

# Macarthur Square Carlton City of Melbourne

Understanding Place.



Place Audit Report  
Wednesday 27 October 2021

# Understanding Place.

“Sometimes, the most valuable information you gather in a public life survey is something you observe, or a conversation you have, that simply comes out of spending hours at a time in a space.”

Gehl Institute c. 2018, *Using Public Life Tools: The Complete Guide*, Gehl Institute, New York

## About this document

This report collects user based data to locate demographic trends and understand changes of use over time. It provides an easy-to-understand snapshot of how we use spaces and how they influence us. The report charts a collection of **Public Life and Public Space** metrics (<https://gehl.institute.org/public-life-tools/>) that can influence public space design and inform recommendations for improvements to the public realm.

## Company contact

Aliza Levy  
[hello@inhabitplace.info](mailto:hello@inhabitplace.info)

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# Audit

**Name**

Macarthur Square, Carlton

**Timeframe**

Wednesday 27 October, 2021

8am - 6pm

**Location**

Between MacArthur Place North and  
MacArthur Place South edged by  
Rathdowne Street and Canning Street,  
Carlton

Melbourne VIC 3053



# About

## Place Auditing

The places we inhabit are not static. We move through them in a complex and layered manner, creating patterns of usage over time. Truly understanding how people use places contributes toward better design for a better quality of life.

Inhabit Place was created to help shape better places; through understanding how a space is actually used we can formulate an enhanced appreciation of what does and does not work, and create places that better suit their environment and their people. With the knowledge gained from an Inhabit Place Audit, planners, developers and government can call upon real data captured in situ to inform their decisions and create places that better serve and delight their citizens.

A Place Audit is shaped around an hourly cycle with a continuous data capture to demonstrate trends over time. Movement, Patterns of Movement, Time in Place and Interviews are documented for 30 minutes every hour as a snapshot of how the space is used.

Data is rounded to the nearest decimal point and in some instances this will result in totals that do not meet 100%.

The Glossary provides definitions on the use of terms and icons in the report.

## Site description

This Audit observes user behaviour and engagement around Macarthur Square in Carlton between 8am-6pm.

**Macarthur Square** is identified in the City of Melbourne's Open Space Strategy as a local open space with a formal character, the dominant feature being the avenue of 20 mature elm trees. The open space runs east to Canning Street and west to Rathdowne Street. The open space is ringed by parallel parking on MacArthur Place North and South servicing residential housing. Dedicated cycle lanes on Canning Street and Rathdowne Street run parallel to the eastern and western edges of the space.

## Methodology

This report collects quantitative and qualitative information. Data was captured by auditors using the Inhabit Place app to map and monitor civic life using the framework of Jan Gehl's **Public Life and Public Space** Studies. By conducting a survey of public areas, we learn how, when, where, and why people are using public spaces.

The metrics of a **Public Life and Public Space** study include:

**Movement:** capturing demographic and mode information of those passing through the space and mapping their desire paths.

**Time in place:** capturing demographic and behavioural information of those people choosing to spend time in the space, mapping their activities to understand duration of stay and activation of different zones within the space.

**Interviews:** documenting people's impressions of the space through intercept surveys and conversations.

**Images:** visualises changes throughout the day to express the mood and feel of the space.

**Observations:** diarised notes of place auditors adding detail that is not otherwise documented.

**Frontages:** mapping activation of the building line that frames the site to understand the extent the building edge interacts with and contributes to the space.

**Inventory:** maps the physical infrastructure on site and makes condition assessments of each item.

**Glossary:** provides definitions on the use of terms and icons in the report.



# Overview



Wed 27 October,  
2021, 8:00am - 6:00pm

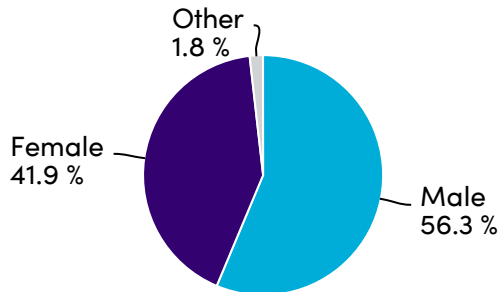
Total people:  
**1,344**

# Overview

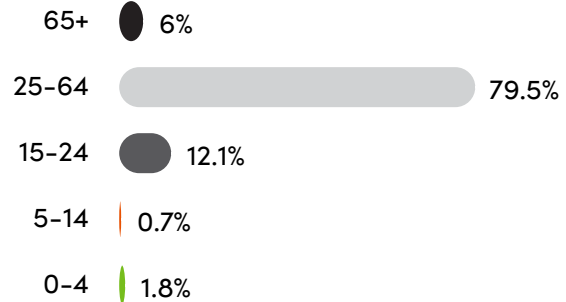
Macarthur Square,  
Carlton 3

The following provides an overview of data from across all audit days. Gender and Age in this section reflect the aggregate of Movement and Time in Place.

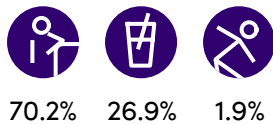
## Gender



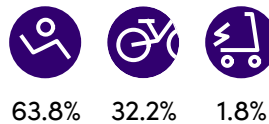
## Age



## Top Behaviours



## Main Modes



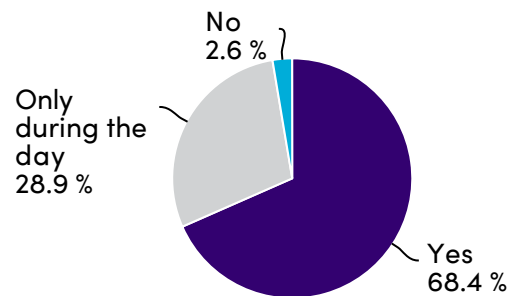
## Impressions

-

+



## Do you feel safe



## Improvements

more benches  
seating  
weather conditions  
quieter  
picnic tables  
playground  
quiet  
coffee van  
lighting  
No smokers  
picnic spaces  
Walkable  
Keep unchanged  
community interactions  
More bins  
Meeting space  
More parking  
cleanliness  
recycling bins  
Accessibility  
food options  
Active infrastructure  
Enough shade  
Living closer  
Off leash  
Proximity  
Better benches  
Water bubblers  
Activity  
more facilities  
Park furniture  
Paths  
Bigger space  
public toilet  
Interactive furniture

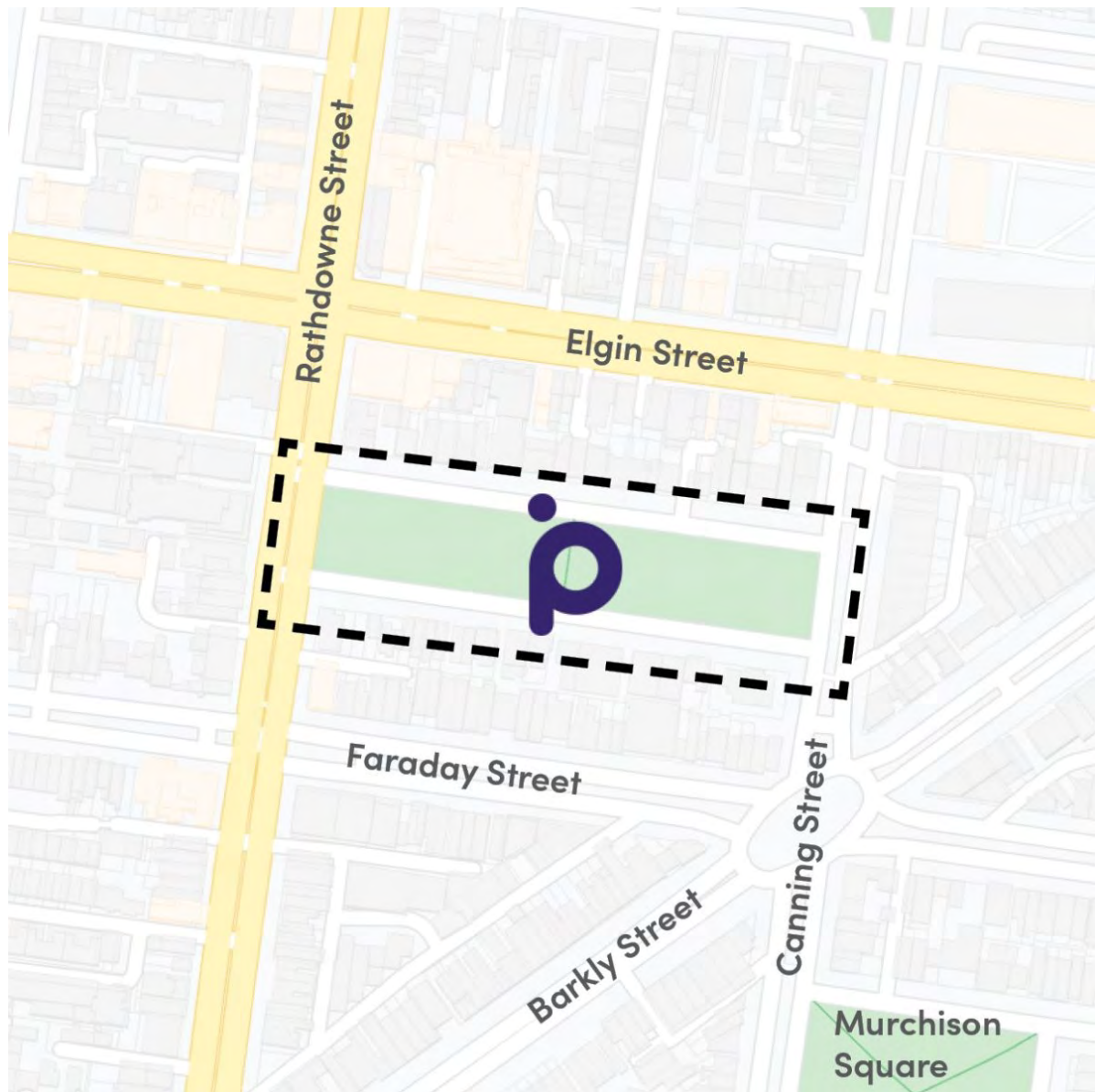
## Weather



27 October 2021  
Clear Sky

# Location

Macarthur Square is the park located in the centre of MacArthur Place North and South edged by Rathdowne Street and Canning Street, Carlton.





# Public Life Findings

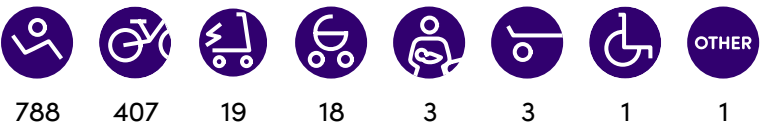


Wed 27 October, 2021  
8:00am – 6:00pm

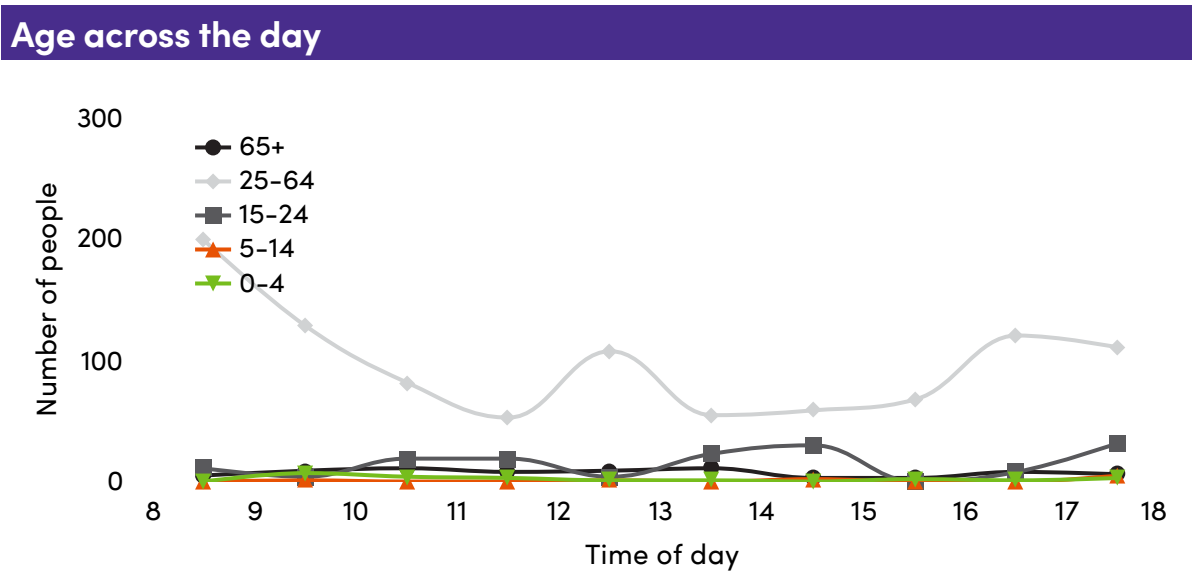
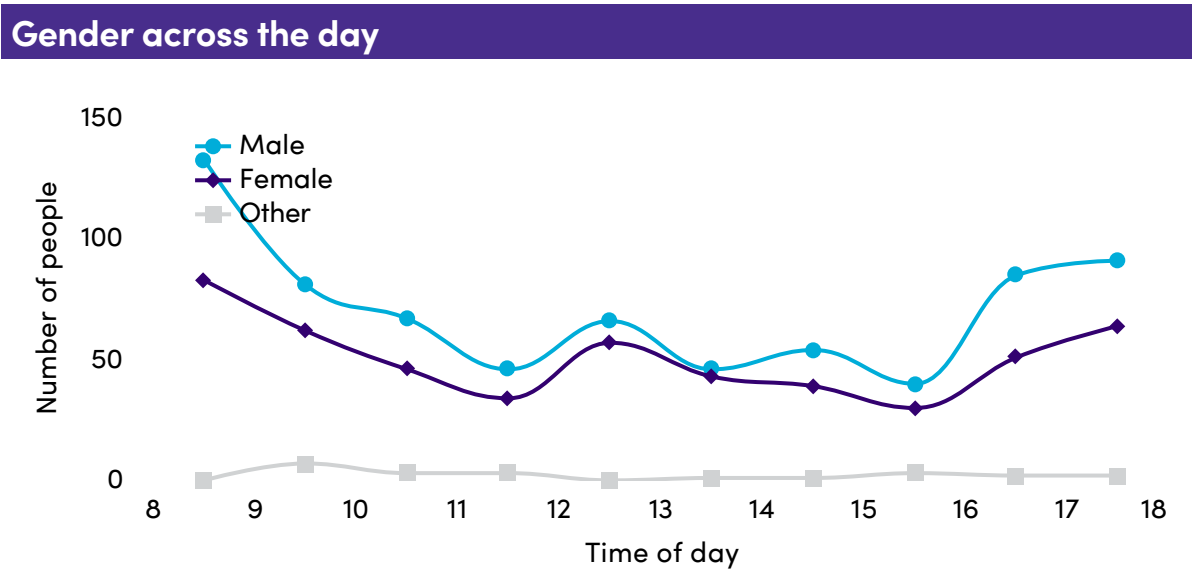
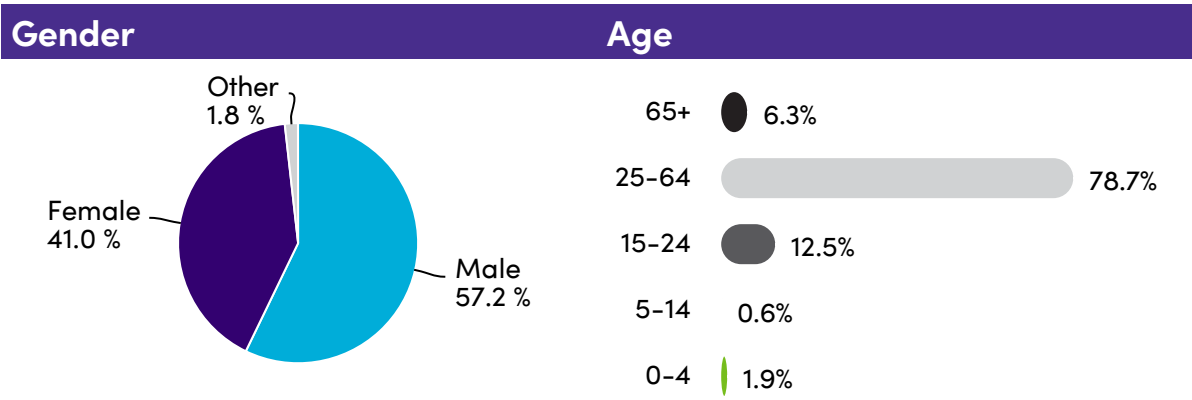
Patterns of movement



Mode



Daily total 1240



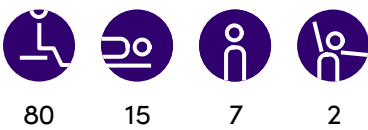


Activation of place

< 10 mins 10-20 mins 20-30 mins

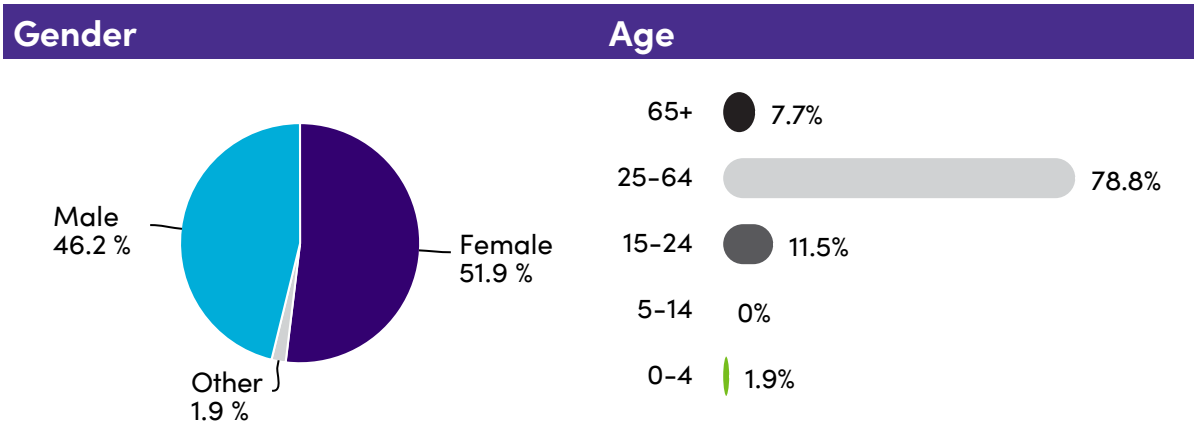


Posture Behaviour

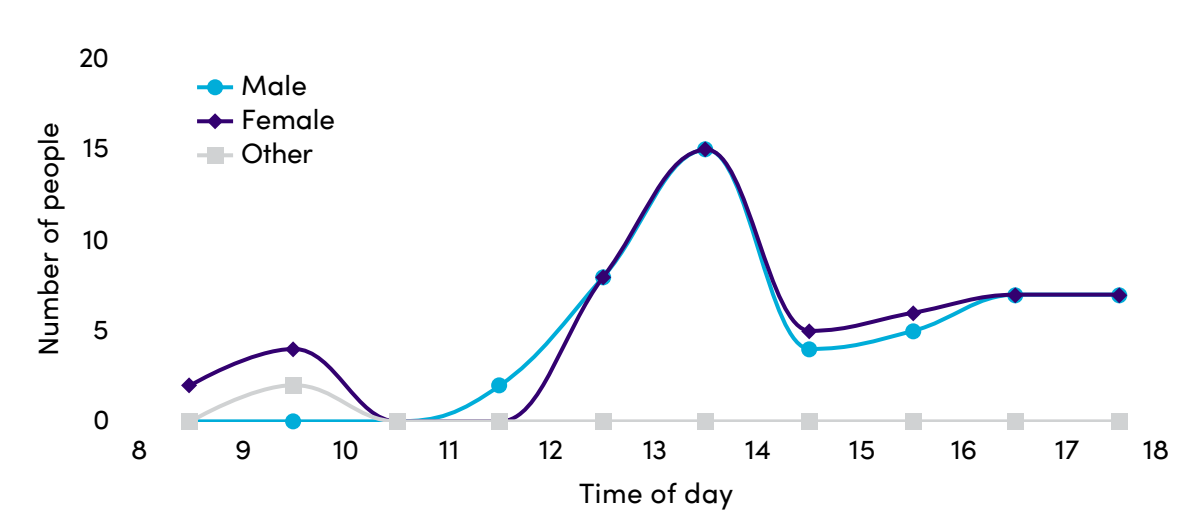




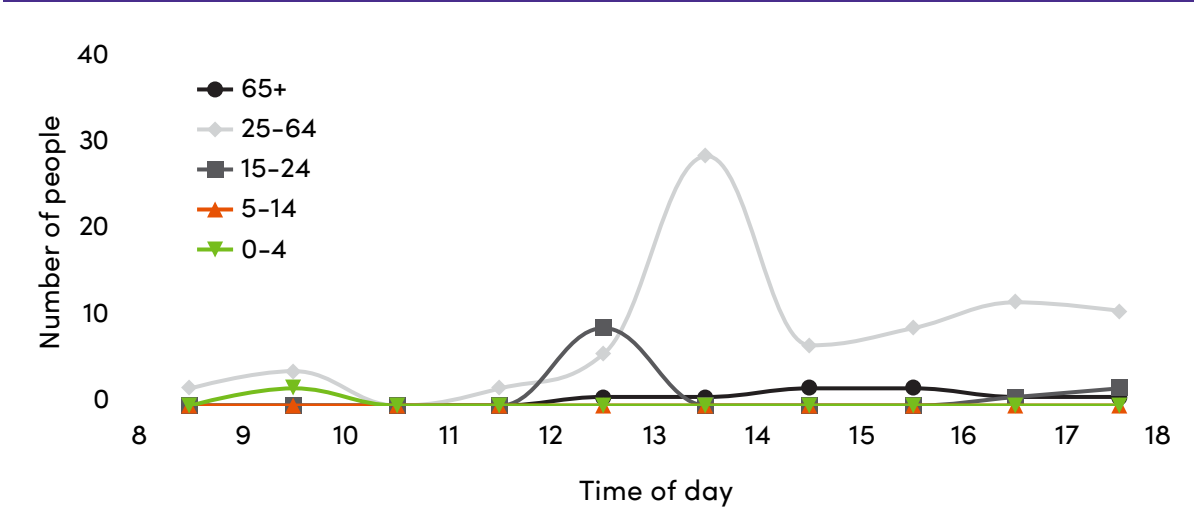
Daily total 104



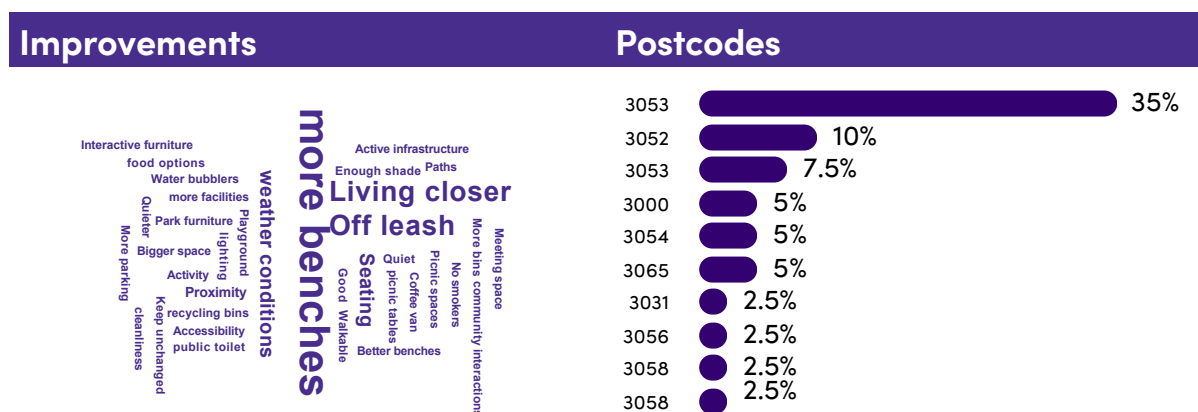
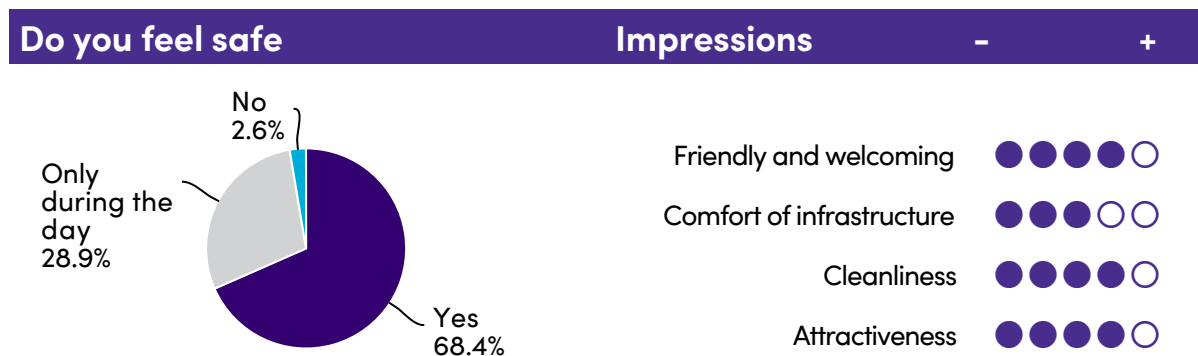
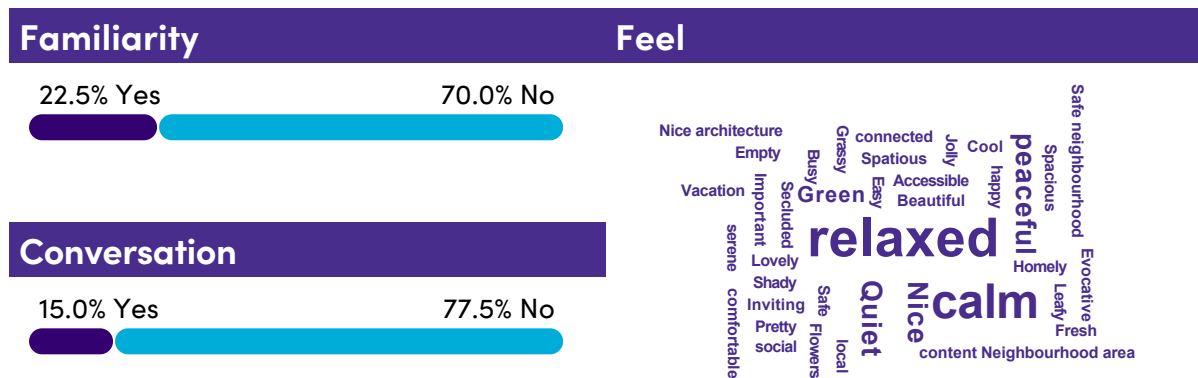
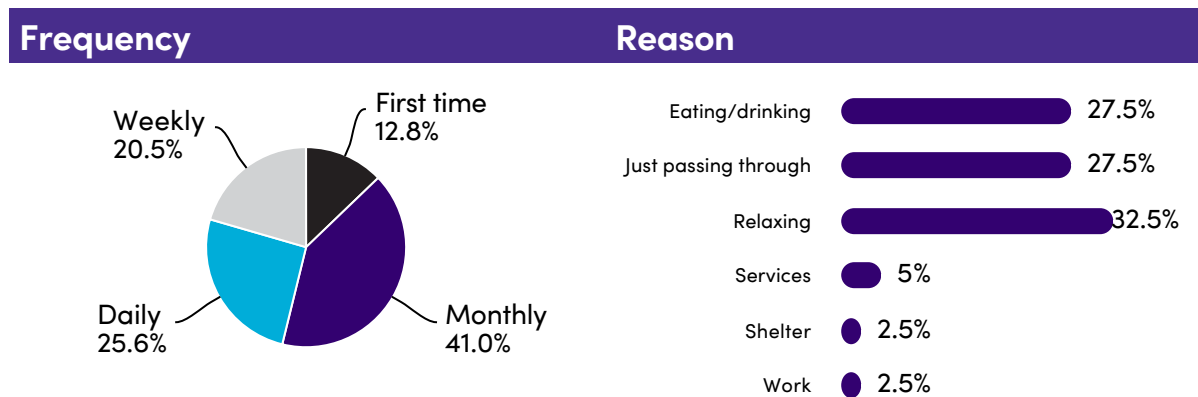
## Gender across the day



## Age across the day



## Daily total 40



Comments are provided by survey respondents to an open question about their experience of the space and how they would like to see the space evolve.

08:47	It's a nice green space maintained within inner Melbourne.
08:57	Mostly pass by on the way to shopping.
09:03	She feels the space is welcoming and surrounded by community but sees that it could feel cliquey to outsiders.
09:57	Come here quite often. Very nice place, have both shade and places to enjoy sunshine.
10:01	Needs more seating spaces other than along the paths.
10:40	The couple were very happy with the space as it is. They would not like any changes to occur in the space. They enjoy the quiet environment and hidden sense of the park.
10:48	Needs to improve lighting in the park as it gets very dark at night. They would like more coffee shops or food places around to bring takeaway into the park.
10:52	More benches and bins would be nice. The infrastructure could still be improved as the area is quite empty, not many activities going on. However, the quietness is suitable when we come here to relax as the big parks tend to be noisy with children playing around. Maybe some garden beds would be nice in the space.
11:01	They saw this space being used like a "backyard" during covid. People brought tables for picnics.
11:37	Wish for off leash area but retain it open like this with no fences.
11:38	It's good to have a quiet park, not every park needs to be multi functional with all the amenities. More benches and path cutting through the park (east west direction) could potentially make the park more easy to access.
11:56	Make it bigger with more seating spaces. She thinks the trees are dying.
11:57	Likes the park as it is, but would like more infrastructure to be installed.
12:38	Space needs a public toilet. He comes here often because the trees don't have flowers so he gets less pollen allergies. Important for public space to be allergy conscious.
12:46	Moved here recently, everything is great right now but it would be nice if this park had picnic tables.
12:46	Lives nearby, feels attached to this small neighbourhood parks as a place to relax, walk her dogs, meet other dog friends and other regulars using the park (eg, the lady doing taichi). Suggested to include some information on the traditional land owners, local flora and fauna to enhance the sense of place. There could be more bins for recycling and other kinds of waste. The area gives a historic vibe.
12:59	It's a nice quiet space, but maybe more lighting so it's safer for women during the night. Littering can be improved. It's accessible from the roads but is not too close that it's noisy.
13:44	She feels having no toilets keeps the area clean and means parties can't occur in this park, as facilities attract more youth and litter. This also keeps the park family oriented and as a lovely local space.

Comments are provided by survey respondents to an open question about their experience of the space and how they would like to see the space evolve.

13:50	Nice and quiet and small. Good lunch spot, like to sit in the sun.
13:59	Open space nice space to chill.
14:43	She was here to get frozen yoghurt nearby.
14:49	She would like the space to remain the same as it feels a lot quieter than the busy Carlton Gardens.
15:06	She said she would only come here at night if she were with other people.
15:10	She suggested having something interactive or movable that didn't look or act like a traditional bench but still offered a place to sit would be a good addition (possibly movable lounge chairs).
15:42	She had come to the location as she had just gone to have a house inspection so she said she likes the area and would like to live here. The park right next to the house is a good thing as she can come by and relax to have time off.
15:51	He noted that he usually just passes through and goes to bigger gardens elsewhere to be active/ walk around or play sport.
15:53	Predominantly used daily for people with dogs. Usually on lead, only it would be good if it could be off leash for a couple of hours. He came with his dog and was sitting down so he said it would be nice to sometimes leave his dog off leash. Under-utilised space, people should use it more.
16:43	It's a nice space with the patch of grass. It's good to visit between work as a quick break and to have a nice picnic.
16:49	She was picking up her daughter from school nearby and used to come here more often but comes less now since they moved from Faraday St to Carlton North. Before COVID she said that trying to find parking around here was really difficult (especially with people coming from elsewhere in Melbourne to visit Lygon Street) - this was less a problem during lockdown, but she is expecting it to increase again since restrictions are starting to ease.
16:53	She mentioned that the space was good as it is and she would mostly like it to stay the same as it has everything she looks for in a space to just relax (bench, greenery, open space).
17:55	Mentioned that the space is nice in every season, landscaped with daffodils along the edge that come up in spring and all the trees offer lots of shade in summer but let the sunlight through when their leaves fall in winter. They prefer coming here than to nearby Murchison Square because it felt more open and less engineered with fewer paths cutting through. She mentioned that she felt safe even at night and sometimes came to walk the dog here alone even while pregnant.



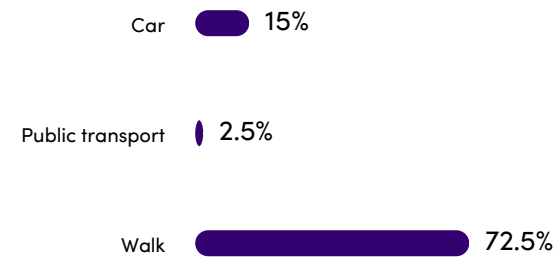
## Interview responses for City of Melbourne

What kind of spaces?	Mode of transport
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What kind of spaces did you seek out during COVID?



How did you get here today (mode of transport)?



## How did your use of this space change during COVID?

08:57	Came to walk and get fresh air.
09:00	Same use (mostly passing through) but with greater frequency and attention paid.
09:03	Walked through here more often.
09:57	Came here to relax and have dinners.
10:01	Use public spaces very often even before covid.
10:40	Came out here more and had more picnics.
10:48	Didn't come here as often.
10:52	Tend to come here with her employer and baby to get fresh air and relax.
11:01	Came here more during covid for reading books and relaxing.
11:37	Came here more often.
11:38	Not much change before and after covid, mostly use public spaces to spend time with the baby, relax.
11:41	Came here more often, especially for picnics.
11:56	Came here less often during covid due to working from home.
12:38	He will use the space no matter if it's covid or not. He loves working from his laptop sitting in this park.
12:46	Relax mostly, walk the dog, meet friends and get fresh air.
12:59	Come more often than before COVID to study, relax and enjoy outdoor activities.
13:44	Rarely came here before covid and have started to come more often since working from home.
13:55	Came out for picnics more regularly or just to relax when weather was good.
13:59	Came to open space more. It was somewhere where you can do multiple activities - bring your own games equipment.
14:43	She lived in the city in 2020 and used to come to this park to eat takeaway food from nearby. Lockdown combined with a move to yarraville in 2021 meant that she came here less than she did before COVID (when she used to come monthly).
14:49	Had been here a couple times before covid, and has been the same since.
14:57	Came here more during covid to walk dog more. Like this park as it is.
15:06	More frequent use of the space for picnics.
15:10	More frequent use of the space, more likely to stay instead of just pass through.
15:42	Spent more time outdoors in green spaces.
15:47	More frequent use, held work meetings here after getting takeaway coffee on market street (never did this before).
15:51	He came through here more often.
16:43	Gravitate to outdoor spaces more, with nature and grassy areas to relax.
16:49	Came here less often because others used it more. Became less likely to stay and instead just passed through more often.
16:53	Avoided people, stayed out of public spaces, having as little contact with people as possible.
17:44	Spent time in open spaces (avoided enclosed smaller spaces).

## What changes would you like to see in public space as a response to COVID?

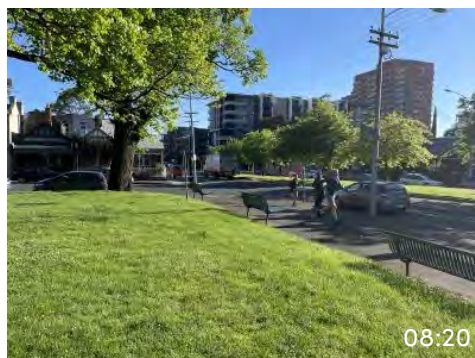
08:57	Put more chairs
09:00	More multifunctional spaces, to be used at different times if the day for different activities (without installing too much infrastructure).
09:03	More rubbish bins.
09:41	More parks and green spaces
09:57	Not much changes for families, we were still using the public spaces as before COVID.
10:01	More picnic tables and shady area.
10:52	More reserves that have native flora and fauna for people to enjoy nature and relax.
11:41	More micro-infrastructures and more benches ie. sanitation facilities.
11:57	More facilities like toilets and drink fountains.
12:46	Feel safer with more lighting.
12:59	Better waste management as more people will be using parks. Better management of amenities, eg public toilets, lawn etc.
13:44	Bins get full so more bins would be nice. Toilets encourage more teenagers and youth to come to park. Would prefer not including toilet facilities meaning people stay for a short time. More water fountains and water for dogs as well.
13:50	Picnic benches so people could meet and eat together outdoors. Public spaces for outdoor games (they mentioned bocce) (lawn bowls). Pop up venue for a park - food and drinks in a park where people can play games. Shade is important.
13:55	Water fountains. More public toilets.
13:59	Somewhere where there is sunlight.
14:43	More accessibility, parking.
14:49	More green spaces in high density housing areas.
15:06	More parking and tire pumps for bikes nearby parks.
15:10	More information or notice boards advertising what services or commerce is nearby, what events are on - something like the 'what's on in Melbourne' page on Facebook but specific to local places.
15:42	More toilets, public amenities.
15:47	Bike racks
15:51	More dedicated bike paths through large park areas.
16:43	Table tennis to play, recreational, games areas.
16:49	More dog poo bags in other parks (like they have in this one).
17:44	Natural environments.
17:55	More emphasis on catering to pedestrians through the suburbs and all the way to the city centre: they mentioned the bike lane along Rathdowne was really wide further north (like a village avenue) and then narrowed substantially before opening up here as it reaches MacArthur Square. They hope for more greenery and green spaces outside official/ large park areas.



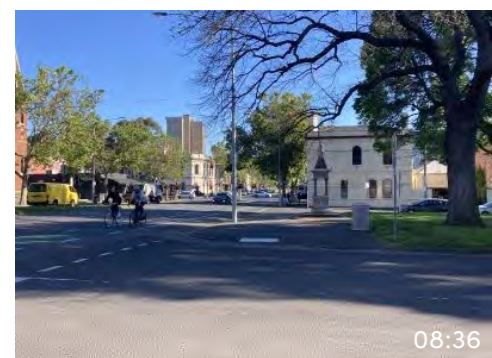
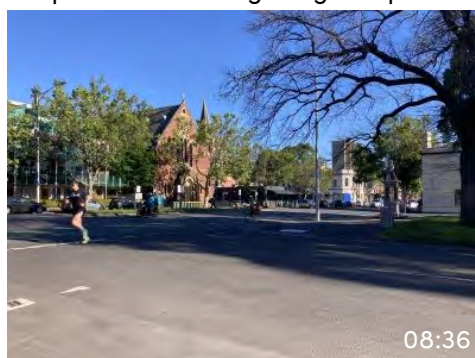
# Images

Images help illustrate the mood of the space as it changes over the day.

Macarthur Square,  
Carlton 15



People exercise along the green patch



Friends having a coffee break!



People crossing the park



# Images

Images help illustrate the mood of the space as it changes over the day.



Lady sitting with her baby



People out for walking their dogs



Streets getting bussier at rathdowne street



taking a nap under the shade



Person exercising



Person eating and drinking



Quite park. View from canning street



Spread out groups of people



mowing nature strips





# Images

Images help illustrate the mood of the space as it changes over the day.



13:28



14:11

The park emptied out very quickly after an hour or two with lots of people staying for lunch or leisure



14:28

Made their way to the benches to drink coffee.



14:40

Sunbathing, sitting directly in the sun.



15:17

Much less people in the park and less traffic going by or through as well



15:44

The pair who were sunbathing changed their location to a sunnier spot avoiding the shade.



16:09

Someone was doing a few laps of the square on a scooter, as if they were practising



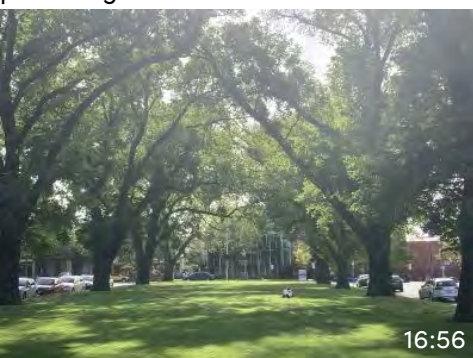
16:13

Someone walking back to their car from Woolworths



16:15

Two young cyclists using MacArthur Place as a link between the bike lanes on Canning and Rathdowne Streets



16:56

Someone lying down in the sun working on a laptop



16:59

The park was recently made on on-leash area



17:07

A young family came for a walk through the park and took their dog off lead to hit a tennis ball for it to fetch



# Images

Images help illustrate the mood of the space as it changes over the day.



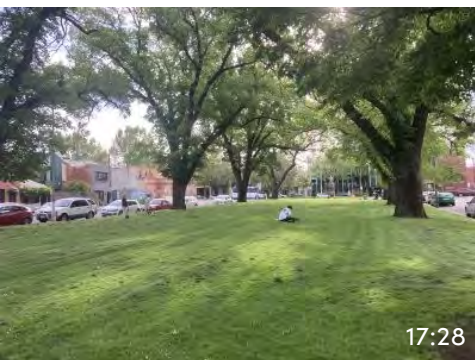
A couple with a small chihuahua took it for a stroll through the park (the dog stayed on leash)



Most people are just relaxing on/ after their evening walk or after their work (group in the picture were interviewed saying they worked nearby).



4 dogs in the park, 2 of these off lead



Lots of people on the Rathdowne side



Not many people on the Canning side



Hanging out with puppy



Observations are auditors notes on the events of the day adding nuance to the quantitative data collected.

08:27	Two workers arrived and started mowing/trimming the lawn
09:08	People seem to cut across the streets quite a bit, and some even walk right down the middle of the street from one end of the square to the other
09:21	The mowing lasted about an hour, but the large mower was left behind
09:23	One woman has been here 3 times since 8am: first to walk through, then she sat down to take a call, and now she's doing tai chi on the middle path
09:24	One resident brought her dog out from a house the borders the square and walked her dog around the grass area for 10-15 minutes before going back inside
13:07	Popular spot for lunch for people living nearby
13:16	One of the workers from this morning returned to trim the edge of the grass on the Canning Street median
13:30	A few times, cyclists rode along the pedestrian path on the Rathdowne end of the square or along the street connecting Rathdowne to Canning
14:00	Most people spending time in the square seemed to pick a shady (or partly shaded place to stay) - these were mostly people eating
14:00	Most people enjoying the space bringing food and to catch up with friends
14:01	Most people in the square stayed on the grass - only one group sat on the bench in the middle path of the square
14:02	Only a couple people looked for full sun and these people tended to lay down on the grass to work from a laptop or just relax a little
14:03	Most people brought takeaway food to eat in the square but a few brought food from home
14:04	Most people spending time in the square seemed to arrive by walking but a few came by car
14:19	A passerby just told me that a number of branches have fallen from the trees lining the square (one hit a car) over the past few years. Over the lunch period, people were scattered across the grass but most sat in the middle of the square.
15:14	I've noticed that throughout the day, people come to the park to use the rubbish bins - there have been multiple people coming out of their cars, into the park to throw away their packaging.
15:55	A couple who has been here for a few hours (one of them in swimmers tanning) moved their rug to follow the sun
15:57	One of the frequent visitors of the space said the bins were sometimes overfilled and that it got messy at times
17:11	Someone rode their bike right into the park to meet a friend and rested it on a tree instead of locking it elsewhere
17:17	Lots of people started bringing their dogs into the park for a little walk or play in the late afternoon, especially from 4:30 onwards
17:31	There's a bit of a thin cloud cover so not much direct sunlight anymore
17:48	Guy using laptop relocated out of the sun under the tree.
17:58	People staying in the park over lunch were mostly in pairs or groups - now there's a number of singles either with their dog or reading a book



# Public Space Findings



Facades categorise activation of the building line to demonstrate how the edges of the space contribute to the experience of the public realm.

## Facade activation



- Active frontage which make a positive contribution to the vitality of the space, and supports a pedestrian friendly public domain.
- Passive frontage that is neutral to the pedestrian experience of the public domain, is not active or lively.
- Blank frontage which makes no contribution to activity, nor passive surveillance or security for those in the public domain.

- Vacant frontage which has no occupants or is derelict.
- Negative frontage which has a detrimental impact on the pedestrian public domain, either by being visually unattractive, the source of offensive noise, odour, runoff or exhaust, or by posing a safety risk during service or loading activities.



Inventory documents the provision of public infrastructure making a condition assessment of each item as Poor (in need of maintenance or repair) or Good (clean and well maintained).

## Infrastructure



- Bins  
2 Good / 0 Poor
- Lights  
12 Good / 0 Poor

- △ Sculptures  
1 Good / 0 Poor
- Seats  
5 Good / 0 Poor

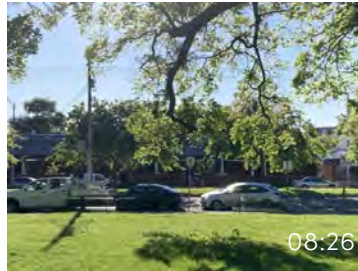


Inventory documents the provision and condition of public infrastructure in the space.

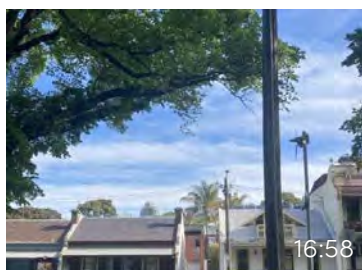
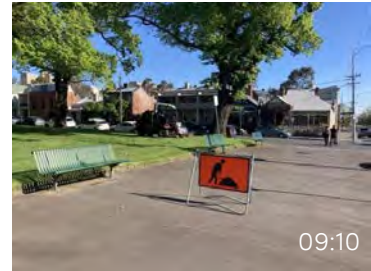
## Condition



Maintenance team



Parallel parking



Lighting along the middle path



Monument at the Rathdowne end



Different kind of bin at the Rathdowne end



Street light along Rathdowne



Street lights along MacArthur Place



Street lights on Canning St

The Glossary provides definitions on the use of terms in the Inhabit Place platform and their application on site during an audit.

**Activation of Place** mapped for 30 minutes every hour this metric presents where people are spending time in the space and for how long

**Age brackets** adopted from Jan Gehl's Public Space Public Life Studies to ensure Inhabit Place data is relatable to global case studies, assessment is based on observation

**Audit hours** the duration of the place audit

**Place Auditor** data collector using the Inhabit Place platform

**Base Map** aerial perspective of the audit site with public inventory represented through symbols

**Behaviour** the main activity people are engaged in while spending time

**Daily Total** represents the total number of people counted

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**Frontage** building line that fronts the public domain

**Active** - Frontage which makes a positive contribution to the vitality of the space and supports a pedestrian friendly public domain. Typically, continuous and transparent glazing, window displays, entries that provide for interaction between indoor and outdoor activities.

**Blank** - Frontage which makes no contribution to activity, nor passive surveillance or security for those in the public domain. Typically, heavily frosted glazing with no interactivity or visual stimulation

**Passive** - Frontage that is neutral to the pedestrian experience of the public domain but is not activated or lively. Typically, window displays that provide visual stimulus but no opportunity to engage, it may also include wall murals or artwork that provide interest to an otherwise blank surface.

**Negative** - Frontage which has detrimental impact on the public domain, being visually unattractive, the source of offensive noise, odour, runoff or exhaust, or by posing a safety risk during use. Typically, service delivery entries, waste storage enclosures, air intakes and exhausts, public or tenant toilet entries or windows, and car parking entries that intersect pedestrian thoroughfares.

**Vacant** - Frontage which has no occupants or is derelict. Typically, closed business premises.

.....  
**Gender** assessments based on observation, where there is uncertainty auditors are instructed to mark 'Other'

**Images** taken by auditors to document mood of the space

.....  
**Interview Questions**

**Conversation** - Have you spoken to anyone new while you've been here?

**Familiarity** - Do you recognise anyone in the space?

**Feel** - Describe how the space makes you feel? (Word clouds generate the most common responses as larger text)

**Frequency** - How often do you visit the space?

**Impressions** - Rank responses as Very Poor, Poor, Neutral, Good, Very Good

**Improvements** - What would inspire you to spend more time here/ What would make your experience more comfortable? (Word clouds generate the most common responses as larger text)

**Interview Comments** - Further comment on the space

**Postcodes** - Where you reside

**Reason** - What brought you to this space?

**Safety** - Do you feel safe in the space?

.....



The Icon Glossary provides the definition for all symbols used within this report.

**Interviews** intercept survey conducted between auditor and user of the space

**Mode** the human method of transit

**Movement** recorded for 30 minutes every hour collecting the age, gender and mode of each individual crossing an imaginary line that transects the space, marked in blue on the site map

**Observations** auditors commentary on the events of the day

**Other** used for a person who has not been visually assessed as male or female

**Out of Area** non local residents

**Overview** a snapshot of metrics averaged across audit days

**Patterns of Movement** drawn for 30 minutes every hour capturing desire lines as people move through the space

**Posture** the position people adopt when spending time

**Public Life Findings** how people use and feel about the space inclusive of Movement, Time in Place, Interviews, Images and Observation data

**Public Space Findings** physical attributes of the space including Inventory and Frontage activation

**Time in Place** recorded for 30 minutes every hour collecting the age, gender and behaviours of those staying in the space

**Total People** is the combined footfall of people passing through and spending time in the space



Carried – children being carried



Cycling – riding a bicycle, in bike trailers or bike seat



Eating and drinking



Excercising – purposful active behaviours including stretching



Leisure activities such as people watching, reading, conversing



Interacting with installation



Mobility Scooter – motorised assistance device



Moving around – staying within the bounds of the space but in constant movement, such as playing



Other



Pram – being pushed in a pram or stroller



Sitting



Skateboard



Smoking



Standing



Waiting for public transport



Walking – includes jogging, running or walking a bicycle



Wheelchair



Scooter



Working



Sleeping

