

Discussion topic 2:

Safe places and spaces

Creating safe public spaces through urban design and placemaking

Great public spaces that are well designed and maintained and used by the whole community promote safety and deter unsafe and anti-social behaviours, such as graffiti, crime and alcohol and drug misuse.

Our community has lower perceptions of safety than what is average for Metro Melbourne. 70.4% of residents feel very safe in public places during the day, but this drops to 28.6% at night.

Frankston City 2021 Annual Community Satisfaction Survey

Women feel 14.4% less safe than men in public areas of Frankston City at night.

Frankston City 2021 Annual Community Satisfaction Survey

62% of respondents to our lighting survey told us that lighting would help them feel safer on footpaths that connect night-time venues and car parks.

Frankston City Lighting Action Plan Survey 2021

In 2021, Council responded to over 3,500 incidents of graffiti in the municipality (1,500 incidents on council property, and 2,000 incidents on private property).

Frankston City Council data

Crime and unsafe behaviours are the result of a complex relationship between social and environmental factors and cannot be 'designed out'. However, good urban design of public places and spaces can be part of a broader approach to community safety and crime prevention to improve the safety of an area, and is an important objective for local government. If a public space feels safe and accessible and inclusive, it is more likely to be well used and loved by all members of the community providing visibility and surveillance, as well as opportunities for social connection.

The process of creating safe public spaces requires careful consideration of many features, including social, spatial, economic and environmental factors. This includes the use of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED), a crime prevention approach used by local government in the urban design of public spaces. CPTED uses a range of design principles to create safe and comfortable public spaces that reduce opportunities for crime to occur.

Placemaking is another approach being used locally to activate public places and improve perceptions of safety. Placemaking is the collaborative process of creating high quality, attractive and vibrant places that people feel connected to and want to live, work, play and learn in. Placemaking usually involves a combination of short-term activations, like outdoor dining and food trucks, and longer term management of the space and amenity improvements like lighting, signage, street art, street furniture, play equipment and shade structures. Events and festivals bring people in and enliven areas to increase foot traffic, boost the economy and improve people's perceptions and the Invest Frankston Business Grants support diverse businesses to expand or bring business to the area.

Graffiti, property damage and illegal dumping of waste and materials are some of the more common illegal activities occurring in public places in Frankston City and can have a detrimental impact to the amenity and perceived safety of an area. Local government works collaboratively with other agencies such as Victoria Police and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing along with local business and communities to protect the safety and amenity of public places.

Train stations and public transport stops are often identified as public places where people do not feel safe, and can be a barrier to the use of public transport even though public transport is one of the safest ways to travel. The Frankston City Community Satisfaction Survey 2021 told us that less than half (44.7%) of our residents feel very safe travelling on or waiting for public transport.

The way we use and perceive the safety of public spaces are unique and specific to our lived experience. The evidence shows that women are more likely to feel unsafe in public spaces and as though a space is not designed with them in mind. This is particularly true for women who experience other intersecting forms of marginalisation, such as those who identify as LGBTQIA+, women from migrant backgrounds, older women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and women with a disability.⁷

The Victorian Government provides a framework to set out how land may be used or developed in Victoria, and supports local councils to deliver liveable and safer public places through the *Urban Design Guidelines and Safer Design Guidelines for Victoria*. Together, these guidelines support local government in planning for new public spaces, streets and developments that minimise crime and support community safety by applying the CPTED principles.

Council's role

Local government has an important role in the safety of public places and spaces, from urban design through to local law enforcement. For Frankston City Council, this role includes:

- Urban design of public open places and spaces so that they are accessible, fit for purpose and valued by all members of our community.
- Placemaking, through initiatives like the *Frankston City Vacant Shopfront Activation Grants Program* in partnership with State Government to attract new businesses to vacant shopfronts across the city, and the Façade Improvement Grant to support business owners, operators and landlords to enhance the presentation of their building or business in Frankston's city centre.
- Activation through events and festivals such as the *Do It Outdoors Summer Series* and *The Lineup* music program that bring people into the municipality.
- Strategic planning to help guide the location, design and delivery of safe public open spaces and infrastructure upgrades, and then working in partnership with State Government, businesses and other stakeholders to invest in renewing public spaces like the Frankston Train Station area.
- Regulatory controls and enforcement through state and local legislation, issuing of permits and enforcing Smoke Free Outdoor areas.
- Provision of CCTV cameras and pedestrian counters to better understand people's movement and behavior in public spaces.
- Proactive graffiti management program to prevent and remove or minimise the appearance of graffiti.
- Traffic management, including the building and maintenance of local roads and footpaths, cycle paths, street lighting and car parks, along with the provision of traffic signage, road closures, parking infringements and school crossing supervisors.
- Transport planning, including the development of an Integrated Transport Strategy to facilitate improved transport connections and movements in Frankston City and advocacy for improved lighting, visibility and shelters at public transport stops to ensure they are safe and accessible for everyone in our community.
- Cleaning, maintenance and upgrading of public spaces to ensure they continue to be safe, achieve safety standards and address any safety concerns, such as fallen trees and damaged play equipment.

To perform this role, Council works closely with Victoria Police, Country Fire Authority, VicSES, the Australian Red Cross, Fire Rescue Victoria, Coast Guard, Department of Health, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and other local support and relief agencies.

⁷Wass, S 2020 Creating safe and inclusive public spaces for women, Women's Health East, Doncaster East.