

Artist's impression of the new inner city park at the Vivian/ Victoria Streets corner



Victoria Street Transformation

UPDATE 12

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➔ BARRIERS ARE COMING DOWN

The remainder of the protective safety fences that kept works separate from pedestrians and road users are coming down revealing the transformed Victoria Street between Dixon Street and Abel Smith Street.

The inner Wellington street is now a boulevard with 54 streetside Italian alder trees planted and two new pocket parks - a revamped Volunteer Corner beside Dixon Street and another beside Vivian Street. Paths have been widened by removing the former raised garden beds to allow more room for pedestrians. Levelling and surfacing of paths and vehicle accessways includes asphalt in some areas and exposed aggregate concrete in others.

The road has been upgraded to allow a cycle lane on the east side including the trial of a protected cycle lane in the southern block which puts cyclists between the kerb and carparks. The northbound lane running from Vivian Street to Dixon Street, which was closed for the duration of the project, has re-opened and Feltex Lane will no longer be used as a detour route.

The area is now set for residential, educational and commercial development which will include a 1000-student campus on the corner with Dixon Street.

➔ POCKET PARK OUTSIDE TOMMY'S

The pattern of concrete pavers laid in the triangular pocket park outside Tommy's Real Estate will give people a feel for the past by showing where early cottages and outbuildings stood. Original city maps created in the late 1880s have been used to devise the paving pattern, using darker pavers to show where buildings stood.

The patterns depict the locations of eight houses and adjacent outbuildings, some in the park by Tommy's, others at Volunteer Corner. The Victoria Street we know today didn't exist until the 1970s and 80s.



➔ ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS

A glass inkwell, several porcelain dolls heads, a china elephant with a little girl riding on top and an early ginger beer bottle are among items discovered during the Victoria Street transformation work.

Four wells were uncovered as construction workers installed new ducts and pipes for existing and future underground services and dug the pits for new street trees. The well that revealed the most interesting artefacts was where several schoolrooms were located from the 1850s, including St Peter's Schoolroom and the Te Aro Infants' School near the Ghuznee Street corner. Archaeologists are preparing a report on the finds.

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➔ FINAL TOUCHES TO VOLUNTEER CORNER

Volunteer Corner beside Dixon Street is one of the major transformations in the Victoria Street project and the final piece to be done. The park is intended for leisure but was also designed to protect the mature elm on the corner with a steel grate walkway constructed over the tree roots. Three separate areas are created with different ground treatments: the majority being paving patterned to show the footprint of early Wellington buildings, a grassed area and a hoggin square composed of compacted clay, sand and gravel (similar to that used at Waitangi Park).

A garden under the elm will be planted soon and will include the winter-flowering shrub Camellia Volunteer which was specially bred in New Zealand for the 2001 International Year of Volunteers.



➔ PAVING PROGRAMME COMPLETED

The road paving programme, which was disrupted on numerous occasions by rain, has been completed with a fresh surface of asphalt throughout. Lane markings have been completed on the upgraded road which has new kerbs and access ramps into properties. Cycle lane markings will be installed in a few weeks' time when the asphalt has cured.

➔ CHALLENGING UNDERGROUND WORKS NOW FUTURE-PROOFED WITH GPS

The normally hidden underground complex of services in Victoria Street were on show throughout the project with a total of 9000 metres of new pipes and ducts laid. The transformation team, on behalf of Wellington City Council and utility companies, replaced many of the ageing services that provide a route for the city's power, communications, water and waste. New ducts were also laid for new services such as expanded street lighting and relocated traffic signals.

People commented on the number of times the road was dug up but the underground "spaghetti junction" of pipes and ducts - some live, some not in use, some not accounted for - meant great care had to be taken for both safety and efficiency. That included the requirement to replace services in a sequence and not trying to replace different services at the same time in the same hole.

One of the challenges for urban work is unreliable service maps prepared in pre-GPS times which, as expected, meant several exploratory holes had to be dug in some places. All services ducts and pipes installed by the transformation team are now linked to GPS, resulting in reliable future-proofed mapping.

Underground service work has made the street ready to handle increased demand from the new developments planned for this area.

➔ CYCLE LANE TRIAL IN SOUTH BLOCK

A trial for a protected kerbside cycle lane will take place in the block between Vivian Street and Abel Smith Street. A kerbside lane on the inside of parked cars and bus stop is potentially the best solution for this block where the inside lane operates as a clearway at peak afternoon traffic times of 4.00pm - 6.00pm.

The trial is set to start by 14 July or earlier once the new asphalt has cured enough for the cycle lane markings to be installed. The lane will be monitored over the next six months.



➔ MURAL AT RE.SPACE

Keep an eye out for progress on a huge 11m high, 20m wide mural being painted by conceptual geometric artist David Brown. The mural funded by Wellington City Council will occupy an entire wall of re.SPACE, the exhibition and event venue which has been newly refurbished by gallery director Julie Daysh in the central block of the Victoria Street Transformation.