

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE PLAY SPACE STRATEGY



Image credit: City of Yarra.



Prepared by: Streets Alive Yarra Inc.
streets-alive-yarra.org

Foreword

Streets Alive Yarra is a non-profit, volunteer, resident and ratepayer action group with a vision for more trees, wider footpaths and vibrant businesses in thriving neighbourhoods. We see our streets being used by people from all ages, irrespective of whether they walk, roll on a wheelchair, cycle, use public transport or drive. Residents and shoppers should be able to move safely, comfortably, and conveniently around Yarra; and park near shops.



Image credit: OCULUS Landscape Architecture and Urban Design

Streets Alive Yarra was founded in 2017 and now has over 2,800 followers on Facebook. A network of local champions develops concepts and proposals for how to improve their local street or precinct. Streets Alive Yarra is also a member of the Victoria Walks Walkability Action Group network.

Further information is available at: streets-alive-yarra.org/about.

Overview

Streets Alive Yarra suggests that the City of Yarra aim to deliver a play space within 200 metres of every home, matching the aspiration of Utrecht.

One way to achieve this is to install modal filters on quiet streets, with a bollard-protected parklet (or play space) on one side of the filter.

Also, we suggest adopting a strategy that aligns with the recommendations of *Cities for Play Designing Child-Friendly High Density Neighbourhoods*, by Natalia Krysiak.

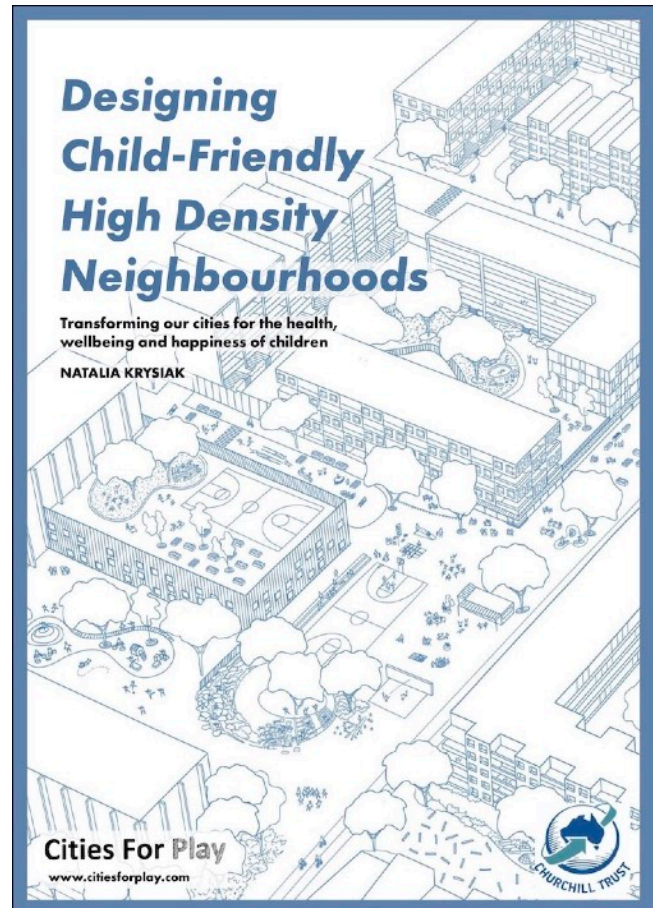
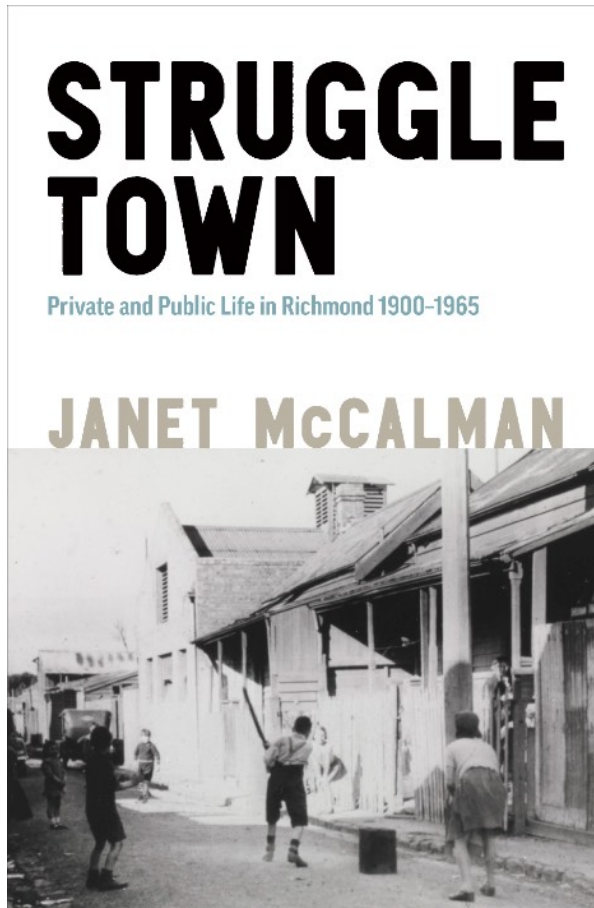


Image credits: Melbourne University Publishing and Natalia Krysiak

What's the problem?

As Strong Towns points out, we've turned our public spaces into car-only zones. We need to turn them back into child-friendly spaces.



Image credit: Strong Towns

Children used to be able to play in our public spaces

We believe that it is possible, and desirable, to make some parts of our streets safe enough to play on again. Janet McCalman writes:

The Edwardian working-class child grew up in a lively street community that the motor car has since destroyed. Mothers felt secure in the knowledge that the community kept a watchful eye for accidents, unexpected dangers and vicious fights...Critics might deplore the incontestable dirtiness of Richmond's streets but the children did not care. Their suburb was a giant playground, rich in excitement, adventure, spectacle and delight, and they felt doubly fortunate in having the river and its still beautiful bushy surrounds and parks on their doorstep.

Loneliness was rare for most Richmond children, however. In the streets they played the timeless games and recited the lore of the street children all over the industrialised world. Toys were few and basic- a doll, a top, a diablo, a hoop, balls and home-made bats, carts, skipping ropes. They were great collectors-cigarette cards, marbles, cherry stones for cherry bobs...But their most important toys were their imaginations and their physical environment and they early learnt to exploit them both creatively and very mischievously.

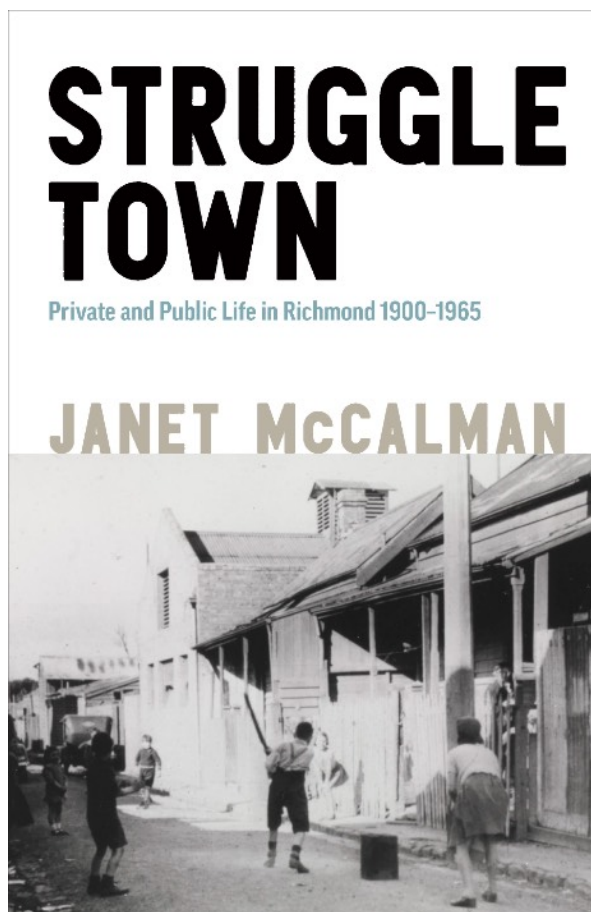


Image credit: Melbourne University Publishing

Designing child-friendly neighbourhoods

We believe that it is possible, and desirable, to design and build our neighbourhoods so they are safe enough to play in again. Natalie Krysiak writes:

Over the past few decades, we have been warned by numerous experts about the detrimental consequences of the decline in children's spontaneous outdoor play and active mobility on their health and wellbeing. Increasing rates of obesity, diabetes, anxiety, depression, loneliness and phobias of the natural world have all been linked to the decline in outdoor play and are of increasing concern.

As noted by author Joe L. Frost: "For the first time in history, the children of entire industrialised nations are losing their natural outdoor grounds for play and forgetting how to engage in free, spontaneous outdoor play. The consequences are profound."

If we are serious about firstly ensuring that higher-density neighbourhoods are inclusive to families with children and secondly that children are provided with the best possible environments for healthy and happy development, then their needs must be meaningfully considered in the design of our cities.

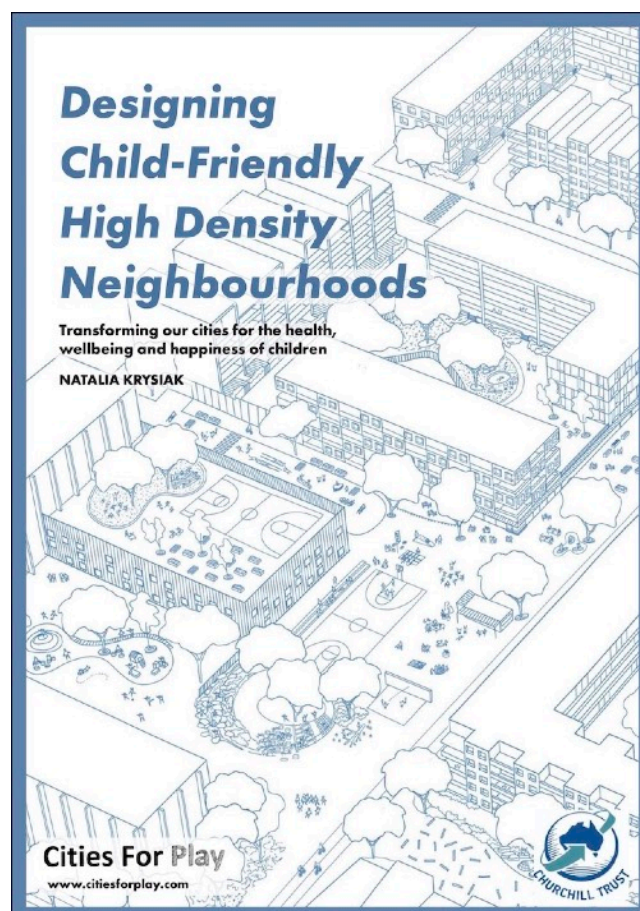


Image credit: Natalia Krysiak

Further information:

- <https://www.citiesforplay.com/>

What Yarra can do

Yarra can build:

- a play space within 200 metres of every home,
- more modal filters, e.g. one per year, to create a bollard-protected safe space on one side of the filter, and
- more parks like the expanded Cambridge Street Reserve, e.g. one per year, that contain a variety of play equipment.

Yarra can make it safer for children to get to play spaces by building:

- wider footpaths and safe crossings,
- protected bicycle lanes that link 30 km/h streets in Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, and
- protected level-access tram stops.

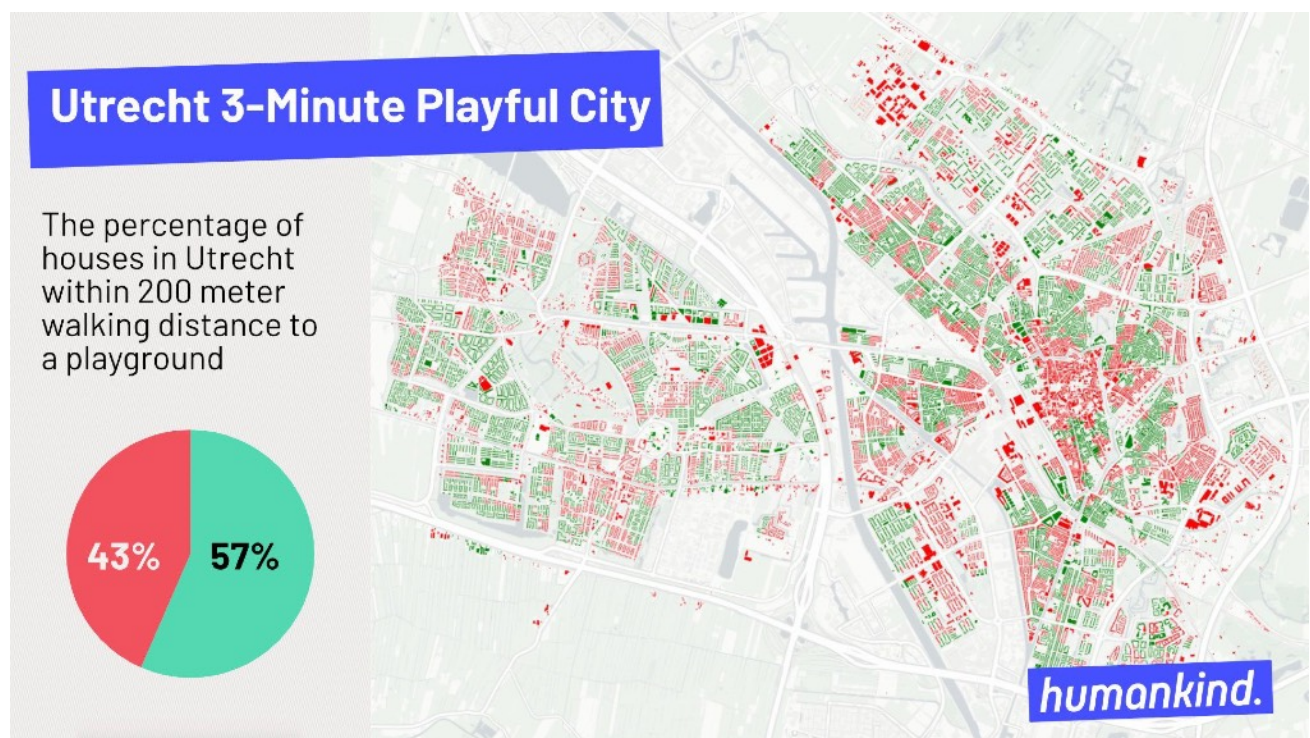


Image credit: Lior Steinberg at Humankind

Further information, including descriptions of smaller non-traditional play spaces:

- <https://streets-alive-yarra.org/better-for-children/>
- https://www.linkedin.com/posts/liorsteinberg_utrecht-accessibility-playground-activity-6819286395878686720-h1sA/
- https://www.linkedin.com/posts/arjanvreugdenhil_amaliapark-participatie-realisatie-activity-6808443161820700673-P3cY/
- https://www.linkedin.com/posts/arjanvreugdenhil_multifunctionele-buitenruimte-ontwerp-activity-6699990277874167808-R7Jn/

Concluding remarks

Streets Alive Yarra supports the development of a Play Strategy, because we believe it would help build a more beautiful, liveable and accessible city. We would be delighted to provide further detail or explanation of the themes raised in this document.

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