

DRIVING SOCIAL INNOVATION IN PLACE AND COMMUNITY

2025 City North Activation Program

INNOVATIVE FRONTIERS: ENHANCING EXPERIENCES VIA TECHNOLOGY

Innovative Frontiers: Enhancing Experiences via Technology

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Project Summary

The *Innovative Frontiers Project* explored how emerging technologies can transform public space and support meaningful community engagement.

RMIT's City North Social Innovation Precinct was chosen as the Project's base due to it being a rapidly evolving area, and embedding innovative technological experiences while the Precinct is undergoing transformation would be beneficial.

The Project explored three interconnected activity streams. The first focused on advanced conversational interactions with a humanoid robot; the second delivered mixed reality experiences showcasing visions for City North's future; and the third introduced interactive technological installations anchored within the Precinct. Together, these activities made cutting-edge technology more accessible and invited the community to actively shape the future of their neighbourhood.

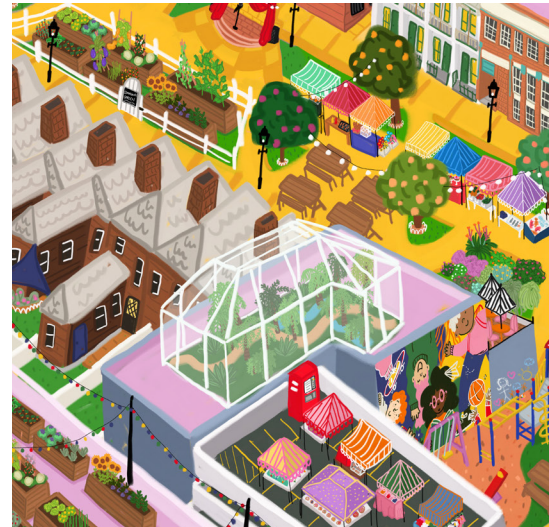
The Project created inclusive, hands-on encounters with technologies that often feel distant or intimidating. By situating these experiences in a public precinct rather than a research lab, it lowered barriers to participation and enabled a diverse range of voices to engage with and reflect on how technology might enhance urban life.

The Project was developed through collaborations with RMIT's STEM College, RMIT's Research and Innovation Portfolio, and a consortium of academics and industry partners committed to developing a longer-term plan for City North's technological future.

Key Project Activities, Milestones & Deliverables

The Project's three main streams of activity each ran over a three-month period from August to November 2025.

The first main activity centred on Humanoid Robot Interactions with advanced conversational capabilities being developed for a humanoid robot known as "Haku Parkinson". Members of the public were able to engage in meaningful, real-time dialogue with the robot within the City North Precinct.





"We chose [to participate in] the City North Activation Challenge because it offered a unique opportunity to demonstrate how emerging technologies can transform public spaces and foster meaningful community engagement."

Project Leads, Innovative Frontiers Project



The second project activity involved a series of mixed reality experiences delivered via Meta Quest 3 headsets. These immersive environments enabled participants to explore and interact with future-oriented ideas for City North, integrating the physical and digital layers of the Precinct.

The last Project activity consisted of Interactive Technological Installations. Through a range of cross-discipline partnered activities, a series of hands-on technological experiences were designed and delivered. These experiences were anchored in the Precinct and invited community members to engage directly with emerging technologies in an accessible, public setting.

All three activities resulted in a consortium of academics and industry partners committing to developing a longer-term technological plan for City North which will be further explored in 2026.

Project Impact

The Project delivered outcomes aligned with the City North Activation Challenge, supporting community-centred innovation within the Precinct.

Interactions with the humanoid robot "Haku Parkinson" generated insights into how people engage with conversational AI in open settings. Mixed reality experiences using Meta Quest 3 headsets provided feedback on how community members understand and imagine the future of City North, contributing to a clearer picture of local priorities.

The Project enabled hands-on engagement with emerging technologies for local residents, while creating opportunities for RMIT students and researchers to test and demonstrate their work in place.

The establishment of a cross-sector consortium supports the continuation of this work, contributing to City North's role as a living lab for technology-enabled urban innovation.

Future Planning

Building on this momentum, the Project is progressing next steps to extend its impact. A cross-sector consortium provides a foundation for ongoing collaboration, alongside partnerships supporting a longer-term technology roadmap for City North.

Plans are underway to expand mixed reality and humanoid robot experiences, incorporating community feedback and extending installations across additional locations in 2026. Further funding, including grants and industry partnerships, is being explored to support this work.

Together, these efforts position City North as a living lab where emerging technologies are developed and tested with the community.

We envision City North becoming a nationally recognised living laboratory where emerging technologies are co-designed with the community to shape urban life.

The *Innovative Frontiers: Enhancing Experiences via Technology* team acknowledge and thank the following contributors:

Innovative Frontiers: Enhancing Experiences via Technology

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For more information on the City North Social Innovation Precinct,
including partnership, collaboration and co-location opportunities, visit:

