

HIGH STREET STUDY Urban Design Framework

March 2005

Towards a Sustainable Spine for Darebin

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[urban strategy planners]



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Executive Summary

HIGH STREET URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK 03

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The High Street Urban Design Framework (UDF) is the result of the High Street Study, initiated to provide a clear vision for the future form and function of the corridor, and strategies to guide the realisation of that vision. The UDF articulates the preferred uses and form of future development abutting the street, and improvements to the public realm - including links to off-street car parks and train stations. It also identifies the most appropriate means to implement the strategies, including planning tools and capital works projects. *[For more detail, refer to page 8]*

Scope

The subject area of the High Street UDF is:

- ▶ High Street and abutting properties, from Merri Creek, Westgarth, to Wild and Mason Streets, Regent
- ▶ the environs of All Nations Park in Northcote
- ▶ that part of the Preston District Centre area extending from High Street to the railway line, between Bruce Street and Murray Road
- ▶ pedestrian links between High Street and train stations

The area between Dundas and Bell Streets is excluded as a land use study has recently been prepared for this area (the Junction Integrated Development Plan).

Consultation

During the course of the study, consultation was undertaken with:

- ▶ a Community Working Group, consisting of representatives of a wide range of organisations including residents, community groups, public transport user groups, traders and developers
- ▶ a Property Development Focus Group, consisting of representatives of the development industry, including property owners, developers and designers
- ▶ Jack Silver, the owner of Northcote Plaza
- ▶ Councillors
- ▶ an Internal Working Group, consisting of Council officers from a wide range of relevant departments

Structure

This report is structured in two volumes:

Volume 1: (Main report) - sets out the background to the study; the recommended strategies; and the proposed implementation tools.

Volume 2: (Precinct guidelines) - applies the strategies to the study area in detail, resulting in a set of guidelines for each precinct within the study area.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The study area falls into the following character areas: [Ref. page 11]

CHARACTER AREA		PREDOMINANT CHARACTERISTICS			
NAME	NORTHERN BOUNDARY	LOT SIZE	LAND USE	BUILDING HT (STOREYS)	BUILDING CHARACTER
1 Westgarth South	Merri Parade / Westgarth St	Medium	Residential	1	Edwardian
2 Westgarth Centre	Union St	Small	Retail	1-2	Victorian & Edwardian
3 Westgarth North	halfway betw'n Charles / Roberts and Clarke Streets	Medium -large	Residential	1	[No street address to High Street]
4 Northcote South	Westbourne Gr / James St	Medium -large	Business	2-3	Victorian - 70s
5 Northcote Central	Elm St / Robbs Pde	Small	Retail	1-2	Victorian & Edwardian
6 Northcote Plaza	-	Very large	Retail	2 equiv	80s
7 Croxton	Woolton Av / Martin St	Mixed	Business	1-2	Victorian - 80s
8 Thornbury Village	Ballantyne St / Raleigh St	Small	Retail	1-2	Victorian & Edwardian
9 Thornbury Central	Hutton / Flinders St	Mixed	Business	1-2	Victorian - 70s
10 Thornbury Junction	Miller / Dundas St	Small	Retail	1-2	Inter-war & Post-war
11 The Junction	Bell St	<i>[Refer to Junction Integrated Development Plan]</i>			
12 Preston South	Bruce St / David St	Medium	Business & Retail	1-2	Inter-war - 80s
13 Preston Central	Clinch Av / Beauchamp St	Small	Retail & Business	1-2	Victorian - 70s
14 Preston North	s. boundary of Holden / Youngman St	Mixed & Retail	Business	1	Victorian - Post-war
15 Preston 'Auto Alley'	Spencer / Wood St	Large	Retail	1	Victorian - Post-war
16 Regent	Wild / Mason St	Mixed	Business & Retail	1	Victorian - Post-war
All Nations Park perimeter	-	Medium	Residential	1-2	Victorian - Post-war

VISION

The strategies set out in the UDF create a vision for the future of High Street. Essentially, this structures the corridor into precincts, each with a distinct role and identity. These include:

- ▶ Core retail centres: retaining their role and built form character but strengthened by the consolidation of primary retail activity from the internodal areas; provision for some intensification in the form of shoptop and mews development, and new low-rise development on larger lots; and business attraction strategies.
- ▶ Rundown internodal areas: developing a new role as areas of higher density housing mixed with commercial and/or showrooms at lower levels, to foster rejuvenation by attracting new investment, provide transit-oriented development and increased housing diversity in low-mid rise forms that protect amenity and views, and create more distinct boundaries to core retail centres.
- ▶ Preston activity centre: reinforcing its role as a community and business centre for the northern region of Melbourne through mid-high rise office and residential development, primarily south of Bruce and David Streets, where it will create a 'gateway' to the centre.
- ▶ Northcote Plaza: enriching its role through the introduction of predominantly low-rise apartment buildings, contributing to urban consolidation and creating a better frontage to All Nations Park and Separation Street while being sensitive to its visual prominence.
- ▶ Northcote South: undergoing incremental change in the form of low-rise office and apartment buildings to create a more coherent 'gateway' to the Northcote activity centre, while retaining views from and towards the top of the hill.
- ▶ Preston Auto Alley: remaining open to change in the future.
- ▶ Character residential areas: maintaining their role and low-rise character, with minimal change.

[For more detail on land use strategies, refer to page 22]

BUILT FORM

The key built form recommendations include:

- ▶ Maximum 5 storeys building height, in general, with the top two storeys set back at least 1.5 metres per floor to separate them

visually from the facade below, thereby maintaining the existing public realm character

- ▶ New development above existing Westgarth and Ruckers Hill shopfronts set back so that it protrudes no more than 15% above the apparent street wall height when viewed from the opposite side of the street, in order to avoid detracting from the predominant character
- ▶ All floors set back from the rear to protect the amenity of adjoining residential properties

[For more detail on built form strategies, refer to page 34]

- ▶ Tree-ed front setbacks when the properties between the Northcote RSL and Baptist Church and the Holden car yard are redeveloped, to define the boundary between Northcote and Thornbury, and Preston and Regent

[For more detail, refer to page 37]

There is no need to overhaul Council's Interim Policy Position on Multi Level and Mixed Use Development, however a few amendments and additions are recommended. *[For more detail, refer to page 34]*

PUBLIC REALM

The High Street Transport Management Plan includes proposals to improve the balance between provision for the different users of the street within each of the main activity centres. These include footpath widenings and central medians to provide an enhanced environment for pedestrians, improved tram and bus stops, and measures to slow traffic.

Improvements are also recommended to improve off-street car parks and pedestrian links to them and nearby train stations, and to create informal meeting spaces.

[For more detail, refer to page 39]

IMPLEMENTATION

A range of planning scheme amendments are required to implement the strategies, including changes to the MSS, a new Local Policy, rezonings, new Design and Development Overlays, a Public Acquisition Overlay, and Incorporated and Reference Documents. *[For more detail, refer to page 46]*

Other implementation mechanisms include capital works projects, business attraction programs and encouragement for owners and operators of businesses abutting off-street car parks to address the car park. *[For more detail, refer to page 48]*

The background features a complex, abstract pattern of white lines on a dark blue field. The lines are thin and vary in orientation, creating a grid-like structure that is slightly skewed and irregular. A prominent, thicker white line runs vertically through the right side of the image, intersecting with several other lines. The overall effect is a modern, architectural aesthetic.

Part I: Background

1 Introduction

PURPOSE

The High Street Urban Design Framework (UDF) is the result of the High Street Study, initiated to provide a clear vision for the future form and function of the corridor, and strategies to guide the realisation of that vision. The UDF articulates the preferred uses and form of future development abutting the street, and improvements to the public realm - including links to off-street car parks and train stations. It also identifies the most appropriate means to implement the strategies, including planning tools and capital works projects.

Melbourne 2030, the Victorian Government's metropolitan planning strategy, nominates Preston as a Principal Activity Centre and Northcote as a Major Activity Centre, while Westgarth and Thornbury meet the definition of Neighbourhood Activity Centres. It states that growth will be encouraged at well-located activity centres such as these, providing for much of the anticipated increase in households, along with ongoing investment and change in retail, office and service markets. Councils are encouraged to revise local planning policies to encourage development in activity centres - particularly higher-density housing.

High Street is predominantly lined by retail, commercial and industrial activities at present, and provides much of the employment, shopping, social, cultural and community services needs of a substantial community. While it has a number of successful retail and business strips, some of the other business areas are under performing, resulting in high vacancies and deteriorating building fabric. At the same time, demand for inner urban apartment living is beginning to reach up the corridor. Accordingly, High Street is increasingly the subject of applications for high-density residential development.

The proximity of High Street to the Epping rail line and two tram routes gives such development the potential to contribute to a more sustainable, public transport-orientated metropolitan form. It may also support local business through increased patronage. However, new development may push out local employment and reduce retail diversity by replacing lower-rent commercial properties. It may also adversely affect the existing character and amenity of High Street and the adjoining precincts.

Therefore, there is a need for a strategic framework to guide planning decisions in relation to properties along High Street. In particular, a clear direction is required in relation to the future role and function of each section of the street - whether it be an activity centre, mixed business strip or residential precinct - and the appropriate built form response. This study seeks to provide that direction.

The High Street Study was triggered by a number of factors, including:

- ▶ a surge of recent applications for multi-level development along High Street, which have attracted community concern
- ▶ community interest in restricting development around the completed All Nations Park
- ▶ the conclusion of Council's Industrial Land Use Strategy that industrial zones are no longer appropriate in parts of High Street

- ▶ the conclusion of Council's Integrated Housing Strategy that a broader range of housing choices is required in Darebin - including shoptop housing - and that the 'intermodal' areas of High Street may prove appropriate for housing
- ▶ the identification of Northcote / Thornbury and Preston as two of Melbourne's seventy-seven key activity centres by the state government's recent Activity Centre Review

This UDF integrates the conclusions of a number of other recent and current Council studies with a direct impact on High Street, including:

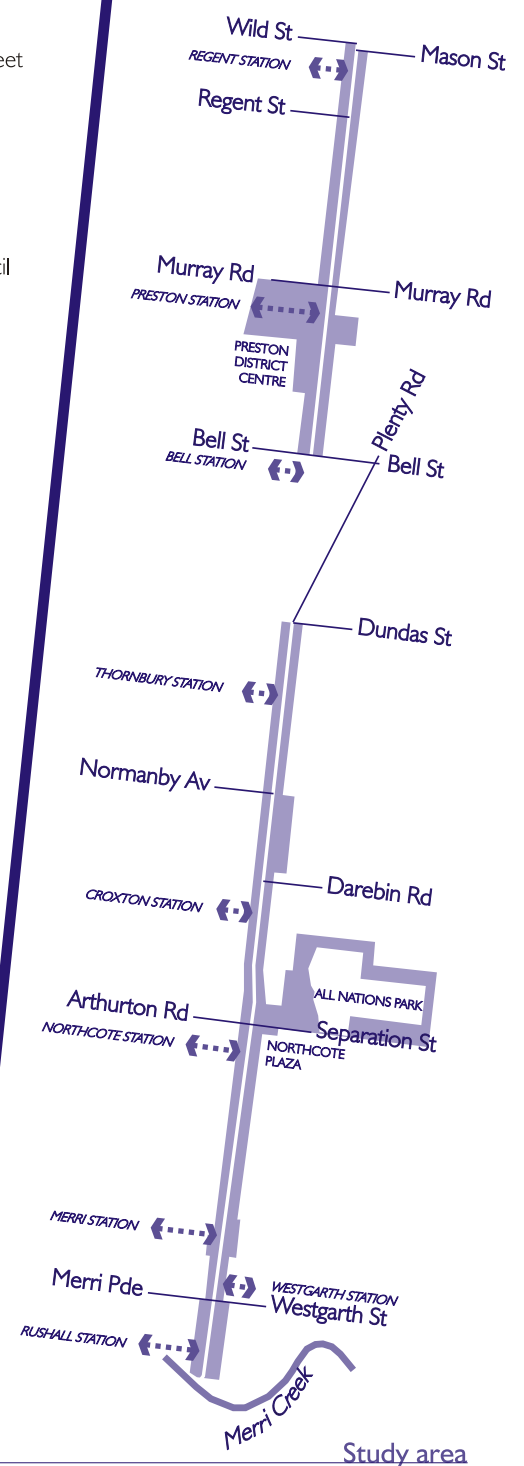
- ▶ the Junction Integrated Development Plan (December 2001; Pinnacle Property Group & KLM Gerner Consulting)
- ▶ High Street Transport Management Plan (ongoing; PBAI Australia, Grogan Richards & David Lock Associates), which follows from the Integrated Travel Plan and North-South Corridor Action Plan (February 2000, PBAI Australia & David Lock Associates)
- ▶ Darebin Retail Activity Centres Strategy (ongoing; Essential Economics, Planning by Design & David Lock Associates)
- ▶ Interim Policy Position on Multi-Level Residential and Mixed use Development (revised 2002; City of Darebin)
- ▶ All Nations Park Built Form Strategy Literature Review (2002; Planisphere)
- ▶ Industrial Land Use Strategy (November 2001; City of Darebin)
- ▶ Integrated Housing Strategy (2002; City of Darebin)

SCOPE

The subject area of the High Street UDF is:

- ▶ High Street and abutting properties, from Merri Creek, Westgarth, to Wild and Mason Streets, Regent
- ▶ the environs of All Nations Park in Northcote
- ▶ that part of the Preston District Centre area extending from High Street to the railway line, between Bruce Street and Murray Road
- ▶ pedestrian links between High Street and train stations

The area between Dundas and Bell Streets is excluded as a land use study has recently been prepared for this area (the Junction Integrated Development Plan).



Study area

CONSULTATION

Work on the High Street Study effectively began in February 2002, when Council undertook consultation to assist in the identification of issues to be addressed by the study. Council has also received a number of submissions on its Interim Policy Position on Multi Level and Mixed Use Development, many of which are relevant to this study.

During the course of the study, consultation was undertaken with:

- ▶ a Community Working Group, consisting of representatives of a wide range of organisations including residents, community groups, public transport user groups, traders and developers
- ▶ a Property Development Focus Group, consisting of representatives of the development industry, including property owners, developers and designers
- ▶ Councillors
- ▶ an Internal Working Group, consisting of Council officers from a wide range of relevant departments

This consultation helped to identify the key issues and aspirations, and review potential development options.

STRUCTURE

This report is structured in two volumes:

Volume 1: (Main report)

Volume 1 sets out the background to the study - including the existing conditions and issues; the recommended strategies, leading to an overall vision; and the proposed implementation tools.

Volume 2: (Precinct guidelines)

Volume 2 applies the strategies to the study area in detail, resulting in a set of guidelines that outline the key objectives, vision, preferred outcomes and specific implementation mechanisms for each precinct within the study area

Existing Conditions

2

HIGH STREET URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK II

The existing conditions in the study area are summarised below. More detailed information is provided in the maps in Appendix A.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The Epping train line runs parallel to High Street, to its west, with seven stations from Merri to Regent. Rushall Station to the south and Westgarth Station on the Hurstbridge train line are also close to the southern end of High Street.

East-west streets provide pedestrian and cycle links to the stations, however most of these are poorly signed and some are blank-walled, creating unattractive and unsafe routes.

The 86 tram route runs up High Street as far as Plenty Road, linking it with central Melbourne in the south and the Bundoora campuses of La Trobe University and RMIT in the north.

There are numerous bus routes that run along or across High Street - particularly Westgarth - linking it with many destinations across northern Melbourne.

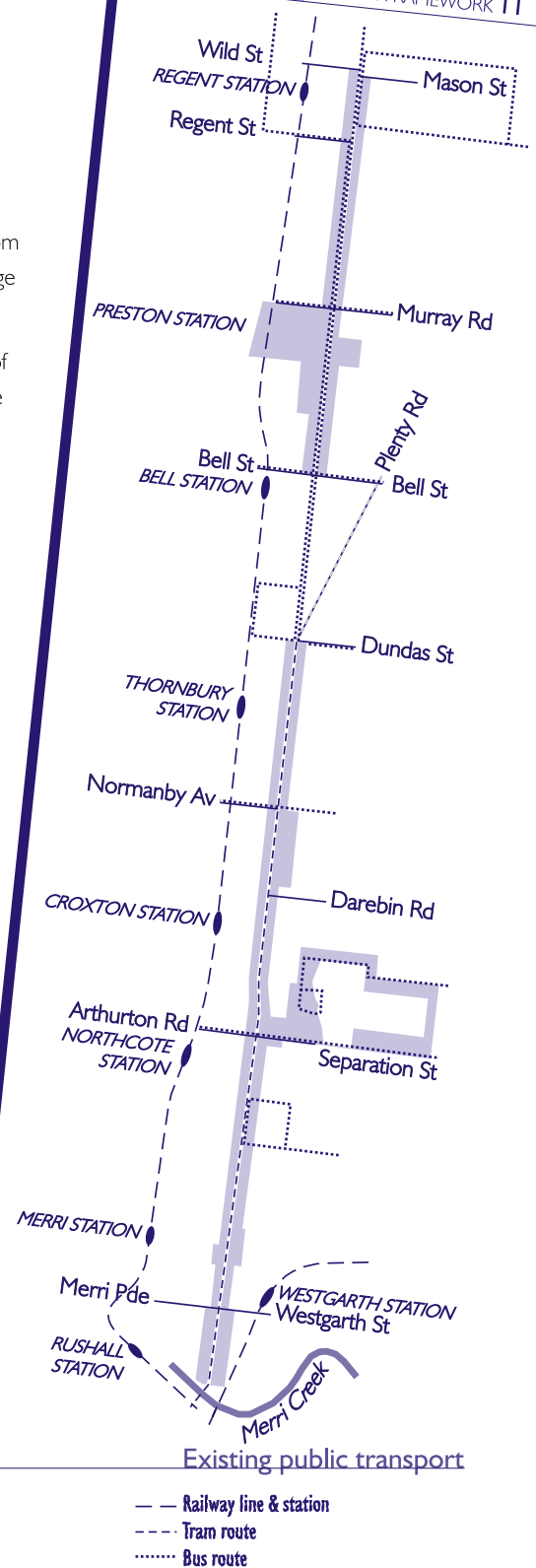
LOT CONFIGURATION

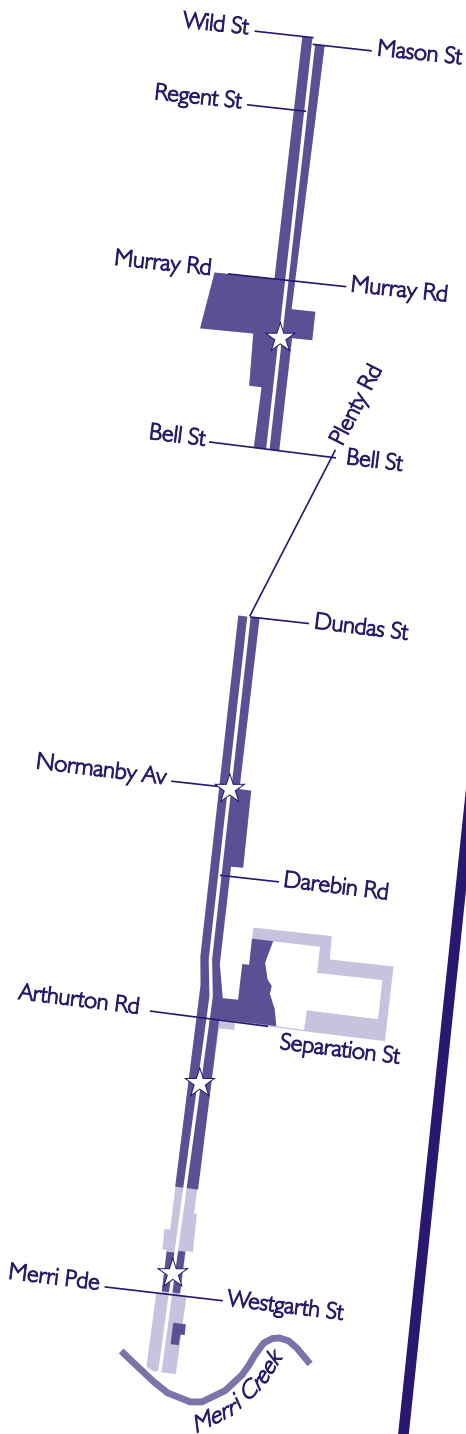
Much of the property alongside High Street is narrow-fronted (4.5-7 metres) and 30-50 metres deep, oriented east-west. The main areas of larger (or consolidated) properties are:

- ▶ in Westgarth, south of Westgarth Street
- ▶ in Northcote, between Union Street and Westbourne Grove / Bastings Street
- ▶ in Northcote, between Separation Street and Gladstone Avenue on the west side and Separation Street and Mansfield Street on the east side
- ▶ in Preston, between Bell Street and Bruce Street / David Street
- ▶ in Preston, north of Roseberry Avenue on the east side
- ▶ in Preston, north of Olver Street on the west side

The only land in public ownership is:

- ▶ Council's offices in Preston
- ▶ The Northcote Town Hall





Existing land uses

- ☆ Retail core
- Retail, business & industrial uses
- Residential uses

LAND USE

Most of High Street is fronted by a mixture of retail and business activities, reflecting the current zoning. The exceptions to this are:

- ▶ South of Merri Parade / Westgarth Street, in Westgarth, which is predominantly residential
- ▶ Between Union Street and Charles and Roberts Streets in Westgarth, which is predominantly residential

The study area is generally surrounded by residential uses. The exceptions to this are:

- ▶ industrial premises on both sides of the intersection with Arthurton Street
- ▶ Northcote Plaza behind the block between Separation Street and Robbs Parade
- ▶ the Thornbury market behind the block between Clarendon and Martin Streets
- ▶ industrial and fast food premises behind the north side of the Bell Street intersection
- ▶ offices, Preston Market and Safeway behind the blocks between Bruce Street and Clinch Avenue (west side only)
- ▶ Holden's outdoor yard behind its showroom immediately south of Olver Street

There are numerous public parks within walking distance of High Street, including All Nations Park, Preston City Oval, Crispe Park and many other smaller parks and reserves.

CAR PARKING

High Street has parallel kerbside car parking along most of its length, although clearways exist in parts, restricting its use.

There are also off-street car parks in Northcote, Thornbury Village and Preston. The pedestrian links between High Street and the Northcote and Preston off-street car parks are generally poorly signed, unattractive and illegible.

BUILT FORM

Most of High Street is abutted by single storey buildings with two-storey buildings scattered along its length. The only areas that are consistently higher than single storey are:

- ▶ a pocket of three storeys and above between Roberts Street and Bastings Street on the east side
- ▶ a pocket of two storey buildings between Westbourne Grove and Hawthorn Road / Lawry Street

Most buildings along High Street have no front setback. The main exceptions to this are:

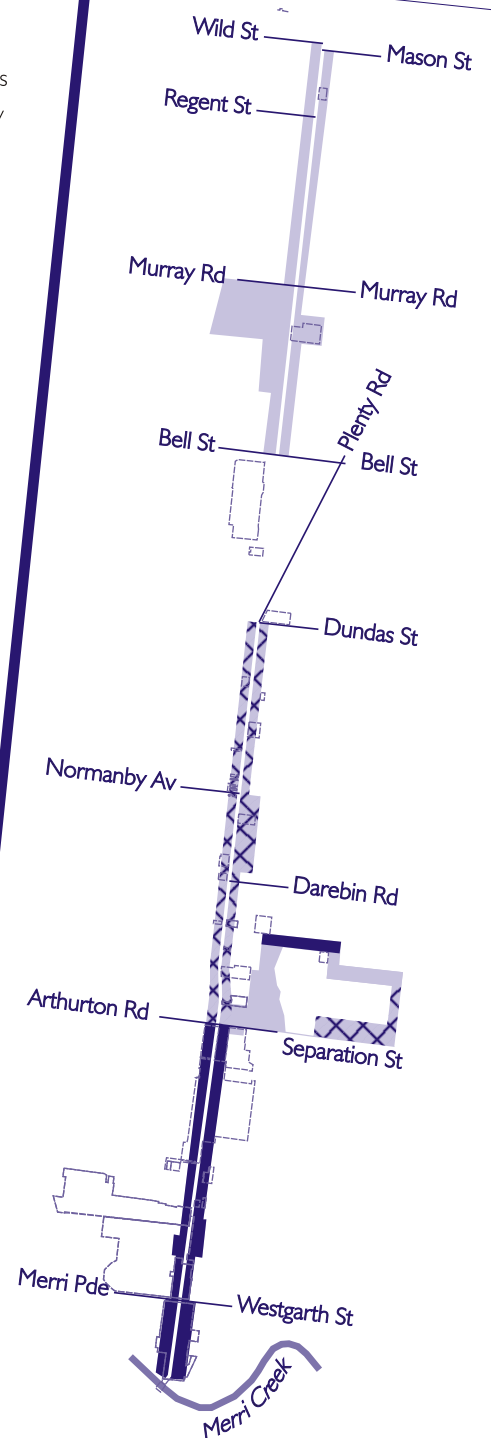
- ▶ south of Westgarth Street
- ▶ between Union Street and Westbourne Grove / James Street
- ▶ between Bell Street and David Street, on the east side only

HERITAGE & BUILDING CHARACTER

There are Heritage Overlays over large parts of High Street and its surrounds south of Arthurton Road / Separation Street, and isolated pockets to the north.

The quality of the building character along High Street can be divided into three areas:

- ▶ predominantly intact Victorian & Edwardian buildings in the south, south of Separation Street,
- ▶ much less consistent character in the middle, between Separation Street and the Junction
- ▶ predominantly inter-war and post-war, poorly valued buildings north of the Junction



Existing built form character

- Predominantly Victorian & Edwardian buildings
- × Inconsistent mix of Victorian - post-war buildings
- ▨ Predominantly inter-war and post-war buildings
- ⋯ Existing Heritage Overlays

TOPOGRAPHY

High Street rises generally from south to north, with an intermediate peak at Ruckers Hill, offering fine views of the Melbourne CBD and creating a landmark for a wide area around.

LEGIBILITY

There are few features to mark the journey along High Street. These include:

- ▶ the broader, tree-lined road reserve south of Merri Parade / Westgarth Street
- ▶ the viaduct north of Union Street
- ▶ Ruckers Hill, including the disused church, the Northcote Town Hall and the view to the Melbourne CBD
- ▶ the bend in the road north of Elm Street / Robbs Parade, including the Elysee building
- ▶ 'the Junction' intersection at Plenty Road and Dundas Street
- ▶ the Bell Street intersection
- ▶ the Preston Town Hall

Extensive views are also available from the top of the new hill in All Nations Park to the northwest and the east, and a view of the Melbourne CBD can be gained from the area around the lake in All Nations Park.

PUBLIC REALM AMENITY

Most of the retail areas in High Street have relatively narrow footpaths (2.5-3m). The main exceptions are:

- ▶ Preston, which has 3-3.5m wide footpaths
- ▶ the west side of the street in Northcote, which has 3.5-4m footpaths

Verandahs in the retail areas provide relatively continuous shelter over the footpaths.

PROPERTY VALUES

The property values in High Street largely reflect the uses, with the highest values in the heart of the Preston activity centre, followed by pockets in the Northcote and Thornbury Village centres and then the remaining business-zoned land, with the lowest values found in the industrial property.

SUMMARY

Analysis of the existing characteristics of the study area indicates that it falls into the following character areas:

CHARACTER AREA		PREDOMINANT CHARACTERISTICS				
NAME	NORTHERN BOUNDARY	LOT SIZE	LAND USE	BUILDING HEIGHT (STOREYS)	BUILDING CHARACTER	
1 Westgarth South	Merri Parade / Westgarth St	Medium	Residential	1	Edwardian	
2 Westgarth Centre	Union St	Small	Retail	1-2	Victorian & Edwardian	
3 Westgarth North	halfway betw'n Charles / Roberts and Clarke Streets	Medium -large	Residential	1	[No street address to High Street]	
4 Northcote South	Westbourne Gr / James St	Medium -large	Business	2-3	Victorian - 70s	
5 Northcote Central (Ruckers Hill)	Elm St / Robbs Pde	Small	Retail	1-2	Victorian & Edwardian	
6 Northcote Plaza	-	Very large	Retail	2 equiv	80s	
7 Croxton	Woolton Av / Martin St	Mixed	Business	1-2	Victorian - 80s	
8 Thornbury Village	Ballantyne St / Raleigh St	Small	Retail	1-2	Victorian & Edwardian	
9 Thornbury Central	Hutton / Flinders St	Mixed	Business	1-2	Victorian - 70s	
10 Thornbury Junction	Miller / Dundas St	Small	Retail	1-2	Inter-war & Post-war	
11 The Junction	Bell St	<i>[Refer to Junction Integrated Development Plan]</i>				
12 Preston South	Bruce St / David St	Medium	Business & Retail	1-2	Inter-war - 80s	
13 Preston Central	Clinch Av / Beauchamp St	Small	Retail & Business	1-2	Victorian - 70s	
14 Preston North	s. boundary of Holden / Youngman St	Mixed & Retail	Business	1	Victorian - Post-war	
15 Preston 'Auto Alley'	Spencer / Wood St	Large	Retail	1	Victorian - Post-war	
16 Regent	Wild / Mason St	Mixed	Business & Retail	1	Victorian - Post-war	
All Nations Park perimeter	-	Medium	Residential	1-2	Victorian - Post-war	

While most of the boundaries between precincts are clear, those between precincts 7 and 8, 9 and 10, and 15 and 16 are not distinct.



Existing character precincts

3 Issues

CONCERNS

Discussion with a wide range of stakeholders has identified the following concerns in relation to High Street:

Land use

- ▶ Lack of definition of activity centre boundaries
- ▶ Lack of distinctive characteristics to distinguish each activity centre - eg. a unique market niche
- ▶ Need to maintain and enhance the diversity of uses within each activity centre - with particular reference to office uses, which are generally lacking
- ▶ Potential loss of services (banks, post offices, libraries, etc)
- ▶ Adverse impact of enclosed shopping centres on street life
- ▶ Inappropriateness of existing zoning in redundant and industrial areas, and potential for inappropriate transition

Building form & design

- ▶ Lack of definition of activity centre boundaries
- ▶ Lack of distinguishing characteristics in each activity centre
- ▶ Potential impact of new development on public amenity - including solar access and sky views
- ▶ Potential for new development to exceed infrastructure capacity
- ▶ Potential loss of views and vistas
- ▶ Impact of new development on heritage and urban character - including fine grain
- ▶ Impacts of future development on amenity of adjoining private properties - waste disposal, overshadowing, noise, etc
- ▶ Potential for lack of support for safe, comfortable and vibrant public realm - including avoidance of vandalism
- ▶ Potential unattractive appearance of new development
- ▶ Potential impact of development and controls on property values

Public realm

- ▶ Lack of definition of activity centre boundaries
- ▶ Lack of distinguishing characteristics in each activity centre
- ▶ Current and potential worsening of accessible, amenable and friendly public realm for pedestrians - including footpath width
- ▶ Lack of informal community meeting spaces and other public open spaces in the vicinity of High Street

Transport

- ▶ Potential insufficient car parking provision - particularly in Thornbury Village
- ▶ Poor pedestrian links to off-street car parks
- ▶ Increase in traffic from future development
- ▶ Insufficient and poor quality links to train stations
- ▶ Lack of disabled access - including kerbs, footpaths and shop entries
- ▶ Lack of good pedestrian links between High Street, Northcote Plaza and All Nations Park

A number of other issues were raised that are outside the scope of the study including, in particular, numerous transport problems. These were referred to the consultants undertaking the High Street Transport Management Plan.

ASPIRATIONS

Discussion with a wide range of stakeholders has identified the following aspirations relating to High Street. Many of these match the performance criteria for activity centres set out in *Melbourne 2030*.

Environmental Sustainability

- ▶ To minimise the number and length of motorised trips
- ▶ To promote the use of transport modes other than private vehicles
- ▶ To capitalise on existing infrastructure
- ▶ To facilitate energy efficient and low-emission building servicing
- ▶ To minimise the embodied energy in buildings
- ▶ To minimise the quantity and retard the flow of stormwater runoff
- ▶ To conserve potable water
- ▶ To maximise the potential for building reuse
- ▶ To provide for greenhouse and ozone-depleting gas absorption
- ▶ To minimise waste
- ▶ To promote indigenous flora and fauna

Social Sustainability

- ▶ To maximise the choice and affordability of housing
- ▶ To contribute to community development

Economic Sustainability

- ▶ To facilitate permanent job growth
- ▶ To facilitate reinvestment in the city
- ▶ To facilitate local enterprise
- ▶ To maintain and increase retail competitiveness and viability
- ▶ To avoid adverse impact on the viability of adjoining commercial uses
- ▶ To promote the corridor as a prosperous and innovative place

Heritage, Character & Legibility

- ▶ To conserve and respect built heritage
- ▶ To maintain continuity of local identity
- ▶ To enhance 'village' identity
- ▶ To maintain and develop a positive built form character
- ▶ To maintain and enhance legibility
- ▶ To discourage 'facadism'

Public Realm Amenity

- ▶ To create attractive and pleasant public spaces - incorporating public art
- ▶ To create interesting and safe public spaces
- ▶ To provide for public needs

Private Amenity

- ▶ To minimise impact on neighbouring properties

Accessibility

- ▶ To minimise traffic impact on adjoining areas
- ▶ To minimise car parking impact on adjoining areas
- ▶ To minimise the land required for car parking
- ▶ To promote pedestrian permeability
- ▶ To promote equal opportunity for mobility impaired people
- ▶ To promote safe pedestrian access to railway stations
- ▶ To promote use of off-street car parking
- ▶ To facilitate servicing

Development Types 4

The types of development considered most likely to be feasible within the study area were identified through a survey of similar streets within Melbourne, and refined through discussion with the Property Development Focus Group. Their characteristics are summarised below.

Shoptop apartments (dwellings above traditional narrow shops)

MINIMUM LOT WIDTH	Single traditional narrow lot, though sometimes in consolidated row
TYPICAL HEIGHT	2-3 storeys (including ground floor retail)
PARKING	At rear
OTHER CHARACTERISTICS	Deliveries potentially at rear

Mews (dwellings at the back of the lot, facing a rear lane)

MINIMUM LOT WIDTH	Single traditional narrow lot, though sometimes in consolidated row
TYPICAL HEIGHT	2-3 storeys
PARKING	Integral garage accessed from lane

Low-rise apartments

MINIMUM LOT WIDTH	15m (3 traditional narrow lots)
TYPICAL HEIGHT	3-4 storeys
PARKING	Basement parking (in business area) or undercroft parking (in residential area)
OTHER CHARACTERISTICS	Zero front setback in business strip, or small front setback in residential area

Mid-rise apartments

MINIMUM LOT WIDTH	18m (though 22m better, to allow for ramp in basement car park alongside efficient parking layout)
TYPICAL HEIGHT	5-6 storeys
PARKING	Basement parking
OTHER CHARACTERISTICS	Requires elevator(s) (the key factor with respect to financial viability) May contain shops at ground floor and/or offices at any level

High-rise apartments

MINIMUM LOT WIDTH	22m (to allow for ramp in basement car park alongside efficient parking layout)
TYPICAL HEIGHT	7-8 storeys (but less than 25m between ground floor and top floor levels, to avoid more onerous building regulations, such as multiple lifts and stair wells, which fundamentally affect financial viability)
PARKING	Basement parking
OTHER CHARACTERISTICS	Requires elevator(s) May sit on podium with shops or offices



The background features a complex, abstract geometric pattern of white lines on a dark blue field. The lines are thin and vary in orientation, creating a grid-like structure that is slightly skewed and irregular. A prominent, thicker white line runs vertically through the right side of the image, intersecting with other lines to form various polygonal shapes. The overall effect is that of a technical drawing or a stylized architectural plan.

Part II: Strategies

5 Land Use

RUNDOWN INTERNODAL AREAS

The precincts along High Street can be divided into those with a well-defined role and well-utilised buildings (residential areas and activity centres), and those lacking a clear purpose and consequently exhibiting an incoherent mix of uses and a relatively high proportion of vacant buildings, often resulting in rundown built fabric and low land values. The latter category includes:

- ▶ Precinct 4: Northcote South
- ▶ Precinct 7: Croxton (the emerging niche music market notwithstanding)
- ▶ Precinct 9: Thornbury Central
- ▶ Precinct 14: Preston North
- ▶ Precinct 16: Regent

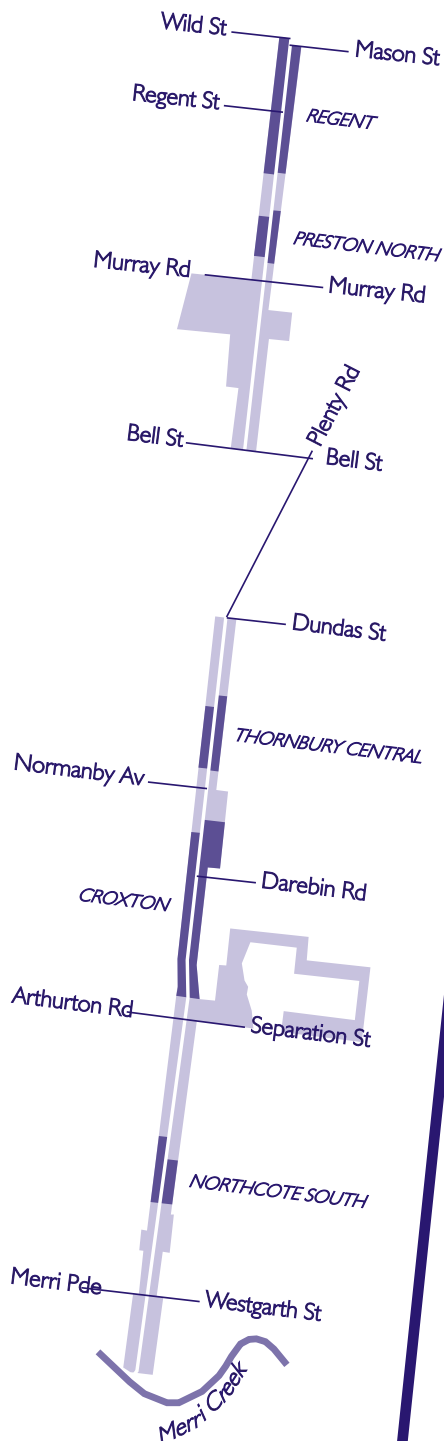
(Although Thornbury Junction is rundown and contains a high proportion of vacancies, the potential exists for its role as a local and specialty activity centre to be strengthened over time).

A clearer role is required for each of these rundown 'internodal' precincts to foster their rejuvenation through private reinvestment. The key land use issue confronting the study area is to determine what that role should be.

There is strong demand for higher density residential development opportunities and little demand for more retail or other business space. Council also has an objective to promote more diverse and affordable housing. However, the activity centres and character residential areas offer little opportunity for redevelopment due to either their heritage significance and character value or their predominance of small and separately owned lots, which are typically difficult to consolidate. There is also concern that substantial additional residential development in the activity centres may lead to pressure to curtail noisy, smelly or untidy commercial activity, which currently contributes to their diversity. Therefore, the rundown internodal areas are, in general, considered key opportunities for new, higher density residential development. Such development has more potential for affordability than low density development where the land value per dwelling is relatively high.

It is considered that the activity centres can be strengthened by consolidating primary retail activity within them, rather than allowing it to maintain a dispersed form. It is also considered that local identity can be strengthened by a clearer definition of the activity centre boundaries. Precluding new primary retail development from the internodal areas and differentiating the form of development between them and the activity centres would assist in meeting both these aims.

However, a direct interface between the building frontages and footpath is still needed, in general, to maintain the interest and amenity of the public realm between existing commercial premises. This cannot be provided by residential development. Instead, a commercial use is required at ground floor level, such as showrooms or office space. The take-up of such space must be monitored to ensure that this strategy does not result in more vacancies. If this does



■ Rundown internodal areas

occur, the scope of allowed uses at ground floor should be widened. However, it is hoped that it will foster the provision of office space for small businesses at a standard that is currently unavailable in the area, enabling more of Darebin's residents to work locally.

In general, new office development should be welcomed along High Street, both to increase the opportunity for Darebin residents to work locally, shortening travel distances and costs, and to increase the patronage of the activity centres. Offices are particularly desirable at the edges of the major activity centres - Northcote and Preston - precincts 4, 7, 12 and 14.

As noted in chapter 2, some of the boundaries between the activity centres and internodal areas are not well defined. In particular, the southern boundary of Thornbury Village is unclear and changing. Therefore, the land use policy may need to be a bit flexible in these situations, to allow the boundary to move over time should an existing activity centre need to expand or shrink to maintain a compact form containing its viable businesses.

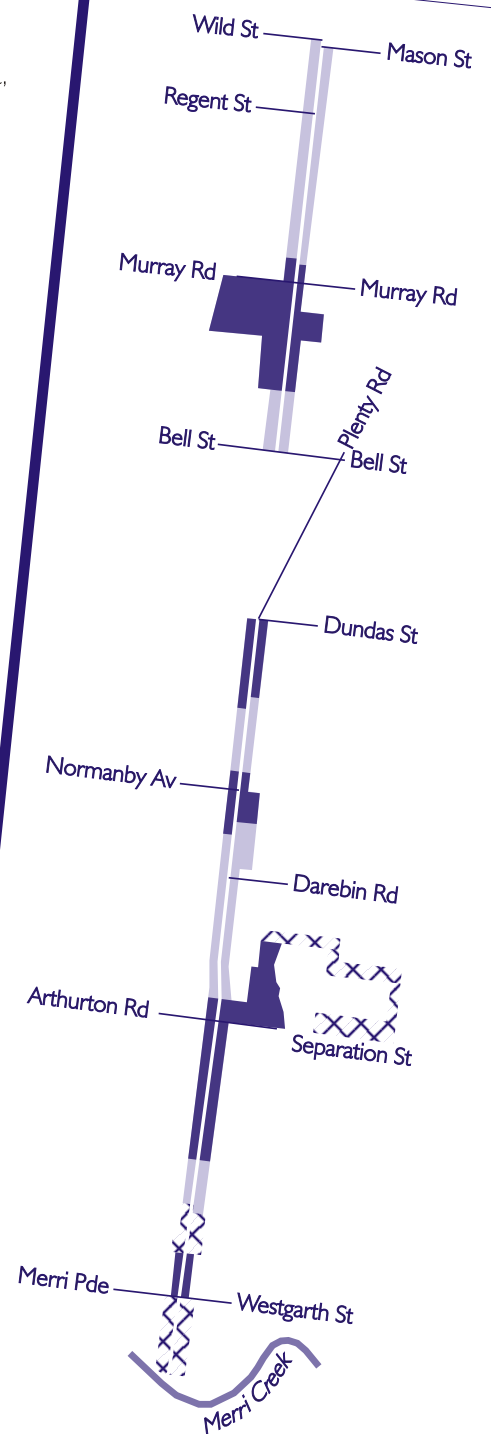
In summary, the land use strategy for rundown internodal areas is for them to take on a new role as higher density residential strips, with commercial and/or showroom uses at ground floor level and, potentially, offices at any level - particularly in precincts 4, 7 and 16. It is hoped that this role will foster the rejuvenation of these precincts by attracting new property investment.

OTHER AREAS

The purely residential areas have a successful role, which there is no reason to tamper with and every reason to leave alone.

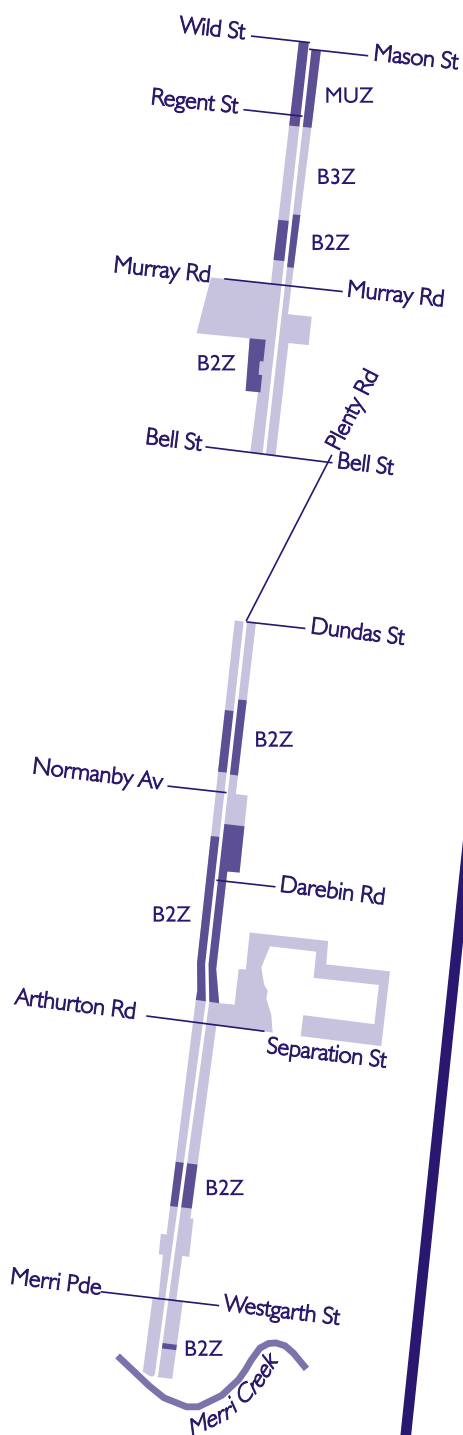
The activity centres also have a generally successful role, although they would benefit from a greater range of uses and the strengthening of unique market niches. In particular, the introduction of more residential accommodation above and behind the shops would be beneficial to enhance the safety of the public realm at night through casual surveillance and thereby support a stronger 'evening economy'. This is unlikely to occur in the numbers that could lead to pressure to curtail noisy, smelly or untidy commercial activity.

Council has little influence over the specific uses that occur in an activity centre. However, policies to protect heritage places and built form character (see chapter 6) have an indirect effect by discouraging redevelopment, and thereby tending to result in the retention of older buildings. Older buildings are generally cheaper to rent, which - in combination with smaller shop units - increases the range of businesses that can afford to occupy them. Council can foster the development of unique niche markets through business attraction programs.



Residential areas & retail centres

- Retail centres
- ⌄ Residential areas
- Other



Thornbury Junction is struggling as a retail centre, owing mainly to the lack of an anchor attraction (such as a supermarket or department store). However, its predominantly small lot sizes do not offer much opportunity for substantial redevelopment. Therefore, strategies need to be set in place to identify a viable role for the centre and attract appropriate new businesses to the area, along with the support of those already there.

Preston has the potential to act as a community and business centre for a significant part of northern Melbourne. However, to fulfil this potential it requires substantially more office space. The predominance of small lots in Preston Central (precinct 13) means that major office development is unlikely to occur there. However, Preston South (precinct 12) and the properties on the east side of Mary Street between Bruce and Cramer Streets are characterised by medium to large lots, and could accommodate a number of major new office developments. This should, therefore, be encouraged, and the take-up of all the potential office development space by apartments should be discouraged.

IMPLEMENTATION

Planning scheme

The strategy outlined above can be most effectively implemented through the planning scheme. In general, the rundown internodal areas need to be rezoned to Business 2, to reflect their role as commercial areas in contrast with the core retail, entertainment and community functions of the activity centres. Preston Auto Alley and the area to its north as far as Regent Street and the southern boundary of 626 High Street should be rezoned Business 3, to retain the employment and attraction of a business cluster, in accordance with the Industrial Land Use Strategy. Further north, Regent (precinct 16) should be rezoned to Mixed Use, to reflect the lack of a clear indication from the market of its potential and consequent need for flexibility.

The strategic basis for the rezonings needs to be stated in the MSS, including the vision and overall strategic directions for High Street set out here. The statement must consider the impact of the strategic directions on other objectives and policies and be framed as a development of the MSS's broad strategic themes.

More specific land use direction should be provided in a new Local Policy for the whole of High Street. For instance, the local policy should set out the type of shops considered appropriate in the internodal areas and the inappropriateness of the spread of comparison shops into Northcote South and Mary Street, the desire for a minimum proportion of offices in Northcote South and Preston South, the acceptability of residential uses at ground floor level in Northcote South and Mary Street, and the need for flexibility at ill-defined precinct boundaries. It should have an introductory section outlining the overall objectives and policies, followed by separate sections setting out the key objectives and policy for each precinct.

Programs

Business attraction programs should be established to develop unique niche markets in each core retail centre.

BUILDING HEIGHT

Issues

The key built form issue confronting the study area is whether higher buildings are appropriate, and if so, where and how high. This is closely related to the issue of setbacks, considered separately below.

Chapter 3 identifies a number of reasons to consider denser development. These can be summarised as follows:

- ▶ To comply with state planning policy (*Melbourne 2030*)
- ▶ To minimise private car use and urban sprawl
- ▶ To capitalise on existing infrastructure
- ▶ To increase housing diversity and affordability
- ▶ To increase the viability of local services and business
- ▶ To increase local jobs
- ▶ To promote reinvestment
- ▶ To enhance perceived safety
- ▶ To increase building energy efficiency

All of Darebin's residential areas are covered by the Urban Character Study and associated Local Policy. Although this allows for some infill development, it discourages larger, multi-level development. The heritage overlays over parts of Darebin also restrict more substantial development. Therefore, those parts of High Street not affected by a heritage overlay offer an important opportunity to provide for denser development, reinforced by the presence of activity centres along the corridor and train stations nearby.

The existing development along High Street generally fills a large proportion of the lot. Therefore, with the exception of isolated opportunities to reuse space more efficiently, denser development can only be achieved by taller buildings. Multi-level buildings also allow residential uses to be vertically separated from ground floor retail and commercial uses.

However, there are a number of reasons to be careful about where taller buildings are allowed and how high they are allowed to be built. These include their potential impact on:

- ▶ existing heritage and local character (including the sense of openness to the sky)
- ▶ important views
- ▶ public and private amenity



Proposed form of general new development to minimise public realm impact



Proposed form of new development in characterful retail centres to minimise public realm impact

- ▶ local traffic and parking
- ▶ services capacity
- ▶ the viability of adjoining commercial uses (this is only affected by residential development)
- ▶ overall built form appearance

Public realm character & amenity

Irrespective of the building style and how much it is valued, the overall scale of the built form contributes significantly to the character and amenity of the public realm - including such factors as openness to the sky and the amount of sun that reaches the footpath in High St. Substantially taller development could therefore adversely affect the current character and amenity.

Most of High Street is edged with single and double-storey buildings, built to the front boundary, with a parapet. As many of these are older buildings, which tend to have greater floor-to-floor heights, this results in a typical 'street wall' height (the height of the façade on the front boundary) of around 5-8 metres.

New development is likely to have floor-to-floor heights of approximately 3.5-4 metres at ground floor - assuming retail or commercial uses - and 3 metres on upper levels - assuming they contain dwellings or small offices. Therefore, in order to maintain a similar level of amenity to that which currently exists, new development should be no higher than three storeys on the front boundary. A three-storey street wall would rise to approximately 9.5-10 metres, which is not significantly higher than that of the existing two-storey buildings.

While front setbacks and contrasting façade materials may be used to minimise the impact of additional storeys above this level, the street wall must appear as the main façade if there is to be some continuity with the existing character. Therefore, any floors that are visible above it must appear as a 'top', and not generally exceed the height of the 'middle' element of the façade - that between the verandah and top of the street wall, a maximum of two storeys. Consequently, if new buildings along High Street are to maintain the existing public realm character, that part of them which is visible from any adjoining street may not generally exceed five storeys. In order to create an interesting skyline, this may be exceeded by one storey within 12m of a street corner and interesting roof features are encouraged. The setback required to floors above the street wall is discussed separately below.

Where upper floors are being developed on top of an existing building with a highly valued character - such as most of the buildings south of Separation Street - they must be visually subservient to the existing facade when viewed from the street if they are to avoid detracting from its predominant character. In practice, this restricts them to a single additional storey. Requirements for setbacks are discussed separately below.

Traffic & parking

Council's traffic engineers consider that there is no need for concern regarding the additional traffic generation of taller buildings alongside High Street, because the impact will be principally felt on High Street itself and barely noticeable on local residential streets. In peak times, key

elements of the main road network have already reached saturation, encouraging commuters to use the highly accessible local public transport services or cycle instead. Additional development will only reinforce this trend.

In general, new development should be expected to provide resident or staff parking on site. In the case of comprehensive redevelopment for low, medium or high-rise buildings, this is envisaged to be at basement level. Resident or staff parking associated with shoptop development can be provided behind the building and mews developments should have integral garages, accessed from the rear lane in both cases. Visitor parking can be provided by the existing on-street and/or off-street public parking.

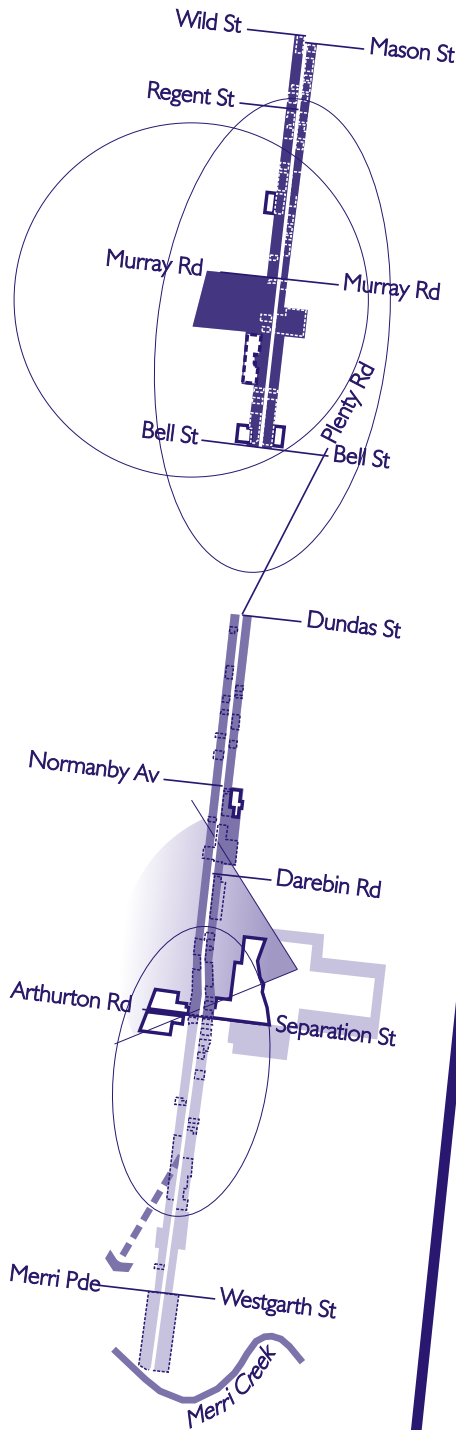
However, given the relatively high public transport use of existing residents in the area as a result of excellent public transport provision, consideration should be given to reducing car parking requirements in new development - particularly near train stations - which will also create an incentive for reinvestment. Instead, developers should be encouraged to prepare 'green travel plans' to justify lower parking standards by showing how alternative travel modes will be encouraged. This policy may need to be implemented in conjunction with local resident permit zones for on-street parking.

Parking provision for existing development in the activity centres is discussed in chapter 9, below.

Precinct-specific factors

In order to determine where taller buildings might be appropriate, the various precincts in the study area were examined in terms of the characteristics that enable more substantial development and those that constrain it. These included the identification of:

1. Areas within a comfortable walking distance of key activity centres, where urban consolidation to minimise travel distances is most justified. A 10 minute walk was used for the Preston centre, given its significance and sub-regional aspirations, and 5 minutes for Northcote as a district centre.
2. Areas with better strategic accessibility by public transport - where urban consolidation to foster public transport use is most justified - or road - where consolidation of commercial activities is most justified. Although all of High Street is relatively close to a train station, this indicated that the Preston District Centre is marginally more accessible than the rest, due to its 'premium' station and the proximity of Bell Street, the only major east-west arterial crossing High Street. This strengthens its case as an aspiring sub-regional centre.



Characteristics that support tall buildings

- Short walk from activity centre or station
- Non-residential adjoining uses
- Medium-large lots
- Poorly-valued character
- Inconsistent character
- Important views

3. Areas without adjoining housing, where the concern about the impact of taller buildings on adjoining residential amenity is removed. (These included both sides of the intersection with Arthurthur Street, the block between Separation Street and Robbs Parade, the block between Clarendon and Martin Streets, the north side of the Bell Street intersection, the block between Bruce Street and Clinch Avenue (west side only), and the area immediately south of Olver Street.)
4. Relative built form character value, to determine those areas where taller buildings might have a more adverse impact on local character. This divided the study area into three bands: predominantly intact Victorian & Edwardian in the south, up to Separation Street; much less consistent character in the middle, from Separation Street to the Junction; and predominantly inter-war and post-war, poorly valued development north of the Junction.
5. Relative lot size, to indicate where larger-scale redevelopment is more feasible, and therefore most likely to take place. This identified a number of strips (mainly the activity centres) with predominantly traditional narrow lots (approximately 5 metres wide) in separate ownership, in which the development of buildings taller than shoptop apartments or mews dwellings is unlikely, and conversely, areas in between (internodal areas) with wider lots offering more feasible development opportunities. This conclusion also supports the aim to achieve greater expression of the boundaries of the village centres.
6. Key views to be protected. This identified broad vistas northwest and east from All Nations Park, and more specific views towards the Melbourne CBD from both All Nations Park and Ruckers Hill.

The end result of this analysis was the division of the study area into a series of precincts with varying levels of suitability for taller development. In particular, they can be grouped into areas where substantial, incremental or only minimal change is appropriate, as follows:

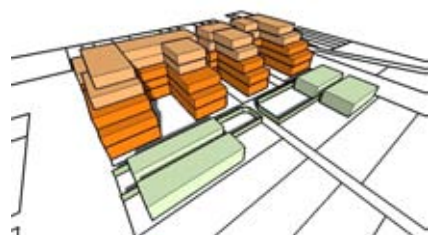
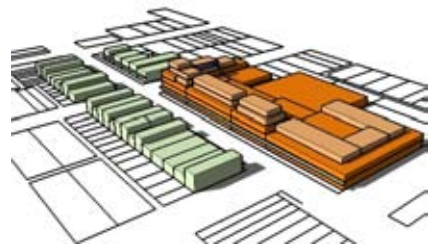
Substantial Change

- ▶ **Preston South** (including Mary St) (precinct 12) was identified as most suitable for mid-high rise development, particularly the southwest corner, which has no interface with existing residential properties - while acknowledging the need to protect adjoining public and private amenity - due to the desire to position Preston District Centre as a sub-regional centre, its proximity to Bell Street and Bell Station, its predominance of wider lots, its lack of a valued built form character and the fact that it is not within a key view
- ▶ **Croxton** (precinct 7) was identified as being suitable for low-mid rise development, depending on the impact of protected views - while acknowledging the constraints presented by its location within a key vista from All Nations Park and the need to protect adjoining public and private amenity - due to its proximity to a train station and Northcote District Centre, its predominance of wider lots and its lack of a consistent, valued built form character.

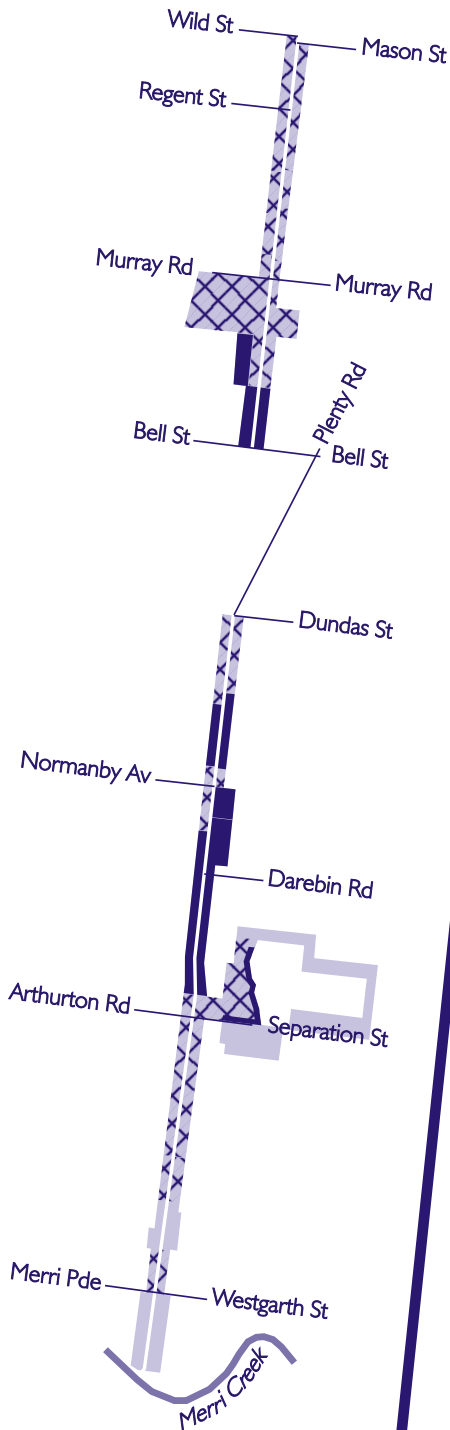
- ▶ **Thornbury Central** (precinct 9) was identified as being suitable for mid-rise development - while acknowledging the constraints presented by the need to protect adjoining public and private amenity - due to its proximity to a train station, its predominance of wider lots and its lack of a consistent, valued character
- ▶ The part of **Thornbury Village** (precinct 8) on the east side between Clarendon and Martin Streets and extending north of Clarendon Street alongside the at-grade car park was identified as being suitable for mid-rise development - while acknowledging the constraints presented by the need to protect adjoining public and private amenity - due to its location within an activity centre, the relative distance from the High Street frontage to residential properties behind, the predominance of wider lots and its lack of a consistent, valued built form character
- ▶ The eastern edge and the eastern end of the southern edge of the **Northcote Plaza** site (precinct 6) were identified as being suitable for low-mid rise development - while acknowledging the constraint presented by their visual prominence from and the eastern edge's location within a key vista from All Nations Park - due to their location within the Northcote District Centre and on a large lot with no residential interface to those orientations

Incremental Change

- ▶ **Preston North** (precinct 14) was identified as suitable for low-rise development due to the desire to position Preston District Centre as a sub-regional centre, its proximity to Murray Road and Preston Station, its lack of a valued built form character and the fact that it is not within a key view, while acknowledging its limited number of wider lots available for substantial development and the need to protect adjoining public and private amenity
- ▶ **Northcote South** (precinct 4) was identified as being suitable for low-rise development due to its proximity to Northcote District Centre, its predominance of wider lots and its lack of a consistent, valued built form character, while acknowledging the constraints presented by its location within a key viewline from Ruckers Hill, its visual prominence and the need to protect adjoining residential amenity
- ▶ **Preston 'Auto Alley'** (precinct 15) was identified as being suitable for low-rise development due to its predominance of wider and deeper lots, its lack of a valued built form character and the fact that it is not within a key view, while acknowledging its distance from a train station or district centre, its visual prominence and the need to protect adjoining residential amenity



Substantial change in Preston South, Thornbury Village & Croxton



Proposed levels of change

- Substantial change
- × Incremental change
- Minimal change

- ▶ **Regent** (precinct 16) was identified as being suitable for low-rise development due to its proximity to a train station, the presence of wider lots, its lack of a valued built form character and the fact that it is not within a key view, while acknowledging its distance from a district centre, its visual prominence and the need to protect adjoining residential amenity
- ▶ **Westgarth Centre, Northcote Central** (Ruckers Hill), the remainder of **Thornbury Village, Thornbury Junction** and **Preston Central** (precincts 2, 5, 8, 10 and 13) were identified as suitable for shoptop apartments and mews dwellings, along with low-rise development on existing wider lots. This is due to the ability for shoptop and mews development to be accommodated by the existing built form without any significant visible impact on its character (except in Preston, where the character is not highly valued), the ability for low-rise development on wider sites to continue the local identity established by existing larger buildings on those lots and contribute to an interesting skyline, the desire to introduce residential accommodation within activity centres and the precincts' proximity to train stations (except Thornbury Village), while acknowledging the predominance of narrow lots and the need to protect adjoining residential amenity.
 - ▶ The block in **Westgarth South** (precinct 1) between Cunningham and Walker Streets, on the east side, was identified as suitable for low-rise development due to the ability for this to be accommodated without detracting from the visual primacy of the existing built form and its proximity to a train station, while acknowledging the valued built form character surrounding it and the need to protect adjoining residential amenity

Minimal Change

- ▶ **Westgarth North** (precinct 3) and the remainder of **Westgarth South** (precinct 1) were considered to be heavily constrained by their heritage significance and built form character, leaving no scope for buildings over three storeys, except for 2 High Street and the public housing estates.
- ▶ The properties around **All Nations Park** were considered to have no justification for taller buildings, due to their relative distance from a train station and district centre and their valued built form character or, in the case of the northeast area, its position within a key vista from the park

BUILDING WIDTH

In areas with a highly-valued building character, the typical building width often contributes significantly to this character. In particular, the Westgarth and Northcote activity centres have predominantly narrow lots, which create the diverse built form that is central to their character. The replacement of more than two of these traditional narrow buildings with a single, more substantial building would therefore be detrimental to their character.

It is therefore proposed that the replacement of more than two traditional narrow buildings with a single wider building be strongly discouraged in the Westgarth and Northcote activity centres.

SETBACKS

As noted above, the impact of a taller building on its surroundings can be reduced by setbacks at upper levels. Setbacks to the front, side and rear elevations are considered separately below.

Front setbacks

The existing buildings along High Street are almost all built to the front boundary. New buildings that are setback from the front boundary could adversely affect the existing character and amenity created by this built form. Therefore, it is proposed that new development be built to the front boundary, except in non-retail areas - where a front setback may be a functional necessity - and where deeper front setbacks are desired to achieve a widening of the street corridor - see chapter 8.

Above the street wall, it is considered that further visible floors need to be set back at least 1.5 metres per floor to separate them visually from the façade below. This may be in one step or two, or a combination along the length of the façade.

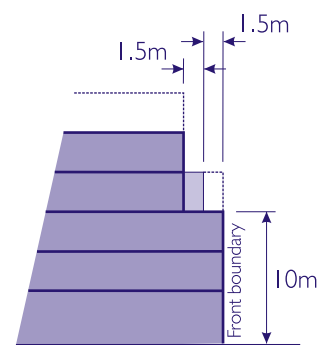
As noted above, the street wall may rise to four storeys - or 13 metres - within 12 metres of street corners, to create an interesting skyline.

Where the building character is highly valued - such as south of Separation Street - it is considered that new development above existing shopfronts should be set back so that it protrudes no more than 15% above the apparent street wall height when viewed from standing height on the opposite side of the street in order to avoid detracting from the predominant character. In practice, this means they need to be setback at least 1.5 metres or 6 metres, depending on whether the existing building is two storeys or one.

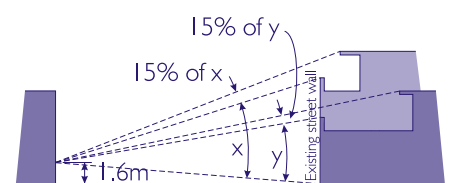
Side setbacks

The existing buildings along High Street almost all extend across the full width of the front boundary, creating a consistent character and well-defined public realm that avoids concealed spaces and a consequent lack of perceived safety. It is therefore proposed that all new development in retail or commercial zones be similarly required to extend across the full width of the lot up to the height of the street wall.

The side walls of new buildings above three storeys may be set back for articulation or in order to allow windows without relying on neighbouring airspace.

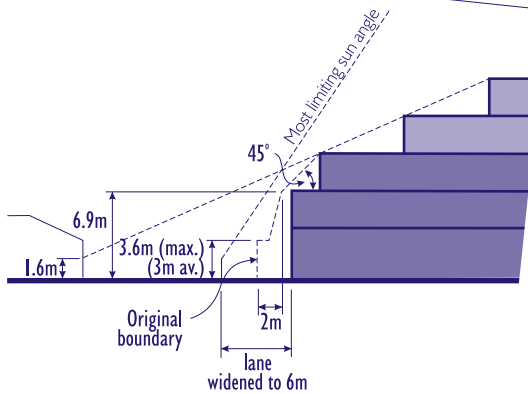


General front setbacks

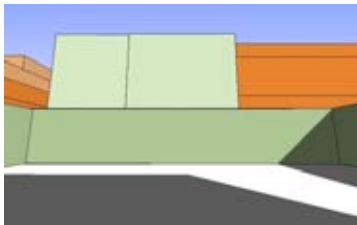


Front setbacks for shoptop development in character areas

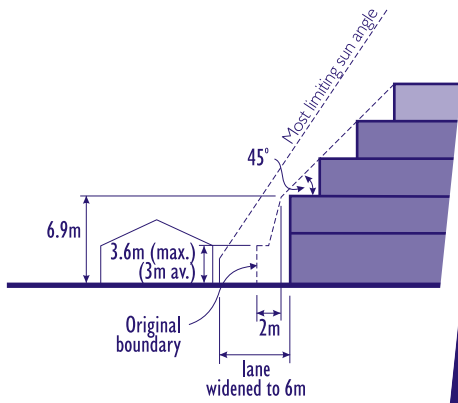
Proposed front setbacks
See Appendix A



Rear setbacks adjacent to end-on residential lot



View of existing 2-storey building & new 5-storey buildings alongside from rear garden of end-on residential lot



Rear setbacks adjacent to side-on residential lot



View of 5-storey buildings from rear garden of side-on residential lot

Proposed rear setbacks

See Appendix A

Rear setbacks

Taller buildings can adversely impact on adjoining residential properties in a number of ways, including overshadowing, an overbearing visual presence and overlooking. Standards exist in the planning scheme to ensure that new residential development avoids unreasonable impacts of this type on other residential properties. It is considered that these standards should also apply to development on High Street abutting a residential property.

Clause 55.04 of the planning scheme establishes a building envelope limit at the rear of the lot to ensure that development does not have an unreasonable visual bulk when viewed from adjoining properties. However, this assumes that new development is not more than 9 metres in height. Therefore, while it is proposed that new development on properties abutting High Street - including mews dwellings - be allowed up to 10 metres high below this plane to allow for a retail or commercial rather than residential ground floor, it is further proposed that development above 10 metres be invisible to someone standing at the rear wall of the house on any adjoining residential property whose rear boundary abuts the site or the laneway behind it. It is not considered necessary that this additional constraint be applied to residential properties whose side boundaries abut the site or a laneway behind it, as it is not reasonable for their occupants to have the same expectation with respect to visual bulk to the side.

Clause 55.04 does not specifically preclude a number of levels having the same rear setback, as long as it is at least that required of the highest of the levels. However, a vertical rear facade three or more storeys high would result in an unacceptably bulky form. Therefore, it is proposed that an additional control be established that requires each level above the second to be set back from that below at the rear, regardless of its conformance with the building envelope limit referred to above.

The overshadowing standard in clause 55.04 of the planning scheme - which requires a minimum of 5 hours sunlight between 9am and 3pm on 22nd September, or no worsening of the current solar access - would result in new development on High Street being limited by an angled plane rising from the rear fence of the residential property at 56o or 52o, depending on which side of High Street it is on. This is less limiting to development than the proposed standard for visual bulk set out above.

Overlooking can be avoided by other means than setbacks - such as high or translucent windows, or screens.

Vehicle access to new development should be via rear lanes where possible, to protect the amenity and character of High Street which has few crossovers. However, many of these lanes are relatively narrow. Therefore, where new development abuts a laneway, it should be set back from the rear boundary to enable the lane to be widened to 6 metres.

IMPLEMENTATION

Planning scheme

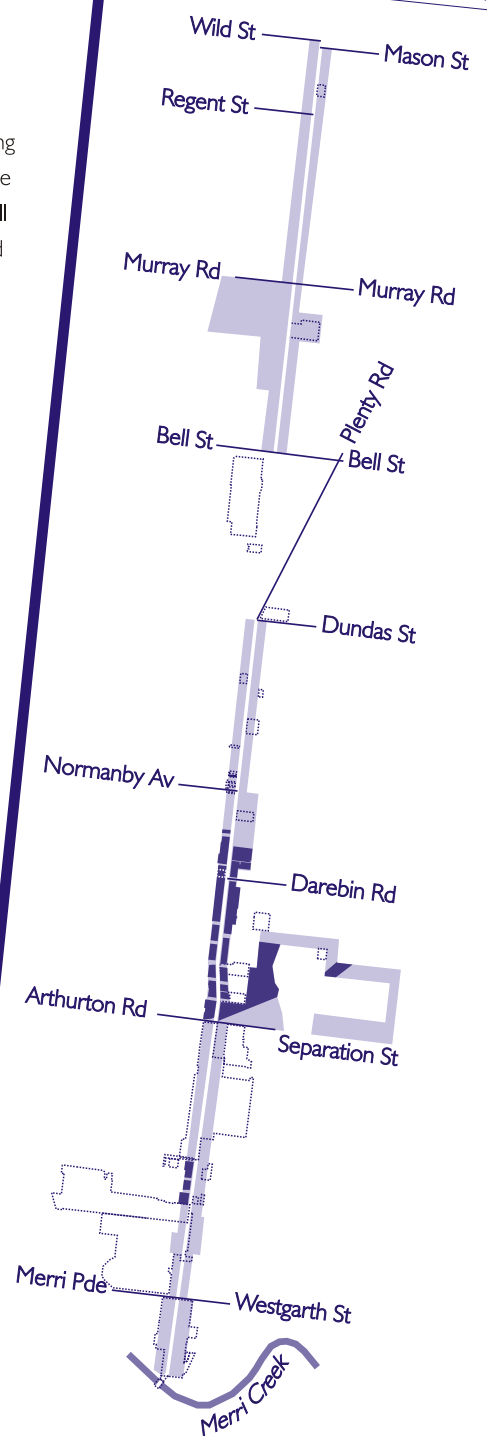
The strategies outlined above can be most effectively implemented through the planning scheme. The areas of minimal change are already protected by the existing Heritage Overlays and the Local Policy on Urban Character. The Westgarth and Ruckers Hill activity centres are also protected by Heritage Overlays. New Design and Development Overlays (DDOs) are required to protect the key views from All Nations Park, and to and from Ruckers Hill. This tool is particularly appropriate as the precincts it would affect are also those where built form change is desired. The DDOs can also be used to limit built form in response to public and private amenity issues. Building heights should be controlled through discretionary height limits (in metres) clearly linked to design objectives (such as to protect key views and public and private amenity). The introduction of DDOs will result in three layers of objectives for development in this area: the MSS, Local Policy (see chapter 5) and DDO. However, this is considered acceptable as the Local Policy is primarily intended to guide decision-making in relation to land use in these areas, whereas the DDO relates to built form.

Overlay controls cannot be justified over the remaining precincts (north of Croxton). However, in these areas the primary aim is to promote rather than overly constrain new development, either to rejuvenate rundown areas or to help position the Preston activity centre as a regional centre for Melbourne's north. Therefore, the fewer controls the better, to avoid deterring developers. Instead, the proposed new Local Policy can be used to state these objectives and others regarding the protection of private and public amenity in these precincts. However, it cannot be used to establish height limits.

The Local Policy should have an introductory section outlining the overall objectives and policies, followed by separate sections setting out the key objectives and policy for each precinct. The current and proposed land use zones in these precincts require a planning permit for buildings and works in each case - except for non-residential buildings in the Mixed Use Zone - which will ensure the local policy is effective.

The strategic basis for the built form controls needs to be stated in the MSS, including the vision and overall strategic directions for High Street set out here. The statement must consider the impact of the strategic directions on other objectives and policies, and be framed as a development of the MSS's broad strategic themes. In particular, the MSS must establish, in broad terms, the importance to the community of the key views that the DDO seeks to protect.

The guidelines for each precinct contained in Volume 2 should also be listed as a reference document in the Planning Scheme, to provide a more explicit indication of the preferred built form outcomes.



Existing & proposed overlay controls

- Proposed Design & Development Overlays
- Existing Heritage Overlays

7 Building Design



A well-proportioned facade

MULTI-LEVEL BUILDINGS

Council has already established a draft policy that provides guidance on the design of multi-level buildings (the Interim Policy Position on Multi Level and Mixed Use Development). There is no need to overhaul this policy statement, however the following amendments and additions are recommended:

Design & materials

- ▶ Add a requirement that the design of development incorporate techniques to minimise their apparent bulk and the 'wedding cake' effect of progressive setbacks to upper levels, such as the creation of a clear base, middle and top - preferably divided along prevailing horizontal lines, such as those of adjoining verandahs or parapets - and vertical articulation to break up long horizontal forms into smaller elements, such as the expression of vertical circulation cores.
- ▶ Add a requirement that the facades of new development be modulated by porticos, balconies, verandahs and sun shade devices.
- ▶ Add a requirement that where upper levels of buildings will reveal blank walls to surrounding public spaces and nearby properties, these must be treated so as to reduce their visual impact.
- ▶ Add a requirement that exposed external walls above the height of the street wall must be visually recessive, through techniques such as a contrasting material or finish to that of the street wall.
- ▶ Add a requirement that rooftop servicing and communication equipment must not be visible from public spaces.

Building height

- ▶ Refer to the proposed Local Policy in this section for more detailed guidance on building heights.

Setbacks

- ▶ Replace clause on height of street wall and front setbacks to upper levels with those developed in chapter 6.

Heritage

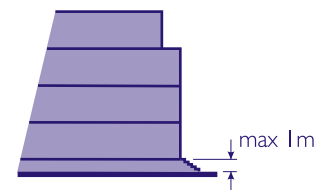
Create a new section with the following requirements:

- ▶ Refurbishment and extension to existing heritage buildings and new buildings adjoining a heritage building must be designed to be respectful and complementary in style, form, proportions, materials and colours.
- ▶ Upper level additions to existing heritage buildings must have an historically appropriate style and scale or be visually distinct and subservient.

- ▶ New awnings and shopfronts to heritage buildings are to be sympathetic to the building style.
- ▶ New buildings must not interrupt the silhouettes of the tops of major heritage buildings as seen against the sky from within the street corridor.

Car parking & vehicle access

- ▶ Add clauses that vehicle access to new development abutting side streets must be via the side street, new development abutting lanes must allow for their widening to 6 metres, commercial deliveries via rear lanes less than 4.5 metres wide must be between 9am and 4pm, and adequate street lighting must be provided in rear lanes as part of any development that uses them for access.
- ▶ Add a clause that Council will consider reduced parking requirements for developments within 400 metres of a train station where a 'green travel plan' is provided that shows how alternative travel modes will be facilitated and implemented.
- ▶ Add a clause requiring all parking areas to be well lit and parking structures to be designed to ensure parked cars are not visible from public areas and adjoining buildings.
- ▶ Widen the scope of the section to include a clause requiring the provision of one bicycle rack per dwelling, or one rack per 100 square metres of any substantial office development and showers, located in an area that is well lit and protected from the weather.



Raised ground floor limit

Street address

- ▶ Qualify the clause regarding vertical separation between the footpath and ground floor building level to limit this separation to one metre.
- ▶ Add a clause requiring external public and communal spaces to be adequately lit and clearly visible from within adjacent buildings.
- ▶ Add a clause requiring internal communal spaces to be clearly visible before entering.
- ▶ Add a clause requiring any recesses in the ground floor front façade of a building built to the street boundary to be no more than 300 millimetres deep and no less than one metre wide.
- ▶ Add a clause requiring mail boxes to be located close to the pedestrian entry.



Natural lighting & ventilation can be provided through the use of courtyard forms and dual aspect

Amenity impacts, including overshadowing & overlooking

- ▶ Amend the clause regarding overshadowing and visual bulk to reflect the standards developed in chapter 6.
- ▶ Add requirements that dwellings be designed to minimise the impact of major external noise sources, and that the site layout of residential developments must separate active communal recreation areas, parking areas, vehicle access ways and service equipment areas from bedrooms.
- ▶ Add a requirement that servicing equipment not be located where it will cause a noise nuisance to adjacent properties.

Sustainability

Create a new section incorporating the Energy efficiency clause and the following:

- ▶ Buildings should be designed to accommodate a range of uses over their lifespan, by being naturally lit and ventilated, having ground floor ceiling heights of at least 2.7 metres and having a maximum number of pedestrian access points visible from the street. Natural lighting and ventilation can be provided through the use of courtyard forms and the creation of a dual aspect for apartments or office units.
- ▶ A detailed stormwater management plan must be submitted demonstrating how the on-site drainage system takes into account the need for on-site stormwater detention or retention and re-use, and the scope for on-site stormwater infiltration.

LOW-RISE BUILDINGS

The planning scheme already contains provisions to guide the design of residential buildings up to three storeys high, including the Local Policy on Urban Character and clauses 54-55 (also known as 'ResCode'). These address issues such as the creation of attractive and well-surveilled edges to public open spaces, and - in combination with the protection to key views discussed above - are considered to be sufficient.

IMPLEMENTATION

Planning scheme

The policy position on multi level and mixed use development needs to be given formal planning status to ensure full regard is given to it at VCAT. It is therefore recommended that the policy position be introduced as a new Local Planning Policy. The full revised text of the policy is provided as Appendix B.

Local Identity

8

HIGH STREET URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK 37

SUBURB DEFINITION

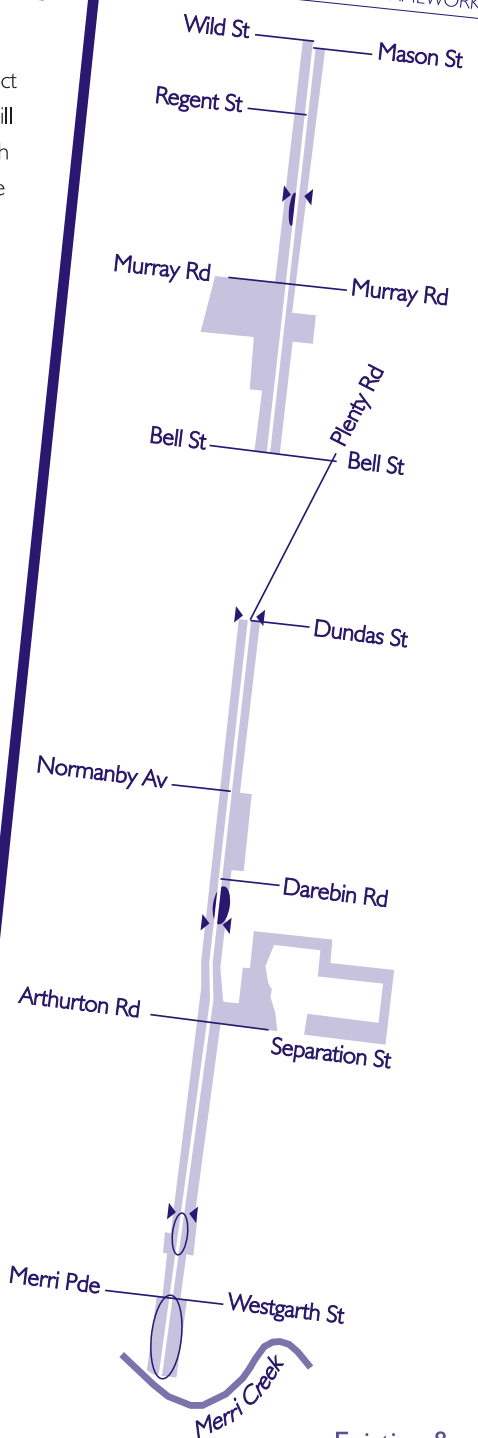
There is a widespread desire to create a greater sense of local identity for each precinct along High Street. The land use and building height recommendations set out above will go a long way towards achieving this by creating greater difference between each precinct. However, there are opportunities to reinforce the sense of moving from one suburb to another through more detailed built form and streetscape measures.

High Street Darebin essentially passes through five suburbs: Westgarth, Northcote, Thornbury, Preston and Regent. The viaduct in Northcote South (precinct 4) and the major intersection at Miller / Dundas Streets already mark the boundaries between Westgarth and Northcote, and Thornbury and Preston. However, there is no clear definition of the boundary between Northcote and Thornbury, or that between Preston and Regent.

The most effective definition of a precinct along High Street is created by the break in the generally tightly-defined built form corridor either side of Westgarth Centre, combined with the substantial trees in those breaks. There is an opportunity to create a similar break between both Northcote and Thornbury, and between Preston and Regent, by requiring future development on appropriate sites to be set back from the front boundary and substantial trees to be planted in that front setback. The most likely opportunities to achieve a consistent row of setbacks occur between the Northcote Baptist Church and Northcote RSL, in the block between Darebin Road and Dennis Street (on the east side only), and at the Holden car yard on the southern side of the Olver St intersection, should those sites be redeveloped.

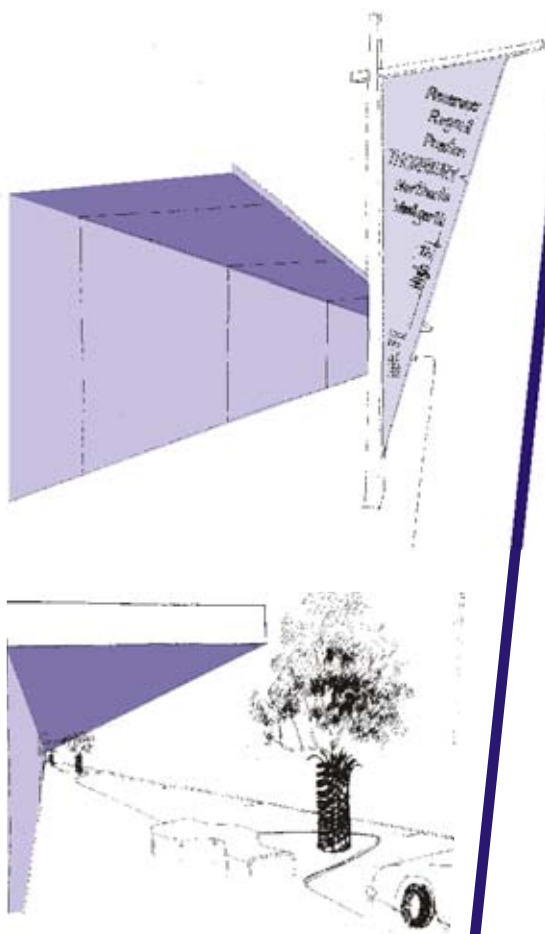
A setback of seven-and-a-half metres is proposed for the properties between the Northcote Baptist Church and Northcote RSL, to increase the apparent road reserve width by one-third. Such a setback would not significantly reduce the feasibility of development on the lots, which are 50-55 metres deep. A lesser setback of six metres is proposed for the other two sites, in recognition of the fact that the lots are shallower but will ultimately work together to create a wider apparent road reserve. These tree-ed setbacks will also create greater visual interest and incident along High Street, increasing both the attractiveness of the journey and its legibility.

A pair of artistically designed signs forming a 'gateway' at the boundaries between each suburb would strengthen the sense of moving from one to another. Varying the frequency of the trees planted in the kerbside parking lane (see chapter 9) from a close spacing in the activity centres to a larger spacing at the point furthest away (at the boundary between suburbs) would reinforce this effect. Alternatively, if the kerbside trees prove infeasible in the activity centres without an unreasonable loss of parking spaces, they could be restricted to the internodal areas, where parking is



Existing & proposed breaks in the street corridor

- Existing wide, tree-lined road reserves
- Proposed tree-ed front setbacks
- Proposed gateway signs



Indicative suburb signs & kerbside tree planting

at less of a premium, to emphasise the difference between the precinct types.

IMPLEMENTATION

Planning scheme

The proposed front setback at the boundary between Northcote and Thornbury falls within the proposed Design and Development Overlay (see chapter 6) and could therefore be established through that means, along with an appropriate landscaping requirement. The front setback at the boundary between Preston and Regent would have to be established in the relevant section of the Local Policy.

Capital works

The proposed 'gateway' signs between each suburb and kerbside tree planting need to be incorporated within Council's capital works program.

RETAIL STREET DESIGN

Most shoppers are pedestrians. Pedestrian movement also fosters spontaneous social interaction, which reinforces the centre as a key community focal point. Therefore, within the retail streets themselves, maintaining vehicular access should not be at the expense of pedestrian convenience, comfort and safety.

However, neither are pedestrian malls the answer, except at the heart of major cities. In smaller centres, they have been largely unsuccessful due to the shops' lack of exposure to passing vehicles, a lack of convenient car parking, a feeling of insecurity due to inactivity after business hours and the barrier around the mall created by an increase in traffic on surrounding streets.

Therefore, retail streets must be designed to achieve the optimum balance of convenience to all users of the space, including not only pedestrians and cars, but also cyclists, trams, buses, taxis, delivery vehicles, outdoor diners and so on. This can be achieved by minimising the space given over to moving traffic (without removing any options for movement), slowing it down and providing as many opportunities and short distances for pedestrians to cross as possible - for example, through the provision of a centre-median. Footpaths on the south or east sides of the street should also be slightly wider to provide for outdoor dining in the sun.

On-street parking should be maximised, not only because it provides for shoppers to park close to the retail outlets, but also because it exposes them to what is available by drawing them past the shops, minimises the need for off-street car parks, slows traffic (through parking and unparking manoeuvres) and creates a barrier between the footpath and moving traffic.

The High Street Transport Management Plan includes proposals to improve the balance between provision for the different users of the street within each of the main activity centres. These include widening the footpath and introducing a central median in the Preston District Centre to provide an enhanced environment for pedestrians, improved tram and bus stops, and measures to slow traffic. A proposal is also being explored to 'green' the streetscape by installing trees in the parking lane, where they will not conflict with verandahs. This will become possible once the clearways are removed, as proposed by the Transport Management Plan. However, should this not be possible without an unreasonable loss of parking spaces, the treatment may be restricted to the internodal areas, where parking is at less of a premium.



Streets that provide for all users

SERVICE ACCESS

Staff parking, delivery access and goods storage should be provided at the rear of shops where this is possible, to maximise the amount of on-street parking for shoppers and hide loading bays. This is particularly important for large shops, which tend to have large and frequent delivery vehicles. Vehicular access is therefore required to the rear of the properties.

In the case of a strip of small shops, this is most efficiently provided by a rear lane. However, shoppers or visitors should not be encouraged to use such rear lanes, nor businesses to front them, as they do not provide a safe, comfortable or attractive environment for pedestrians.

All the activity centres along High Street already contain rear service lanes. Any proposals that would remove these or their continuity should not, therefore, be considered.

In order to facilitate their use for access to car parks in substantial new residential development, narrow rear lanes should be made one-way, where possible, until such time as they have been widened along the majority of their length. Consideration should also be given to replacing noisy surfaces with quieter treatments.



Existing unsafe & unattractive car parks

OFF-STREET CAR PARKS

Off-street car parks should be designed as positive public spaces. Their edges should be designed like retail streets, with active frontages, footpaths, lighting, verandahs and no recessed spaces. The parking areas should be well-lit and sheltered by trees or shade structures.

Off-street car parks should be directly linked to the other shops they serve by streets or pedestrian routes lined by shops. While 'walk through' shops provide physical connection, they are the least preferred means of access, as some shoppers do not feel comfortable using them.

Vehicle access to off-street car parks should be via High Street where possible, so that drivers are exposed to the retail offer. However, new crossovers will generally not be permitted.

Most of the off-street car parks in the activity centres along High Street are surrounded by blank fences and/or the rears of shops, which do not provide active frontages, footpaths or verandahs, and often incorporate recessed spaces. They are also generally poorly lit and landscaped, and have poor links to High Street, both in terms of their directness and their legibility. Shops abutting car parks should, therefore, be encouraged to present a frontage to them, without lessening the activeness of their High Street frontage. This will also create more 'walk-through' opportunities. Improvements can also be made to the lighting, landscaping, signage and provision for pedestrians within the car parks owned by Council.

In most successful retail centres there is a high level of demand for car parking spaces, especially between staff who work there and people who have come to shop. Left uncontrolled, parking spaces close to the centre are often taken by those that work there. Instead, they should be

made available for shoppers to help attract them to the centre.

In order for parking availability to respond to user needs, a graded approach should be applied to time restrictions with the shortest-term parking at the heart of a centre, increasing to the longest-term parking on its periphery. This will ensure high turnover in the most central areas, increasing availability to those with the least time. Longer term users, including staff, will be compelled to use the car parks located towards the edge of the centre or where available, the spaces behind their premises.

This strategy should guide any review of parking controls in and around the activity centres.

The availability of customer car parking is a key factor in the appeal of retail centres, and therefore their viability. The additional development envisaged by this study is largely outside the retail centres, and therefore unlikely to significantly affect their parking supply and demand. However, some of the proposals developed by the Transport Management Plan affect on-street parking provision - particularly the increase in parking availability by the removal of the pm clearway, and the removal of some kerbside parking due to the introduction of longer no-standing zones near intersections and the realignment of tramlines to the kerb at certain tram stops. Therefore, new parking strategies are required in the activity centres - which may be affected by both new development and changes to street management - and the 'internodal' areas in which greatest change is anticipated, which will affect parking supply and demand.

Northcote and Preston should be given highest priority for the development of new parking strategies, to be undertaken as an integral part of the structure planning required by *Melbourne 2030*. These should be followed by a strategy for Croxton - which is likely to experience greatest change - and finally Thornbury Village - where the realigned tramlines will substantially reduce the kerbside parking availability (although it should be noted that the parking spaces on the western side have only recently become available in late afternoon through the removal of the pm clearway) - and Westgarth.

PUBLIC SPACES

Informal public spaces are an important component of successful community centres, providing the chance for social interaction and a range of activities, such as people-watching, eating, reading, chatting, market stalls and other community events. However, to be successful, such spaces should be located at a point of intense pedestrian activity, as they are not usually a sufficient attraction in themselves to draw people significantly out of their way. In the context of High Street, this means that they must be at the heart of a retail centre, and on or within High Street itself.



Informal public space located at a point of intense pedestrian activity

Existing public spaces exist in front of the Northcote Uniting Church and Stuzzi in Northcote, and the Town Hall and post office in Preston. The redevelopment of the Northcote Town Hall will also result in a new public square. There is little opportunity to create additional public spaces alongside High Street in the retail centres. However, the potential exists to enhance the existing spaces and create new ones within the road reserve. In particular, the space in front of the Preston Town Hall is in an ideal location to act as an informal meeting space for the centre, but its design does not support its use in this way, providing no spaces for people to stop and sit or gather. A different landscaping treatment would significantly increase its usefulness as an informal meeting space.

The High Street Transport Management Plan includes proposals to widen the footpath and provide appropriate street furniture at key locations to create informal meeting spaces. Opportunities should also be sought for new public art, designed to reflect Darebin's diverse culture.



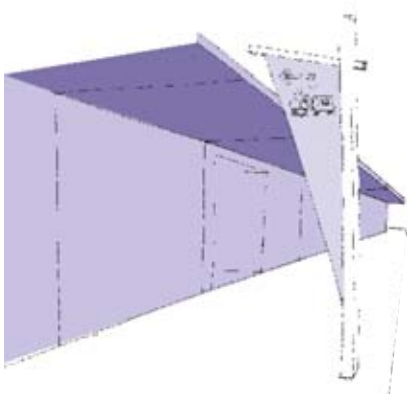
Existing unsafe & illegible pedestrian link to station

PEDESTRIAN LINKS

Many of the pedestrian links from High Street to train stations and off-street car parks are hard to find and have a poor appearance and sense of security, potentially lessening the use of trains and car parks. In particular, signage on High Street to the car parks is only sporadic and signage to the stations is almost non-existent. In many cases, the station is not visible from the end of the pedestrian link, requiring further signage or visual cues. While some of the links are along attractive residential streets lined by house-fronts, others have inactive edges - such as blank walls, side fences and loading bays, sometimes creating a poorly-defined edge - which deter people from using them, particularly after dark, due to the lack of casual surveillance and presence of concealed spaces, creating a feeling of insecurity. Separation Street provides a particularly narrow and uncomfortable route to Northcote Station, dominated by heavy traffic.

The legibility of the links could be very easily improved by the use of signs on High Street. While they need to read as part of a 'family' in order to be recognisable from a distance, these could be artistically designed to form part of the unique identity of High Street. Where possible, pedestrians should be directed via safer and more attractive routes. In any case, lighting should be brought up to standard in all links.

The link to Northcote Station along Separation Street could be improved through a more generous and active-edged pedestrian area, created by capitalising on the likely future redevelopment of the properties on its southern side to widen the road reserve and face new buildings towards it.



Indicative station sign

PAVING & STREET FURNITURE

The quality of the public realm can be compromised by visual clutter and inconsistent and poor quality furniture and materials. The appearance, quality, cleanliness and care of the environment can influence the attractiveness of a retail centre to shoppers.

It is important to remember, however, that the streetscape is only a setting for activities and should not dominate them visually. A simple but good quality approach to designing footpaths, furniture and landscaping generally achieves the best appearance. For example, a common footpath treatment can be used to provide a coherent environment, with distinctive treatments in key locations to add character and reinforce local identity. The inclusion of elements such as public art, lighting, signage and landscaping can all assist in achieving this. The streetscape should also be designed to minimise the maintenance burden and cost.

It is therefore proposed that Council continue to implement a coordinated paving and street furniture strategy. Consideration should be given to planting trees in kerbside parking lanes or central median strips where verandahs constrain the ability to plant them in the footpath. Soft, high-maintenance surfaces such as garden beds at ground level and grassed nature strips should be avoided, as should planter boxes which often become little more than rubbish bins. In any case, all foliage should be above head height or below knee height to avoid the creation of concealed spaces. It is also important that the street is cleaned frequently and street furniture kept in a good state of repair.

IMPLEMENTATION

Planning scheme

A Public Acquisition Overlay should be introduced along the southern edge of Separation Street west of High Street, to create a wider footpath.

The parking strategies to be developed for the main activity centres and development areas along High Street may recommend the use of Parking Precinct Plans to implement them.

Capital works

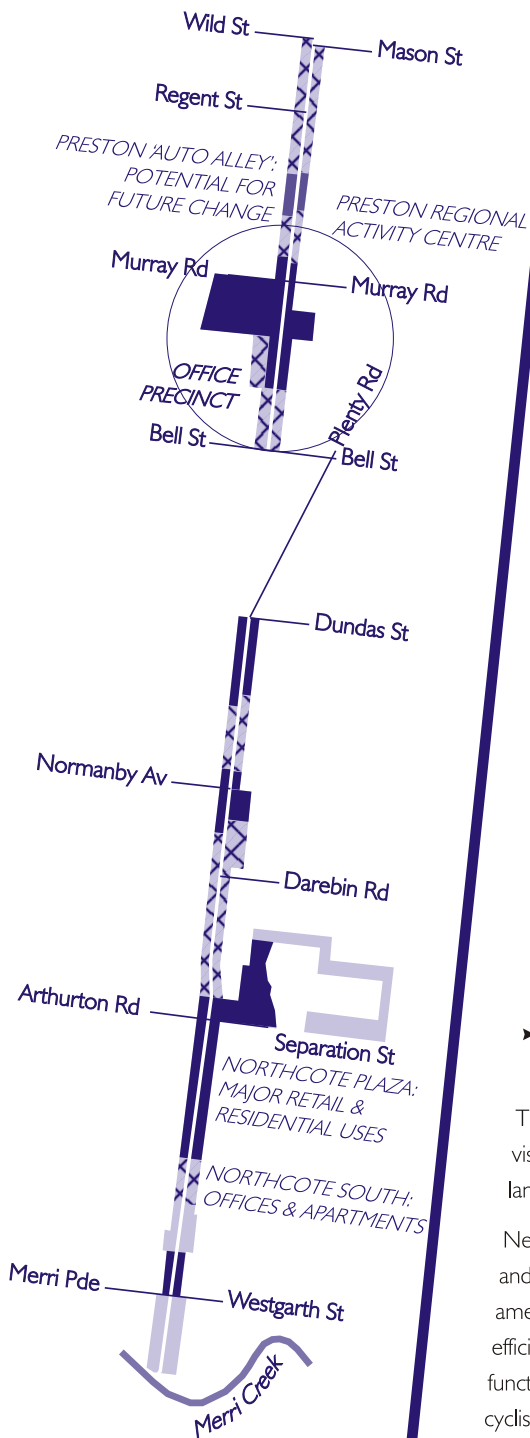
The relevant streetscape treatments recommended by the High Street Transport Management Plan need to be incorporated within Council's capital works program, along with new street furniture and improvements to off-street car parks and pedestrian links. Some of the Transport Management Plan proposals will be undertaken by other agencies.

Other

Contact needs to be made with the owners and operators of businesses abutting off-street car parks to encourage them to address the car park. It is envisaged that operators would be enthusiastic about the potential to have additional frontage to a major car park and the additional exposure to people walking through the shop. The impediments are likely to be the cost of renovations and the need to provide for loading and storage.

10

Summary: Vision



The strategies set out above create a vision for the future of High Street. Essentially, this structures the corridor into precincts, each with a distinct role and identity. These include:

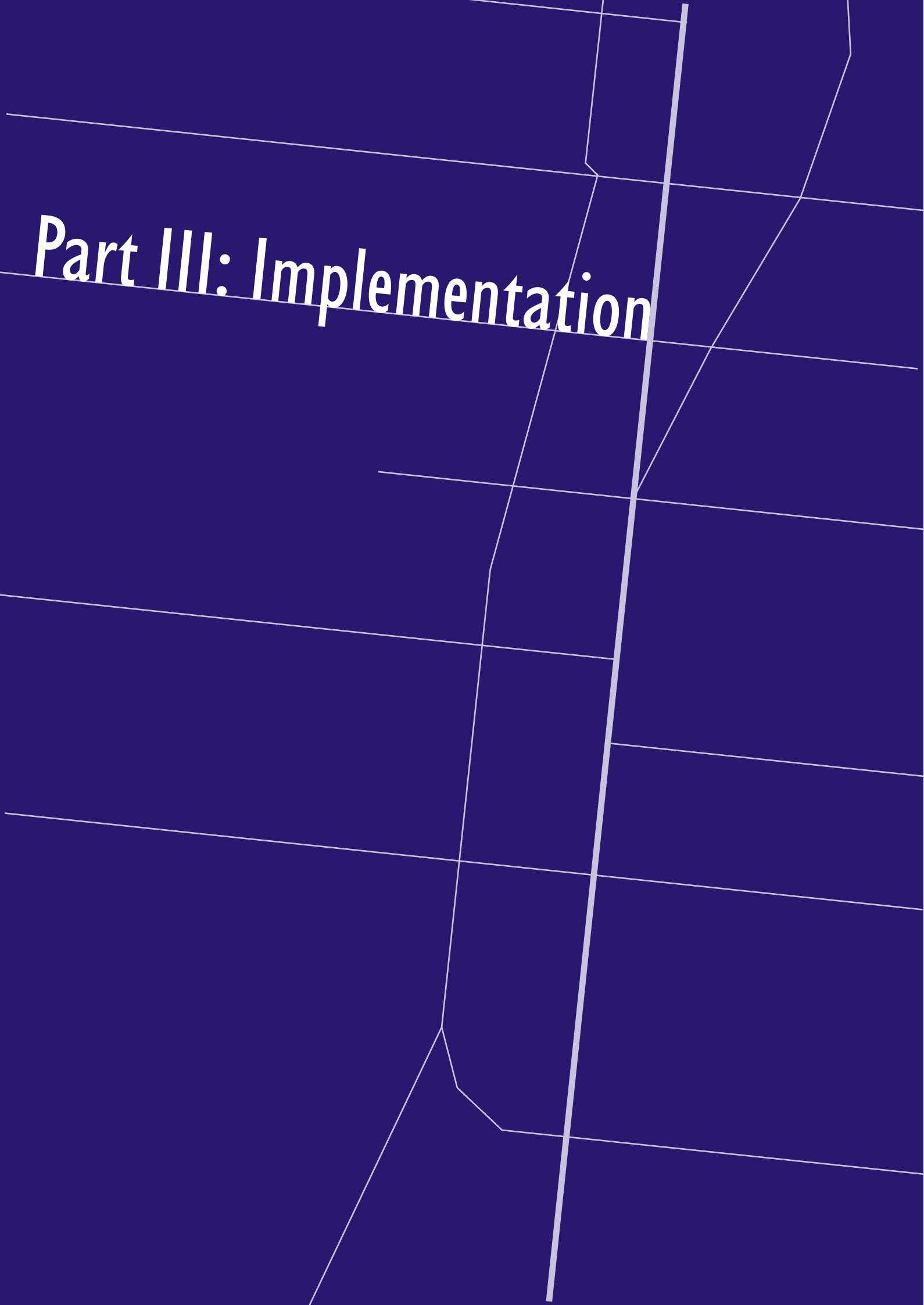
- ▶ Core retail centres: retaining their role and built form character but strengthened by the consolidation of primary retail activity from the internodal areas; provision for some intensification in the form of shoptop and mews development, and new low-rise development on larger lots; and business attraction strategies.
- ▶ Rundown internodal areas: developing a new role as areas of higher density housing, mixed with commercial lower levels, providing transit-oriented development and greater housing diversity in low-mid rise forms that protect amenity and views, and create more distinct boundaries to core retail centres.
- ▶ Preston activity centre: reinforcing its role as a community and business centre for the northern region of Melbourne through mid-high rise office and residential development, primarily south of Bruce and David Streets, where it will create a 'gateway' to the centre.
- ▶ Northcote Plaza: enriching its role through the introduction of predominantly low-rise apartment buildings, contributing to urban consolidation and creating a better frontage to All Nations Park and Separation Street while being sensitive to its visual prominence.
- ▶ Northcote South: undergoing incremental change in the form of low-rise office and apartment buildings to create a more coherent 'gateway' to the Northcote activity centre, while retaining views from and towards the top of the hill.
- ▶ Preston Auto Alley: retaining its focus on car yards and related businesses in the short-medium term.
- ▶ Character residential areas: maintaining their role and low-rise character, with minimal change.

The greater variation in land use and built form will reinforce the local identity, legibility and visual interest along High Street, supported by a range of more detailed built form and landscape treatments.

New buildings will set a high standard of design that contributes positively to the public realm and avoids adverse impact on the amenity of adjacent residences, provides adequate internal amenity and provision for various means of access, and achieves high levels of energy efficiency and stormwater management. This will be supported by enhancements to the function and appearance of the street, particularly in terms of its support for pedestrians, cyclists, trams and buses.

Proposed precinct roles

- Strengthened retail centres with secondary residential uses
- ▨ Higher density housing mixed with commercial lower levels
- Character residential areas

The background features a dark blue field with a network of white lines. A prominent vertical line runs down the right side. Several other lines intersect it at various points, creating a grid-like structure with irregular, elongated cells. The lines vary in thickness and orientation, some being nearly horizontal and others more diagonal.

Part III: Implementation

11 Planning Scheme

A range of planning scheme amendments are required to implement the strategies outlined in Part II. These are summarised below.

MSS

The new MSS to be prepared as a result of the current review should incorporate a statement of the overall vision and strategic directions for High Street set out in this report, including a brief summary of their rationale. This must consider the impact of the strategic directions on other objectives and policies and be framed as a development of the MSS's broad strategic themes.

LOCAL POLICY

A new local policy should be introduced for the whole of High Street. This should have an introductory section that develops the vision and strategic directions set out in the MSS into more specific overall policies, followed by separate sections outlining the specific key objectives and policy for each precinct. The policies should cover more specific land use directions - such as the type of shops considered appropriate in the internodal areas, the desire for a minimum proportion of offices at upper levels in Preston South and the need for flexibility at ill-defined precinct boundaries - and more specific built form directions in those areas not covered by a Design and Development Overlay (see below).

The amended policy on multi level and mixed use development should also be given formal planning status as a new local planning policy.

ZONING

A number of rezonings are proposed. These include:

- ▶ Rezoning the rundown internodal areas from B1 to B2
- ▶ Rezoning Northcote South and Mary Street to B2
- ▶ Rezoning Regent to a combination of B3 and MU

OVERLAYS

In addition to the existing heritage overlays, which seek to ensure appropriate development within heritage areas, a number of Design and Development Overlays (DDO) are proposed. The primary objective of the DDOs is to protect the following important views:

- ▶ The northwest vista from All Nations Park - including Mt Macedon and the Macedon Ranges - which affects properties on High Street from Separation Street to Woolton Avenue on the west side and to the southern boundary of 594 High Street on the east side.
- ▶ The east vista from All Nations Park - including the Doncaster ridgeline, Dandenong Ranges, 'Willsmere' and the Yarra Bend parklands - which affects a number of properties above the 53m contour on Brickworks Lane, Kellet Street, Christmas Street, Wales Street, Jenkins Street and Darebin Road. Below this contour, the existing provisions of the planning scheme will ensure new development does not encroach above the horizon.
- ▶ The view of the Melbourne CBD from the top of Ruckers Hill, which affects 147 to 183 High Street.

The DDOs should establish discretionary height limits (in metres), clearly linked to design objectives.

The DDOs should also seek to achieve secondary objectives such as the protection of public and private amenity, and the expression of the boundary between Northcote and Thornbury through a landscaped front setback, as recommended in chapter 8.

A Public Acquisition Overlay is also recommended along the southern edge of Arthurton Road west of High Street, to create a wider footpath.

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

The precinct guidelines provided in Volume 2 of this report should be listed in the planning scheme as a reference document, to provide a more explicit indication of the preferred built form outcomes than is possible within the local policy.

A further reference document may be required to give status to any elements of the policy on multi level and mixed use development that cannot be incorporated within the new local planning policy.

12

Capital Works

A range of capital works projects are required to implement the strategies outlined in Part II. These include:

- ▶ Transport Management Plan proposals regarding improvements to tram and bus stops, footpath widenings, new central medians, new pedestrian crossings, and so on
- ▶ 'Gateway' signs between each suburb
- ▶ street tree planting
- ▶ new street furniture
- ▶ new signs and lighting to improve pedestrian links to train stations and off-street car parks
- ▶ improvements to off-street car parks

It should be noted that some of the Transport Management Plan proposals will be partly or wholly undertaken by other agencies.



Other 13

Other implementation mechanisms required to implement the strategies set out in Part II include:

- ▶ Business attraction programs to develop unique niche markets in each core retail centre
- ▶ Encouragement for owners and operators of businesses abutting off-street car parks to address the car park

Reference Documents

All Nations Park Built Form Strategy

Literature Review 2002 Planisphere

Darebin Retail Activity Centres Strategy *ongoing* Essential Economics, Planning by Design & David Lock Associates

High Street Transport Management Plan *ongoing* PBAI Australia, Grogan Richards & David Lock Associates

Industrial Land Use Strategy *November 2001* City of Darebin

Integrated Housing Strategy 2002 City of Darebin

Junction Integrated Development Plan *December 2001* Pinnacle Property Group & KLM Gerner Consulting

Melbourne 2030: Planning for Sustainable Growth *October 2002* Victorian Government

Setback Requirements

A

HIGH STREET URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK 51

This note explains the setback requirements referred to on pages 31 and 32.

FRONT SETBACKS

Business zones

The majority of the front façade of any new development in a business zone should be built to the front boundary up to 8m above ground level.

New buildings

The front façade of any floor level more than 10m above ground should be set back at least 1.5m for each 3m that it exceeds 10m above ground level, except within 12m of street corners, where development may be built to the front boundary up to 13m above ground level before being set back as above.

New shoptop development

South of Separation Street, any new shoptop development should be set back so that the angle of view filled by the front façade of the existing building and the new floor level combined is no more than 15% greater than the angle of view filled by the front façade of the existing building, when viewed from standing height on the opposite side of the street.

North of Separation Street, the front façade of any new shoptop development should be set back at least 1.5m for each 3m that it rises above the existing building.

Other zones

Development should be set back in accordance with the prevailing setbacks.

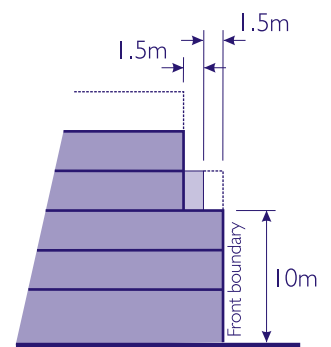
SIDE SETBACKS

Business zones

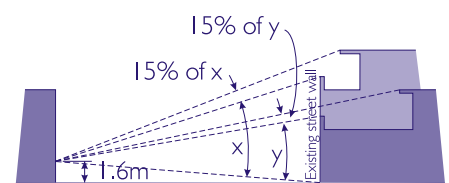
Any new development in a business zone should be built to both side boundaries up to 8m above ground level, except those boundaries abutting a road reserve.

Other zones

Development should be set back in accordance with the prevailing setbacks.

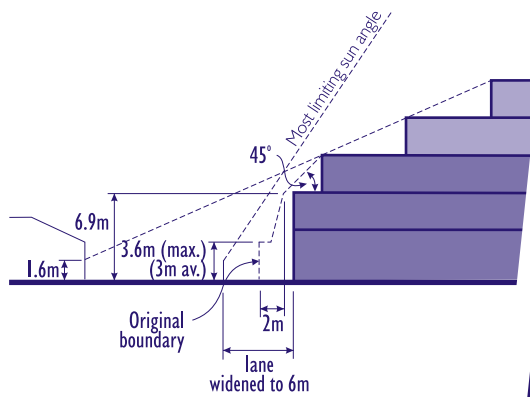


General front setbacks

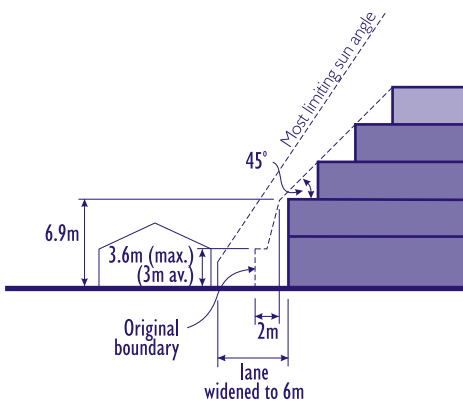


Front setbacks for shoptop development in character areas

Proposed front setbacks



Rear setbacks adjacent to end-on residential lot



Rear setbacks adjacent to side-on residential lot

Proposed rear setbacks

REAR SETBACKS

The rear façade of any new development abutting or directly across a rear lane from a residential property should be set back so that it does not encroach on the dotted line illustrated on the adjacent diagrams. In other words:

- ▶ If the site abuts or is directly across a rear lane from the **rear** boundary of a residential property, any rear façade more than 3m above ground level should be set back at least 1m from the rear boundary plus a further 255mm for every metre of height above 3m up to 6.9m above ground level, and a further 1m for every metre of height between 6.9m and 10m. The rear façade of any floor levels more than 10m above ground level should be set back so that they are not visible from the rear of the house on the adjoining residential property at an eye level of 1.6m above the internal ground floor level.
- ▶ If the site abuts or is directly across a rear lane from the **side** boundary of a residential property, any rear façade more than 3m above ground level should be set back at least 1m from the rear boundary plus a further 255mm for every metre of height above 3m up to 6.9m above ground level, and a further 1m for every metre of height above that.

The rear façade of any new development abutting a rear lane should also be set back in order to widen the lane to 6 metres.

Policy Position on Multi-Storey Residential & Mixed Use Development

HIGH STREET URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK 53

**ADOPTED 17 DECEMBER
2001**

AMENDED FEBRUARY 2005

APPLICATION OF POLICY

This policy applies to all residential or mixed-use development involving four (4) or more storeys and residential or mixed-use development less than four (4) storeys in Business 1 and Business 2 Zones.

POLICY BASIS

The City of Darebin is experiencing change in its demographic makeup, economic structure and physical form. These changes in Darebin are driven by social and economic change at the national and global level.

Changes in demographic characteristics, income distribution, housing costs and lifestyle preferences are increasingly evident in changing housing choices. These changes are recognised and described in detail in Council's draft Integrated Housing Strategy, currently undergoing public consultation. Work undertaken for the Victorian Government's forthcoming Metropolitan Strategy for Melbourne indicates that by 2031 there will be 600,000 new households in the metropolitan area, of which 90% will have one or two people only. Forecasts indicate that over 20,000 new dwellings will be required every year to accommodate household formation in the metropolitan area.

It is expected that Darebin's population will grow by a further 7,000 people over the next 15 years. However because both existing and new household sizes are expected to continue to decline with social and demographic change, the City can be expected to have almost 9,000 more households by 2016. Clearly, these forces require significant change to the amount and form of the City's housing stock.

Multi-level apartment housing with attributes of high accessibility to transport, work, education and social opportunities, personal security, low maintenance and access to outlooks and views, has become a desired form of housing in Melbourne. Interest in this form of housing is spreading from the city centre and the city fringe to inner and middle-ring municipalities like Darebin.

The desired attributes of apartment housing, combined with the prevailing conditions on High Street, make locations both within and between the more active retail areas potentially attractive for apartment redevelopment. This form of development provides renewal opportunities for sites with limited scope for profitable business activity, and reinforces the population base available to support emerging

businesses in the more active centres along High Street. Other sites in the city are also attracting interest for this form of development; principally larger sites on the main road network where isolated business activities have become less commercially viable.

General urban planning principles support the intensification of residential densities close to public transport, centres of economic and social activity and public and private infrastructure investment. Planning principles also support extension of the range of housing types available to people. These themes are prominent in the Metropolitan Strategy for Melbourne. The Metropolitan Strategy has highlighted the benefits of clustering higher density housing, business, education, shopping and recreation at activity centres with high public transport accessibility. A number of centres within Darebin, including the Preston and Northcote centres on High Street, have been identified as the focus of intensified development, including residential and mixed use buildings. The Government's existing Transit Oriented Precinct Development Program already funds projects that promote this theme.

While multi-level apartment development is a legitimate housing form with the potential to contribute positively to economic and social conditions in the City, care is required to ensure that impacts on existing uses are contained. This requires attention to overshadowing, privacy, acoustic separation, vehicle access and car parking arrangements, and the relationship of new buildings to their surroundings in both visual and functional terms.

This interim policy position sets out the major planning considerations that will guide Darebin City Council's treatment of applications for multi-level residential and mixed use developments in the City. The content focuses on High Street but is applicable to other sites in the City. In particular the policy is also applicable to sites that may be regarded as 'gateway' locations on the major road entrances to the City from the north, south, east and west.

OBJECTIVES

An overall objective of the policy is to provide a framework within which Council can pursue a holistic and considered approach to multi level development in the city and ensure that decision making is consistent with the Council and community vision for Darebin.

- ▶ To facilitate sustainable development, taking into consideration Darebin's local, regional and global responsibilities.
- ▶ To identify broad locational criteria to guide the identification of sites suitable for multi-level development in the City of Darebin.
- ▶ To require high standards of design and finish for multi-level development.
- ▶ To establish design criteria to ensure sustainability and to control the height, bulk and form of multi-level development

- ▶ To require the form of multi-level development to be sensitive to the prevailing building alignments and heights by responding to the rhythm and grain of existing buildings on the street through setbacks, articulation of buildings and the use of colour.
- ▶ To require the form of multi-level development to be sensitive to the scale of existing residential development on adjoining sites
- ▶ To promote opportunities for innovative land use mixes in new development, including commercial office space and home offices, and variety in housing size, configurations and bedroom numbers
- ▶ To ensure that adequate arrangements for vehicle access and parking for residents and visitors are provided in multi-level residential development
- ▶ To promote active building frontages at ground level, and visual and functional interaction between the footpath and new buildings
- ▶ To protect adjoining residential development from unreasonable amenity impacts due to overshadowing and overlooking from multi-level residential development
- ▶ To protect public open space and parks from unreasonable overshadowing
- ▶ To provide an adequate level of residential amenity for residents of multi-level development, including provision of noise attenuation measures to protect residents from noise created as a part of the normal business and entertainment functions of the activity centre
- ▶ To provide adequate standards of access to and within multi-level development for people with disabilities
- ▶ To establish a high standard of energy efficiency for the design, construction and fitout of multi-level development
- ▶ To ensure that local utility services are adequate to handle the loads imposed by multi-level residential development
- ▶ To ensure that the incremental aggregate effects of development proposals are considered
- ▶ To ensure that the form of multi level development within or adjacent to identified heritage areas respects the values of areas covered by Heritage Overlays
- ▶ To ensure that multi level development is on a site large enough to minimise unreasonable overshadowing and overlooking of edexisting residential development

POLICY

	Development of Less Than 4 Storeys	Development of 4 Or More Storeys
Development in Residential Zones (Including Mixed-Use Zone)	Clause 55	Clause 22.08
Development in Business 1 and Business 2 Zones	Clause 22.08 and parts of clause 55 as specified below	Clause 22.08

Table 1 - Application of clause 22.08 and clause 55 to multi-level residential and mixed-use development

Residential or mixed use development less than four (4) storeys on land in the Business 1 Zone or the Business 2 Zone should be assessed in accordance with this policy and the following clauses of the Darebin Planning Scheme:

- ▶ 55.01
- ▶ 55.02-2 to 55.02-5
- ▶ 55.03-6 to 55.03-7 and 55.03-9 to 55.03-10
- ▶ 55.04-3 and 55.04-6 to 55.04-8
- ▶ 55.04-1 and 55.04-4 to 55.04-5 in relation to adjoining dwellings in a Residential zone
- ▶ 55.05-1 to 55.05-4 and 55.05-6
- ▶ 55.06-1 and 55.06-3 to 55.06-4

It is policy that the following standards are used in the assessment of planning applications for residential or mixed-use development involving 4 or more storeys in the City of Darebin, along the design principles and other documents specified in clause 19.03.

LOCATION

Locations or circumstances where multi-level development may be supported include:

- ▶ Sites containing existing buildings of a height and bulk substantially greater than the prevailing height and bulk in the immediate locality
- ▶ Sites of a size, shape, location and orientation that the potential for overshadowing and overlooking of neighbouring residential property is minimised
- ▶ Sites located on a Road Zone Category 1 or 2
- ▶ Sites with potential to provide a high level of amenity to residents of the development by virtue of the availability of attractive views or outlook

- ▶ Sites within comfortable walking distance (400 metres) of a railway station.
- ▶ Sites within comfortable walking distance (400 metres) of a Principal or Major activity centre.

Locations or circumstances where multi-level residential development is unlikely to be supported include:

- ▶ High Street between Westgarth Street/Merri Parade and Separation Street/Arthurton Road, in view of the late 19th Century and early 20th Century character and scale of buildings in this area, and the potential value of this character and scale to the area's development as a location for retail and recreation services
- ▶ Sites located in a Heritage Overlay or adjacent to properties of recognised heritage value in the Darebin Heritage Review
- ▶ Development that would unreasonably diminish valued views from public parks, main roads and other significant vantage points to features such as:
 - ▶ Mount Macedon and the Macedon Ranges
 - ▶ the Doncaster ridgeline
 - ▶ the Dandenong Ranges
 - ▶ 'Willsmere' and the Yarra Bend parklands
 - ▶ the Melbourne Central Business District
 - ▶ the open vista to the west from the hill in All Nations Park, including opportunities to enjoy the sunset
 - ▶ the Northcote Town Hall
- ▶ Development that would unreasonably overshadow areas of public amenity including parks and other significant public spaces.

DESIGN & MATERIALS

- ▶ Development is expected to exhibit high standards of design, materials of construction and external finishes. Appropriate use of a range of design techniques including variety, contrast, repetition, colour, texture and detail should be used to harmonise building elements with their surroundings, manage transitions in scale between new and existing buildings, and create attractive, interesting and durable building facades.

- ▶ Design should respect, without mimicking, the existing urban character of the area, including nearby residential streets
- ▶ Design should pay particular attention to interface design, taking into consideration relative orientation and position of adjacent buildings, scale of the development, colour, materials and roof pitch.
- ▶ Design and building materials used should minimise the potential for graffiti
- ▶ The use of materials with a low embodied energy, and the reuse of existing materials are strongly encouraged. (Embodied Energy is the total energy used to create, use and dispose of a product including all of the processes involved in harvesting, production, transportation, construction, use and disposal or re-use. It can represent a significant proportion of the total energy used during the lifecycle of a home.
- ▶ The design of new buildings should incorporate techniques to minimise their apparent bulk and the 'wedding cake' effect of progressive setbacks to upper levels, such as:
 - ▶ The creation of a clear base, middle and top preferably divided along prevailing horizontal lines, such as those of adjoining verandahs or parapets.
 - ▶ Vertical articulation to break up long horizontal forms into smaller elements, such as the expression of vertical circulation cores.
- ▶ The façades of new development should be modulated by porticos, balconies, verandahs and sun shade devices.
- ▶ Where upper levels of buildings will reveal blank walls to surrounding public spaces and nearby properties, these will be treated so as to reduce their visual impact.
- ▶ The design of exposed external walls, above the height of the street wall, should ensure that they are visually recessive, through techniques such as a contrasting material or finish to that of the street wall.
- ▶ Rooftop servicing and communication equipment should not be visible from public spaces.

BUILDING HEIGHT

- ▶ Building height should be determined by the application of the other elements of this policy and having regard to:
 - ▶ Site context, including the scale and character of surrounding development and the nature and sensitivity of surrounding land uses.
 - ▶ Site characteristics, including area, dimensions, topography, orientation and outlook.
 - ▶ Existing use, including nature, hours of operation, generation of noise, odours, light, dust and other external nuisances, traffic generation, vehicle access and parking
 - ▶ Existing development on the site, including height, bulk, and site coverage.

SETBACKS

- ▶ On sites within a Business 1 or Business 2 zone buildings should extend across the full width of the front boundary at ground level. No front or side setback from a street is required for up to 3.5 metres higher than the prevailing building height on the street to which the building fronts in the immediate locality, as determined by Council, to a maximum height, without setback, of ten (10) metres.
- ▶ Any part of a building above that referred to in the preceding point is to be set back a minimum of 1.5 metres per level from the level below on any façade facing a street.
- ▶ Buildings over 25 metres in height should be set back from side and rear boundaries a minimum of 3 metres for commercial uses and 6 metres for residential uses per level. New buildings facing existing buildings with windows to residential uses should ensure that overlooking to the existing windows is minimised by the use of translucent glazing, offsetting sight lines or screens.
- ▶ Frontage setbacks in Residential 1 zones should be determined having regard to the setbacks prevailing in the locality, the nature of adjoining uses and the character of the street.
- ▶ In Residential zones a new building adjacent to an existing residential building is to be not more than 3.5 metres higher than that existing residential building, for the entire length of the new building on the side adjoining the existing residential building, and for a depth of four (4) metres from the common boundary. Where the new building is separated from the existing building by a public lane or right of way, the depth may be reduced to two (2) metres. Where an adjoining residential site is vacant, the site will be assumed to contain a two level building for the purposes of this clause.
- ▶ The height required in the preceding point may be varied where an existing building on the site of a proposed development is more than 3.5 metres higher than an adjoining existing residential building, at the elevation nearest to the adjoining existing residential building. However the height of new development in this elevation should not exceed the height of such existing building on the site, and such existing building should not be increased in height.
- ▶ A greater setback than required by application of the above clauses may be required to meet the “Overshadowing” and “Overlooking” requirements of this policy.

USE

- ▶ Where a proposed development is located in a core retail area of a Business 1 or Business 2 zone, the ground level frontage of the building facing the street should be designed and used for retail or other approved business purposes.
- ▶ Development is to provide residential apartments with a range of bedroom configurations to promote housing affordability and choice.

CAR PARKING & VEHICLE ACCESS

- ▶ Vehicle parking will generally be required to be provided on site for the residential component of development in accordance with clauses 55.03-9 to 55.03-11 of the Darebin Planning Scheme.
- ▶ Non-residential components of development will be expected to make some provision for car parking. Council will have regard to the parking rates and the decision guidelines under clause 52.06 of the Darebin Planning Scheme in determining a suitable provision in each case.
- ▶ Vehicle crossings to frontage streets in commercial or business areas will generally be discouraged, due to their incompatibility with safe and convenient vehicle and pedestrian movement, and the undesirability of interrupting active frontages in commercial or business areas.
- ▶ Where available to the site, vehicle access for a development is to be generally provided from a side or rear street, lane or right-of-way. The limited capacity of narrow rear lanes and rights-of-way to carry high volumes of traffic will be a limiting factor to the development of sites which do not have side or rear street access. Council may require the widening and reconstruction of lane or right-of-way reserves and formations at the developer's cost, to provide for adequate vehicle access to the subject development and future development in the immediate locality.
- ▶ Council may require a traffic report prepared by a reputable consultant to justify the proposed parking and access arrangements for a development. A traffic report will be required if there is a request to waive parking requirements.
- ▶ Vehicle access to new development abutting side streets should be via the side street.
- ▶ New development abutting lanes may be required to allow for their widening to six (6) metres.
- ▶ Commercial deliveries via rear lanes, less than 4.5 metres wide, should be between 9am and 4pm.
- ▶ Adequate street lighting will be provided in rear lanes as part of any development that uses them for access.
- ▶ Council will consider reduced parking requirements for developments within 400 metres of a train station, where a 'Green Travel Plan' is provided that shows how alternative travel modes will be facilitated and implemented.

- ▼ All parking areas need to be well lit, and parking structures should be designed to ensure parked cars are not visible from public areas and adjoining buildings.

STREET ADDRESS

- ▼ In core retail areas, development is to provide continuous weather protection to the footpath.
- ▼ In core retail areas, development is to provide for an active frontage to the footpath through the inclusion of generous glazing, building openings or other design techniques that promote visibility and accessibility between the footpath and the building.
- ▼ In other locations, development should provide an attractively designed and finished interface between the building and the footpath. Landscaping, steps, terracing, paving, fencing and/or balcony treatments should be incorporated in the building design so as to provide variety and interest from the street, while protecting the privacy of residents within. A vertical separation between the footpath and the ground level of the building will be accepted, up to a maximum of one (1) metre, provided the size of the separation does not compromise achievement of the preceding requirement, in the opinion of Council.
- ▼ Development is to provide an attractive, recognisable and accessible pedestrian access point from the street to the residential component of the building.
- ▼ If required by the nature of uses proposed, development is to make provision for advertising signage as an integrated and visually cohesive element of the building design.
- ▼ External public and communal spaces are required to be adequately lit and clearly visible from within adjacent buildings.
- ▼ Internal communal spaces are required to be clearly visible before entering the space.
- ▼ Any recesses in the ground floor front façade of a building built to the street boundary are to be no more than 300 millimetres deep and no less than one metre wide.
- ▼ Mail boxes are to be located close to the pedestrian entry.

AMENITY IMPACTS, INCLUDING OVERSHADOWING AND OVERLOOKING

- Residential or mixed-use development should meet the objectives of clauses 55.04-3 and 55.04-6 to 55.04-8 of the Darebin Planning Scheme. It should also meet the objective of clause 55.04-1 and 55.04-4 to 55.04-5 of the Darebin Planning Scheme in relation to adjoining dwellings in a Residential zone. Council should have regard to the standards set out under these clauses when assessing whether a residential apartment development meets the objectives of these clauses.
- The form and layout of development should be such as to inherently avoid or minimise overlooking of neighbours, rather than relying on screening or other corrective techniques to assure privacy.
- Design elements to control overlooking from the development to the secluded open space of surrounding residential development should be designed and constructed as integrated and visually cohesive elements of the building design, rather than as corrective additions.
- Surface treatments should use low reflectivity surfaces.
- Servicing equipment will not be located where it will cause a noise nuisance to adjacent properties.

ON-SITE AMENITY AND FACILITIES, INCLUDING PRIVATE OPEN SPACE

- Residential apartment developments will meet the objectives of clause 55.05 of the Darebin Planning Scheme. Council should have regard to the standards set out under this clause when assessing whether a residential apartment development meets the objectives of this clause.
- Development is to incorporate weather protection to private open space to Council's satisfaction. Such elements should be designed and constructed as integrated and visually cohesive elements of the building design, rather than as corrective additions.
- Development is to make adequate provision for natural light and ventilation to habitable rooms, including bedrooms, for all residential apartments within the development.
- Dwellings are required to be designed to minimise the impact of on-site external noise sources, and the site layout of residential developments will separate active communal recreation areas, parking areas, vehicle access ways and service equipment areas from bedrooms.
- Residential development is to incorporate appropriate noise attenuation measures to minimise the potential impact of noise generated by nearby business, commercial and entertainment uses as part of their normal operations. An acoustic assessment report may be required to demonstrate the effectiveness of proposed measures.

- ▶ In larger residential developments, communal open spaces should be provided to allow for recreational uses such as a garden, courtyard and BBQ facilities and utility uses such as open air clothes drying.
- ▶ Communications devices, cabling, antennas and plant should be integrated into the building design, consolidated and rationalised wherever possible and not visible from the surrounding streets.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

- ▶ Generally, development will be required to make private arrangements for bulk storage and collection of refuse, including recyclable waste and this should be the responsibility of the body corporate.
- ▶ Waste will be stored on site (not in adjacent laneways or on public footpaths) other than for the minimum time required for collection.
- ▶ Waste disposal facilities will be carefully located so as not to pose amenity or health risks to the occupants of the development or abutting uses.
- ▶ The hours of collection of waste should be restricted so to minimise amenity impacts to any adjacent residents.
- ▶ All waste arrangements will be to the satisfaction of Council.

EQUITABLE ACCESS

- ▶ Development is to be designed to comply with the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 as amended. In particular, any part of the building to which the general public is to have unrestricted access is to be designed and constructed to avoid discrimination in the provision of access. This is to include:
 - ▶ Access from the street footpath to foyers, lobbies, passageways, lifts and the like
 - ▶ Access from the street footpath to any separately accessible premises at ground level
 - ▶ Access from car parking areas to foyers, lobbies, passageways, lifts and the like
 - ▶ Access from foyers, lobbies, passageways, lifts and the like to individual premises
 - ▶ Access from foyers, lobbies, passageways, lifts and the like to public toilets
 - ▶ Emergency access and exits.

- Development is to provide lift access to all levels of the building from which separate premises take their main access.

UTILITY SERVICES

- Council will consult with the relevant utility service providers for water supply, sewerage, stormwater drainage and power in relation to the adequacy of utility services to support the development proposed.

HERITAGE

- Refurbishment and extension to existing heritage buildings and new buildings adjoining a heritage building will be designed to be respectful and complementary in style, form, proportions, materials and colours.
- Upper level additions to existing heritage buildings will have an historically appropriate style and scale or be visually distinct and subservient.
- New awnings and shopfronts to heritage buildings are to be sympathetic to the building style.
- New buildings will not interrupt the silhouettes of the tops of major heritage buildings as seen against the sky from within the street corridor.

SUSTAINABILITY

- Development is to achieve a five (5) star energy rating assessed in accordance with the Sustainable Energy Authority of Victoria 'First Rate' system or equivalent.
- Buildings should be naturally lit and ventilated, having ground floor ceiling heights of at least 2.7 metres and having a maximum number of pedestrian access points visible from the street. Natural lighting and ventilation can be provided through the use of courtyard forms and the creation of a dual aspect for apartments or office units.
- A detailed stormwater management plan must be submitted demonstrating how the on-site drainage system takes into account the need for on-site stormwater detention or retention and re-use, and the scope for on-site stormwater infiltration.