

CITY OF DAREBIN RETAIL ACTIVITY CENTRES STRATEGY

Prepared for

City of Darebin

by

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The City of Darebin in conjunction with Essential Economics Pty Ltd, in association with Planning by Design and David Lock Associates, has prepared a Retail Activity Centres Strategy to guide the on-going development of retail activity centres in Darebin and to provide input to a review of the City of Darebin Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS). The initial report was prepared in 2003, and has since been amended to reflect the findings of an independent panel in relation to Amendments C47 and C53 to the City of Darebin Planning Scheme.

The Strategy is intended to present a strategic basis for Council programs and policies in relation to the following areas:

1. **Development in retail activity centres:** Decision-making by Council in response to planning applications for development in activity centres; proactive measures to encourage appropriate expansion and business development in centres; centre management issues; identification of an appropriate activity centre hierarchy; identification of roles and future preferred development for centres; consideration of centres where retail roles have been lost.
2. **Town planning at retail activity centres:** Application of planning scheme instruments including proposed changes to zoning at retail activity centres and proposed amendments to the City of Darebin Local Planning Policy Framework (including the Municipal Strategic Statement).
3. **Urban design:** Initiatives that are intended to improve the visual and functional attributes of centres.

It is some time since the previous retail strategy was undertaken by WSC consultants in 1997, and it is now opportune to prepare an updated retail strategy which traces recent development trends and provides an examination of the prospects for retailing across the City of Darebin and in specific shopping areas. We note that this previous Retail Strategy dealt primarily with centre management issues, and there is a need to consider other issues relating to retail growth opportunities, strategic planning considerations, and urban design issues.

An important component of the Strategy comprises a review of the network of identified activity centres in Darebin. The centre network review has been undertaken in order to ensure that the network continues to identify relevant roles for each centre. The Strategy includes land use and development recommendations (including, in some cases, proposed zone changes) for poorly performing centres and for those centres which have lost their retail and/or commercial role.

The Strategy has been prepared with consideration given to **Melbourne 2030**, which presents a Metropolitan Strategy for Melbourne as a whole. The policies and principles identified in the Activity Centre Strategy for Darebin have been prepared in the context of activity centre policy presented in the Metropolitan Strategy, and are intended to contribute to the implementation of Melbourne 2030.

1.2 Objectives

The overall objectives for the Activity Centres Strategy are as follows:

1. Preparation of a **background report** which includes an assessment of the current situation for retail centres in Darebin, and which identifies the issues and opportunities which need to be addressed
2. Preparation of **strategies** to address the issues and opportunities which have been identified, to define a vision for the future development of activity centres in Darebin, and to provide a framework for Council decision-making with respect to centre development
3. Preparation of a series of **recommendations** which put into effect the Strategy, and which can be incorporated into Council programs and policies through changes to the application of zones, changes to the MSS, introduction of Council programs, and so on

1.3 Outcomes

The outcomes arising from these broad study objectives are presented in two separate reports which have been prepared as part of the City of Darebin Retail Activity Centres Strategy:

Retail Activity Centres Background Report

The Retail Activity Centres Background Report provides a background analysis of the structure and operation of retail activity centres in Darebin, including consideration of retail trends, analysis of population and spending levels, identification of retail development potential, evaluation of the current roles and performance of individual centres, and other factors which influence centre development. The report identifies the key issues and opportunities which need to be addressed through the Strategy.

Retail Activity Centres Strategy

The Retail Activity Centres Strategy presents recommendations for the future development of retail activity centres in Darebin, including the preparation of a Vision to guide Council decision-making; Principles relating to centre development, centre management and business planning, and urban design; and a Retail Development Framework to guide the overall development of the activity centre network. The report identifies where these strategic outcomes can be implemented in Council's policies and programs, including changes to the City of Darebin Planning Scheme.

This document presents the **Retail Activity Centres Strategy**, while the *Retail Activity Centres Background Report* is presented as a separate document.

Separate **Placed-Based Strategies** have also been prepared as part of this study. These provide indicative recommendations for the future development of individual activity centres, and are intended as the basis for structure planning to be progressively undertaken for individual centres. The Place-Based Strategies do not form part of the Retail Activity Centres Strategy for planning purposes.

1.4 Format and Approach

The Retail Activity Centre Strategy comprises the following elements which are intended to provide the basis for Council decision-making in relation to activity centre development:

Vision

The Vision is intended as an overall guiding statement of how the network of activity centres in Darebin is to be developed, in a way which meets the wider objectives of the City of Darebin, including those relating to economic development, small business development, improving amenity for residents, creating active and attractive public spaces, addressing sustainability issues, and so on.

Strategic Policies for Centre Development

A set of strategic policies has been developed in order to provide guidance for Council and other stakeholders. The policies provide recommendations with regard to certain aspects of centre development, including, for example, centre roles and centre identity, business development and centre management, Council response to development applications, principles to guide urban design issues for existing and new centres, and an appropriate planning response for poorly performing centres and those which have lost their retail role.

Retail Development Framework

The Retail Development Framework describes the network of activity centres in Darebin, and identifies a hierarchy of centres to guide the future development of the network. The Framework is intended to present an overall vision of the roles of centres and the location for retail and business development. The Framework also provides specific recommendations for poorly performing centres in Darebin, including a decision-making framework for assessing the future role of such centres.

The Retail Development Framework is also intended to provide a strategic review of activity centres, which is identified as a required Action in **Melbourne 2030 - Implementation Plan 4 (Activity Centres)**, and also contributes to the implementation of Melbourne 2030 by identifying the network of neighbourhood centres that operates in Darebin.

Implementation

A range of implementation measures give effect to the recommendations contained in the Strategy, and include:

- proposed changes in the application of zones
- proposed amendments and additions to the Darebin Municipal Strategic Framework (MSS)
- other measures intended to give effect to the Strategy (eg input to Council programs with respect to business development and centre management, etc)

Monitoring and Review

A monitoring and review process has been developed for the Strategy, in order to ensure that it remains a relevant and up-to-date policy document. This is especially important when we consider the urban development trends which may influence centre development in Darebin, which include increasing housing density (particularly along the High Street corridor), changing socio-demographic features, retail industry trends (including increasing popularity of large format retail stores), and so on.

Planning Checklist

A planning checklist is presented in Chapter 9, and provides a structure for the assessment of planning applications in activity centres in Darebin. The checklist provides a summary of those aspects of the Strategy that are relevant in assessing applications, and presents a listing of information to be provided by applicants.

1.5 Other Studies

It is important to note that the Activity Centres Strategy is one of a number of policy documents underway or recently prepared for the City of Darebin, relating to various aspects of policy development. These documents include:

- the **Darebin High Street Study** (2002), which provides a detailed vision for the future form and function of the High Street Corridor, including implementation measures such as zone changes, local policy application, changes to the Darebin Municipal Strategic Statement, application of Design and Development Overlays, etc
- the **City of Darebin Industrial Land Use Strategy** (2001), which provides a framework for decision-making in relation to industrial land use development and design across the municipality, and includes changes to Industrial zones, a guide for land use and policy direction for each identified industrial precinct, and preparation of a decision-making framework for application in rezoning requests
- the **Junction Integrated Development Plan** (2001), which presents a framework for the future development of the Junction precinct (which generally includes parts of High Street and Plenty Road, between Dundas Street and Bell Street), and including suggested zone changes to implement the plan
- the **Darebin Integrated Travel Plan**, which sets out Council policy with regard to travel in the municipality, and includes guidance in relation to road improvements, tram and bus stops and routes, footpaths and pedestrian crossings, parking, and so on
- the **City of Darebin Integrated Housing Strategy** (2001), which sets out Council's objectives for housing in the municipality, and develops strategies by which these objectives may be achieved
- the **Preston Central Vision 2006** (2001), which presents a strategy and vision for the ongoing development of Preston Central as a key business and community centre for Darebin and the northern region of Melbourne

In addition to these Council policy documents, a number of other studies have been reviewed as part of the preparation of this Strategy, including business planning documents for individual centres.

It is important that these existing policy documents be considered in the preparation of strategies relating to activity centre development and planning, in order to ensure that a consistent vision and policy direction is adopted for the future development of the activity centre network in Darebin.

In addition to Council policies prepared by the City of Darebin, the Strategy also considers **Melbourne 2030**, which presents strategies and implementation measures to guide development in the Melbourne Metropolitan area. Melbourne 2030 has the weight of a “seriously entertained strategy”, and has been implemented in Victorian Planning Schemes through the inclusion of a new Clause 12 (draft) to the State Planning Policy Framework. Policies and strategies currently under preparation (including this Retail Activity Centres Strategy) are required to be reviewed in consideration of the Melbourne 2030 document.

The Retail Activity Centres Strategy is intended to address a number of Actions identified in Melbourne 2030, in particular those actions presented in **Implementation Plan 4 - Activity Centres (draft)** which are identified as requiring local government implementation. These actions include the following initiatives in Melbourne 2030:

- Initiative 1.1.1: Undertake a strategic review of activity centres; identify direction of change for each centre; identify Neighbourhood Activity Centres
- Initiative 1.1.2: Undertake a process of structure planning for individual centres, particularly Principal and Major Activity Centres
- Initiative 1.2.3: Undertake assessment of activity centres against performance criteria, and encourage concentration of activity at existing centres

Other initiatives also have relevance in the preparation of this Strategy.

1.6 Coverage

It should be noted that whilst Northland, alongside Preston Central, has been identified in Melbourne 2030 as a Principal Activity Centre, the study has an emphasis on preparing recommendations for strip centres in Darebin. This reflects the more limited potential for local government to proactively influence the physical form of development at major undercover centres, and the emphasis on local centre management and urban design outcomes (which are more relevant for strip centres in the context of Council budgets for capital works, support for trader associations, etc). However, it is of course important to appreciate that there are opportunities for Council to encourage an appropriate form and scale of development at Northland, and Council can introduce specific conditions relating to centre design and provision of public facilities such as community space, public transport interchanges, and so on.

While the emphasis for the strategy is on other centres, we note that Northland plays an important regional retail role for residents in the City of Darebin and the wider region. The centre attracts retail spending into the City of Darebin from a wide region, generating significant employment opportunities and creating potential for spin-off benefits for other centres (especially, for example, for bulky goods at the nearby homemaker precinct along Murray Road).

The Strategy also presents a number of principles and policies for application to certain centre types, such as for local convenience centres, bulky goods clusters, and so on. Specific recommendations have been prepared for centres that are identified as poorly performing or having lost their retail role. These policies are presented in the Retail Activity Centre Framework (refer section 5.6).

2 SUMMARY OF ISSUES FOR THE STRATEGY TO ADDRESS

2.1 Introduction

This Chapter presents a summary of the key issues that need to be addressed through the Retail Activity Centres Strategy, based on the analysis undertaken as background to the study. A more detailed presentation of the issues and opportunities is contained in the Background Report, which also includes a detailed retail-economic assessment of the retail sector in Darebin, and an overview description of the key features, roles and opportunities for individual centres. We note that the retail-economic analysis is based on data collected during the preparation of the Strategy in 2003.

The issues identified in the Background Report relate to aspects such as:

- the potential for retail development
- centre planning, including roles and functions of centres
- business planning, including centre management issues
- issues regarding urban design and infrastructure requirements
- consistency with existing strategies and policies

Each of these issues are identified and discussed in subsequent sections.

2.2 Retail Development Prospects

The retail-economic analysis presented in the Background Report identifies the following key issues in relation to retail development prospects for centres in Darebin:

1. There is significant retail provision in the City of Darebin, providing a wide range of retail facilities for Darebin residents and those visiting from further afield. The retail network includes regional retail facilities located at Preston Central and Northland Shopping Centre (which are Principal Activity Centres in the Metropolitan Strategy hierarchy), as well as a range of major activity centres (Northcote, Reservoir), neighbourhood centres, local convenience centres, cluster centres (by which we mean bulky goods and other homemaker-oriented facilities), and smaller individual businesses providing retail and other services.
2. The activity centre network is supported by a large residential population, which is forecast to grow, albeit at a relatively slow rate (an additional 3,600 persons over the coming 5 years). An important aspect of population change is the fact that Darebin is experiencing a significant shift in the demographic profile of its residents, with increasing housing demand creating high house prices and increasing development opportunities in the southern part of the municipality. This “wave” of demographic change is expected to move northwards to other parts of the municipality (Preston, Reservoir) in coming years, providing additional stimulus to the demand for retail and business services. The additional policy support, through Melbourne 2030, for

high density housing at nominated centres (that include 4 Principal/Major centres in Darebin) could lead to higher-than-forecast population growth, and an increased level of retail demand at the local level for those centres where housing development is occurring.

3. Importantly, retail demand also comes from neighbouring municipalities, where significant population growth continues to be experienced, particularly in parts of the City of Whittlesea (including Epping, South Morang, and Mernda/Doreen).
4. These population and socio-demographic trends are expected to create additional demand for retail and business services in the City of Darebin. The analysis presented in the Background Report identifies retail potential in the order of 87,000 m² of additional floorspace over the period 2001 to 2016, although this is presented as a broad indication of retail demand, and actual growth opportunities will depend on many factors.
5. The increasing demand for retail floorspace is likely to generate the following local-level pressures for retail and business development:
 - Expansion of Northland Shopping Centre as the main location for regional-level shopping serving the wider region (and this expansion is also supported by spending coming into the municipality from further afield)
 - Growth in the provision of bulky goods shopping facilities in response to the increasing popularity of this form of shopping
 - Potential strengthening of the role for the main centres along the High Street spine, including Preston and Northcote, where high density residential development is expected to occur
 - Strengthening of the viability of existing shops, particularly the main grocery shopping locations, with opportunities for business improvement such as building renovation or redevelopment, etc
 - New retail and local business facilities to serve new growth areas (Mount Cooper, Lancaster Gate, Mont Park)
 - Increased provision of cafés and restaurants and other lifestyle retail services as a result of the demographic profile of new residents - this demand will be particularly significant where it serves young populations in high density and infill development, such as along High Street
6. There is unlikely to be substantial additional demand for local centre facilities, particularly those located in established residential areas which are not likely to experience significant infill redevelopment, although there may be opportunities for small-scale home-business development at these centres as an alternative to retail activity. However, where new residential development is evident - including high density development along major transport corridors (eg High Street) and infill development in residential suburbs - additional demand will be created for a range of local retail and business services.

The issues identified above point to the need for good strategic planning to ensure that the retail network develops in a way that meets the retail and business needs of residents and visitors, while also meeting wider strategic goals such as improved accessibility; ecological, social and economic sustainability; economic and business development; job growth; and so on.

2.3 Centre Roles and Identity

The Background Report presents an analysis of the roles and function and future viability of retail activity centres in Darebin, and identifies the following issues relating to centre roles and identity:

1. It is important that centres have clearly defined and easily identifiable roles in the activity centre network in order to assist Council and other stakeholders in directing future investment, and to provide an opportunity for centres to develop appropriate marketing themes.
2. Activity centres typically have a range of important functions in addition to their role as a retail shopping location. These additional roles and functions relate to aspects such as their contribution to the built environment, provision of non-retail commercial activities (office, service industry, community, civic, etc), community, cultural and social activities, transport, education and cultural functions, and as a focus for local employment. It is important that these other roles be maintained and strengthened through the policies presented in this Strategy.
3. Increasingly, there are opportunities for some centres to develop new roles as locations for higher density residential development, which will assist in supporting the viability of existing business and providing opportunities for new retail and business functions, although we note that these opportunities are mostly focussed on the larger commercial or industrial sites (for example, larger properties on High Street) that present viable opportunities for housing redevelopment.
4. The activity centre network needs to be able to accommodate the changing needs of residents and other visitors, and this is particularly in evidence with the increasing demand for large format retail types. These opportunities need to be accommodated in the retail network in ways that maximise the economic, social and environmental goals of the community, and suitable sites need to be identified for such development.
5. Some smaller centres are under-performing or have completely lost their retail and/or commercial roles. In these cases there is a need to identify alternative development opportunities which can be facilitated through a review of planning provisions, including rezonings (where appropriate) or changes to strategic policy. It is important, however, to maintain a network of local centres that provide easy access to basic retail facilities for walk-in customers (ie pedestrian access from residents in the immediate surrounding area).

2.4 Centre Management and Business Planning

Issues relating to centre management and business planning for retail activity centres include the following:

1. Effective and coordinated management of activity centres is an important factor in the success of centres. Management models need to be carefully tailored to reflect the needs of individual centres.
2. There are a range of issues which are typically experienced by business associations, including difficulty in engaging or capturing the interest of business operators and property owners in the centre, the need for professional training of business people, the time and resources requirements for meetings etc, the need to ensure representation, the importance of self-help

rather than total reliance on Council or government support, the need to create ownership of the vision and strategies identified for the centre, and so on.

3. It is important to ensure that there is an appropriate and agreed allocation of roles and responsibilities among the stakeholders - including Council, property owners, business operators, local residents, and infrastructure providers - aimed at creating a mutually supportive partnership approach between all the major stakeholders that recognises specific skill and resource availability.
4. The availability of sufficient funding is critical to the success of centre management models, and this means that choices need to be made with respect to funding models (eg voluntary contributions vs Special Rate, etc). The implementation of funding mechanisms creates an additional workload for Council offices, which means that special rates tend to be more effective for larger centres. Funding schemes also need to take into account the need to develop an effective Business Plan, to be implemented by a (usually) part-time centre co-ordinator.
5. Centre management models need a co-ordinated implementation mechanism, and this role usually will fall to Council. Typically, this requires a co-ordinated approach by a number of different Council departments, and often there is a need to identify specific internal processes and allocation of responsibilities.

2.5 Urban Design Issues

A number of key issues relate to urban design features of retail activity centres, and are summarised below:

1. The visual quality of retail activity centres has an important influence on the attractiveness and vibrancy of centres, and it will be important to ensure that these visual features are supported by investment by Council, property owners, developers, and businesses.
2. Urban design also has an important contribution to make to the functional role of centres - for example, urban design treatments can be used to define centre boundaries, promote vibrant street activities, focus activity, provide for social interaction, and so on.
3. Some activity centres in Darebin present poorly in terms of their urban design features, and in these cases there is a need for an increased level of investment by stakeholders - including Council - directed to these centres. In some centres which have lost their retail and/or commercial role, this additional investment is only likely to be generated where the Strategy can identify new and viable roles for these centres.
4. For the High Street corridor, the Strategy aims to complement the urban design vision which has been developed in the High Street Study, which seeks to encourage vibrant and high quality activities for the corridor.
5. There is a lack of retail variety and non-retail activity such as professional services, community functions and office space at some centres, and this is particularly the case for the stand alone centres like Northland and Summerhill/Target Centre.
6. Many of the smaller centres and the fringes of the larger centres are fragmented by non-retail and vacant premises, discouraging shoppers from walking between the shops and reducing the vitality of the street environment. The High Street centres suffer from a traffic-dominated public

realm associated with significant through-traffic, and this does not contribute positively to a friendly environment for pedestrians, outdoor diners, informal socialising and cyclists. It also adversely affects the reliability of tram and bus services. There is a need for a better balance of provision between all street users.

7. There is a shortage of car parking in a small number of centres (although most are well provided for), which is exacerbated by the use of the most central spaces by staff of the shops and businesses.
8. Pedestrian access to and within some centres is poor, and this is particularly the case for Northland, Summerhill/Target and between Reservoir Village and The Broadway.
9. Pedestrian connections with train stations and off-street car parks are poor in many cases, both in terms of the quality and legibility of the route.
10. There is a lack of activity in most of the centres after the shops close due to a lack of non-retail floorspace, resulting in a loss of casual surveillance and consequent feeling of insecurity by those going to evening activities or home from work, particularly after dark.
11. There are a number of instances of high blank walls or service areas abutting public spaces, particularly at Northland, Summerhill/Target and Northcote Plaza, and around off-street car parks, and these create an unattractive environment and reduce safety.
12. Some centres have infrastructure requirements that need to be met, such as seating and rubbish bins, and there are isolated examples of a lack of shade over the footpath.
13. Many of the older centres have a rundown appearance. This is contributed to by the poor condition of both buildings and streetscape, and is exacerbated by a lack of opportunity for tree planting, visual clutter and, in some cases, poor choice and little consistency of street furniture and materials. Although not as significant as other aspects of their design, the appearance, quality, cleanliness and care of the public realm can influence the attractiveness of a retail centre to shoppers. However, there appears to have been relatively little investment by either building owners or Council in recent years.

2.6 Existing Policies

There are a number of existing policies which need to be considered in the development of the Retail Activity Centres Strategy. The key aspects are summarised below:

State Policy

State level planning policy is described in the State Planning Policy Framework (SPPF), which is included in all Victorian Planning Schemes. The SPPF provides a number of policies which are of relevance for activity centre planning:

1. The SPPF is intended to provide the State context for land use planning and development across Victoria. It sets out a number of principles for land use development, including (amongst others) the need to provide appropriate land for development of facilities to serve the needs of existing and future communities; to put in place appropriate policies that meet environmental goals of sustainability and effective management of resources; to provide infrastructure in a

timely, efficient, accessible and equitable manner; and to promote the economic and social well-being of communities. These principles are reflected in the Retail Activity Centres Strategy.

2. State policy has recently been prepared which provides specific directions and policies for Metropolitan Melbourne, and is included as a (draft) Clause 12 in the SPPF. Clause 12 identifies a number of principles for implementation of the Metropolitan Strategy for Melbourne (Melbourne 2030), which comprises *Sustainability, Innovation, Adaptability, Inclusiveness, Equity, Leadership, and Partnership*. These principles are further developed as a set of key directions and related policies, of which the most relevant components are summarised in the following paragraphs.
3. Policy 1.1 identifies activity centres as the focus for high-quality development, activity and living for the whole community. The policy is supported by a number of recommendations that:
 - Encourage concentration of shopping, business, community, leisure and other activities to existing and planned activity centres
 - Promote a mix of activities at centres, which are intended to encourage multi-purpose trips, create economic synergies, provide community focal points, and support the development of a network of public transport
 - Encourage the clustering of high density housing in and around centres
 - Promote local strategies that define the role and function of activity centres and provide a strategic basis for preferred type and scale of development, and which identify public transport linkages
 - These recommendations are supported by additional implementation measures for each level of the activity centre hierarchy, which comprises the Central Activities District, Principal Activity Centres (including Preston Central and Northland), Major Activity Centres (including Northcote and Reservoir), Specialised Activity Centres (including La Trobe Technology Park), and Neighbourhood Activity Centres
4. Policy 1.2 encourages a broader range of activities to be accommodated at activity centres, with restrictions on the development of out-of-centre sites. The policy directs a range of non-retail activities (education, community, etc) to locations in or next to centres on the activity centre network, and discourages out-of-centre developments except where they satisfy tests of net community benefit, including assessment of issues relating to economic and social vitality, accessibility, encouragement of public transport trip-making, and clustering of like-activities.
5. Policy 1.3 encourages substantial new housing development to sites in or close to activity centres and to other sites that offer good access to services and transport.
6. Policy 5.1 promotes good urban design to make the environment more liveable and attractive by ensuring that new development contributes to its surrounding community and responds to the surrounding built environment. The policy also has specific measures to ensure that transport corridors are developed sensibly in a way that integrates land use planning, urban design and transport planning.
7. Policy 8.1 identifies the need to upgrade and develop the Principal Public Transport Network and local public transport services to connect activity centres, and improving connections to Principal and Major Activity Centres that are not adequately serviced by the Principal Public Transport Network and improving public transport services and interchanges at stand alone centres.

8. Clause 14 of the SPPF identifies the need to ensure that a sufficient supply of land is available for residential, commercial, industrial, and other uses, and to facilitate the orderly planning of urban areas.
9. Clause 17 encourages the concentration of major retail, commercial, administrative, entertainment and cultural developments into activity centres (including strip shopping centres) which provide a variety of land uses and are highly accessible to the community. The policy provides a set of general implementation measures that are similar in direction to those included for detailed application to Metropolitan Melbourne at Clause 12 (draft).
10. Clause 18 is intended to integrate land use and transport planning around existing and planned declared highways, railways, principal bus routes and tram lines.

Overall, the State Planning Policy Framework identifies a range of principles and implementation measures that support orderly planning for activity centres, and which place an emphasis on the concentration of a variety of land use activities at or close to activity centres. These principles are supported in the Darebin Retail Activity Centres Strategy, and are contained in the Strategic Policies for Development of Activity Centres (Chapter 4) and the Retail Activity Centre Framework (Chapter 5). Implementation measures which are intended to achieve these outcomes are presented in Chapter 6.

A perceived short-fall with regards to the Metropolitan Strategy is that it appears to concentrate on the planning and physical aspects of centres and does not acknowledge to any great degree the importance of centre management, business development and business mix.

Local Planning Policy

The City of Darebin Planning Scheme presents local policy for application to land in Darebin in the Municipal Strategic Statement (Clause 21) and Local Planning Policy section (Clause 22). We note that the Municipal Strategic Statement is currently under review.

The key features of the policy document include:

1. The appreciation of the important role that activity centres play in the urban development of Darebin, including their important functions as retail nodes, and locations for a variety of other activities. The Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) notes that Darebin has a diverse network of shopping centres that caters for local and regional needs and which including Preston Central and Northland as the regional centres serving much of northern Melbourne. Significant shopping areas are also noted along the High Street corridor (including Reservoir) and at Fairfield.
2. The Darebin MSS notes the importance of ensuring that job growth continues to occur through an intensification of economic activity and redevelopment of sites. There is an appreciation of the potential role that mixed use development can play in providing employment opportunities as well as accommodating an increase in resident numbers to support economic activities.
3. The High Street internodal areas are identified as requiring a land use planning response in order to identify a vision and strategy for their future development in a way that adds to the vitality of existing centres. The main policy response to this issue is presented in the **High Street Study**, which has recently been undertaken, and which is supported by the Retail Activity Centres Strategy.

4. The Strategic Vision that has been adopted by Darebin to guide land use planning and development emphasises issues such as **vibrancy** and **sustainability** as key themes which will assist in creating liveable and harmonious communities.
5. An overall Structure Plan for Darebin identifies the main features and opportunities for future development. The Structure Plan notes the importance of Preston Central and Northland (including the associated homemaker precinct) as regional shopping locations, and also identifies key retailing precincts along the High Street spine, and at Fairfield. The internodal areas along High Street are identified as requiring a review of their future role (and this has been undertaken in the High Street Study).
6. Clause 21.10 presents Council policy with respect to Economic Development. The policy identifies the need for land use and development policies that promote economic development, particularly given the relatively high unemployment rate in Darebin. The policy also includes a number of objectives with regard to activity centres, including:
 - To create a responsive and diverse local economy
 - To facilitate and support small and micro business as a sector providing employment growth
 - To establish an effective retail hierarchy and role for a range of nominated retail activity centres
 - To revitalise the appearance and consolidate the function of local retail activity centres
 - To review existing industrial and commercial areas experiencing economic decline or land use change

Overall, the local policies presented in the Darebin Planning Scheme provide support to the notions of planning for vibrant and varied activity centres which provide a range of services to the surrounding communities they serve. These policies provide a basis for the development of the Retail Activity Centres Strategy, which aims to meet the objectives of Council policy with regard to establishing a vibrant and viable network of activity centres to serve the Darebin community. However, we note that the Retail Activity Centre Strategy presented in this report contributes to a review of existing policies presented in the MSS, including recommended changes which to be reflected in the updated MSS.

3 VISION TO GUIDE ACTIVITY CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

This Chapter presents a Vision to guide the ongoing development of retail activity centres in Darebin. The Vision is intended as an overall guiding statement of how the network of activity centres in Darebin is to be developed in a way which meets the wider objectives of the City of Darebin, including the goals which are expressed in existing Council and State policy and those that have been identified as part of this study.

The goals that are applicable to retail activity centre land use and development in the City of Darebin can be summarised as follows:

- To promote economic development and ongoing job creation
- To foster small business development
- To encourage the development of interesting, viable and vibrant activity centres
- To improve the range and quality of shopping and business services provided at activity centres
- To improve the amenity of the built environment
- To create safe and liveable urban environments
- To encourage accessibility and sustainability as key features of activity centre policy
- To introduce activities such as housing and mixed use development at locations which support the roles and functions of activity centres

These goals are expressed in the following Vision for Retail Activity Centre Development in the City of Darebin:

Darebin’s retail activity centre network will be developed in a way that promotes the vibrancy and sustainability of the activity centre network through appropriate land use planning and development, business development, and centre management policies that focus investment on activity centres as key community focal points

4 STRATEGIC POLICIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF ACTIVITY CENTRES

4.1 Introduction

To achieve the Vision that has been prepared to guide Activity Centre Development, a broad suite of strategies, policies and actions covering a range of economic, business, social and physical issues in a consistent and collaborative fashion are required.

Activity centres are complex urban entities. Successful centres require a carefully constructed “cocktail” of initiatives that address business mix, business development, community development, physical design, centre management and urban planning aspects. Pursuing any of these in isolation from the others is unlikely to be effective. A vibrant centre relies on more than its physical design for its success; typically, a combination of qualities such as attractive physical design, an appropriate business and activity mix, effective and cooperative management and a clear appreciation of a centre’s status and potential are the most successful ingredients for an attractive and well-performing centre.

A range of strategic policies have been developed to guide Council’s decision-making process with regard to the future development of the retail activity centre network, and are supported by actions for implementation. These strategic policies constitute the broad objectives around which this Strategy is based, and are outlined under the following headings:

- Centre Roles and Identity
- Centre Management and Business Development
- Urban Design

These objectives are designed to be pursued in an integrated and coordinated fashion through a strategic partnership between Council, businesses, property owners and the various business associations in Darebin.

4.2 Centre Roles and Identity

The following strategic policies are intended to assist in the process of identifying viable roles for activity centres in Darebin and creating an identity for these centres in order to guide the delivery of private investment, Council resources and programs and other measures. The identification of centre roles is an important process in determining the Retail Activity Centre Framework that operates in Darebin, and which is presented in Chapter 5.

(1) Support the retail activity centre network

The retail activity centre network will be supported so that the specific roles, functions and themes of each centre are easily identifiable and to provide certainty for stakeholders including Council, developers, property owners and businesses.

The retail activity centre network - or retail hierarchy - is an important tool which helps to define the level and type of retail provision for individual community catchments, and assists in planning for the efficient delivery of retail and business services.

The adoption of a hierarchy of centres, with nominated roles at each level in the hierarchy or for individual centres, is an important process in identifying the preferred future direction for centre development. Moreover, the retail centre network provides an important reference point in assessing applications for development in activity centres.

The hierarchy adopted for the purposes of Melbourne 2030 is inadequate in the context of municipal strategic planning, and needs modification for Darebin’s many centres. An updated hierarchy which has been adopted for the purposes of this study is presented in Chapter 5.

Actions:

- 1.1 Ensure that the retail activity centre network is recognised as a useful planning tool to guide the location, type and volume of new or expanded retail development
- 1.2 Adopt the provisions of this Retail Activity Centre Strategy, including the Retail Activity Centre Framework (Chapter 5), to guide Council decision-making in relation to centre development
- 1.3 Review the status of existing planning, development and design plans for the major centres, having regard for policies in *Melbourne 2030* which identify the need to prepare local structure plans for Principal and Major Activity Centres

(2) Retain retail expenditure through the provision of an efficient activity centre network

Council will work to retain local spending in Darebin through the improvement of existing centres/shops, and by facilitating the development of additional retail facilities where they meet the demands of residents and visitors and where it is in accordance with the retail activity centre framework.

The fundamental goal in providing retail facilities is to ensure that residents and other businesses are provided with the full range of retail and other business services that they demand, in locations that are accessible and convenient, and in an urban environment that is safe, vibrant and aesthetically pleasing.

Maximising the level of retail provision for residents and other visitors directly contributes to achieving the key goals of economic development and small and micro-business development, and creates local economic benefits in the form of jobs, incomes and ongoing investment. Moreover, the ability to encourage a wider range of business service provision and office development has the potential to create important economic clusters which provide a stimulus for further economic development and job creation.

There are number of important considerations relating to the principle of maximising retained spending, including the need to ensure that activity centres are attractive physical environments, the need to provide for new forms of retail development, the need to maximise population and spending growth, and so on.

Actions:

- 2.1 Support proposals for the development of new or expanded retail facilities, or for redevelopment of existing facilities, where such proposals are in accordance with the Retail Activity Centre Framework and other policies presented in this Strategy
- 2.2 Council will require sufficient information from the proponent of new or expanded retail development in order to contribute to decision-making, including an analysis of the proposal against the policies presented in this Strategy

(3) Define and consolidate the activity centre network

Darebin has an established network of retail activity centres that will provide the focus for ongoing retail and business development, and will be the locations where ongoing private and public investment will be directed

Consolidation of retail, business, employment, community and leisure facilities, and high density housing at existing activity centres will provide an important contribution to the goals of Vibrancy and Sustainability.

Consolidation contributes to Vibrancy because it creates a focus for a range of activities, including retail, business, community, education, and other land uses. The aggregation of activities at defined centres consolidates trip-making at these locations, adding to the viability for shops and business at these centres.

Consolidation contributes to Sustainability by reducing the need for multiple trips in order to undertake activities such as shopping, business trips, journeys to and from work or home, undertaking education, community or civic activities, and so on. Reduced trip-making creates important benefits in terms of reduced private car use, and hence reduced greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental benefits, improved pedestrian safety, and so on. Moreover, the consolidation of activities provides an opportunity to integrate land use and transport services, thereby providing an opportunity for an increased level of public transport service, which also creates environmental benefits.

An important aspect is the need to clearly define the locations and boundaries of existing activity centres in Darebin. Chapter 5 provides a description of the locations of retail activity centres in Darebin and their place in the retail hierarchy, while detailed information for particular centres is provided in the accompanying report *Place-Based Strategies*.

Actions:

- 3.1 Support the consolidation of retail and business development at identified activity centres in accordance with the Retail Activity Centre Framework and wider policies presented in Melbourne 2030

- 3.2 Encourage a variety of uses to establish at identified activity centres, including high and medium density residential development, where this is supported by other Council policies and other recommendations presented in this Strategy

(4) Consolidate the network of local convenience centres

Council will review the locations and zoning of local convenience centres so that they present viable locations for local-level retail facilities, while also ensuring that centres remain accessible, particularly for less mobile residents

Darebin has a network of smaller convenience centres that serve local-level demands for retail and other business services. It is important that this network of local centres be supported through Council policy in order to ensure that there are opportunities for walk-in customers to access local services, thereby reducing the potential for short car trips.

Yet there are opportunities to rationalise the existing network in order to promote a network of viable and vibrant centres, and to reduce the run-down nature of some of Darebin’s activity centres by encouraging suitable alternative uses.

The Retail Activity Centre Network (refer Chapter 5) provides recommendations in relation to local convenience centres that are not operating as vibrant and viable centres.

Actions:

- 4.1 Support the retention of a network of local convenience centres that serve the needs of local communities, with consideration especially given to the needs of less mobile residents
- 4.2 Where there are opportunities to rationalise the network of centres (as identified in Chapter 5), amend the planning scheme in order to encourage other alternative uses that contribute positively to their surrounding environment and which meet the needs of Darebin residents

(5) Identify future development options for poorly performing local centres

For those local convenience centres which have been identified as having fully or partly lost their retail and/or commercial role, Council will work to identify and facilitate alternative land uses and activities

In some cases, small local convenience centres in Darebin are poorly performing, and have a number of properties that lie vacant, are run-down, or house secondary or lower-order uses. In other instances, centres have completely lost their original role as local retail activity centres.

In both cases, a planning response is required in order to identify alternative preferred land uses and development options at these centres, and Council will need to work with businesses and land owners in order to facilitate development at these locations.

The Retail Activity Centre Framework (refer Chapter 5) identifies individual centres which have redevelopment opportunities, and nominates a future direction for these centres. Chapter 5

also identifies where planning scheme amendments are a appropriate response to facilitate land use change.

Actions:

- 5.1 Investigate the opportunities to rezone land in order to encourage alternative land uses at local convenience centres which have lost their intended retail or commercial role
- 5.2 Undertake rezoning of land at local convenience centres where appropriate, as identified in the Retail Activity Centre Framework (refer Chapter 5)
- 5.3 Work with land owners and businesses in order to identify opportunities to redevelop poorly performing properties and centres

(6) *Encourage a wide mix of activities, particularly in Principal, Major and Neighbourhood Centres*

Council will encourage the future development of identified Principal, Major and Neighbourhood Centres as lively foci for a wide range of uses including shopping, business, work and leisure

Important benefits can be gained from widening the mix of activities that are available at activity centres, through the economic benefits of clustering and aggregating like uses, the efficient allocation of infrastructure, and the social and environmental benefits associated with factors such as reducing private vehicle trip-making, encouraging more vibrant centres, integrating public transport access, and so on.

Actions:

- 6.1 Encourage office and commercial uses at or adjacent to existing shopping locations (such as at Northcote, Preston, and the *internodal* areas along High Street)
- 6.2 Encourage community uses such as child-care centres, local primary schools etc to locate in close proximity to activity centres
- 6.3 Encourage a broader mix of uses at Northland, including additional non-retail uses such as office, entertainment, residential, community activities, etc
- 6.4 Provide improved public transport access to activity centres, and integrate transport interchange facilities at main activity centres

Other policies relating to the operation of types of centres is provided in Chapter 5 (Retail Activity Centre Framework), while more detailed indicative recommendations for a selection of main centres is contained in the accompanying report, *Place-Based Strategies*.

(7) Ensure that activity centres develop in an integrated fashion

Council will work to ensure that land use development is integrated with transport infrastructure so that activity centres are well-served by public transport alternatives, and to improve the amenity of centres by reducing car traffic

The City of Darebin has recently completed the Darebin Integrated Travel Plan (ITP), which aims to provide guidance in relation to road improvements, tram and bus stops and routes, footpaths and pedestrian crossings and car parking facilities. The objective of the ITP is to achieve an efficient allocation of transport resources which meets the needs of residents and which contributes to the principles of sustainability and vibrancy.

The integration of transport and land use means that activity centres are to be served by a range of alternative access options, including public transport, walking, cycling, and private vehicle use.

Actions:

- 7.1 Implement traffic management along key vehicle routes such as High Street in order to improve amenity for users of activity centres (refer Darebin ITP)
- 7.2 Integrate transport modes and routes at key locations such as Northcote, Preston, Reservoir and Northland
- 7.3 Review bus routes to ensure that neighbourhood centres are well served
- 7.4 Adopt the principle of integrated development when assessing development applications in activity centres, or proposals for new retail or commercial uses located away from centres
- 7.5 Adopt an integrated and mutually supportive approach to management and business development at centres, and to the range of activities provided at each centre which recognises their specific strengths and potential for integration with transport services

In addition to these actions to be undertaken by Council, a number of initiatives are identified in the Melbourne 2030 policy relating to the need to achieve integrated transport outcomes, including actions where the City of Darebin has a role as a key stakeholder.

(8) Closely monitor out-of-centre development, and ensure that such development is restricted to nominated locations

Ensure that retail activities that occur away from activity centres conform to the principles of Vibrancy and Sustainability, through policies which seek to aggregate uses at nominated locations

While activity centres are the focus for developing retail, commercial and other functions, there is development pressure on sites located away from activity centres for a range of retail and related activities such as bulky goods/homemaker shopping, building/trade supplies and hardware sales, and other large format activities.

These development opportunities are in response to the increasing popularity of large-scale retail stores which house a wide variety of merchandise, typically in bulky retail categories

such as furniture, whitegoods and other electrical equipment, camping equipment, hardware, and so on. These stores tend to seek relatively unencumbered sites away from existing activity centres, where land values are low compared to activity centre locations, and where large sites can be identified that can accommodate their considerable car parking requirements without having to resort to costly site consolidation. Other key site criteria relate to the need for good exposure to a large regional catchment, and excellent access arrangements, preferably on a main arterial road. For these shopping types, there is considerable emphasis on car-based access, and this derives from the large catchments they serve (from which the private vehicle is a convenience method of transport), and the bulky nature of the purchases involved (furniture, whitegoods and electrical equipment, barbeques, camping equipment, gardening supplies, timber and hardware items, and so on).

It is important to recognise that there are various types of retail outlets that are typically included in the bulky goods retailing group. These include large, destination homemaker developments, typically involving national brand names and high car parking requirements; and smaller outlets which overlap in their role with showrooms, trade supplies, and other retail forms. Each of these types of bulky goods retailer has different requirements in terms of the size of the site, floorspace requirements, access and exposure, car parking, etc.

The key issue for these types of shopping facilities is how to accommodate these popular forms of retail (which are successful because they meet the needs of shoppers), while encouraging a sustainable form of development that conserves infrastructure resources, provides an opportunity for other modes of transport access, encourages improved visual amenity, and contributes to the goals of Vibrancy and Sustainability.

Melbourne 2030 includes measures that are intended to constrain the development of out-of-centre activities, including proposed new evaluation criteria against which new out-of-centre developments are to be assessed. Council will contribute to this process, and will encourage a set of evaluation criteria which provides an appropriate balance between the interests of shoppers and retailers, and the need to achieve orderly and sustainable planning outcomes.

For Darebin, there are a number of locations where clusters of such activities have developed, including:

- the environs of Northland Shopping Centre on the south side of Murray Road (Northland Homemaker Centre, Bunnings, etc)
- Bell Street, in proximity to Albert Street (Harvey Norman/Officeworks, Drummond Golf/Rays Outdoors, Dick Smith Powerhouse, and other scattered premises)
- Plenty Road, Preston (mostly of the smaller, lower-order type of bulky goods retailing, including wholesale and building supplies, etc)
- High Street, Preston (also mainly lower-order bulky goods retailing, including furniture manufacture and sales, paint supplies, and auto-related stores)

These locations will form the basis for locating new bulky goods activities at existing clusters, with an emphasis on the Northland and Bell Street clusters for the major homemaker developments. There will be an emphasis on the creation of large integrated developments that house multiple tenants, thereby reducing the need for short car trips, and providing an opportunity to deliver other forms of transport access.

While the Strategy provides guidance in terms of bulky goods retail development, it also recommends that further work be undertaken to establish the preferred locations for bulky

goods retail development. This may also include the preparation of a bulky goods local planning policy.

Actions:

- 8.1 Recognise the increasing popularity of bulky goods clusters, and their specific site criteria in terms of site size, exposure and access, etc
- 8.2 Support such developments where they are located at existing clusters as defined in the Retail Activity Centres Framework
- 8.3 Ensure that proposals for new or expanded bulky goods development at these locations are accompanied by a retail-economic analysis of the potential impact of such proposals on the existing retail framework
- 8.4 Undertake further research to establish the preferred locations for these types of developments and, if necessary, prepare a bulky goods local planning policy

(9) Support the development of new retail activity centres only where they are justified by the development of new residential communities, and where they contribute positively to net community benefit

Council will support retail development applications for new centres only where the proponent clearly establishes the retail need for such development in a new location in response to the development of new communities, and where there are no adverse impacts on the operation of the retail activity centres framework.

Darebin is served by an established network of retail activity centres that has developed over many years to serve the retail needs of residents in the municipality. The construction of new activity centres has potential to adversely impact on the operation of the existing network of retail activity centres except where such development can be justified in terms of the provision of new retail facilities to serve growing communities.

The need for new neighbourhood facilities can be justified at locations such as Mont Park/Larundel and Mount Cooper, where new housing development generates the need for the provision of retail facilities to serve local level and neighbourhood demands.

However, all such development proposals are required to provide evidence that the provision of additional retail floorspace will not adversely affect the operation of the existing network of retail activity centres. This evidence will need to be presented in a report format which provides the following analysis:

- 1. Description of the proposed development in terms of amount of retail floorspace, type and components (eg supermarket, specialty stores, etc)
- 2. Identification of likely trading catchment, and indication of overlapping catchments with existing centres
- 3. Analysis of population levels and retail expenditure levels/forecasts for the identified catchment

4. Analysis of retail demand and supply in the catchment, showing the extent to which the development of new shopping facilities is justified in terms of new retail demand arising from housing development
5. Identification of the extent to which the proposed development relies on spending attracted from outside the catchment, for example from passing trade
6. Assessment of the extent to which the trade achieved by the new facilities is captured from existing retail locations, with reference to household survey data
7. Analysis of the potential impact on existing retail locations, in terms of percentage impact on sales
8. Assessment of the contribution of the proposed development to Net Community Benefit, in terms of:
 - employment generation (or loss) during construction and operation
 - impact on retail choice and availability
 - impact on overall levels of vibrancy and sustainability
 - contribution to levels of public transport use
 - contribution to liveability, social interaction, and other community-related goals

It is envisaged that proposals for the development of new retail activity centres would be presented only in the context of major urban redevelopment, such as that occurring in north-eastern parts of Darebin. Proposals for new centres will not be supported where they are not justified by major residential redevelopment.

Actions:

- 9.1 Ensure that proposals for new shopping centres are accompanied by suitably detailed economic analysis showing justification for the development and which provides evidence that the existing retail activity centre framework will not be adversely affected
- 9.2 Support new shopping centre developments only where they are required to serve the needs of new residential communities associated with major urban redevelopment

4.3 Business Development and Centre Management

Introduction

Effective management of the traditional activity centres in Darebin and the support of the businesses within the centre is a critical component to their overall success and survival. Management activities typically cover issues such as coordinated marketing, leadership and advocacy, business development and professional development.

Overview

There are a variety of Retail Activity Centre management structures and systems utilised by Local Government in Australia. These structures fall generally into two categories:

1. Internal structures

Internal structures involve the Council taking on a leadership role and having the management system internal to the organisation. Such structures often include dedicated Council officer positions, departments, units or boards that oversee the management and development of a centre or network of centres.

2. External structures

These involve the outsourcing of management to external bodies such as an Incorporated Business Associations, with Council playing a facilitating and coordinating role.

The decision on which structure is most appropriate usually reflects the source of funding available to it. For example, internal structures tend to be more predominant when Local or State Governments provide significant funding. External structures tend to be more predominant when funding is voluntarily provided (ie business membership to an Association) or where it involves a special rate charge or levy.

The management structure adopted by most municipalities in Victoria is (for major activity centres) external, enabling Council to maximise its resources by outsourcing centre management to Business Associations where activities are funded by the proceeds of a special rate or charge scheme.

Issues that need to be considered in any management program include:

- Recognition that Business Associations are voluntary and the time, resources and expertise of individual members that is available can limit their ability to effectively manage and market a centre. It is therefore important that business associations have access to professional assistance. This is typically provided where financial resources exist, through employment of a “centre coordinator”. Where business associations do not have the resources to employ a coordinator they rely heavily on Council staff.
- Recognition that Business Associations can fail to function effectively without a secure source of funding, most commonly provided through a special rate and charge schemes.
- Recognition that the management of retail activity centres can never be completely independent of Council. The activities of an Association funded by special rate proceeds ensure that the Association is linked to Council through a contractual arrangement outlining both Council and the independent body’s role and responsibilities. While Business Associations perform the role

of centre manager, this tends to relate only to the marketing, administration, communication, and business development functions. Council retains responsibility for core function like general maintenance, operations and cleaning, urban design, planning and policy development and the provision of physical infrastructure. Business Associations will need to advocate to Council for the improvement or provision of these core functions. Their success in having these matters addressed tends to depend on the relative importance of the centre, how well the Association can argue their case and how well the Association can network with Council departments.

- Recognition of the need for ongoing overall management and monitoring of the program by Council. Even where Councils pursue an external approach to management, there is still a requirement for it to manage, coordinate and monitor the program. Furthermore, Council must ensure that business associations have a clear understanding of how their centre is expected to develop, their role and function, the specific management activities to be pursued, how these will be funded and the role and responsibilities of the stakeholders. This is usually addressed through a business plan for the centre.

Current Situation

Darebin currently has five centres where there are formalised Trader or Business Associations, business plans (not all current), and a special rate or charge scheme. These include:

- Preston Central
- Rucker's Hill (incorporating High Street Northcote, Northcote Plaza and Northcote Central)
- Station Street Fairfield
- Thornbury Village
- Reservoir Village

The Economic Development Unit is the principal unit responsible for the management of Retail Activity Centres. Services and or funding provided by this unit relating to the management of activity centres includes:

- Regular liaison with Trader or Business Associations and their coordinators including regular meetings involving representatives from each of these centres to raise issues of concern
- Coordination of various issues raised by Associations to appropriate Council departments
- Implementation and administration of special rate and charge schemes for marketing, management and business development
- Provision of guidelines and ongoing advice for the effective operation and interaction of Trader or Business Associations with Council (currently being prepared)
- Advocacy for specific projects and events to other Council departments
- Installation of Christmas Decorations in eight retail activity centres
- Preparation of some capital works proposals at the request of Trader Associations
- Facilitate the coordination of Council services for specific events such as road closures for festivals

- Preparation of funding applications i.e. StreetLIFE and the coordination of these projects if successful
- Providing financial support to business associations that wish to pursue a special rate scheme and assistance in the preparation of initial business plans.

Issues that need to be addressed by this strategy include the following:

- It appears that not all centres are pursuing the objectives and programs identified in their business plans.
- Not all centres are employing professional assistance to assist in the implementation of management and marketing programs.
- Council does not formally adopt completed business plans and does not have a formal process through which to monitor and review the activities of business associations.
- There is sometimes confusion among internal Council departments surrounding who is responsible for initiating and pursuing policy, planning and infrastructure issues when it relates to Retail Activity Centres
- There is a lack of resources for the development Retail Activity Centres beyond the five centres that have special rates or charges or Government funding.
- There is limited ongoing financial commitment by Council towards the maintenance and improvement of Retail Activity Centres infrastructure
- The Economic Development unit is responsible for a diverse range of activities beyond the management of Retail Activity Centres and therefore has limited capacity and financial resources.
- There is an increasing expectation for Associations to take on greater responsibility for the development of their centre. Not all associations have the capacity, resources or experience to achieve this.
- Associations continue to face a perennial problem of only a few business people being interested in committing time and effort towards the management processes which can lead to burn out. Changes to the makeup of Business Association committees often result in significant loss of momentum and information.

Strategic Policies

The following principles and actions are proposed for Council to facilitate the management of Retail Activity Centres.

(10) Council will facilitate and coordinate the management of activity centres

This role will be managed by the Economic Development Unit and will ideally be undertaken by a dedicated staff position within the unit. Such a position would be responsible for all aspects of facilitating and coordinating a retail activity centre management program for Council. Activities should include:

- liaising with Associations and informal trader groups
- coordinating Council's response to various issues raised by Business Associations and individual businesses

- coordinating the preparation of business plans
- coordinating the establishment and administration of special rate or charge schemes
- preparing capital works submissions inline with business plans
- monitoring the implementation of business plans and the effectiveness of special rate and charge schemes
- coordinating any appropriate Government or other funding applications
- coordinating any other ongoing issues relevant to these centres such as installation of Christmas Decorations, road closures for festivals etc

The Economic Development Unit will assume the role as the initial point of contact between Council, businesses and business associations and will coordinate the provision of programs and support provided by other Council departments.

Actions:

- 10.1 Create a staff position in the Economic Development Unit responsible for facilitating and co-ordinating the management of activity centres
- 10.2 Develop a job description for the centre co-ordinator role

(11) Council will pursue a strategic partnership with businesses and, property owners towards the effective management of activity centres

Council will seek to work in a strategic partnership with business operators, property owners and business associations, recognising that each of these parties has an important role to play and contribution to make towards the success of their respective centre. Each party will need to accept roles and responsibilities related to their skills, experience, resources and networks. (This is currently being undertaken at Thornbury Junction through a partnership between the State Government StreetLIFE Program and Darebin Council).

Actions:

- 11.1 Pursue a strategic partnership approach in working with business operators, property owners, business associations and other stakeholders, and in implementing specific programs involving these parties

(12) Council will facilitate coordinated planning and monitoring for management programs

Council will assist in the formation of business associations and will encourage business associations to pursue coordinated management and marketing programs by providing financial support to the preparation of initial business plans and feasibility studies into the viability of a special rate program.

A Business Plan should recognise and provide four key aspects of centre development including:

- Management and Communications
- Marketing and Promotions
- Business and Professional Development
- Physical Environment

Business Plans once completed should be presented to and formally noted by Council.

A current Business Plan will be required for all centres with a special rate program and Council will require an annual report that indicates which actions and initiatives have been achieved. Business Associations will be expected to fund business plans themselves once a special rate program has commenced.

Council responsibilities identified in the business plans will be incorporated into departmental annual plans and where required, submissions prepared inline with normal budget processes.

Council will prepare a Physical Framework Plan for the centre outlining improvements that will be made to the physical environment and incorporating recommendations and actions identified in the centre's Business Plan. This plan will be adopted by Council and funding for identified works will be allocated in capital works budgets. Business Associations and the local community will be involved in the development of these plans.

Council will only pursue Management, Marketing and Business Development Special Rates and Charge Schemes when requested by a representative Association or group.

A payment agreement between Council and the Association will be required where Council intends to forward the proceeds of the special rate or charge scheme to the Association for expenditure. Expenditure should be in line with directions outlined in the Business Plan and it is the responsibility of Council to ensure this.

Actions:

- 12.1 Support the creation and ongoing operation of business associations, including the provision of financial support for the preparation of business plans and feasibility studies into the implementation of special rate schemes
- 12.2 Ensure that all business associations seeking to implement a Special Rate have an active Business Plan
- 12.3 Prepare Physical Framework Plans for centres implementing Business Plans to identify physical works that are required for input to capital works programs
- 12.4 Introduce Payment Agreements to formalise the release of funds from special rate schemes in accordance with centre business plans

(13) Professional Support for Business Associations

The effective management of a centre requires professional support and coordination beyond that volunteered by Association members. A professional coordinator should be engaged by an Association where a special rate or charge scheme is introduced. The coordinator can provide either the Association with the means to implement the business plan and liaise with Council on a regular basis. It will be important to establish realistic expectations of what the coordinator can achieve in the time and budget allocated and provide opportunities for two-way feedback, between the co-ordinator and the Association, about performance.

Council should play an active role to assist the Association in the engagement and initial management of the coordinator. The coordinator's role needs considerable support from Council to be effective with direct contact available as required.

Actions:

- 13.1 Support the engagement of professional centre co-ordinators by business associations to oversee the implementation of centre business plans that are supported by a special rate scheme

(14) Provide a regular schedule of meetings between Council, coordinators and Association representatives

Council officers should meet with Coordinators on a regular basis to enable ongoing two-way communications about all matters affecting centres. Where necessary, representation from other Council departments can be included in these meetings.

It is also important that Associations are provided an opportunity to meet with Council on a regular basis, particularly those centres that have informal Associations. A regular schedule of meetings involving representation from all centres can provide a valuable networking opportunity for Associations to learn what other centres are doing, their issues and sharing ideas and where appropriate working together for mutual benefit.

Actions:

- 14.1 Ensure that there is a regular program of meetings to provide regular contact between Council officers (in particular the newly created centre management role - refer Action 10.1), co-ordinators and business association representatives
- 14.2 Establish a quarterly forum to enable Council, centre co-ordinators and business association representatives to meet and discuss issues of mutual concern impacting on activity centres, to review the implementation of the Retail Activity Centres Strategy and to enable networking between the various stakeholders.

(15) Provide Council support and assistance to Associations to help them comply with their responsibilities and obligations outlined in the Business Plan and Payment Agreements

This can occur through the provision of information and information sessions, targeted training and direct assistance to ensure there is adequate knowledge and appropriate systems and process in place to assist compliance.

Actions:

- 15.1 Provide support for business associations in order to ensure that they comply with their responsibilities and obligations, as stated in Business Plans and Payment Agreements (refer Action 12.4)

(16) Encourage and support ongoing business and professional development within major activity centres

Professional development is often the most neglected area in small business that can make the most difference. Council should actively encourage ongoing professional development particularly focusing on customer service, merchandising and presentation, selling skills and business management and planning. This can occur by ensuring that Business Plans adequately reflect and provide some funding towards this area and Council promoting suitable sessions and or considering the provision of an annual program of sessions.

Business development from a management perspective tends to focus on activity mix and business retention and attraction. Council can be increasingly influential in this area by establishing and promoting the desired activity mix for individual centres. Business Attraction Kits can be established providing relevant information required by businesses when considering an area to locate to. Council can either actively pursue or support the Association in their pursuit of desired businesses for a centre, work with or provide professional assistance for key businesses to improve their operation or encourage diversification of existing businesses to fill activity gaps.

Actions:

- 16.1 Encourage the preparation of business plans that give due regard to the importance of professional development for small businesses in activity centres
- 16.2 Consider the introduction of a program of meetings/sessions that provide training in customer service, merchandising, selling skills, business management, and other relevant skills
- 16.3 Work with business associations and centre coordinators in the preparation of Business Attraction Kits that assist in attracting appropriate new businesses to each centre

(17) *Ensure that all Council Departments are aware of the management programs and activities.*

A significant number of Council departments impact directly or indirectly on the management of a centre, yet many do not understand how. It is important that all departments understand how they can contribute positively to the development and management of centres and establish appropriate and timely responses to the many needs of these centres. This will be coordinated by the Economic Development Department.

Actions:

- 17.1 Ensure that there is an appropriate level of co-ordination of council activities across departments in order to assist in the implementation of programs and actions presented in the Retail Activity Centres Strategy

4.4 Urban Design Policies and Principles

The following urban design policies and principles are intended to guide decisions about the design of new retail areas, including new or expanding local centres or bulky goods precincts.

(18) *Ensure that centres are appropriately located on main roads and at locations which serve their catchments*

Retail centres are often dependent upon passing movement, with the most successful usually located along or at the juncture of well connected routes - as shown by the numerous retail strips along Melbourne's arterial roads. Here, they are able to take advantage of high levels of visual exposure and accessibility. Furthermore, the presence of cars within a retail centre increases both the perceived and actual personal security outside shopping hours by providing a source of casual surveillance. It is therefore important that new retail floorspace presents a face to main movement routes to maximise their exposure to all passers by.

However, in some cases, main roads are just too busy for comfortable pedestrian activity, particularly crossing the road. Bell Street and St Georges Road are examples of this. On such roads, on-street parking also becomes difficult, discouraging people from using adjacent retail outlets. In these cases, or where space is simply not available on the main movement route, retail uses should face a street that leads directly from the main road into the catchment - preferably to an activity node such as a train station or major recreation facility - and have a strong visual presence at that intersection.

Bypasses to retail streets should be avoided, except in the case of those that would otherwise carry extremely heavy or inappropriate traffic, such as trucks, as they remove important passing traffic.

Major shops, such as supermarkets and department stores, should also be located on main roads, despite their lesser reliance on passing traffic. This ensures that smaller shops benefit from their attraction and avoids the need for separate trips to different shops. It also minimises the traffic generated on local streets. Where large retail outlets already exist, smaller shops may gain exposure by facing their car park rather than a main road.

Non-retail components of activity centres may locate at the fringe of centres, on streets perpendicular or parallel to the main retail street, as they generally do not rely on passing traffic.

Actions:

- 18.1 When considering applications for new or expanded retail development, give due regard to the physical location, form and layout of the proposed development to ensure that it is well located to meet the needs of the catchment it is intended to serve

(19) *Encourage an urban design form which reflects and supports the image, role and function of the centre.*

An effective centre requires a physical form and design that will enable businesses and activities to achieve their full potential. The physical design of a centre, whilst an important ingredient towards its viability will not be effective if it fails to reflect the image, identity and role of the centre or the aspirations, desires and values of business operators and customers. Examples of how this can occur are:

- the location of seats and public meeting spaces near to the core retail activities (eg post office, bank, newsagency, supermarket etc)
- provision in streetscape planning for outdoor dining in a centre that promotes itself as a café centre
- allowance for outdoor trading in a centre that has a market type theme
- evening security and surveillance in centres that aim to trade in the evenings

Actions:

- 19.1 Encourage an appropriate design for new retail development which works towards improving the physical form and design of centres in such a way as to better meet the needs of businesses and customers
- 19.2 Encourage design responses that include security and surveillance at centres that trade in the evenings
- 19.3 Ensure that the physical development of centres has due regard for opportunities for street activity

(20) *Locate public transport stops in the heart of the retail centre*

Public transport is a key ingredient in achieving successful retail centres by allowing appropriate access to the centre from people who are unable or unwilling to drive. Tram and bus stops and taxi ranks should be located centrally within retail centres wherever possible in order to maximise accessibility.

However, stopped buses can impede the view of shops and emit unpleasant fumes. Bus boarders are an appropriate option in this case to move buses away from shopfronts, as well

as giving traffic priority to buses. An alternative is for bus stops to be located alongside blank walls. Furthermore, bus stops should be consolidated into as few stops as practically possible and bus layovers should not be located within a centre.

Actions:

- 20.1 In transport planning for activity centres, ensure that public transport access is provided to the heart of the retail centre in such a way as to minimise potential adverse consequences (such as vehicle emissions, view impediments, etc)

(21) Provide a permeable local movement network focused on the main retail street

Streets that provide direct routes to a retail centre encourage visitation. By contrast, convoluted routes or those that require prospective shoppers to turn onto an arterial road and then off again to get to a centre discourage visitation.

Therefore, retail centres should be arranged so that local streets lead directly to them, crossing any arterial roads without deviation. This is particularly applicable within a comfortable walking distance of a centre, typically taken to be 400-800 metres.

A 'gridded' street pattern without one-way or dead-end streets distributes traffic relatively evenly, avoiding heavy traffic flows and congestion which deter access by both car and foot. By contrast, street networks that rely on a small number of main roads serving culs-de-sac tend to create barriers to both vehicular and pedestrian movement. Therefore, the local street network around a retail centre should be fine-grained and fully-connected (although it need not be an *orthogonal* grid).

Actions:

- 21.1 In planning for new retail centres, encourage design responses that provide permeability for pedestrian and traffic movement

(22) Design retail streets to maximise pedestrian convenience and safety, and car parking, while maintaining vehicle permeability

Most shoppers are pedestrians. Pedestrian movement also fosters spontaneous social interaction, which reinforces the role of 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.

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 manoeuvres) and creates a barrier between the footpath and moving traffic. On the other hand, roundabouts should be avoided, because they require a substantial amount of space, force pedestrian crossings away from the desire line and create smooth traffic flows downstream, which removes opportunities for both drivers and pedestrians to enter or cross the traffic stream. Traffic lights provide a better solution where standard uncontrolled junctions are not adequate.

Despite the need to accommodate all these uses, retail streets should not be allowed to get so wide that the shopfronts on each side lose visual contact with each other.

Actions:

- 22.1 Encourage design response in retail development which ensure that there is an appropriate balance of emphasis between the various users of public space, including pedestrians, cars, cyclists, public transport, delivery vehicles, outdoor diners, and so on

(23) *Provide service access at the rear of shops and businesses, wherever possible*

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.

Actions:

- 23.1 Encourage a design response for retail development that separates access for customers from staff parking, delivery and storage access

(24) *Ensure continuity of retail frontage wherever possible*

A continuous row of shopfronts encourages shoppers to walk between them. Gaps between shops - such as those created by wide cross roads, ground-floor residences, off-street car parks or parks - discourage shoppers from walking to the next row because of the distance, the lack of interest along the way and - in the case of car parks - the hostile environment.

Therefore, the retail properties in a centre should form continuous frontages wherever possible.

Actions:

- 24.1 Encourage a design response for retail development that ensures a continuity of retail frontage where possible

(25) *Require shops and businesses to maximise their address to the street frontage*

The safety, comfort and interest of the public realm are key factors in attracting shoppers. Shops and businesses can enhance the amenity of the public realm in a number of ways, beginning with the building extending across the full width of the front boundary, providing a zero front setback, incorporating a clear and identifiable entry point and using extensive glazing. This also helps to distinguish retail centres from their surroundings. Concealed spaces that result from recesses in the ground floor façade create potential entrapment spots and should be avoided.

The inclusion of an awning or verandah provides a sense of enclosure for pedestrians and strengthens the relationship between shops and the adjoining public realm. They also provide protection from the weather. Uses which spill out onto the street - such as cafes and restaurants - further contribute to the safety and interest of the street and the overall appeal of the centre, and should be encouraged. However, the installation of awnings or verandahs should not be done in a way that does not adversely affect disabled access.

Traditional 'big box' developments such as supermarkets, department stores, multiplex cinemas and enclosed shopping centres should be 'wrapped' with smaller, outward-facing shops to present both active and attractive frontages to surrounding public spaces such as streets and public car parks. The same approach should be taken to multi-storey car parks.

Actions:

- 25.1 Encourage a design response for retail development which maximises the extent of retail activity on the street frontage, and which avoids the creation of non-active parts of the street frontage (eg blank walls)

(26) *Ensure that residential development above shops enjoys a street address*

While a mix of uses such as residential and commercial activities is encouraged in activity centres in Darebin, it is important to respect the needs of new residents in commercial precincts by ensuring that new residences are provided with an appropriate street address, for example an access door, letter box, etc. However, there needs to be recognition of the primary retail and commercial function of land use in activity centre precincts.

There are some circumstances where assessment of shop-top housing proposals requires special consideration, particularly where properties have small frontages, and where the provision of an entry for residents creates a very small retail unit that may be unlikely to attract a viable tenant. In these cases, the proponent must demonstrate that there are potential tenants for the retail/commercial space.

Actions:

- 26.1 Ensure that residential developments in commercial districts are provided with a street address in a manner that does not detract from the primary retail/commercial function of the centre, and which ensures that the retail space is a viable unit

(27) *Encourage the development of a rich mix of shops and professional, personal and community services in activity centres*

The shops and services that a centre has to offer are its most important attribute in attracting customers. Simply, the greater the mix of shops and services, the greater the likelihood of someone finding what they want. As a result, more people are attracted to the centre, increasing its vitality. This also increases the opportunity for trip combining and local jobs, saving transport costs, and provides greater opportunity for spontaneous social interaction - an important attribute of the traditional retail centre.

To preserve the mix of goods and services on offer within retail centres, it is important to discourage the consolidation of too much property into large, single holdings, which often results in the development of homogenous, enclosed centres and a loss of retail diversity.

The opportunities for activity centres to develop a unique, niche market and therefore attract people from a wider catchment should be encouraged.

Actions:

- 27.1 Encourage retail and mixed use developments that contribute to the diversification of the mix of activities located in activity centres

(28) *Disperse retail anchors*

Activity centre anchors such as supermarkets, department stores, banks, post offices, cinemas, pharmacies, medical centres and libraries should be dispersed throughout retail centres, to create pedestrian flows past the shops in between. In a traditional strip centre, this requires them to be on both sides of the street.

Actions:

- 28.1 Ensure that new retail developments encourage pedestrian flow through a centre through the location of key customer attractors

(29) *Maximise density of urban development, within character and amenity constraints*

The safety and viability of retail centres are enhanced by greater levels of pedestrian activity. This is partly influenced by the density of development in the centre, which can also affect the viability of public transport, the efficiency of infrastructure use and the energy efficiency of the built form.

A simple yet effective way of increasing density is by providing taller buildings. The benefit of this can be twofold as not only is density increased, but when provided in the right location, taller buildings can improve a centre's legibility. It is preferable that significantly taller buildings have a publicly-relevant use such as a town hall, library or arts centre associated with it.

Where taller buildings are provided, regard for the existing built form character and amenity impacts may be required. This can be dealt with in a number of ways including setting back upper levels and the sensitive distribution of building mass.

Actions:

- 29.1 Support an increased density of urban development at retail activity centres in a manner that adds to the level of activity in the centre without detracting from the existing character of the area or its amenity

(30) *Encourage non-retail uses where they contribute to an active and safe environment*

Retail centres should include non-retail uses where possible - particularly those activities such as cafés, restaurants, bars, etc, that are particularly active outside shopping hours - to encourage the development of an 'evening economy' and to increase safety. In addition to eating, drinking and entertainment venues, this may include offices, community facilities and residential accommodation. Apart from restaurants and bars, these should be on upper floors to maintain retail frontage continuity - refer Principle (24). However, all upper floor uses should have a front door on the street in addition to any access from parking at the rear or in a basement, to provide a visible and safe entry point.

Offices and medium-density housing development at the fringe of the centre can also provide an increase in the activity outside business hours and overall numbers of people using the centre. Together with shoptop apartments, this also provides alternative housing types which satisfy emerging lifestyle choices.

As demonstrated by mixed-use places that have evolved without regulation, different but compatible uses can be easily contained within the same area. This is achievable by employing a variety of measures such as placing different uses on top of each other and facing them towards different streets.

Actions:

- 30.1 Encourage urban development in activity centres that promotes activity outside normal business hours but which does not fragment the retail offering
- 30.2 Encourage non-retail development, particular above ground floor retail uses and at the fringe of centres

(31) *Design and manage off-street parking to ensure safety and optimise their convenience and contribution to commercial vitality*

Off-street car parks should be designed as positive and safe public spaces. Their edges should be designed like retail streets, with active frontages, footpaths, lighting, verandahs and no concealed 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 from the main retail street where possible, so that drivers are exposed to the retail offer.

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.

Actions:

- 31.1 Ensure that car parks are developed in ways that maximise their convenience and safety, provide good exposure to the retail offer at activity centres, and do not fragment the retail/commercial nature of the activity centres
- 31.2 Apply time restrictions to car parking in a manner that ensure that there is high turnover in locations at the heart of the centre, and encourage long-term parking at the fringe of the centre

(32) Provide open space within the public domain

Along with their greater diversity, the ‘publicness’ of traditional, street-based retail centres provides a greater range of opportunities and experiences for people. Enclosed shopping centres, on the other hand, tend to provide a rather predictable and sanitised environment. This may explain the recent survey result that the majority of the Australian population would rather shop in real streets than enclosed shopping centres.

Therefore, as a means of maintaining their attraction, retail centres should incorporate public open space areas to accommodate a diverse array of both informal and formal activities including people watching, eating, reading, chatting, market stalls and other community events, each of which are an essential ingredient of any successful activity centre. Ideally, this should be provided in the form of a well-connected central focus space that is flexible and large enough in its design to accommodate a range of public activities, without being so big as to create a sense of desolation in quiet periods.

Actions:

- 32.1 Encourage the provision of public open space in activity centres, preferably as a central focus for outdoor activities

(33) Install simple, robust paving and street furniture and maintain a frequent streetscape cleaning and repair program

In many cases, the quality of the public realm in retail centres is compromised by visual clutter and inconsistent and poor quality furniture and materials. Although not as significant as other aspects of its design, the appearance, quality, cleanliness and care of the environment can influence the attractiveness of a retail centre to shoppers, particularly if there is a nearby alternative of better physical quality.

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, and consistent and coordinated signage can all assist in achieving this. The streetscape should also be designed to minimise the maintenance burden and cost.

Trees can add significantly to the attractiveness of a retail centre. Where verandahs constrain the ability to plant street trees in the footpath, they may be planted in kerbside parking lanes or central median strips. 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.

Public art can benefit a place by strengthening its character and identity as well as providing an interactive attraction for people. In many cases, public art serves a dual purpose by performing as a functional piece of street furniture.

The provision of lighting may be realised in a variety of ways, including overhead street lamps, on bollards, within the footpath and to highlight certain features including building facades, monuments and trees. The more lighting that exists, the more likelihood there is of people using a place after dark.

Signage often creates visual clutter within the public realm, creating more confusion than assistance. To address this, signage should be consistent and coordinated over a wide area, and be designed and located to best suit pedestrian needs. More subtle examples of signage include directional systems using paving type or art in the footpath.

To address the issues outlined above and to achieve a simple and consistent approach to streetscape elements, Councils should prepare a comprehensive and coordinated strategy that identifies a suite of furniture and materials for various spaces, selected according to their context. In undertaking this task, the overriding objective should be to ensure that public realm spaces remain attractive over time and grow old gracefully. It is also important that the street is cleaned frequently and street furniture kept in a good state of repair.

Actions:

- 33.1 Ensure that centres are well provided with an appropriate array of streetscape infrastructure, including for example:
 - Footpath treatment
 - Street furniture (benches, bins, etc)
 - Lighting
 - Public art
- 33.2 Encourage a consistent and coordinated signage program for centres
- 33.3 Prepare a strategy for the comprehensive provision of appropriate levels of street infrastructure (note the indicative recommendations that are presented in the accompanying report, *Place-Based Strategies*)
- 33.4 Ensure that street infrastructure is provided in a manner that minimises the maintenance burden and cost

(34) Encourage the use of sustainable forms of transport to access activity centres

The use of sustainable modes of transport for accessing activity centres provides an important contribution to the principles of Ecological Sustainable Development (ESD), as well as improving the amenity of local environments through reduced private vehicle traffic, reduced air emissions, safer public spaces, and so on.

Sustainable forms of transport include public motorised transport (trains, trams and buses), as well as walking and cycling. In order to encourage the use of these modes, Council will need to work with other stakeholders including State government, transport companies and other local governments in order to ensure that the public transport network is of a high standard that encourages patronage. In addition, activity centre policies that promote the convenient location of convenience shopping centres, and that support greater residential development in or adjoining activity centres will assist in ensuring that centres are easily accessible by walking and cycling.

Actions:

- 34.1 Implement transport management policies that encourage the use of sustainable transport modes for accessing activity centres, including the use of:
 - Public motorised transport
 - Bicycles
 - Walking
- 34.2 Work with other stakeholders to ensure that Darebin is appropriately served by a high standard public transport system that meets the needs of residents and visitors
- 34.3 Support State-level policies that encourage higher density residential development in or adjoining activity centres, particularly those identified in this Retail Activity Centres Strategy as key locations for such development (refer Retail Activity Centre Framework and indicative recommendations contained in the accompanying report, *Place-Based Strategies*)

5 RETAIL ACTIVITY CENTRE FRAMEWORK

5.1 Introduction

This Chapter presents a Retail Activity Centre Framework to guide the future development of the Retail Activity Centre network in the City of Darebin. The Framework has been prepared to support the Strategic Policies presented in Chapter 4, while indicative urban design recommendations for selected main centres are contained in the accompanying report, *Place-Based Strategies*. Note that the recommendations in the Place-Based Strategies are indicative only, and are intended as the basis for structure planning to be progressively undertaken at these centres.

The Retail Activity Centre Framework assigns broad roles and functions to identified centres in the network, based on the application of centre categories adopted for the purposes of this report, and is intended to guide Council decision-making with respect to future development at activity centres. A description of the retail hierarchy which provides explanation of the centre categories and their relationship with those categories presented in *Melbourne 2030* is provided in section 5.2 below.

The location of centres in the Framework is illustrated in the accompanying Figure 5.1.

The Framework also provides the rationale for future expansion of retail shopping and commercial facilities in Darebin. The analysis undertaken as part of this Strategy identifies potential for approximately 87,000 m² of additional retail floorspace development in Darebin over the period 2001-2016, although we note that this estimate is provided only as a broad guide. The construction of this floorspace will be directed in accordance with the Retail Framework and the Strategic Policies outlined in Chapter 4 of the Strategy.

The Framework also identifies local convenience centres which are performing poorly as retail and/or commercial centres, and which require a planning response in order to facilitate new development opportunities. For these centres, a strategic rationale is provided for the rezoning of land at some of these centres in order to encourage alternative activities that would assist in revitalising these locations, for commercial or other uses (as identified).

5.2 Activity Centre Hierarchy

The Retail Activity Centre Framework defines the roles of centres in the activity centre network that operates in Darebin broadly in accordance with the categories of centres that have been adopted for the purposes of the *Melbourne 2030* strategy. However, in some cases these categories are inadequate to provide sufficiently detailed analysis of the roles and functions that are provided by retail centres in Darebin, and we have modified the categories accordingly.

A particular instances is where *Melbourne 2030* provides no recognition of the function of bulky goods or homemaker precincts, such as occur in the Northland environs (on the south side of Murray Road), or along part of Bell Street from Victoria Street to Albert Street. In response, the hierarchy adopted in the Retail Activity Centres Strategy includes reference to **Cluster Centres**, which are nominated locations for the clustering of bulky goods outlets.

The Retail Activity Centre Framework therefore utilises a *modified* version of the *Melbourne 2030* hierarchy, as summarised in the following Table 5.1. Figure 5.1 provides an illustration of the Activity Centre Framework, and a list of centre references is provided in the accompanying Table 5.2.

A detailed description of each of the levels of the hierarchy, including recommendation for application to the activity centres in the City of Darebin, is provided in the subsequent sections 5.3 to 5.8.

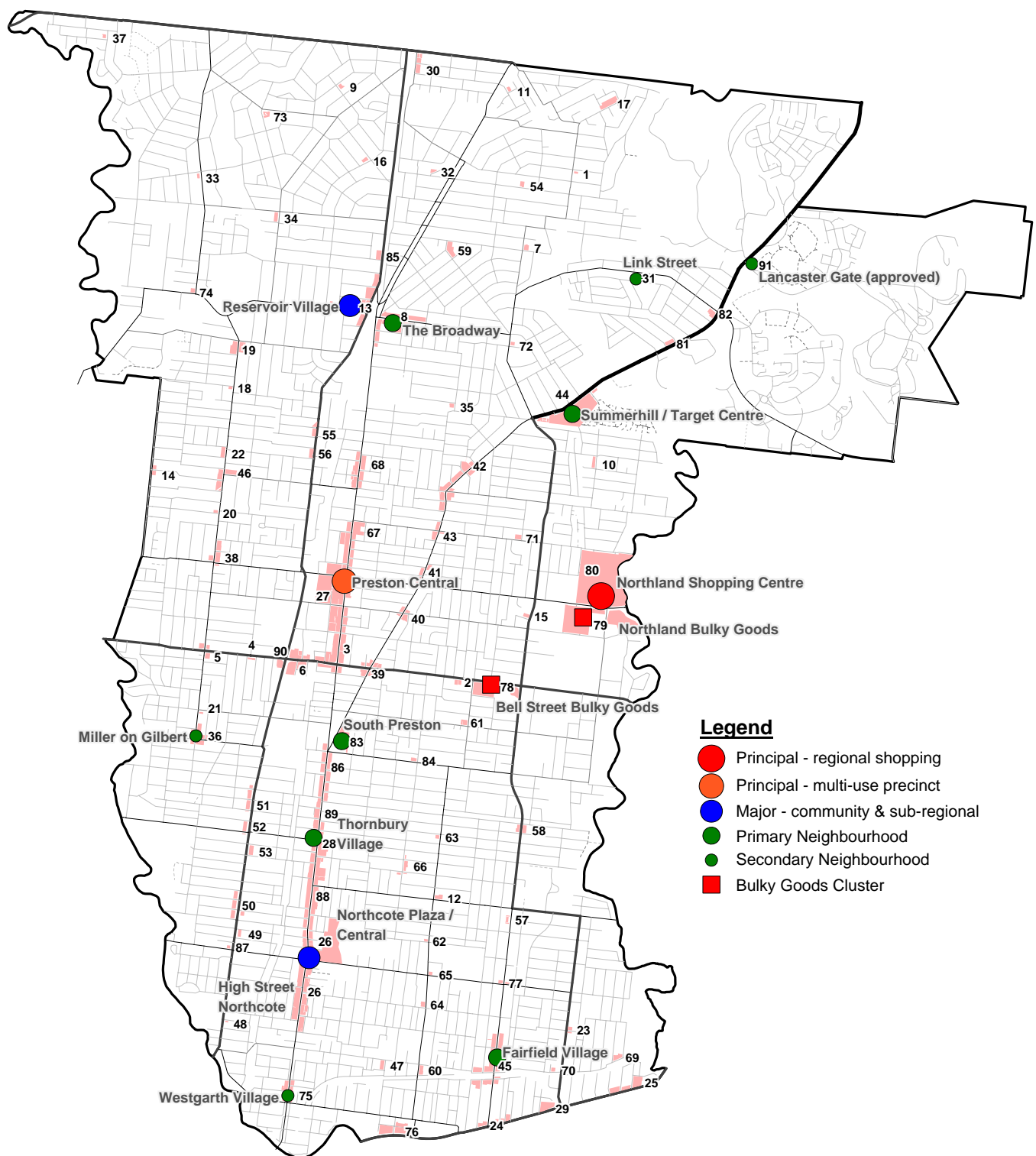
Table 5.1: Modified Melbourne 2030 Activity Centre Hierarchy for Application to Darebin

Level of hierarchy	Summary description of role/function	Centres in Darebin
Principal Activity Centre (Regional Shopping/Entertainment)	Location for regional shopping services, cinemas and other entertainment functions, and limited non-retail activities such as community/medical/office.	Northland Shopping Centre
Principal Activity Centre (Multi-Functional Centre)	Wide mix of retail, office, civic and community functions, with key opportunity to develop as a multi-function precinct	Preston Central
Major Activity Centre (Sub-regional Shopping)	Location for shopping facilities that serve a sub-regional market (and including discount department store shopping); Northcote also has potential to develop as a significant multi-function location including high density housing	Northcote (including Plaza/Central and High Street shops);
Major Activity Centre (Community)	Key location for the integration of retail, civic, community and transport infrastructure	Reservoir Village
Primary Neighbourhood Activity Centre	Major neighbourhood shopping locations providing weekly grocery shopping and, in some cases, limited specialty store shopping	Fairfield; Broadway; South Preston; Summerhill / Target; Thornbury Village
Other Neighbourhood Activity Centre	Smaller groups of shops serving a neighbourhood catchment, typically with a small supermarket as a key tenants; Westgarth also has a wider specialty/arthouse/café role	Link Street; Westgarth Village; Miller on Gilbert Lancaster gate (approved)
Local Convenience Centres and other specialised locations	Small groups of shops serving a limited catchment, and typically providing for the daily convenience needs of residents in the surrounding area	Approximately 55 local convenience centres in Darebin (refer Table 5.2), plus other centres serving highway role/convenience restaurants, etc
Cluster Centre	Nominated location for the clustering of major bulky goods retail activities	Northland Bulky Goods precinct Bell Street Bulky Goods precinct

Source: Essential Economics

FIGURE 5.1:

City of Darebin, Retail Activity Centre Framework



Source: Essential Economics

Note: for centre reference, refer Darebin Retail Activity Centres Strategy, Table 5.2

Table 5.2: Roles of Retail Centres in the City of Darebin

Map Ref	Name / location	Core Role / function
1	Banff St / Invermay St	Only two operating convenience businesses, with some service industry apparent and a strong milk bar; may be opportunity to rationalise properties with redevelopment
2	Bell St / Dermott St	Strong niche role in florist/gifts for drive-past customers, but no real convenience retail role; bottle shop is a key tenant. Existing residential uses above.
3	Bell St / High St	Has mix of homemaker (furniture and paint), auto and other uses; includes major development departments (DSS); poor integration with other uses on south side of Bell Street
4	Bell St / Stott St	Service station; surrounding precinct has highway restaurants; car wash; (see centre 6)
5	Bell St / Gilbert Rd	Strong convenience function with pharmacy/medical centre, milk bar and florist; takeaway and video on south side; non-retail including communications on corner site
6	Bell St / St Georges Rd	Includes variety of mixes; fast food, service station, Preston Club, various highway service business and commercial, may be redevelopment opportunities, especially south side near Bell Street station
7	Boldrewood Pde / McMahon St	Run down centre, milk bar operates as core of centre. Lack of vacant premises indicates that centre is serving local demand.
8	Broadway, Reservoir	Struggling neighbourhood centre with limited catchment due to Reservoir Village, and limited access patterns; may be stronger in future with housing development in surrounding area; needs some local work on parking, streetscape (a bit tired)
9	Carson St	Very rundown centre; has 7 premises, only two of which operate as retail (milkbar and hair dresser), with 3 vacant or rundown premises and 2 vacant properties; may represent a redevelopment opportunity with rationalisation of the centre to 2-3 retail properties
10	Crevelli St	Local convenience shops include milk bar, bakery and pizza, but remaining 6 properties are vacant and run down; evidence that conversion to residential already occurred; more opportunities are available
11	Daleglen St	Rundown centre that has entirely lost its retail role, opportunity for redevelopment to mixed use or residential
12	Darebin Rd / Victoria Rd	Strong local convenience role including milk bar, TAB; good florist, some commercial; evidence of excess properties and declining viability (for example, the centre has recently lost green grocer)
13	Reservoir Village	Strong role in providing for mainly grocery shopping needs of surrounding residents; constrained in terms of future development; insufficient car parking; need improved integration with transport services; part of the wider identified Reservoir centre
14	Elizabeth St / McNamara St	Local centre that has lost convenience role and is now focused on specialised retail, office, service business, etc Residential uses becoming more evident in centre.
15	Albert St / Enfield Ave	Local centre with milk bar, pizza/pasta takeaway (delivery), fish and chips; also has food distribution (pork crackers) . Significant proportion of vacant premises. Changes of use should retain a visibly permeable commercial frontage.

Map Ref	Name / location	Core Role / function
16	Gellibrand Cr	Local convenience centre with mix of shops including milk bar, post office, well established deli and bottle shop, and some office uses. A vibrant centre containing some residential uses above and to the rear.
17	Gertz Ave	Originally planned as a neighbourhood centre but serves a limited catchment due to street pattern; is of excessive size for the role it performs, and there may be an opportunity to encourage residential/mixed use development in the future
18	Gilbert Rd / Carrington Rd	Local centre with Halal meat supply/butcher and milk bar
19	Gilbert Rd / Henty St	Strong local convenience serving residential catchment, users of recreation facilities and industrial area; main tenants include bakery, 7-11, newsagent; also has takeaways, hair and beauty salon, and some non-retail uses; includes Red Rooster and gym
20	Gilbert Rd / Jacka St	Former local centre, now redundant and under redevelopment
21	Gilbert Rd / Oakover Rd	Doesn't really operate as a retail activity centre; just includes milk bar (on west side) and non-retail
22	Gilbert Rd / Vale St	Local centre with milk bar and takeaway pizza, bottle shop; other premises filled by non-retail service business etc (security systems, electrical repair, etc)
23	Grange Rd / Darling St	No convenience retail; cellar is main tenant; vacant properties on south side of Darling St present a redevelopment opportunity
24	Heidelberg Rd / Station St	Precinct has niche role in luxury/imported cars, and includes hotel on junction; other uses include fine furniture manufacture/sales; the centre has no real retail role
25	Alphington Village	Mix of uses/activities, mostly relying on drive-past role; Dan Murphy is a drawcard, and 7-11; other uses include small office (travel), cafe (mostly serving industrial uses); some other retail uses on south side
26	Northcote Central / Northcote Plaza and High Street strip Northcote - Ruckers Hill	Major sub-regional shopping location for southern part of Darebin; has overlapping catchment with Northland; poor presentation to High Street; opportunity for redevelopment of Central part; housing development proposed; opportunity for urban village. Mix of convenience retail, comparison shops, service business, discount merchandise, entertainment, etc; good opportunities for future development with demographic change
27	Preston Central	Good prospects of developing as an urban village; encourage more intense retail and other activities; Preston Market is a key asset which brings people from a regional catchment; opportunity for redevelopment of Council properties; opportunity to encourage investment with designation as a Principal Activity Centre for the purposes of Melbourne 2030
28	Thornbury Village	Attractive neighbourhood centre anchored by small supermarket, market, and a variety of convenience retail; also has some specialty retail and an important café component, which is increasing in importance; centre tends to be growing southwards, and there are opportunities for residential development to help define the southern boundary of the centre
29	Heidelberg Rd / Perry St	Hotel only; not a retail centre
30	Johnson St Shopping Centre	Has a strong local role, with a good mix of convenience oriented shops, including Tatts/lotto/newsagent, bakery, pizza, liquor; has some non-retail uses including office, gym, and auto-related at southern end

Map Ref	Name / location	Core Role / function
31	Link St / Dunne St	Strongly performing neighbourhood centre with good mix of shops, anchored by a small supermarket (IGA); good integration with surrounding uses, including park/reserve, child care, school, etc
32	Market Crt	Redundant local centre has only milk bar operating out of 10 premises; very poor visual amenity, should be redeveloped for other uses
33	Massey Ave	Good local convenience mix, including milk bar, newsagent, chemist, hairdresser, takeaway, etc
34	Broadhurst Ave / McFadzean Ave	Good local centre with mix of shops including deli-green grocer, chemist, milk bar, medical
35	Mendip Rd	Local centre with milk bar and hair salon. Convenience role to be retained.
36	Miller on Gilbert	Small neighbourhood shopping centre anchored by small IGA supermarket; good variety of retail uses with a full range of convenience stores; some vacancies at periphery, where there are non-retail uses including office, service industry; could allow mixed uses in these outlying parts of the centre
37	Churchill Ave / Moira Ave	Local centre with milk bar and take away shop: has very limited catchment due to road network, Merri Creek, etc Northern portion of the centre currently used as office with potential for redevelopment
38	Gilbert Rd / Murray Rd	Local centre fragmented across intersection - milk bar on south side, pizza, chemist and bottle shop on north-west side; mix of uses on north-east, including bakery, video and non-retail (auto parts, etc)
39	Plenty Rd / Bell St	Various uses, including service industry, auto-related, paint shop, Hotel (under renovation), and office uses at south-west part; milk bar serves these uses and tram depot
40	Plenty Rd / Gower St	Non-retail centre, comprising Caltex PFS and auto sales (Mercedes Benz)
41	Plenty Rd / Beauchamp St	Local conveniences include food store (drive-in) and milk bar, newsagent; non-retail uses include wholesale direct to public (tiles, bedding, etc), service industry (plumbers, furniture makers, etc), and some commercial (architects, photo studio, computing) Visually permeable commercial frontages to be retained.
42	Plenty Rd / Tyler St	Comprises local convenience services including newsagent, etc; has wider role in bridal fashion and services, jewellery, flower arranging etc; strong video shop; evidence of some change to office use; potential for residential conversion; hotel at northern end.
43	Plenty Rd / Wood St	Local centre with chemist, milk bar, bottle shop, fish and chips, but most premises wholesale, flooring supplies, building supplies, printers, some commercial; some vacancies, but most premises used for secondary/low-order activities; potential for residential conversion.
44	Summerhill Shopping Centre / Target Centre	Classified as a primary neighbourhood centre (not identified in Melbourne 2030), but has a wider sub-regional retail role due to presence of Target store; the Target/Coles section works well, but adjoining Summerhill centre anchored by Safeway underperforming
45	Fairfield Village	Strongly performing and vibrant neighbourhood centre with good mix of retail uses, including niche roles in books, street cafes & restaurants, gifts, etc; relatively weak supermarket offering may present redevelopment opportunity in the future

Map Ref	Name / location	Core Role / function
46	Regent Village Shopping Centre	Strong local convenience role and good location, supported by other uses such as kindergarten; issues with traffic management and tram stop; opportunity as a neighbourhood centre; some new development at southern end; could encourage office/retail and mixed use on periphery
47	Simpson St	Local convenience with milk bar, but many vacant properties (or under renovation), and some redevelopment apparent; good candidate for mixed use redevelopment
48	St Georges Rd / Aberdeen Gr	Just comprises milk bar mainly serving school children at Northcote High School
49	St Georges Rd / Bent St	No retail role; comprises printing press, church use etc
50	St Georges Rd	Local convenience role supported by IGA; retail on both side but primarily on west side; other non-retail uses include laundry, dry clean, tattoo, medical; many vacancies, and both sides have development opportunities
51	St Georges Rd: Smith - Fyffe	Mix of activities, including service industry, small manufacturing, wholesale supplies, some commercial (eg accountants); has convenience component at northern edge with bakery and milk bar; BP petrol filling and audio centre opposite; lots of run-down properties
52	St Georges Rd / Normanby Ave	Local convenience role with milk bar and take away (south side of Normanby); drive-past food role with KFC, Subway and Cheesecake shop; on east of St Georges Rd hotel and service industry etc presents opportunity to redevelop on north side of Normanby
53	St Georges Rd / Woolton Ave	Niche role in office furniture (new and used); also comprises non-retail uses including office, dance, reception centre
54	St Vigeons Rd	Comprises office (pottery manufacture/distribution), hairdresser; may present an opportunity for redevelopment for residential and home business mix
55	Spring St / Butters St	Petrol filling station; used to have milkbar etc, now redundant
56	Spring St	Milk bar is main convenience role, with other premises including a mix of activities, such as music school, office, etc
57	Station St / Darebin St	Lost local convenience role; main anchor is video hire; number of non-retail business with numerous vacancies and office uses emerging.
58	Rossmoyne Village	Strong local convenience centre which serves surrounding residential catchment, passing traffic and industrial area; main convenience role is on west side, with newsagent, cafe, milkbar, chemist, bottle shop; vacant properties at northern end
59	Strathmerton St / Orrong Ave	Poorly performing local convenience centre - just 4 active retail shops out of total 14 premises; opportunity for residential redevelopment, particularly at northern end
60	Victoria Rd / South Crescent	Local convenience role, augmented by other non-retail uses such as garden supplies (across Victoria St), auto repairs, natural therapy. Several vacant premises, potential for residential redevelopment, good proximity to transport.
61	Victoria St / Raglan St	Milk bar and fish and chips; 2 vacancies potential for appropriate redevelopment; encourage retention of retail frontage
62	Victoria Rd / Clifton St	No convenience role, just has service business. Centre appears to be in decline.
63	Victoria Rd / Gooch St	Local centre with mix of uses including convenience (milkbar and hair/beauty salon), vet, auto parts. Shop-top potential.

Map Ref	Name / location	Core Role / function
64	Victoria Rd Plaza	Convenience role with small supermarket/general store, pizza, hot bread; has drive-in parking; some office/medical
65	Victoria Rd / Separation St	Stand-alone 7-11 store serving drive-past traffic and users of adjacent bowling alley and recreation centre
66	Wales St	Attractive but unviable local centre with limited catchment, which is converting to non-retail uses - this should be encouraged
67	Preston North	Mix of activities, including some retail (particularly furniture outlets), also includes furniture manufacture and other service industry uses
68	Regent	Mix of uses, including retail and wholesale, building supplies, and other service industry and non-retail activities (swim centre, etc)
69	Wingrove St / Kelvin Rd	9 properties, but only 2 convenience retail, including milkbar and butcher; viability supported by station; should keep retail role, but may be limited opportunities for redevelopment, especially mixed use
70	Wingrove St / Martin Ct	No convenience retail role; has small home-style pickle manufacturer/retailer, hobby shop, beauty, vet; some housing redevelopment evident in surrounding area
71	Wood Street	Milkbar which takes 2 premises but should be 1; "Wood's condiments & jams" provides specialty retail and manufacture location, and comprises 3 premises
72	Bolderwood Pde / Yarra Ave	Small local centre with milk bar, take away and strong bottle shop/cellar. Redevelopment encouraged at northern end
73	Hughes Pde / McFadzean Ave	Good mix of shops for local centre; has niche role because of bakery (famous for ciabatta); also includes Tattsлото, milk bar, beauty salon, etc
74	Edwardes St / Banbury Rd	No active role; redundant centre
75	Westgarth Village	Good small neighbourhood centre with niche "Bohemian" flavour; cafés and restaurants, organic food; Westgarth theatre is a destination/attractor
76	Heidelberg Rd / Jeffrey St	Zoned industrial; has petrol filling station, other uses are industrial, commercial or service industry; does not operate as a retail centre
77	Station St / Separation St	Zoned industrial; has petrol filling station, other uses are industrial, commercial or service industry; does not operate as a retail centre
78	Bell Street Bulky Goods Cluster	Mix of bulky goods / homemaker and leisure superstores, including Harvey Norman, Officeworks, Drummond Golf, Ray's Outdoors; Dick Smith Powerhouse, Paint supplies, office furniture on north side
79	Northland Bulky Goods Cluster	Key bulky goods centre, includes Northland Homemaker Centre, individual shops along Murray Rd (Berkowitz, etc), and Bunnings; outstanding proposal for land at Murray Rd / Chifley Drive to expand centre
80	Northland Shopping Centre	Identified as a Principal Centre; main regional location for specialty retail, department store, and food shopping; approval for extension granted, with additional DDS; important cinema and entertainment role; issue regarding transport access
81	Plenty Rd / Keats Av	Essentially passing traffic-based centre, including florist (x2), takeaway (x2), cheesecake shop; general store closed down; furniture manufacturing/sales
82	Plenty Rd / Dunne St	McDonalds Family Restaurant

Map Ref	Name / location	Core Role / function
83	South Preston	Supermarket based neighbourhood centre anchored by Safeway, and with a collection of small shops; Safeway Plus PFS, car sales on corner of Dundas St
84	Dundas St / Newcastle St	Market/grocery with fresh fruit and vegetables, and bottle shop; strong performer
85	High St / Barton St	No retail role; includes petrol filling station, car wash and vacant premises
86	Y on High	Mix of uses, including some local retail, but with emphasis on niche activities such as art-related activities (galleries, framing, etc), music equipment repair and sales, disco equipment, martial arts school, design jewellery; strong bakery located north of Dundas Street
87	St Georges Rd / Arthurton Rd	Comprises milk bar plus restaurant and medical centre; industry adjoining
88	Croxton	Identified as a redevelopment opportunity for residential development with commercial/retail ground floor, with emphasis on non-convenience uses; provides opportunity for investment in built form, which is lacking in this location; refer High Street Study
89	Thornbury Central	Mix of uses, including convenience retail, specialty retail, office, etc; generally not able to be defined as a centre, marks the division between Y on High and Thornbury Village
90	Bell St / St Georges Highway	McDonalds Family Restaurant
91	Plenty Rd / Main Drive	Lancaster Gate Neighbourhood Centre – see Lancaster Gate Development Plan

Source: City of Darebin; Essential Economics

5.3 Principal Activity Centres

Centres in Darebin

Principal Activity Centres in the City of Darebin comprise:

- Northland Shopping Centre (Regional Shopping/Entertainment)
- Preston Shopping Centre (Multi-Functional Centre)

Background

Principal Activity Centres are intended to be a focus for higher-order shopping facilities, major entertainment venues, office and commercial activities, community and government functions, etc. According to *Melbourne 2030*, they are intended to have the following characteristics:

- Mix of activities generating large number of trips
- Well served by multiple public transport routes
- A large catchment attracting activities that meet metropolitan needs
- Potential to grow and support intensive housing developments

The City of Darebin is served by Preston Central and Northland Shopping Centre, both identified in *Melbourne 2030* as Principal Activity Centres serving the northern region of Melbourne.

The Northland's role as a Principal Activity Centre (Regional Shopping/Entertainment) reflects its key role as a shopping destination and location for cinema and other entertainment facilities. The centre is not expected to develop as a major focus for a wide range of activities including intensive housing, although there may be limited opportunities to expand the range of activities currently undertaken at the centre, and to encourage some higher density housing in the surrounding region.

Preston Central's role as a Principal Activity Centre (Multi-Functional Centre) reflects its nature as a centre which currently accommodates a wide range of activities (including non-retail), and which has an opportunity to develop as a key location for an expanded level of development, including intensive housing.

Future Directions

Directions for the future development of the Principal Activity Centre in Darebin in order to achieve these outcomes are as follows:

1. Principal Activity Centres are the key locations for higher-order retail development serving the wider northern region, although smaller nodes of specialty shopping will also be provided at Major Activity Centres (see below).
2. A significant proportion of the identified retail floorspace expansion that is expected to occur in Darebin will be accommodated at Principal Activity Centres (and this includes expansion already approved for Northland Shopping Centre).

3. A greater mix of activities will be encouraged in future development at Principal Activity Centres (and particularly Preston Central as a Multi-Functional Centre), including commercial office, community and government facilities.
4. Council will work to promote the integration of Principal Activity Centres with surrounding land uses.
5. Transport access options for Principal Activity Centres, including the public transport network, will be reviewed in order to maximise the opportunity for shoppers to use public transport modes to access the centre.
6. A greater intensification of activity is encouraged at Principal Activity Centres (and particularly Preston Central), including, for example, expanded retail and commercial development, consolidated car parking, redevelopment of under-utilised sites, etc.
7. Intensive housing development is encouraged to locate in close proximity to Principal Activity Centres, and particularly Preston Central, which has potential to develop as a true multi-functional centre.
8. Council will ensure that environmental concerns, including potential interface issues with surrounding sensitive land uses, are considered and addressed in future development (especially at Northland Shopping Centre with regard to environmental issues with Darebin Creek).

5.4 Major Activity Centres

Centres in Darebin

Major Activity Centres in the City of Darebin comprise:

- Northcote, including Northcote Plaza, Northcote Central, and High Street strip (Sub-regional Shopping and Community)
- Reservoir Village (Community)

Background

Major Activity Centres have similar characteristics to Principal Activity Centres, including a wide mix of retail, business, community and other uses, but serve smaller catchments. Because of their smaller size, they have less provision for higher-order activities including full-line department stores, and the range of specialty shopping is less extensive.

Generally, there are two types of major activity centres, comprising stand-alone or undercover centres of the modern type, often surrounded by car parking (eg Northcote Plaza), and which have a focus on the provision of sub-regional shopping facilities, or more traditional centres that have grown from strip shopping centres and which are typically located along main arterial routes and are served by rail and/or tram services (eg Reservoir). The traditional centres tend to have an important community role as the focus for retail, civic, and community uses, and are often located at key transport interchanges.

Melbourne 2030 encourages the continued development of Major Activity Centres as key foci for a wide range of economic and social activities, including retail shopping facilities, commercial office

functions, community and civic facilities, and leisure and entertainment uses. The consolidation of these activities in Major Activity Centres will be supported by improved public transport infrastructure in order to achieve the critical goals of Vibrancy and Sustainability.

Future Directions

For the City of Darebin, the following directions are intended to guide the future development of Major Activity Centres (note that indicative recommendations for individual centres are presented in the accompanying report, *Place-Based Strategies*):

1. Major Activity Centres will be the focus for a wide mix of economic, social and community facilities, and will be the location for major grocery shopping, specialty retailing (with a mix of national brand and independent stores), and entertainment and leisure activities (including cafés and restaurants).
2. The role of Major Activity Centres will be broadened, including provision for higher-order retailing (where supported in terms of market demand), office development, entertainment venues and other economic, social, and community roles.
3. Further retail development at Major Activity Centres will be supported, particularly for major grocery facilities and a range of specialty shops, entertainment and leisure venues (including cafés and restaurants), and other retail activities which contribute to the vibrancy and viability of centres.
4. The provision of major government services at locations in Major Activity Centres will be encouraged.
5. High density housing will be encouraged in or adjoining Major Activity Centres in order to add to their vibrancy and to achieve sustainability goals.
6. Major Activity Centres will be further integrated with the public transport system and will be the location for improved transport interchanges between multiple public transport modes.
7. The visual and functional amenity of Major Activity Centres will be improved through public investment in streetscape, street furniture, lighting, etc, and through private investment in building maintenance and renovation, etc.

5.5 Neighbourhood Activity Centres

Centres in Darebin

Primary Neighbourhood Activity Centres in the City of Darebin comprise:

- Fairfield Village
- Broadway
- South Preston
- Summerhill / Target Centre
- Thornbury Village

Other neighbourhood centres which serve smaller catchments comprise:

- Link Street
- Westgarth Village
- Miller on Gilbert
- Lancaster Gate (approved)

Background

Darebin is served by a network of neighbourhood centres, ranging from relatively large centres such as the Summerhil/Target Centre and Fairfield Village, to smaller neighbourhood centres such as Miller on Gilbert. Generally these centres are distinguished by a mix of mostly convenience shopping needs such as newsagent, chemist, hairdresser, green grocer, butcher, takeaway food, etc, and typically anchored by supermarket facilities. Often these centres have a limited range of specialty shops, and have some non-retail roles such as small offices, medical centre, service business, etc. In the case of Westgarth Village, we note that the centre has a role as a small neighbourhood shopping facility for local residents, while also serving a wider role as a location for café dining, arthouse cinema, etc.

Summerhill Shopping Centre has a substantial retail component, including a discount department store, and effectively serves a sub-regional catchment. For the purposes of this analysis, the Summerhill / Target centre is identified as a Primary Neighbourhood Activity Centre, although we note that the centre has a broader sub-regional retail role.

There are a number of centres in Darebin that were originally designed to undertake a neighbourhood shopping role for their surrounding residential neighbourhoods, with provision for around 15-20 shopping premises, but currently only offer a more limited local convenience role comprising substantially fewer viable shops. These centres are covered in section 5.5 *Local Convenience Centres*, and directions have been prepared which specifically relate to those centres which have partly or fully lost their original retail/commercial role.

New neighbourhood centres are required in circumstances where major new communities are formed through urban redevelopment. This is occurring in parts of north-east Darebin, where a new neighbourhood centre is proposed to serve the Lancaster Gate/Mont Park developments. Recommendations with regard to the development of new centres are presented in Chapter 4, Strategic Policies for Development of Activity Centres.

For the purposes of *Melbourne 2030*, Neighbourhood Activity Centres are characterised by the following features (refer *Melbourne 2030*, p49):

- generally limited mix of uses meeting mostly convenience needs of the surrounding residential catchment
- generally less than 10,000 m² of retail floorspace
- accessible to a viable user population by walking/cycling
- accessible by local bus services and public transport links with at least one Principal or Major Activity Centre
- important community focal points, ideally close to schools, libraries, child care, health services, police stations, and other facilities that benefit from good public transport links

Neighbourhood Centres are intended as locations for convenience shopping to serve the surrounding neighbourhood, as well as a variety of other uses including community uses, and often supported by high density housing in the surrounding walk-in catchment (where appropriate). Neighbourhood centres are also to be served by public transport facilities, and are to contribute to the goal of encouraging walking, cycling and public transport use. Redevelopment occurring in urban areas should provide viable locations for Neighbourhood Centres in areas where the current distribution is inadequate to serve new residents (and according to the Strategic Policies presented in Chapter 4).

Future Directions

The following directions are intended to guide the future development of Neighbourhood Centres in the City of Darebin:

1. Neighbourhood Activity Centres will be the focus for convenience shopping facilities that are supported by the surrounding residential neighbourhood, as well as (particularly for the Primary Neighbourhood Centres) providing additional facilities such as specialty shopping, small office and micro-business premises, service business, etc.
2. New Neighbourhood Centres will be encouraged only where they serve new urban growth areas, and will be located appropriately to provide opportunities for a variety of transport access modes, including walking, cycling and public transport, as well as car access, and designed in accordance with the Urban Design Policies presented in this Strategy (refer Chapter 4).
3. Local community facilities such as child care centres, maternal and child health centres, medical centres, primary schools, police stations, etc, will be encouraged to locate close to Neighbourhood Activity Centres in order to maximise the vibrancy, viability and sustainability of these locations.
4. More intensive housing will be encouraged to be located on the periphery of Neighbourhood Activity Centres (particularly the Primary Neighbourhood Activity Centres) in order to promote viable facilities by contributing to demand.
5. Shop-top housing will be encouraged at Neighbourhood Activity Centres where the building type is appropriate and where the centre is located close to the public transport network.
6. Active retail uses will be encouraged to consolidate together in order to present opportunities for redevelopment at the fringe of centres.
7. The urban environment at Neighbourhood Activity Centres will be improved through public and private investment so that they become amenable and vibrant focal points for local communities.

5.6 Local Convenience Centres

Centres in Darebin

The City of Darebin is served by a network of approximately 55 local convenience centres (refer Table 5.2). The locations of these centres, and the walk-in catchment that they serve, is illustrated in Figure 5.2.

Background

Local convenience centres represent the base of the retail hierarchy that operates in the City of Darebin. They typically comprise a small number of retail premises (although the actual number of operating retail premises varies) that provide for the convenience retail needs of local catchments, and generally include milk bar, newsagent, hairdresser/beauty salon, takeaway, and other convenience retail uses. In some cases the retail mix is more extensive, and may include non-retail activities such as small office, service business, and service industry; local centres present important opportunities for the establishment of small businesses in this regard. Often these secondary uses are attracted to local centres where there are a number of vacant premises, in preference to the higher rents that are charged for premises in areas that are zoned for service industry, or as an alternative to renovating home properties for home-based business activities.

The distinguishing features of local convenience centres in comparison with neighbourhood centres are:

- they are of smaller size
- they serve small catchments of only up to around 2-3,000 persons
- they do not typically have proper supermarket facilities (ie 800 m² or more), although some local convenience centres can offer a general store or small mini-market (of, say 400 m²)
- a higher share of shoppers access the centre via walking and cycling, although local centres typically also require some car parking facilities for drive-in customers

Local Convenience Centres are not identified in the *Melbourne 2030* document, and are an additional level of the retail hierarchy that has been adopted for the purposes of the Darebin Retail Activity Centres Strategy. The inclusion of an additional level in the retail hierarchy is in response to the important role that these local convenience centres play in the Darebin retail sector.

This assessment of local convenience centres is intended to provide guidance in planning for retail and other commercial uses in these centres, and to assist in planning for local centres that are poorly performing. The analysis presented in this strategy includes the identification of opportunities for redevelopment of the whole or part of the centre, for residential and/or other uses.

The distribution of small local centres varies across the municipality according to the density of housing and the age of the housing stock. For example, in the older southern parts of Darebin, where the size of house blocks is smaller and where neighbourhoods are arranged in a grid pattern, there is a relatively dense network of local centres, and this is augmented by individual milk bars. In the northern part of the municipality, centres are more widely dispersed, and this reflects the presence of larger lot sizes, which means that a dense network of centres is less likely to be viable. In addition, the irregular street patterns in parts of the northern suburbs make it more difficult to locate local centres in positions which can easily serve a viable catchment, and these development patterns encourage greater car use to access centres.

The coverage of centres in Darebin is shown in the accompanying Figure 5.2, which displays activity centres in the municipality, with circles of radius 400 metre drawn around each centre to indicate the extent of the walk-in catchment. The map illustrates the difference in coverage between southern and northern suburbs, with parts of Reservoir and Kingsbury not covered by the 400 metre walk-in buffers.

We note that the 400 metre walk-in catchment is a conservatively small area that is to be served by convenience facilities. Typically, the local convenience catchment can be drawn to encompass a region up to around 700 metres from the centre, although this is considered the limit to a comfortable

walking distance. The adoption of a 400 metre buffer reflects the important role of local centres in serving the retail needs of less mobile residents.

The illustration of walk-in catchments serves to emphasise that there is a need to continue to provide convenient retail facilities at accessible locations across the municipality. This is an important consideration in the context of planning for poorly performing centres, especially where opportunities have been identified to rezone centres (or parts thereof) for residential development. It is essential that an appropriate network of local centres be retained to serve residents and to meet their convenience retail needs, and there is a risk that rezoning the whole of these poorly performing centres for residential (or other) uses may lead to the loss of convenience stores and facilities, even though these activities have existing use rights. In these cases there is a need to retain the business zoning for part of the centre in order to safeguard the retail use and local services.

The strategy therefore seeks to strike an appropriate balance between either dissolving entire centres by rezoning the land to allow residential use, or doing nothing and leaving the centres to continue to struggle along at their existing pace.

Our analysis of centres in Darebin has identified a number of Local Convenience Centres in Darebin that are not performing well as retail activity centres, and have lost all or part of their retail role. Typically, these centres may have only a small proportion of total premises in active retail operations, with the remainder of properties used for secondary purposes such as service industry, or lying vacant or derelict.

The reasons for poor performance at these centres and the consequent decline of the centre vary, but key factors include the following:

- Street patterns which limit the extent of local walk-in shopping catchments and reduce the exposure to through traffic (which is particularly important given that small convenience stores often rely heavily on passing trade)
- Less dense residential development, with larger properties and smaller households, meaning that walk-in catchments have lower populations than would otherwise be the case
- In some cases neighbourhoods were planned with an excessive allowance for neighbourhood centres, which meant that centres that were nominated for neighbourhood facilities (with, say, 15-20 or so premises) in fact have a much lesser local convenience role in the retail network, with only a proportion of premises accommodating viable retail facilities
- A number of social and demographic changes have taken place in the last 20 years or so, including the increased participation of women in the workforce, increased mobility and incidence of 2 or more cars in a household, reduced time available for shopping and travelling to shops, greater expectations in terms of quality and range of retail produce, improved service levels, a widening of food shopping tastes, etc - these trends have reduced the importance of neighbourhood and local centres in the hierarchy in favour of one-stop shopping at larger supermarket-based centres
- Low commercial returns of corner store operations caused by factors such as easy access to modern convenience stores and the extended operating hours of supermarkets can often lead to a decline of the retail centres milk bar or convenience store. This in turn impacts drastically on patronage levels to the centre.
- In parts of the network that serve higher socio-demographic catchments, local centres have attracted other relatively high-order uses such as office, micro-businesses, and so on; while other centres in lower socio-economic areas tend to attract service industry as secondary uses for premises, and there is a higher incidence of vacant and run-down properties

An analysis of local convenience centres in Darebin undertaken as part of this study has identified six specific local convenience centres that are in decline or are no longer offering any convenience or viable retail role, and require an immediate planning response. Other centres have been identified for ongoing monitoring and future assessment.

These centres are shown in Table 5.3 below, which also provides a summary of their current level of commercial activity.

Table 5.3: Selected Local Convenience Centres and Current Commercial Activity

Local Convenience Centre	Total number of tenancies	Number of tenancies in operation
Crevelli Street	9	2 (milk bar, pizza shop)
Daleglen Street	7	1 (wholesale equipment) – no local convenience use remaining, some residential uses commenced.
Grange Rd and Darling St (SE cnr)	2	0 - milk bar and other convenience store closed
Market Court	10	1 (milk bar) – some residential uses commenced.
Spring Street (near cnr of Butter St)	2	1 (mechanical workshop) – milk bar closed
Edwardes Street (near Banbury Rd)	1	0 - milk bar closed

Source: Essential Economics Pty Ltd

An appropriate planning response is required for these poorly performing centres in order to identify where viable retail opportunities, may still exist, and to assist in facilitating alternative development where centres do not have an ongoing retail role.

Our analysis indicates that if no planning response is devised, it is likely that most properties in these centres will remain vacant or be used for alternative (non-retail) activities. This outcome is mainly due to the excess number of properties in these local centres to serve modern shopping patterns, which is as a result of the days when it was normal for centres to be planned with 10 or 12 properties. It is difficult to imagine these centres ever operating to their full potential again.

It is also important to recognise, however, that appropriate responses need to be determined on a case-by-case basis, with consideration given to factors such as:

- whether the centre performs any retail role
- whether the centre is located in a residential area
- whether there are opportunities to rationalise part of the centre, and retain a smaller yet viable retail component
- whether there is future potential for viable retail facilities (eg through residential redevelopment options in the future)
- what other activities occur at the centre (eg service industry, office, etc), and whether these are appropriate given the centre's location
- whether there are real development alternatives (such as medium density housing)

- the fact that the mixed use zone operates in effect as a residential zone and does not encourage commercial uses

The following section presents a decision-making framework in order to assist in determining an appropriate response for application to local centres. Specific comments are also provided in Table 5.5 for application to particular local convenience centres in Darebin.

The recommendations for rezoning parts of centres in Darebin (as presented in Table 5.5) have been made with consideration given to the trends and issues described above, including in particular:

- the existing retail role at these centres
- the likelihood (or otherwise) of growth in the catchment served by these centres
- the opportunities for retail consolidation
- locations of alternative centres to serve residents in the surrounding catchment
- opportunities for residential or other development

The identification of centres for rezoning has been made on a conservative basis, with the primary focus on retaining sufficient retail facilities to serve the needs of existing and future residents. Nevertheless, the trends in the retail industry and in customer behaviour and demographics point to declining support for retail provision at the very local level (ie at local convenience centres). There is increasing support for well-located neighbourhood shopping centres that can be served by a variety of access modes and offer modern facilities and a wide variety of product. This is something that many local convenience centres can not offer.

In addition to these factors, the recommendations for individual centres have also been made with application of the decision-making framework presented below.

Decision-making Framework

As noted above, there are a number of factors that need to be considered in planning for poorly performing local centres, and these need to be applied on a case-by-case basis. However, as a general approach for application to all local centres, the following Table 5.4 provides a decision-making framework for planning at local convenience centres.

The framework provides a conservative basis for decision-making, in that it favours retention of land zoned for retail use where there may be some future prospect for viable retail uses on the land. This reflects the over-arching need to plan for the retail needs of future residents in Darebin, and the difficulty in returning residential land to business uses.

Table 5.4: Decision-making Framework for Planning for Local Convenience Centres

Retail activity	Other activities	Surrounding land uses	Planning response
None - no retail activity	None - vacant land	Residential	Consider rezoning to Res1Z except where future housing may support new retail facilities
		Commercial/highway location or other uses	Investigate potential to encourage other commercial activity; otherwise consider rezoning to Res1Z
	Other activities - service industry / office / other commercial	Residential	Where other activities are inappropriate to the residential location, encourage them to move to more appropriate sites, and consider rezoning to Res1Z; otherwise retain existing zone but explore possibilities to rationalise the centre where vacancies exist
		Commercial/highway location or other uses	Retain existing zone
Yes - retail activity evident	Excess properties, with many vacancies	Residential	Explore opportunity to rationalise the centre and rezone part of the centre to Res1Z in an effort to support the existing viable commercial uses
		Commercial/highway location or other uses	Consider opportunity to encourage other commercial and highway-oriented activity; retain existing zone but monitor for opportunity to encourage residential development if the centre remains vacant
	Excess properties, mainly service industry / office / other activities	Residential	Where other activities are inappropriate to surrounding residential uses, encourage them to move to more appropriate sites, and consider rezoning to Res1Z; otherwise retain existing zone but explore possibilities to rationalise the centre where vacancies exist
		Commercial/highway location or other uses	Retain existing zone and encourage commercial and highway-oriented development
	Mostly retail	Residential	Retain existing zone for retail use (B1Z)
		Commercial/highway location or other uses	

Source: Essential Economics

The decision-making framework identifies the Residential 1 Zone as an appropriate alternative to the existing zone in circumstances where the centre has no viable retail role and where residential development is an appropriate development option. However, it is important to note that opportunities for mixed use development should be explored where appropriate (although the use of the Mixed Use Zone is not preferred since it acts as a *de facto* residential zone).

Planning decisions that affect the operation of local convenience centres should have due regard for the primary role of such centres in meeting the local shopping needs of residents in the surrounding area. Proposals to rezone centres from business to residential or other use should be made only where it is evident that the centre has no effective retail role (ie, convenience shopping needs are provided at an alternative location) or where new development can incorporate convenience shopping facilities (eg as part of a mixed use development).

Future Directions

The following directions will guide Council policy with regard to the future development of Local Convenience Centres in Darebin. Specific recommendations for individual poorly performing centres are presented in Table 5.5.

1. Local Convenience Activity Centres will provide local level convenience retail services to a limited local catchment which primarily comprises walk-in customers in the immediate environs of the shop, although some local convenience centres also have an important role serving passing traffic.
2. A mix of uses is encouraged at local centres, with an emphasis on the provision of basic retail services such as milk bar/general store, newsagent, hairdresser, etc.
3. Some Local Convenience Centres are appropriate for a wider mix of economic activities, including commercial office and service business. These uses are particularly encouraged on the fringe of centres.
4. Consolidation of active retail facilities is encouraged in order to allow redevelopment of redundant space at centres which have an excess of properties and a high vacancy rate.
5. For centres which have lost their retail role, other development opportunities, including high or medium density residential, will be encouraged, and may be facilitated through rezoning, where appropriate.
6. Decision-making with regard to planning options at local convenience centres will be undertaken in the context of the Decision-making Framework for Planning at Local Centres (refer Table 5.4).
7. Local Convenience Centres will be monitored for redevelopment opportunities and will be regularly reviewed to identify potential planning responses to facilitate alternative development.
8. Local convenience retail facilities will be planned for in newly developing areas only where the walk-in catchment is not served by neighbourhood centres; where the need for local centres is identified, an appropriate size of centre will be encouraged (say, 2-4 shops rather than 5-10) in order to minimise redundant space.
9. The location of new local and neighbourhood centres (if required) will be identified with regard to accessibility for the surrounding local catchment (including public transport access) as well as opportunities to serve passing traffic.

Table 5.5 provides specific recommendations for centres which have been identified as having lost all or part of their original (or planned) retail role. The table includes identification of the alternative land use development opportunities, and considerations in preparing a planning response at these centres.

Table 5.5: Considerations for Poorly Performing Local Centres in Darebin

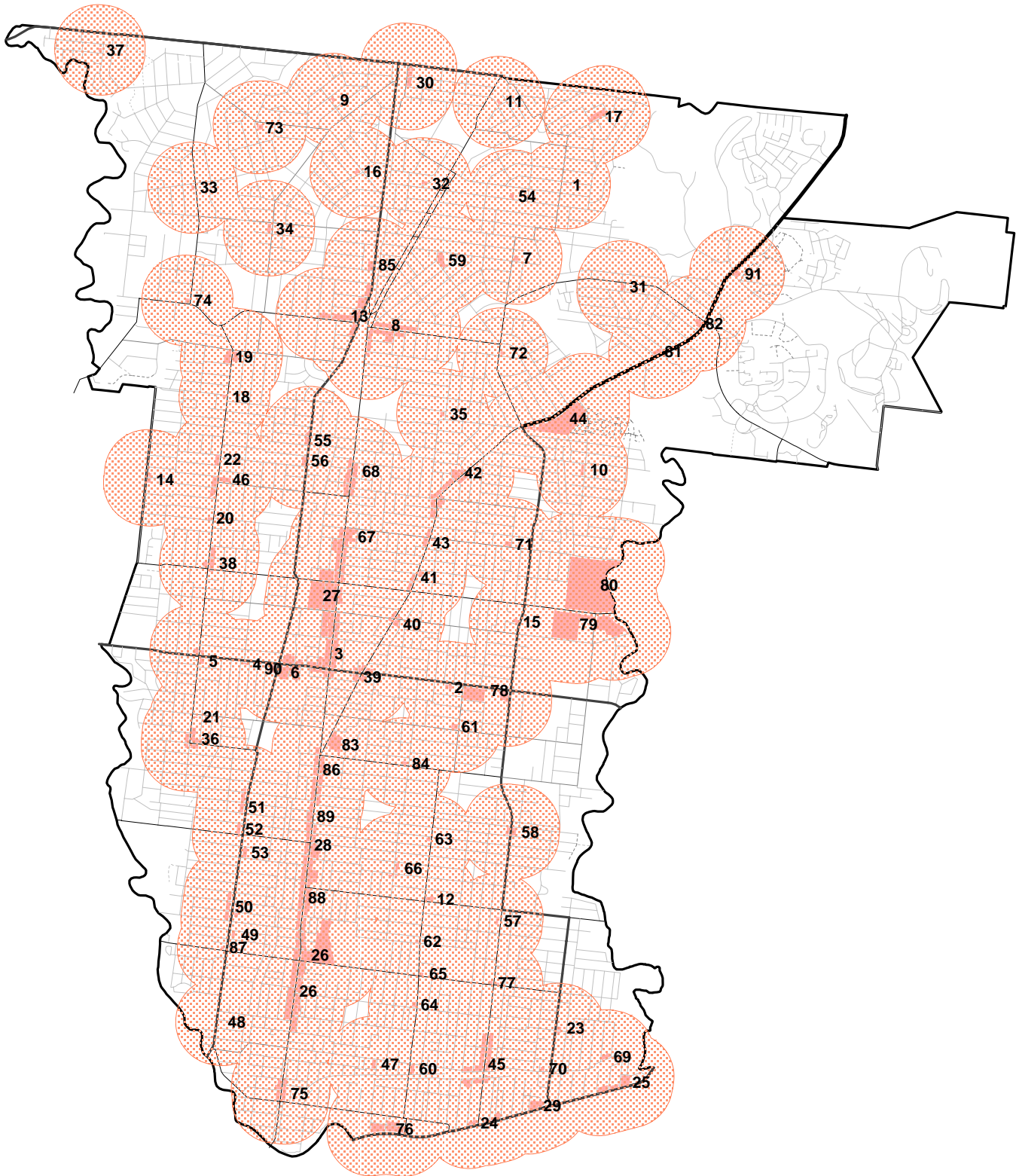
Ref	Centre	Comment / development opportunity	Planning considerations / recommendations
1	Banff St	Local centre with 2 retail shops out of 7 properties. Opportunity to consolidate retail function and accommodate redevelopment for residential (which is surrounding land use)	Retain zone to ensure commercial function; investigate opportunity to rationalise some properties for redevelopment to residential
9	Carson St	Rundown centre with just 2 active tenants out of 7. May be opportunity for redevelopment to residential, but need to ensure local retail function; lack of alternative retail facilities in surrounding area	Retain zone; investigate opportunity to rationalise some properties for redevelopment to residential
10	Crevelli St	Local shops which are adjacent (3 properties), with remaining premises vacant and rundown. Presents opportunity for redevelopment to residential. Some residential activity already evident. Centre is close to Summerhill.	Retain existing B1Z for retail uses currently operating; consider <u>rezoning</u> remaining properties to Res1Z
11	Daleglen St	Poorly planned centre with very limited catchment; no active retail properties. Opportunity to encourage existing uses (service business) to locate elsewhere, and develop for residential. Alternative retail use at petrol filling station on Dalton Road and other nearby centres.	Consider <u>rezoning</u> to Res1Z
12	Darebin Rd/ Victoria Rd	Has a mix of convenience retail at western end, but presents opportunities to consolidate active properties and redevelop remaining redundant space.	Retain zone but encourage mix of uses, particularly at eastern fringe
14	Elizabeth St	Limited convenience role, could present future opportunity for residential/mixed use.	Retain zone but monitor for future opportunities for residential
17	Gertz Ave	Local centre which has many vacant and non-retail properties. Opportunity to encourage residential development on fringe of centre; potential also for small and home-based business development. Need to encourage consolidation of retail activity at core of the centre (eastern end).	Encourage consolidation of retail activity at eastern end of centre; review potential to rezone part of centre to Res1Z
23	Grange Rd/ Darling St	Small local centre with active properties north of Darling St; vacant properties south of Darling St have development potential for residential.	Retain existing zone but monitor for future retail/commercial activity
32	Market Crt	Single active tenant (milk bar) out of 10 properties. Northern part of centre is rundown, and adjoins walk track/open space; may present an opportunity for residential development at this end.	Consider <u>rezoning</u> part of centre to Res1Z; retain properties at southern end for potential future retail/commercial use (say, 3-4 properties); consult with land owners
47	Simpson St	Only limited retail role. Excess premises offers redevelopment opportunity for commercial office/mixed use development; some residential development as part of mixed use may be appropriate	Retain B1Z, but encourage greater mix of activities
50	St Georges Rd/ Beavers - Emmaline	Wide mix of uses, including convenience retail, service industry, and vacant property. May be redevelopment opportunities on fringe where excess properties exist	Retain existing zone, but monitor for opportunities to encourage mixed use or residential development of excess properties on fringe of centre
54	St Vigeon St	Limited retail role (hairdresser). May present future opportunity for mixed use/residential/home based business development	Retain zone but monitor for opportunity to rezone to encourage mixed use or residential development
55	Spring St/ Butters St	No retail activity, redundant local shops; consists of petrol filling station. Opportunity to rezone to attract alternative uses	Consider <u>rezoning</u> land to Rez1Z

Ref	Centre	Comment / development opportunity	Planning considerations / recommendations
59	Strathmerton Av	Has limited retail role (4 active tenants out of 14 premises); presents opportunity to consolidate retail/commercial activity and redevelop remaining properties for residential or mixed use	Retain existing zone and encourage greater mix of uses; monitor for opportunity to rezone to Res1Z
62	Victoria Rd/ Clifton St	Has no convenience retail role, but accommodates other service business uses	Retain existing zone and encourage mix of uses
66	Wales St	Limited retail convenience, close to school, opportunity for greater mix of uses including residential.	Retain zone; encourage mixed use development; monitor for potential to rezone parts of the centre for residential
74	Edwardes St/ Banbury Rd	Redundant local shop originally provided to serve adjoining industrial uses and limited residential catchment east of Banbury Road; current retail potential is limited to food shopping for workers, which can be provided in an industrial zone. Property is currently vacant.	Consider <u>rezoning</u> /incorporating into adjacent In3Z

Source: Essential Economics Pty Ltd
refer Figure 5.1 or Figure 5.2 for centre locations

FIGURE 5.2:

Walk-in Coverage of Centres in Darebin



Source: Essential Economics
Note: for centre reference, see Table 5.2

5.7 Cluster Centres

Centres in Darebin

Nominated Cluster Centres in the City of Darebin comprise:

- Northland Bulky Goods precinct, comprising the Northland Homemaker Centre, properties along Murray Road to Chifley Drive, and the Bunnings Warehouse store
- Bell Street Bulky Goods Precinct, comprising the Harvey Norman/Officeworks centre, the Rays Outdoors/Drummond Golf centre, and Dick Smith Powerhouse and other properties on the north side of Bell Street

Background

Cluster Centres are defined for the purposes of this Strategy as locations where large format retail activities tend to cluster to take advantage of site selection advantages such as:

- large sites either as single parcels or for consolidation
- relatively low development cost away from intensive activities
- high exposure to passing traffic
- good accessibility from a regional catchment, with private vehicles being the primary mode of access
- opportunities for integrated developments

Cluster centres typically accommodate retail activities in merchandise categories such as furniture, bedding, lighting, hardware, camping and other recreational equipment, whitegoods and other major electrical equipment, garden supplies and products, and so on. In the context of this Strategy, the cluster centres typically comprise major national brand homemaker retailers, and are distinguished from lower-level bulky goods activities such as showroom, trade supplies, etc.

While some particular stores can operate as destination outlets (particularly the large hardware superstores), typically these retail operations seek sites close to major anchors (such as Harvey Norman, Guests, etc).

Important benefits can be gained from encouraging further consolidation of these cluster activities, principally in relation to the conservation of land where larger integrated developments can be constructed. The integration of these activities at nominated precincts also allows for the provision of alternative transport modes, although car-based transport is likely to remain the overwhelmingly preferred access mode.

In the northern region of Melbourne there is substantial existing and proposed provision of bulky goods facilities, particularly in the City of Whittlesea, where demand for homemaker products is stimulated by significant new housing construction. This new provision is principally occurring at Thomastown (immediately north of the City of Darebin) and at Epping.

Future Directions

The following directions will guide future development of bulky goods/homemaker clusters in the City of Darebin:

1. Cluster Centres will be the preferred nominated locations for the provision of major homemaker bulky goods facilities selling items such as furniture, electrical, hardware, leisure goods, etc.
2. The construction of new large format/bulky goods retail facilities will be directed to preferred locations comprising:
 - the environs of the Northland Shopping Centre (where zoned appropriately, and including additional proposed development at Chifley Drive opposite the Bunnings store)
 - Bell Street (including existing land developed for bulky goods on the south side of Bell Street, and land in the surrounding area).
3. Further assessment of the Bell Street Cluster Centre and its opportunities to accommodate additional bulky goods development will be undertaken through the preparation of a separate strategy for Bell Street.
4. Parts of Plenty Road are appropriate locations for secondary uses such as smaller-scale building supplies and trade-related goods and services; other locations will be assessed in accordance with the Out-of-centre Evaluation Criteria that are to be established during implementation of *Melbourne 2030*.
5. Council will provide input to the development of appropriate criteria in order to ensure that there is a balance between the needs of shoppers (who demand additional bulky goods provision) and the wider economic, social and environmental considerations.
6. The environs of Northland Shopping Centre, including the Northland Homemaker Centre, the adjoining properties with frontage to Murray Road, the existing Bunnings site, and additional land proposed for bulky goods on Chifley Drive, is nominated as the main site for new major homemaker developments involving national brand tenants that generate significant car .
7. Large integrated developments which accommodate 15,000 m² or more retail floorspace are the preferred format for Cluster Centres, and will be encouraged in preference to smaller ad hoc strip development.
8. There is potential for consolidation of sites to allow large integrated developments in parts of Bell Street in close proximity to the existing facilities near the intersection of Albert Street, which are currently zoned IN3Z. However, additional assessment of the merits of bulky goods development in this location is required.

6 IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 Introduction

This Chapter provides guidance in the implementation of the City of Darebin Retail Activity Centres Strategy, including:

1. A description of the key steps that need to be undertaken to give effect to the Strategy
2. Directions for the preparation of updated material for input to the Darebin Municipal Strategic Statement
3. Summary of zone changes proposed in the Retail Activity Centres Strategy

These implementation measures are described in the following sections.

6.2 Key Steps to Implement the Strategy

The following key steps are required to give effect to the Retail Activity Centres Strategy:

(1) *Adopt the recommendations*

Council needs to agree to and formally adopt the recommendations presented in this Strategy, including:

- the **Vision** for future retail development in Darebin (refer Chapter 3)
- the **Strategic Policies** that have been prepared with regard to Centre Roles and Identity, Business Development and Centre Management and Urban Design (refer Chapter 4)
- the **Retail Activity Centre Framework** that has been prepared to identify roles in the hierarchy of centres and guide future development of the retail hierarchy (refer Chapter 5)

While the Place-Based Strategies are not proposed to be adopted as part of the Retail Activity Centres Strategy, they provide important reference points in the ongoing preparation of structure plans for individual centres.

(2) *Allocate roles and responsibilities*

Responsibilities for implementing the Retail Activity Centres Strategy need to be confirmed and allocated, including allocation of roles across Council departments

(3) Prepare updated material for Darebin MSS

A review of the Darebin Municipal Strategic Statement is currently underway. Updated material needs to be prepared that reflects the policies and recommendations in this Strategy. Guidance in the preparation of this material is provided in section 7.3 below.

(4) Prepare amendments to the City of Darebin Planning Scheme

Amendments to the Planning Scheme are required in order to give effect to the recommended rezonings presented in this Strategy, including rezoning of land on High Street (as identified in the High Street Study), and rezoning of land at specified local convenience centres (refer Section 5.6).

(5) Introduce monitoring and review program

There is a need to introduce monitoring and review program so as to ensure that the policies and recommendations presented in this Strategy are kept under review and, ultimately, achieved. Recommended monitoring and review procedures are presented in Chapter 7.

6.3 Input to Darebin Municipal Strategic Statement

The Darebin MSS is currently under review, and there is a need to ensure that the preparation of an updated MSS reflects the material that is presented in this Strategy.

Accordingly, the following comments are intended to provide guidance in the preparation of updated material:

- The description of the municipality and its regional context needs to give due weight to the importance of the retail sector in the Darebin economy.
- The description of issues and opportunities in the municipality should include reference to the opportunity to further develop activity centres as key focal points for the provision of retail and business services, civic and community functions, recreation and entertainment activity, and - in some cases - intensive housing development. There needs to be discussion of how the development of activity centres needs to be undertaken in the context of achieving environmentally sustainable outcomes, and in a manner that is in accordance with other policy areas such as housing development, transport integration, and economic development.
- Strategies relating to Housing development should include measures that are intended to ensure that the opportunities for intensive housing in and around activity centres should be undertaken in such as way as to contribute positively to the primary retail and business role of activity centres.
- Strategies relating to community development should include measures that are intended to promote the provision of community facilities at locations close to activity centres.
- Strategies relating to economic development should include measures that:
 - Promote activity centres as locations for a diverse range of retail and business activities
 - Protect the primary retail and commercial role of activity centres

- Encourage the creation of business associations that support small business development through centre management, business planning etc
- Encourage the revitalisation of poorly performing activity centres for alternative business development where possible
- The MSS needs to include a section on Activity Centre development that presents an overview of the existing Retail Activity Centre Framework, and which summarises the key issues that will affect future development opportunities (refer Background Report, Chapter 7 and Chapter 2 of this Strategy).
- The section on Activity Centre development should include reference to the Vision to guide activity centre development, as presented in Chapter 3 of this Strategy.
- The section on Activity Centre development should include measures that reflect the Strategic Policies presented in this Strategy, including:
 - Encourage the consolidation of retail and business activity at nominated centres
 - Support new retail development proposals where they are in accordance with the Retail Activity Centres Framework and centre strategies
 - Closely monitor out-of-centre development, and ensure that such development is restricted to nominated locations, particularly in relation to bulky goods retailing
 - Ensure that activity centres develop in an integrated fashion
 - Consolidate the network of local convenience centres
 - Require a high standard of design for new development and redevelopment at activity centres
- The section on Activity Centre development should include implementation measures that reflect the recommendations presented in this Strategy, including:
 - The use of the Retail Activity Centre Framework to guide decision-making with respect to centre development
 - The provision of Council support and guidance for businesses in activity centres through centre management and business planning programs
 - The application of Strategic Policies with respect to centre roles and functions, centre management, business planning and urban design issues in activity centres
 - The use of the Decision-Making Framework for Planning at Local Convenience Centres as a means of assessing potential planning response at local centres
 - Preparation of planning scheme amendments for those centres which have been identified as having lost their retail role and for which alternative uses have been identified
- The section on Activity Centre development should include reference to further strategic work that is to be undertaken, including the preparation of Structure Plans for Principal and Major Activity Centres, as required by *Melbourne 2030*
- The section on Physical Infrastructure should include reference to the need to undertake capital works at retail activity centres in order to improve their visual and functional performance; indicative recommendations are identified in the Place-Based Strategies
- The section on Transport and Access should include reference to transport-related initiatives that provide support to the operation of Retail Activity Centres, including measures that:
 - Improve public transport accessibility to centres

- Encourage a more intensive development of land at activity centres, including for housing
- Aim to ensure that there is a balanced approach to transport management and road planning which recognises the needs of car users, public transport users, pedestrians and shoppers, street diners, and other stakeholders

6.4 Summary of Proposed Zone Changes

This Retail Activity Centres Strategy makes reference to a number of proposed changes to the City of Darebin Planning Scheme in the form of changes to land use zones at particular centres. These zone changes are summarised below, and include reference to zone changes proposed in the High Street Study:

Table 6.1: Summary of Proposed Changes to the Application of Land Use Zones in Darebin

Location	Proposed zone change	Comment
<i>High Street Study Recommendations:</i>		
High Street, Croxton	Rezone to B2Z	Reflects intended shift from core retail to office and mixed use development; refer High Street Study
Thornbury Village	Rezone In3Z properties north of Martin Street to B1Z	Reflects extent of the Thornbury Village centre and its primary retail role; refer High Street Study
Thornbury Central (High Street)	Rezone to B2Z	Reflects intended shift from core retail to office and mixed use development; refer High Street Study
Thornbury Junction (Y on High)	Rezone In3Z properties north of Flinders Street to B1Z	Reflects primary retail role and opportunities at Y on High; refer High Street Study
Preston South	Rezone B1Z properties on Mary Street to B5Z	Reflects opportunity for mix of uses favouring office and residential mix; refer High Street Study
Preston North	Rezone properties from Clinch Av/Beauchamp St to Spencer St/Wood St to B2Z	Reflects intended preference of office and mixed use development; refer High Street Study
Regent	Rezone to MU and B3Z	Reflects shift in emphasis towards residential/commercial mix, and retention of auto industries
<i>Recommendations for local convenience centres</i>		
Crevelli Street	Rezone properties currently not occupied (northern part of centre) from B1Z to Res1Z	Local centre with many vacant and run-down properties; active retail uses are adjacent at southern end; residential uses in surrounding area; the centre is close to Summerhill / Target
Daleglen Street	Rezone to Res1Z	Local centre has no convenience retail role; current service business uses to be encouraged to locate elsewhere; local convenience needs met elsewhere (at petrol filling station on Dalton Rd, and other local centres)

Location	Proposed zone change	Comment
Market Court	Rezone part of centre to Res1Z	Many vacant and run-down properties at northern/eastern part of the centre; provides opportunity to rezone to Res1Z, but should retain some retail use (say 3-4 properties); rezoning should be preceded by consultation with land owners, particularly those at western/southern end.
Spring Street/Butters Street	Rezone part of land to Res1Z	Centre consists of petrol filling station and vacant/run down properties; no viable retail potential for vacant property.
Edwardes Street/Banbury Road	Rezone to In3Z	Small business zone intended to provide local services to workers in industrial estate; this role now provided by tenants in the industrial zone; should incorporate into adjacent In3Z

Source: High Street Study, DLA; Table 5.5

6.5 Capital Works

Table 6.2 presents a summary of indicative recommendations for capital works measures to be undertaken in Darebin, with an indication of priority timing for each measure. Note that this schedule excludes transport infrastructure works to be undertaken by other agencies.

We also note that these recommendations only, and are subject to more detailed investigation as part of structure planning to be progressively undertaken for individual centres. The recommendations are based on analysis contained in the accompanying report, *Place-Based Strategies*.

Table 6.2: Summary of Indicative Capital Works Measures (refer *Place-Based Strategies*)

Works	Summary	Locations
<u>High Priority</u>		
Traffic management changes ¹	Replacement of clearways with shorter no-standing areas and reduction of speed limit to 50kph	Preston, Northcote, Fairfield (40kmh), Thornbury Village, Thornbury Junction, Westgarth,
High Street central medians	Painted median	Northcote, Thornbury Village, Thornbury Junction
	Raised median and trees	Preston
Enhanced external pedestrian connections	Lighting around station	Westgarth
	New pedestrian link to station	Northcote
	Improved pedestrian facilities & amenity around Reservoir Station	Broadway, Reservoir Village
	Improved pedestrian crossings across Murray Rd	Northland
New town square	Redevelopment of space in front of Preston Town Hall	Preston
Signage	New pedestrian directional signage to stations and different precincts within centre	Westgarth, Northcote, Thornbury Junction, Preston, Reservoir Village, Broadway, Northland
<u>Medium Priority</u>		
Gateway treatments	Kerb outstands, rumble strips, signature trees, signage & seating	Westgarth, Northcote, Thornbury Village, Preston, Reservoir Village, Broadway, Fairfield
Central medians	Painted median along length of strip	Fairfield
Street trees	In kerbside parking lane, where parking supply allows	Northcote, Thornbury Village, Thornbury Junction, Preston
	Along adjoining main road boundary	Plenty Rd, Summerhill & Murray Rd, Northland
Kerb outstands	Kerb outstands at Duncan St	Fairfield
	Informal seating areas & pedestrian crossings	Thornbury Village, Thornbury Junction, Reservoir Village
	Key locations	Westgarth Theatre, entry to Preston Market
Centre-parking linemarking	Widen parking bays	Broadway
Rear laneways ²	Construct new laneways	Fairfield
Pedestrian link enhancements	Surface treatment & signage	Fairfield
New footpaths	Alongside off-street car parks	Fairfield, Reservoir Village
Seating	On kerb outstands	Westgarth Theatre, Northcote, Thornbury Village, Thornbury Junction, Reservoir Village, Preston Market entry
Identity markers	Public art signifying centre	Spring & High St, Reservoir Village
<u>Low Priority</u>		
New pedestrian crossings	Kerb outstands & pedestrian crossings	Northcote, Preston

Works	Summary	Locations
Off-street car parks	Improvements to existing car park surface & new trees	Preston
Seating	New seats	Preston, Broadway
Bicycle racks	New bicycle racks	Preston
Trees	In kerbside parking lane, where parking supply and pavement management allows, and subject to safety requirements	Reservoir Village
	In central median	Broadway
Lighting	Tree uplighting	All centres
Footpath screens	To screen traffic impacts	Spring & High St, Reservoir Village
Fence removal		Oval, Preston
Footpath renewal	Replacement with more appropriate surface	Westgarth, Broadway

Notes: ¹ These works to be undertaken by VicRoads
² This will require land acquisition

7 MONITORING AND REVIEW

An important part of the implementation process for Retail Activity Centres Strategy is to ensure that the strategy remains relevant as circumstances change and as new opportunities arise.

Monitoring of progress in the implementation of the Strategy will be important, and this will allow proper assessment as to how the Strategy is performing and whether or not changes are warranted as a result of emerging trends.

Monitoring also enables the Council and the community to judge how well and how efficiently the plan is being implemented. It is important, however, that speed of implementation should not be the sole criterion for success. Most communities seek quality planning outcomes and, with a little patience, will be pleased to see on-the-ground results that ensure viable retailing activities and attractive, competitive shopping centres.

Council must ensure, therefore, that the Retail Activity Centres Strategy is monitored and reviewed on a regular basis.

Suggested indicators for monitoring and review purposes would include those listed in Table 7.1. These indicators are based on readily available and relatively inexpensive data, including official data, Council planning approvals and commencements data, land use/floorspace surveys, and reference to consultant reports.

A number of programs are proposed as contribution to the monitoring process, including the following:

1. Undertake a program of floorspace surveys throughout the municipality to establish current levels of retail floorspace provision, and to provide a basis for monitoring future changes in retail floorspace.
2. Undertake, in cooperation with business associations, a series of short in-centre surveys of businesses and customers in each of the main centres on a regular (eg bi-annual) basis. The survey should cover issues such as changes in perception of the centre, perceptions of the health of the centre, employment levels, etc. The surveys should be used to assess the impact of the initiatives contained in the Strategy.
3. Use the annual report from each business association to review the status of activity in the centre, especially with regard to business planning initiatives undertaken.
4. Use the Payment Agreement between Council and the business associations to assess the effectiveness of business plan and special rate programs.

Table 7.1: Indicators for Monitoring Process

Indicator	Source	Comment
1 Retail floorspace	Floorspace surveys	Implement commercial floorspace survey in order to allow an up-to-date estimate of total retail floorspace
2 Retail property development proposals and projects	Council records	Track development applications and proposals
3 Retail trading performance	Consultant reports; Property Council	Especially track official sources of data, including Property Council data for Northland, etc
4 Increased floorspace provision for shops and services, as well as increased value of buildings and works	Council data for planning and building approvals, and building completions	This measure uses regular and up-to-date data, and therefore very useful. Can indicate change in use from shop to other use and vice-versa.
5 Vacancy rates for retail m ² (vacant retail m ² expressed as a % of total retail m ²)	Land use and floorspace surveys	Can be undertaken at any time. In typical strip centres in a typical trading year, retail floorspace vacancy rates average around 4-6% of total. Provides good indication of general health of a centre.
6 Expansion in trade area served by shops in the Centre	In-centre surveys undertaken by Council, or from consultant reports	Provides evidence of retail role; especially useful to see different roles for different merchandise categories
7 Increased employment levels in shops	Can conduct regular survey of traders/other businesses in centres to identify existing employment profile.	Employment is a useful indicator on trading growth or decline, and helps to show local community and Council the economic importance of the Centre. Important to measure change in employment levels over time.
8 Changes in land use patterns (incl. retail, service, office, community, etc)	Regular land use surveys	Inexpensive means of monitoring land use and activity changes. Important to show new roles and functions served by centres.
9 Changes in property values and rates	Council rate records; data from Victorian Valuer General (residential values)	Useful indicator, especially as a relative indicator (eg different rate valuations for between centres).
10 Viewpoints on health of centres as expressed in property industry, real estate and those in retail industry	Regular contact with real estate agents, developers and retail industry.	Quarterly forum organised by Council as a venue for information exchange between property and retail industry, local traders and Council.
11 Progress on business planning initiatives at activity centres	Business Plans, annual reports and Payment Agreements prepared with business associations at centres	Review annual reports to monitor and assess progress on initiatives contained in business plans

Source: Essential Economics Pty Ltd

8 PLANNING CHECKLIST

This Chapter presents additional information as a guide for the assessment of planning application related to development at activity centres in Darebin, including:

- a summary of the key sections of the Strategy that are relevant in the assessment of applications for retail and other development in activity centres;
- and
- presentation of Assessment Criteria as a reference point for Council officers when assessing development proposals for new or expanded retail development, including information required to accompany the application, and a list of issues associated with assessing retail developments..

8.1 Application of the Retail Activity Centres Strategy for Planning Application Assessment Purposes

In considering development proposals at activity centres in Darebin, reference should be made to the application of policy as presented in the following sections of this Strategy:

- The **Vision** for activity centre development, which provides an overall guiding statement of how the network of activity centres in Darebin is to be developed in a way that meets the objectives of the municipality
- **Strategic policies** for application to development proposals at activity centres, including in particular the following specific policies:
 - Policy 2, which supports retail development where it retains retail expenditure in Darebin by meeting the needs of residents and visitors, and where proposals are in accordance with other policies
 - Policy 3, which supports existing activity centres for the consolidation of retail activity as well as for accommodating non-retail uses such as residential or mixed use development
 - Policy 6, which encourages a wide mix of activities at the Principal, Major and Neighbourhood Centres, including non-retail uses
 - Policy 7, which identifies the principle of integrated development for application to development proposals
 - Policy 8, which aims to encourage bulky goods and homemaker shopping at specified locations, preferably involving integrated developments
 - Policy 9, which provides specific reference to proposals for the development of new activity centres, and supports these proposals only where they are required to serve the needs of new residential communities
 - Policies 18 to 30, which provide recommendations with regard to urban design issues in planning for retail activity centres (Policies 31 to 34 also provide guidance in relation to urban design planning for the public sphere, such as provision of car parking, open space, etc)

- The **Retail Activity Centre Framework**, which presents an activity centre hierarchy as a useful tool for planning at activity centres, and includes specific recommendations with regard to future directions for each level in the hierarchy. Proposals for new development should be assessed in the light of these provisions.

8.2 Assessment Criteria for Retail Planning Applications

Retail Planning Assessment Criteria have been prepared as a reference point for Council officers when assessing development proposals for new or expanded provision of retail floorspace. The Criteria can also be used by developers for guidance in terms of information they should provide to Council in order to facilitate the planning approvals process.

The Criteria consist of two components:

- a listing of information which an Applicant should provide to Council in order to facilitate the planning approvals process; and
- a checklist of issues associated with assessing need for a retail development.

In assessing a development proposal, reference should be made to the application of various other aspects of this Strategy, as described in 9.1 above.

Information Applicants must provide when Seeking Planning Approval for a Retail Proposal

1. Address of the subject site and Title particulars
2. Details of the proposed retail component
 - amount of retail floorspace (in m²)
 - number of retail tenancies and sizes
 - type of retail floorspace (eg, supermarket; discount department store, specialty stores, etc)
 - car parking (if applicable)
3. Details of any other (non-retail) component where applicable, including office floorspace, entertainment uses, residential component, etc.
4. An economic impact report is required for major new retail developments (at the discretion of Council, but generally comprising those proposals involving 5,000 m² or more of retail floorspace, or the provision of a key major tenant such as supermarket, etc). The report should provide the following information:
 - supporting evidence of retail demand
 - assessment of any likely impact on existing or planned (ie approved) retail facilities
 - description of anticipated benefits to community (measurable and non measurable)
 - estimated contribution to employment (in both construction and retail operation), and noting the indirect flows (although these generally accrue to a wide area, including the State and national economies)

- overall contribution to net community benefit
5. Council will decide on the extent of supporting economic impact information required of the applicant on the basis of the size of the retail floorspace component for which approval is being sought. While a brief statement is sufficient for a development of around 5,000 m² (and depending on the place in the hierarchy of centres and the main retail tenant), Council would require a more detailed feasibility assessment if the proposal involves the development of a major shopping facility, or a large peripheral sales outlet or centre. Prospective developers should discuss their proposals with Council officers prior to formal submission of a Planning Permit Application or rezoning request so that the extent of supporting information required by Council can be ascertained. Council reserves the right to request additional information on economic impact from the applicant, if required.
 6. The proposal should be accompanied by an analysis of the development in the context of the policies presented in this report, including (where relevant):
 - how the proposal meets the strategic planning policies presented in Chapter 4, including those measures relating to retail role and function, urban design and planning issues, and so on; and
 - the extent to which the proposal is an appropriate development for the centre in which it is located, in the context of the future directions that have been developed for application to each level of the retail hierarchy (Chapter 5).

Considerations in the Assessment of Planning Applications for Retail Development

The following considerations are provided as guidance in assessing applications for retail development in Darebin. These considerations are provided also as guidance to proponents in terms of the level of information required to support major development applications.

Note that the level of information required to support an application will be at the discretion of Council.

(1) *Retail demand*

- 1.1 The application/proposal must show a need or demand for new or expanded retail floorspace provision to serve the catchment.
- 1.2 A retail feasibility assessment is required for major development proposals, or those with a key tenant (such as new supermarket), as determined by Council.
- 1.3 The application or retail assessment must indicate the current trade area or catchment population level, and the current and forecast population and retail spending growth rate for the next 5 and 10 years.
- 1.4 The application/assessment must show the extent to which the proposal will draw trade from beyond the trade area or catchment, or from passing trade.
- 1.5 Indicate whether the new retail provision - if proposed for an existing centre - would mean an expansion in the size of the catchment served by that centre.

(2) Retail supply

- 2.1 Indicate the existing supply of retail floorspace serving the catchment.
- 2.2 Give details of any other proposals for new or expanded retail development in the catchment or beyond, which could have an effect on the viability of what is presently proposed.
- 2.3 Indicate the main features of the existing hierarchy of retail centres which serve the catchment, and show where the proposed new or expanded retail provision would fit within this hierarchy.
- 2.4 Give evidence as to whether the existing supply of retail floorspace is or is not adequate to meet existing and foreseeable demand levels (say, over the next 5 to 10 years).
- 2.5 Indicate whether there are any existing retail gaps in merchandise/services which the proposal will fill.
- 2.6 Give details as to the existing level of vacant retail premises in the catchment and in any other affected centres, and assess whether these premises are suitable to accommodate modern retail needs.
- 2.7 Give details as to alternative sites to that proposed, and show the extent to which the proposal represents a preferred site.

(3) Escape spending

- 3.1 Indicate the amount of residents' spending that currently escapes to other, more distant shopping centres located beyond the catchment.
- 3.2 Show forecasts of the levels of escape spending if there is no increase in retail facilities to serve the catchment.
- 3.3 Give details as to the retail categories that are featured in the escape spending, and indicate the share of this escape spending that could reasonably be retained by the proposed new or expanded retail facilities.

(4) Impact on existing retail facilities

- 4.1 Prepare an analysis of the effect on total retail sales levels (expressed in dollars and as a percent of total) at existing retail facilities if the proposal for new retail floorspace is approved.
- 4.2 Show how the existing average level of retail sales in the existing facilities (expressed in terms of sales per square metre of retail floorspace) would be affected by the introduction of additional retail floorspace.
- 4.3 Show the extent to which the proposal is expected to lead to an overall improved provision of retail facilities to the catchment - and especially with consideration to any adverse trading impacts on existing centres.

- 4.4 Prepare an analysis of the employment impact of the proposed new or expanded retail facilities, including the potential loss in employment at centres negatively impacted by the proposal.

(5) *Urban design issues*

- 5.1 The application must meet site planning and other requirements specified in the planning scheme or in other planning policy documents.
- 5.2 The planning application must include - where requested by Council - an assessment of the proposed development in the context of urban design policies presented in this Strategy, including strategic policies with regard to urban design planning, as presented in Chapter 4. In addition, proposals are required to be assessed in the context of any structure plan that has been prepared for the centre.

(6) *Net community benefit*

- 6.1 The planning application must provide an indication of the development proposal's contribution to Net Community Benefit (NCB), in terms of:
- employment generation (or loss) during construction and operation
 - impact on retail choice and availability
 - impact on overall levels of vibrancy and sustainability
 - contribution to levels of public transport use
 - contribution to liveability, social interaction, and other community-related goals
- 6.2 The application must specify how the proposed development contributes to NCB, including consideration of the following factors:
- Potential positive factors, including: increased choice in retail goods and services available to the community; increased retail competition; retention of a share of escape spending; increased employment and multiplier effects; increased contributions to Council rates; etc, and
 - Potential negative factors, including: loss of sales at existing shops/centres; loss of employment; possible business closures; possible vacant shops; possible multiplier effects; etc.
- 6.3 For larger projects, as determined by Council, the proposal must also consider non retail impacts such as traffic circulation and parking demand, environmental effects on adjoining activities, local character and amenity impacts, and so on.