

Built environment background paper

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of some of the key land use planning issues associated with Yarra's built environment — its buildings, streets and open spaces — to stimulate and inform the Liveable Yarra People's Panel discussions.

The People's Panel will meet in August and September 2015 and be hosted by Yarra City Council to discuss, deliberate on and make recommendations about key planning matters facing Yarra. These recommendations will ultimately inform a rewrite of Yarra's planning scheme.

This paper is not intended to be a comprehensive discussion of all things related to the built environment. It captures key information, trends, issues, and challenges, and presents these as a starting point for discussion.

To have informed and in-depth discussions about addressing the challenges of urban planning and development, it is important to understand that these outcomes are influenced by many factors, and Council cannot control or influence all of them.

Development demand has a big influence on the overall scale and nature of development, but built form policy, building regulations and other design influences can change the details of the development and have a big influence on the impacts of development. The People's Panel deliberative forums are an opportunity to consider a range of challenges, issues and opportunities, and to provide advice to Council on key planning issues.

This paper provides a brief overview of the Yarra's built environment as it has developed since the mid-nineteenth century. It also identifies some of the key challenges facing Yarra as it seeks to accommodate a growing population and changing businesses into the established built environment, including local and state government policy interventions.

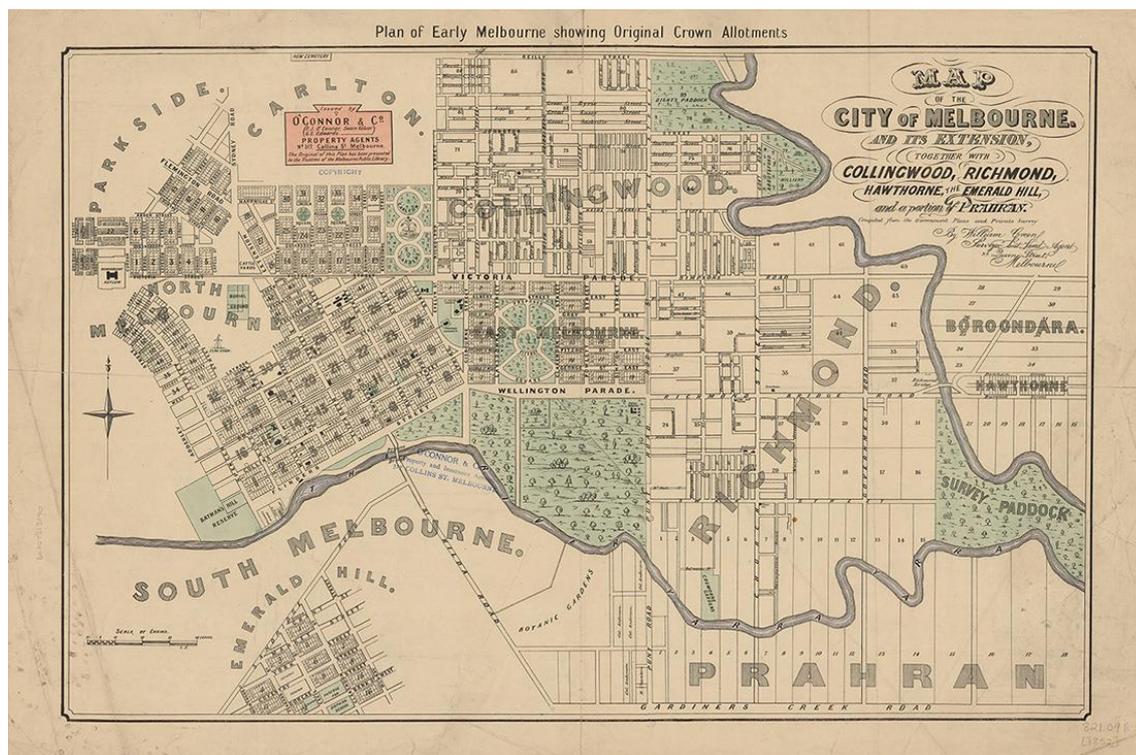
Evolution of the built environment in Yarra

The Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation have a relationship with the land that extends back tens of thousands of years and European settlement had a significant impact on their traditional practices of camping, hunting and gathering practices. The fabric of Yarra's built environment was set out over this pre-European landscape of gentle hills and flat, low-lying areas, which was drained by the Yarra River and its tributary creeks. The topography and waterways remain as the strongest pre-European landscape features of the area. This paper tells the chronological story of how Yarra's built environment developed into the place we know and enjoy today.

1830–1850: Grid roads and first suburb

The central Melbourne street grid was laid out in 1837 in alignment with the Yarra River. This grid was soon followed by the establishment of new main roads and subdivisions extending into the surrounding areas. Some of these new roads were surveyed as wide stock routes and have become today's leafy boulevards like Victoria Parade. The streets and roads that filled in these areas were mostly laid out in a north–south orientation, contrasting with what is now the CBD of Melbourne.

Figure 1: City of Melbourne and the surrounding suburbs 1852



Source: State Library Victoria

In 1839, Fitzroy became Melbourne's first suburb (originally named Newton) when vacant lots were offered for sale following the subdivision of land between Melbourne City and Alexandra Parade. These lots were developed with a mix of urban and rural uses, including cottages, small farms and market gardens. Little built evidence of this period remains except the street pattern.

More suburbs followed, with some, such as Carlton, having subdivisions that were comprehensively surveyed and laid out. In contrast, other areas, such as Collingwood and Richmond, were relatively unplanned. These areas had disjointed and often narrow streets and were places where cheaper housing was built.

1850–1890: Gold Rush to Marvellous Melbourne

A new prosperity came to Melbourne with the Gold Rush and this was shared by the early suburbs. This period saw the introduction of grand houses in parts of Yarra: Princes Hill, Carlton North, Fitzroy North and Richmond Hill; with more modest housing in Fitzroy, Collingwood, Abbotsford and Richmond for workers employed in the developing industries nearby. The subdivisions from this period usually included rear laneways for the collection of night soil. These bluestone paved lanes have become a valued characteristic of Yarra and inner Melbourne in general.

Tram services developed along the main roads, which attracted shops and businesses, forming the beginnings of the shopping strips we know today. Buildings were typically one or two storeys, often with detailed parapets, and awnings or verandas over the footpath. Many of Yarra's historical landmark buildings, including St Ignatius' Church and the Town Halls with their characteristic clock towers, were built during this period.

Figure 2: Wool washing on the Yarra River, 1870



Source: *City of Yarra Libraries*

Industries such as wool-washing and beer-brewing were drawn to the Yarra River which provided a source of water and what was then thought of as a convenient waste disposal. This resulted in large-scale industrial sites and buildings occupying sections of the river frontage.

1890–1920: Victorian to Edwardian

The development of grand houses continued in the boom-style Victorian and Edwardian architecture. Modest late Victorian and Edwardian timber cottages continued to in-fill some of the poorer residential areas, particularly parts of Fitzroy, Collingwood, Abbotsford and Richmond, where there was also more industrial development. This situation resulted in single-storey cottages juxtaposed with industrial buildings that often had facades over 10 metres high built up to the street.

The shopping strips saw the development of department stores, notably in Smith Street where Foy and Gibson was located. Many of these emporiums were large buildings up to five storeys high with Italianate and Edwardian architectural details.

As well as its retail stores, Foy and Gibson established a manufacturing base in the area, with a number of red brick factory warehouse buildings bounded by Stanley, Wellington, Peel and Little Oxford Streets.

Figure 3: Brunswick Street, 1906



Source: State Library Victoria

1920–1950: Depression and austerity

The population decline of the interwar period resulted in different patterns of residential development across Yarra with some expansion of industrial buildings.

During the 1930s there was significant development in Alphington where detached, single storey Edwardian and Californian bungalows were constructed on larger lots. In contrast to other residential areas of Yarra, this type of development was more characteristic of the leafy middle ring suburbs of Melbourne.

During the Depression, the poorer parts of Fitzroy, Collingwood and Richmond were affected by poverty and classified as slums. Richmond became known colloquially as 'Struggletown' and many of the larger and grander houses of Richmond Hill, Princes Hill and Fitzroy North were converted to rooming houses or flats.

Figure 4: The back yards of slum housing in Fitzroy, 1935



Source: State Library Victoria

Some industrial buildings expanded and there was in-fill development of new shops along the shopping streets. Institutions also expanded, including the Abbotsford Convent, and Epworth and St Vincent's Hospitals with their own distinctive architectural styles.

1950–1970: Post-war boom

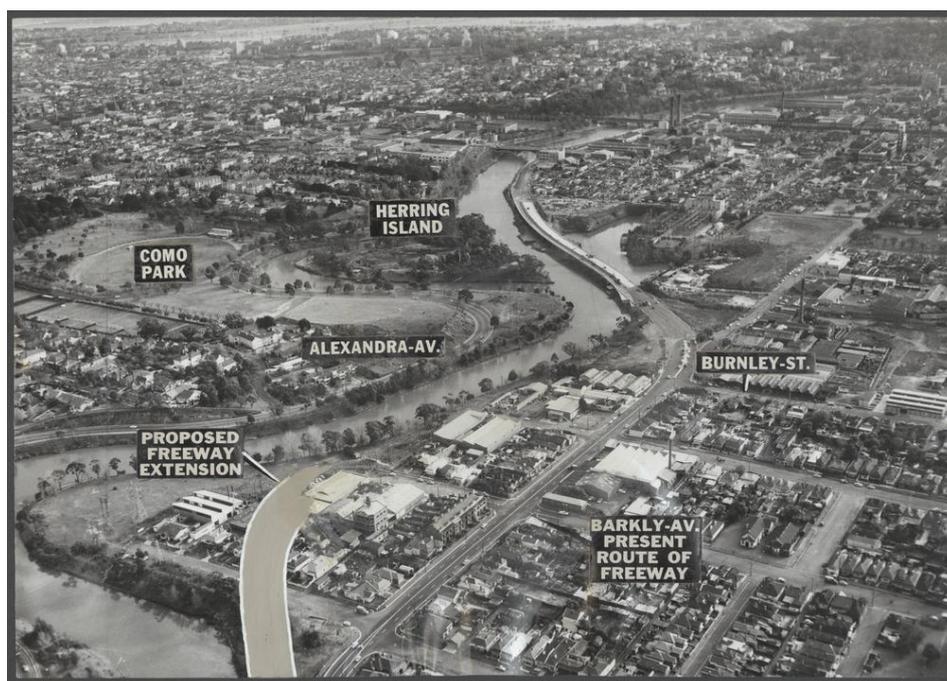
Population decline in Yarra during the post-war era resulted in limited change to Yarra's built environment, with the exception of housing estate developments.

The shift outwards to newer, car-based suburbs left the inner suburbs to local workers, new migrants, and the remaining industries. Established residential areas saw some gradual replacement of existing dwellings with more modern houses. Across the inner and middle ring suburbs including those in Yarra, some larger lots were redeveloped into blocks of walk-up flats ranging from two to four storeys high.

In contrast to this gradual change, intervention by the State Government through the Housing Commission of Victoria resulted in the wholesale clearance of slums and redevelopment of the land for public housing in parts of Carlton North, Fitzroy, Collingwood and Richmond. Walk-up flats and towers with up to 23 storeys were constructed in parkland settings based on modern practices from Europe and North America. This form of development was disruptive to the existing residential areas and street network.

The construction of the Monash Freeway and later the Eastern Freeway by the State Government also disrupted the street network and led to buildings being demolished.

Figure 5: South Eastern freeway under construction, 1962



Source: State Library Victoria

Towards the end of this period, the inner suburbs became increasingly attractive as places to live and work. This was due, in part, to the heritage character and accessibility of the inner city. Some of these residents were also activists who succeeded in reversing the Victorian Government policies on slum clearance in favour of retaining heritage buildings.

The shopping streets saw some modest in-fill development that accommodated new businesses, as did the industrial areas and major institutions.

1970–2015: Return to the inner-city

The increasing popularity of the inner suburbs as places to live saw initial interest in Yarra focus on the more substantial terrace houses to the north in Princes Hill, Carlton North, Fitzroy North and Clifton Hill. Heritage protection was established in these areas during the 1980s and provided the foundations for Yarra's existing heritage controls. As housing demand continued, interest extended south to the modest former worker cottages of Collingwood, Fitzroy and Richmond.

Activity along the historic shopping strips increased as businesses were established to provide services for Yarra's increasing population. The shopfronts, footpaths and access to public transport supported an active street life.

Urban consolidation gained support in Melbourne as a principle for containing urban sprawl and making better use of existing services and infrastructure. This resulted in medium and higher density planning policy and guidelines, which allowed for residential development in activity centres and former industrial areas within the inner city.

Relocation of industry to greenfield sites and overseas locations in the 1980s and 1990s provided an opportunity for the redevelopment of former industrial sites across Yarra and the repurposing of industrial buildings for residential or more intensive employment uses.

The rediscovery of the Yarra River as a valued landscape and recreational asset saw redevelopment focussed on the river, notably along Trennery Crescent in Abbotsford and the eastern end of Victoria Street.

Demand to live and work in Yarra has continued to increase, bringing with it significant development over the last several decades, primarily in apartments in new or converted buildings.

Figure 6 illustrates aspects of Yarra's current built environment. Taken from the top of the Nylex Sign, the Richmond Housing Estate, Pelaco Building, St Ignatius' Church and Dimmeys Redevelopment are visible in the distance with the foreground showing a mix of uses and built form.

Figure 6: Yarra today, looking north from the top of Nylex sign



Source: Yarra City Council

Recent and anticipated future influences on Yarra

While recent development continues to reflect the patterns that have emerged recently, there has been a general trend towards increased height and greater intensity in new developments. This trend has been influenced by a range of factors including the continuing demand for living and working in the inner city (reflected in increasing land values), state and local planning policies, and changing approaches to development and building construction. The interactions between these influences have resulted in the built form outcomes we see today.

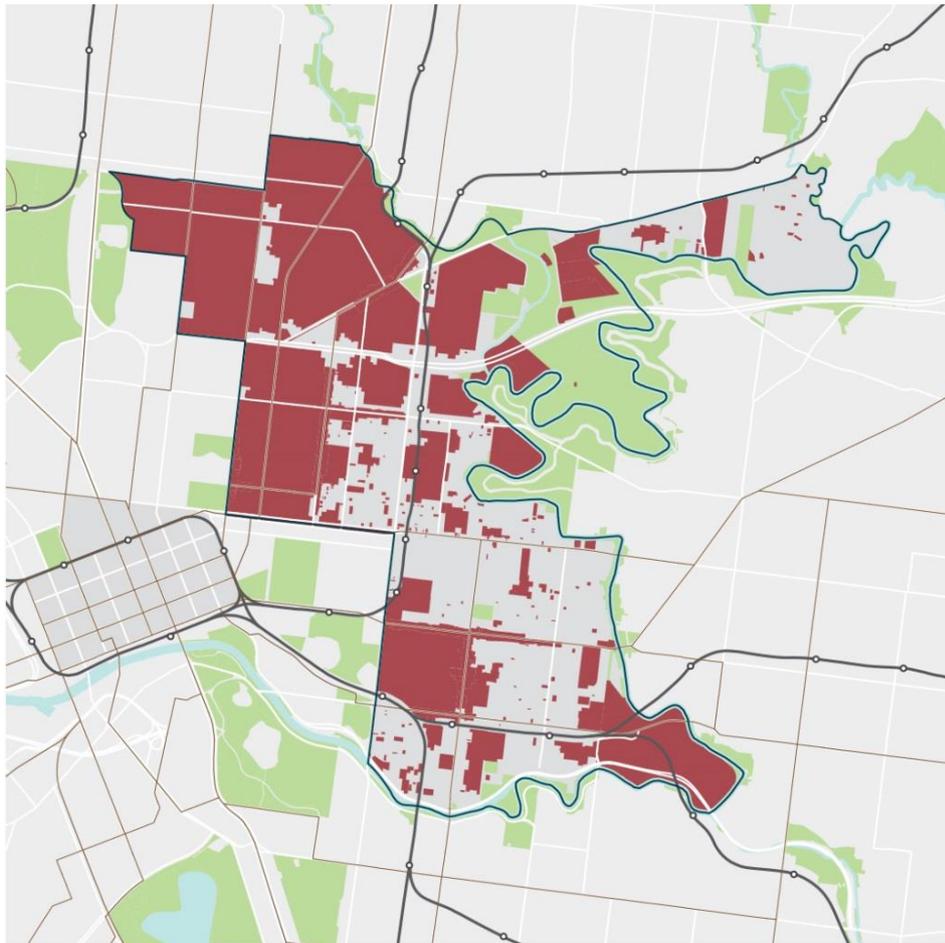
Heritage

The diversity and extent of Yarra's heritage, which includes some of Melbourne's earliest suburbs, is a key influence on the built environment. Today, almost 60% of all properties in Yarra are covered by the Heritage Overlay, including a significant proportion of residential areas. In particular, areas in the northern and central parts of Yarra, and Richmond Hill, are extensively protected.

The overlay aims to ensure that development does not adversely affect the character and significance heritage places. The degree of intervention in the building fabric is also influenced by the heritage significance of an existing building, which is reflected in the heritage grading of the property. These controls allow for change, and recommend that the architectural expression of any new works is different from the heritage fabric. This has resulted in a range of development outcomes that vary considerably in how new components relate to existing heritage buildings.

While the amount of development that can occur in areas in the Heritage Overlay is generally limited, pressure to redevelop those buildings with a lower heritage grading is likely to persist as Yarra's population and economy continue to increase and evolve.

Figure 7: Heritage Overlay areas in Yarra



Source: Yarra Planning Scheme

Almost 60% of all properties in Yarra are covered by the Heritage Overlay with a significant proportion in residential areas

Established residential areas

Development has continued to occur in Yarra's low-rise residential areas, although they have limited capacity to accommodate future growth and change. This reflects the value placed on Yarra's historical character by the community, along with a more general resistance to greater density and taller buildings in these locations.

While metropolitan planning policy has supported urban consolidation since the 1980s, initiatives such as the *Good Design Guide for Medium Density Housing* (GDG) were unpopular with the community as they allow multi-unit development in residential areas. The GDG was replaced by ResCode, the residential design code implemented by the State Government, in 2001. ResCode applies to apartment buildings of up to four storeys on land zoned for residential use. Importantly for Yarra, ResCode makes the response to neighbourhood character the primary assessment criterion for new development. Many elements of a building's design are also regulated, such as the position on its site, setbacks from front and side boundaries, and overall height. There are conflicting views about the success of ResCode. Some argue that it does not go far enough to protect existing character; others are critical of the restrictions the code places on contemporary residential design.

The approval of Yarra's new residential zones by the Victorian Minister for Planning in April 2015 places further controls on development in established residential areas. The State Government brought in the new zones to provide clearer direction on levels of housing growth in residential areas, including the introduction of mandatory height controls. The application of the Neighbourhood and General Residential zones in Yarra has resulted in further limitations on development in established residential areas

Most sites covered by these zones have a maximum building height of between 8 and 9 metres, some existing warehouses and main road locations can accommodate buildings up to 11.5 metres. Additionally, the Neighbourhood Residential Zone specifies a maximum number of dwellings that can be constructed on a lot. While the new zones essentially consolidate previous policy, they will restrict the level of development that could have occurred on some larger sites under the previous residential zone. Given how recently the zones were approved, it will be some time before any impact on residential development will be apparent.

While development in established residential areas often takes the form of extensions and renovations, there are different influences on the resulting built form. On sites with heritage protections, it is common to limit the amount of development that is visible from the street. This typically results in two- or three-storey extensions being constructed towards the middle or rear of the site, which can have a greater amenity impact on neighbouring properties.

There has also been a recent trend for more intensive redevelopment of larger residential sites where single family dwellings are replaced with two or more new dwellings over two or three storeys. These developments occupy most of the site, building over areas that were previously used for outdoor space. On-site car parking is often provided, changing the appearance of the streetscape from the typical pattern of front gardens, ground floor rooms and on-street parking, to frontages of driveways and garage doors. The demand for these projects may reflect broader influences including smaller households, desire for or acceptance of less outdoor space and increased land prices affecting development viability.

Figure 8: Example of new residential development where driveways and garages at street level are replacing front gardens, ground floor rooms and on-street parking



Source: Yarra City Council

Places for growth

The limited opportunities for growth in residential areas of Yarra have resulted in more intensive development in major activity centres and former industrial areas. Development in these locations has also been encouraged by access to jobs, services and public transport. Additionally, larger sites are common in these areas, and these tend to be easier to develop and have greater design flexibility to minimise amenity impacts on surrounding properties, streets and public space.

Residential development has typically taken the form of apartment buildings, often with non-residential uses at ground floor. Accommodating housing demand in these locations has been supported by long-standing metropolitan planning policy. This approach continues in the recently released *Plan Melbourne*, the State Government's metropolitan planning strategy, which also identifies urban renewal areas and health and education clusters as locations for growth.

Major activity centres

Yarra's major activity centres are focused on a number of main streets and are generally in the form of long, linear corridors. Travelling along the length of these corridors reveals distinct areas with their own built form character and activities: shopping strips, residential areas, and larger lots with showrooms and offices. A number of businesses such as bars, restaurants and music venues operate after hours and are key locations for Yarra's night time economy.

While more intensive development is occurring to some extent along all major activity centres, the greatest redevelopment has been along the western section of Bridge Road and the eastern end of Victoria Street, with buildings up to 11 storeys high. Recent development has also seen taller buildings of up to 10 storeys completed or under construction along Swan, Brunswick and Smith Streets.

There are heritage overlay areas in all major activity centres, although there is variation in both the area covered by the overlay and the heritage grading. The overlay applies to most of Brunswick Street, Smith Street and Bridge Road. On Swan Street the main retail precinct and eastern end are within heritage overlay areas and on Victoria Street there are a number of scattered locations with the Heritage Overlay. While the heritage streetscape is often valued in the traditional retail strips, the controls are more focused on individual buildings.

Approaches to redeveloping sites covered by the Heritage Overlay vary from modifying the internal layout of buildings to retaining only a portion of external façades. Lower levels are generally built to match existing building heights along the street frontage and maintain the

prominence of the abutting parapet, which often contains decorative architectural detail. With the reduction in ceiling heights over time, this typically results in three contemporary storeys being equivalent to a two-storey shop from the nineteenth century. Any new upper levels are generally set back from the street to preserve the character of the front of the building. Depending on the surrounding context, proposed height, and building orientation, each upper level may be set back further to minimise off-site impacts including visual bulk, overlooking, and overshadowing of adjoining properties and the public realm.

Where development occurs on sites not covered by heritage protections, the built form response generally takes a similar approach in matching existing building heights at the street frontage and providing upper level setbacks, although often with a more contemporary design expression.

In all major activity centres, there are areas that have either a fine grain character with narrow lots or a mix of small and large sites. Where taller redevelopment has occurred, this has typically taken place on larger sites or through the consolidation of smaller properties. It is therefore common to find taller development directly abutting, or in close proximity to, existing buildings of a much smaller scale. This has resulted in a variety of building scales and built form in major activity centres.

Figure 9: Development in major activity centres



The Ark on Bridge Road in Richmond is a 10-storey development with a number of upper level setbacks (left). The Dimmeys redevelopment on Swan Street in Richmond maintains the existing façade and clock tower with a 10-storey residential tower located towards the rear of the site (right).

Source: Yarra City Council

In some locations, the availability of a number of large sites not covered by heritage controls has provided opportunities for more extensive redevelopment. At the eastern end of Victoria Street, this has resulted in a cluster of taller buildings. While the general built form outcomes are similar to other large developments, the context has provided the opportunity to establish a new, contemporary built form character. This has often resulted in long, continuous frontages and a different pedestrian experience to the fine grain character of narrow, individual shops typically found in the traditional shopping strips.

Figure 10: Victoria Street East



A cluster of new developments on larger sites has been appearing at the eastern end of Victoria Street (left), which allows for a new built form character to emerge. Continuous frontages result in a different pedestrian experience (right) from the fine grain character found in the traditional shopping strips.

Source: Yarra City Council

Rear interfaces

While most people experience Yarra's built form from the street, the approach to development at the rear of properties is equally important. This is especially the case where there is an interface between different types of areas, for example the retail strip along a major activity centre and a residential area. The interface between these areas may be a property boundary, laneway or street.

It is generally expected that the upper levels of taller buildings will also be set back from the rear of properties to provide a transition to low-rise areas, thereby reducing amenity impacts like visual bulk, overlooking of private outdoor space, and overshadowing of streets and other public spaces. In some locations the recent trend towards greater building height at the rear of properties can result in increased off-site amenity impacts.

There has also been an increase in car traffic in laneways and local streets to access parking in new developments. While restricting vehicle access along the main frontage improves the pedestrian environment there, more cars using laneways and local streets can impact on the character and amenity of these places.

Housing in former industrial areas

While there is continuing demand for residential redevelopment in former industrial areas like Fitzroy, Collingwood and Richmond, there is a finite supply of remaining building stock.

The conversion of warehouses was facilitated by the rezoning of former industrial land to the Mixed Use Zone, which allowed for residential use. During the early stages of redevelopment it was more common to undertake straight conversions within existing buildings. As land values and construction costs increased, more intensive redevelopment became more common, including retention of the façade only and construction of additional upper levels.

Many of these projects have resulted in the restoration of heritage features of Yarra's industrial buildings. Some redevelopment has provided public access to formerly private sites, giving the community new ways to engage with Yarra's former industrial heritage. Additionally, on former industrial sites with no heritage value, existing buildings have been demolished and entirely new developments built.

Figure 11: Former industrial areas



Different approaches to the conversion of warehouse buildings in Rose Street, Fitzroy (left). The ERA Apartments development in Cremorne is an entirely new development providing a mix of uses (right).

Source: Yarra City Council

Business and industrial areas

The Cremorne area of Richmond and Gipps Street Precinct in Collingwood are both important employment locations. With strong demand for residential development in these areas, it is important that Council ensures zone changes in former industrial areas continue to support business development and employment opportunities.

Existing commercial buildings in these locations have proven incredibly adaptable to accommodate a range of business needs. There has also been some new development of purpose-built accommodation for specific business sectors. As employment areas transition to new industries or consolidate existing uses, it is important that redevelopment provides space for the types of businesses that will help drive Yarra's economy.

Strategic redevelopment sites

In 2009, Council identified 42 Strategic Redevelopment Sites (SRS) in Yarra. These sites were chosen as they are in good locations for growth and are able to absorb such growth without major impacts on the surrounding area. Of these sites, 15 have since been redeveloped, three have completed one or more of their construction stages, and a further two are under construction. However, there are challenges with the current policy. Council's list of SRSs is now not comprehensive and many other sites in Yarra are considered as Strategic redevelopment sites under State planning policy criteria.

SRSs are in all suburbs of Yarra except Princes Hill and Carlton North, with a concentration in Fitzroy, Collingwood, Abbotsford and Richmond. Sizes vary from a few thousand square metres to several hectares. The context of the sites varies as they are located in all types of areas: existing residential, major activity centres and former industrial. The diversity of locations has resulted in a range of development outcomes with different responses to built form, massing, building height, amenity and whether or not existing buildings have been retained. These developments have also resulted in buildings that are often taller than others in the area.

Urban renewal areas and health precincts

The State Government's *Plan Melbourne* identifies three urban renewal areas and two health precincts in Yarra that are planned to accommodate both residential and employment growth. The urban renewal areas are a north-south corridor from North Richmond to Victoria Park Station,

Alexandra Parade, the Gipps Street Precinct in Collingwood and Cremorne. Health precincts are located around Epworth Hospital on Bridge Road and St Vincent's Hospital on Victoria Parade.

The health and education clusters are located in major activity centres, providing an opportunity for these important institutions to expand in their established locations. *Plan Melbourne's* intention for the urban renewal areas is less clear about the level of development and built form outcomes, Council has an adopted Swan Street Structure Plan that provides some guidance for areas of Cremorne.

The Yarra River

The pattern of recent development along the Yarra River is highly varied, reflecting the different landscape characters, land use patterns and the way the river interacts with the built environment.

Through Alphington and Fairfield, the river is largely buffered from residential and institutional areas by parkland. A significant redevelopment of the Amcor site is currently under consideration.

Abbotsford has seen more significant redevelopment along the Yarra in two locations. Existing former industrial buildings along Trenerry Crescent have been adapted alongside the construction of new buildings for both residential and business uses. The redevelopment of several large former industrial sites has established a new built form character and mix of land uses at the eastern end of Victoria Street. While some developments have provided additional access to the river, the route from the existing street network through the development to the river is not always clear.

The Cremorne area of Richmond has seen some major development of both residential and business uses along the freeway edge — mostly taller apartment buildings and a business park, and further development pressures exist in this area. While these locations can provide views onto the river, improving access to it is difficult as the sites adjoin CityLink, which forms a barrier.

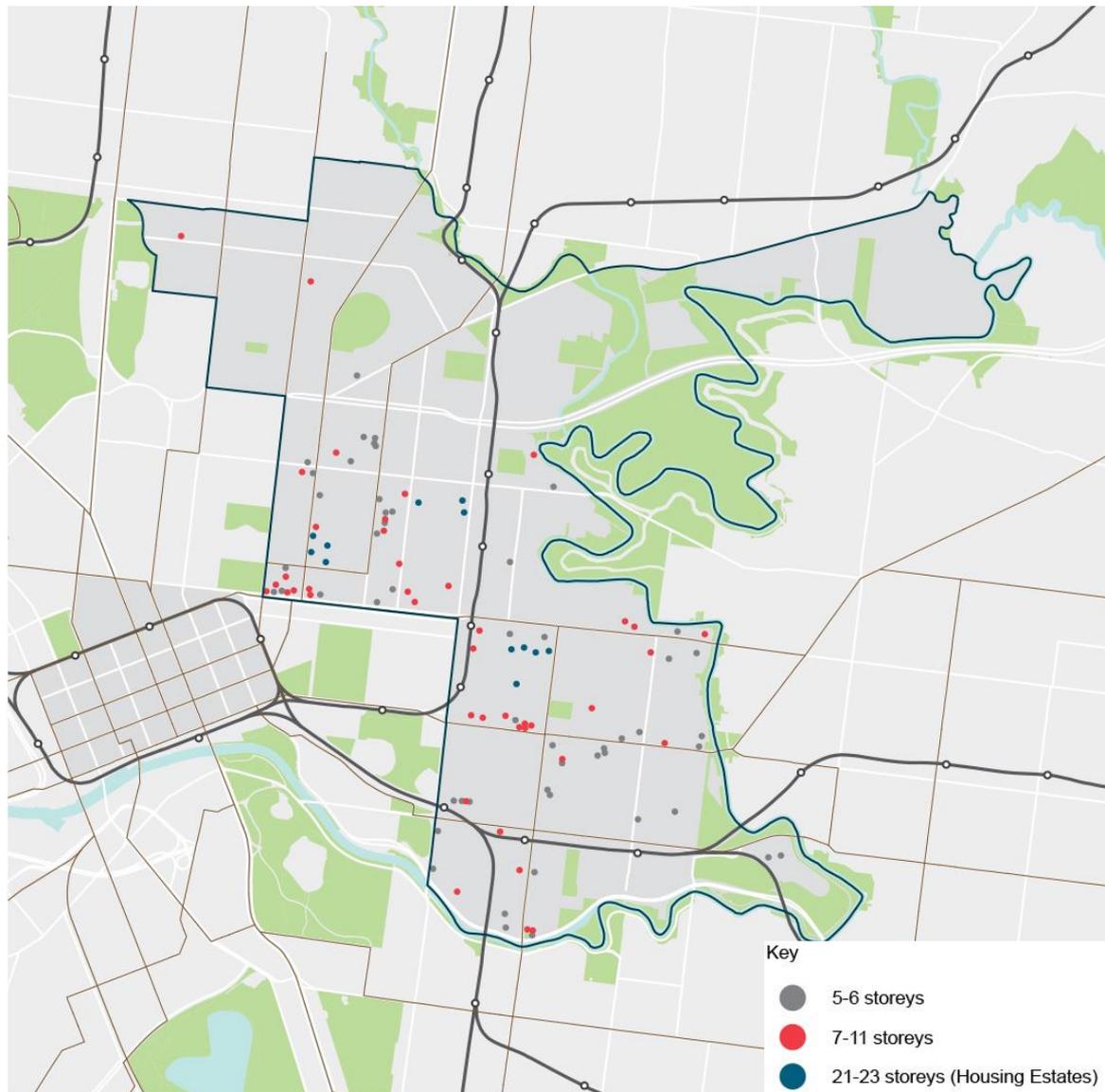
The Yarra River will continue to be an important environmental and amenity asset for the municipality. While a principle objective for the river corridor has been to ensure that it remains dominated by vegetation, this priority sometimes conflicts with the legacy of Yarra's former industrial buildings and recent development along the river.

Changing urban form

While areas of Yarra have a low-rise character, there are also taller building forms such as church steeples, clock towers, old silos and chimney stacks, the housing commission flats, and recent apartment buildings. This combination of building forms contributes to the municipality's overall urban form and character.

The current trend for apartment buildings is anticipated to continue, driven by a range of influences such as demand for inner city living and working, population growth, land values, development models, and metropolitan policies that support urban consolidation and inner city development.

Figure 12: Taller built form in Yarra



Completed buildings over five storeys are primarily located along major activity centres and in former industrial areas. At some of these locations clusters of taller development are emerging.

Source: Yarra City Council (compiled from data from permit applications, Property and Ratings, GIS)

Future challenges

Yarra is a highly desirable place to live and work, which will continue: population projections by the State Government anticipate the need for an additional 15,900 new dwellings by 2031; almost half again of the present number of dwellings. Growth in workplaces is also anticipated and is likely to be focused on health and education, advanced manufacturing, professional services and the creative industries.

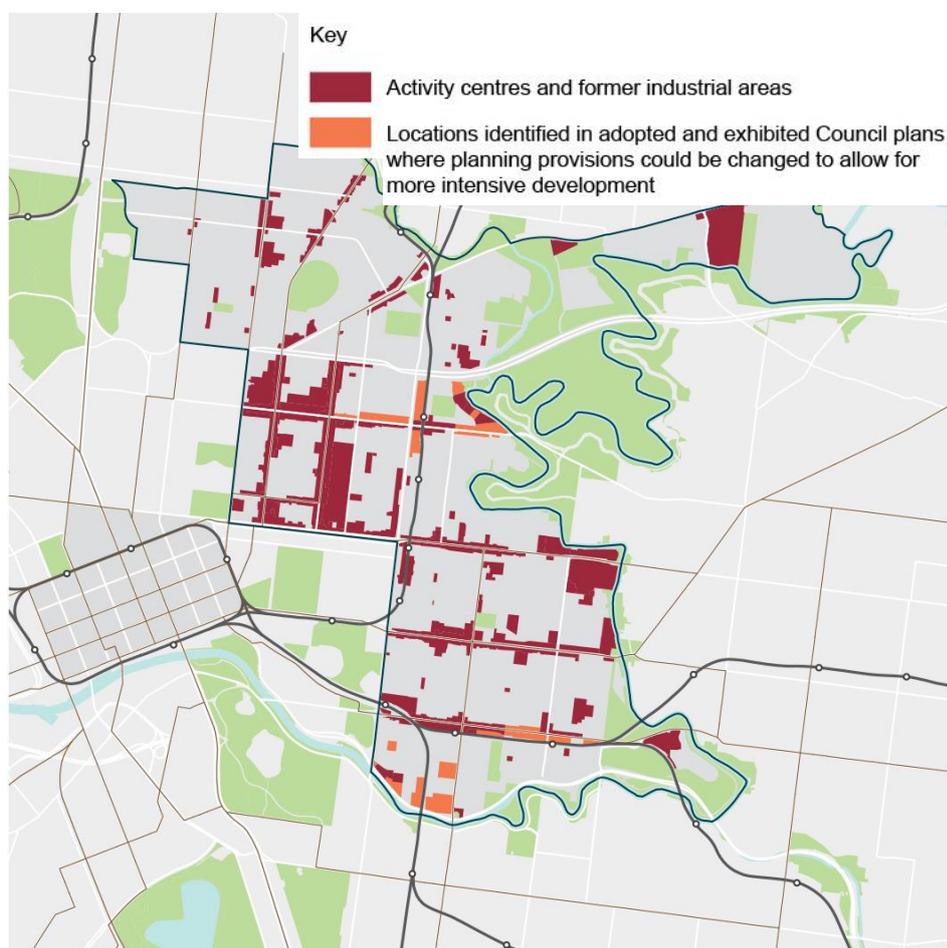
The role of good design

The design quality of buildings and public spaces will continue to shape people's experience of Yarra. Good design will result in a broad range of benefits, so it is crucial that the right design outcomes are achieved. As Yarra continues to grow, good design will have a major influence on community interactions and our relationship with the built environment. The following sections of this paper outline some of the considerations necessary to achieve this.

Places for growth

Some locations are more appropriate for change than others. The majority of residential and employment growth in Yarra is likely to be accommodated in major activity centres, former industrial areas, strategic redevelopment sites, urban renewal areas, and health precincts. These are shown on the map below.

Figure 13: Areas in Yarra that are likely to accommodate future residential and employment demand



Source: Yarra City Council

As demand for development will continue to occur in these locations, Yarra will continue to see developments that result in a range of built form types. Therefore, design principles that enable good design in the right locations are important.

Responding to place

There is great diversity in the suburbs and streets of Yarra. Within these places there are even smaller areas or precincts with their own local character: for example, the northern, central and southern ends of Smith Street are quite different from each other. However, current design guidelines are resulting in a generally uniform approach to built form across Yarra: lower levels match existing building heights with upper levels set back. Design should be more responsive to place, so decisions need to be made on principles that will provide appropriate built form, building heights, building separation, setbacks and amenity outcomes for different neighbourhoods.

Urban Form

Yarra's regional context as an inner city municipality is also an important consideration. It has developed, and will continue to develop, an urban form that reflects its location between the high-rise towers of the CBD and the detached housing of the middle suburbs. As Melbourne continues to grow, future development in Yarra will need to respond to the opportunities of an inner city location.

Current objectives in local policy state that development on strategic redevelopment sites or within activity centres should generally be no more than five to six storeys¹. Development applications to build taller buildings will likely continue to be lodged. Policy needs to respond to the demand for housing and business in Yarra, balancing community views and the environment in which the development sector operates.

While building height is often a key concern, it is not necessarily the main determinant of good design outcomes. For example, a six-storey building with 12 apartments per floor may have greater visual bulk than a nine storey building with eight apartments per floor. The impacts of these buildings would be further influenced by façade design, choice of materials, interfaces with adjoining buildings, and, importantly, how the building is experienced from the street.

Street life and public space

It is very important that new development enhances and engages with the public realm. Council plays an important role in the public realm, providing, for example, bike loops, street trees and furniture as well as guidelines for footpath trading. Developments can make a significant contribution to Yarra's active and vibrant street life. With a growing population and limited opportunities to provide new open space, streets will become increasingly important places for public life, particularly along the main streets of Yarra's activity centres.

How recent developments have responded to the street varies significantly. Residential entries, shop fronts, office spaces, car parking entrances and blank walls each result in very different pedestrian experiences of the street. The type and degree of activity at ground level can also influence perceptions of safety. It is important to identify how new developments address the public realm and to discuss design principles that will result in positive contributions to street life.

Interfaces

The locations that will accommodate future demand in Yarra have interfaces with a range of different places: residential and commercial areas, heritage precincts, train stations and rail

¹ Clause 21.05-2

corridors, the Yarra River, and major roads and freeways. How sensitive these interfaces are to the impact of development also varies and each requires different response for design elements such as building heights, building separation and setbacks.

There may be benefits in identifying locations with less sensitive interfaces and allowing different built form outcomes there, including increased building height. In locations with more sensitive interfaces, greater policy direction may be required to guide building heights against boundaries and upper level setbacks. Interface issues also affect new developments; providing opaque glazing or balcony screening to avoid overlooking of existing residential properties can result in limited outlook for these residents.

Heritage

Heritage is a valuable part of Yarra's built environment. While the majority of Yarra's properties are covered by the Heritage Overlay, there is continuing pressure to redevelop or repurpose heritage buildings in activity centres and former industrial areas.

It is important to consider what design principles are appropriate for commercial heritage buildings. How new buildings reference existing built form, the arrangement of heritage façades, elements such as window proportions, and the existing material palette all strongly influence the way contemporary design is incorporated into heritage places.

There are differences in the extent and value of heritage buildings in different places across Yarra. When considering development in heritage places, it may be beneficial to consider whether the streetscapes include continuous heritage buildings or whether heritage buildings are interspersed with other architectural styles.

Future opportunities

Reviewing Yarra's planning scheme is an opportunity to reflect on recent trends and to discuss future challenges. By understanding which locations are more appropriate for meeting future demand from people who want to live and work in Yarra, Council can be proactive in encouraging development that provides long-term benefits to current and future communities.

Summary: where to from here and Liveable Yarra

Yarra has experienced significant change to become the place it is today. Yarra has adapted to influences and it has evolved, and it will continue to do that.

This paper raises a lot of issues and questions for the People's Panel to consider. Height of buildings, protection of residential amenity, and protection of interest, activity and amenity in pedestrian environments are all significant considerations in managing our built environment for the future.

As is evident in this paper, urban planning cannot control all factors influencing development. For the People's Panel to be successful it will be important to focus discussions on the factors that Council's urban planning can influence. Ultimately the greatest impact will be achieved by addressing issues within Council's influence and control.



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