



City of Yarra

Urban Design Strategy

Table of Contents

- 1. Purpose of the Strategy 2
- 2. Background 2
- 3. What is Good Urban Design? 2
- 4. Strategic and Policy Context 3
 - ◆ 4.1 State Context 3
 - ◆ 4.2 Inner Melbourne Regional Context 3
 - ◆ 4.3 Local Context 3
- 5. Yarra Today 4
 - ◆ 5.1 Inner Melbourne Character Context 4
 - ◆ 5.2 Physical Setting 5
 - ◆ 5.3 Urban Form and Character 6
- 6. Vision and Key Objectives 7
 - ◆ 6.1 Vision 7
 - ◆ 6.2 Key Objectives 7
- 7. Framework for Urban Design in Yarra 8
 - ◆ 7.1 Enhanced Quality Of Yarra’s Urban Form And Character 8
 - ◆ 7.2 Effective Management of Growth and Change 20
 - ◆ 7.3 Design Excellence in New Developments 22
 - ◆ 7.4 Quality Public Domain and Public Spaces in Yarra 24
 - ◆ 7.5 Processes and Practices That Promote Good Design 25
- 8. References 26

1. Purpose of the Strategy

The City of Yarra's Urban Design Strategy (the Strategy) aims to achieve good design outcomes to develop a coherent and appealing urban environment with opportunity for its continuity, growth and change. It sets out a vision, key objectives and a set of priority actions that will help improve the quality of the City's urban design in a dynamic urban environment.

It acknowledges that it is important for future developments in Yarra to be more responsive towards existing heritage character and better environmental and accessibility outcomes. Good urban design in Yarra is also concerned with the economic well being of the municipality to ensure that it is an attractive and interesting place for tourists to visit and businesses to locate. It also recognises that whilst there is a need to achieve good design outcomes at an individual site level, there is also a need for a greater focus on improving the quality of the overall urban form and fabric.

2. Background

Melbourne is currently experiencing exponential growth. **Melbourne 2030: a planning update - Melbourne @ 5 Million** (December 2008) indicates that almost 316,000 dwellings are anticipated in Melbourne's established areas where there is access to public transport and other services.

As an inner Melbourne municipality the City of Yarra is experiencing significant pressure for redevelopment and land use change; arising from a combination of its inner-metropolitan location, the dynamic and diverse nature of its population and changes in the municipality's economy.

Retaining the character which is valued by the community, while accommodating growth and change, presents an enormous challenge for planners, urban designers and decision makers in influencing development so as to:

- Protect the highly valued characteristics of Yarra's urban form.
- Protect the distinctive identity of the low-rise, close-knit residential neighbourhoods.
- Ensure that all new development demonstrates design excellence.
- Integrate best practice in environmentally sustainable design (ESD).
- Integrate best practice in accessibility design.
- Guide the rapidly changing character of commercial and industrial areas.
- Provide safe, comfortable and accessible public spaces for people and visitors of Yarra.
- Encourage walking, cycling and usage of public transport.

3. What is Good Urban Design?

As stated in the recently adopted Urban Design Charter for Victoria:

Urban design is the practice of shaping human settlements to create practical, comfortable and delightful places for people to live and go about their daily lives. It is also about making well planned, logical connections between people, places and buildings.

Through the Urban Design Charter the State Government is committed to making cities and towns in Victoria more liveable by good urban design and is promoting the development of strategies and approaches to support this.



4. Strategic and Policy Context

4.1 State Context

Melbourne 2030 - Planning for Sustainable Growth and Development and the State Planning Policy Framework (SPPF) of the Victoria Planning Provisions, include principles that recognise the need for a high standard of urban design and amenity.

The SPPF Clause 15.01 on Urban Environment includes urban design objectives, strategies and principles that require development to respond to its context in terms of urban character, cultural heritage, natural features, surrounding landscape and climate. It suggests specific strategies to create urban environments that are safe, accessible, inclusive, functional and provide good quality environments with a sense of place and cultural identity.

4.2 Inner Melbourne Regional Context

Inner Melbourne Action Plan (IMAP)

Action 1.1 of the Inner Melbourne Action Plan (Inner Melbourne statement of significance to include recognition of Inner Melbourne's unique 19th century heritage), was to develop and document a common understanding of the structure, character and significance of Inner Melbourne to inform local policy and design, including its contribution as a 19th century city to the tourism industry and visitor interest, and its selection as a residential location.

That action has been implemented through the development of *Liveable and Walkable Melbourne: The Structure, Character and Significance of Inner Melbourne*, which states that:

The many wide ranging and authentic features that typify "Inner Melbourne-ness" are worth consolidating and building upon. The region depends on the conscious enhancements of the public realm for its physical amenity and charm.



4.3 Local Context

Yarra Planning Scheme

The Yarra Planning Scheme (the Planning Scheme) sets out requirements for the land use, development and protection of land. It includes a Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) that expresses a vision for Yarra up to 2020. The MSS Clause 21.05-2 of the Yarra Planning Scheme on Urban Design states:

Looking at the built form of the whole municipality, a clear picture emerges of a low-rise urban form punctuated by pockets of higher development. The low-rise urban form that constitutes much of the municipality is mostly in the one to two storey ranges, with some three and four storey buildings. The pockets of taller buildings include the high-rise housing estates, some industrial (or ex-industrial) complexes and the landmark towers, spires and signs. Activity centres being generally Victorian and Edwardian in origin, are generally two storeys, with some higher signature buildings.

This characteristic is important as it helps to differentiate Yarra from the urban form of adjoining cities, particularly the City of Melbourne, thus strengthening its sense of place.

The MSS Clause 21.10 Future Work identifies future work items to assist in meeting the MSS objectives and strategies, including preparation of an Urban Design Strategy and review of any implications for the policies and controls within the Planning Scheme.

The Planning Scheme also recognises that a key strength of the municipality is its diversity in terms of land use mix, built form, natural features and community composition. This diversity, combined with inner urban location and the availability of key redevelopment sites, is contributing to an increased demand for more intense urban development. These pressures include multi-storey development along main roads, within established mixed use, retail, commercial and industrial areas and close to the Yarra River.

In guiding the scale, form and appearance of new development the Planning Scheme also includes a number of other clauses with objectives and specific strategies, and in some cases design guidelines, to enhance the urban design qualities of Yarra.

Other Local Strategies and Plans

Through the Yarra Environment Strategy (2008-2020) Council promotes improving the environmental performance of buildings and infrastructure and streetscapes. It provides specific objectives, targets and actions in relation to open space and urban bushland, built form, transport, waste and greenhouse emissions, all of which influence urban design in Yarra.

Council's Strategic Transport Statement, Parking Strategy and Bicycle Strategy advocate for improved public transport and reduced car usage and encourage walking and cycling.

Council is committed under its Difference Is More Disability Action Plan 2010-2013 to the objective of improving 'physical access to the built environment – buildings (public, and where possible private), parks, open spaces, signage, roads and footpaths'.

Yarra's Economic Development Strategy (2009-2014) promotes sophistication and edginess, accessibility and inclusiveness, a strong sense of place and belonging, and sustainability of the built environment.

The City of Yarra Housing Strategy (2010-2013) includes strategic objectives in relation to the built environment and sustainability. Related strategies and actions support these objectives of future housing in Yarra being well designed, appropriately located and sensitive to Yarra's urban context and being exemplary in achieving sustainable outcomes that have a direct influence on overall urban form.








Through its Open Space Strategy Council aims to ensure the long-term economic, cultural and environmental viability of Yarra's open space network so that green spaces are protected and enhanced for current and future generations. The Strategy also promotes creating more open space in parts of the City, especially in Collingwood, Richmond and Cremorne.

There are other local plans and strategies which relate to the Urban Design Strategy. These are listed in Section 8.

5. Yarra Today

5.1 Inner Melbourne Character Context

The plan opposite shows the physical attractions which visitors to Melbourne remember and return to. These are also the elements which are valued by the region's residents and the people who work in Inner Melbourne. These attractors are also a key part of the tourism focused economic health of the City. These elements of Inner Melbourne are:

-  The Yarra River which flows through and defines the eastern edge of Inner Melbourne.
-  The Bay which defines the southern edge of Inner Melbourne.
-  The generous parks which surround the city centre.
-  The wide boulevards including Victoria Parade, Royal Parade, Flemington Road and St. Kilda Road.
-  The grid of narrower main roads and shopping strips serviced by the well established tram routes.
-  The central grid of the CBD skewed to the rest of the Inner Melbourne grid and defined by the higher buildings.
-  The development of distinct higher building corridors such as St Kilda Road.

The City of Yarra enjoys the heritage legacy of 19th and early 20th century buildings and is custodian of most of the above elements, including boulevards, park edges, the Yarra River and associated parkland, main roads, shopping strips, heritage richness and a strong public transport network.



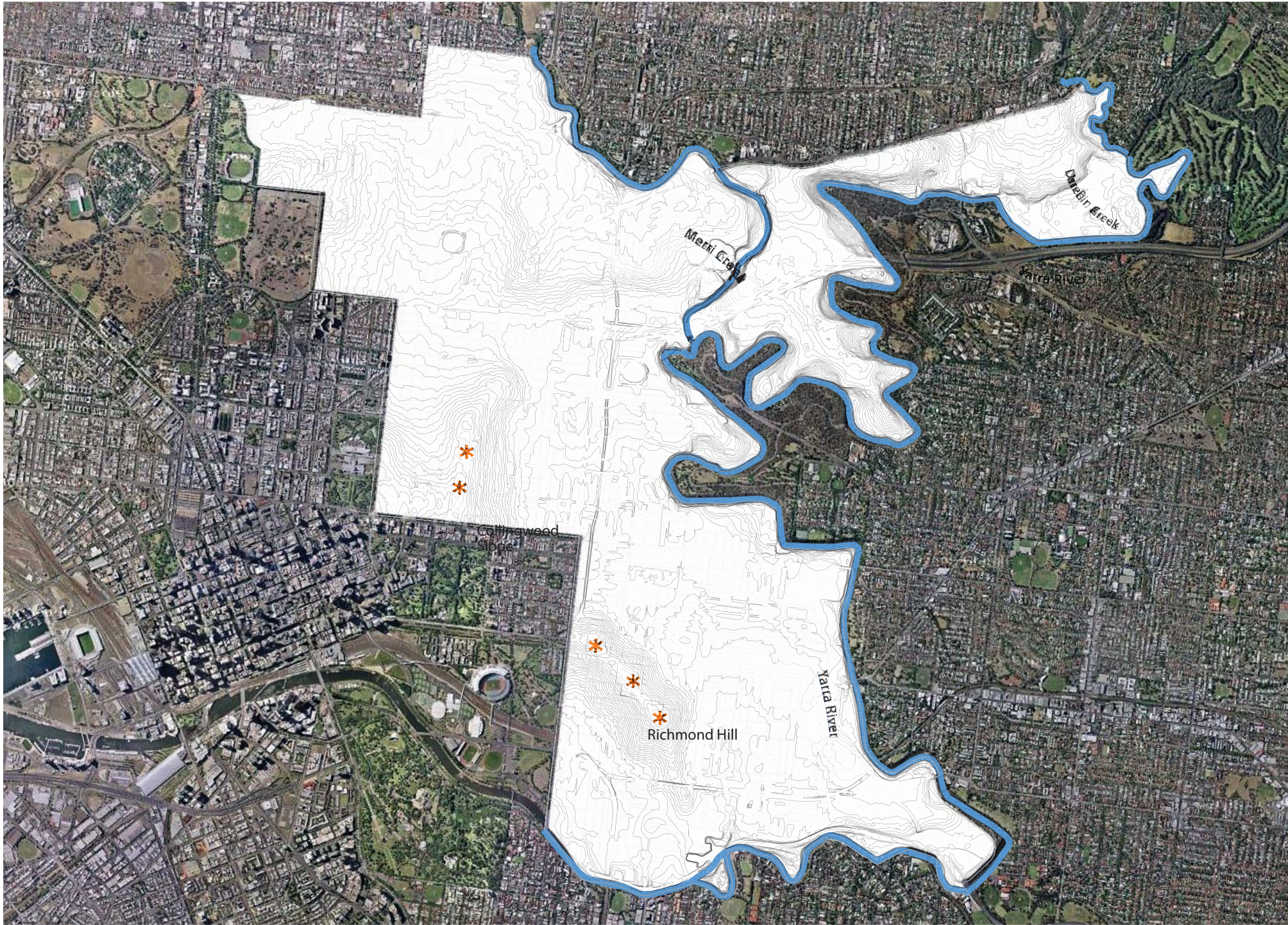
5.2 Physical Setting

The physical setting of Yarra is predominantly flat with two pronounced rises: Richmond Hill and the Collingwood Slope. It is bordered to the east and south by the Yarra River and associated natural environments.

Its key characteristics are:

- Girdled by the Yarra River to the east and south with associated green space but compromised by Citylink to the south.
- The Merri Creek and Darebin Creek provide green seams to the north.
- These waterways are often bordered by steep escarpments or banks.
- Generous parks within the City of Melbourne preserve a green edge to the west of the municipality.
- Distinct hills with high points accommodate landmarks such as St Ignatius Catholic Church and provide opportunity for views.
- Some of the green edges also provide the opportunity for views.

This unique setting provides the opportunity for the evolution of the rich and varied urban character of the City of Yarra we know today. In particular the abuses of the Yarra River corridor during the 19th century are being redressed through change of use and redevelopment.



- Waterways
- * High points

5.3 Urban Form and Character

The topography described in the previous section is overlaid by a grid of streets ranging from the formal Hoddle grid of Princes Hill and North Carlton to the ad hoc grid of Richmond and Abbotsford, providing the basic structure to the municipality.

The elements that are important for providing the basic urban structure to the municipality and contribute to its urban design quality include:

- A grid of main roads.
- Wider boulevards which radiate from the Melbourne city centre and include Victoria Parade and Alexandra Parade.
- Tram routes that follow the main roads, starting the radial system from central Melbourne.
- The railway corridors which are mostly invisible but exposed at the bridge crossings over the main roads.
- Major activity centres which line the tram routes along Brunswick Street, Smith Street, Victoria Street, Bridge Road and Swan Street.
- Activity centres which are Victorian and Edwardian in origin and are generally two storeys, with some higher buildings.
- Neighbourhood activity centres and shops and other commercial outlets that also follow main roads and serve the local communities.
- Later superimposition of freeways and road widening.
- Distinctive urban character neighbourhoods.
- Industrial precincts with large sites which are in the process of changing use.
- Fine grained residential areas of Richmond are juxtaposed with coarse grained large industrial areas.
- Heritage areas which are a distinctive part of the character of Yarra and include Victorian and Edwardian neighbourhoods.
- Town halls and community hubs which relate to each of the former municipalities.
- Landmarks including prominent buildings and other structures sometimes located on the higher areas of Yarra.
- A chain of open space which follows the River and creeks with major parks on the western flanks providing Yarra with a perimeter of parkland.

Evolving Built Form

Recent urban redevelopments have included:

- Incremental change in non heritage residential areas resulting in some changes to the neighbourhood character.
- Redevelopment of large former industrial sites resulting in a new urban character.
- Some higher building activity in traditional strip activity centres.
- Changing built form of large sites in other main roads such as Burnley Street and Johnston Street.
- Redevelopment of riverfront former industrial sites taking advantage of the landscape setting.



Heritage dominated shopping precinct



Local landmarks



Typical residential streetscape

City of Yarra in the Context of Melbourne CBD

6. Vision and Key Objectives

6.1 Vision

Future developments in Yarra reinforce a coherent, harmonious and appealing urban environment with an opportunity for continuity and change, focusing on achieving design excellence and a high quality public domain.

6.2 Key Objectives

The key objectives of the Urban Design Strategy to achieve this vision are:

1. Enhanced Quality Of Yarra’s Urban Form And Character

The rapidly changing environment, due to redevelopment and land use changes, requires that the elements which contribute to the image and identity to the City are identified. Careful consideration of urban design aspects should be given to future development of these elements so that new developments exhibit a strong character and a coherent urban form at the municipal level. The quality of the good urban design outcomes for each would rely on identifying the key attributes of the built form, private realm and public domain of those elements.

2. Effective Management Of Growth And Change

The City of Yarra presents a compact built environment with a mixed land use pattern. Its suburbs include distinct residential character precincts often juxtaposed with, commercial, industrial and community buildings. The municipality provides a range of opportunities for inner city living and working. The existence of a variety of local amenity within and around the municipality, easy availability of public transport and other services and its proximity to the Melbourne CBD, attracts new residents and businesses to Yarra. The under-utilised large, ex-industrial sites and activity corridors along major public transport routes also provide the opportunity for development and redevelopment. Increasing land prices of the Inner City also create pressure for high density developments to make new development viable.

The current State policies promote more intensive development of established and inner city suburbs. The planning vision for the municipality (the MSS) suggests that:

Yarra will have a distinctive identity as a low rise urban form, with areas of higher development and highly valued landmarks.

In this context, with an aim of achieving the best long term urban design outcomes it is important that new development associated with growth and change in the municipality is managed in such a way that;

- Development within neighborhoods of identified valued built form character is managed to protect and enhance the existing character.
- Larger scale redevelopment or development within areas where changes to built form character are sought is managed in such a way so as to create a high quality of preferred built form character.

3. Design Excellence In New Developments

In the context of the rapid growth in the Inner Melbourne region it is important that new development in Yarra presents design excellence and that Yarra’s neighbourhoods maintain their distinctiveness to be attractive to new residents and businesses.

The design excellence of new developments or redevelopments in Yarra will require giving a higher priority to:

- Achieving higher quality architectural design in buildings.
- Providing an appropriate interface between the new and what is existing.
- Integrating environmentally sustainable principles into design.
- Integrating accessibility design principles into design.
- Identifying sites that require special design considerations.
- Appropriately managing the interface between juxtaposed residential, commercial and industrial buildings.

4. Quality Public Domain and Public Spaces in Yarra

The public domain of Yarra includes all of the road and street space, small squares, public car parks and parks and reserves along river and creek corridors. The care, responsibility and enhancement over time of these spaces is the responsibility of many players.

The current lack of open space in established suburbs suggests that development of new urban spaces will be important. Currently, urban spaces within Yarra are generally restricted to the legacy of road reserves or street space. It is important to reclaim more space for pedestrians and outdoor activities for the community through general enhancement of the existing street space and by seeking opportunities in public and private developments.

Public domain improvements in Yarra should also balance the needs of pedestrians, public transport, cyclists and cars and should encourage universal access, walkability and social interaction.

5. Processes and Practices That Promote Good Design

Council has the responsibility for considering applications for the use, and development of land. It also has responsibility for development, management and maintenance of its own assets and the public domain. Whilst it is important that Council advocates for achieving better design quality in private developments, it is also important that it leads by example through its own development. This may require the introduction of new tools, process changes and adoption of a robust and integrated service delivery approach to enhance the quality of urban design outcomes in Yarra.

A number of public authorities own large land parcels within the municipality such as the Office of Housing, VicTrack, VicRoads etc. It is important that Council advocates for integrated planning and consolidation of government owned assets wherever possible.

7. Framework for Urban Design in Yarra

The framework for urban design in Yarra responds to the key objectives. It identifies key elements relevant to each objective, the key issues related to those, what has been done so far and recommendations for what needs to be done.

7.1 Enhanced quality of Yarra's urban form and character

The Urban Design Plan for Yarra, shown opposite, builds on the main urban design assets which contribute to the richness and character of Yarra. The successful urban design of a place is about the way that the public domain relates to the private domain and in particular the built form. In Yarra this is usually the way buildings relate to the streets, parks and other public spaces to ensure a safe, accessible, inclusive, memorable and efficient place.


The Plan shows the key urban design elements which contribute to the qualities of Yarra and provides the design intent for each. The following sections describe in further detail each of these elements, their importance, issues, existing gaps, projects which have been completed, future projects and some design ideas for both the public domain and the built form.




The Urban Design Plan

(see legend on the next page)


LEGEND

- 


Entries and Highly Visible Special Sites: These locations mark the entry to the City of Yarra and often the transition from the middle ring to the more urban inner suburbs. Sometimes the entry is reinforced by a river or creek crossing. There are other special sites at key intersection which are important for providing a sense of place and a transit point for modal interchange.

Design intent: Municipal boundaries marked through the good design of public spaces and built form that reinforce its context and landscape.
- 


Boulevards: Yarra is custodian of two of Melbourne's premier boulevards, Victoria and Alexandra Parades, and they are a distinctive part of inner Melbourne.

Design intent: Coherent built form with improved access that enhances the character of the tree lined avenues.
- 


Main Roads: These contrast in character with the boulevards with their hard edged urban character. Urban main roads with their vibrant activities and tram routes are a distinctive part of inner Melbourne and Yarra. Many of these routes are significant for the heritage buildings lining the routes.

Design intent: Coherent built form lining the route with improved access and the consistent greening of the street, where possible.
- 


Activity Centres – Major: These centres line the main road tram routes which radiate from the Melbourne CBD and perform a regional and local role.

Design intent: Change in the built form and the public domain that respects the established heritage and preferred urban character.
- 


Activity Centres – Neighbourhood: These centres serve the local neighbourhoods and are also focused on main roads.

Design intent: Built form in scale with the neighbourhood and enhanced, accessible and inclusive public domain.
- 


Town Hall Precincts and Community Hubs: Precincts centred around the three town halls and community hubs.

Design intent: Community focus reflected in the built form and design of public spaces around the Town halls and key community facilities.
- 


Public Transport Stops and Stations: Important highly accessible locations.

Design intent: Opportunities for more intensive development and public domain enhancement.
- 


Green River and Creek Corridors: Following the Yarra River, Merri and Darebin Creeks.

Design intent: Reinforcement of the green corridor and development that provides a sensitive interface to the river and creek corridors.
- 


Parks and Significant Open Spaces: Usually formal in design but the built form edges on private properties around parks and open spaces are often varied.

Design intent: Buildings on private properties around parks and open spaces provide strong built form edges that respect the green space.
- 

Neighbourhood Street Space with Low Open Space Amenity: A number of neighbourhoods in Yarra are deficient in open space.

Design intent: Utilisation of redundant street space to create small urban spaces.
- 

Heritage Areas: A distinctive part of Yarra and Inner Melbourne.

Design intent: Change managed to respect the existing heritage fabric of buildings and the public domain.
- 

Landmarks: Including prominent buildings and other structures.

Design intent: New development that respects the visible landmark quality of the element.

element ENTRIES AND HIGHLY VISIBLE SPECIAL SITES

These locations mark the entry to the City of Yarra and often the transition from the middle ring to the more urban inner suburbs. Sometimes the entry is reinforced by a river or creek crossing. There are other special sites at key intersection which are important for providing a sense of place and a transit point for modal interchange.

Why are they important?

Entry locations help in defining Yarra's image as well as with orientation. Some locations are already well defined, while others remain as left over spaces after road works. Being at the edge of the municipality they are often forgotten spaces.

Design intent: Municipal boundaries marked through the good design of public spaces and built form that reinforces its context and landscape.



Public Domain

Quality public domain and public spaces in Yarra

Issues:

- Often neglected.
- Poor pedestrian connection.
- Out of scale with broad setting.
- Inconsistent identification and signage.
- Competition between the need of vehicle, public transport link and pedestrian spaces.

What has been done?

Design work is underway for the Victoria Street entry close to Hoddle Street and intersection of Church and Swan Streets.

What needs to be done?

- Provide uniform entry signage for all pedestrian and vehicular entries.
- Prepare design work for neglected locations including:
 - Swan Street/Punt Road
 - Church Street at the Yarra River and at the junction of Bridge and Swan Streets.
 - Victoria Street at Hoddle Street.
- Realise the opportunities to enhance existing infrastructure at the entry points such as rail bridges.
- Promote consistency in the treatment of public domain with adjoining areas.

Design idea: Victoria Street entry



Built Form

Design excellence in new developments

Issues:

- Poor design responses in some of these prominent locations.
- Poor public domain interface.

What needs to be done?

- Provide greater design attention to buildings located at entries and special locations as they form important landmarks (refer map).
- Prepare urban design guidelines for entries and special sites.
- New development at the entry locations along the river edge should have a lower key approach and provide stepped transition in height so that the development provides a sensitive interface to the river corridor.
- New development at other entry locations and highly visible special sites should have regard to the character and scale of the existing built form and the transitional nature of the area at municipal boundaries so that the new development is complementary to area and the setting.

element **BOULEVARDS AND MAIN ROADS**

Why are they important?

Wide tree lined boulevards are a distinctive part of inner Melbourne, contrasting with the urban character of the grid of main roads. Competing demands on these roads include being a conduit for vehicles, trams, buses, bicycles and pedestrians, as well as the public spaces for the linear strip activity centres. They are often traffic dominated unattractive spaces.

Design intent (boulevards): Coherent built form with improved accessibility that enhances the character of the tree lined avenues.

Design intent (main roads): Coherent built form with improved accessibility lining the route and the consistent greening of the street, where possible.



Public Domain

Quality public domain and public spaces in Yarra

Issues:

- Competing needs for private vehicles, public transport and activity centres.
- Often the public domain does not present a consistent design image.
- Parts of some boulevards are managed by different municipalities eg. Victoria Parade, Alexandra Parade and Hoddle Street.
- Some potential boulevards are not fully developed.
- Inconsistent treatment of main roads and boulevards beyond the municipal boundary.
- Retention of heritage fabric and detailing.
- Street and footpath access needs to be improved.

What has been done?

Some renewed tree planting has been completed but often there is insufficient space for significant trees.

What needs to be done?

- Prepare comprehensive designs for non activity centre boulevards and main roads including Hoddle/Punt Road, Alexandra Parade, Burnley Street, Johnston Street, Nicholson Street, Church Street and Victoria Parade.
- Seek opportunities for potential extension of boulevards.
- Promote consistent avenue planting for main roads and unrealised boulevards.
- Improve accessibility on main road and boulevards.
- Emphasise providing links to open spaces and river corridors.
- Advocate for consistent treatment across municipal boundaries.

Design idea: sketch of main road



Built Form

Design excellence in new developments

Buildings provide a hard edge urban character to main roads and boulevards.

Boulevards

Issues:

- Built form which is low scale and out of scale with the wide road corridor.
- Development which dominates the significant avenue tree planting.
- Inconsistent built form controls with adjoining municipalities.

What needs to be done?

- Develop consistent guidelines for boulevard built form in consultation with the neighbouring municipalities.
- Identify areas which would be suitable for greater height or new built form.

Main Roads

Issues:

- Main road sites are a focus for higher density developments and the existing built form controls/guidelines do not fully address these long term changes on main roads outside activity centres.
- Public transport rich locations are not fully utilised.
- Lack of unified built form policy for main roads.
- Inconsistent built form controls with adjoining municipalities.
- Protection and reinstatement of active ground level uses.

What needs to be done?

- Prepare urban design guidelines for key main roads including Johnston Street, Hoddle/Punt Road, Alexandra Parade, Burnley Street, Church Street etc experiencing development pressure.

element ACTIVITY CENTRES – MAJOR

The City of Yarra's major activity centres are located along major roads which also provide major tram routes. These centres are important linear activity links between the City of Yarra and the adjoining municipalities.

Why are they important?

Major activity centres fulfill a regional role in metropolitan Melbourne, as well as providing a focus for their local communities.

Design intent: Change in the built form and the public domain that respects the established heritage and preferred urban character.



Public Domain

Quality public domain and public spaces in Yarra

Issues:

- Competing demands for the street space.
- Often poor pedestrian amenity.
- Inconsistent and patchy repairs.
- Lack of footpath space means that space at the corner of side streets is important.
- Need for bicycle parking and bike routes.
- Need for maintenance and service access.
- Competing demand for improved public domain to keep the centres attractive and accessible to residents and businesses.
- Insufficient public facilities including toilets and disability access parking bays and inconsistent street signage to these facilities.
- Increased traffic and parking.

What has been done?

Public domain frameworks have been prepared for Smith Street and Victoria Street as part of the structure planning process, and a streetscape master plan is underway for Smith Street. New public spaces have been constructed at Lennox Street, Mary Rogers Square and Stanley Street.

What needs to be done?

- Provide urban design input to future structure plans for Swan Street, Bridge Road and Brunswick Street.
- Prepare streetscape master plans for all centres.
- Recognise local cultural focus eg. aboriginal, in each centre.



Built Form

Design excellence in new developments

Issues:

- Current development pressure requires careful management of the heritage characteristics and accessibility requirements of the activity centres whilst allowing for growth and development.

What needs to be done?

- Prepare built form framework plans as part of the structure planning process for Swan Street, Bridge Road and Brunswick Street.
- Develop an appropriate mechanism for new developments to contribute to the enhancement of the public domain.
- Ensure parking for major attractors is located away from 'main street' frontages and where possible integrate into developments.
- Encourage land consolidation and partnerships wherever possible.

Design idea: new infill to an activity centre strip respecting the scale of the urban form



Element **ACTIVITY CENTRES – NEIGHBOURHOOD**

Neighbourhood centres are shown on the plan below. The public domain of the neighbourhood activity centres is focused on the road and footpath space of most of these traditional strip centres. Some, like North Fitzroy, have additional space created at major street intersections.

Why are they important?

Neighbourhood centres are traditionally the focus for community life for the immediate neighbourhood. Some have a specialist role, such as Gertrude Street with a focus on art and design.

Design intent: Built form in scale with the neighbourhood and enhanced, accessible and inclusive public domain.



Public Domain

Quality public domain and public spaces in Yarra

Issues:

- Competing demands for the street space.
- Often poor pedestrian amenity.
- Lack of footpath space means that redundant side street, road space and median space may be important for pedestrian areas.
- Lack of street furniture in public areas.
- Need for improved lighting.
- Poor quality public domain leading to lack of safety in some areas.
- Lack of passive surveillance.
- Poor or lack of accessible public toilets and disability access parking bays.
- Poor or lack of street signage for these accessible facilities.

What has been done?

- Some preliminary conceptual planning has been undertaken for North Fitzroy as part of the community hub project.

What needs to be done?

- Prepare streetscape master plans for each neighbourhood centre.
- Develop public domain improvement plans for cultural focussed precincts.

Built Form

Design excellence in new developments

Issues:

- Intensive and mixed use developments often compromise the quality of the interface between public and private areas.
- Need for respect for heritage buildings.

What needs to be done?

- Prepare built form guidelines for each neighbourhood centre, with Johnston Street as a priority project.

A neighbourhood activity centre at North Fitzroy



Design idea: public domain improvements to a neighbourhood activity centre



Element TOWN HALL PRECINCTS AND COMMUNITY HUBS

These are precincts centred around the three town halls and future community hubs. Some community hubs are part of larger activity centres. Neighbourhood houses also provide local hubs.

Why are they important?

Town Hall precincts and community hubs, together with activity centres, provide a focus for neighbourhood identity and local community activity.

Design intent: Community focus reflected in the built form and design of public spaces around the Town halls and key community facilities.



Public Domain

Quality public domain and public spaces in Yarra

Issues:

- Retention of the heritage and cultural links and character of the neighbourhoods served by the hubs.
- Need to improve disability access and way finding to and within the Town Hall Precincts and community hubs.

What has been done?

- Urban Design Frameworks have been completed and adopted by Council for Richmond Town Hall and Collingwood Town Hall Precincts. Guideline plans have been prepared for community hubs for the Lourdes site and North Fitzroy. An Open Space Precinct Plan has been prepared for the Fitzroy Town Hall Precinct.

What needs to be done?

- Prepare an Urban Design Framework for the Fitzroy Town Hall Precinct focused on built form and public domain plans.
- Prepare Urban Design Guidelines for all future community hubs including landscape improvement plans.



Design idea: Richmond Town Hall showing the integrated development of the precinct



Built Form

Design excellence in new developments

Issues:

- Need for any new developments adjacent to iconic / heritage buildings to have regard to such buildings in terms of scale and character.
- New developments need to protect the views to Town Halls.

What needs to be done?

- Prepare Urban Design Guidelines for all future community hubs to guide built form.
- Adopt an integrated building and landscape development approach for all new community hubs.

Collingwood Town Hall and surrounds



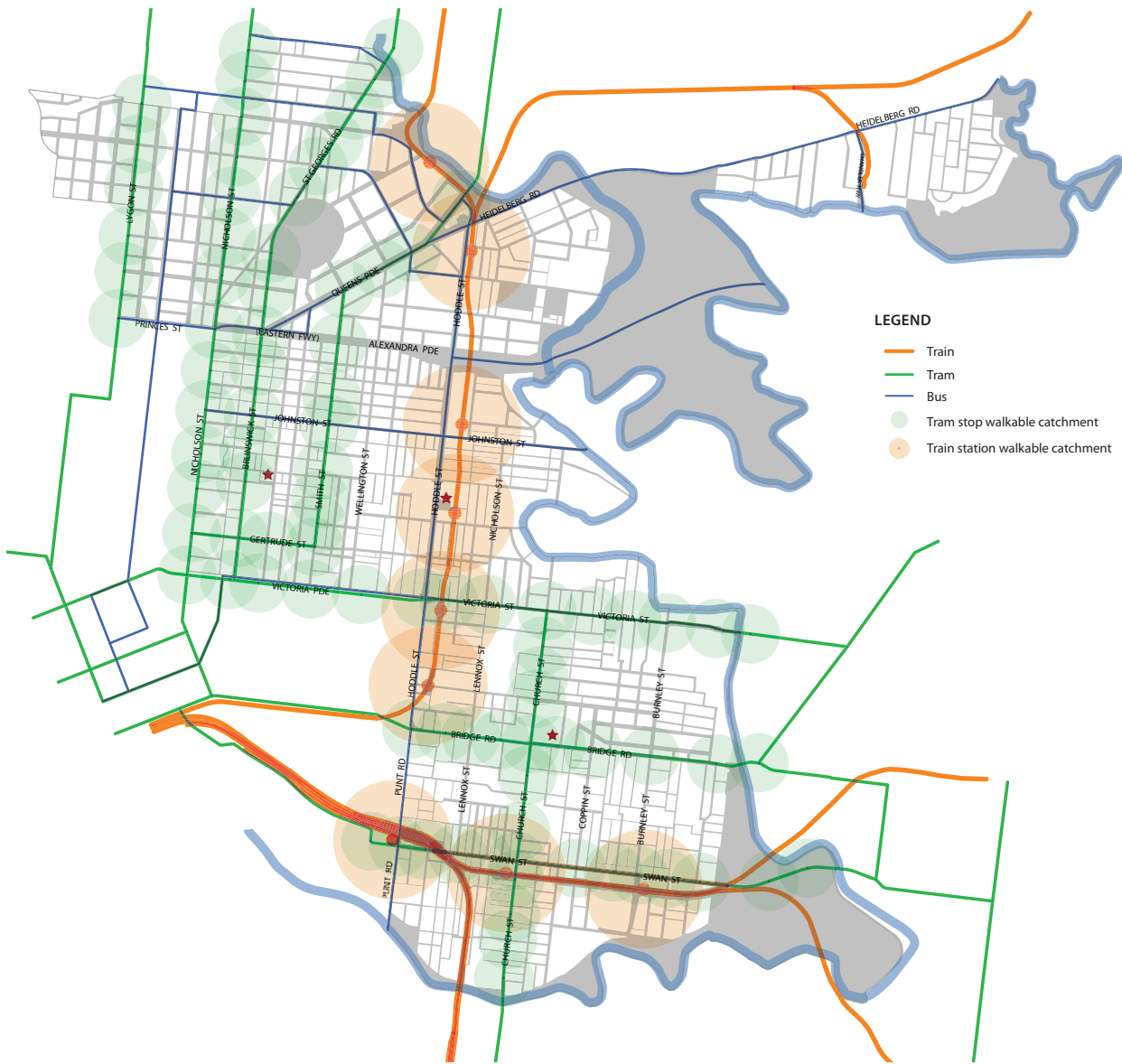
Element PUBLIC TRANSPORT STOPS AND STATIONS

Public transport stops include trams, buses and railway stations. Most parts of the municipality are well served by public transport.

Why are they important?

These highly accessible locations are important for encouraging increased patronage of all modes of public transport. Some are also located at the gateways to the municipality.

Design intent: Opportunities for more intensive development and public domain enhancement.



Public Domain

Quality public domain and public spaces in Yarra

Issues:

- Environs around some stations within the municipality are neglected and discourage the use of public transport.
- Concerns about safety.
- tram stops and trams that are independently accessible by people with a disability are required in activity centres.
- Multiple ownership of land presents constraints for improvements.
- Pedestrian links to stops and stations are of poor amenity and lack integration with development.
- Poor access to and insufficient number of public toilets.
- Need to improve pedestrian and bicycle links from public transport stops to facilities outside City of Yarra (eg. sporting facilities).
- Lack of wayfinding and passenger comfort.
- Poor signage to public facilities (toilets, disability access parking bays).

What has been done?

- East Richmond Station Design Plan for access and amenity improvements.

What needs to be done?

- Give priority to access to public transport stops in terms of public domain improvements, including providing for DDA compliant pedestrian routes and bicycle routes that link the stops.
- Undertake amenity improvements to improve safety and vitality around station precincts.
- Work with providers of public transport to improve public transport stops and stations.
- Capitalise on the investment in super stops to provide other pedestrian amenities.
- Give priority to improve high patronage stops and stations.
- Install accessibility verified wayfinding signage and bicycle storage facilities and undertake amenity improvements to passenger comfort (including disability parking bays and accessible toilets).

Built Form

Design excellence in new developments

Issues:

- Increasing density may conflict with heritage objectives in some precincts.
- Loss/replacement of car parking in these locations.
- Underutilised and neglected land presents opportunity for improving built environment around stations.

What needs to be done?

- Prepare urban design guidelines for public transport precincts.
- Give priority to making key stations as transport hubs.
- Advocate for well designed independently accessible station redevelopment for locations such as Richmond, Burnley, Collingwood etc.
- Explore opportunity for higher density development around train stations.

Design ideas: enhancement of East Richmond Station



East Richmond Station



Element GREEN RIVER AND CREEK CORRIDORS

The green corridors of the municipality follow the Yarra River, Merri and Darebin Creeks. The River defines the boundary of the municipality to the east and south.

Why are they important?

The green waterway corridors are important for environmental, ecological, recreational and amenity reasons.

Design intent: Reinforcement of the green corridor and development that relates to the corridor.



Public Domain

Quality public domain and public spaces in Yarra

Issues:

- Competing demands for the recreational and commuter needs of the corridor.
- Poor access to the Yarra River and creek corridor trails.
- Poor water quality entering the waterways.

What has been done?

- Much of the former industrial landscape of the Yarra River, and creek valleys has been reclaimed within the municipality with newly vegetated areas and replanting of the banks over the past 40 years. Access to the waterways is guided by the Open Space Strategy which provides nominated street links to the Yarra River corridor.

What needs to be done?

- Minimise vegetation removal for environmental, open space, amenity and urban character reasons.
- Reinforce the green corridor effect through street planting, private land landscaped setbacks and vegetating river and creek edges.
- Provide opportunities for additional accessible pedestrian and bicycle links to the corridors.
- Promote active and passive Water Sensitive Urban Design to improve the quality of water entering waterways.

Built Form

Design excellence in new developments

Issues:

- Domination of parts of the green corridor by highly urban forms of development.
- Lack of presence of the green corridor at and near the edges of the corridors particularly from adjacent roads.
- New and intensive developments along river and creek corridors often leading to loss of viewlines to the corridors.

What has been done?

- Yarra Planning Scheme includes design objectives and planning controls for the river and creek corridors.

What needs to be done?

- Enable views and green feel from wider public domain to the corridors in new development along river/creek corridors.

The green river corridor



Element PARKS AND SIGNIFICANT OPEN SPACES

Key parks and reserves in the City of Yarra were typically laid out in the 19th century with formal designs and formed an integral part of the adjacent urban fabric. Notable examples include Edinburgh Gardens, Darling Gardens, Gahan Reserve, Citizens’ Park and Barkly Gardens.

Why are they important?

These parks and reserves are important to the urban spaces of the City of Yarra. The treatment of the perimeter streets and the buildings surrounding the open space is an important urban quality of the municipality.

Design intent: Buildings on private properties around parks and open spaces provide strong built form edges and respect the green space.



Public Domain

Quality public domain and public spaces in Yarra

Issues:

- Need for improved pedestrian, bicycle and public transport access.

What has been done?

- Both Collingwood and Richmond Town Hall UDFs explore better links to existing parks.

What needs to be done?

- Improve pedestrian and bicycle access.
- Encourage best practice in accessible design of public space.
- Improve wayfinding to and within parks and open spaces.
- Explore opportunities for extending the feel and amenity of the space using pedestrian/green links.
- Incorporate ESD principles, including Water Sensitive Urban Design and rain water harvesting into the design of public spaces where possible.
- Incorporate accessibility design principles into design of public spaces.

Design idea: Richmond Town Hall new built form edge which relates to Citizens’ Park



Built Form

Design excellence in new developments

This includes freestanding buildings in parks (Council and other/ public buildings) and built form to the park edges.

Issues:

- Some buildings do not relate well to the park setting.
- Poor location and disability access of car parks and other infrastructure.
- Need for appropriate identification and wayfinding signage.
- Need for passive surveillance.
- Need for activity through buildings fronting parks and open spaces.

What needs to be done?

- Prepare guidelines for new buildings in parks.
- Prepare guidelines for new buildings which surround or are adjacent to existing parks and open spaces to provide a strong built form edge and green feel and opportunity for overlooking of open space.
- Protect/enhance key views and viewlines to parks and open spaces.
- Encourage community uses that engage with open space.

A medium density development overlooking public open space



Element NEIGHBOURHOOD STREET SPACE

Many neighbourhoods in the City of Yarra have a deficiency of public open space, and there are limited opportunities to provide new open space. Neighbourhoods within the municipality which have low provision of recreational open space are designated in the City of Yarra Open Space Strategy.

Why are they important?

Redundant road space can provide opportunities for greening, more permeable surface, pedestrian spaces and other amenity space to offer alternatives to traditional open space.

Design intent: Utilisation of redundant street space to create small urban spaces.



Public Domain

Quality public domain and public spaces in Yarra

Issues:

- Limited opportunities for provision of open spaces.
- Need for positive use of left over street spaces.
- Need to develop new urban spaces as public spaces.
- Need for improved access and signage.

What has been done?

- Balmain Street in Cremorne has already been developed in an open space deficient area. The Open Space Strategy identifies other areas such as Oxford Street in Collingwood as having potential for creating open space within the road reservation.

What needs to be done?

- As part of the LATM and other neighbourhood planning processes identify redundant road space for redevelopment as small urban spaces within open space deficient areas.
- Advocate for new public spaces through private developments.
- Implement the Yarra Open Space Strategy and seek opportunity for development of small public spaces.
- Encourage, walkability, universal access, safety and social interaction in all new public spaces.

Design idea: Balmain Street in Cremorne - a traffic solution was modified to provide a substantial amenity area in a neighbourhood which is deficient in open space



Built Form

Design excellence in new developments

Issues:

- Safety and surveillance around neglected spaces.

What needs to be done?

- Promote active edges around and use of small urban spaces.



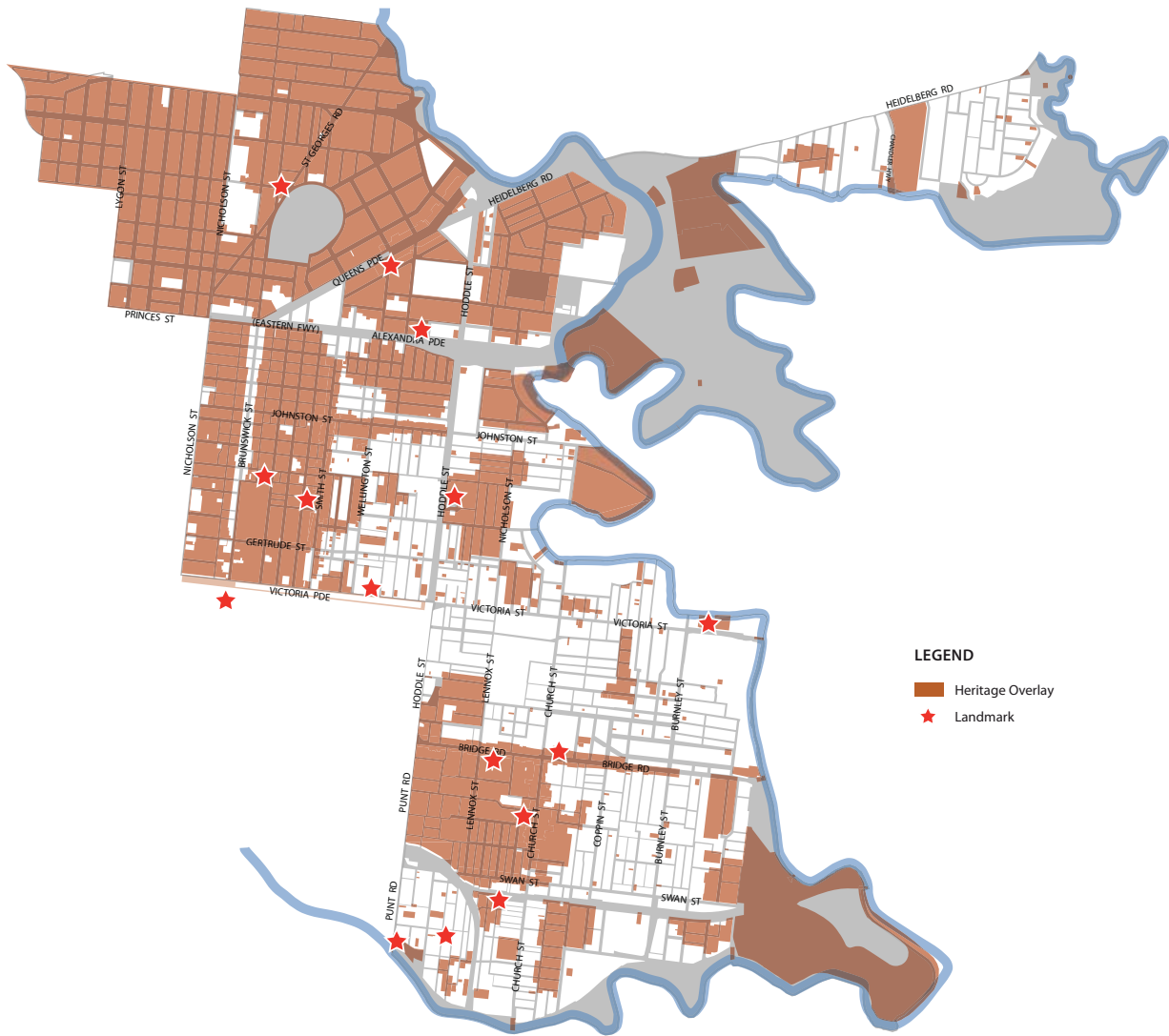
Element HERITAGE AREAS AND LANDMARKS

The City of Yarra has a rich fabric of heritage buildings and landmarks which contribute substantially to the importance of inner Melbourne as a notable example of a 19th century boom city. Yarra also has a rich legacy of bluestone kerbs and gutters with original kerb stone and pitcher detailing. Much of this is located within Heritage Overlay areas in the Yarra Planning Scheme.

Why are they important?

The retention of landmarks, heritage buildings and streetscape detailing is important for Yarra and for the contribution to inner Melbourne, for conservation as well as for the robust urban design qualities of the fabric. Heritage is part of the richness of inner Melbourne as a tourist destination with resultant economic benefits.

Design intent: Change managed to respect the existing heritage fabric of buildings and the public domain.



Public Domain

Quality public domain and public spaces in Yarra

Issues:

- Compromising of heritage fabric in buildings and street detailing.
- Bluestone gutters may be problematic for bicycle access and DDA compliance.
- Inappropriate siting of domestic infrastructure such as rain water tanks in front yards.

What has been done?

- Heritage street detailing is to be retained through the implementation of the City of Yarra Materials Policy and City of Yarra Public Domain Manual (Technical Notes).

What needs to be done?

- Provide greater attention to detailed restoration and complementary new works in heritage streetscapes.
- Complete and monitor City of Yarra Public Domain Manual relating to heritage street details.

Public domain enhancement that respects the existing bluestone heritage detailing



Built Form

Design excellence in new developments

Issues:

- Integration of heritage and urban design policy in the Planning Scheme.
- Managing change to respect the heritage characteristics of the building / area whilst providing opportunities for more intense development.
- Heritage fabric retention and integration of ESD requirements.
- New development proposals need to complement landmarks.

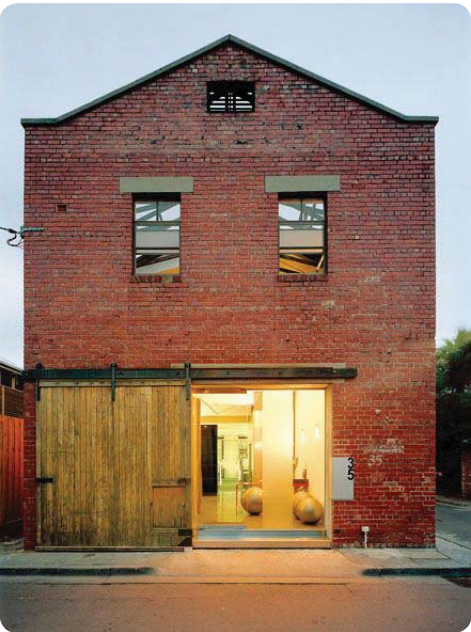
What has been done?

- The Yarra Planning Scheme identifies landmarks within the municipality and provides planning considerations for developments in proximity to the landmarks.
- Yarra Planning Scheme includes a number of heritage sites and precincts and provides planning guidance for development of heritage sites and other buildings within heritage context.

What needs to be done?

- Review the existing Planning Scheme policies for better integration of heritage, ESD and urban design.
- Identify/create new landmarks.
- Protect significant views to the landmarks.

Sympathetic restoration of heritage building for adaptive reuse. A Melbourne example.



7.2 Effective Management of Growth and Change

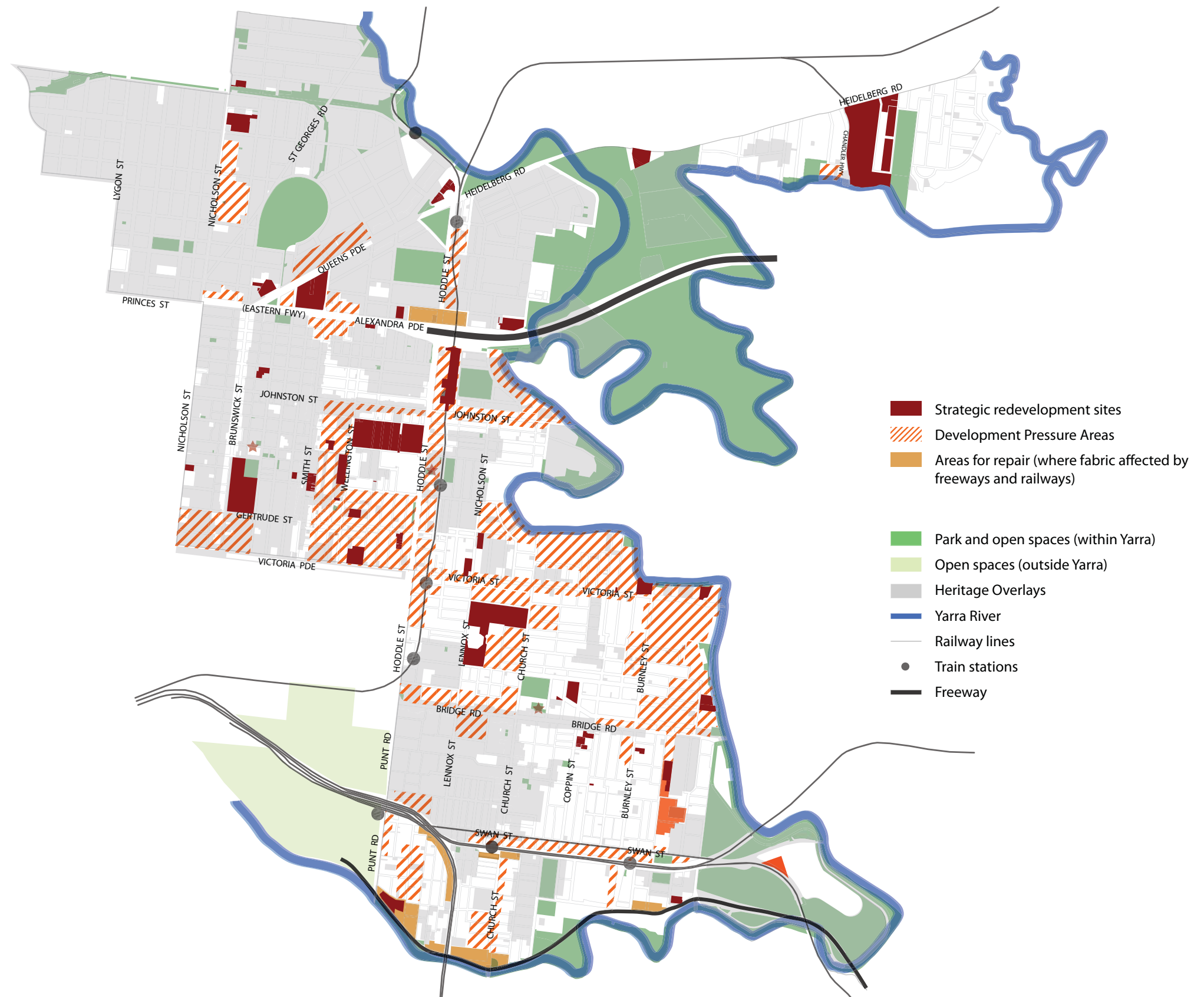
The City of Yarra is characterised by distinct suburbs with significant heritage areas and fine grained areas with small lots where the urban character is unlikely to substantially change. These include North Fitzroy which is a low density residential suburb with wide streets and late Victorian and early Edwardian dwellings. North Carlton - Princes Hill is noted for spacious brick or render late Victorian and Edwardian streetscapes. Clifton Hill has good public open space and park lands whereas Fairfield - Alphington have green and leafy residential areas. There are also distinct areas of concentration of Victorian terraces and cottages in Richmond, and Collingwood and Fitzroy have mixed commercial and residential neighbourhoods with consistency of Victorian streetscapes.

By contrast there are some suburbs such as Abbotsford and Cremorne and parts of Collingwood and Richmond, where there is concentration of large sized sites, industrial or warehouse buildings with limited heritage value. An analysis of current development trends has confirmed that such pockets of these areas are undergoing change and are likely to experience further pressure for change.

The changing character of these areas has been generally dependent on the following factors:

- Non heritage status
- Large size of the sites
- Whether sites have the opportunity of changing use, usually from industrial to residential and other uses
- Being Key Strategic redevelopment sites
- Proximity of large sites to railway stations
- Large sites along major roads or public transport corridors

There are also areas where the original urban fabric has been disrupted by more recent interventions such as road widening or construction of freeways and there are areas along railway lines that present poor built form interface and need urban form improvements. These areas are often key approaches to the City. It is important that opportunity for new development in such areas is identified and urban fabric of such area is improved so that the new development is more in scale with the infrastructure.



Development Pressure Areas

If managed effectively growth and change can contribute positively to the long term sustainability of both Yarra and metropolitan Melbourne as well as the urban design richness of Yarra..

Issues

- Availability of under-utilised land/large buildings, often in highly accessible locations along transport corridors and main roads
- Concentration of large number of large sites leading to substantial change in the built form character of the area.
- High land values of the large sites resulting in high density and often large developments to make them viable.
- Large development proposals being assessed on individual merits also require consideration of impact in a broader context.
- Focus on building large developments and little or no improvements to public realm.
- Poor presentation of the urban fabric at high exposure locations such as along freeways, railway lines and river corridor.
- Increased traffic and parking.
- Limited vehicular access to some sites along railway corridors and freeways.
- Poor pedestrian amenity.
- Poor maintenance of the public realm along freeways or railway corridors due to multiple agency responsibility.

Poor interface to railway corridors



What has been done?

- A number of Key Strategic Redevelopment sites have been identified and included in the Yarra Planning Scheme as shown in the map.
- Design and development guidelines prepared for large former industrial sites including the Channel Nine site in Richmond and the Amcor site in Alphington.

What needs to be done?

- Identify areas of development pressure and areas that are undergoing change.
- Prepare urban design guidelines for high development pressure areas and key redevelopment sites (refer map).
- Identify additional potential Key Strategic Redevelopment Sites.
- Encourage consolidation/partnership in designated areas to accommodate change and realise additional open space and an improved public domain.
- Protect and enhance the character of valued heritage and non heritage residential precincts.
- Identify residential areas where new developments have changed the neighbourhood character.
- Prepare urban design guidelines to reinforce preferred character.
- Prepare strategies to improve the disrupted urban fabric along freeways and rail lines.
- Require new development to create new public realm areas or improve the public domain to contribute to the urban quality of Yarra.

Example: New development that enhances the public domains



Example New development sympathetic to existing streets cape.



Example Medium density housing development.



Example : Extension and reuse of existing buildings.

7.3 Design Excellence in New Developments

Achieving design excellence in new developments in Yarra requires a focus on:

- Design aspects leading to high quality architecture in buildings.
- Integrating environmental sustainable design principles.
- Integrating accessibility design principles into design.
- Designing to promote good health and social wellbeing .
- Responding positively to the existing and preferred neighbourhood character and urban context.
- Identifying sites that require special design consideration.
- Responding positively to the public domain.

All Sites

Issues:

Common urban design issues in the City of Yarra as in other parts of Melbourne often include:

- Intensive developments and site subdivisions causing inconsistency in the built form of the streetscape.
- Buildings projecting into front yards and interrupting consistent setbacks (e.g. the dwelling or garage).
- Excessive visual building bulk causing buildings to dominate the street and neighbouring properties.
- Poor siting of garages and carports distracting from streetscapes.
- Loss of off-street car parking
- Driveways leading to loss of footpath and blank frontages.
- Inappropriate front fences.
- The loss of green character and permeability, especially in backyards.
- Absence of appropriate guidelines and measures to improve environmental performances of buildings.
- Lack of consideration of universal access.

What is being done?

- Design assessment based on Planning Scheme provisions.
- Guidance is being provided through referral in relation to urban design, heritage and ESD matters.

What needs to be done?

- Identify the elements that provide character to the built form of various precincts.
- Focus on the design aspects leading to high quality architecture of individual proposals.
- Promote innovation and incorporation of best practice principles.
- Reassess Council's car parking requirements particularly to address streetscape character issues of those areas where the streetscape character is changing rapidly due to introduction of carports/garages.
- Advocate for a Sustainable Design Assessment in the Victoria Planning Provisions.

Design Considerations for All Sites

Quality of urban design outcomes of new developments relies on appropriate responses for the key elements of a building or its parts. The key aspects that influence a design response can be described as below:

■ Site and neighbourhood character context

- Shape, size and physical features of the site
- Accessibility (including disability access and service access)
- Edges (neighbouring properties and buildings)
- Orientation
- Land use
- Neighbourhood and preferred future character

■ Built form and massing

- Typology (contemporary/traditional)
- Height / bulk and scale
- Horizontally versus verticality
- Solid vs void
- Roof form

■ Building layout

- Building line and setbacks
- Site coverage and site permeability
- Storm water management
- Parking, access (including disability access parking and pedestrian disability access, bicycle and vehicular) and traffic
- Internal and external amenity response such as daylight, ventilation, passive heating and cooling
- Ground level street interface

■ Facade design and streetscape fit

- Rhythm
- Solid vs glazed, projected and recessed areas
- Building interface (overshadowing, overlooking etc)

■ Response to public domain

- Legibility, views
- Access for all and entry treatment
- Boundary treatment
- Landscaping, light and shade (overshadowing)
- Safety and surveillance
- Impacts of ancillaries such as air-conditioning units and energy devices etc

■ Design detail, colour and materials

- Texture
- Pattern
- Complementary materials and colours
- Colour contrast
- Solar access, cross ventilation
- Sustainable use of resources
- Response to predominant architectural elements of the streetscape

Sites Requiring Special Consideration

Across Yarra there are sites which require a special design response. These include:

- **Large sites**
Provide opportunity for high density developments in all neighbourhoods in different settings - residential areas, activity centres, mixed use and industrial areas. The current development trends indicate that due to the opportunity for the yields there has been rapid redevelopment of large sites.
- **Corner sites**
Corner sites mark the beginning and end of a street or important intersections. They often provide opportunity for containment of character precincts or for highlighting the corner. They repeatedly occur in various parts of the municipality.
- **Ex-industrial sites**
The City of Yarra contains numerous ex large industrial sites, some in industrial and mixed use areas, some along main roads and some others surrounded by fine grain residential areas or on river edge. Many of these also contain heritage buildings.
- **Sites that address lanes and narrow streets**
Some of the earlier neighbourhoods of Yarra developed with houses having a service lane at the back. The growing pressure for high intensity developments and current development trends demonstrate that many such lanes are being used to gain front or rear/access to units.
- **Sites in transition areas**
Yarra's land use pattern is unique as many of the suburbs include mixed land use patterns. The properties that are located at the interface of two different land use areas, eg. commercial and residential, have greater pressure for being influenced by the built form of the adjoining area and therefore require careful consideration.

Issues:

- Managing the height and form interface between the low rise fine grain development and high density new development.
- Compromised internal amenity as development proposals are often focused on maximising the yields leading to:
 - Small service areas.
 - No common areas.
 - Lack of focus for landscaping the site.
 - Improper ESD response.
- Lack of or insufficient access and wayfinding for people with disability.
- Inappropriate ground level interface in medium density residential developments associated with provision of basement parking.
- Lack of consideration for a connection between public and private domain.
- Poor interface to laneways/right of ways leading to safety and surveillance issues.
- Inappropriate massing and buildings often extending beyond prevailing building line in corner sites and compromising/impacting streetscape character.

What is being done?

The Planning Scheme includes some guidance to address design issues for such special sites, but the provisions are not specific enough to enhance the unique opportunities that these locations may offer.

What needs to be done?

- Promote innovative design response.
- Provide active interface to the street.
- Prepare "do and don'ts" for the typical type of cases that occur in different locations in Yarra that may help in providing better design guidance.
- Develop design principles for assessment of special sites.
- Promote an integrated built form and landscaping response.
- Explore opportunities to improve the public domain adjacent to the sites.
- Develop principles that promote an ESD response.
- Promote passive design principles that provide internal comfort without relying on the need for the use of active technology and energy consumption.
- Promote use of water sensitive urban design strategies for efficient use of water.
- Promote accessible design principles.

Good examples showing positive response to address key development issues



7.4 Quality Public Domain and Public Spaces in Yarra

Why is this important?

A well designed public domain brings comfort, safety and connectedness to its users and attractive public spaces add to the activity and vibrancy of places.

Improving the public domain in Yarra would require:

- Emphasis being given to the quality of the whole municipality, not just special places.
- Reflecting the essence of the character of inner Melbourne in the local character of individual neighbourhoods.
- Consistency in design treatment for public domain works.
- Addressing sustainability principles in the design, and promotion of environmentally sustainable technologies such as WSUD.
- Enhancing walkability and social interaction.
- Implementing accessible design principles to ensure inclusion of people with disability.
- Integrating public art with public domain improvements.

The Urban Design Plan at Section 7.1 emphasises the need for a special response to the overall public domain in Yarra. It identifies elements of Yarra's overall urban structure that require special consideration and are important for reinforcing the image and character to the City. However there are other more specific elements that contribute to the quality of Yarra's public domain which are listed below:

- Local streets
- Footpaths
- Kerb extensions
- Laneways
- Street trees, flora and fauna.
- Street furniture
- Incidental open spaces

Issues:

- Need for a consistent vocabulary of street furniture.
- Frequent disruption of footpaths by an increasing number of driveways.
- Poor public realm response to laneways.
- Need to maximise opportunities for small public spaces and pocket parks.
- Lack of integration of public art.
- Dominance of hard paved surfaces in urban areas and activity centres, generating heat.
- Need to identify unsafe areas for amenity improvements.
- Need for a more integrated approach to asset based capital works.
- Barriers to access of public domain, facilities and spaces by people with a disability.
- Lack of integration between government agencies for maintenance and upgrade of their assets.

What has been done?

- To guide the design of the public domain across Yarra, a Public Domain Manual is being prepared. Within the manual technical notes have been prepared for street furniture.
- Council has committed to deliver four public open spaces in four years. Public spaces at Balmain Street and Stanley Street have already been completed.

What needs to be done?

- Complete the Public Domain Manual to include paving, lighting, signage etc., seeking advice from an accredited access consultant where appropriate.
- Promote an innovative and best practice approach in public domain and public space design.
- Include ESD principles in public domain improvements.
- Implement accessible design principles to improve physical access to built environment, facilities, parks, open space, signage, roads and footpaths.
- Seek opportunities for softening of hard paved spaces wherever possible.
- Develop guidelines, policies that help avoid disruptions of footpaths.
- Seek opportunities for integrated planning, delivery and upkeep of government owned infrastructure.
- Seek opportunities for integrating public art with public domain improvement.
- Seek opportunities to provide for accessible public toilets and related signage.
- Actively promote opportunities for greening local streets.
- Promote opportunities for greening of incidental open spaces.
- Require large developments to improve the abutting public domain.
- Advocate for new common spaces in large developments that can also be used by the public.



7.5 Processes and Practices That Promote Good Design

Urban design requires a multidisciplinary response as it involves buildings, places and people. Successful implementation of the Strategy will require that Council utilises a range of tools and practices to improve the urban design outcomes in the municipality.

Tools

A range of tools is available for the planner and urban designer to assess development proposals and as tools in the negotiation to achieve good urban design outcomes.

What are the existing tools?

Existing tools include:

- Urban Design Charter: Provides a basis for good urban design in Victoria.
- Yarra Planning Scheme: Provides guidance for the built form for the City of Yarra in heritage and non heritage areas. The existing provisions provide sufficient statutory basis for planning decisions. However the drafting is repetitive and often lengthy and there is a need for changes to provide consistency between heritage and built form policy.
- Structure Plans: Provide an opportunity for addressing urban design issues, particularly in activity centres, which are implemented through the Planning Scheme.
- Urban Design Frameworks: Similar to structure plans but have a greater emphasis on built form and the design of the public domain. They have been developed for specific precincts in Yarra including town hall community hubs and precincts which are seeing considerable change. Examples are Richmond Town Hall UDF, Collingwood Town Hall UDF and the Cremorne and Church Street Precinct UDF.
- Site Specific Design Guidelines: More detailed guidelines for specific, usually larger sites and strategic redevelopment sites. They provide useful guidance in dealing with key redevelopment sites for large development proposals. Examples are the Channel Nine site, Collingwood TAFE site etc. These can also be referenced in the Planning Scheme.
- State Government’s design guidelines: The State government has published a set of design guidelines for specific aspects such as for higher density residential developments, safer design, activity centres etc.
- Photo Documentation Database: Yarra has developed a database of good design examples. It is a dynamic database that can be updated from time to time to remain current and valid.
- 3D modeling: 3D modeling of development proposals has been used as an effective tool for better understanding the visual impacts of some of the larger proposals.
- There are also specific policies, strategies and local laws relating to community issues, ESD outcomes, improving access, walking, cycling, use of public transport and community health and wellbeing.
- Council’s Access and Inclusion Policy and the *Difference is More Disability Action Plan 2010-2013* commits to best practice in accessibility design.

What needs to be done?

- Council consider being a signatory of the *Victorian Urban Design Charter*.
- Further work to suggest changes to the Yarra Planning Scheme in order to include objectives, design guidelines and principles consistent with this strategy. The Amendment should also provide consistency in the language and to link (where necessary) different provisions relating to design outcomes.
- Prepare urban design guidelines and urban design frameworks for large sites and areas where major change is likely to occur.
- Explore new tools such as *Do and Don’ts* to address typical urban design issues in different settings.
- Explore opportunities to actively promote inclusion of ESD principles in new development.
- Promote new tools and innovative urban design solutions to help address new community issues such as bill posting, graffiti etc.
- Promote design discussions and design awards to advocate for benefits of good design.

Practices

Design Assessment of Development Proposals

What are the existing practices?

The current practices that influence the design aspects of a new development proposals include:

- Pre application meetings with the applicant or his/her architect or consultants: Pre-application meetings are organized by statutory planners. In certain large proposals external urban design advice is sought for pre application discussions.
- Design advice from urban designers through discussions: Currently, design discussions are held on weekly basis between the statutory planners and urban designers for planning proposals requiring design advice.
- Post planning application design discussions with the applicant or his/ her architect or consultants: Statutory planners are involved in discussions with the applicant in negotiating design outcomes of the application.
- Urban design referral process: The urban designers provide urban design advice for planning applications. There are other aspects of design, such as heritage or, traffic for which individual advice is taken from subject matter experts.

What needs to be done?

- Urban designers to be regularly involved in pre application meetings.
- Urban designers to be involved early in the referral process. Their involvement at further information stage can help improve the design outcomes of the application.
- Create a 3D modelling base for the municipality to assess impact of new developments in larger context and its interface to the surrounding areas.
- All development proposals for large developments should be accompanied by an accurate 3D image.
- Integrated design advisory meetings for all key development proposals, involving different units of the Council such as urban design, traffic, heritage, strategic planning, ESD, arts and culture, open space, disability access and inclusion.
- Establish a panel of accredited access consultants in consultation with Council’s Disability Advisory Committee. All large public domain improvement projects to include an access appraisal or advice from an access consultant.
- Statutory Planners to receive regular on-the-job training in relation to urban design issues.

Council's Own Building Projects

What are the existing practices?

- Relevant business units and departments of Council are involved in the development of Council facilities such as Library and Cultural Services, Youth Services, Recreation etc.
- Currently the business unit responsible for the service and Council's Building Projects and Asset Management unit have the responsibility of coordinating the design and implementation of such projects. In some cases urban design advice is sought.
- Council is actively promoting ESD outcomes through its Strategic Planning, Statutory Planning, Urban Design, Environmental Management and Recreation and Open Space Planning units.
- Under the Disability Action Plan Council is actively promoting access and inclusion outcomes for people with a disability to remove barriers to physical access and participation in the economic, cultural and social life of the community.

What needs to be done?

- Council to lead by example in its own projects demonstrating best practices.
- Council's Urban Design Unit and other units such as the Traffic, Parking, Environment, Statutory Planning (including heritage advisors) etc need to be involved early in the process.
- Adopt an integrated service delivery approach to maximise urban design benefits for various outcomes.
- Demonstrate ESD outcomes in Council buildings.
- Demonstrate access and inclusion outcomes in urban design, capital works and project planning through utilising the advice of accredited access consultants and consultation with the Disability Advisory Committee.

Public Domain Improvement Projects

What are the existing practices?

Current practice of management of public domain in Yarra includes:

- New projects
- Renewals
- Reinstatement works

Different business units in the Council are responsible for management of different assets and services.

What needs to be done?

Forward capital works planning with an integrated service delivery approach is required to improve certainty of project funding. This would result in:

- Process improvements for better project management.
- Better coordination of various Council services for development, use, upkeep and maintenance of its public spaces and assets.

8. References

The Urban Design Strategy is closely aligned with the following documents/strategies of the Council:

- Council Plan 2009-2013
- Yarra Planning Scheme
- Yarra Environment Strategy - Towards Local Sustainability 2008-2020
- Yarra Economic Strategy 2009-2013
- Tourism Strategy 2011-2016
- City of Yarra Bicycle Strategy 2010-2015
- Strategic Transport Statement 2006
- Yarra's Encouraging and Increasing Walking Strategy, 2005
- Difference is More - Disability Action Plan 2010-2013
- Yarra's Open Space Strategy
- City of Yarra Housing Strategy 2010-2013
- City of Yarra Health Plan 2009-2013
- Arts and Cultural Strategy (2011-2015)

It also supports recommendations of other strategies of the Council.