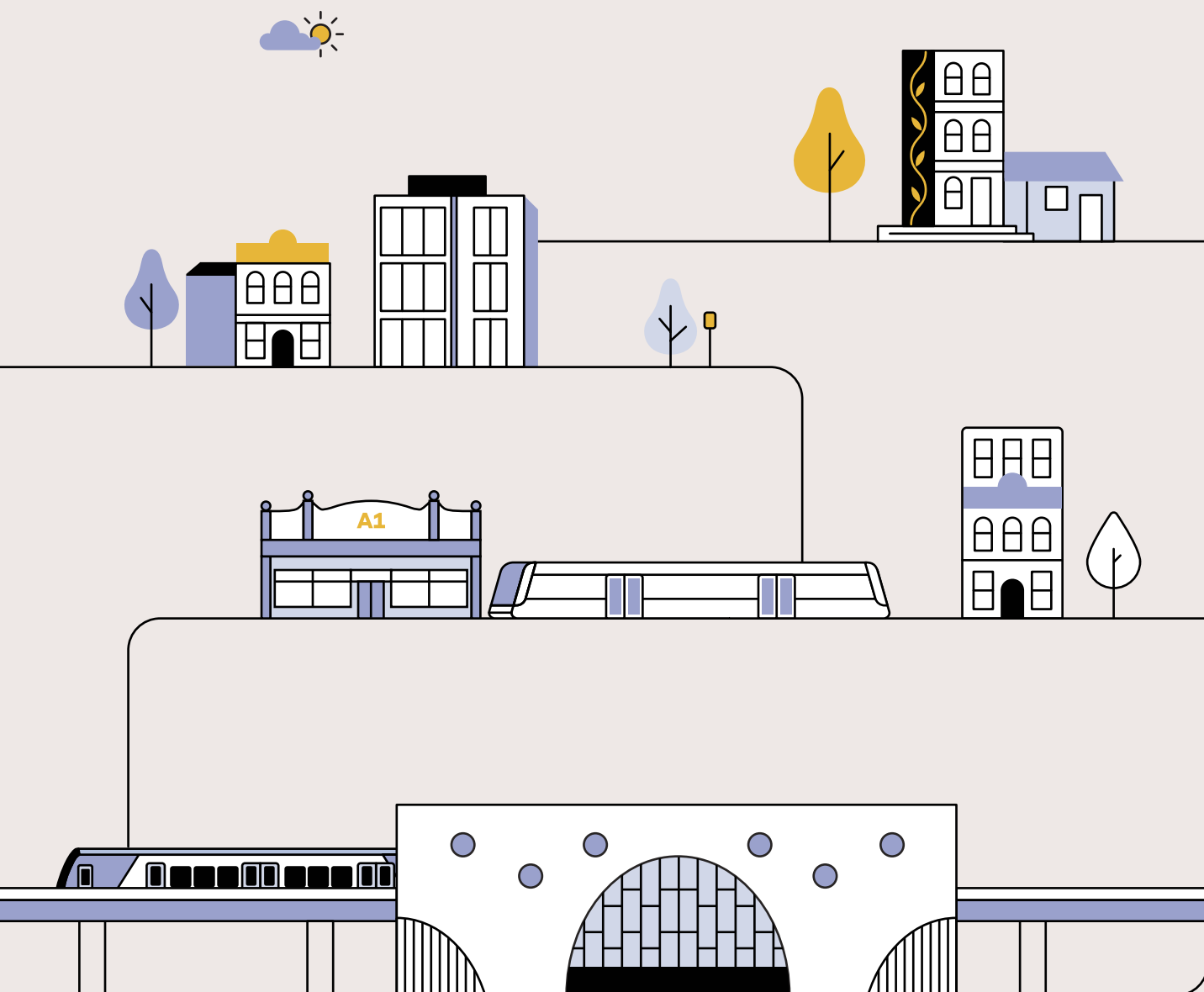


MERRI-BEK TRAIN AND TRAM ZONE ACTIVITY CENTRES PLAN

BRUNSWICK (SYDNEY ROAD) | COBURG
WURUNDJERI WOI-WURRUNG COUNTRY

FEBRUARY 2026



**Authorised by the Victorian Government,
Melbourne**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Victorian Government acknowledges Traditional Owners in Victoria as the custodians of Country. We acknowledge their extraordinary strength and resilience in the face of historical and ongoing social, economic and legal injustices, maintaining their connection to Country.

The Merri-bek Activity Centres are located on the lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People and we acknowledge them as Traditional Owners. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, whose knowledge and wisdom have ensured the continuation of spiritual and cultural practices.

We acknowledge that the long-lasting, far-reaching and intergenerational consequences of colonisation and dispossession continue to exist today and continue to cause harm. Colonisation has left entrenched systemic and structural racism and suffering, including through the laws and policies of the Colony of Victoria, which specifically excluded First Peoples and their laws, lores, customs, languages and cultures. The Victorian Government has a responsibility to transform its systems and service delivery so First Peoples have decision-making power over matters that directly affect them.



Description of artwork

Aaron (Gunaikurnai) 'Movements Between the Five Clans' 2019, acrylic on canvas.

"The tracks are going between the five clans of the Gunaikurnai and the hands are the symbols of my spirit travelling around the campsites."

This artwork was created through programs provided by the Torch. **The Torch** provides art, cultural and arts industry support to Indigenous offenders and ex-offenders in Victoria. The Torch aims to reduce the rate of re-offending by encouraging the exploration of identity and culture through art programs to define new pathways upon release.



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1 THE PURPOSE

The Activity Centres Plan sets a broad vision for the area, which incorporates the local knowledge of the community and others who visit and work in the place, and informs preparation of new planning controls to enable development over time.





WHY WE'RE PLANNING FOR MERRI-BEK

This Train and Tram Zone Activity Centres Plan (the Plan) for Brunswick (Sydney Road) and Coburg guides where new homes go, how new development will be shaped and what improvements will enhance the liveability of this place.

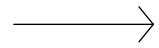
The purpose of this Plan is to support clear place-based planning rules, focusing on built form outcomes such as building heights, to guide where new homes go and provide certainty to community and developers about growth. It also identifies the opportunities for place improvements to support more homes.

We undertook technical analysis and consulted with the community over two phases to inform this plan, as outlined in *Merri-bek Train and Tram Zones – Stage 1 Phase 2 – Consultation Summary Report* (DTP 2026).

This strategic background document should be read alongside the relevant planning schemes and other documentation.

2 THE TRAIN AND TRAM ZONE ACTIVITY CENTRES PROGRAM

We're planning for more homes in and around 58 train and tram zone activity centres across Melbourne, encouraging more new homes to be built around public transport, jobs and services by 2051.



STATE STRATEGIC CONTEXT

We've expanded the Train and Tram Zone Activity Centres Program to include another 48 train and tram zone activity centres (we refer to them generally as activity centres) where there is good access to public transport, jobs and services. This builds upon the Activity Centres Pilot Program which focused on 10 activity centres. The distribution of the train and tram zones is shown at **Plan 1: Metropolitan context**.

Plan for Victoria sets the vision for how the state will grow to 2050. Structured around five pillars of action, the plan outlines how Victoria will become more vibrant, accessible and connected. *Plan for Victoria* lists Brunswick (Sydney Road) and Coburg activity centres as centres we're planning for under *Pillar 1: Housing for All Victorians*.

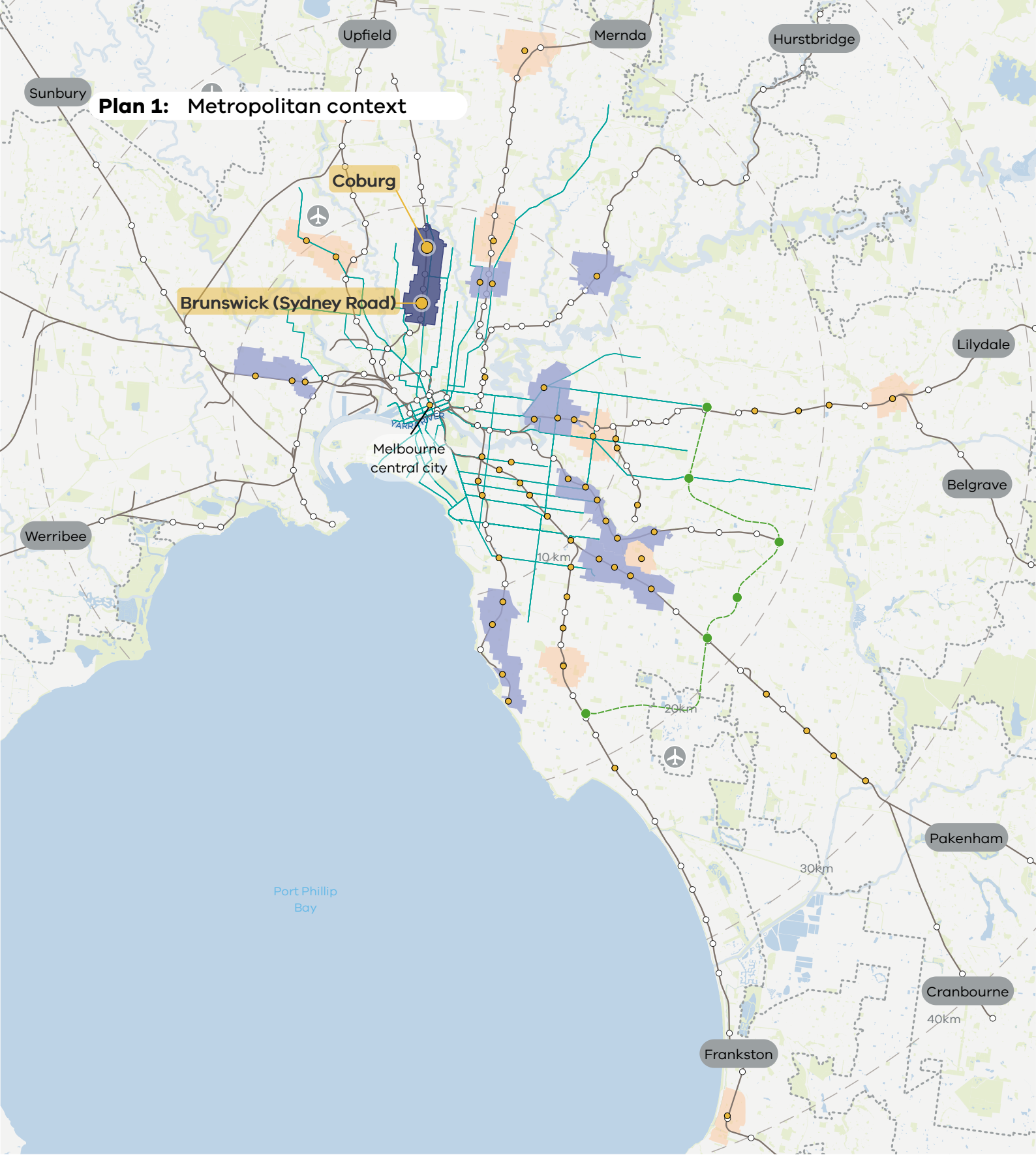
The Brunswick (Sydney Road) and Coburg activity centres are located within the Merri-bek local government area. *Plan for Victoria* sets a target of 69,000 net additional homes for the Merri-bek local government area to 2051.

The Train and Tram Zone Activity Centres Program creates planning capacity for more homes in these activity centres and their catchments, contributing to the housing targets for the City of Merri-bek.

The Program also operates in the context of and alongside state policies that support Victorians to live, work, access and enjoy places across Melbourne:

- **Victoria's Bus Plan 2021** sets out the Victorian Government's long-term strategy to deliver a more modern, productive and environmentally sustainable bus network.
- **Melbourne's Tram Plan 2023** sets out the Victorian Government's long-term approach to delivering a tram network that puts passengers first, connects people to the places they want to go, and is accessible to more people.
- **Victorian Cycling Strategy 2018–2028** lays out the government's commitment to invest in a safer, lower-stress, better connected cycling network.
- The **Economic Growth Statement** lays out the actions for a stronger economy that creates more jobs and supports a stronger future for all Victorians.
- The **Healthy Waterways Strategy** sets the long-term vision for managing the health of Melbourne's waterways.
- The *Train and Tram Zone Activity Centres Program Explainer, 2026* sets out the objectives for the Program, along with the urban design principles that underpin this work.

Plan 1: Metropolitan context

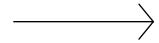


- train and tram zone activity centre
- Merri-bek train and tram zone activity centres and catchment
- other tranche 1 train and tram zone activity centres and catchment
- activity centres pilot catchment
- urban growth boundary
- tram route
- train station & corridor
- SRL East station & corridor (indicative)



3 THE STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR MERRI-BEK

Victorians want more homes close to public transport, jobs and services.





ABOUT MERRI-BEK

This plan comprises two activity centres, being:

- Brunswick (Sydney Road) Activity Centre
- Coburg Activity Centre.

When we say *Merri-bek*, we are referring to both of these centres and their shared catchment areas. The activity centres are shown at **Plan 2: Merri-bek context & recent infrastructure**.

Why Merri-bek is in the Program

The Program is focused on locating more homes close to train stations and tram lines that have the highest capacity now and into the future.

The Merri-bek train and tram zone activity centres are located around the Brunswick and Coburg train stations. The Brunswick (Sydney Road) activity centre will benefit from the planned removal of eight level crossings on the Upfield Line and the construction of two modern and accessible stations in Brunswick.

These centres are well-served by public transport, with train services connecting to metropolitan Melbourne, including the city centre, Royal Park and North Melbourne.

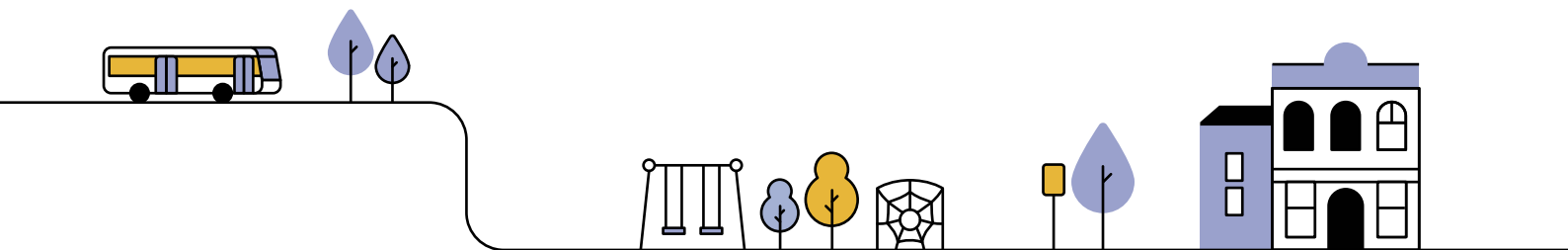
A connected network of bus and tram routes service each of the activity centres and provide access to a range of destinations including

Moonee Ponds, Clifton Hill and Preston, and the wider western, northern and eastern suburbs of Melbourne. The Coburg activity centre, for example, has a major bus and tram interchange at the intersection of Sydney Road and Bell Street, serviced by eight bus routes and a tram line.

What we understand about the place

The Merri-bek activity centres are between three and eight kilometres north of Melbourne's city centre. These are in the suburbs of Brunswick, Coburg and Coburg North.

In recent years, the Victorian Government has committed to and carried out several community and transport infrastructure projects within these centres. The key projects are shown at **Plan 2: Merri-bek context & recent infrastructure**.



Public realm and community infrastructure improvements – making great community spaces

The Upfield Shared Use Path provides an active transport connection between the Coburg and Brunswick (Sydney Road) train and tram zone activity centres.

The Bell to Moreland Level Crossing Removal Project upgraded the path and delivered new community open spaces including playgrounds, half basketball courts, exercise equipment and a dog park.

The Brunswick Level Crossing Removal Project will build two modern and accessible stations in new locations in Brunswick’s north and south, deliver separate walking and riding paths, and create two MCGs worth of new community open space. Community facilities such as the Brunswick and Coburg Libraries and the Balam Balam Place Community Centre provide community members with good access to places which encourage social interaction and opportunities to learn and grow.

The Merri-bek community also has access to opportunities for play, socialising and exercise through the Brunswick Baths and many small and larger parks. The larger open spaces in Gilpin, Clifton and Brunswick Parks are particularly important for environmental and community reasons. They provide space for large canopy trees, as well as sports fields and facilities.

We heard from community members that a safer, more accessible public realm with good lighting is important.

Across the Community Reference Group Statements of Advice, we heard the call for more well-designed and well-connected public spaces, as well as more trees and greenery.

Transport infrastructure improvements – improving how we get around

The Level Crossing Removal Project removed four level crossings between Bell Street and Moreland Road and built two new stations at Coburg and Moreland. Community open space was delivered underneath the elevated tracks, improving east-west connections and the Upfield Bike Path.

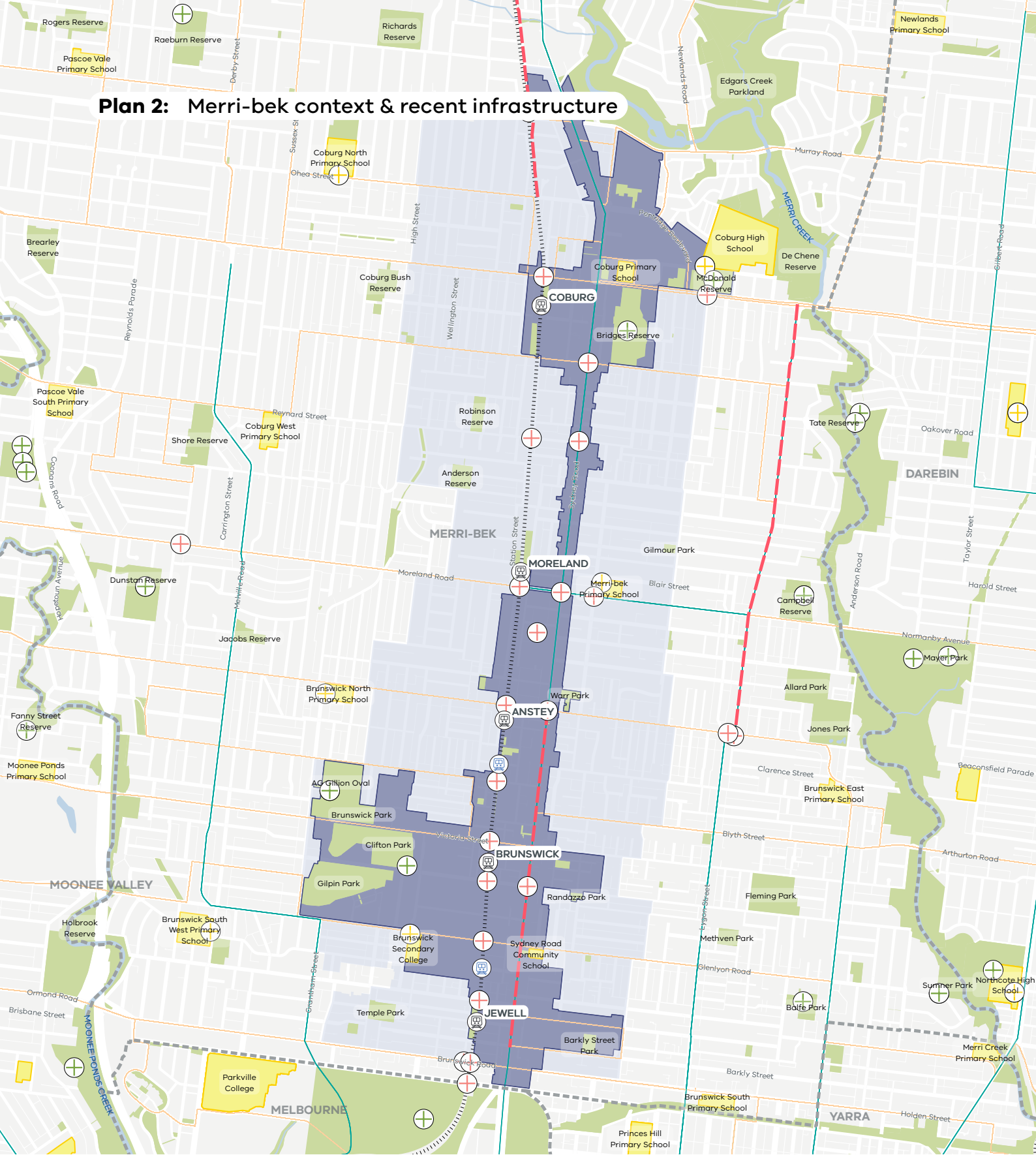
The Brunswick Level Crossing Removal Project will build two new stations and remove eight level crossings further improving safety, reducing congestion and extending community open space. The Upfield Bike Path from Moreland Station to the south side of Park Street will be transformed into separate walking and riding paths.

The Metro Tunnel will unlock the rail network, enabling more trains to run and paving the way for future upgrades beyond the initial opening of the tunnel on other lines.

We heard from community members that improved pedestrian crossings and safer bike paths are important.

Across the Community Reference Group Statements of Advice prepared by the Community Reference Group, we heard the call for improvements to footpaths to continue to support walking, as well as more frequent bus and train services.

Plan 2: Merri-bek context & recent infrastructure



- train and tram zone activity centre core
- train and tram zone activity centres and catchment
- train station & corridor
- new elevated station
- tram route
- bus route
- municipal boundary
- education (state)

- existing open space
- watercourse & waterbody
- Recent State Government funded infrastructure projects**
- transport corridor upgrades
- transport infrastructure upgrades
- education facility upgrades
- sporting facility upgrades



TRADITIONAL OWNERS

The Registered Aboriginal Party for the Merri-bek activity centres and catchment areas is the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWCHAC).

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation is the Registered Aboriginal Party for and on behalf of Wurundjeri People. Wurundjeri People are recognised as the Traditional Owners of their lands and waters in Brunswick (Sydney Road) and Coburg, and across central-south Victoria.

Traditional Owner groups are the original custodians of the land who share a deep cultural, spiritual and social connection with Country. They have their own unique culture, history, language, customs, lores and laws.

Statement from the Registered Aboriginal Party

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation has provided and consented to the publication of a Statement of Cultural Values for the Merri-bek train and tram zone activity centres.

This Statement is included as part of the Plan for the purposes of sharing information, increasing awareness and understanding of Aboriginal people and their connections to, and understanding of, the place with the broader community.

It is hoped that this statement will spark curiosity and inform the strategic direction for these activity centres, as well as signal to developers, builders and the wider community the cultural significance of these places to Aboriginal people.

Plan for Victoria's pillars of action

Self-determination and caring for Country is one of the five pillars of action in *Plan for Victoria*.

Action 20 provides the opportunity to recognise Traditional Owners' Country in planning schemes and provide Country-specific guidance, where supported by and following ongoing engagement with Traditional Owners.

The Department of Transport and Planning has consulted with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and the Traditional Owners of the land to understand the cultural values and stories that relate to the Country we are planning more homes on.



The Statement of Cultural Values is a condensed statement of documented cultural values.

The statement does not represent the full significance of cultural values of the activity centres, which can only be understood through more detailed Cultural Values Assessments that involve On Country walks and traditional knowledge recording.

WURUNDJERI WOI-WURRUNG WATERWAYS STATEMENT

Water is integral to the formation of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country, and there are many Creation stories for different waterways, including the Birrarung (Yarra River).

As stated by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders of the WWCHAC Water Program subcommittee (WWCHAC, n.d.):

The waterways are the lifeblood of the land. The veins of Country. We must care for our mother and her veins.

The waterways provide not just for humans, but all living things; all around us, above us and below us. Being respectful of all spiritual and living things connected to waterways is our cultural responsibility. Waterways sustain all animals and plants – all life. Waterways are important for our totemic systems, as they may depend on living and thriving waterways. Ensuring waterways are healthy and thriving contributes to our strong continued connection to Country.

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People are the only cultural authority to speak for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country, therefore, it is paramount that Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People are providing direction on how Country should be cared for and managed. Understanding our lores/laws and our traditional cultural protocols, process, governance and decision-making needs to be respected, supported and resourced to allow proper informed participation.

Speaking to the right people who make decisions is an important space for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People to be in to ensure cultural values for waterways are imbedded and informing policy and planning. Being involved at a high level and at the beginning of processes, lays the foundation for working towards and achieving cultural outcomes for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People, Country and our waterways.

Providing the Elders the space and opportunity to teach and pass knowledge onto the next generation is extremely important. Our voices, stories, history and connections need to be acknowledged and shared. We need to ensure there is the space for the next generation to continue to Care for Country.

Working together is integral to the environmental, spiritual, sustainable and cultural outcomes for Country. A healthy Country contributes to the health and wellbeing of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People.

WURUNDJERI WOI-WURRUNG STATEMENT OF CULTURAL VALUES

The Wurundjeri people have an unbroken relationship with Country, caring for this land, its waterways, its plants, and animals. A core purpose of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Corporation is the protection, preservation and revitalisation of Wurundjeri culture and cultural practices.

– Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation
Community Statement, November 2025.

For thousands of years Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people occupied their traditional estates. As custodians of the land they cared for, shaped and cultivated Country. Through fire and land management Country thrived, was kept clean and healthy, food and medicinal resources kept plentiful. This was not merely a physical obligation, to have enough food and water, but a spiritual one. People and Country are not separate but are one and the same, the obligation to care for Country was laid down to People by Bunjil.

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people witnessed the end of the last Ice Age and watched as the snow-capped mountains poured water into the grasslands to the south of their Country, flooding it. For thousands of years the stories of the creation of the Birrarung (Yarra River) and the water that would later be referred to as the Port Phillip Bay were passed down generation to generation.

Merri-bek, including the Brunswick (Sydney Road) and Coburg activity centres has been explored in several WWCHAC Cultural Values Studies such as the *Merri Creek Aboriginal Cultural Values Report (2012)*, and the *City of Moreland Thematic Research Review (2020)*. Brunswick and Pentridge (now Coburg) hold significant cultural value for Wurundjeri.

The Merri-bek area is linked to waterways and the lands that connect them, which are important to Wurundjeri people including Merri Creek and Moonee Ponds Creek. Merri Creek and Moonee Ponds Creek are possible locations where the Batman 'Treaty' signing occurred. The exact location is unknown. Other possible locations include Edgars Creek, Darebin Creek, and the Plenty River¹. Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders reflected that Batman misled their Ancestors and used the 'Treaty' as a bribe to purchase their Traditional Lands. Ancestors saw this dealing as a granting of permission for Europeans to stay temporarily on Country. It is agreed by Elders that Batman's 'Treaty' should be recognised in the historical context of Aboriginal people's exclusion, confinement to remote mission sites, and conception of terra nullius².

The Merri-bek area was a gathering space for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Ancestors and other Traditional Owner groups³. William Kyle, a prominent Coburg resident recalled that in *"Feb 1844, 675 people gathered in camps along the Merri Creek. They included 95 people from the north and northwest, and 185 people from the Campaspe and Loddon River... witnessed west of the old Plenty Road near the eastern border of Coburg"*.⁴



Figure 1: Merri Creek, Victoria

Strangway Farm (now Coburg Bush Reserve) was a homestead where Aboriginal Protector William Thomas lived. Thomas' journals reflect respect towards Woi-wurrung people, and his advocacy for Traditional Owner protection is well known.

Smyth recalls Thomas's "farm at Pentridge", and an occasion where a young Bunurong man, "Ter-run-uk" was fatally injured, and Thomas cared for him at Strangway⁵. William Barak camped beside Strangway Farm with a group of Wurundjeri people in February 1848⁶. The outlining basalt stumps of the house remain in place at Coburg Bush Reserve.

Pentridge Prison also represents a highly culturally significant space for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people. The Merri Creek near Pentridge Prison was a site where Ancestors performed cultural practice and ceremonies⁷. The site of Pentridge Prison is identified as holding Wurundjeri cultural heritage materials such as shellfish, bones, and some stone axe-heads, blades and flints⁸.

In 2022, WWCHAC supported the Merri-bek City Council in the renaming of the Local Government Area including Brunswick and Coburg to the Woi-wurrung language place name Merri-bek (meaning rocky country), formerly known as Moreland City Council⁹.

THE VISION FOR MERRI-BEK

Brunswick (Sydney Road) and Coburg are growing into even more vibrant places to live, work and spend time. Connected along Sydney Road, they form a lively, multicultural community where people come together.

As more people choose to call these centres home, new housing will be encouraged to fit the local character, sitting comfortably alongside heritage buildings, leafy streets, open spaces and parks. The community will also benefit from upgraded public places and much-loved facilities like libraries, parks and pools.

With the Upfield train line, bike path and the Route 19 tram running through the centres, it will be easier than ever to get around in a safe and sustainable way. People will still enjoy easy access to nearby natural areas such as Merri Creek and Gilpin Park – important places for walking, relaxing and connecting with nature.

The vision for each of the tram and train zone activity centres are built from Statements of Advice prepared by the Community Reference Group.

Brunswick (Sydney Road)

The vision

Brunswick (Sydney Road) will offer a range of homes that reflect the suburb’s creative and diverse spirit. New apartments will sit beside older, character-filled buildings that tell Brunswick’s story.

Locals and visitors will continue to support the area’s thriving design scene, creative industries and entertainment venues.

The statement of advice excerpt

Brunswick (Sydney Road) is a vibrant, community-led place shaped by diversity, creativity and strong social connection.

Residents value its green spaces, walkability, cultural depth, inclusive spirit and human-scale environment. These qualities are essential to preserve as the area evolves.



Coburg

The vision

Coburg will grow into a welcoming mix of homes, shops, workplaces and community spaces. New residents will be close to the upgraded Coburg Station and the renewed Pentridge precinct.

Loved places like Victoria Street Mall and the Coburg arcades will remain at the heart of the community, offering spaces for people to meet, shop and connect.

The statement of advice excerpt

The Coburg Activity Centre has a distinctive character defined by its cultural diversity, strong community spirit, and mix of historic and evolving features.

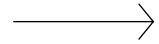
While areas need improvement, the community sees Coburg as a place worth protecting and investing in.





4 THE ACTIVITY CENTRE CORES

The activity centre core is the central part of the activity centre, closest to public transport, jobs and services.





EXPECTED CHANGE IN THE ACTIVITY CENTRE CORES

The existing context of the activity centre influences the amount of growth expected. We understand how important it is to protect what makes each place special. Through community engagement, we heard from community members to understand which local characteristics to protect and enhance, as well as what could make these places better.

The activity centre cores are vibrant places where people shop, work, access public transport, connect with family and friends, and live. This makes the core the right place for more housing and more diverse housing types. More Victorians can live where they want to and closer to the things that matter to them.

Each activity centre core will change gradually over the next few decades, providing the new homes we need between now and 2051. It is likely that larger and unused blocks of land will be developed first, as they provide the best opportunities to deliver new homes the soonest.

"I think it's important to provide more housing choices but with high importance also placed on providing open space for the community and ensuring the local area character is enhanced."

– Brunswick (Sydney Road)
community member

How we determine appropriate heights

The current size and nature of the activity centre core, including its existing services and infrastructure, influences the growth planned for to 2051.

The Housing Growth Framework gives the activity centre a ranking that determines the possible range of building heights that can be applied.

The building height in the activity centre core is further informed by the built form typologies applied – see **Figure 2** below for an example. These are determined by both the level of development a location can accommodate and the types of buildings, homes and businesses already there.

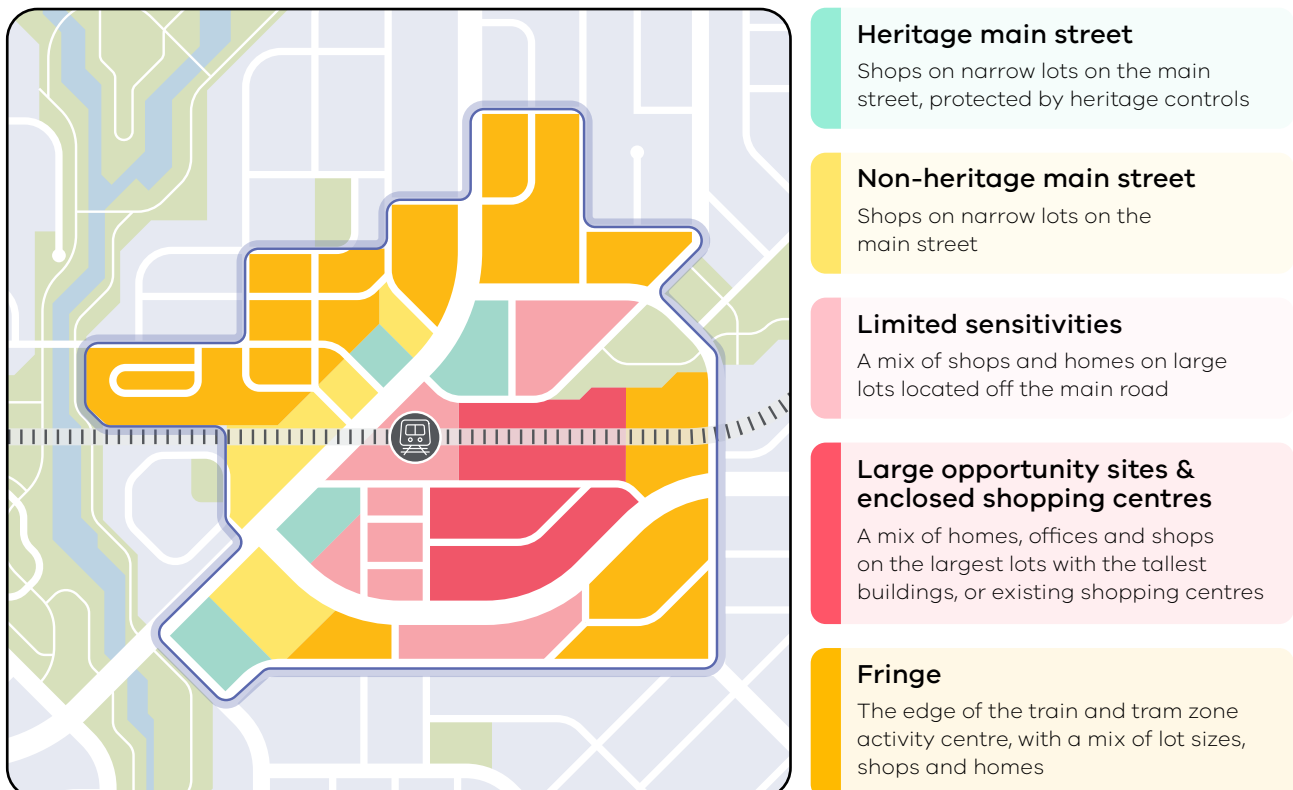
Each typology in the Housing Growth Framework ranking has its own set of standards for heights and setbacks, to allow the right level of development to happen in the right places. More information can be found in the *Train and Tram Zone Activity Centres Program Explainer, 2026*.

The Built Form Overlay provides consistent planning controls in the activity centre cores based on those typologies.

The overlay introduces a streamlined planning pathway to allow more buildings, homes and businesses to be built faster by clearly outlining standards appropriate for each area. It uses 'deemed to comply' standards for building heights, street wall heights and setbacks.

If a planning application meets these standards, a permit cannot be refused on the basis of those standards. If a planning application does not meet the standards, the usual decision-making process and criteria apply.

Figure 2: Built form typologies



BUILT FORM OUTCOMES EXPLAINED

We are working with a set of consistent built form standards that support growth while ensuring development responds and contributes positively to its local context.

To understand where we've applied some of these standards to the Merri-bek activity centres, please see:

- **Brunswick (Sydney Road) Activity Centre core built form** and
- **Coburg Activity Centre core built form**.

Built form testing

Each place is unique and we have responded to this by carrying out built form testing. Built form testing helped us to balance more homes with good amenity. For example, protecting sun access to identified parks and streets, and protecting identified key view lines.

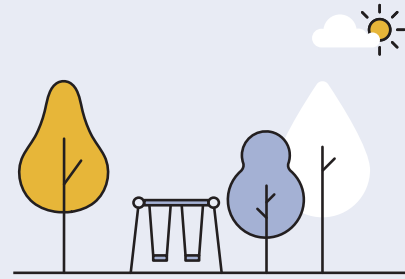
Recommendations from built form testing included changing typologies and building heights as well as other minor changes to sun access protection and sensitive interface standards. Refer to *Activity Centres Program Tranche 1 Local Variations Testing Merri-bek Report* (Architectus, January 2026).

Sustainability and climate change response

Sustainability components will be embedded into our planning so that effects on the environment and local climate will need to be considered for certain planning applications.

Sun access protections

Public and green spaces serve as invaluable public assets. Sun plays a vital role in preserving the health of landscaping and trees, as well as providing comfortable conditions for users. Parks, streets and other public spaces have been identified for different levels of protection based on their significance and use. This will ensure they receive enough direct sun in different seasons.



Pedestrian connections

Pedestrian connections are new or existing walkways between buildings.

They allow better access to and from the activity centre core.



Active frontages

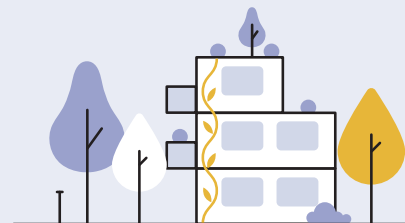
Active frontages, including multiple entrances and storefront windows at ground level, support a vibrant, active, and safe pedestrian environment. We have identified primary, secondary and tertiary active frontages based on the existing and emerging land uses in different typologies, ensuring new buildings provide opportunities for the right level of activation.



Landscape setbacks

Landscape setbacks are the spaces between the front of the building and the property line, typically front gardens.

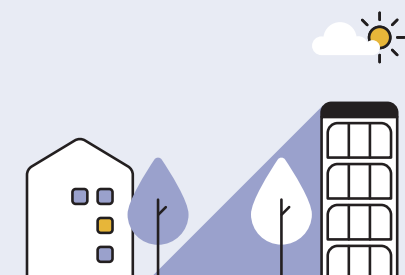
They support urban greening and in particular tree canopy, the softening of edges and ensure an appropriate transition to the public realm.



Sensitive interface setbacks

Setbacks manage the amenity needs of neighbouring properties by providing space between the building and the property line.

Sensitive interface setbacks are used to respond to the amenity needs of neighbouring properties to the south. These provide additional setbacks to the south boundary to allow sun access to the north-facing windows of properties south of the activity centre core.





BRUNSWICK (SYDNEY ROAD) ACTIVITY CENTRE CORE BUILT FORM

What we understand about the place and how we've addressed it

Brunswick (Sydney Road) has a strong entertainment and artistic culture that keeps its many shops, restaurants, galleries and civic spaces lively.

Many of these places have historic significance, including Sydney Road's shopfronts and major landmarks like the Brunswick Baths and the Town Hall. That's why we have applied the Heritage Main Street typology to key sections of Sydney Road and connecting streets including Dawson, Albert and Victoria Street.

The Community Reference Group noted how important green, open spaces and tree canopy are for providing shade and supporting walkability, recreation and relaxation. That's why we have planned for overshadowing protection of important open spaces including Bulleke-Bek, Yubup and Warr Parks.

Shading and weather protection on Sydney Road will also be preserved and improved through a weather protection clause in the Built Form Overlay to encourage the use of consistent awnings over footpaths, complementary to Sydney Road's existing streetscape.

The Upfield bike path will be further transformed through the Level Crossing Removal Project, which will bring with it increased open space and safety, with separated walking and riding paths.

Brunswick (Sydney Road) is on the Upfield train line with direct connections to Melbourne's city centre and other key destinations. In the coming years, the existing stations will be replaced with modern stations in Brunswick's north and south.

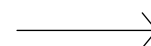
We have worked closely with the Level Crossing Removal Project in planning for housing and amenity around Brunswick's current and future stations. We have included a requirement for ground-floor setbacks along the Upfield rail corridor to increase connectivity and sun access along the important thoroughfare.

We heard that the community are generally supportive of development being concentrated around train stations and large sites such as supermarkets and car parks. This has been reflected in the chosen maximum building heights, with master planning requirements being applied in some areas to encourage site-specific design responses.

"I am very supportive of increased housing in this area but not at the expense of the amenity, cost or community here. I want to improve upon the great open spaces, and I want to keep the diversity of the people who live here."

– Brunswick (Sydney Road) community member



















Refer to **Plan 3: Brunswick (Sydney Road) typology, activation and setbacks** and **Plan 4: Brunswick (Sydney Road) building heights and sun protection** to see the built form outcomes and preferred building heights for the activity centre core.



Plan 3: Brunswick (Sydney Road) typology, activation and setbacks

Active frontages along Sydney Road will help to maintain its character and encourage pedestrian activity

We have applied landscape setbacks on streets east of Sydney Road to encourage good tree canopy coverage and a transition to quieter residential areas

-  Brunswick (Sydney Road) train and tram zone activity centre core
-  train station & corridor
-  new elevated station
-  existing open space
-  Heritage Main Street Core typology
-  Non-Heritage Main Street Core typology
-  Fringe Precinct typology
-  Limited Sensitivities typology
-  Large Opportunity Sites typology
-  Enclosed Shopping Centres typology
-  master plan site
-  primary active frontage
-  secondary active frontage
-  tertiary active frontage
-  sensitive interface
-  landscape setback
-  pedestrian connection
-  pedestrian connection (indicative)
-  Victorian heritage register site
















Plan 4: Brunswick (Sydney Road) building heights and sun protection

Heights on Sydney Road gradually increase away from the heritage area. A consistent street wall height on Sydney Road will produce a similar look and feel despite varied building heights

Bulleke-bek Park has sun access protections and adjacent building heights are up to 10 storeys to protect the space for local community

The tallest maximum building heights are proposed at Barkly Square, due to the large lots and car park areas

Maximum building heights up to 12 storeys are applied between Victoria Street and Albert Street. This is consistent with existing apartment developments and encourages a harmonious street character

| | | | |
|---|--|---|--------------------------------|
|  | Brunswick (Sydney Road) train and tram zone activity centre core |  | VHR - height not specified |
|  | train station & corridor | Sun protection | |
|  | new elevated station |  | boulevard |
|  | up to 8 storeys |  | key pedestrian street |
|  | up to 10 storeys |  | high protection open space |
|  | up to 12 storeys |  | moderate protection open space |
|  | up to 16 storeys | | |
|  | up to 20 storeys | | |





COBURG ACTIVITY CENTRE CORE BUILT FORM

What we understand about the place and how we've addressed it

Coburg is a welcoming, multicultural community that celebrates and supports its local small businesses. The fine-grain scale of Sydney Road's shopfronts is an important feature. These sections of Sydney Road do not have heritage overlay protection. We have applied the Non-heritage Main Street typology to these areas, which will encourage design responses that respect Sydney Road's existing built form, for example by setting a lower street wall height.

Community members said how important it is to preserve gathering places such as Victoria Street Mall and parks. That is why we have planned sun access protections for key streets and parks including Victoria Street, Sydney Road and Bridges Reserve.

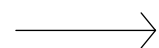
We heard that community members are generally supportive of development in central areas near Coburg Station and on Bell Street. These areas have been identified by Merri-bek City Council in its draft framework for central Coburg as suggested focus areas for redevelopment, and the delivery of new community infrastructure such as a library and piazza and a health and community services precinct.

We have worked to ensure our planning complements and enables Merri-bek City Council's concept for central Coburg.

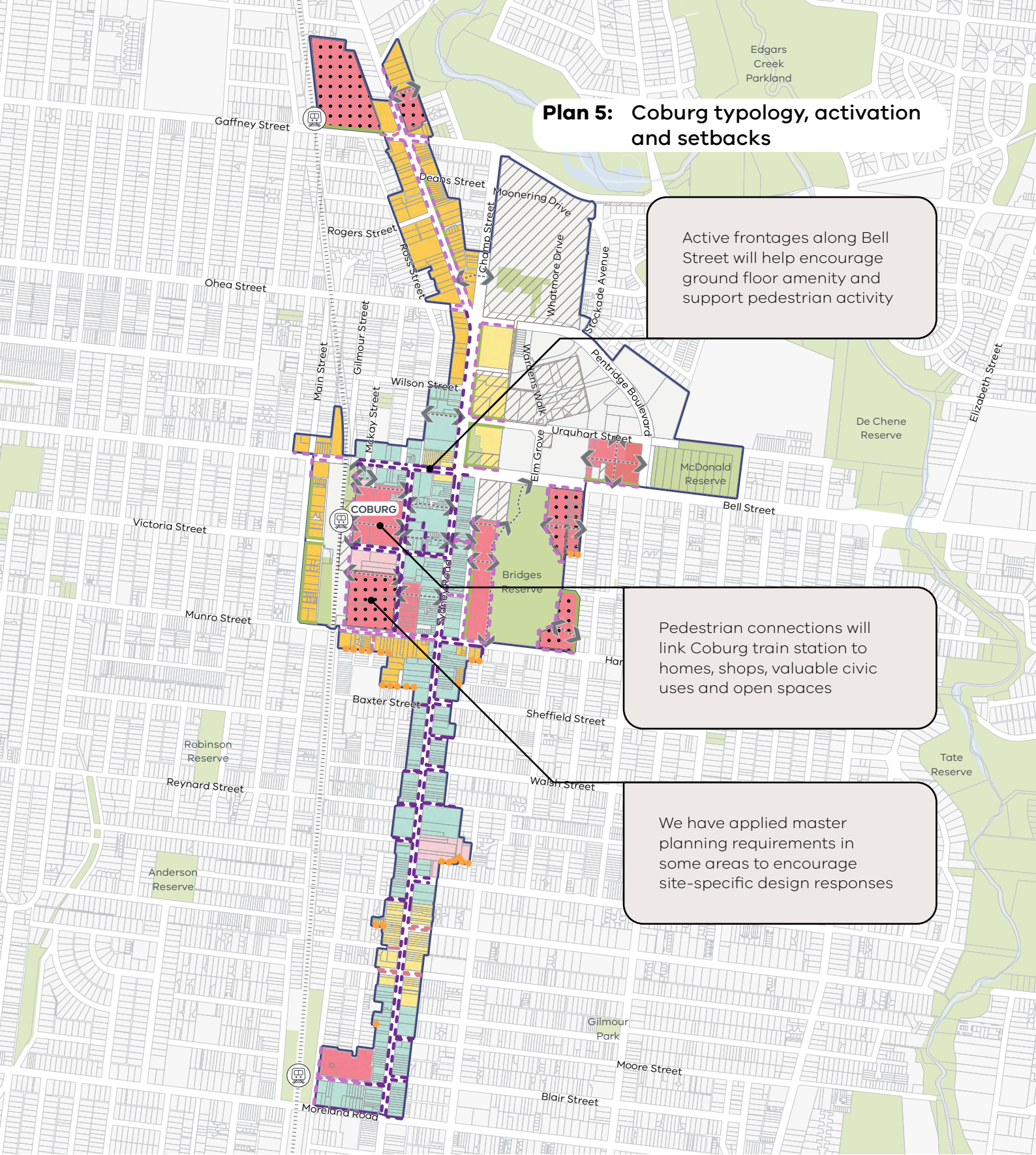
"We support quality higher density development around Coburg Station. We are interested in impacts to the open space and general character of the area because it is a fantastic, family-friendly, walkable environment."

– Coburg community member

Refer to **Plan 5: Coburg typology, activation and setbacks** and **Plan 6: Coburg building heights and sun protection** to see the built form outcomes and preferred building heights for the activity centre core.



Plan 5: Coburg typology, activation and setbacks



Active frontages along Bell Street will help encourage ground floor amenity and support pedestrian activity

Pedestrian connections will link Coburg train station to homes, shops, valuable civic uses and open spaces

We have applied master planning requirements in some areas to encourage site-specific design responses












- Coburg train and tram zone activity centre core
- train station & corridor
- existing open space
- Heritage Main Street Core typology
- Non-Heritage Main Street Core typology
- Fringe Precinct typology
- Limited Sensitivities typology
- Large Opportunity Sites typology
- master plan site
- primary active frontage
- secondary active frontage
- tertiary active frontage
- sensitive interface
- landscape setback
- ↔ pedestrian connection
- ↔ pedestrian connection (indicative)
- Victorian heritage register site



Plan 6: Coburg building heights and sun protection

Taller maximum building heights have been applied closer to the Coburg train station

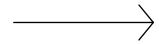
Sun access protections for Bridges Reserve and City Oval will mean that while more people will live close to this open space, its benefit to the wider community will not be diminished by overshadowing

-  Coburg train and tram zone activity centre core
 -  train station & corridor
 -  up to 8 storeys
 -  up to 10 storeys
 -  up to 12 storeys
 -  up to 16 storeys
 -  up to 20 storeys
 -  VHR - height not specified
- Sun protection**
-  key pedestrian street
 -  high protection open space
 -  moderate protection open space



5 THE ACTIVITY CENTRE CATCHMENTS

The residential area surrounding the activity centre core, called the catchment, provides opportunities to locate more homes close to local destinations such as shops and services, public transport and jobs.





EXPECTED CHANGE IN THE CATCHMENT

The catchment makes sure more homes are in the right places to give Victorians more housing choices with access to local destinations.

The catchment extends approximately 800 metres from the current and proposed Brunswick train stations and Coburg train station and the main commercial areas of the activity centre core and will allow for more housing diversity and choice including small and medium-scale apartment buildings, townhouses and semi-detached houses close to the activity centre.

Changes to zoning in the planning schemes

The Housing Choice and Transport Zone (HCTZ) enables a diversity of housing in the catchment, and other well-serviced locations. The HCTZ1 is applied to most existing residentially zoned land in the inner catchment and HCTZ2 is applied to most existing residential-zoned land in the outer catchment and will replace existing residential zones in these areas.

Plan 7: Merri-bek catchment shows the high-level vision for the inner and outer catchments. To see the detailed application of HCTZ, please refer to the *Merri-bek Planning Scheme*.

Transition from the train and tram zone

As you move away from the commercial and community core of the activity centre, the allowable building heights gradually decrease, creating a transition between the activity centre and the surrounding suburb.

As seen in the illustration below, the catchment has been divided into an inner catchment and an outer catchment. To understand how the catchment has been set, refer to the *Train and Tram Zone Activity Centres Program Explainer*, February 2026.



The core

The cultural and commercial hub of the community, the activity centre core is thriving and active with shops, community facilities, services and transport options.

The inner catchment

The inner catchment includes residential land with direct access to the activity centre core, open spaces, local destinations, and public and active transport.

The inner catchment generally allows for building heights up to four storeys. Where lots are larger and meet specified criteria, it allows buildings of up to six storeys.

The outer catchment

The remainder of the catchment generally allows for building heights up to three storeys.

Where lots are larger and meet the criteria, it allows buildings of up to four storeys.

To understand where we've applied the inner and outer catchment, please see **Plan 7: Merri-bek catchment**



Plan 7: Merri-bek catchment

Coburg

The **inner catchment** responds to the concentration of services and amenities near Coburg Station and in the Pentridge Precinct.

The **outer catchment** responds to a comfortable walking distance to the Coburg and Batman stations.

The **inner catchment** links the two activity centres, in response to continuous public transport and the proposed new train stations, including Moreland Station, the 19 tram on Sydney Road, and the 6 tram and 510 bus on Moreland Road.

Brunswick

The **inner catchment** responds to the centre's amenities including Clifton Park and Gilpin Park to the west, and Barkly Square to the east.

The **outer catchment** responds to where it intersects with other commercial areas including the Grantham/Union Street neighbourhood centre.

- train and tram zone activity centre core
- inner catchment
- outer catchment
- 🚊 new elevated station
- other train and tram zone activity centres and catchment
- activity centres pilot catchment
- train station & corridor
- tram route
- bus route
- Heritage Overlay
- existing open space
- watercourse & waterbody



CHANGES TO THE MERRI-BEK PLANNING SCHEME

Changes to local policy

We have amended some local policies in the *Merri-bek Planning Scheme* to more closely align with our objectives in the Train and Tram Zone Activity Centres Program.

Changes to the overlays

The Built Form Overlay guides built form for medium-scale and higher-scale apartment buildings, as well as for retail, office and other uses in the core.

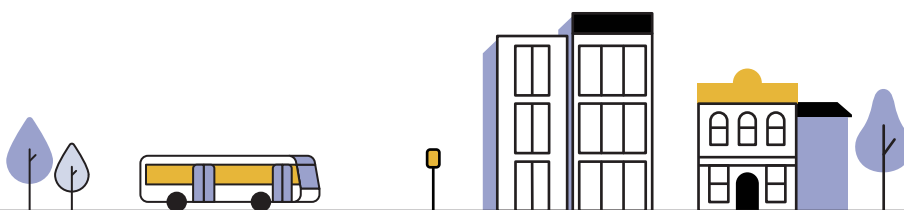
To have these kinds of homes close to services, jobs and public transport, we need to remove some of the existing overlays that have built form controls. This includes:

- Brunswick Activity Centre – Sydney Road and Upfield Corridor Design and Development Overlay 18 in Brunswick (Sydney Road) activity centre
- Gaffney Street Precinct, Coburg North Design and Development Overlay 16 in Coburg activity centre

Changes to zoning

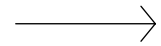
To have the kinds of places set out in this Plan, we need to rezone some areas that have conflicting land use and built form controls. This includes:

- Changing some areas of Residential Growth Zone to Commercial 1 Zone in Brunswick (Sydney Road) activity centre.
- Changing some areas of General Residential Zone to Commercial 1 Zone in Brunswick (Sydney Road) activity centre.
- Changing some areas of Residential Growth Zone to Mixed Use Zone in Brunswick (Sydney Road) activity centre.
- Changing some areas of General Residential Zone to Activity Centre Zone in the Coburg activity centre.
- Changing some areas of Commercial 1 Zone to Activity Centre Zone in the Coburg activity centre.
- Amending the the content of Schedule 1 to the Activity Centre Zone for Coburg activity centre.



6 INFRASTRUCTURE

The Brunswick (Sydney Road) and Coburg activity centres were chosen for their access to public transport networks, community facilities, services and other important infrastructure.





PLANNING FOR FUTURE DEMAND

The quality of the places we live in affects all aspects of our lives, from our health and wellbeing to our impact on nature.

Though there has already been significant investment in Brunswick (Sydney Road) and Coburg (refer to **Plan 2: Merri-bek context & recent infrastructure**), we know that as more people move in, there will be greater demand for infrastructure and services.

The Victorian Government, alongside councils and other infrastructure delivery partners, is continuing to plan for future demand, to help deliver the things people in train and tram zone activity centres will benefit from into the future.



Transport improvements

We plan and manage transport at a system level, balancing all modes together. Through co-ordinated improvements to train, tram and bus networks, we're seeking to make public transport simpler, more accessible and more reliable.

We are also looking to facilitate improvements in walking and cycling (known as active transport), and have committed to a target of 25 per cent of all trips being by active transport by 2030. These improvements should provide people with more options to travel and encourage more people to leave the car at home.

Road network improvements are planned across Victoria to improve the efficiency, safety and resilience of the road network, balancing the needs of all road users.



Education capacity

The Victorian Government continues to consider the need for additional government primary and secondary school provision to serve the growing community.

We are also monitoring the need for new and/or expanded public, not-for-profit and for-profit kindergarten provision to serve the community.



Health services

The Victorian Government continues to consider the development of health services and infrastructure priorities to support the health system. Future investment will seek to respond to growth and ageing infrastructure pressures, and will also consider opportunities to promote new care models and how to make best use of existing infrastructure.



Integrated water management

To improve the liveability, biodiversity and climate resilience of these centres, the Victorian Government continues to investigate place-based integrated water management interventions including alternative water supplies that can be delivered for non-potable uses. The interventions aim to integrate innovative flood mitigation measures that not only reduce local flooding and build climate resilience, but also contribute to water supply security, enhance public amenity, support urban cooling, and nurture biodiversity.

In line with *Plan for Victoria*, new guidance is being prepared on how to appropriately build in areas subject to flooding. As part of this, Melbourne Water is in the process of updating its flood modelling through the Greater Melbourne Flood Information Program to provide more in-depth information about known hazards. This new flood modelling information could be used by councils when approving permits for housing in areas subject to flooding and to inform the design of future flood and drainage mitigation infrastructure.

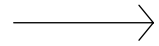
The opportunities for public realm upgrades identified below could include consideration of water security, water sensitive urban design and nature-based approaches as part of upgrades to streetscapes and open spaces.

Water sensitive urban design strategies such as permeable surfaces, distributed detention (including deep soil tree pits and raingardens) and waterway enhancement could contribute to managing more intense rainfall, reducing flood risk, and improving amenity, cooling, biodiversity and liveability.

These approaches could contribute to ensuring that the urban form is climate adaptive.

7 LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR MERRI-BEK

Communities value access to high quality parks, open spaces and walking and cycling infrastructure, and they want to see more investment in these facilities.





INVESTING IN MERRI-BEK'S INFRASTRUCTURE

We have heard through community engagement on the Train and Tram Zone Activity Centres Program and *Plan for Victoria* that communities value access to high quality parks and open spaces, and walking and cycling infrastructure, and want to see more investment in these.

The Victorian Government is developing an infrastructure funding system to ensure that developers contribute to improving the infrastructure, so these centres remain great places to live.

Under the system, developers may be expected to pay a standardised contribution for each new home they deliver and for each square metre of new commercial or industrial space they deliver.

This system will provide direct contributions for councils and the Victorian Government to help deliver the essential infrastructure each activity centre needs to thrive.

Developers, local government, state agencies and other stakeholders including the Federal Government all share responsibility for funding infrastructure, and the new system will aim to be one component of a broad infrastructure funding strategy to ensure communities receive the infrastructure they need.

Infrastructure investment focus areas



Inclusive, community-centred design

Improving your streets, public spaces and local public facilities, such as libraries and community centres, to ensure communities can meet daily needs close to home.



Accessible public transport and active transport

Investing in safe and direct walking and riding networks that help people to get around and enhance the community's liveability. Upgrading public transport infrastructure to be universally accessible, safe and comfortable.



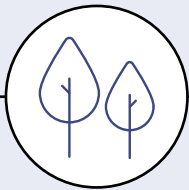
Green spaces that are great places

Contributing to greener and cooler parks, streets and public places with more vegetation and street trees.

STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES

We have identified the following strategies and opportunities. This new flexible system will respond over time to direct future priorities in the local area, and could be rolled out in the short, medium or long-term.

Examples of potential locations are included below and in **Plan 8: Indicative Merri-bek place improvement opportunities**. This plan shows the transport network, open space and community infrastructure improvement opportunities for the Merri-bek activity centres, which could occur over time.

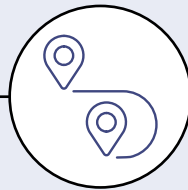


Strategy

Support improved opportunities for play and recreation and maximise greening, use, access, and enjoyment of public space by everyone.

Opportunities

- Upgrade existing public spaces so they can be better used by the community for recreation and community events. Spaces like Anderson Reserve, Temple Park and McKay Street Reserve could be improved through interventions like upgrades to playground and exercise equipment, increased tree planting and landscaping, water sensitive urban design and seating and lighting improvements.
- Increase the capacity and/or quality of the amenities of active recreation reserves such as Clifton Park to meet some of the additional demands generated by future development. This could include improved lighting, reconfigured sports fields or upgraded playing surfaces and pavilions.

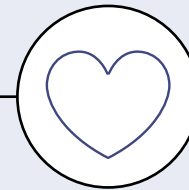


Strategy

Support safer, attractive and connected walking and riding networks that help people meet their everyday needs and move between activity centres.

Opportunities

- Provide safer and attractive riding facilities, on strategic and priority corridors, such as Victoria Street, Stewart Street and Moreland Road.
- Provide attractive walking routes through safe and attractive crossing opportunities and continuous footpath treatments in the activity centre cores, around train stations and roads such as Hope Street, Waterfield Street and Dawson Street.



Strategy

Support thriving activity centre cores that encourage social life and activity and are greener and cooler places where people are safe and welcome to shop, socialise and dine.

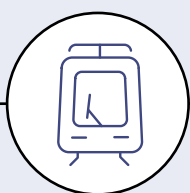
Opportunities

- Upgrade streetscapes in activity centre cores to support outdoor dining and improve footpaths, crossings, street furniture and wayfinding.
- Create greener streetscapes to improve places to socialise and rest, such as Sydney Road and Victoria Street.
- Improve laneways in activity centre cores to support increased accessibility to key destinations by improving pedestrian priority and amenity through greening, traffic management interventions and small-scale infrastructure improvements.

The place examples referenced are indicative only and are subject to change at the discretion of the relevant responsible authority. Further examples are shown on the following plans:

- **Plan 9: Brunswick (Sydney Road) activity centre place improvement**
- **Plan 10: Coburg activity centre place improvement.**

These core plans show the local opportunities for the specific activity centres and immediate surrounds, not the broader transport network opportunities identified in **Plan 8**.

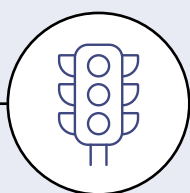


Strategy

Support greater choice in travel by improving on-road public transport efficiency and customer experience.

Opportunities

- Improve the safety, comfort and customer experience of bus and tram stop facilities, including shelters, seating, tactiles, information displays and wayfinding.
- Provide safer access to bus and tram stops by aligning these with pedestrian crossings.
- Improve bus and tram efficiency and reliability, including traffic signals and minor intersection changes, and on-road priority.

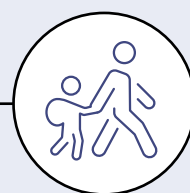


Strategy

Support more efficient road movements for cars and freight.

Opportunities

- Continue to review ways to improve traffic flow for cars and freight along roads such as Bell Street, including traffic signals and minor intersection changes.
- Improve signalling for streets that carry buses and trams.



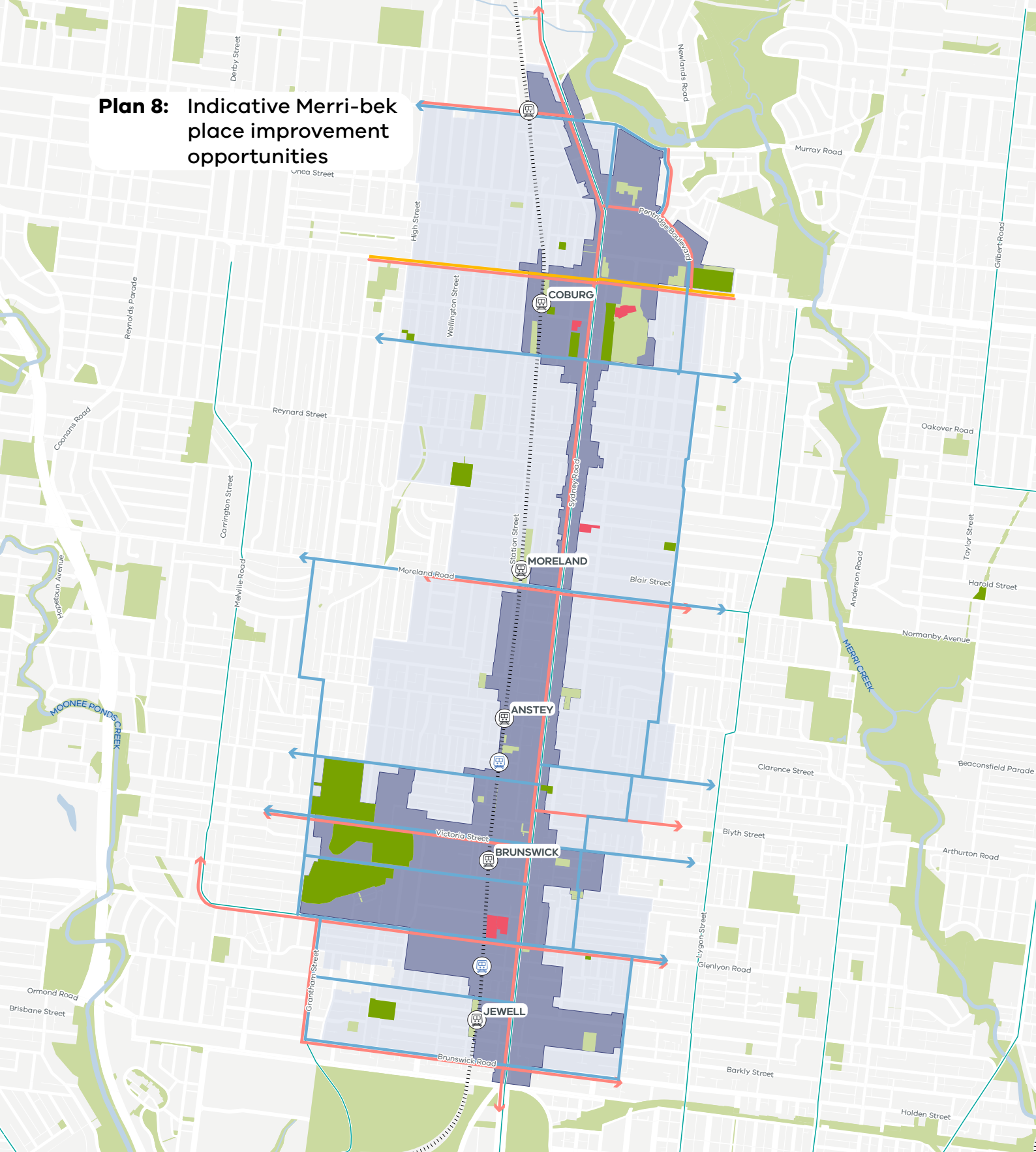
Strategy

Support improvements to existing community infrastructure and identify opportunities for new infrastructure to support a growing community.

Opportunities

- Increase the supply of and existing multi-purpose community facilities such as Coburg Library, the Saxon Street cultural and community hub and the Brunswick Baths to meet the growing demand in Merri-bek.

Plan 8: Indicative Merri-bek place improvement opportunities



- train and tram zone activity centre core
- train and tram zone activity centres and catchment
- train station & corridor
- new elevated station
- tram route
- existing open space
- watercourse & waterbody

- opportunities**
- active transport improvements
 - public transport infrastructure improvements
 - minor road and signalling improvements
 - open space improvements
 - community infrastructure improvements



Plan 9: Brunswick (Sydney Road) activity centre place improvement



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Endnotes

- 1 Wurundjeri Tribe Land & Compensation Cultural Heritage Council Inc. (2012) Merri Creek Aboriginal Cultural Values, Report for Melbourne Water December 2012.
- 2 Wheeler et. al. (2018) CHMP 14125 – Queen Victorian Market Precinct Renewal – Zone 1 (Old Melbourne Cemetery), pp. 126–127.
- 3 Broome, R. (2001), *Coburg: Between two creeks*. Coburg Historical Society, Vic, p. 26.
- 4 Daley, C. (1925) Reminiscences from 1841 of William Kyle, a Pioneer, *Victorian Historical Magazine*, 10 (3): p. 166.
- 5 Smyth, B. R. (1878) *The Aborigines of Victoria: with notes relating to the habits of the natives of other parts of Australia and Tasmania*, Government Printer, Melbourne Vol 1, p. 160.
- 6 Stephens, M. (ed) (2014) *The Journal of William Thomas Assistant Protector of the Aborigines of Port Phillip & Guardian of the Aborigines of Victoria 1839–1867, Volume Two: 1844 to 1853*. Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages: Melbourne, p. 294.
- 7 Presland, G. (1994) *Aboriginal Melbourne: The Lost Land of the Kulin People*, McPhee Gribble Penguin Books, p. 85.
- 8 Broome, R. (2001), *Coburg: Between two creeks*. Coburg Historical Society, Vic, p. 5.
- 9 Merri-bek City Council (n.d.), *Renaming Merri-bek*, Merri-bek City Council, *Renaming Merri-bek*

Images

Merri Creek, Victoria [picture], ca. 1860, Trove, National Library of Australia, accessed 14 October 2025. nla.gov.au/nla.obj-135239436/view

All site photography by Charlie Kinross (2025) unless otherwise indicated.

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- Wheeler, J., Gronow, M., Janson, S. & Welsh, L. (2018) CHMP 14125 – Queen Victorian Market Precinct Renewal – Zone 1 (Old Melbourne Cemetery).
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