

12.1 CENTRAL COBURG PROGRAM

Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade

Central Coburg Program

At its meeting held 8 October 2025, in a confidential item Council endorsed the draft Central Coburg framework plan (Attachment 2) and draft Concept for Coburg (Attachment 3) for community engagement. Council also endorsed a six-week community engagement program to seek feedback from the community; and to receive a report in early 2026 with a final Central Coburg framework plan including an overview of community feedback and proposed next steps.

Council also resolved to release a shorter version of the confidential report (as presented to Council) on Council's website once public engagement begins. This is that report.

REPORT

Executive summary

Council has been working with the Coburg community for almost two decades to develop a feasible plan to revitalise the centre of Coburg – creating jobs and a thriving economy, terrific housing close to public transport and jobs, great community spaces and a green and inviting public realm. After a major partnership called *The Coburg Initiative* was paused in 2012, Council has explored scenarios on several occasions.

Since that time, key initiatives to breathe new life into Central Coburg include the removal of the level crossing, the Coburg Health Hub (a major strategic project identified in the 2012 Masterplan) is now on track to be delivered, and earlier this year Council committed to deliver a new Coburg library and piazza with the design to be unveiled for community feedback in coming months.

The last few years have been challenging and parts of Coburg are feeling tired. Now is the time for us to take the next steps to maximise Central Coburg's potential as a cultural, economic and retail hub in Melbourne's inner-north.

With the Health Hub precinct in train, and a range of development occurring to the north of Bell Street, in November 2023, Council held an extensive engagement with the community about progressing the six sites in Central Coburg. This feedback has guided work to develop a feasible concept to revitalise Council's landholdings in central Coburg. This concept for Coburg builds upon the catalyst investment of the new Coburg library and piazza.

This draft Central Coburg framework plan follows extensive testing of a range of scenarios, and balances the community's and Council's aspirations to:

- Create more jobs and a thriving economy in central Coburg.
- Deliver great design and built form with a vibrant, aesthetically appealing streetscape and identity for Coburg.
- Create beautiful and inviting new parks and open spaces for the community.
- Improve and redistribute public car parks, roads, and pedestrian access to make sure central Coburg is convenient and accessible.
- Provide diverse housing choices for families and other future Coburg residents, and contribute to closing Merri-bek's social housing gap.
- Deliver a financially sustainable outcome where revenue from the development funds the delivery of public infrastructure including open space, community infrastructure, roads, drainage and public realm – as well as enabling the provision of social and affordable housing options.

The proposed six-week community engagement will help Council understand whether the draft framework plan has balanced the issues that are important for the community. This will inform preparation of a final framework plan and considerations on how to progress to implementation.

Decisions on Council's level of investment, procurement and delivery approaches, and land transactions will be future considerations – they are not part of this report.

Previous Council decisions

The most recent Council decisions relating to Central Coburg are listed below:

- Central Coburg Program scenario modelling update (Confidential) – 9 July 2025
- Central Coburg Program scenario modelling update (Confidential) – 14 May 2025
- Coburg Library and Piazza Location – 14 May 2025
- Central Coburg Program – Scenarios for Further Investigation (Confidential) – 12 March 2025
- The Coburg Library and Piazza project – 12 February 2025
- Support for Central Coburg businesses and community – 11 September 2024
- The Coburg Conversation engagement findings and precinct objectives – 10 April 2024

These Council resolutions are contained in **Confidential Attachment 1**. Decisions not marked as confidential are available on Council's website.

1. Policy context

Council plan 2025-29

The draft Central Coburg framework plan is consistent with a range of strategies in the Council plan, including:

1. Care for nature and climate resilience
 - Cool urban environments and beautify public spaces with nature, including seeking opportunities to reduce hard surfaces to increase permeability.
 - Improve parks and facilities to make them welcoming places to share and to enjoy activities.
2. Healthy and inclusive communities
 - Support the housing and wellbeing needs of all in the community particularly those on lower incomes to have access housing in Merri-bek.
3. Beautiful and liveable city
 - Maintain our streets, laneways, and public places so they are adaptive to community needs; places we are proud of and feel safe in
 - Make it easy and safe for people to move around Merri-bek, especially using public and active transport and zero emissions vehicles
4. Thriving economy and culture
 - Facilitate the further development of and investment into key commercial and industrial areas to attract investment and diverse job opportunities.

Council action plan 2025-26

Action 37: Progress plans and projects to revitalise and improve central Coburg.

2. Background

Place context

Central Coburg is a vibrant and diverse neighbourhood with a strong local identity, popular shopping strips, and excellent access to public transport. Sydney Road and Victoria Street Mall are well-loved for their mix of shops, cafes and restaurants, and the area includes valued community facilities such as the Coburg Library and Leisure Centre. The Bell Street level crossing removal has delivered new open spaces, upgraded shared paths, and a modern station. Council has significant land holdings in the precinct (six sites of around 45,000 square metres), much is currently used for 1,068 off-street public car parking spaces.

Central Coburg is also home to a retail precinct and a range of commercial businesses, along Sydney Road, Victoria Street Mall, Foleys Arcade, Walkers Arcade, and other popular areas. It hosts three churches, health services, and Council's existing library. To the East, the Russell Street sporting precinct includes the Coburg Leisure Centre, the Bridges Reserve football oval (home of the Coburg Football Club), and in coming years will also host the Aspire Sports Centre (the national base of the Bachar Houli Foundation).

To the North East, the Coburg Health Hub project was confirmed several years ago, with a planning application expected to be advertised for community feedback in the coming months.

Council has recently committed \$60 million to a new library and piazza in the heart of the central Coburg train station precinct, and is currently running a design competition to deliver this facility. Community engagement on the design is currently planned in early 2026.

Strategic and planning policy context

- The Merri-bek Planning Scheme identifies Central Coburg as a Major Activity Centre, highlighting its key role in accommodating a diverse mix of retail, commercial, and cultural uses, supporting employment opportunities, and enabling significant residential growth.
- The State Government is currently rolling out reforms to deliver on its Housing Statement and aspiration to deliver hundreds of thousands more homes close to public transport, employment and essential services. The reforms include major changes to 60 Activity Centres along key public transport lines – including Brunswick and Coburg (known as the Merri-bek Cluster). The State is currently undertaking community consultation on the Merri-bek Cluster and has recently released maps showing its high level plans which it intends to introduce as new built form planning controls in the Planning Scheme in early 2026. The draft Central Coburg framework plan is aligned with these aims and what we know about the new planning controls so far – but importantly the draft framework plan balances economic outcomes, diverse building heights and forms to facilitate great streetscapes, with the aspiration to deliver more well-located, high-quality, and affordable housing.

Project context

This is not the first attempt at utilising Council's landholdings to catalyse revitalisation in central Coburg.

- Following an expression of interest, Council entered into a strategic partnering agreement (similar to a joint venture) with Equiset Services Pty in 2008. This included a study area of approximately 40 hectares.
- This partnership was precipitated by the *Coburg 2020 Structure Plan* (2006) and Council's purchase in 2006 of a Bi Lo supermarket (which was since repurposed to house Schoolhouse Studios). A further land purchase was made in 2009.
- The *Colours of Coburg* masterplan was developed over several years, however the Equiset partnership ended in 2011.

- In 2012, Council released an EOI for a Health Hub on a site along Bell and Urquhart Streets, a precinct within the larger *Colours of Coburg* concept. This was followed by an RFQ – which initially did not receive any conforming bids, but ultimately led to an agreement with the Coburg Health Hub. That project is in train with a planning permit application currently being finalised.
- Between 2017 and 2021, Council investigated Coburg Square, which focused on the Waterfield West site only. This work did not ultimately progress.
- In 2023, Council made the decision to progress consultation on a different configuration – six sites in the Central Coburg precinct, covering around 45,000 square metres. This is much smaller than the original *Colours of Coburg* initiative, and larger than the *Coburg Square* project. In November and December 2023, Council undertook an extensive community consultation known as the Coburg Conversation, to understand the community's aspirations for the six sites in the very centre of Coburg.
- This consultation underpins the current Central Coburg work.

Large-scale infill developments are challenging projects. It's not uncommon to see multiple attempts to understand, balance and align Council, community and developer expectations.

The Central Coburg program

Six Council-owned sites (approximately 4.5 hectares excluding streets and parks) form the basis of the draft Central Coburg framework plan (Figure 1).

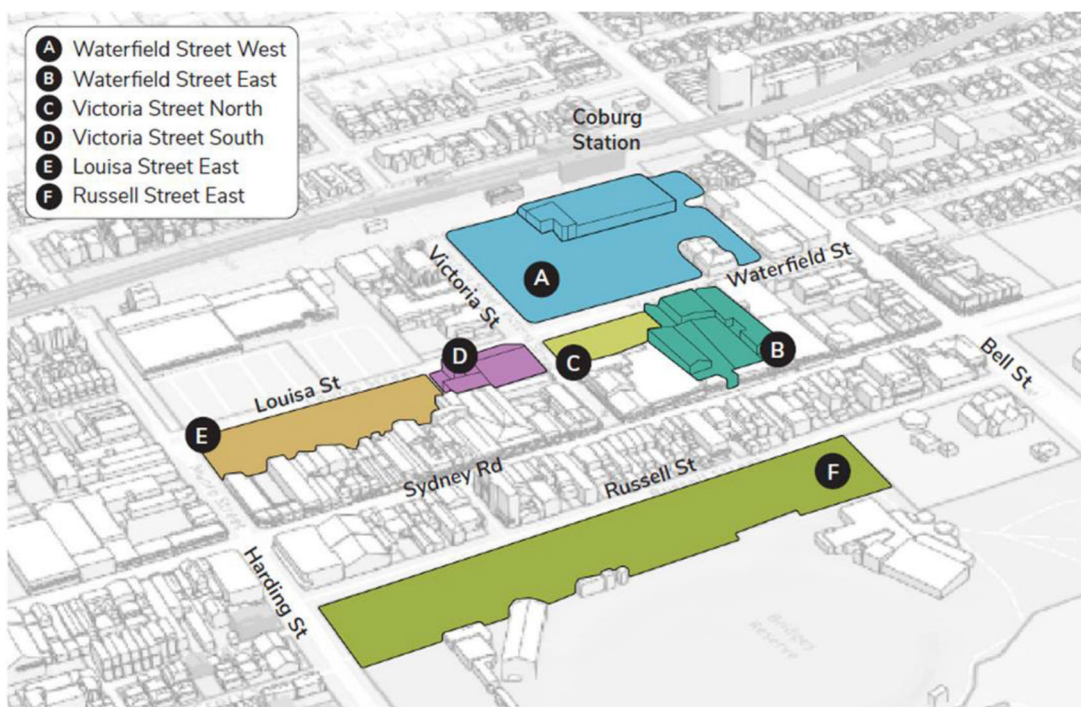


Figure 1: Council-owned sites in Central Coburg

In April 2024, following extensive community consultation, Council adopted the following objectives to guide the draft Central Coburg framework plan:

- A new library in the heart of Coburg
- New inviting public spaces
- More greening and cooling
- High-quality housing, including social and affordable housing
- People-friendly streets

- A thriving local economy

In March 2025, Council endorsed the development of a precinct framework scenario balancing economic, housing, public realm and parking uses across the selected sites. A preferred scenario was confirmed in July, to be further developed and brought to Council in October (the current report) prior to a further round of community consultation.

Background technical work

A draft Central Coburg framework plan has been prepared, balancing the above objectives with financial feasibility. This work has been informed by extensive background technical investigations, including:

- Built form modelling and spatial testing
- Financial feasibility modelling
- Movement, access and car parking study
- Multi-deck car parking design quality case studies
- Wind, flood and overshadowing modelling
- Land surveys, geotechnical reports and preliminary site contamination reports
- Arborist report
- Housing needs analysis
- Economic uplift and community benefit report
- Local market study

Draft Central Coburg framework plan outcomes – *Coburg is here*

The draft Central Coburg framework plan sets out how the adopted objectives will be achieved, organised around six themes.

1. *Coburg is community: A community place where the library, piazza and Victoria Street Mall form the heart*

We imagine a future that brings community together. The new library and piazza will strengthen Coburg's civic heart, forming a welcoming place where people gather, connect and celebrate community life. From here, a network of inviting new laneways, lined with new businesses, will link Coburg Station, Victoria Street Mall and Sydney Road, making it easier and more enjoyable to move through the centre.

Upgrades to Victoria Street, Waterfield Street, Louisa Street and Russell Street will create greener and more comfortable routes, complementing the new laneways and supporting a lively and accessible heart for Coburg. Together, these changes will bring more life to everyday moments in Coburg, whether it is grabbing a coffee on the way to the station or meeting friends in the piazza.

2. *Coburg is thriving: A thriving place where diverse businesses complement each other and create new life and energy.*

There is new retail at the ground floor, particularly on new streets and walks that connect people from the train station to the heart of Coburg. There's an opportunity for a new supermarket and an office building. The ground floor retail at the base of buildings can vary in size from small "hole in the wall" shops to larger premises. These new retail and commercial spaces will support more night-time activity.

This includes almost 11,000 square metres of commercial space being office and retail.

3. Coburg is accessible: An accessible place where people can comfortably walk, cycle, catch public transport, or drive and park their car.

Parking is important, and we propose to provide around 900 public car park spaces in convenient locations across central Coburg. This makes all parts of Coburg accessible within a short two-minute walk.

The streets will be priorities for accessible parking, loading and short-term parking. There's an opportunity for upper levels of car parking buildings to be set aside for traders and possibly new residents.

Not everyone living in central Coburg will want or need a car park with their apartment, given the train station, buses and Sydney Road tram. So we'll reduce the parking requirements. This should also make the apartments more affordable.

This includes:

- Three new laneways and walks
- Replacement of over 80 per cent of the existing 1,068 public spaces
- Prioritising on-street spaces for accessible parking, loading and short-term parking
- Dedicated lower levels of multi-deck car parks to accessible and short-term parking, upper levels to long-term parking, business permit parking and optional residential parking
- Potential for additional leased parking in upper levels of multi-decks

4. Coburg is home: A family friendly place to live with jobs, shops, public transport and public spaces and community facilities all nearby.

We want Coburg to be family friendly, so we don't just want one- and two-bedroom apartments. We want a range of sizes for a range of different families and households. We are planning for 1,700-2,300 new people to call Coburg home, where they will live in 850-1,150 dwellings.

We want apartments to be flexible in their design so that we can ensure they meet the needs of the community. For example, having two two-bedroom apartments being able to become a larger family apartment.

Over 20 per cent of the dwellings would be subsidised housing, with a focus on providing social housing.

5. Coburg is open: An open place where streets and parks provide comfortable, shady meeting points for the community.

Coburg will be green with over 6,000m² of new public open spaces. Building heights are proposed between seven and 18 storeys arranged to protect sunlight access to existing and new public open spaces and key pedestrian streets. Upper levels of buildings are set back from the street to create a more open and inviting pedestrian environment.

Victoria Mall will get a facelift, something many community members have asked for. And undergrounding powerlines will allow for more tree canopies, which will reduce the urban heat island effect.

The framework plan proposes six new parks (including the new piazza) and the planting of more than 200 new trees.

6. *Coburg is evolving: A place where plans turn into action, with projects moving from vision to delivery.*

Things are happening in Central Coburg – the level crossing has been delivered, the Coburg Health Hub is in progress, and work is underway to design the new library and piazza Council has promised as Stage 1 of the Central Coburg revitalisation.

The draft framework plan is preparing the next stage of delivery. In developing the plan, we have prioritised:

- Feasibility of the next stage (Stage 2) which would follow the library and piazza
- Delivering public realm investment in early stages where practical
- Exploring the potential for social and affordable housing as independent projects
- Allowing the concept to adapt over time as context changes

3. Issues

Key considerations influencing the draft framework

Feasibility

Council's aspirations and the draft Central Coburg framework plan are ambitious. They balance many competing needs – such as public realm and public open space, commercial and retail space, public parking provision to support a thriving economy, social and affordable housing provision, and an aspiration to deliver more diverse housing than standard developments.

It is important to acknowledge that feasibility can change over time. It is modelled at a point in time, but feasibility shifts as markets, borrowing conditions, development costs, revenue and funding opportunities change.

Council has limited funds and must use them responsibly. The draft Central Coburg framework plan aims to maximise public benefit while ensuring projects remain achievable. Ambitious policy outcomes like more social and affordable housing, larger apartments, and high-quality public spaces all bring additional cost. Re-provisioning public car parking is also essential to enable housing, but it requires major investment.

Council aims to:

- Set a plan that can be implemented
- Deliver a plan that can adapt to changing market conditions
- Maximise public benefit while retaining feasibility
- Plan for investment that aligns with Council's capacity

To prepare the draft Central Coburg framework plan, we have investigated:

- Feasibility modelling
- The cost of various options balancing different levels and types of:
 - Social and affordable housing
 - Dwelling mix, including larger apartments
 - Car parking
 - Ownership and delivery
- Current and likely grant and funding opportunities
- Market sounding

The draft Central Coburg framework plan delivers on community aspirations while still being financially sustainable. While the framework is feasible, it is only by a fine margin. There is little room to move, which means any changes will involve trade-offs. Examples of the trade-offs at play are illustrated below.

Illustrative investment trade-offs

- To increase social and affordable housing, more dwellings need to be sold at market rate to cover the subsidy.
- To create new housing sites, public car parking has to be relocated. Parking solutions themselves come with challenges.
- Allocating space for office, commercial and retail needs to be balanced with demand and different financial returns from different uses.
- Basement parking is expensive given ground conditions in Coburg, while above-ground parking must be carefully designed to ensure an attractive experience from the street and public open spaces.
- Building height needs to be balanced against the quality of the street environment, solar access and wind tunnel effects while still creating space for housing, open space, commercial space and parking.
- Public realm upgrades and managing existing flood risks also add to cost.

This is complex work and there are no simple answers. As the work progresses, we will continue to test new approaches, seek out funding opportunities, and refine the balance between community aspirations and financial reality.

The draft Central Coburg framework plan is a carefully considered starting point. It is ready to be tested with the community to see whether we have struck the right balance, while keeping feasibility and trade-offs firmly in view.

Economic benefit

Central Coburg is celebrated for its diverse and multicultural food offerings, specialised retail, and lively community gathering spaces. The area is known for its affordable food, both fresh and cooked, and its array of Middle Eastern businesses including cafes, restaurants, jewellery, and unique specialty stores. It also has a range of professional services and other businesses. Many of these establishments are well-known, have been in the area for years, and are woven into Coburg's cultural history.

Council aims to:

- Increase prosperity and vibrancy of the existing traders
- Decrease the amount of escape expenditure (only about 10 per cent of Coburg household spending is spent in Coburg)
- Increase retail and service offerings to make Coburg more of a destination
- Increase local jobs

To prepare the draft Central Coburg framework plan, we have investigated:

- What makes retail a success
- What kind of economic benefits the project will deliver
- An analysis of local market conditions to determine how much additional retail can be accommodated in Central Coburg

Local market analysis shows that there is sufficient demand to deliver the significant increase in retail and office space proposed in the draft framework plan. There is potential to accommodate even more retail floor space, which can be considered, alongside any feasibility implications, as the project progresses. The new retail is predominantly small-scale tenancies along key pedestrian routes. These smaller tenancies will encourage a diverse range of businesses, expanding on what people love about Coburg currently and increasing the reasons to shop in Coburg.

A broad range of other commercial and retail uses are envisaged. Retail floorspaces include ground floor shopfronts, shopping malls and arcades – and are envisaged to house retail businesses such as groceries, restaurants, cafes, jewellery, clothing, and other merchandise. Office floorspaces (including “shop top” spaces and a potential office building) are expected to accommodate industries such as real estate professional services (accountants, lawyers, consultants), and potentially government or other medium sized business users. There are other business types that might occupy either retail or commercial floorspace – for example allied health services, fitness-based businesses such as gyms or specialised exercise services, or creative studios.

Key economic figures are:

- At least 300-350 new direct jobs in Central Coburg
- 125 jobs will be generated per annum during construction
- 147 jobs per annum after construction
- Around \$700 M during construction and \$100 M annually in gross value added will be generated
- Around \$1.5 B in additional income generated for households and businesses will be generated during construction, and \$200 M annually

Housing

Housing supply in Coburg is not adequately meeting community needs. Merri-bek has the lowest level of social housing and the second highest rate of unmet housing need of the M9 councils (the City of Melbourne and the eight Councils that surround it). Most houses in Coburg are detached or semi-detached houses in low-scale residential zones and there has been less apartment development in the activity centre compared to other nearby centres. Where market-driven apartment development has occurred, it has generally not provided a broad mix of apartment types suitable for larger families. These challenges exist alongside an evolving housing policy environment, including the State Government’s Housing Statement, which sets ambitious targets that Central Coburg will be expected to help deliver.

Council aims to:

- Create opportunities for housing in Central Coburg
- Offer a diversity of housing types and sizes that support every age and stage of life
- Provide social and affordable housing that targets those with the greatest need and provide access to safe and secure housing

To prepare the draft Central Coburg framework plan, we have investigated:

- The role central Coburg can play in meeting housing needs
- The role central Coburg can play in meeting social and affordable housing needs
- How to deliver larger apartments to support a diverse growing population
- Delivery models for social and affordable housing
- Making sure these aspirations are feasible

Overall dwelling numbers and mix

The draft framework plan delivers between 850 and 1,150 new dwellings with a target mix of 30 per cent one-bedroom, 30 per cent two-bedroom, 20 per cent three-bedroom and 20 per cent four-bedroom dwellings. The mix is adaptable, with one and two-bedroom dwellings able to be combined into larger three and four-bedroom homes, or split the other way, so the development can respond to local demand. Typical market-led apartment development would result in far fewer larger dwellings – around ten percent of three-bedroom and no four-bedroom apartments.

This approach is intended to create a broader variety of housing types and price points that respond to community needs, offering more than what the market typically delivers. It also allows for apartments to be reconfigured over time, giving residents flexibility to adapt their homes to changing circumstances, for example through dual key designs.

The next steps are to explore opportunities to refine the balance of dwellings through market sounding and feasibility testing, investigate innovative approaches to adaptable apartment design, and consult with the community to understand the housing types they would like to see delivered in Central Coburg.

Social and affordable housing

In developing the draft framework plan, we asked, what is the “right” level of social and affordable housing for this development? Aside from the City of Melbourne which has set a target that up to 25 per cent of all future residential development should be affordable housing, no other Victorian council has established specific social and affordable housing targets for development on council-owned land. Given the lack of policy targets, a first principles approach has been developed, considering the current and forecast housing need, and Council’s leadership role it wants to demonstrate.

Per Capita’s Centre for Equitable Housing has advised Merri-bek on this question over a number of years. Their work has helped to establish a reasonable range to consider for Central Coburg. Almost 7,000 more social and affordable homes will be needed in Merri-bek by 2051 – and around a fifth of this in Coburg. In 2051, Per Capita estimates that Coburg will have a gap of around 350 social and 200 affordable homes.

Given the backlog of need in Coburg, and Council’s leadership role in addressing social and affordable housing, a social and affordable housing target of around 30 per cent is proposed across the council-owned sites, with at least 90 social housing dwellings.

Built form and solar access

Taller buildings can help deliver more homes or jobs, but they also create a number of challenges. More height brings visual impacts, overshadowing of public spaces, and stronger wind conditions that affect comfort at street level. More height also means more car parking, which becomes difficult to fit within buildings. Careful design is needed even at this concept stage to ensure good layouts, natural light and ventilation.

Council aims to:

- Build on existing character and context
- Maintain sufficient solar access to public space
- Mitigate wind impacts
- Create attractive and liveable apartments
- Deliver high quality and sustainable building design

It includes built form modelling that includes indicative internal layouts and takes account of both overshadowing and wind modelling. It proposes indicative building heights ranging from seven to 18 storeys. Heights are arranged to ensure sufficient sunlight reaches existing and new public open spaces, as well as key pedestrian streets such as Victoria Mall. Heights are below the proposed heights of the State government's Activity Centre reform which will come into effect in early 2026.

The plans are at concept stage only and will require detailed design work before they can be delivered. However, modelling has considered indicative internal layouts to ensure buildings achieve good levels of daylight, outlook, cross-ventilation and internal space. External design and appearance have not been resolved at this stage. More detailed guidance will be developed to shape the quality of future built form, including the design of multi-deck car parking buildings.

Parking

Public car parking is a key asset for both visitors and local businesses. Central Coburg currently has 1,561 off-street public car parking spaces, of which 1,068 are owned by Council. There are also approximately 100 on-street spaces. All parking is at ground level and occupies nearly one-third of the developable land in Central Coburg. There is an opportunity to reconfigure how public car parking is provided to provide for new housing, businesses and public spaces.

Providing the right number of car parking spaces is a balancing act. The ground conditions in Central Coburg make basement parking very expensive. However, providing multiple levels of above ground parking in every building would result in inactive building edges fronting new streets and public open spaces, particularly on smaller sites where there isn't space to hide car parking behind new uses. More car parking also results in more traffic, which would be difficult to accommodate within the existing road network, particularly at the southern end of Louisa Street which sees all eastbound traffic exiting from this location as they cannot turn right onto Bell Street at the northern end of Waterfield Street.

The draft Central Coburg framework plan has been developed to:

- Make it easier to find a parking space, with parking distributed throughout the centre to minimise the distance between parking and destination
- Provide parking for existing businesses based on current usage
- Provide an appropriate level of private parking for new residents and new commercial uses
- Give people the choice to live in a home with or without car parking, including the option of decoupling uses from ownership of a car parking space
- Minimise the number of inactive edges to the street from car parking

The car parking model has been informed by a car parking study which investigated current usage based on parking surveys and parking sensor data. This work adopted best practice car parking provision principles, based on traffic analysis and likely public and private parking demand generated by new land uses. This work considered:

- How to deliver high quality multi-deck car parking
- Comparable cost of delivering basement parking and above ground parking
- Spatial layouts to make sure car parking is in accessible locations
- Innovative approaches to managing car parking
- Staging to ensure that new car parking is delivered at appropriate times

Public and private car parking

Historically, much of the car parking in Central Coburg was constructed to support businesses in the centre. Many businesses rely on the existing car parking for their staff and customers. It is important to continue to provide sufficient parking for these businesses. However, that does not mean catering for 100 per cent of car parking demand during the busiest hour of the busiest day of the year. Designing for that peak would result in an oversupply of parking at all other times.

Best-practice parking planning, including at many of Melbourne's busiest shopping centres, is based on the principle of the peak repeatable parking event. This principle allows for 10-15 days per year when the peak car parking demand (for any hour across that day) would exceed the available spaces. Visitors may adjust by visiting outside the peak period or arriving by an alternative mode of transport on at those times. Parking sensor analysis shows that just over 80 per cent of current spaces (around 900 spaces) are needed to meet the principle for Central Coburg.

The draft framework plan provides almost 900 public car parking spaces, and over 150 additional off-street publicly accessible car spaces that could be used for demand generated by new commercial uses and/or leased to apartments requiring additional car parking (decoupled parking).

Private car parking will be needed for residential uses. The draft framework plan weighs up a range of factors to propose a feasible provision level.

Parking management

The management of car parking in and around the centre will also be important. Future work would include:

- Identifying locations for different parking restrictions, prioritising accessible, loading and short-stay parking in the most convenient locations, with long-stay parking directed to upper levels of the multideck.
- Real time parking displays showing the location and number of available spaces.
- Consideration of paid long-term parking within the activity centre, and permit parking in nearby residential streets, to ensure the amenity of neighbours is maintained.
- Considering conditions at the time of development, recognising that circumstances, technology, and community needs may change over the next 5-10 years, so decisions about future parking management cannot be locked in now.

Public realm investment

The public realm in Coburg currently does not adequately meet the needs of the community. It is unpleasant for pedestrians and does not encourage people to spend time in the centre, while issues with accessibility and perceptions of safety further limit its use. With expected population growth, demand on the public realm will increase. These challenges are compounded by limited greenery and biodiversity, existing flooding issues, and extensive hard surfaces that contribute to the urban heat island effect. As extreme weather events such as heatwaves and heavy rainfall become more frequent, the shortcomings of the public realm will become increasingly pronounced.

Council aims to:

- Create a network of welcoming, accessible public spaces that add vibrancy
- Make streets safe, comfortable, and easy to navigate
- Enhance Victoria Street Mall as a key destination
- Provide open spaces co-located with existing trees and greenery

- Improve comfort and wellbeing with better solar access, shade, and avoiding wind impacts
- Reduce heat through more greenery and cooler surfaces
- Manage stormwater and flooding through natural systems that integrate water into the landscape
- Support biodiversity by creating habitats for birds, bees, and insects
- Limit development impacts on natural systems

To prepare the draft Central Coburg framework plan, we have investigated:

- The role and function of the current street network and where new connections are needed
- Traffic modelling to guide changes to the network
- Options for a distributed network of public spaces
- The economic benefits of investing in the public realm
- Wind and overshadowing impacts
- Existing and potential flooding issues, and how open spaces can help manage water
- Climate risks and strategies to reduce their impact
- Opportunities to support more diverse species and natural systems

The draft Central Coburg framework plan proposes significant investment in the early stages of the project to uplift the public realm. This includes a new library and over 6,000 square metres of new green space, the planting of more than 200 trees, and improved shade and comfort within key pedestrian areas. To reduce flooding risks, water storage is designed into streets and open spaces. Stormwater currently being captured at City Oval will be reused to irrigate new public spaces, helping to green the centre sustainably.

Work is continuing to refine these plans. Future stages will set out detailed design guidelines for trees, lighting, paving, and other elements that shape the character of streets and open spaces, as well as strategies for capturing and reusing water in new buildings. Community consultation will play a central role in shaping new public spaces, and we are keen to hear ideas on how they should look, feel, and function so they reflect local values and aspirations.

Staging and delivery

The development concept is contemplated to happen in stages. Some sites will only be developed once existing uses are relocated (such as the existing library site). Council also needs to balance the staged relocation of car parking to ensure replacement parking is available as development progresses.

Human Rights consideration

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. The recommendation to endorse a draft framework for consultation is consistent with the Charter and does not limit or interfere with any of the rights protected under the Act.

4. Community consultation and engagement

An intensive community engagement is planned to obtain feedback on the draft Central Coburg framework plan. A six-week engagement will incorporate a mix of online and in-person activities to reach a wide audience. We will engage local residents, potential future residents, businesses, shoppers, workers, community organisations, and other key Council stakeholders. Targeted conversations with key stakeholders will ensure they play an active role throughout the process.

This engagement also provides us an opportunity to check in with the community to see if their 2023 feedback is still consistent today. The engagement will acknowledge previous engagement and be clear about scope. For example, the overall amount of housing is shaped by feasibility and is not open to significant change. However, there is greater scope for input on matters such as new parks, street upgrades, and how these public spaces can best serve local needs.

Engagement will explain the feasibility challenge and the need for trade-offs to balance different public benefit outcomes. It will also outline potential staging, timing and future work. In early 2026, there will be a separate community engagement on a draft concept design for the Library and Piazza.

Engagement activities

Online

Conversations Merri-bek will be the central hub, providing access to project information, documentation, visualisations, and opportunities to give feedback. This will be supported by a digital campaign across Council's social media, e-newsletters, and targeted online advertising.

In-person

In person meetings, pop-ups and site walkthroughs will allow people to engage directly, including those less active online. At these sessions, 3D models will be available via QR codes or VR headsets, giving people the chance to visualise proposed changes in place.

At the beginning of the engagement period, Council will meet with leaders of local community groups and organisations to present the proposal, and request that the leaders share key information with their networks.

Communications

Communications will be delivered through both online and non-digital channels to ensure broad reach.

Online

Social media, e-newsletters, online advertising, and campaign materials will expand awareness and encourage participation.

Print and non-digital

Posters, flyers, and postcards will be distributed through Council venues, local businesses, and direct mail. Innovative methods such as night-time projections in Victoria Mall are also being explored, alongside more traditional options including billboards, public transport advertising, radio, and print.

Affected persons rights and interests

Before making a decision that affects a person's rights, Council must identify whose rights may be directly affected and provide an opportunity for that person (or persons) to convey those views regarding the effect on their rights and consider those views.

The public engagement process will provide an opportunity for all community members to provide feedback on the draft framework plan.

5. Officer declaration of Conflict of Interest

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

6. Financial and Resources Implications

The funds required to undertake public engagement and prepare a final Central Coburg framework plan are budgeted for within the current year budget of the Central Coburg Program.

7. Implementation

October to December 2025

- Community engagement on the draft Central Coburg framework plan

January to March 2026

- Preparation of a final Central Coburg framework plan that incorporates community feedback
- Report to Council outlining engagement outcomes and seeking endorsement of the final framework
- Preparation of a precinct business case, procurement strategy and project business cases to take to market
- Community engagement on a draft concept design for the Library and Piazza

March to December 2026

If Council endorses a final framework plan, the next steps may include:

- Developing a project governance and delivery model
- Market engagement and commencement of procurement
- Library and Piazza final concept design presented to Council for endorsement.
- In this period, Council would be asked to endorse the commencement of an implementation stage for some or all parts of the program.

2027

- Identify a preferred partner for the next stage and sign contracts

Attachment/s

- | | | |
|---|---|------------|
| 1 | Previous Council decisions - Confidential | D25/530890 |
|---|---|------------|

Pursuant to section 3(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 2020 this attachment has been designated as confidential because it relates to Council business information, being information that would prejudice the Council's position in commercial negotiations if prematurely released.

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|---|-------------------------------------|------------|
| 2 | Draft Central Coburg framework plan | D25/530893 |
|---|-------------------------------------|------------|

Pursuant to section 3(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 2020 this attachment has been designated as confidential because it relates to Council business information, being information that would prejudice the Council's position in commercial negotiations if prematurely released.

3 Draft Concept for Coburg

D25/530896

Pursuant to section 3(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 2020 this attachment has been designated as confidential because it relates to Council business information, being information that would prejudice the Council's position in commercial negotiations if prematurely released.