

Places for People



Merri-bek
City Council

**Creating vibrant, connected public
spaces across Merri-bek's activity
centres and shopping strips**

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Context



1. Connecting with Country

First Nations Peoples have cared for Country for thousands of years through cultural, ecological, and spiritual practices and knowledge.

Learning from Traditional Owners leads to better, more sustainable design, ensures cultural safety and visibility, and supports truth-telling and reconciliation.

Merri-bek City Council is committed to ensuring First Peoples' culture, knowledge, and heritage are respected and woven into the city's future.

Acknowledgement of Country

Merri-bek City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways in the area now known as Merri-bek. We pay respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging, as well as to all First Nations communities who significantly contribute to the life of the area.



Cultural heritage of Merri-bek

The area that makes up the City of Merri-bek rests on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people of the Kulin Nation.

Pre-colonisation, Merri-bek was dominated by basalt volcanic plains, interspersed with grassy woodlands, open grasslands, and creek corridors. The most significant features were Merri Creek and Moonee Ponds Creek, which provided reliable water, food resources, and movement corridors through the landscape. The area supported seasonal camps, food gathering, tool production, ceremony, and social exchange.

Merri-bek functioned as part of a broader living cultural landscape rather than as a fixed settlement, reflecting deep and enduring connections between people, land, and ecology.

Truth-telling and Reconciliation

European settlement rapidly disrupted and destroyed much of the cultural landscape that is now known as Merri-bek prior to 1835. Colonisation alienated Traditional Owners from their Country and from the resources upon which their traditional lives depended, resulting in devastating impacts on the health, population, and culture of First Nations Peoples and their Country.

Today, Council supports the Uluru Statement from the Heart and is committed to working towards reconciliation through our Statement of Commitment to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities of Merri-bek. The Statement includes commitments that form the basis for ongoing relationships between Elders and Merri-bek City Council.

Merri-bek takes a holistic Country lens to connect our activity centres to the broader regional landscape, through drawing on broader strategic work including the Yarra Strategic Plan (Burndap Birrarung Burndap Umarkoo).

The Places for People Plan aligns with this broader strategic work and the commitments to work towards reconciliation.

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First Nations engagement insights

Merri-bek City Council acknowledges that the information provided by the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people has helped inform Places for People.

Previous conversations and engagement with Traditional Owners and First Nations community members helped inform the Council's approach to the transformation of central Coburg. Traditional Owners have encouraged Council to also consider this knowledge and approach when planning more broadly for the Places for People Plan. Of the four areas of inquiry, the key opportunities under First Nations Culture and Public Space and Character can be applied to the design of public spaces in this plan and are incorporated into this work to ensure our public spaces honour, connect, and care for Country and First Nations culture.

Merri-bek City Council has undergone consultation with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Traditional Owners and representatives in the development of this plan. We will continue to work closely with the Traditional Owners in delivering the plan to ensure that future projects acknowledge and respect Wurundjeri Country.

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Whole of Country Plan 2025 - 2035

The Whole of Country Plan sets out Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung cultural strength-based objectives for managing Country. The Places for People Plan will align with this plan and its principles:

- Authenticity
- Collaboration
- Empowerment
- Future-focused
- Knowledge
- Leadership
- Quality
- Resilience
- Respect
- Unity

How will this Places for People Plan connect with Country?

The Places for People Plan outlines design principles to guide the outcome of public space projects. The first principle is Connection to Country. This design principle is informed by information from the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and emphasises the importance of:

- Engaging meaningfully with Traditional Owners on appropriate projects.
- Promoting language, culture, and knowledge sharing through place naming and signage.
- Healing Country through designs that reflect the historical ecology of the area.
- Planting endemic species.
- Creating connections to water in design and Water Sensitive Urban Design.
- Including First Nations public art.
- Providing space for community events.
- Ensuring public spaces are culturally safe for First Nations People.



2. Introduction

What is this Places for People Plan?

Places for People is Council's 10-year plan to create high-quality public spaces that enhance the vibrancy, sustainability, and liveability of Merri-bek's shopping strips and activity centres.

In this plan, public spaces include streets, plazas, laneways, pocket parks, footpaths, kerb extensions, areas of public seating, and landscaped streets.

Why do we need this plan?

Well-designed public spaces and streets provide residents and visitors with welcoming places to gather, rest, connect with others, and engage in the social and cultural life of our municipality.

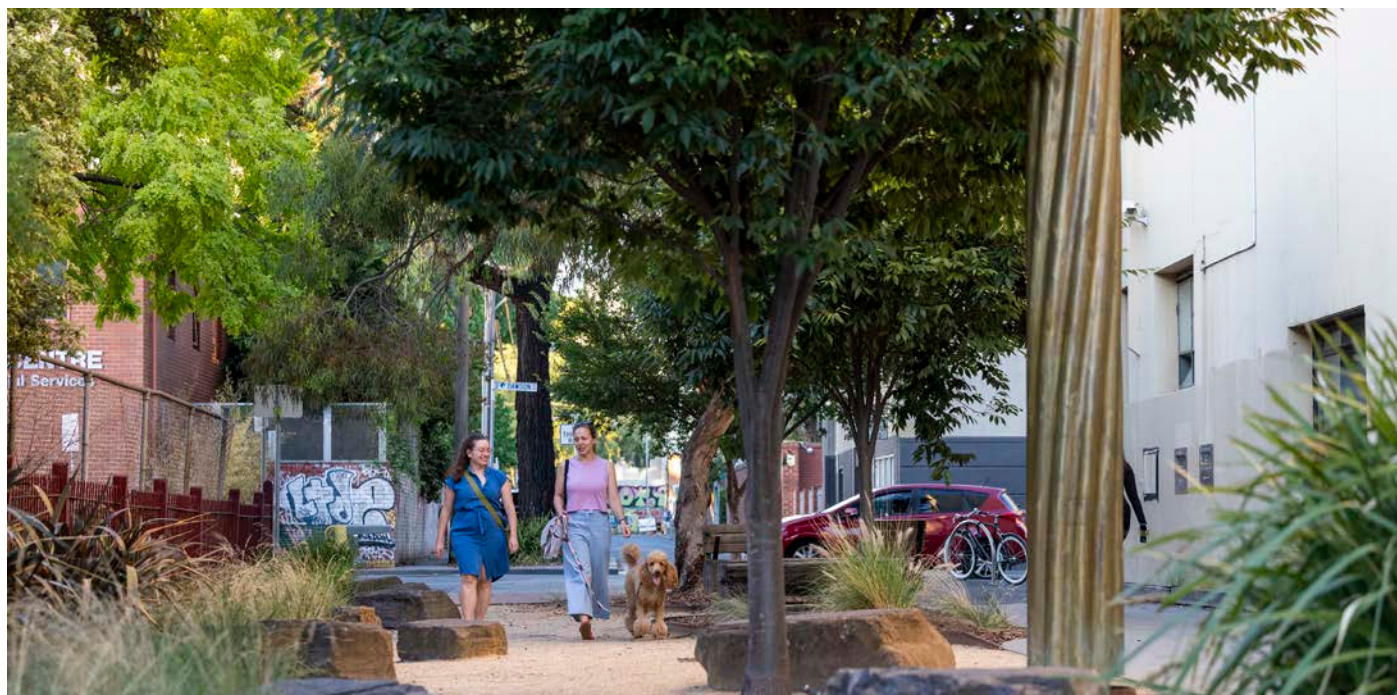
In Merri-bek, we require more and higher-quality public spaces to meet the needs of the growing population, support our local economy, respond to climate change, and address the lack of public spaces in our activity centres – as identified in the Merri-bek Open Space Strategy.

How will this plan deliver new and improved public spaces?

This plan guides Council's future investment in the public realm by identifying opportunities for new and improved public spaces, and in doing so, address key challenges and maximise the benefits of public space.

The plan has two key objectives:

1. To define and outline our approach to public spaces in our major activity centres and neighbourhood and local shopping strips.
2. To identify priority public space projects to be targeted through Council's 10-year capital program.

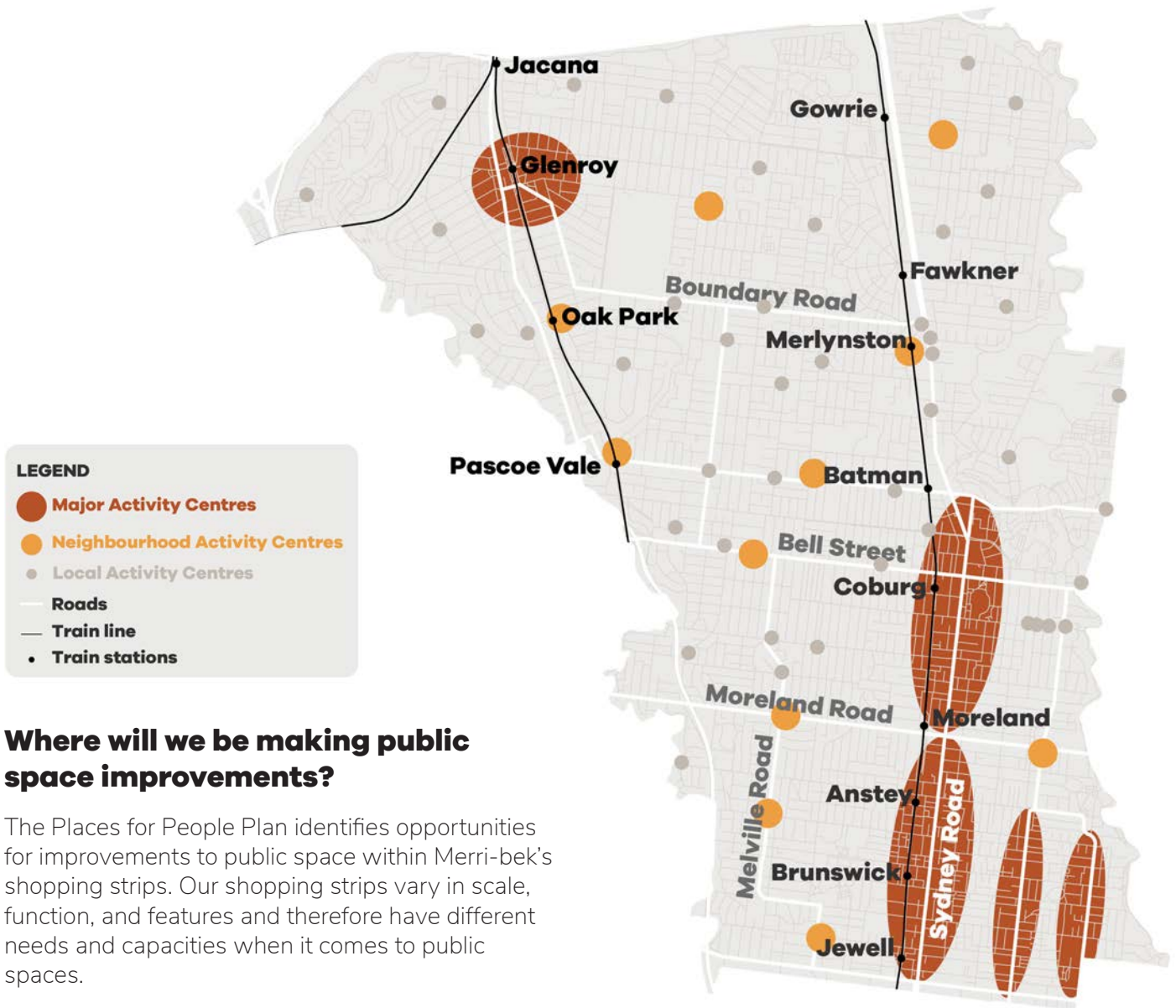


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Where will we be making public space improvements?

The Places for People Plan identifies opportunities for improvements to public space within Merri-bek's shopping strips. Our shopping strips vary in scale, function, and features and therefore have different needs and capacities when it comes to public spaces.

The largest shopping strips are within our three major activity centres - Brunswick, Coburg, and Glenroy. These areas serve large catchments of people and provide a variety of shopping, dining, and entertainment offerings, as well as important community infrastructure, including health and education services.

Our neighbourhood and local shopping strips serve smaller catchments and provide various local services.

Public spaces, streets, and parks in residential areas or outside of shopping strips aren't included in the Places for People Plan.



3. Policy context

State Government context

Plan for Victoria

Plan for Victoria is the Victorian Government's 2025 vision for the future of Victoria. The plan outlines five pillars of action to deliver better housing, jobs, services, places, sustainability, and caring for Country across Victoria.

Places for People aligns with Pillar 3: Great places, suburbs, and towns. This pillar and our plan, aim to deliver public spaces that are community-centred, safe, inclusive, green, and support local business.

Movement and Place

Movement and Place in Victoria is a framework that guides and balances place and movement functions of streets. Developed by the Department of Transport and Planning, the framework keeps people and their needs at the centre of transport planning.

The framework is used to classify streets and their purpose. This is done by determining the movement function of a street on the scale of M1 (high movement) to M5 (low movement) and the place function of a street on the scale of P1 (state/national significance) to P5 (local significance).

Council has aligned both the Places for People and Streets for People plans with Movement and Place in Victoria, ensuring streets are designed with a people-first approach.



Merri-bek Council Vision and Plan

Merri-bek leads and leaves no one behind. In 2035, we are a welcoming, safe, and thriving community. We are sustainable, and our environment is respected. Our community is engaged and informed. Our streets are full of life.

Places for People aligns with all five focus areas outlined in the Council Plan 2025-29, including:

- **Care for nature and climate resilience** by aiming to increase tree canopy cover and street greening, and implement Water Sensitive Urban Design through the Places for People opportunities.
- **Healthy and inclusive communities** by ensuring public spaces are accessible, comfortable, build connection and belonging, and encourage participation of people from diverse backgrounds.
- **Beautiful and liveable city** by creating well-maintained public spaces that add greenery, well-designed street furniture, and public art to our shopping areas.
- **Thriving economy and culture** by creating public spaces that support economic activity by attracting visitors and providing spaces that encourage people to stay longer around our shopping areas.
- **Engaging and responsible Council** by evaluating our new and improved public spaces to ensure they continue to deliver on community needs.

Context

Approach

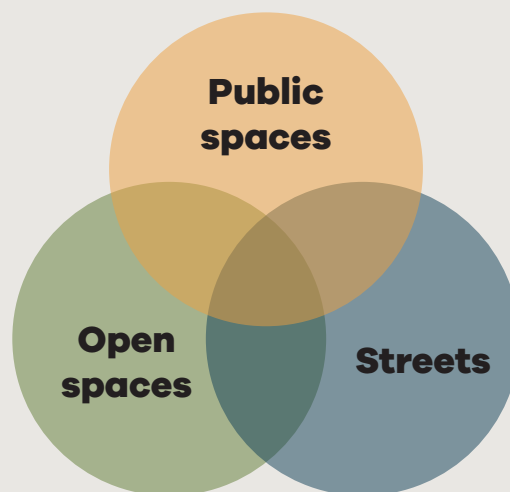
Opportunities



Planning for our public realm

The public realm refers to publicly owned, outdoor places that are open to everyone to move through, rest, recreate, and come together. Our public realm consists of our streets, public places, and open spaces. There is overlap in the way these aspects of our public realm function.

Council has a plan for each aspect of the public realm. Improvements to our streets are addressed in the Streets for People Plan, and improvements to our open spaces are in the Open Space Strategy and Action Plan. This document, the Places for People Plan, focuses on improvements to our public spaces.



Streets for People Plan

Streets for People is Merri-bek's plan to create safer, more accessible, healthy, liveable, and inclusive streets for everyone.

The plan identifies streets that Council will target as Streets for People projects and outlines the process through which the projects will be delivered.

The plan focuses on streets and corridors with relatively lower movement functions, allowing them to play a stronger place role, with an emphasis on amenity and providing comfortable connections into activity centres.

Open Space Strategy

The Merri-bek Open Space Strategy provides direction for the future provision, planning, design, and management of Merri-bek's open space network.

The challenges identified in the strategy include increased pressure on existing open spaces, given the rise in resident and worker populations, and the presence of areas that are lacking open space.

Places for People will contribute to relieving pressure on existing open space and improving underserved areas within the activity centres by identifying opportunities for new and improved public spaces.

Park Close to Home

'A Park Close to Home' is a Council program that aims to create and improve access to open space in areas of Merri-bek with no parks in walking distance.

Shopping Strip Renewal Program

The Shopping Strip Renewal Program 2015-2025 (SSRP) delivered a series of local economic development initiatives and urban design improvements to improve business performance and activate public spaces across neighbourhood shopping strips in Merri-bek. The Shopping Strip Renewal Program concluded in 2025 and has been replaced by the Places for People Plan. This plan now provides the framework for delivering upgrades to neighbourhood and local shopping strips.

Other Council strategies

There are several other Council plans, strategies, and policies related to this plan, which are reflected in the opportunities and design principles. These include, but are not limited to:

- Climate Risk Strategy
- Climate Emergency Action Plan
- Economic Development Action Plan
- Merri-bek Human Rights Policy
- Urban Forest Strategy

4. Our People

Community engagement is essential to delivering projects that the community needs and wants.

How did we draft this plan?

This plan has been informed by Council's past strategic work on public space and community feedback, including from businesses and traders.

What have the community said about public spaces in Merri-bek?

Council has undertaken community engagement around public spaces as part of the Open Space Strategy 2024, Coburg is Here 2026, and this Places for People Plan 2026.

During the development of this plan, we heard from a diverse range of participants, including residents, workers, business owners, and young people. Various community needs and wants were identified through these projects and have shaped the focus of the Places for People Plan.



From the various engagement activities we understand that the community wants to see:

- More public space, especially given the growing population and increasing pressure on existing open spaces.
- Greater prioritisation of public space opportunities in areas with fewer existing spaces.
- Alignment between population growth, needs and future investment when planning for public spaces.
- More public space opportunities for Glenroy.
- More seating, shade, and weather protection.
- More trees and natural planting to improve biodiversity, more canopy cover, and urban cooling along busy and paved streets.
- Public spaces that are accessible to people of all abilities.
- Good connections between public spaces, streets, and transport.
- Balance between the needs of businesses, older people, people with disabilities, and servicing requirements.
- More space for pedestrians.
- Streets that are safe for all users.
- More spaces that provide for a range of activities and programming.
- More seating, lighting, water, public art, play elements, and outdoor dining.
- Clean and well-maintained streets.
- More public space for socialising.
- High-quality outcomes for public spaces.

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"Public spaces in high-density areas act as shared backyards, providing spaces to relax, exercise and play"



¹Merri-bek Precinct Profiles, 2025 ²ABS Census, 2021

"Streets can be for people, not just cars. Slower traffic, trees, seating, more playspace, teenie weenie pocket parks."



"Merri-bek needs more informal areas where you can socialise, relax, and enjoy nature."



How do public spaces benefit the community?

High-quality spaces benefit the community and the environment by:

- Engendering a sense of community belonging, ownership, and civic pride.
- Improving community health and well-being through social connection and connection to nature and the outdoors.
- Supporting social and cultural interaction, reducing isolation, and helping people from different backgrounds feel included and safe.
- Benefiting the local businesses and economy by attracting visitors and providing space for activation.
- Contributing to a centre's identity and unique sense of place.
- Facilitating a range of events and activities, encouraging outdoor activity.
- Environmental benefits include stormwater capture, reuse, and infiltration through integrated water management, expanded tree canopy cover, increased biodiversity, and urban cooling.

5. Our Places

In Merri-bek we have four types of public spaces. Different types of public spaces function differently. They all have value in our community and, depending on their location and condition, need different things.



Forecourts

Forecourts mark the entry or gateway to a destination. These are usually co-located with key transport stops and community facilities, and provide space for waiting, resting, social gathering, and, in some cases, community events.

Forecourts help to activate spaces around buildings and train stations and can contribute to a sense of safety through lighting, clear sightlines, and the presence of people.



Gathering spaces

Gathering spaces are large public spaces that people seek out for social gatherings, cultural events, play, and rest. They are centrally located and designed for community use. These spaces can host a range of community events, including markets, performances, interactive activities, and cultural gatherings, all of which contribute to a sense of community and place identity.

These spaces are often landmarks for an area and contribute to a place's identity and character. Gathering spaces include civic squares, urban pocket parks, and pedestrian malls.

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Streetscapes

Streetscapes and pedestrian links within our activity centres are designed to prioritise the pedestrian experience in busy shopping areas with active frontages. Streetscapes have a high demand for pedestrian activities and lower levels of vehicle movement. They support and contribute to the pedestrian-friendly nature of a place by providing space for rest, infrastructure for safe movement via walking and cycling, and slower vehicular speeds. Streetscapes can directly support economic activity through active edges and providing space for outdoor dining.



Local places

Local places are small and meaningful public spaces. They may include a thoughtfully located seat near a tree or garden bed. They provide a place for people to stop and rest in the shade, as well as contribute to street greening. These spaces are often located in kerb outstands or on a wide footpath and are simple in design, with features such as landscaping and seating.

How to read the opportunities

The place-specific opportunities for public space improvements in our major activity centres are outlined on pages 26 - 39.

Each opportunity is tagged with a coloured circle to indicate whether the opportunity refers to a forecourt, gathering space, streetscape, or local place. The full circle indicates high priority projects, and the open circle indicates an opportunity to be explored.

Legend

-  Forecourt
-  Gathering space
-  Streetscape
-  Local place
-  High priority project
-  Opportunity to explore

Approach



6. Our Process

Places for People will be considered as a part of Council's 10-year Capital Works Program to ensure the coordination of this work and other project priorities. It follows Council's project management framework for capital works project delivery. As a part of this plan, opportunities have been assessed to identify priority projects. All priority projects will be developed in alignment with the design principles outlined on page 19.

Prioritisation

How do we prioritise projects in Brunswick, Coburg, and Glenroy?

Opportunities have been assessed to determine high priority projects and which require further investigation. The opportunities for Brunswick, Coburg, and Glenroy are assessed against the key themes below to determine which projects are feasible and most suitable to happen first. The program remains flexible to ensure that as our community's needs change, the program can be adaptable to changes as new opportunities arise. Opportunities are assessed through the following:



Value for money/time



Community impact



Economic impact



Strategic alignment



Environmental benefit



Ease of deliverability



Other factors

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How do we prioritise projects in neighbourhood and local shopping strips?

The neighbourhood and local shopping strips are prioritised based on an assessment of conditions and constraints. The condition and constraints assessment considers factors including how recently the centre received capital investment, its economic health and the potential for revitalisation, street furniture and footpath quality, and the capacity for street greening.



Condition



Constraints



Other factors



Design principles

Principles have been developed to guide the design of public spaces and streetscapes across Merri-bek.

Connection to Country

Public spaces should be designed to care for Country and work towards healing Country. Public spaces should include elements that acknowledge the land of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and ensure places are culturally safe for First Nations People.



Safe

Public spaces should be welcoming, socially inclusive, and safe for people of all ages, genders, backgrounds, and abilities. Design must consider security and perceptions of safety holistically. Design must aim to facilitate equitable use and everyone's sense of civic ownership and belonging in a public space.

Accessible

Public spaces should contribute to Merri-bek's network of open spaces, active transport corridors, and public transit routes, ensuring accessibility and encouraging sustainable transport. Public spaces should be well linked, easy to reach, and accessible to people of all abilities.

Meaningful

Public spaces should reflect the culture and creativity of the surrounding community to create meaning and inspire community pride. They should encourage people from diverse communities to meet, connect, and feel they belong. Design should cater to all living things creating comfortable and well-loved spaces.

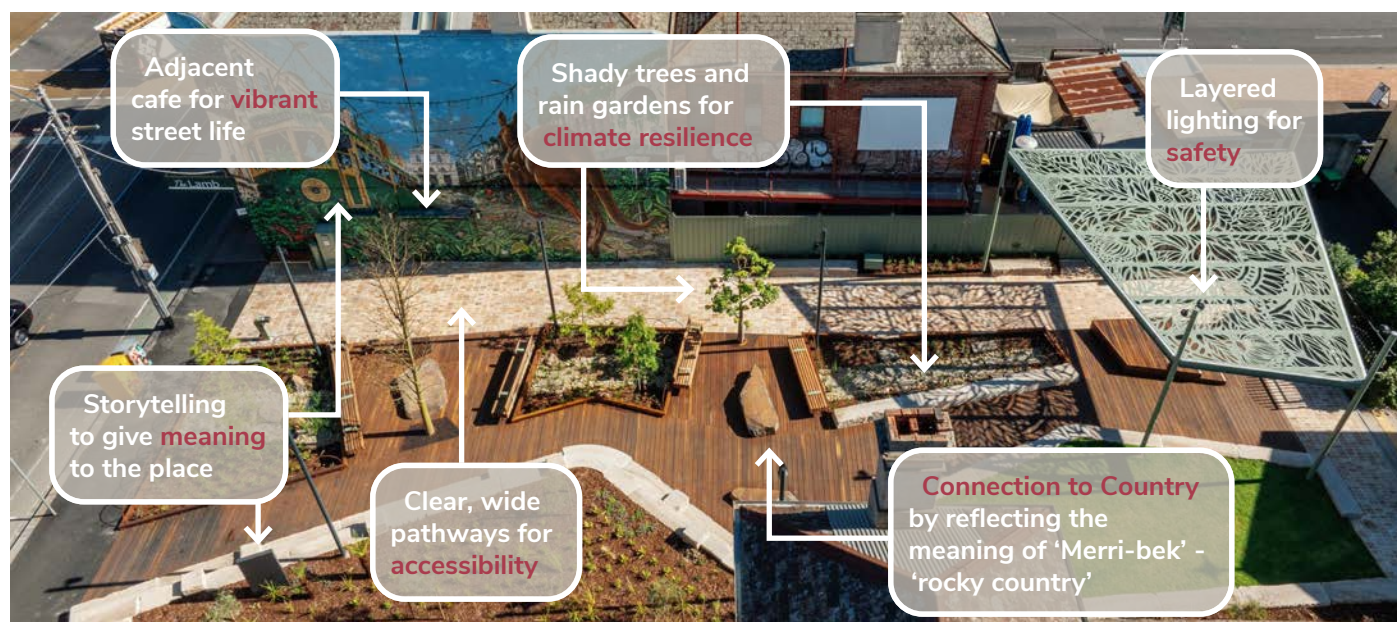
Vibrant

Public spaces should be engaging and beautiful destinations of public life, supporting the economic vibrancy of our city. They should vary in size and function, providing for a diverse variety of experiences and activity.

Climate resilient

Public spaces should aim for climate-positive design and mitigate climate impacts on our city, contributing to a more liveable, resilient, and cooler urban environment and wildlife corridors. Shade is essential to public life and is a basic condition for safe mobility.

What could this look like?



7. Delivering the Plan

Allocating investment

Around 70% of shops in Merri-bek are located in our major activity centres. These centres attract large numbers of visitors, connecting people to community infrastructure and services. The Brunswick, Coburg and Glenroy activity centres serve wide catchments of the community, whereas our smaller shopping strips tend to service local areas. The Places for People Plan recognises that the scale of the identified opportunities across different centres will relate to the scale of their potential community benefit.

The public space projects in major activity centres are naturally larger, more complex, and take longer to deliver. This plan considers the spaces within major activity centres individually and within the unique context and character of each major activity centre. The prioritisation criteria informs which projects are feasible and therefore a priority for consideration in Merri-bek's Capital Works Program.

Our neighbourhood and local shopping strips also require investment in important day-to-day streetscape amenities such as street furniture and tree planting to ensure our local shopping strips are pleasant places to be and encourage locals to visit. This plan recommends upgrades continue to occur in these areas with consideration to the opportunities and constraints of each centre.

Additional programs and projects may be supported subject to external funding. Council will continue to pursue state and federal grants to support public realm improvements for the city.



Strategic implementation

Places for People will guide improvements in Merri-bek's activity centres and streetscapes over the next ten years. Through Places for People, Council will invest funding into upgrading public spaces for our community. These works will improve the vibrancy, safety, and function of public space in our activity centres.

This program provides Council with a clear, equitable plan for prioritising investment. It will guide long-term capital works planning and inform annual budgets. The program provides a list of opportunities while allowing flexibility to respond to emerging priorities or new funding opportunities. Project opportunities may arise throughout the life of the program, and these will be assessed against the prioritisation criteria of Places for People in alignment with the design principles.

Places for People will be considered as a part of Council's 10-year Capital Works Program to ensure the coordination of this work and other project priorities. It follows Council's project management framework.

We will conduct community engagement on improvements on a project-by-project basis. The type of community engagement undertaken will be tailored to each project, factoring in the type of activity centre or shopping strip, the level of change being proposed, the annual budget process, and in conjunction with our Council Plan commitments.

This approach will ensure that Council can deliver on the program, yet still respond to factors that may affect delivery timelines, including cost escalations and feasibility study outcomes.

Opportunities from Places for People will be considered each year as a part of Council's annual budget process. A formal review of the plan will be undertaken after four years to ensure the Places for People remains relevant, reflects community needs, expectations, existing conditions, Council's financial resources, and is responsive to any legislative changes.

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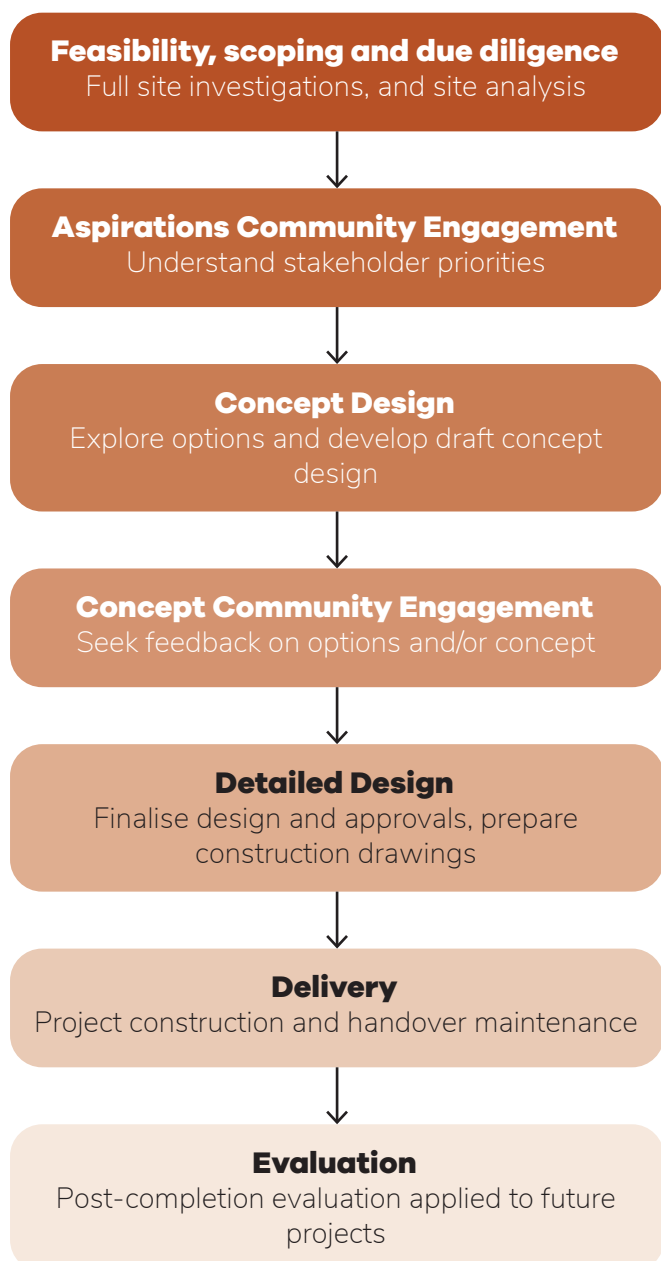
Opportunities



Project implementation

The following flowchart provides an overview of the steps that will be followed for the implementation of individual projects or upgrades. As each project is unique and varies in scale and complexity, we will tailor this general approach to fit the needs of each project and its stakeholders.

Temporary spaces may also be created in parallel to this process to trial and test changes or interventions in simple and low-cost ways. This approach, known as 'tactical urbanism' can play an important role in creating more public space, activating underutilised land, and complementing the community engagement process.



Supporting implementation

In addition to the capital works and public space projects identified in this plan, which provide a vital element of the physical public realm, Council provides ongoing operational and community services that help to make our activity centres great places. These services and programs continue to evolve to meet the needs of our growing population and local economy, and undergo regular planning and review.

- **Merri-bek Economic Development Action Plan** which includes themes and actions to support businesses and the local economy, including in Merri-bek's activity centres.
- **Merri-bek Public Place Service Improvement Plan** which outlines improvement initiatives for the most important services that help keep Merri-bek's public spaces clean, safe and inviting.
- **Merri-bek Public Art and Murals Program** which guides the integration of public art in public spaces to beautify, engage, and excite.
- **Festivals, Events and Place Activation** which guides festivals, events, and place programming that activate Council's public spaces, engage and connect the community, and support local businesses.
- **Transport Safety Programs** and initiatives to make streets and movement corridors safer for everyone, including upgrading crossings, speed limit reductions, and traffic calming strategies.
- **Social Cohesion Plan** which focuses on the 'inclusive places and spaces' theme to make our public places inclusive, culturally safe and welcoming for people from diverse backgrounds. It also supports community events, local activation, and gives underrepresented groups the chance to help shape and use these spaces.

8. Measuring success

How do we measure and evaluate change?

The Plan

Regular monitoring of the progress of the Places for People Plan will be undertaken as part of Council's Capital Works Program and Council's Operational Reporting.

Some of the measures we will report on are:

- Number of Places for People opportunities designed
- Number of programs delivered as identified in this Plan
- Improvements delivered in alignment with the Capital Works Program funding allocations
- Amount of external funding received for Places for People projects

Individual Places for People Projects

We will also evaluate each Places for People project that is delivered. There may be specific measures for individual projects, but generally, projects will be monitored by:

- Collecting qualitative data to understand how people feel about the project through meaningful community engagement, including trader sentiment surveys.
- Collecting quantitative data to understand how the places are being used. This may include vacancy rates of shops, footpath conditions, pedestrian counts, parking surveys, tree condition reports. Streetscape projects may also include Road Safety Audits, Healthy Streets Assessments, and crash statistics.

Each project will be assessed against the principles of the Places for People Plan, considering how it contributes to improving the following qualities of public space:

1. Connection to Country
2. Accessible
3. Vibrant
4. Safe
5. Meaningful
6. Climate resilient

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Opportunities



9. Brunswick Sydney Road

Today

Brunswick Activity Centre, centred on Sydney Road, is a vibrant and dense urban centre that reflects its creative, culturally diverse community. The built form is a mix of fine-grain heritage facades and high-density apartments, complemented by a small number of quality public spaces that provide residents and visitors with public space and community facilities. The civic heart around the Town Hall, Library, Counihan Gallery, Brunswick Baths, and Balam Balam Place is a hive of activity supported and enhanced by the surrounding precinct anchors.

The main shopping strip of Sydney Road is dominated by independent retailers, with an eclectic blend of arts venues, multicultural dining, and retail businesses. The Brunswick Design District and RMIT University anchor the creative activity evident in the galleries, businesses, and murals that add vibrancy to Brunswick. The commercial landscape is trending towards high quality dining experiences, retail, and services, with some specialty retail, notably the well-established Bridal precinct.

Despite its economic success, leading urban initiatives, and reputation as a creative and cultural destination, Sydney Road itself is dominated by vehicular traffic and is lacking in street greening and open space, while the narrow Upfield corridor and heavily utilised shared path feels cramped and congested.

In the future

The Brunswick Level Crossing Removal Project (LXRP) will transform the Upfield corridor, linking neighbourhoods either side of the rail line, and creating a new, substantial open space corridor. The project will bring excellent opportunities for new public spaces aligned with the new and heritage stations, along with smaller urban pocket parks in the adjacent streets, as documented in Council's Upfield Urban Design Framework. Council will advocate for these spaces to be delivered as part of the LXRP.

As Sydney Road is state-owned with managed clearways, Council is limited in the level of change it can currently bring to the streetscape. Major state investment in accessible tram stops is desperately needed and will bring the opportunity to transform the corridor into a more vibrant and people-friendly street with ample space for greening and active street life. Council will continue to advocate for this Victorian Government investment in the whole Sydney Road corridor through this plan, see pages 38-39 for an overview of what Council will be advocating for through this plan.

In the meantime, the established, fine-grained urban fabric of Brunswick means that Council's approach in this corridor is to build upon the provision of smaller public spaces along the main activity street, to create a strong network of special spaces that provide welcome breaks in the built form, and frequent green and cool places of respite and connection.

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Opportunities for Brunswick, Sydney Road



The full circle indicates a high-priority project

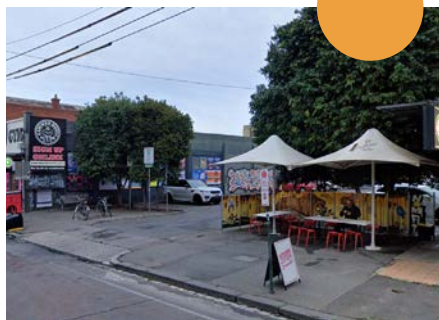


The open circle indicates an opportunity to explore



568 Sydney Road

Provide a new public park through the Park Close to Home program.



Sydney Road forecourts

Explore enlarging and upgrading existing forecourts at 682 Sydney Road and 797 Sydney Road.



Local places

Explore opportunities for projects along Sydney Road to improve street greening and walkability.



Wilson Avenue

Explore upgrading the Wilson Avenue bouldering wall area.



Sparta Place precinct

Explore the potential to improve Sparta Place.



Pedestrian Link to Frith St

Explore upgrading the Council-owned laneway to provide a pedestrian link to Frith Street Park.

Upfield Corridor Urban Design Framework

Council has developed an Upfield Corridor Design Framework to have more of a say on what the Level Crossing Removal Project (LXRP) will look like in Brunswick. The framework includes draft concept plans for various opportunities that extend the benefits of the LXRP beyond the rail corridor through small public spaces and streetscape projects.

The intention is that the opportunities will be delivered over multiple years, either during or after the completion of the LXRP. The opportunities include new public spaces and streetscapes.



10. Brunswick Lygon & Nicholson St

Today

The Lygon Street and Nicholson Street corridors are diverse in their offering and character, and therefore require different approaches when it comes to public spaces and the public realm.

Lygon Street is a long shopping strip with a variety of modern restaurants, local bars, local supermarkets, and shops. At the southern end of Lygon Street, the vibrant dining area is supported by wide footpaths, kerb outstands, and minor street greening.

Towards the north of Lygon Street, around high-density developments, and local service businesses, the footpaths are narrower, and the street greening is very limited. Off the main corridor, however, there is considerable open space, including Methven Park and Fleming Park.

Nicholson Street is a more fragmented spine with pockets of commercial activity amongst stretches of residential homes, contributing to low levels of street activation. There is a mix of cafes and local services that cater more to residents over visitors to the area. The recently completed East Brunswick Village has established a commercial anchor that provides a large supermarket as well as entertainment, retail, and dining services.

In the future

There is a key opportunity to capitalise on the success of the southern section of Lygon Street through upgrading the streetscape to provide improved pedestrian amenity, street greening, and new public spaces. This area is likely to continue to attract traders offering quality dining experiences and boutique retail.

Opportunities in the northern section of Lygon Street are limited by the narrow footpaths. Council is advocating for accessible tram stops to deliver wider footpaths, frequent pedestrian crossings, and new space for greening to contribute to a better public realm. There is some opportunity to create new public spaces within side streets in this section of the corridor. Council is currently trialling reduced speeds to 30 km/h on the Lygon Street corridor and will continue to advocate for reduced speeds on Nicholson Street.

Given the dominance of housing and lack of continuous shopping strips, Nicholson Street is unlikely to develop into a continuous spine of activity, and it is anticipated that new residential development is more likely to be medium-density housing on existing residential lots. East Brunswick Village is evolving into a larger precinct and defines somewhat of a shift from a residential to a mixed-use area.

Context

Approach

Opportunities



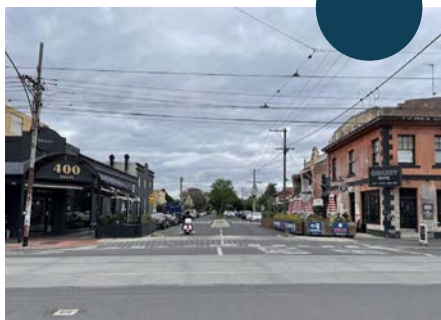
Opportunities for Lygon and Nicholson Street, Brunswick



The full circle indicates a high-priority project

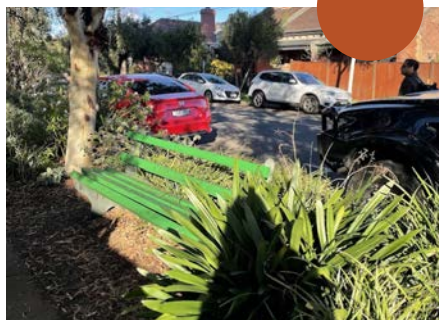


The open circle indicates an opportunity to explore



Dining precinct

Upgrade the south of Lygon Street streetscape.



Local places

Explore opportunities for small projects on side streets to improve street greening and walkability.



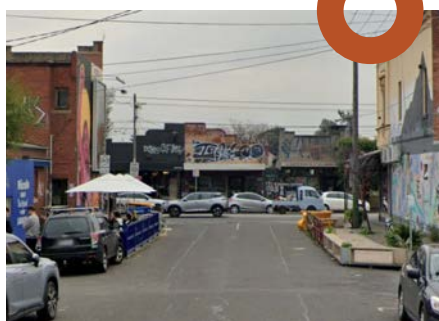
Future parks

Investigate land purchasing opportunities for gathering spaces through Park Close to Home.



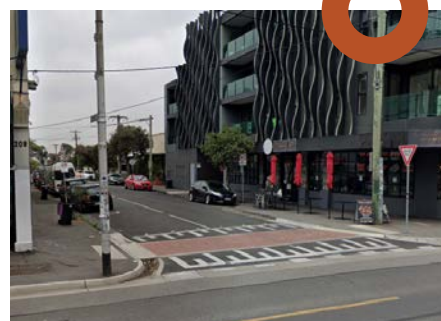
Lygon Street/Albion Street

Explore the potential for improvements to pedestrian amenity at Lygon Street/Albion St.



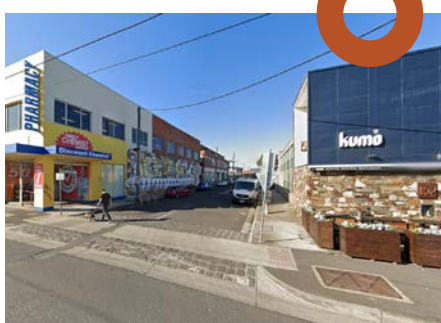
Piera Street

Explore the potential for improvements to pedestrian spaces in Piera Street.



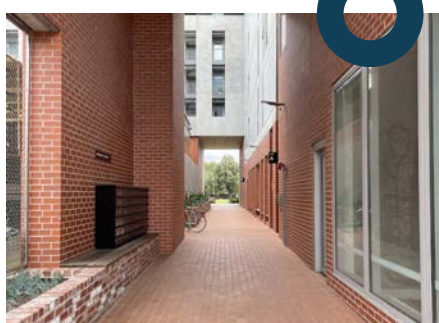
Jarvie Street

Explore the potential for improvements to pedestrian spaces in Jarvie Street.



O'Connor Street

Explore the potential for improvements to pedestrian spaces in O'Connor Street.



Nicholson Street laneways

Explore opportunities for improving the pedestrian amenity of laneways off Nicholson Street.

11. Coburg

Today

Coburg is a unique and evolving activity centre that reflects the cultural diversity and rich history of the area. Rows of heritage shopfronts sit alongside light industrial buildings on Sydney Road, larger commercial buildings and car parking occupy the centre, while high-density apartments stand on the historic Pentridge Prison site.

The heart of Coburg is somewhat fragmented with the civic anchors being spread out from the buzz of the multicultural food and retail offerings on Sydney Road and Victoria Mall. The large areas of surface parking between Sydney Road and the station create a barrier to the walkability of the centre. At the southern end of Sydney Road there is a lack of cohesion due to the mix of building types. This reduces the walkability of the area as commercial destinations are limited and widely spaced. Sydney Road Coburg is increasingly becoming a destination for jewellery shopping, contributing to an evolving commercial identity.

The quality of public realm varies across the activity centre. Successful initiatives range from the iconic Victoria Mall to smaller interventions such as the Dunnes Lane pedestrian link, providing a key connection to Coburg Leisure Centre and Bridges Reserve. The same limitations relating to Sydney Road itself, and the need for accessible tram stops outlined previously, apply through Coburg.

In the future

Central Coburg will undergo significant transformation as outlined in the framework for central Coburg. The new Coburg Library and Piazza will establish the heart of Coburg and provide a stage for public life to better connect the centre and the community. This catalyst project, along with the future of the Council owned sites, will deliver a variety of significant public realm improvements.

The new Coburg Health Hub on Urquhart Street will also attract many visitors in need of quality public space, and significantly intensify the level of activity around the civic centre. Coburg is beginning to see some high-density development along the Sydney Road corridor, and with growing pressure on housing supply, it is likely that development will increase given the opportunities that larger commercial sites offer. This development should create a more consistent street wall and fine-grain commercial interface, leading to a more activated and walkable spine.

With the anticipated density, it is essential that public realm improvements keep up to accommodate the growing residential population, and public spaces are provided for rest, gathering, and play. This plan identifies streetscape upgrades, public space upgrades, and street closures that provide opportunities to create new and improved public spaces to support the community and economy in Coburg.

Context

Approach

Opportunities



Opportunities for Coburg



The full circle indicates a high-priority project



The open circle indicates an opportunity to explore



Victoria Mall

Undertake short-term improvements to Victoria Mall. To be delivered in 2026-27.



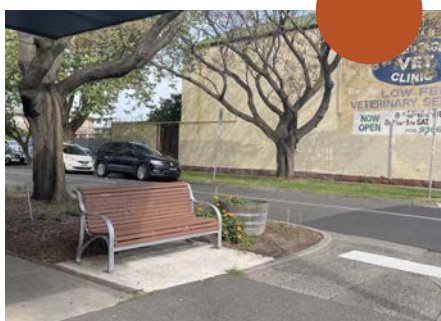
Urquhart Street

Upgrade Urquhart streetscape, linking Coburg Health Hub, the Civic Centre, and schools.



Coburg Health Hub

New gathering space to be delivered through Coburg Health Hub development.



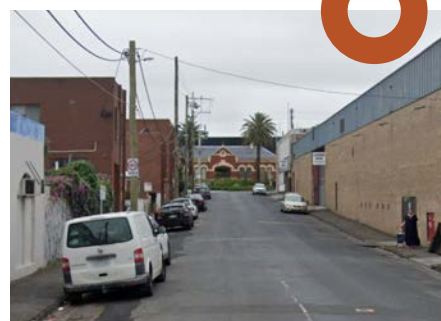
Local places

Explore opportunities for small projects on side streets to improve street greening and walkability.



Civic Centre forecourt

Explore upgrade of the existing forecourt at the Civic Centre.



Carron and Allen Street

Explore the potential for improvements to pedestrian spaces in Carron and Allen streets.

Central Coburg

Council will be delivering a range of public realm projects through the program for central Coburg. The framework for Coburg outlines opportunities for new public spaces and streetscapes across central Coburg. The new Coburg Library and Piazza are underway and serve as the catalyst project for a range of public realm upgrades outlined in the framework. Opportunities for upgrading key streetscapes and new pedestrian links include Louisa Street and Waterfield Street, Victoria Street and Victoria Street Mall, Russell Street, as well as new streets and laneways.





12. Glenroy

Today

Glenroy provides a variety of retail and hospitality. The area is evolving as a multicultural hub, with businesses reflecting the variety of cultural communities that live in Glenroy. The pedestrian experience is hindered by the significant surface car parking and high volumes of vehicular traffic along Pascoe Vale Road and Glenroy Road that run through the core of the centre.

Wheatsheaf Road and Post Office Place are important local shopping strips that provide a mix of cafes, small restaurants, and local services. These strips are walkable and provide some greening. The pedestrian experience on Pascoe Vale Road is unwelcoming, as traffic dominates and there is limited greenery. The lack of public transport and limited crossing points further reduces the walkability and connectivity of the centre. Glenroy Road provides a similar experience, and Council is advocating to the Victorian Government to improve these conditions on both major roads.

The Glenroy Hub is a well-used, key community facility that provides valued services and hosts a variety of great community events that bring vibrancy to Glenroy, notably the annual Glenroy Festival. Access to the hub could be improved to provide a better connection to the core of Glenroy. Council is advocating for improved road safety on Plumpton Avenue.

The renewal of Glenroy Station through the Level Crossing Removal Project has provided high-quality public space and greening to Glenroy.

In the future

Glenroy is yet to experience considerable development that transforms existing large private sites into mixed-use developments that contribute to the commercial activity of the centre.

The Coles site presents a car park to the Glenroy Road frontage and a blank wall to Morgan Court. This site has the potential to introduce active edges, more street life, and residential and commercial activity. Similarly, the key site to the east of the station represents a great opportunity for a mixed-use development incorporating new public space and activated pedestrian links adjacent to the station and along Hartington Street.

For major transformations to be successful in Glenroy, it is critical that pedestrian infrastructure, such as appropriate crossing points, are considered and complement public realm projects. Until some of these key sites change, the approach in Glenroy is to focus on those streets which offer high potential for pedestrian amenity and street life due to the adjacent built form, lower levels of traffic, and proximity to the station.

Context

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Opportunities



Opportunities for Glenroy



The full circle indicates a high-priority project



The open circle indicates an opportunity to explore



Wheatshaeaf Road

Upgrade Wheatshaeaf Road.
Project to be completed by 2027.



Morgan Court Activation

Undertake minor improvements to Morgan Court. Small upgrades will be delivered in 2026-27.



Post Office Place

Upgrade Post Office Place streetscape.



Glenroy Station forecourts

Explore the potential to upgrade the station forecourts around Glenroy Station.



Belair Avenue

Explore the potential for a new local place at Belair Avenue.



Local places

Explore opportunities for small projects on side streets to improve street greening and walkability.



Pascoe Vale Road

Explore the potential to upgrade the pedestrian areas of Pascoe Vale Road.



Morgan Court streetscape

Explore the potential to upgrade streetscape south of the Morgan Court public space.

13. Neighbourhood and local shopping strips

Neighbourhood shopping strips

Neighbourhood shopping strips have a mix of uses to meet the daily and weekly needs of the local community. In Merri-bek there are 12 neighbourhood shopping strips. This can include shops, services, supermarkets, small businesses, and cafes.

These centres:

- Serve a smaller number of residents, within a largely residential neighbourhood - 8,000 to 10,000 residents
- Have between 20 and 60 shop fronts
- Cover smaller areas, typically one to two city blocks
- Play an important role in providing medical/health and community services and a place to meet and socialise in the local area.

Some examples of neighbourhood shopping strips include Bonwick Street in Fawkner and Melville/Moreland Road in Brunswick West.

Upgrades are anticipated to include street furniture renewal and enhanced greening including new street trees wherever space allows.

The allocation between centres will be considered annually through the adoption of the Capital Works Program.

Local shopping strips

Local shopping strips provide access to small local shopping services. These centres serve the daily convenience needs of nearby residents and often include a small convenience store and services such as dry cleaners, hairdressers, and coffee shops. There are 43 local shopping strips.

These centres:

- Serve nearby residents for their daily convenience
- Vary in size from just a couple of shopfronts in a local street to a block or two of shops in a residential neighbourhood
- Have between 2 and 20 shop fronts
- Form part of the local urban fabric, creating street life and activity within our neighbourhoods.

Some examples of local shopping strips include Coonans Road in Pascoe Vale South and North Street in Hadfield.

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Opportunities for neighbourhood and local shopping strips



The full circle indicates a high-priority project



The open circle indicates an opportunity to explore



Better footpaths

Upgrade footpaths and roads for community safety and accessibility.



Better greening

Increase street greening for example in East Street.



Better street furniture

Install new public seating and improve existing public seating.



West Street

Streetscape upgrade project to be completed by 2027.



Bell Street/Melville Road

Explore opportunities to improve pedestrian amenity.



Melville Road/Albion Street

Explore opportunities to improve pedestrian amenity and increase street greening.



Grantham/Union Street

Explore opportunities to improve pedestrian amenity and public art

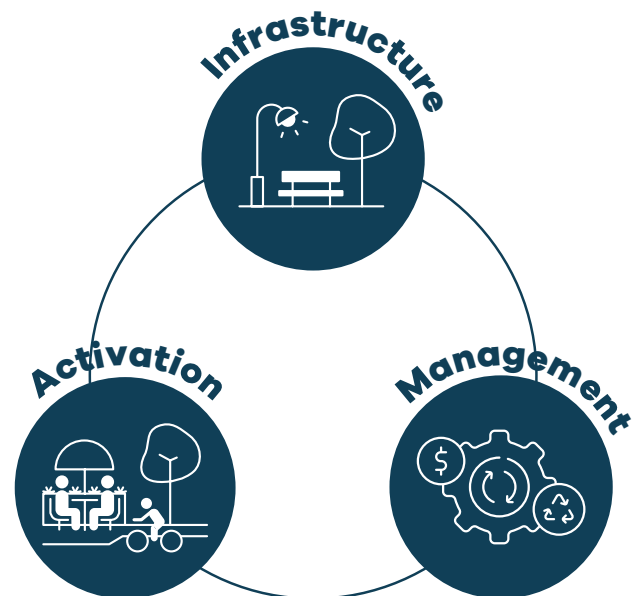
14. Plans & programs

The importance of planning

For public spaces to function well, activation and the management of a space are essential beyond the physical infrastructure. Even if a space is designed with good infrastructure, it is essential that people use the space (activation) and that it is well-maintained, clean, and complies with Council policies and permits (management).

This plan identifies opportunities for new and improved plans and programs to better activate, manage, and improve our public spaces beyond the place-based opportunities.

There are many other programs and plans currently in place that work well to support the activation and management of our public spaces, see page 37.



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Opportunities for plans and programs



Streetscape guidelines

Develop streetscape guidelines to guide the design and material standards of our streets.



Shop front renewal

Continue to work with businesses to improve their shop fronts and outdoor dining areas.



Footpath Trading review

Review and improve the Footpath Trading Guidelines to be clear and easy to understand for traders.



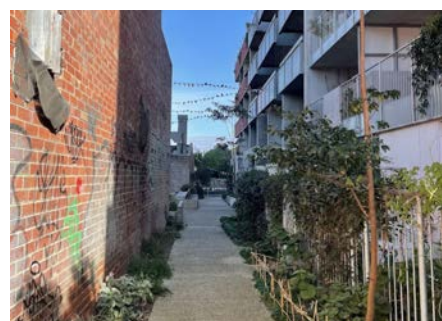
Tactical Urbanism

Refine the process for planning and implementing public space trials and new ideas.



Maintenance & cleanliness

Deliver quality street cleansing and maintenance to keep our public spaces at their best.



Public space on private land

Explore opportunities to partner and deliver new and improved public spaces on private land.



Social support

Work to protect dignity and provide support for people experiencing homelessness or ill mental health.



Inclusive places & spaces

Deliver the socially inclusive places and spaces in line with the Social Cohesion Plan.



Asset renewal

Deliver quality street furniture, footpath renewal and urban forest creation and maintenance.

15. Advocacy

Advocating for change

Advocacy is essential for making change across our municipality on roads and areas that are not within Council's jurisdiction.

Council advocates and works with governing bodies whose decision making impacts our community to maximise the benefits of their project and programs and deliver on community aspirations.

Through this plan, we heard a range of ideas from our community for improving some of the major state-owned corridors in Merri-bek. This plan outlines advocacy opportunities to work towards achieving these improvements.

What needs to change?

The characters of the Brunswick, Coburg, and Glenroy activity centres are dominated by the linear nature of our main activity streets, Sydney Road, Lygon Street, and Pascoe Vale Road.

The physical form of these streets is often constrained by the tramlines managed by Yarra Trams and the associated clearways managed by the Department of Transport and Planning. These clearways mean that the existing narrow footpaths can't currently be widened to make additional space for pedestrians and street greening.

Both Sydney Road and Lygon Street require accessible tram stops to serve the needs of our community, and this is a major advocacy agenda

for Council. Once achieved, the introduction of accessible tram stops will transform the configuration and character of these streetscapes.

Until the Victorian Government invests in accessible tram stops or transforms clearways, Council is limited in the changes it can make to footpath widths and tree planting along Sydney Road, Lygon Street, and Pascoe Vale Road. Given these limitations, our interim approach is to:

- Maximise greening opportunities adjacent to major roads through a continuing program of local places, as outlined on pages 27, 29, 31, and 33.
- Focus on improvements in local streets leading to major roads to enhance the movement network to reach these centres, as outlined in the Streets for People Plan.
- Advocate to the Victorian Government for improved pedestrian crossing times and frequency to aid pedestrian movement and connectivity across these streets.
- Improve the amenity of Sydney Road through focused cleansing, street furniture renewal, and decluttering of footpaths by the removal of redundant signs and infrastructure through the 'Love Sydney Road' program.
- Continue to advocate and implement 30 km/h speed limits on major roads as trialled on Lygon Street.

Context

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Opportunities for advocacy



Sydney Road

Advocate for better pedestrian amenity, street greening, and lower speed limits.



Accessible tram stops

Advocate for accessible tram stops on Sydney Road and Lygon Street.



Pascoe Vale Road

Advocate for better pedestrian amenity, street greening and lower speed limits.



LXRP

Advocate for maximising the public space opportunities and improving east-west links.



Better access to shops

Advocate for the removal of step entries to improve accessibility to shops for mobility device users.



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