



# Darebin Neighbourhood Character Study

## Existing Character Report

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November 2021

Prepared for DAREBIN CITY COUNCIL

**ETHOS  
URBAN**



## Acknowledgement of Country

Ethos Urban acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people who are the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land we now call Darebin and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

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# INTRODUCTION



# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of this Study

The Darebin Neighbourhood Character Study is being undertaken to update and accurately reflect the existing and preferred neighbourhood character for the municipality.

To achieve this objective, the Study will:

- Provide an assessment of current conditions and a review of the existing and now outdated Neighbourhood Character Study, which was completed in 2007.
- Undertake community and stakeholder consultation to better understand character values, inform preferred character outcomes, and determine design guidelines for the City of Darebin.
- Finalise preferred character statements and design guidelines in alignment with the Housing Strategy for all character areas within the City of Darebin.

The revised Neighbourhood Character Areas and Design Guidelines will be implemented through an amendment to the Darebin Planning Scheme, and will provide increased clarity regarding character identification and enhancement.

## 1.2 Purpose of this Report

This report provides a review of the existing neighbourhood character in Darebin. This has been informed by desktop analysis, a site survey of current conditions and a review of existing strategies, including the Neighbourhood Character Study (2007). The report establishes four main character area types, that are further split out into seven character areas (see Section 3 - Neighbourhood Character Profiles).

Future stages of this project will be guided by consultation with the wider community as to the values that could be reflected in later stages of the Neighbourhood Character Study.

### Project Stages

This project will be undertaken in six stages:



## Darebin Snapshot

- Located 4 kilometres north of central Melbourne, Darebin covers approximately 53 square kilometres of land stretching from Heidelberg Road in the south to Mahoney's Road/Keon Parade to the north.
- The City of Darebin recognises the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people (hereafter Wurundjeri) as the traditional custodians of the Darebin municipality. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people work, live and study in Darebin.
- Vibrant high streets, green open space, public transport connectivity and strong local character are amongst the many characteristics valued by residents, workers and visitors.
- Unique to the City Darebin, the following attributes reflect the city's historical development patterns:
  - A clear geographic boundary at Bell Street, which delineates development eras and dwelling styles.
  - Landscaped settings along the creek frontages (Darebin Creek to the east and Merri Creek to the west), as well as undulating topography and tree lined streets.



**166,430** current residents

\*Population id Resident Population - 2020



**32.72%** projected population growth between 2021 - 2041

\*ID Forecast



**35.12%** projected dwelling growth between 2021 - 2041

\*ID Forecast



**4km** North of Melbourne CBD



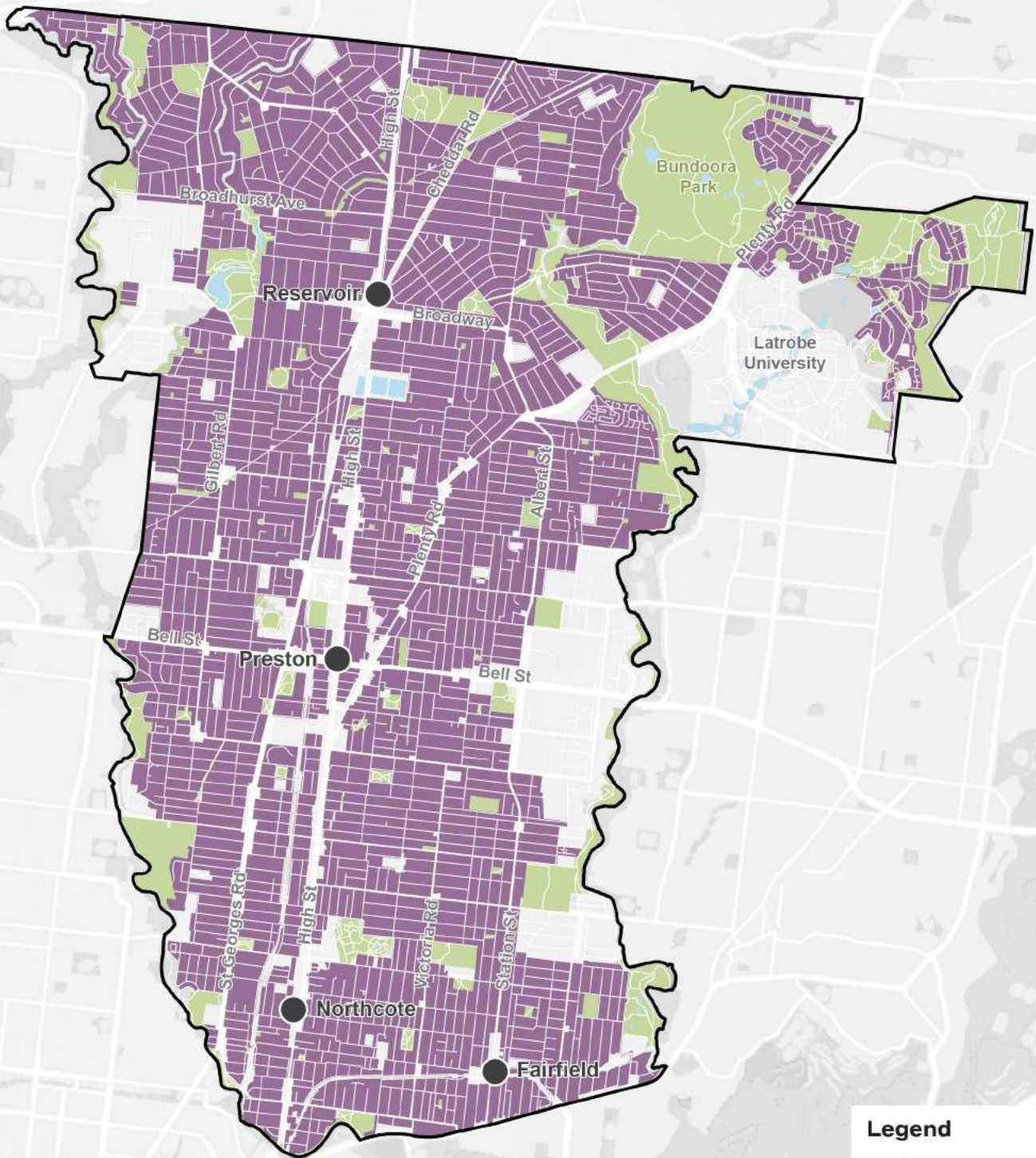
## 1.3 Study Area

The study area for the Darebin Neighbourhood Character Study encompasses all residential zoned land within the municipality. The character of these areas varies greatly across the study area and ranges from the urban, fine grain streetscapes of Northcote and Preston to the spacious garden settings of Reservoir and Bundoora. It is also noted that since the completion of the previous Neighbourhood Character Study in 2007, additional pockets of residential development have occurred in fringe locations, particularly around Latrobe University, as well as growth and change in some established areas.





## Study Area



### Legend

- LGA Boundary
- Study area
- Open space
- Waterbody





## 1.4 What is Neighbourhood Character?

This definition is in reference to Planning Practice Note 43 *Understanding Neighbourhood Character*, and has been adapted to reflect the local context of the City of Darebin.

### Neighbourhood Character in Darebin

Neighbourhood Character is what visually differentiates a neighbourhood from another, and is the measure of a local identity. It encompasses the way a neighbourhood looks and feels. It is created by a combination of landscape, vegetation, the built environment, history and culture, and how they interact.

Local character is distinctive. It influences the sense of belonging a person feels to that place, the way people respond to ambience, how it influences their mood, their emotional response, and the stories that come out of their relationship with that place.

Neighbourhood character contains many different facets. It is important to understand character in a holistic way, which involves examining the relationship between people and the social, environmental and economic characteristics of place. Local character should guide how to manage a changing urban environment so that any changes are sympathetic to the valued characteristics and ultimately shape a preferred future character.

Neighbourhood Character is underpinned by the following core concepts:

- Character is a combination of the public and private realms and how they relate to one another.
- Every property, public place or piece of infrastructure makes a contribution, whether great or small.
- It is the cumulative impact of all these contributions that establishes neighbourhood character.
- The key to understanding character is being able to describe how the features of an area come together to give that area its own particular character.
- All areas have a character in the same way that all people have a personality. In some areas the character may be more obvious, more unusual, or more attractive, but no area can be described as having no character.
- The understanding of the key components of neighbourhood character ultimately informs the definition of preferred future character statements.



For Darebin's residential areas, the key attributes that have been examined in order to evaluate neighbourhood character are:

- Architectural style, form and layout
- Existing materials
- Building heights
- Roof styles
- Garages and carports
- Orientation and siting
- Front fencing
- Gardens and landscaping
- Public realm and streetscape

### Neighbourhood character and amenity

Amenity is about the pleasantness, ambience and liveability of an area. Neighbourhood character is about its sense of place and community value. Regardless of the character of an area there are standards of residential amenity that apply to all residential development. These basic amenity standards include overlooking, overshadowing and solar access. Sometimes, these amenity standards can have an effect on neighbourhood character, but as a general principle, neighbourhood character and amenity should be treated separately.

### Neighbourhood character and heritage

In defining neighbourhood character, it is important to understand the differences between neighbourhood character and places of heritage significance that are generally recognised in the planning scheme.

While all areas have a history or a heritage, not all areas are historically significant. Heritage significance is determined by recognised criteria set by Commonwealth, State and local agencies, with reference to the Burra Charter. In Victoria, heritage places and areas are recognised by application of the Heritage Overlay in planning schemes or inclusion on the Victorian Heritage Register. Cultural heritage is largely embodied in the

underlying values and the broader physical context of a building and place. It is important to manage and retain this fabric and setting to retain the cultural significance of a place. Heritage significance can't be improved, but the fabric of a place can be improved, restored or reinterpreted.

In many areas building style is important to setting the character of the area. This includes not just typical form and massing, but may also include details, materials and colours. Buildings do not need to be old or historically significant to have a character that is important to people's understanding and enjoyment of an area.





## 1.5 Why is the current study being undertaken?

Darebin Council recognise that the existing Neighbourhood Character Study and Precinct Guidelines (2007) are outdated and many policy and implementation measures have changed (e.g. residential zones). This is making neighbourhood character policy difficult to administer, open to challenges, especially in aligning character with housing growth/change and at times producing poor design outcomes.

The Neighbourhood Character Policy details existing conditions and establishes preferred future outcomes for residential development. Council also utilises existing provisions including the Design and Development Overlay (DDO), Heritage Overlay (HO) and Zone schedules to control building heights, setbacks, subdivision sizes and external appearance. The updated NCS provides an opportunity to incorporate additional planning controls to guide residential uses and built form outcomes.

Council has recently developed the Darebin Good Design Guide for apartment development and medium density development. These documents sit outside of the planning scheme and do not have statutory effect, however they are used to influence applications to achieve better design outcomes. It is intended that the Neighbourhood Character Study and future Housing Strategy will support an amendment to the Planning Scheme, to guide housing change and achieve preferred design outcomes.

### **Darebin Neighbourhood Character Study, 2007**

In 2007, a neighbourhood character study for Darebin was completed (by Planisphere). The study method involved three stages and provided recommendations for both statutory implementation and non-statutory mechanisms.

As noted in the previous study, the character type areas are largely focussed on the housing era e.g. Victorian and Edwardian. This Neighbourhood Character Study will consolidate existing character areas where appropriate, broadening them to include a greater focus on the combined effect that built form, vegetation, topography, views, and landscaping have on Neighbourhood Character.

The previous study included recommendations to achieve statutory implementation of the Neighbourhood Character Study. However, several recommendations have not been implemented by Council and require further investigation. This study will establish Preferred Future Character statements and associated design guidelines that will be able to be incorporated into residential zone schedules.

For further assessment of the previous Neighbourhood Character Study, refer to [section 2.6](#).



## 1.6 Methodology

### Desktop Analysis & Background Review

The desktop analysis included all land within the General Residential Zone (GRZ), Neighbourhood Residential Zone (NRZ), Mixed Use Zone (MUZ) and Residential Growth Zone (RGZ). The desktop analysis produced character area boundaries and enabled a general understanding of the study area. The previous study (2007) was used as an indicator for potential character area boundaries.

### Character Survey & Analysis

Meetings were held with Council's planners to discuss existing issues, areas of concerns and threats to character. A site survey was conducted to ground truth the preliminary neighbourhood character areas, which resulted in further refinement of boundaries and areas.

The methodology for the site survey includes:

- A review of the previous neighbourhood character area boundaries.
- A site survey to verify desktop analysis of preliminary character areas.
- An assessment of areas based on the general attributes of private and public realms: built form and layout of the different areas; overall streetscape qualities; vegetation and landscape quality and the era of development.
- Photos for each area and character type.
- Identification of the characteristics and neighbourhood character impacts of new and infill development.
- Identification of more specific character precincts within each character type.

The following character elements were noted during the surveys:

- Undulating topography, particularly in areas adjacent to the creek.
- Streetscape qualities including canopy cover, nature strips, footpaths, road widths, road layout etc.
- Private garden styles and vegetation.
- Building form (including roof form).
- Architectural style.
- Siting including building spacing and setbacks.
- Design detail and finishes.

- Building materials and colours.
- Frontage treatment.
- Car parking and vehicular access.

### Mapping & Preliminary Character Precinct Profiles

This stage consolidated the findings of the background analysis and survey work, which was used to draft a set of Character Precinct Profiles. The initial Precinct Profiles comprised precinct maps, existing character statements, character elements, and issues and threats.

### Consultation

Community and Stakeholder consultation will be undertaken in order to determine key values that will inform the preferred future character statements and design guidelines associated with the updated character areas.

### Preferred Character Statements and Design Guidelines

Following consultation, Preferred Character Statements and Design Guidelines will be prepared, and will reflect the findings of this report as well as values identified by the community and Council.



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# CONTEXT



## 2.0 Context

### 2.1 Overview

#### Implications

As outlined in the following section, the Planning Policy Framework for the City of Darebin seeks to provide guidance for future development within the municipality, with a number of policies relating to built form issues, including neighbourhood character.

Tailored schedules to residential zones will also encourage more appropriate built form outcomes, instead of relying on ResCode standards that do not always respond to the context or character.

Neighbourhood Character Study will seek to address these issues through preferred character objectives and design guidelines.

#### Planning Policy Framework

The Planning Policy Framework (PPF) provides a context for planning and decision making. Planning objectives are fostered through appropriate land use and development policies and practices, which integrate relevant environmental, social and economic factors.

The PPF recognises the importance of neighbourhood character and contextual design. It states that neighbourhood character should be protected and recognised.

#### Municipal Strategic Statement

The Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) outlines a number of objectives and strategies relating to the environment, housing, economic development and transport and infrastructure. It recognises the key issues relating to each theme and provides policy directions and objectives.

#### Local Policy Framework

The City of Darebin Planning Scheme contains local policies relating to residential development in Darebin. The Neighbourhood Character Study is a Reference document to the Darebin Planning Scheme and is embedded in Local Planning Policy at Clause 22.02. The Clause aims to apply the consideration of applications for development and works on land in the Neighbourhood Residential Zone and the General Residential Zone.

It is noted that the Local Planning Policy Framework is currently being translated to into the new integrated PPF and Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) as part of amendment VC148. Although the translation exercise will require a review of LPPF content, key local issues and strategic directions from the LPPF will be retained.

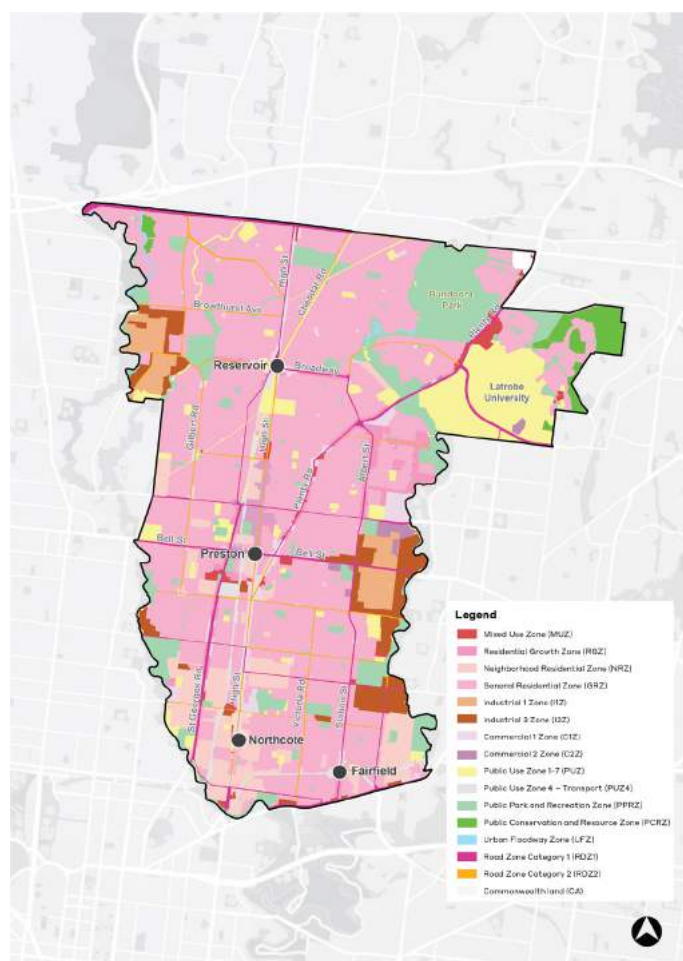
For a full summary of Darebin's Planning Policy Framework, refer to **Appendix C**.



## 2.2 Zones and Overlays

### Residential Zones

- General Residential Zone (GRZ)
- Neighbourhood Residential Zone (NRZ)
- Residential Growth Zone (RGZ)
- Mixed Use Zone (MUZ)



### General Residential Zone (GRZ)

The majority of residential land in Darebin is zoned General Residential (GRZ). The GRZ allows for building heights of up to 9 metres and must not exceed 3 storeys at any point. The three zone Schedules do not provide specific building height controls for Darebin.

### Neighbourhood Residential Zone (NRZ)

The Neighbourhood Residential Zone (NRZ) applies to clusters of residential development, predominantly in the south of Darebin. The NRZ allows for building heights of up to 9 metres and must not exceed 2 storeys at an point. The zone Schedule does not provide building height controls for Darebin.

### Residential Growth Zone (RGZ)

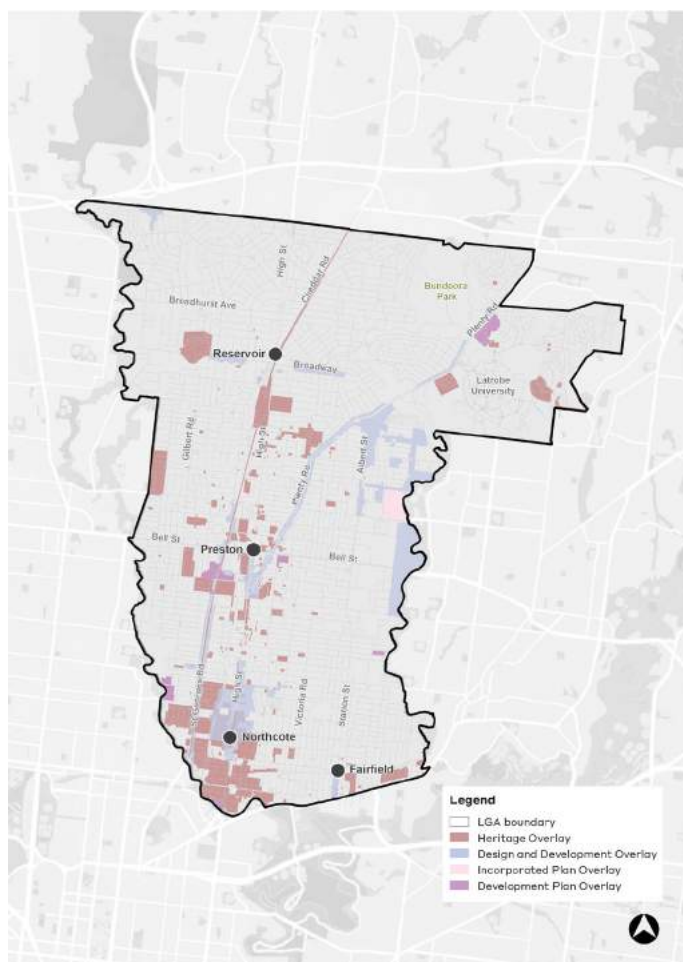
The Residential Growth Zone (RGZ) applies to sites along main roads in Darebin. The RGZ allows for building heights of up to 13.5 metres, unless specified in a schedule to the zone. There are four schedules to the zone- schedules 3 and 4 allow for increases of an extension of an existing building or the construction of a new building to exceed the specified building height. However, the new building must not exceed the height of immediately adjacent buildings facing the same street.

### Mixed Use Zone (MUZ)

The Mixed Use Zone (MUZ) applies to pockets of residential development along major roads. The MUZ does not regulate building height.

## Heritage and Built Form Overlays

- Heritage Overlay (HO)
- Design and Development Overlay (DDO)
- Incorporated Plan Overlay (IPO)
- Development Plan Overlay (DPO)



## Design and Development Overlay (DDO)

Eighteen schedules to the Design and Development Overlay (DDO) are applied across the municipality. The DDOs provide varying building heights, depending on the site location.

### Preston

- Schedule 3 applies to The Junction - South Preston. The DDO specifies building heights ranging from 6 to 18 storeys, depending on the location of the site within this precinct.

### Northcote

- Schedule 5 applies to properties located to the north of Brickworks Lane and east of the All Nations Park. DDO5 specifies building heights of up to 8 metres.
- Schedule 13 applies to Gadd Street and limits building heights to no more than 14 metres above ground level.
- Schedule 14 applies to Northcote Major Activity Centre and provides building heights for the 10 sub-precincts.
- Schedule 16 applies to sites along St Georges Road. The DDO enables building heights between 3 to 6 storeys, depending on the location of the site within this precinct.

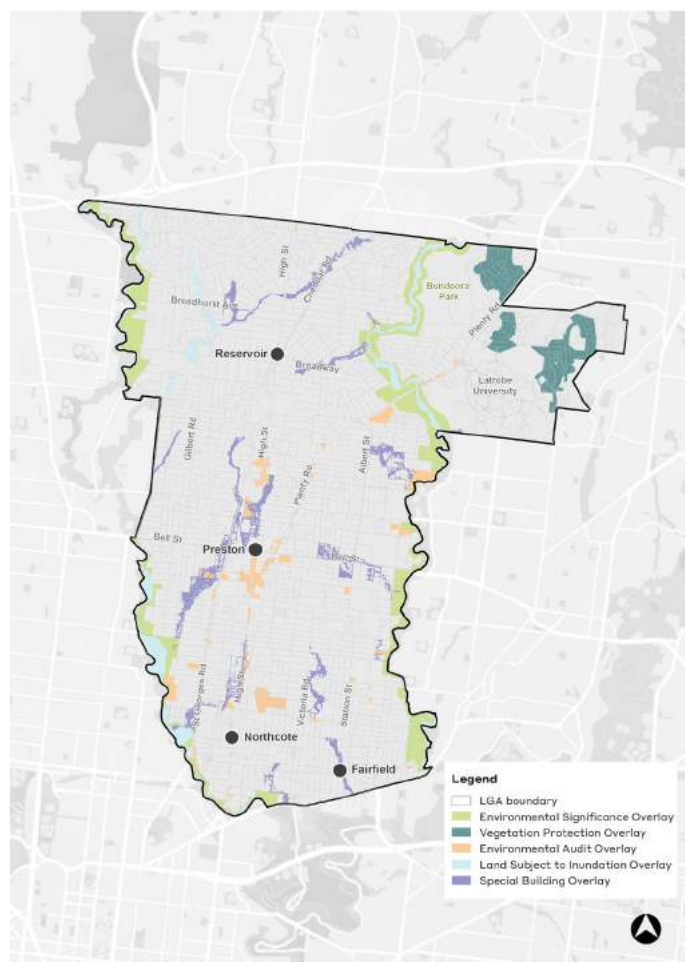
### Plenty Road Corridor

- Schedule 17 applies to sections of the Plenty Road Corridor. The DDO specifies building heights ranging from 3 to 12 storeys.



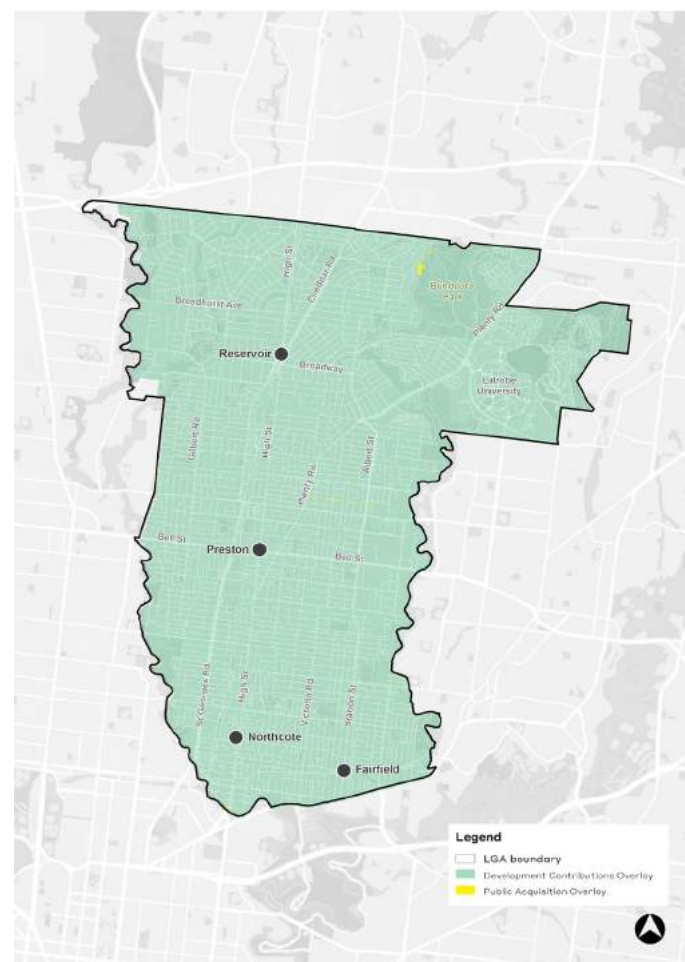
## Environmental and Landscape Overlays

- Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO)
- Vegetation Protection Overlay (VPO)
- Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO)
- Special Building Overlay (SBO)
- Environmental Audit Overlay (EAO)



## Other Overlays

- Public Acquisition Overlay (PAO)
- Development Contributions Plan Overlay (DCPO)



## 2.3 Planning Practice Notes

### Practice Note 43 - Understanding Neighbourhood Character (DELWP, 2018)

*Planning Practice Note 43* provides guidance for applicants, the community and councils about:

- Understanding what is meant by neighbourhood character; and
- Preparing or assessing a permit application for a residential development.

### Practice Note 90 – Planning for Housing (DELWP, 2019)

*Planning Practice Note 90* provides information and guidance about how to plan for housing growth and protect neighbourhood character.

Key points relevant to this study include:

- Housing change is an inevitable and ongoing process. Tensions can arise between housing and neighbourhood character objectives;
- Planning for housing change should be expressed in the form of a Housing Strategy which may also be accompanied by a Neighbourhood Character Strategy;
- Respecting character does not mean preventing change. In simple terms, respect for the character of a neighbourhood means that development should be designed in response to its context; and
- A framework for managing change typically comprises the delineation of minimal, incremental and substantial change areas.

### Practice Note 91 – Using Residential Zones (DELWP, 2019)

*Planning Practice Note 91* provides information and guidance about the use of residential zones in addition to the local policies and overlays to implement strategic work and how best to make use of the key features of the residential zones.

Key points relevant to this study include:

- Dwelling density is no longer the basis for restricting development outcomes in the Neighbourhood Residential Zone;
- It is no longer appropriate to limit housing growth in existing urban areas just because an area is perceived to be remote from jobs, services and public transport;
- There is no 'default' residential zone to be applied to a residential area in Victoria;
- Applying the right residential zone must be derived from the municipal-wide strategic framework plan or residential development framework plan;
- Applying a residential zone should align with either existing building heights if they are sought to be maintained, or align with future building heights identified in strategic work;
- Overlays play an important role to give effect to preferred built form outcomes when a zone will not fully achieve the identified housing or neighbourhood character objectives for an area; and
- Rather than specifying preferred neighbourhood character statements in local planning policy, objectives can be specified in a schedule to a residential zone to implement the preferred neighbourhood character.







## 2.4 Strategic Documents

### Key Findings

A review of relevant policies and strategies has been undertaken. Findings relevant to neighbourhood character and future development opportunities within the City of Darebin have been grouped by theme.

A complete summary of the strategic documents that have been reviewed is provided in **Appendix C**.

#### Reviewed Documents

- Housing Demand Supply Analysis (SGS, 2020)
- Darebin Housing Strategy (City of Darebin, 2013)
- GreenStreets Streetscape Strategy 2012-2020 (City of Darebin, 2012)
- Urban Forest Strategy 2013 – 2028 (City of Darebin, 2013)
- Starting the Conversation to Design Your Darebin 2041 (City of Darebin, 2021)
- Darebin Good Design Guidelines – Apartments, Medium-density development (City of Darebin, 2020)
- Thornbury Park Estate Heritage Study (RBA Architects and Conservation Consultants, 2021)
- Council Agenda- 2041 Community Vision (City of Darebin, 2021)

### Housing

- Housing diversity is a key strength in Darebin and provides dwellings at a variety of price points.
- A high proportion of medium-density dwellings in Darebin provide an alternative to separate houses.
- The northern areas of the LGA have the greatest amount of housing capacity, which is mostly designated for medium density infill development.
- There is a need to provide housing for a growing population, particularly with regard to an ageing population and a trend for fewer people in each dwelling.
- The main opportunities for housing growth in Darebin come from brownfield or infill redevelopment.
- Housing growth is expected to be most significant in serviced and accessible areas.

### Vegetation & Landscaping

- Vegetation and landscaping are central elements for determining an area's character.
- Trees soften the built environment and emphasise seasonal changes through colour, form, texture and pattern.
- Darebin's current tree canopy consists of a mixture of natives and exotics in various forms including formal gardens, informally planted gardens and low-level gardens with limited vegetation.
- There is a strong focus on the landscaping of individual gardens to expand the urban forest.

### Community values

- The local community value period style homes and heritage areas in Darebin.
- Public open space is an important aspect to the local community, and having access to local parks and trails.
- Access to services and public transport infrastructure is a major pull factor for residents living in Darebin.

## 2.5 Neighbourhood Character Study, 2007

### Neighbourhood Character Study and Precinct Guidelines (Planisphere, 2007)

*The Neighbourhood Character Study (NCS)* identifies neighbourhood character area types throughout Darebin to guide future residential development. The Study adopts eight character area types to reflect variations in the layout and form of the area, and the way that the built form interacts with and relates to the landscape. These character area types are referred to by housing era and are largely based on the architectural style of dwellings. The character areas highlight the history and evolution of residential development in Darebin, which includes nineteenth century inner urban neighbourhoods, to the Postwar middle ring suburbs, to the recent outermost developments.

The pattern of residential development in Darebin is influenced by a number of factors including the geology and topography, development of public transport, the natural environment, landscape quality, local landmarks and the nature of land speculation. A key feature of residential neighbourhoods in Darebin is the diversity of residential environments, ranging from traditional low density and low scale suburban areas to more compact inner urban areas, featuring heritage streets or contemporary apartment dwellings.

The preferred character for Darebin considers variations in both the characteristics of the locality and the extent to which these are important in defining its character. Design considerations for future residential development are outlined below:

- The landscape quality of Darebin;
- Siting of buildings;
- Height and form of buildings;
- Car parking;
- Lengthways subdivision;
- Areas of consistent or unique neighbourhood character;
- Heritage or older buildings;
- Achieving a high quality of new design;
- Front boundary treatment;
- Providing for carefully managed growth within housing opportunity areas; and
- Creekside environs or areas of natural significance.

### Recommendations

The study provided statutory implementation recommendations to achieve the preferred character for each precinct, including updates to Darebin's MSS, Urban Character Policy at Clause 22.02 and consideration of built form overlays.

The statutory implementation measures include eight areas with potential for the Neighbourhood Character Overlay (NCO), due to their particularly distinct and intact character. The application of the NCO ensures a greater level of statutory protection in 'minimal change areas' in the Housing Strategy. The recommendations for the NCO have not been implemented into the Darebin Planning Scheme. Many of these area are now protected by the Heritage Overlay, which is considered to provide appropriate protection for the buildings within these areas. Considering the continued change across neighbourhoods in darebin over the last decade, NCOs may no longer be justified.



## Implications for 2021 Study

While growth and change has been experienced in Darebin over the past 15 years, established areas remain relatively the same. Therefore, character areas from the 2007 Study have largely informed the revised boundary and character types in this report.

However, there is a shift in thinking away from dwelling era being such a significant driving factor of character. While it is still an important attribute, neighbourhood character can generally be retained, even if newer development is experienced throughout a neighbourhood. The new Study seeks to incorporate significant contextual features, such as topographical variations along creek edges and Aboriginal cultural heritage values.



## 2.6 VCAT Cases

The following is a summary of themes and implications from VCAT cases relating to neighbourhood character in the City of Darebin.

For the list of VCAT cases referred to, see **Appendix B**.

### Setbacks

Various VCAT cases were concerned with the appropriateness of front setbacks across new developments. These cases emphasised the lack of front setbacks on front garden character and the resulting disruption to the existing rhythm of building spacing. The amount of land allocated for crossovers then saw a further decrease in the amount of garden space made available. It was also noted that there is a lack of local policy to address inconsistent streetscapes.

### Built Form

Several cases focused on the design and visual bulk of new residential development. More specifically, the transitional height and form between the ground and upper floors of a building and adjoining residential properties. In some cases, the addition of a third level to an existing building was refused, due to inconsistencies with the height of surrounding buildings.

Many cases emphasised the need for high quality contemporary design, that responds to the existing character and meets policy aspirations. A key finding is the need to review and update preferred future character statements, to ensure that new development aligns with specific characteristics and attributes of local character areas.







## Subdivision

Several cases focus on 2 storey development through residential subdivision. A key concern was the risk of over-development and loss of amenity in private dwellings. The over-development of sites and inappropriateness of rear setbacks can detract from the spacious feel that is enhanced by backyards and garden spaces. There is a need to ensure that new design is consistent with the preferred future character statement, particularly in areas with mixed character and undergoing significant change.

## Relevance of current NCS

Several cases highlighted issues with the current Neighbourhood Character Study (NCS) and support the preparation of a new strategy. One of the main issues is that the NCS is outdated and does not properly consider medium and higher density development. It is further demonstrated that some of the neighbourhood character precincts share similar characteristics, which supports the amalgamation of neighbourhood character areas in the new NCS. The emergence of medium and high density residential development along main roads and in areas with mixed character, supports the addition of a new character area in the NCS.

3

# NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER PROFILES





## 3.0 Neighbourhood Character Profiles

### 3.1 Overview

The four primary character types identified within the City of Darebin are outlined in the table below.





- Inner Urban
- Urban Garden
- Contemporary Residential
- Transit Corridor

The residential areas of Darebin have then been surveyed and categorised into subcategories called 'character areas', to reflect local differences between areas within each character type. The provision of nine character areas encompasses the timeline of residential development in Darebin.

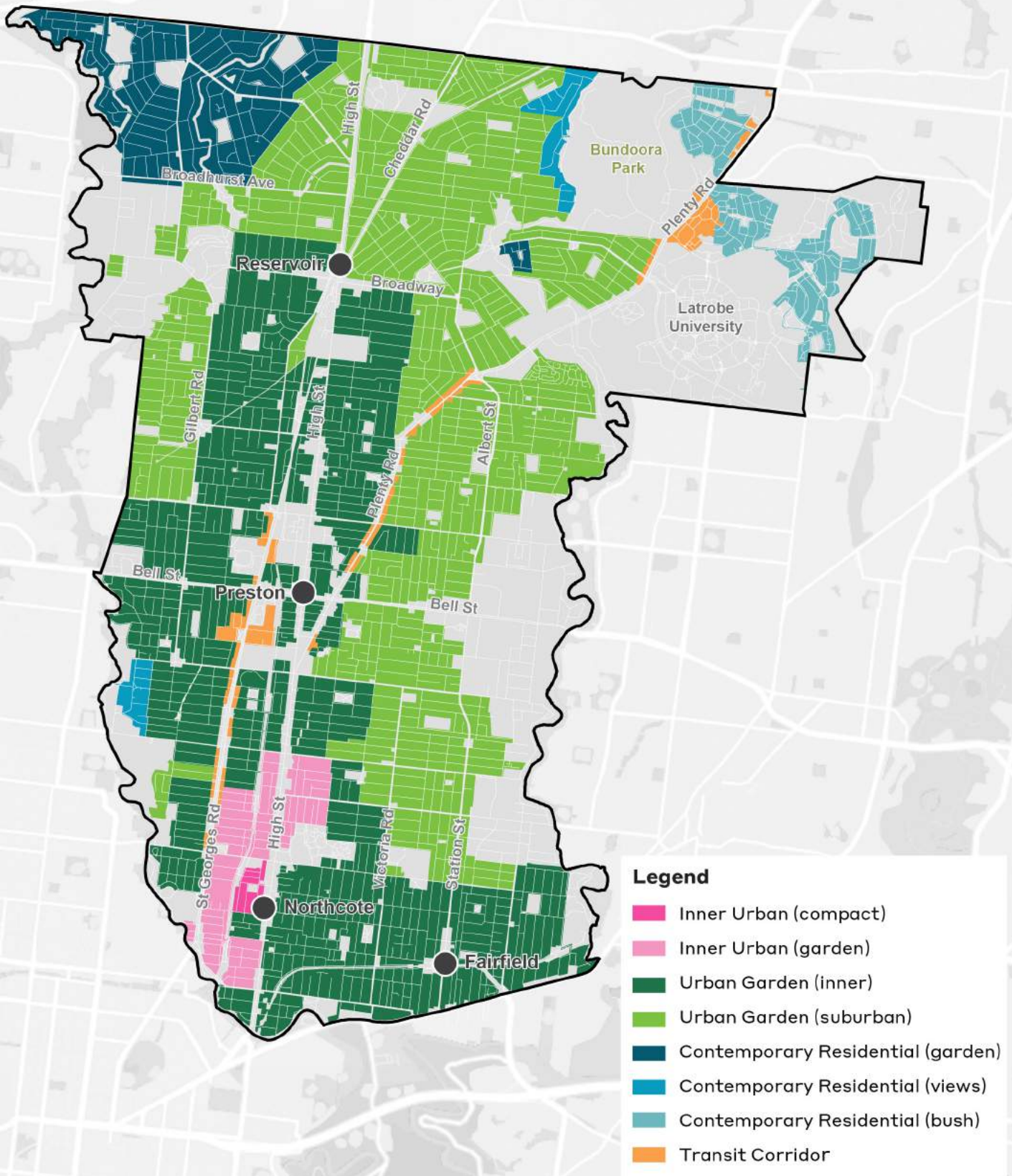
The eight character areas that apply to residential zones in Darebin are:

- Inner Urban (compact)
- Inner Urban (garden)
- Urban Garden (inner)
- Urban Garden (suburban)
- Contemporary Residential (garden)
- Contemporary Residential (views)
- Contemporary Residential (bush)
- Transit Corridor

These neighbourhood character areas represent broad patterns of residential development across the municipality, and its historic expansion from the inner northern suburbs of Northcote and Fairfield through to the northern section of Bell Street. The character areas apply to large residential areas and are not influenced by individual developments or streets.

Character Type	Main Locations	Summary	
Inner Urban	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northcote - High St/Georges Road belt</li> </ul>	Highly urban character, with buildings dominating the streetscape. Contains narrow streets, with Victorian and Edwardian cottages visible behind low front fences and low level front gardens.	
Urban Garden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fairfield</li> <li>• Northcote</li> <li>• Preston</li> <li>• Thornbury</li> <li>• Reservoir</li> </ul>	Consists of a mix of building styles dating from the Prewar, Interwar and Postwar eras. Newer buildings have increased front and side setbacks and spacious garden settings.	
Contemporary Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Reservoir</li> <li>• Thornbury (along Merri Creek)</li> <li>• Bundoora</li> <li>• Macleod</li> </ul>	Consists of spacious residential areas with sometimes informally sited dwellings in a garden setting. The road network follows a curvilinear layout (courts / cul-de-sac) and features a mix of flat and undulating topography.	
Transit Corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thornbury</li> <li>• Preston</li> <li>• Bundoora</li> </ul>	Character areas are set along main roads with a tram route. Emerging character defined by a growing number of higher density contemporary developments set within a mix of older, lower density dwellings.	

## Character Areas





## 3.2 Inner Urban (compact)










Inner urban (compact) denotes a small pocket of residential dwellings, representative of Victorian, Edwardian and Interwar era styles. Buildings dominate the streetscape, featuring either small front setbacks or set up to the footpath, often with no side separation. Row terrace houses and workers cottages are common in this area.

The area is characterised by low front fences and low, narrow front gardens. The public realm is made-up of narrow streets and concrete sidewalks, with occasional tree planting. Subdivision layouts are formal, and comprise rear and side laneways.





## Existing Character Attributes

	<b>Architectural Style, form and layout</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Older base of Victorian, Edwardian and Interwar era styles, with contemporary infill development.</li> <li>• Buildings are generally attached, with some detached structures.</li> <li>• Front facades are articulated with the use of verandahs, balconies, ornamented parapets, windows and doorways.</li> <li>• Buildings and roof forms are generally mixed in older developments and flat in contemporary developments.</li> </ul>
	<b>Building materials</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mix of timber weatherboard, brick, render and other contemporary materials.</li> </ul>
	<b>Building heights</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 to 2 storeys.</li> </ul>
	<b>Roof styles</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mix of pitched (gable or hip), parapet or flat roofs constructed of steel, iron or tiles.</li> </ul>
	<b>Garages and carports</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No visible garages or carports in front setback areas.</li> <li>• Parking structures and crossovers occasionally located on the side boundary.</li> <li>• Lanes provide rear access to garages / carports.</li> </ul>
	<b>Orientation and Siting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buildings are oriented parallel to address the street.</li> <li>• In some areas buildings are built up to the front boundary, otherwise there are consistent setbacks of 1 to 3m.</li> <li>• Side setbacks are narrow or non-existent, or up to 1m in width.</li> </ul>
	<b>Front Fencing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low or transparent front fencing, up to 1.2m in height constructed of timber or wrought iron.</li> </ul>
	<b>Gardens</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low, narrow garden settings.</li> </ul>
	<b>Public Realm</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Streets are narrow and have a Victorian era base with a fine-grain, formal grid layout. They consist of laneways, modest lot sizes, narrow footpaths and bluestone or concrete kerbs and channels.</li> <li>• Few street trees are planted where space is provided on the road or sidewalk.</li> <li>• Modified grid layout with rear and side laneways.</li> </ul>










### 3.3 Inner Urban (garden)

Inner urban (garden) is predominantly defined by Victorian, Edwardian and Interwar era dwellings, along with an increasing prevalence of contemporary infill development. Regular front and side setbacks, together with low or transparent front fences, help to create a sense of space in the streetscape. Consistent front setbacks provide space for modest front planting.

The public realm features wide streets that provide on-street carparking, footpaths and grassy nature strips. Streets have a formal subdivision pattern with modified grid layouts, which can vary throughout the area. Changes in permeability of lots, as well as presence of rear and side laneways contribute to these variances.



## Existing Character Attributes

	<b>Architectural Style, form and layout</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Older base of Victorian, Edwardian and Interwar era styles, with occasional Postwar era style and contemporary infill development.</li> <li>• Buildings are generally detached, with occasional attached styles.</li> <li>• Front facades are articulated with the use of verandahs, balconies, recesses, windows and doorways.</li> <li>• Building and roof forms are generally mixed in older developments and flat in contemporary developments.</li> </ul>
	<b>Building materials</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mix of timber weatherboard, brick, render and other contemporary materials.</li> </ul>
	<b>Building heights</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 to 2 storeys, occasional 3 storey apartments on main roads.</li> </ul>
	<b>Roof styles</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Predominantly gabled roof styles and occasional hipped or flat roofs constructed of steel, iron or tiles.</li> </ul>
	<b>Garages and carports</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No visible garages or carports in front setback areas.</li> <li>• Parking structures and crossovers occasionally located on the side boundary.</li> <li>• Lanes provide rear access to garages / carports.</li> </ul>
	<b>Orientation and Siting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buildings are oriented parallel to address the street.</li> <li>• Consistent front setbacks ranging from 2 to 6m.</li> <li>• Side setbacks are narrow or non-existent or up to 3m in width.</li> </ul>
	<b>Front Fencing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low or transparent front fencing, up to 1.2m in height and constructed of materials suited to the building.</li> </ul>
	<b>Gardens</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low, well-maintained formal garden settings.</li> </ul>
	<b>Public Realm</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Streets have a formal grid layout with footpaths, nature strips, laneways and concrete kerbs and channels.</li> <li>• Street trees are regularly planted through most of the area.</li> <li>• Modified grid layout with rear laneways.</li> </ul>












### 3.4 Urban Garden (inner)

Urban Garden (inner) is characterised by a mix of Victorian, Edwardian, Bungalow, Interwar and Postwar era styles, along with an increasing prevalence of contemporary infill development. Buildings are generally large in scale, featuring front and side setbacks and present a range of architectural styles of a high quality design and material finishes. A noteworthy feature is the varying building heights, particularly in areas situated on higher ground with city views.

Regular front setbacks allow for well established gardens. Consistent street tree planting, including large canopy trees are a prominent feature and resemble avenue style street tree planting in some parts. Streets have a formal, gridded layout and include footpaths and nature strips.



## Existing Character Attributes

	<b>Architectural Style, form and layout</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mix of Victorian, Edwardian, Bungalow, Interwar and Postwar era styles, with contemporary infill development.</li> <li>• Buildings are generally detached, with occasional semi-detached unit complexes and attached styles.</li> <li>• Front facades are articulated with the use of entrance porches, verandahs and bay windows.</li> <li>• Building and roof forms are generally mixed.</li> </ul>
	<b>Building materials</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mix of timber weatherboard, brick, render and other contemporary materials.</li> </ul>
	<b>Building heights</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1-2 storeys, occasional 3 storeys on main roads.</li> </ul>
	<b>Roof styles</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Predominantly gabled fronted roof styles, with broad roof planes and generous eaves.</li> <li>• Occasional hipped or flat roofs constructed of steel, iron or tiles.</li> </ul>
	<b>Garages and carports</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Car parking is mixed, located behind the facade of the dwelling or constructed on the side boundary.</li> </ul>
	<b>Orientation and Siting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buildings are oriented parallel to address the street.</li> <li>• Front setbacks ranging between 5 to 8m.</li> <li>• Side setbacks are narrow to modest, ranging from 0.5 to 3m.</li> </ul>
	<b>Front Fencing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low or transparent front fencing, up to 1.2m in height and constructed of materials suited to the building.</li> </ul>
	<b>Gardens</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well-maintained and established garden settings, with significant trees and planting or garden spaces suited to small spaces where necessary.</li> </ul>
	<b>Public Realm</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Streets have a formal, gridded layout with footpaths, grassy nature strips and concrete kerbs and channels. Some parts have curved roadways with cul-de-sacs.</li> <li>• Street trees are large in scale and regularly planted through most of the area. Some parts of the area have formally planted avenue style street trees.</li> <li>• Undulating topography.</li> <li>• City views in some parts.</li> </ul>

## 3.5 Urban Garden (suburban)

Urban Garden (suburban) is defined by spacious residential lots with established or establishing garden settings. Buildings date from the post-war era, as well as an increasing prevalence of contemporary infill development, that are typically double storey. A key distinguishing feature of this area are wide streets, which follow a formal subdivision pattern with footpaths, grassy nature strips and canopy trees.

Regular and generous front and side setbacks create a sense of space in the streetscape. Low front fences allow views to the buildings and front garden spaces. Buildings are constructed from a range of materials commonly used in the Postwar era including brick, weatherboard and fibro. Hipped, tiled roof styles are also a key distinguishing feature of this area.





## Existing Character Attributes



### Architectural Style, form and layout

- Predominantly Post-war era styles constructed in the 1960s and 1970s, with occasional contemporary infill development dispersed between lower and older building stock.
- Buildings are generally detached, with some semi-detached styles.
- Front facades are articulated with the use of verandahs, recesses, windows and doorways.



### Building materials

- Predominantly brick and occasional brick with render and fibro.



### Building heights

- 1 to 2 storey single dwellings.



### Roof styles

- Predominantly hipped, tiled roofs.



### Garages and carports

- Car parking is frequently constructed on the side boundary or in line with the front facade.



### Orientation and Siting

- Buildings are oriented parallel to or address the street.
- Consistent setbacks across old and new development between 7m to 9m.
- Side setbacks range from 1 to 4m.



### Front Fencing

- Low or solid front fencing, up to 1.2m in height and constructed of materials suited to the building.



### Gardens

- Low to medium levels of vegetation.



### Public Realm

- Streets are wide and follow a formal grid layout with footpaths, nature strips and concrete kerbs and channels.
- Some parts have curved roadways with cul-de-sacs.
- Lower levels of vegetation with young trees planted on nature strips. Grassy nature strips is a common sight.

## 3.6 Contemporary Residential (garden)

Contemporary Residential (garden) is characterised by consistent built form that is reflective of contemporary building styles and curvilinear subdivision developed between the 1980s and 2000s. Dwellings are generally detached and are a mix of single and double storey. Materials are primarily brick and roof forms are generally hipped and tiled.

Front setbacks are generous, with provisions for high levels of planting and formal landscaping. Front gardens are low level, established and feature exotic plant species. Absent or low front fencing forward of the dwelling creates an open streetscape. Side setbacks are narrow as dwellings are often built to the width of the block. Street trees are irregularly planted, with grassed nature strips being a common sight.



## Existing Character Attributes



### Architectural Style, form and layout

- Predominantly contemporary development established between the 1980s and early 2000s.
- Buildings are generally detached.
- Front facades are articulated with the use of verandahs, balconies, recesses, sculptures, porch entries and doorways.



### Building materials

- Predominantly brick or render, with other contemporary materials and detailed design features.



### Building heights

- Mix of 1 to 2 storey single dwellings.



### Roof styles

- Predominantly hipped, tiled roofs.



### Garages and carports

- Parking structures and crossovers in the form of double car garages and large driveways.
- Car parking is generally located in line with the building and occasionally behind the facade of the dwelling.



### Orientation and Siting

- Buildings are oriented parallel to or address the street.
- Dwellings generally feature generous front setbacks of between 4 to 9m.
- Side setbacks are narrow to modest, ranging from 1m to 3m.



### Front Fencing

- Low or solid front fencing, up to 1.2m in height and constructed of brick to suit the building material.



### Gardens

- Well-maintained front gardens, with low-level established planting, often featuring exotic plant species.



### Public Realm

- Curvilinear, court-based, street pattern with wide nature strips and a combination of concrete kerbs and channels and occasional rollover kerbs.
- Footpaths not always present on both sides of the street.
- Some parts have street trees on nature strips.



### 3.7 Contemporary Residential (views)

Contemporary Residential (views) is defined by its strong landscape setting that features undulating topography and panoramic views. Dwellings in this area are a dominant feature, visible from many streets and public spaces. Dwellings are generally detached and typically constructed of brick, with occasional rendering. Key distinguishing features include building heights of up to 3 storeys in areas with tree top views.

Dwellings in this precinct contain wide street frontages and have large front setbacks from the street, providing for planting, front garages and occasional steep driveways. Low and permeable front fences allow for views through to dwellings and front garden areas. The lack of footpaths contributes to a merging of the public and private realm, with dwellings become a part of the broader rolling landscape.



## Existing Character Attributes



### Architectural Style, form and layout

- Predominantly Postwar era styles with occasional contemporary development.
- Buildings are generally detached with occasional semi-detached styles.
- Front facades are articulated with the use of balconies, recesses, windows and doorways.
- Building and roof forms are generally mixed in older developments and flat in contemporary developments.



### Building materials

- Predominantly brick or render, with other contemporary materials and detailed design features.



### Building heights

- Predominantly 1 to 3 storeys.



### Roof styles

- Mix of pitched (gable or hip) or flat roofs constructed of steel, iron or tiles.



### Garages and carports

- Parking structures and crossovers in the form of double car garages and steep driveways.
- Car parking is generally incorporated into the building, in front of the dwelling and occasionally in line with the building.



### Orientation and Siting

- Buildings are oriented parallel to or address the street.
- Front setbacks are generous, ranging from 4m to 9m.
- Side setbacks range from 1 to 3m in width.



### Front Fencing

- Mixed fencing up to 1.5m in height and constructed of brick or masonry.



### Gardens

- Formally landscaped gardens with significant planting and canopy trees.



### Public Realm

- Streets have a modified grid layout.
- Some parts have curved roadways with cul-de-sacs.
- Footpaths not always present on both sides of the street.
- Street trees are regularly planted through most of the area.
- Sloping topography.

## 3.8 Contemporary Residential (bush)










Contemporary Residential (bush) is defined by strong landscape settings, with an undulating topography that provides wider streetscape views dominated by native vegetation. Dwellings are generally large in scale of up to 3 storeys and present a range of contemporary architectural styles, of a high quality design and material finishes. The materiality of dwellings consists of muted tones and colours that fit within the landscape setting.

Streets have a curvilinear subdivision pattern that follows the undulating topography and provides planted nature strips with canopy trees and shrubs. Private gardens are heavily vegetated and appear visually unified with the vegetation in the public realm. Front fencing is low and unobtrusive, blending with gardens and street vegetation.





## Existing Character Attributes

	<b>Architectural Style, form and layout</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mix of contemporary architectural styles developed from the 1990s to 2010s.</li> <li>• Buildings are generally detached.</li> <li>• Front facades are articulated with the use of recesses, balconies, porch entrances, windows and doorways.</li> <li>• Building and roof forms are generally mixed in older developments and flat in contemporary developments.</li> </ul>
	<b>Building materials</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Predominantly brick or render, and other contemporary materials.</li> </ul>
	<b>Building heights</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large, detached 1 to 3 storey dwellings.</li> </ul>
	<b>Roof styles</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mix of pitched (gable or hip) or flat roofs constructed of steel, iron or tiles.</li> </ul>
	<b>Garages and carports</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Car parking is mixed, located on the side boundary and in front of the dwelling.</li> <li>• Parking is incorporated into the basement level of 3 storey buildings.</li> </ul>
	<b>Orientation and Siting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buildings are oriented parallel to or address the street.</li> <li>• Front setbacks are generous, ranging from 4m to 9m.</li> <li>• Side setbacks are narrow to modest, ranging from 0.5m to 3m.</li> </ul>
	<b>Front Fencing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Front fencing is often solid, but incorporates permeable elements or vegetation to soften the appearance.</li> </ul>
	<b>Gardens</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well-maintained and established gardens, with medium to high levels of planting.</li> <li>• Increased planting of native vegetation.</li> </ul>
	<b>Public Realm</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Streets have a modified grid layout, with curved roadways with cul-de-sacs.</li> <li>• Mix of concrete kerb and channel and rollover kerbs.</li> <li>• Footpaths not always present on both sides of the street.</li> <li>• Street trees feature many native species, are large in scale and regularly planted through most of the area,</li> <li>• Undulating to sloping topography.</li> </ul>







## 3.9 Transit Corridor

Transit Corridor character areas are set along main roads with a tram route. These areas are experiencing a gradual increase in the number of apartment developments, which is resulting in an emerging character defined by a growing number of higher density contemporary developments set within a mix of older, lower density dwellings.

Front setbacks vary and are typically larger amongst the older housing stock. Buildings are often screened by substantial vegetation in front gardens. Public realm landscaping consists largely of grassed nature strips and occasional canopy trees. New developments comprise smaller front setbacks and often have minimal side separation.



## Existing Character Attributes

	<b>Architectural Style, form and layout</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mixed architectural styles, with increasing number of contemporary buildings emerging alongside existing Interwar and Postwar styles.</li> <li>Multi storey apartment developments are emerging as a dominant building form, replacing existing semi-detached and detached dwellings.</li> <li>Front facades are articulated with the use of verandahs, balconies, recesses, windows and doorways.</li> <li>Building and roof forms are generally mixed in older developments and flat in contemporary developments.</li> </ul>
	<b>Building materials</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mixed</li> </ul>
	<b>Building heights</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mix of 3+ storey apartment developments and 1 to 2 storey single dwellings.</li> </ul>
	<b>Roof styles</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mix of pitched (gable or hip) or flat roofs constructed of steel, iron or tiles.</li> </ul>
	<b>Garages and carports</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parking structures and crossovers generally more prominent, but not dominating. Mix of street and rear/side access.</li> </ul>
	<b>Orientation and Siting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Buildings are oriented parallel to or address the street.</li> <li>Older developments generally feature more generous setbacks of between 3-6m, while contemporary developments are generally between 1-3m.</li> <li>Side setbacks are generally either non-existent or up to 3m in width.</li> </ul>
	<b>Front Fencing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low or transparent front fencing, up to 1.2m in height and constructed of materials suited to the building in apartment developments. Higher, opaque fences in single dwellings are also common due to location on busy main roads.</li> </ul>
	<b>Gardens</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Established gardens, with medium to high levels of planting and generally at least one canopy tree.</li> </ul>
	<b>Public Realm</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Streets are wide and follow a formal grid layout.</li> <li>Streets are often main roads and on a tram route.</li> <li>Street trees are planted where space is provided on the nature strips.</li> </ul>



4

# NEXT STEPS



## 4.0 Next Steps

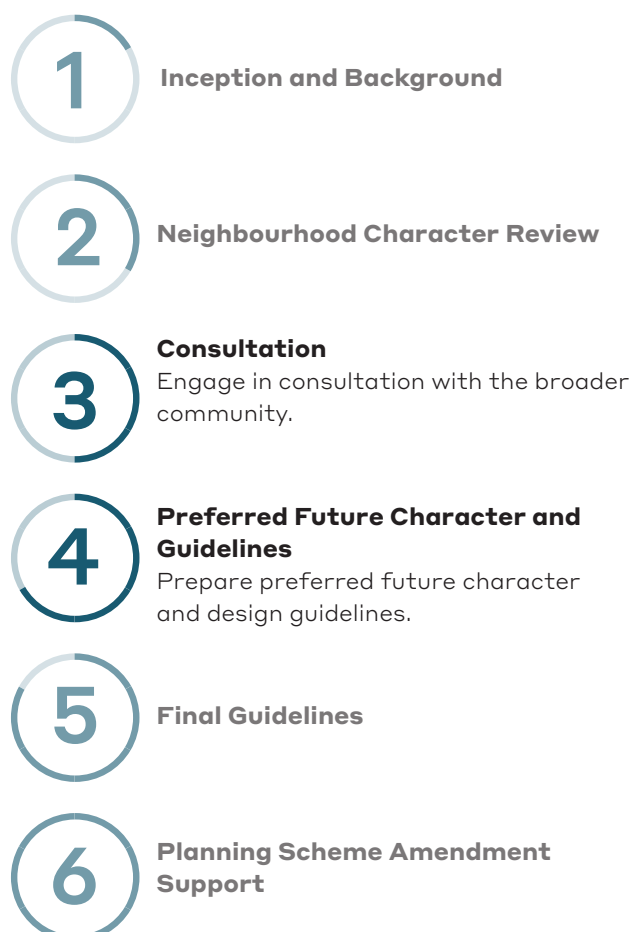
### 4.1 Project Stages

This existing character report provides an overview of the background to the neighbourhood character study, as well as identifies provisional character types and areas.

The next step is to undertake community and stakeholder consultation (stage 3) and develop draft preferred future character statements and guidelines (stage 4).

### 4.2 Consultation

The opportunity to consider community values as part of neighbourhood character will be guided by consultation to be undertaken in **Stage 3**.





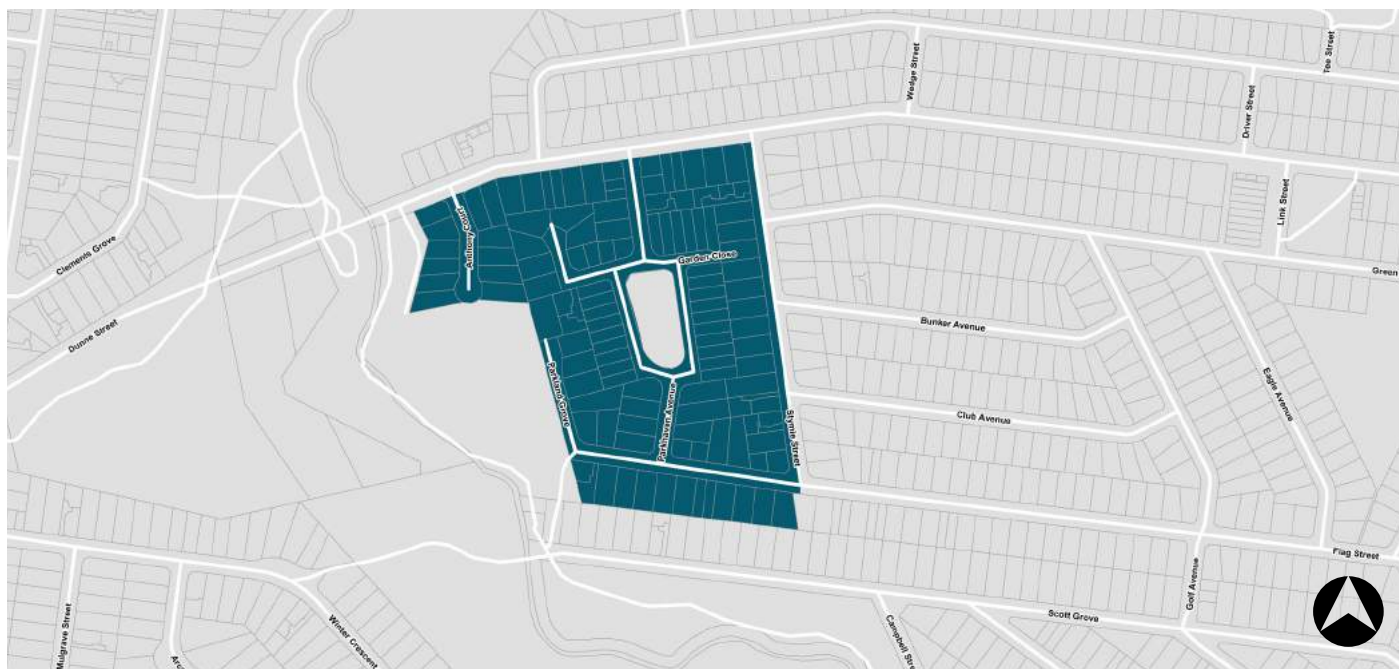
# APPENDICES



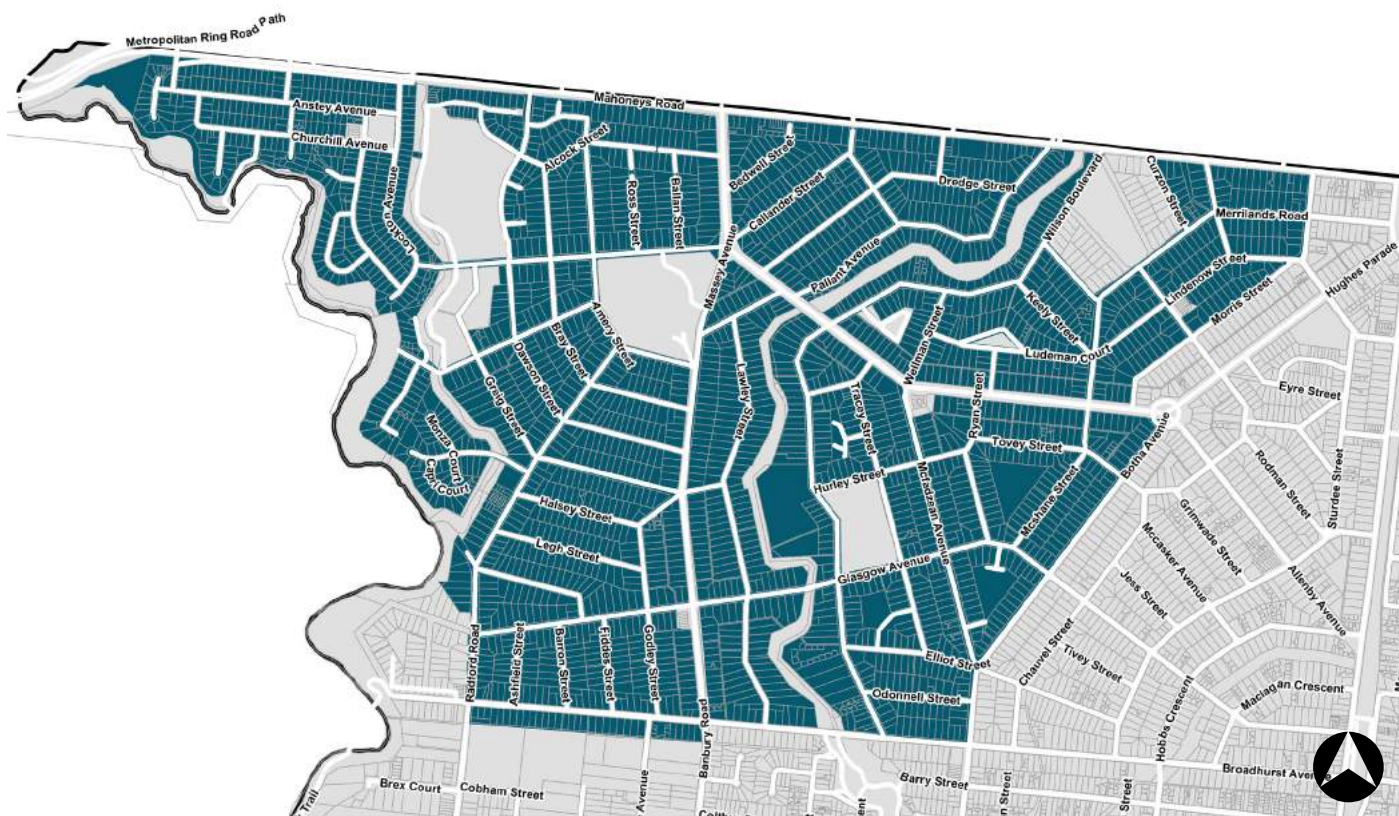


## GIS Exports





**Contemporary Residential (garden)**  
Kingsbury



**Contemporary Residential (garden)**  
Reservoir





Macleod



Macleod





## Inner Urban (compact)

Northcote



## Inner Urban (garden)

Northcote



**Inner Urban (garden)**  
Northcote



**Inner Urban (garden)**  
Northcote





**Urban Garden (inner)**  
Northcote, Thornbury & Preston



**Urban Garden (inner)**  
Northcote, Fairfield & Alphington





**Urban Garden (inner)**  
Northcote, Thornbury & Preston



**Urban Garden (suburban)**  
Northcote & Fairfield

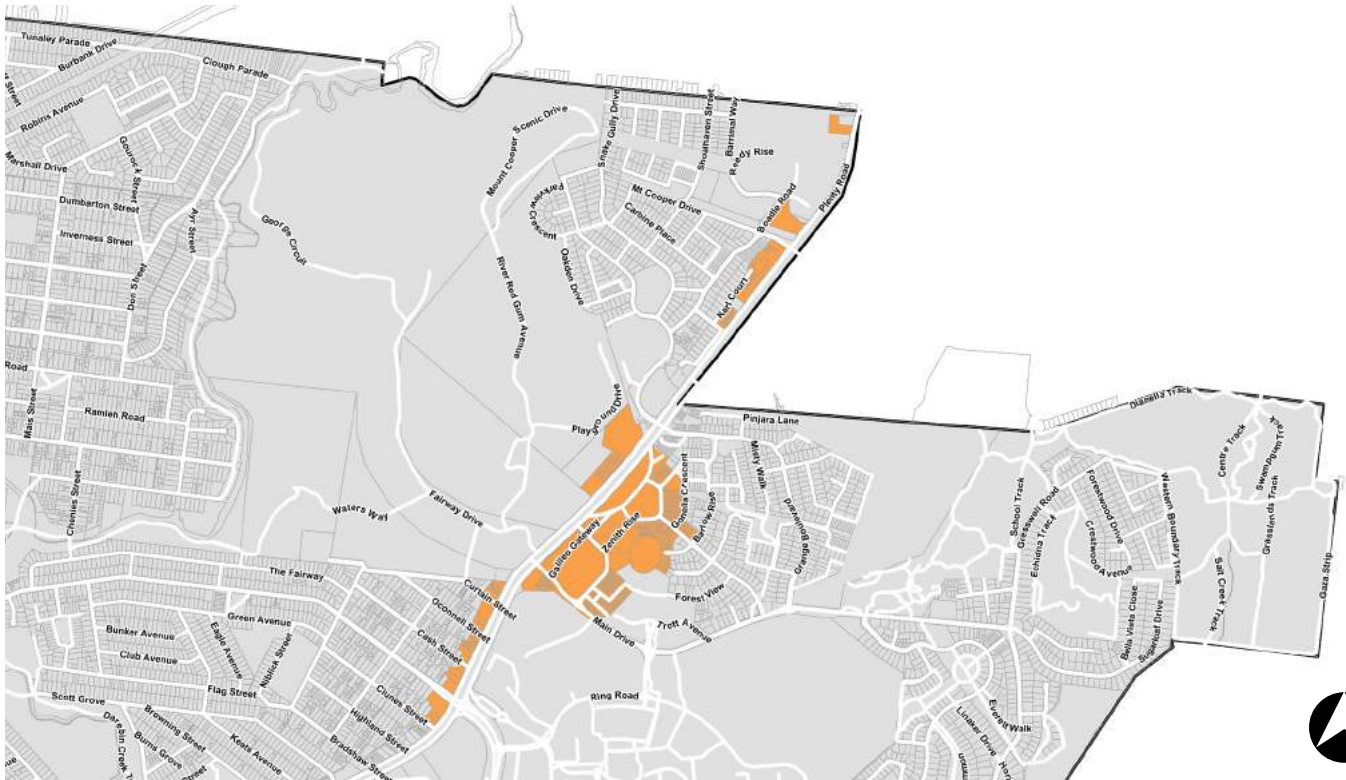




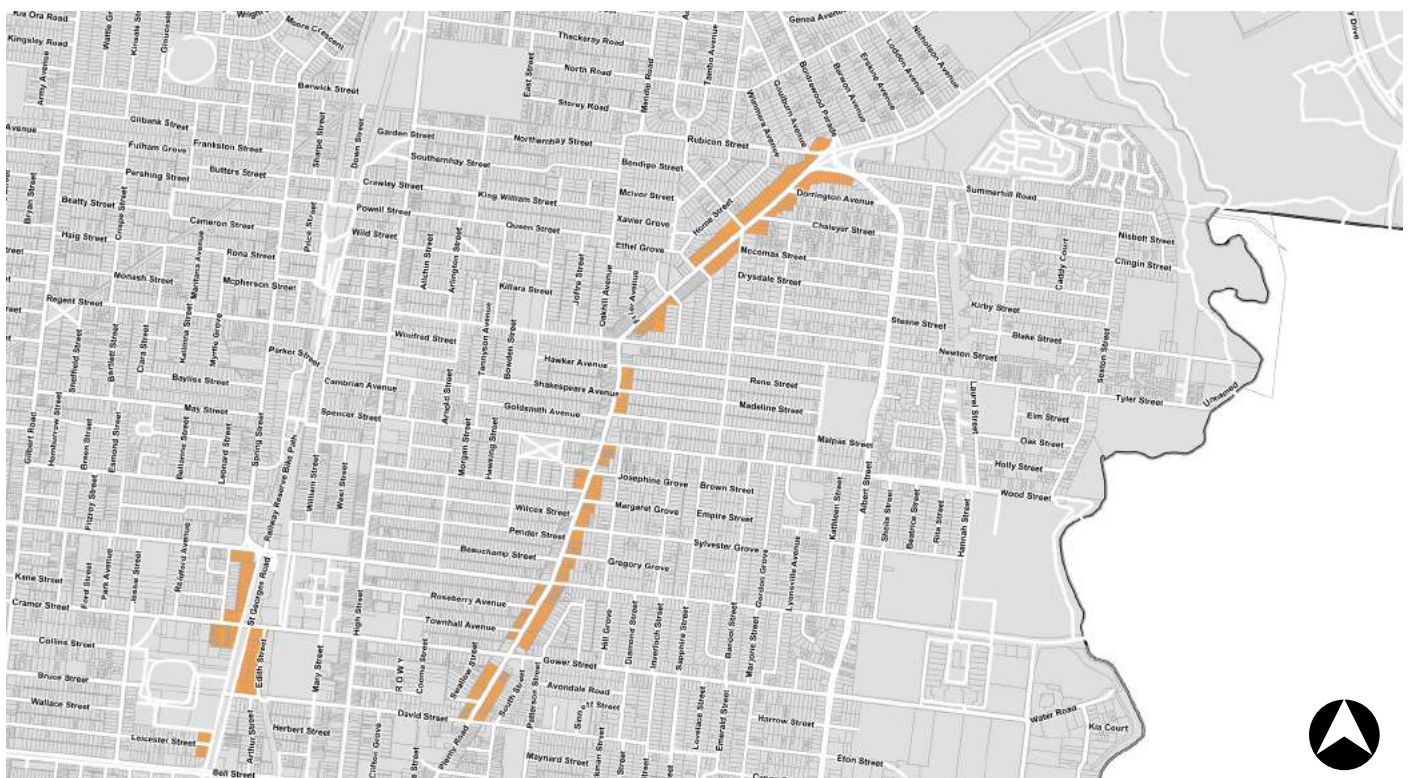
**Urban Garden (suburban)**  
Thornbury, Preston & Reservoir



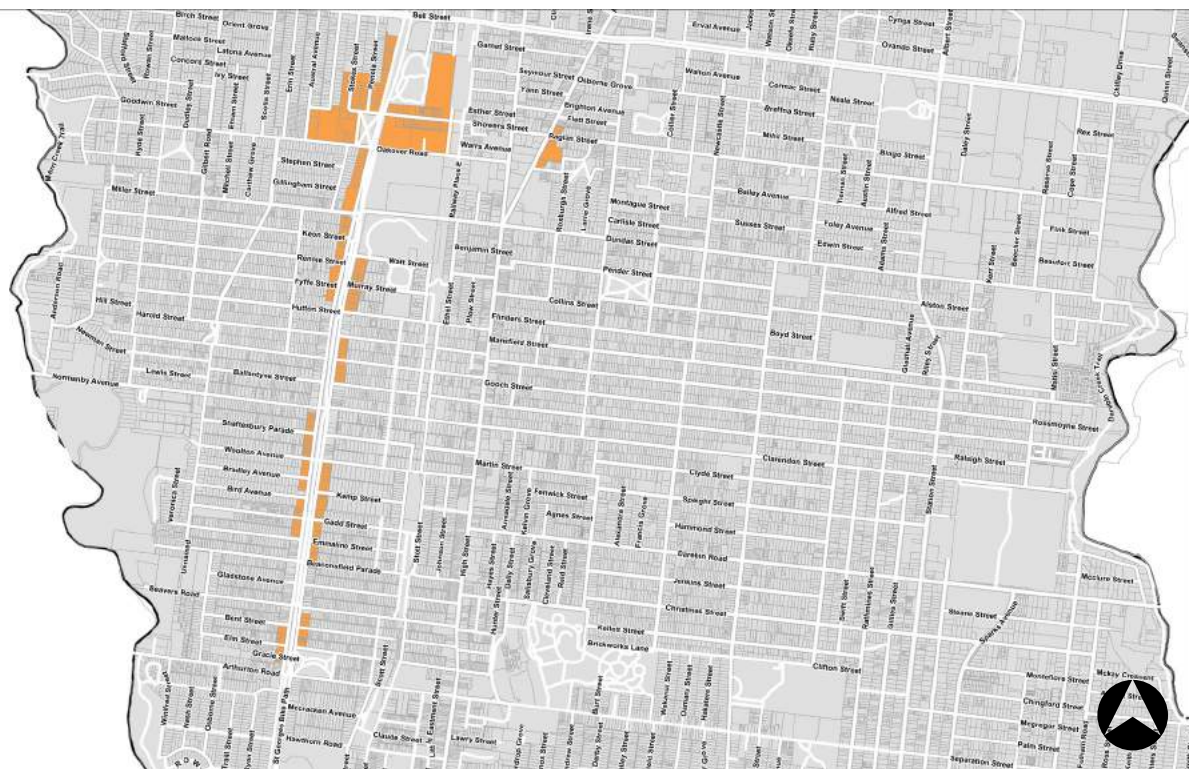




**Transit Corridor**  
Bundoora & Preston







**Transit Corridor**  
Preston & Northcote

# Appendix - B

## List of VCAT Cases

- Krstevski v Darebin CC [2016] VCAT 119 (5 February 2016)
- LPSF Nominees Pty Ltd v Darebin CC [2016] VCAT 139 (8 February 2016)
- Mansfield Street Partnership Pty Ltd v Darebin CC [2016] VCAT 15 (11 January 2016)
- Saristavros v Darebin CC [2016] VCAT 671 (28 April 2016)
- SBG Developments Pty Ltd v Darebin CC (Amended) [2016] VCAT 702 (4 May 2016)
- Cotone v DarebinCC [2015] VCAT 384 (2 April 2015)
- C Kairouz Architects v Darebin CC [2016] VCAT 965 (9 June 2016)
- Riva Ridge Pty Ltd v Darebin CC [2016] VCAT 1074 (22 June 2016)
- Massiore v Darebin CC [2016] VCAT 1213 (29 July 2016)
- Mancuso v Darebin CC [2016] VCAT 1334 (9 August 2016)
- Reid v Darebin CC [2016] VCAT 1711
- Five Element Homes Pty Ltd v Darebin CC[2016] VCAT 1777
- Guestling Pty Ltd v Darebin CC [2016] VCAT 2002
- Howgate v Darebin CC [2016] VCAT 2180
- Sardellis v Darebin CC (2017) VCAT 89 (20 January 2017)
- Pinnacle Team Pty Ltd v Darebin CC (2016) VCAT 1943 (21 November 2016)
- Planning and Design Pty Ltd v Darebin CC [2017] VCAT 1688 (16 October 2017)
- Carone v Darebin CC [2020] VCAT 294 (10 March 2020)
- Caruso v Darebin CC [2018] VCAT 634 (24 April 2018)
- Wilcon Projects Pty Ltd v Darebin CC [2018] VCAT 1602 (19 October 2018)
- Brisot Developments Pty Ltd v Darebin CC [2020] VCAT 306 (13 March 2020)
- Chahid Kairouz Architects v Darebin CC [2020] VCAT 1113 (8 October 2020)
- Much Investment Pty Ltd v Darebin CC [2017] VCAT 262 (23 February 2017)
- Biliias v Darebin CC [2019] VCAT 284
- Simic v Darebin CC [2003] VCAT 1648 (11 November 2003)
- C. Kairouz Architects v Darebin CC [2017] VCAT 259 (2 March 2017)
- Zomaya v Darebin CC [2017] VCAT 319 (7 March 2017)

# Appendix - C

## Zones and Overlays

### Residential Zones

The majority of residential land in Darebin is zoned **General Residential (GRZ)**. The purpose of this zone is to 'encourage development that respects the neighbourhood character of the area' and to 'encourage a diversity of housing types and housing growth particularly in locations offering good access to services and transport.'

Typical housing development within the GRZ includes single detached dwellings, semi-detached dwellings and the occasional unit complex. There are three schedules to the GRZ; Schedule 1 includes requirements for site coverage and private open space and the remaining schedule rely on ResCode standards.

The **Neighbourhood Residential Zone (NRZ)** applies to clusters of residential development, predominantly in the south of Darebin. Typical housing development within the NRZ includes single detached dwellings of single and double storey.

The **Mixed Use Zone (MUZ)** and **Residential Growth Zone (RGZ)** apply to sites along major high streets in Darebin. The MUZ provides for a range of residential, commercial and industrial uses that complement mixed-use functionality. The RGZ provides for housing at increased densities in locations close to services and transport.

### Other Zones

The **Commercial 1 Zone (C1Z)** applies to shopping strips, major activity centres and neighbourhood activity centres throughout the municipality. The major commercial areas are Fairfield, Northcote, Preston and Reservoir. The Commercial 1 Zone is experiencing an increase in apartment developments, particularly in areas proximal to public transport, activity centres and community services.

The **Public Use Zone (PUZ)** is scattered throughout the municipality. A large portion of PUZ affects LaTrobe University in the north-east of Darebin and provides for educational uses.

### Overlays

The **Heritage Overlay (HO)** applies to a number of sites across the municipality deemed to be of historical significance. It can apply to a single site, identifying a single significant building, or it can apply to a whole precinct. Many sites included within the Heritage Overlay are related to characteristics or qualities that distinguishes it from the rest of the municipality. This corresponds with the earlier settlement patterns in the south of the municipality and along key transport corridors and activity centres.

Twenty-two schedules to the **Design and Development Overlay (DDO)** are applied across the municipality. DDOs set out design objectives in various areas and include mandatory subdivision and development density provisions, mandatory building height provisions, site coverage and other siting design requirements. Site specific requirements apply in areas fronting a creek and grasslands.

The **Development Plan Overlay (DPO)** applies to a number of precincts and key strategic sites that require future use and development to be outlined on a development plan, before a permit can be granted.

The **Vegetation Protection Overlay (VPO)** applies to parts of the municipality in the north-east. The VPO identifies natural heritage areas containing significant exotic and indigenous vegetation.

The **Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO)** identifies properties that fall within a 200 metre catchment of the Darebin Creek and Merri Creek. The ESO ensures that new development respects the environmental values of the creeks and contribute to the surrounding biological community. This correlates with areas located within the 'Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Sensitivity Areas', as identified in the *Darebin Housing Strategy*.



# Planning Policy Framework

## Clause 11 - Settlement

### Clause 11.01-1S – Settlement

It is policy to deliver housing that facilitates access to jobs, services, infrastructure and community facilities. A key component of this Clause is to promote and capitalise on opportunities for urban renewal and infill redevelopment. New residential development should be planned around existing or future activity centres to maximise accessibility to facilities and services.

### Clause 11.02-1S – Supply of urban land

It is policy to ensure a sufficient supply of land is available for residential, commercial, retail, industrial, recreational, institutional and other community uses. It is a requirement for councils to accommodate projected population growth over at least a 15 year period and provide clear direction on locations where growth should occur on a municipal basis.

### Clause 11.03-5S – Distinctive areas and landscapes

Protect and enhance the valued attributes of identified distinctive areas and landscapes. A key strategy is to recognise the significant geographic and physical features of local landscapes.

## Clause 15 - Built Environment and Heritage

### Clause 15.01-1S – Urban Design

Create urban environments that are safe, healthy, functional and enjoyable and that contribute to a sense of place and cultural identity. Design responses should respond to local contextual features including, character, cultural identity, natural features, surrounding landscape and climate.

### Clause 15.01-4S – Healthy neighbourhoods

It is policy to design neighbourhoods that foster healthy and active living and community well-being. Neighbourhoods should facilitate community interaction and encourage people of all ages and abilities to live healthy lifestyles and engage in regular physical activity.

## Clause 16 - Housing

### Clause 16.01-1S – Housing Supply

It is policy to provide well-located, integrated and diverse housing that meets community needs. Design responses for new housing in established urban areas should focus on providing higher density housing development on sites that are proximal to jobs, services and public transport.

### Clause 16.01-1R Housing supply – Metropolitan Melbourne

It is policy to manage the supply of new housing to meet population growth and promote sustainable living. Opportunistic locations for new housing and mixed use developments include urban-renewal precincts and areas for greyfield renewal, particularly through land consolidation.

### Clause 16.01-2S – Housing Affordability

Deliver more affordable housing closer to jobs, transport and services. It is strategy to improve housing affordability by:

- Ensuring land supply continues to be sufficient to meet demand.
- Increasing choice in housing type, tenure and cost to meet the needs of households as they move through life cycle changes and to support diverse communities.
- Promoting good housing and urban design to minimise negative environmental impacts and keep costs down for residents and the wider community.
- Encouraging a significant proportion of new development to be affordable for households on very low to moderate incomes.

## Clause 18 - Transport

### Clause 18.01-1S – Land use and transport planning

It is policy to integrate land use and transport for a safe and sustainable transport system. It is strategy to plan urban development in a way that makes jobs and services more accessible. This requires integrated transport plans to be prepared for all new major residential, commercial and industrial developments.



## Clause 22.02 Neighbourhood character

This policy applies to the consideration of applications for development and works on land in the Neighbourhood Residential Zone and the General Residential Zone (as shown in the Neighbourhood Character Precinct Plan attached to Clause 22.02). The objective of this Clause is to retain and enhance the identified elements that contribute to the character of the area and ensure development responds to the preferred neighbourhood character of the area.

## Clause 22.03 Darebin Creek - Adjacent land design and development

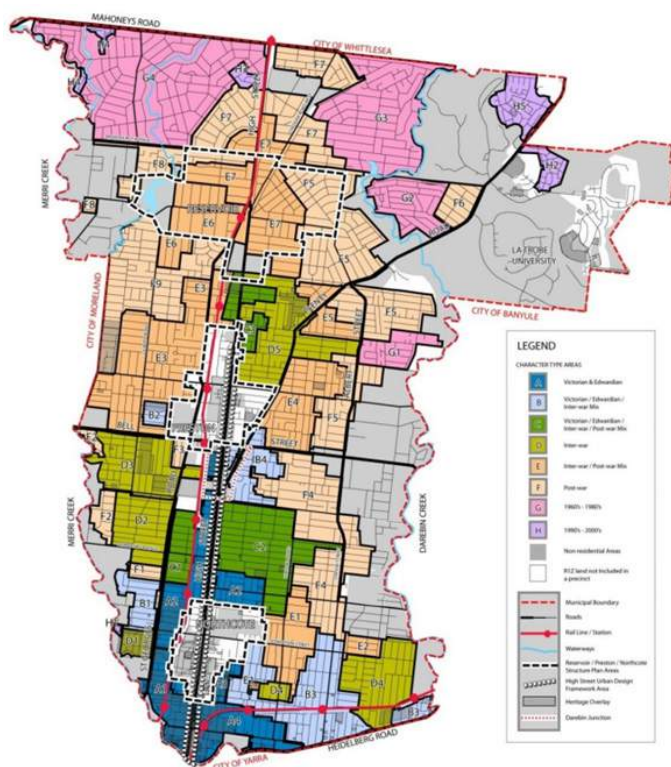
This policy applies to properties located within a Darebin Creek character area and addresses issues related to the pressure for redevelopment of creek side lots and replacement of single or two storey houses with larger multi-unit developments. The policy seeks to protect, maintain and enhance the natural, landscape, cultural and built elements of the creek. It also seeks to ensure that new development contributes to the desired character of the creek-side environs and does not adversely impact on the creek's aesthetic values.

## Clause 22.05 High Street corridor land use and urban design

This policy provides land use and urban design guidance for the High Street Corridor, between Merri Creek, Westgarth in the south to Wild and Mason Streets, in the north and is based on the recommendations of the High Street Urban Design Framework and Precinct Guidelines. The corridor is broken up into 12 precincts, and for each precinct the policy provides a set of policy statements and design guidelines.

## Clause 22.06 Multi-residential and mixed use development

This policy applies to multi-dwelling apartment development and mixed-use development which includes a residential use. The policy addresses several design elements related to sustainability, urban design and amenity impacts. Those of particular relevance to this Study include design and materials, building heights and dwelling diversity. Each design element includes an objective and a set of design guidelines.



02 Darebin Neighbourhood Character Precinct Plan



## Strategic Documents

### Housing Demand Supply Analysis (SGS, 2020)

This report provides an evidence basis for Council to plan for future housing development in Darebin. The report focuses on the types of housing that will be needed in the future, housing demand factors, current planning controls, housing affordability and the relationship between housing supply and demand.

The key findings are summarised below:

- Housing diversity is a key strength in Darebin and provides dwellings at a variety of price points.
- High proportion of medium-density dwellings in Darebin that provide an alternative to separate houses.
- The highest demand is expected to be for medium density dwellings, followed by high density dwellings.
- The northern areas of the LGA have the greatest amount of housing capacity, which is mostly designated for medium density infill development. There is substantial capacity for high density development throughout the LGA, with the most central area around Preston.
- Housing affordability has declined in Darebin, with growth in dwelling prices and rents outpacing growth in household incomes.
- There is a high degree of uncertainty currently regarding the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and any associated economic downturn.

### Darebin Housing Strategy (City of Darebin, 2013)

*The Darebin Housing Strategy* articulates Council's plan for new residential development in the municipality and is a Reference Document to the Darebin Planning Scheme. The Strategy highlights the need to provide housing for a growing population and to respond to a change in demographics, particularly with regard to an ageing population and a trend for fewer people in each dwelling.

The key housing goals for Darebin are:

1. Plan for Growth;
2. Address changing demographics and diverse housing needs;
3. Address housing affordability and social housing needs;
4. Acknowledge a changing economy;
5. Respond to climate change and environmental considerations; and
6. Respect heritage, character and quality design outcomes.

The main opportunities for housing growth in Darebin come from brownfield or infill redevelopment. Housing growth is expected to be most significant in serviced and accessible areas in proximity to activity centres, employment opportunities, major arterial roads and public transport infrastructure. Other trends influencing housing development include the transformation of former industrial sites and precincts for residential development, urban renewal opportunities distributed across Preston and Reservoir and strategic opportunity sites identified in the Urban Development Program (UDP).

### GreenStreets Streetscape Strategy 2012-2020 (City of Darebin, 2012)

*The GreenStreets Streetscape Strategy* establishes a framework for streetscape design and street tree planting. The streetscape comprises physical elements such as street trees, street furniture, public transport infrastructure and footpaths. The streetscape is recognised as an important component of Council's open space network and forms part of the broader public domain. These elements contribute to the quality of public spaces, in turn help shape neighbourhood character.

The key directions for streetscape design are:

- Visual Amenity & Design Process;
- Response to Population & Development Pressure;
- Sustainable Transport & Accessibility;
- Urban Food Production; and
- Response to Climate Change.

### Urban Forest Strategy 2013 – 2028 (City of Darebin, 2013)

*The Urban Forest Strategy* seeks to guide the planting and management of trees. The urban forest is comprised of trees, shrubs and other vegetation on both public and private land. Darebin's current tree canopy consists of a mixture of natives and exotics including large numbers of Melaleucas, Water Gums, Melia, ornamental pears and Plane trees. Trees and other vegetation are significant assets in urban areas and change the character of an area. Trees soften the built environment and emphasise seasonal changes through colour, form, texture and pattern.

The Strategy prioritises tree planting on public land managed by Council, public utility managed land and private land. The Study identifies a lower percentage of canopy cover on private land and encourages more tree planting to occur on land that it does not manage.

Other priority areas for tree planting in Darebin include:

- Pedestrian and bicycle priority areas, to increase shade and amenity;
- Areas where there is sufficient space for large canopy trees, as large trees deliver more benefits than small trees;
- Hot spots within Darebin, to deliver health benefits from lowering peak summer temperatures;
- Areas where shading of buildings will provide an indirect carbon benefit by reducing carbon emissions associated with air conditioning;
- Areas with alternative irrigation water supplies, particularly on-site or near site stormwater that could be utilised for tree irrigation, to maximise tree growth and transpiration cooling benefits and protect waterways; and
- Areas that may enhance local natural biodiversity.

## Starting the Conversation to Design Your Darebin 2041 (City of Darebin, 2021)

Darebin Council consulted with local residents to gauge their input on the future design of Darebin through 2041.

Residents value period style homes and heritage features and expressed concern towards the growing trend for high density development. Residents claim high and medium-density residential development detracts from the current neighbourhood character of single detached dwellings and results in a loss of older homes with heritage significance.

*"Stop allowing large numbers of subdivisions - we are losing our old homes (that could be done up and restored) to poorly built / cheap looking small-town houses."*

*"Build houses not apartments, don't overpopulate"*

Public open space is an important aspect to the local community, with the overwhelming majority of survey responses highlighting the word "green" to describe the future of Darebin. Access to local parks, particularly the Merri Creek, is a key consideration for the future design of Darebin.

*"Maintain (or even improve) the ratio of development to green space."*

*"More tree canopy please. Street scape improvements, particularly in Preston Central."*

*"Lots of parkland, lots of trees and community green space"*

The "village feel" of retail areas in the City of Darebin is highly valued by the wider community. Access to shops on High Street in Northcote and Westgarth and to the Preston Market, is highly regarded by the community as an important aspect of living in the City of Darebin.

*"[I love] ... The vibe on High St Northcote (restaurants, cafes, etc.)"*





## Darebin Good Design Guidelines – Apartments, Medium-density development (City of Darebin, 2020)

*The Good Design Guidelines for Darebin* promotes high quality design responses and provides best practice examples, to establish a benchmark for new residential development. The Guidelines apply to different types of residential development, including medium-density development and apartment development.

The Design Guidelines are based on the following principles:

- Designed to fit in the context;
- Designed for performance;
- Designed to create a community;
- Designed to meet the function;
- Designed to be robust;
- Designed to be resilient; and
- Designed to be beautiful.

Key design outcomes for new development in Darebin include:

- To ensure the development responds to the character of adjoining street and urban structure.
- To ensure development integrates with the surrounding by providing necessary connections and interfaces.
- To ensure the built form does not compromise the future development potential of adjoining sites and provides appropriate separation between buildings.
- To integrate the development with adjoining streets, laneways, parks and other public spaces.
- To ensure that building entries and pedestrian access are easy to identify and connect to the public domain.

- To ensure that vehicular access points are designed to minimise the impact on streetscape and reduce conflict between vehicular and pedestrian movement.
- Maximise canopy coverage by incorporating mature existing trees and providing significant deep soil areas for new canopy trees.
- To ensure the design of facades provide visual interest along the street while respecting the character of the area.
- Minimise the impact of site services on the streetscape and public realm.

### Exemplar Designs for medium-density development

The main weaknesses with medium density in Darebin are dominant car parking and prioritisation of yield, over liveability. The three key aspirations for medium density development focus on:

- More about landscape;
- Urban Generosity/ Being a good neighbour; and
- Looking to the future.

Exemplar design responses for medium-density development demonstrate a connection to the natural landscape, facilitate passive surveillance and social interaction and provide innovative design solutions that explore site consolidation, use of shared space and adaptive uses of car spaces.

## Thornbury Park Estate Heritage Study (RBA Architects and Conservation Consultants, 2021)

The Thornbury Park Estate Precinct is bound by Miller Street to the north, St Georges Road in the east, Smith Street in the south and Strettle Street in the west. The Thornbury Park Estate was first developed in the early 20th century and contains a mix of Federation, Interwar and Postwar era housing stock. The Estate is identified as having aesthetic significance for including a few individually notable buildings. The majority of buildings are 'Contributory' and there are three buildings marked as 'Significant'. The Study recommends that the heritage overlay is applied to the Thornbury Park Estate Precinct for its historical, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Darebin.



## Council Agenda- 2041 Community Vision (City of Darebin, 2021)

The Community Vision is a new requirement introduced through the Local Government Act 2020. The Darebin 2041 Community Vision is based on a 20-year horizon.

The draft vision for Darebin is:

*"Darebin is equitable, vibrant, green and connected. We respect First Nations peoples, our diverse communities and places. We are committed to a sustainable, climate safe future".*

The vision is informed by the community engagement program that was designed to capture future aspirations of the community for Darebin.

The key themes that emerged from the program are:

- Greening the city;
- Inclusive diversity;
- Sustainability;
- Safety; and
- Lifestyle.

Prepared by:

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