



ACTIVITY CENTRES TOOLKIT: MAKING IT HAPPEN

April 2010

Published by the Department of Planning and Community Development,
8 Nicholson Street, East Melbourne Vic 3002 April 2010

©Copyright State Government of Victoria 2010. This publication is copyright. No part may be reproduced by any process except in accordance with provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

Authorised by the Victorian Government, Melbourne.

Printed by Stream Solutions Pty Ltd

Printed on 55% recycled paper

ISBN 978-1-921607-44-8

DISCLAIMER

This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

ACCESSIBILITY

This publication is published in PDF and Word formats on www.dpcd.vic.gov.au



Photo: Mirvac

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	POLICY CONTEXT	2
3	BECOMING DEVELOPMENT-READY	3
4	MOVING FROM PLANNING TO IMPLEMENTATION	4
5	ACTIVITY CENTRE CASE STUDIES	7
5.1	FORMING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS	8
	GREENSBOROUGH CASE STUDY	8
	COBURG SNAPSHOT	10
	GEELONG SNAPSHOT	11
5.2	PROVIDING PLANNING CERTAINTY THROUGH FACILITATION	12
	UNIVERSITY HILL CASE STUDY	12
	MOONEE PONDS SNAPSHOT	14
	DONCASTER HILL SNAPSHOT	15
5.3	LAND ASSEMBLY TO CREATE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES	16
	DANDENONG CASE STUDY	16
	GLEN WAVERLEY SNAPSHOT	20
	MOE SNAPSHOT	21
5.4	DELIVERING PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS TO CREATE QUALITY PLACES	22
	BENDIGO BANK HEADQUARTERS CASE STUDY	22
	MADDERN SQUARE FOOTSCRAY SNAPSHOT	24
	NORTHCOTE SNAPSHOT	25

ACTIVITY CENTRE TOOLKIT: MAKING IT HAPPEN

This toolkit has been prepared by the Department of Planning and Community Development to assist local government, business associations, property owners and other government agencies implement activity centre policy and structure plan initiatives to improve activity centres and attract investment for development.



1 INTRODUCTION

Activity centres are a key platform of *Melbourne 2030* and *Melbourne @ 5 million*, the Victorian Government's strategies for managing Melbourne's growth.

They are the lynchpins of a 'multi-centre' structure for metropolitan Melbourne where people can enjoy the benefits of living closer to work with less congestion on roads and public transport networks.

Councils have already demonstrated their commitment to *Melbourne 2030/Melbourne @ 5 Million* by developing visions for activity centres that plan for the needs of their changing communities.

The local government sector deserves to be commended for its significant achievements in bringing the vision of *Melbourne 2030/Melbourne @ 5 Million* to life. In particular, the activity centre structure plans of some councils have set an example to others in terms of resourcing and planning.

However, as Melbourne's population approaches 5 million, more work will need to be done to ensure activity centres respond to demographic change, emerging technologies, environmental sustainability and the needs of businesses and communities.

While activity centre policy sets out the basic principles for future development, there is no 'one size fits all' solution. Councils have found each place is unique. Delivering on a vision for the future needs of communities, landowners and investors requires individually-tailored planning tools as well as a range of skills and resources.

Activity centre structure plan implementation needs to be multi-disciplinary within council and involve key stakeholders, including the Victorian Government, service providers and local communities. In addition, councils are encouraged to invest in, and locate their own assets in activity centres to foster private sector partnerships. The future of activity centre development is dependent on further private investment in order to provide the greatest public benefit.

The *Activity centre toolkit: Making it Happen*, provides a set of tools for councils, the private sector and the Victorian Government to help implement activity centre policy and structure plan initiatives. The toolkit outlines a number of ways to improve activity centres and attract investment for development. It also includes case studies that showcase best-practice approaches undertaken by innovative councils.

Vibrant activity centres require a bold vision and a focus on sustainable communities.

The Victorian Government is committed to activity centres and 'making it happen' for local councils. They are an essential component of Melbourne's well-deserved reputation as one of the world's most liveable cities.

MELBOURNE'S 5 TYPES OF ACTIVITY CENTRES

Central Activities Districts – Melbourne is the metropolitan area's largest centre of activity with the greatest variety of uses and the most intense concentration of development. Melbourne will continue to be the preferred location for activities that have State or national significance. The designation of an additional six Central Activities Districts will allow Melbourne to move away from one large inner centre (focused around the Central Business District) to a number of larger centres, like mini-CBDs in the suburbs, and will be the focus of a substantial proportion of future employment growth and public investment.

Principal Activity Centres – These are large centres with a mix of activities that are well served by public transport (e.g. Coburg, Preston, Knox City, Werribee). The size and/or location of Principal Activity Centres mean they have an especially important role to play as a focus for community activity, services and investment.

Major Activity Centres – These are similar to Principal Activity Centres but serve smaller catchment areas (e.g. Moorabbin, Pakenham, Williamstown). They provide additional scope to accommodate ongoing investment and change in retail, office, community, service and residential markets.

Specialised Activity Centres – These are important economic precincts (e.g. Monash University/Health Research Precinct, Melbourne Airport) that provide a mix of economic activities that generate high numbers of work and visitor trips. Their planning and development should reinforce their specialised economic function.

Neighbourhood Activity Centres – These centres have a limited mix of uses meeting local needs and are dominated by small businesses and shops and limited community services. They offer some local convenience services and some public transport provision but are not necessarily located on the Principal Public Transport Network (PPTN).



2 POLICY CONTEXT

MANAGING POPULATION GROWTH

Victoria's long history of urban and transport planning has helped shape Melbourne's growth. With a strong central city and network of activity centres, Melbourne's settlement pattern has served the community well.

Melbourne 2030 is the Victorian Government's overarching strategy for ensuring the continual, sustainable and beneficial growth of Melbourne.

Drawing on new population projections for Victoria, in December 2008 the Government released *Melbourne @ 5 million*, which builds on and updates *Melbourne 2030*. This planning update recognises Melbourne will be home to five million people much faster than previously anticipated.

Together with the *Victorian Transport Plan*, *Melbourne @ 5 million* aims to reshape Melbourne into a multi-centred city to ensure a better distribution of business activity, jobs, housing, services and transport choices. This will allow people to live closer to where they work, spend less time commuting and enjoy life more.

Population increase and declining household size

Victoria in Future 2008 projects Melbourne's population will increase from 3.7 million in 2006 to 5 million by 2026, an increase of 1.3 million. Coupled with this population increase is a continuing decline in household size, mainly due to an ageing population. Household growth is expected to grow by 40.2 per cent between 2006 and 2026. This means Melbourne will need an additional 600,000 homes over the next 20 years in the city's new and established suburbs.

Bringing housing and jobs closer

Over the last 100 years Melbourne has grown as a centrally-focused city fanning out from the Central Business District (CBD). The next phase of Melbourne's growth will see development of more than one main activity and business district, with intensified Central Activities Districts (CADs) in an outer ring around the CBD. This will create a multi-centred Melbourne and ensure a better distribution of jobs, facilities and housing. These CADs will be supported by employment corridors that put people closer to jobs and reduce transport congestion. The wider network of activity centres and the growth of regional centres will continue to play a critical role in accommodating Melbourne's growth.



© The State of Victoria, 2010. The State of Victoria does not warrant the accuracy or completeness of information in this publication and any person using or relying upon such information does so on the basis that the State of Victoria shall bear no responsibility or liability whatsoever for any errors, faults, defects or omissions in the information.

Activity centres to become places of choice

New housing in activity centres will enable Melburnians to stay close to friends and family in their local area, while having access to goods and services and a reliable public transport network. Activity centres will offer a more sustainable lifestyle by meeting people's daily needs and reducing the need for a car. Older people will be able to maintain their quality of life with access to quality services.

Councils have the lead role in 'making it happen' in their activity centres to accommodate growing and changing populations.



3 BECOMING DEVELOPMENT-READY

To attract people, an Activity Centre needs to offer a wide and diverse range of activities, services and goods. An activity centre needs to accommodate a critical mass of people who live, work and visit the centre to support the range of activities required to maintain its commercial viability and make it a safe and welcoming place to live, work and visit. Councils can play the pivotal role in making their centres development-ready.

Most councils have undertaken strategic planning to determine the potential of activity centres in their municipalities. Detailed work is now complete for a range of centres which identifies the predicted services and facilities required to meet future community needs and the environmental, social, economic, cultural and physical elements that underpin successful centres. The current priority is for councils to implement these plans in a timely manner.

Research undertaken to inform this toolkit identified a number of steps that should be undertaken before an activity centre plan is implemented. These are:

Developing a clear vision

A clear and bold vision for how the centre will grow and change should be established. The project vision and high level principles need to reflect stakeholders' interests and benefits. Likewise the vision should be 'place specific' and build on the area's unique characteristics and opportunities.

Aligning the strategic planning framework and implementation tools

A direct relationship needs to be established between the strategic planning framework of what the centre will look like and the necessary tools needed to implement that vision. A statutory framework should be put in place to support delivery of the vision.

Ensuring project commitment

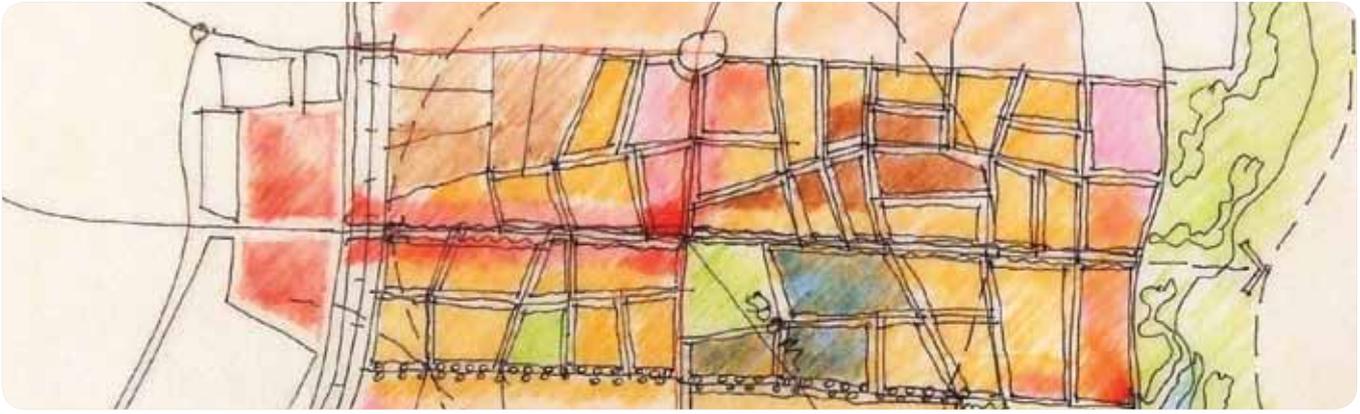
A project aimed at transforming a municipality while meeting the community's aspirations requires 'whole-of-council', 'whole-of-government' and community support. Support from councillors and council officers is needed as well as an integrated approach across council. A dedicated project manager and project team are essential to manage the project.

Engaging stakeholders

Mechanisms should be put in place to keep all stakeholders fully informed and ensure the agreed vision and principles for the activity centre are retained as the details of implementation are developed. Local community and voluntary sector organisations should be engaged to better understand the needs of the local community and as partners in future delivery. Commercial landholders and tenants need to understand the benefits of development for their businesses and have an opportunity to identify future partnerships with council to improve the overall centre.

Obtaining government support

An effective partnership should be developed with State and Federal Governments. Many government departments and agencies have significant interests and/or investments in activity centres and should be consulted early on to get in-principle support for the proposed planning framework. The project vision should be aligned with government policy and priorities.



4 MOVING FROM PLANNING TO IMPLEMENTATION

Moving from planning to implementation with regard to an activity centre can take time. There is no single model of how implementation should occur. Given the scale of change to be accommodated to meet the future needs of the community, councils need to develop partnerships with private developers and investors to implement their structure plans.

A partnership with private investors requires trust and flexibility. While both partners need a fixed objective, the development partnership needs to allow for new opportunities and be able to respond to changing market forces.

Research undertaken to inform this toolkit identified a number of steps that could help inform implementation. These are:

Seeking specialist advice

It is important for councils to have the right people on board to provide advice, negotiate with key stakeholders and ensure the centre is being developed to its full commercial and community potential. Councils need to source, often externally, specialists in project management and development as required. Experts need to work independently, yet in the best interests of councils and communities.

Ensure financial and commercial viability

A sound understanding of the development market is essential to any activity centre redevelopment, including the balance between private investment and public funding to ensure the centre's long-term commercial viability. Councils should seek input from experts in project appraisal, management and finance when negotiating with funding bodies and financial institutions.

Identifying public land assets

Many activity centres contain significant public land holdings. It is important for councils to identify how this land can be used to leverage and maximise private investment in the centre and deliver broader public benefit.

Managing risk

If councils are redeveloping their activity centres in partnership with private investors and public land and/or assets are involved, probity and risk need to be carefully and independently managed. On major projects, where significant council assets are involved in the redevelopment, it is worth engaging a risk specialist who can create an open climate for negotiation that reflects commercial interest while ensuring council assets are managed appropriately. The use of a probity auditor can help throughout the negotiation and development phases of a project.

Achieving quick wins and demonstration projects

Given there is some community concern regarding increased density in activity centres, it is important to develop innovative demonstration projects to provide people with a new way of seeing their built environment and to overcome any lingering resistance.

Monitoring project milestones

There are a number of tools that can be used to review progress at key milestones in a project. One example is the Victorian Government's Gateway Review Process (GRP). This is a valuable tool to ensure a project is on track and has the right scope and level of expertise. The GRP can help councils monitor whether their investment is being well spent. It can also ensure the strategic objectives of business and government are being met while achieving value-for-money outcomes. The GRP is a structured process whereby reviews are carried out at decision points in a project's life cycle, known as gateways, by a team of experienced people, independent of the project.



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

The Department of Planning and Community Development provides direct assistance and funding to councils to help them maximise the development potential of their landholdings.

Priority Development Panel

The Priority Development Panel is an advisory committee established by the Minister for Planning under section 151 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. It is a multi-disciplinary panel of experts with skills and experience in planning and planning-related fields, such as urban design and architecture, land economics, social research, transport planning and engineering.

The Priority Development Panel is an advisory body, not a decision-maker, and provides independent advice to the Minister for Planning.

It has been established to:

- identify ways to provide faster approvals processes for developments of State or regional significance
- work closely with project proponents and local government to speed up decision-making
- provide expert advice to assist in resolving issues and facilitating strategic planning outcomes.

Development Facilitation Unit

The Development Facilitation Unit helps councils with large or complex development proposals and liaises with interested parties. Where necessary, it fast-tracks statutory planning decisions to get key activity centre projects off the ground.

It was established to:

- provide information and advice about the planning process and the progress of planning scheme amendments and planning permit applications
- advise the Minister for Planning, DPCD and other government departments on private sector projects and issues
- liaise with other government departments and agencies to promote a common government position on private sector projects and issues
- seek improved liaison and problem resolution mechanisms between councils, the development industry and government.

Expert Assistance Program

Established in 2007, the Expert Assistance Program provides councils with specialist expert and technical advice to finalise and implement structure plans for Principal, Major and Specialised Activity Centres. It is a flexible and responsive program designed to give councils appropriate expertise to ensure progress in achieving outcomes in the activity centre. As part of the Victorian Government's 2009–10 Budget, it provided an extra \$1.5 million of funding to assist metropolitan councils on top of \$3 million already allocated between 2007 and 2009.

Creating Better Places Program

The Creating Better Places Program was established by the Victorian Government in 2005 to help metropolitan and regional councils and communities create more vibrant, attractive, sustainable and safer activity centres, and to protect heritage assets across Victoria for future generations. The program supports councils to deliver works that build on other recent projects. In 2009–10 and 2010–11, grants of up to \$2 million each round will be allocated for Melbourne's activity centres and eligible towns and cities within the networked cities corridor.

For more information about these programs visit:
www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/planning



Photo: Rhiannon Slatter

5

ACTIVITY CENTRE CASE STUDIES

The following case studies illustrate some of the different ways in which State Government, local councils, landowners and other key stakeholders have worked in partnership to make it happen in their activity centres.



- Strategic Partnership Agreements
- Planning Facilitation
- Land Assembly
- Public Realm Improvements

Metropolitan Melbourne

- Rail Network
- Major Roads
- ✈ Airport

© The State of Victoria, 2009. The State of Victoria does not warrant the accuracy or completeness of information in this publication and any person using or relying upon such information does so on the basis that the State of Victoria shall bear no responsibility or liability whatsoever for any errors, faults, defects or omissions in the information.

5.1

FORMING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

The Strategic Partnerships Agreements outlined in these case studies were formed between councils and major land holders with significant commercial interests in improving the quality of the activity centre. Councils recognised that developing the centres alone would not provide the outcomes that their community wanted for the future. Land holders recognised the opportunity that partnership with Council provided: improving the quality of the activity centre would attract further investment in the centre, and increase the value of their commercial interests in the centre.

GREENSBOROUGH CASE STUDY

By forming a strategic partnership with a private developer, the City of Banyule is on track to transform Greensborough into a sustainable urban village with a range of residential, recreational, retail and commercial opportunities.

Context

The Greensborough Principal Activity Centre (GPAC) is at the heart of the suburb of Greensborough in the City of Banyule. The location provides a unique opportunity to integrate the natural beauty of the adjacent Plenty River Valley with the activity centre.

The Plenty River Valley includes the South Morang and Mernda growth areas which are estimated to accommodate a future population of more than 50,000 people. The majority of the activity centre area is within a 400 metre (five minute) walk to Greensborough Railway Station. It is the only Principal Activity Centre in the north-east of metropolitan Melbourne, serving Banyule and the Nillumbik region.

The Plan

The GPAC Structure Plan was developed in 2002 and 2003 by Banyule City Council. It outlines the conditions for future development and growth in Greensborough and incorporates three main elements:

- a structure plan
- an urban design framework
- a transport plan.

The GPAC Structure Plan includes a framework for public sector investment that details a range of planning outcomes. It incorporates community aspirations and minimum performance criteria for new development that underpins all future investment in the town centre.

The GPAC Structure Plan was developed through ongoing consultation with an active local community who wanted Greensborough to provide much better opportunities for shopping, working and day-to-day life, now and into the future.

The GPAC Structure Plan set out a vision for the activity centre but did not include a lot of detail about what the centre would look like. It was developed by an in-house council team, with consultants providing specific tasks as required.

Selecting the right tool: a strategic partnership approach

The implementation of the GPAC Structure Plan was led by council's CEO as a 'whole-of-council' project, not just as a planning initiative. However, it was clear to council early on they did not have the financial ability or landholdings to deliver the strategic objectives on their own.

To transform Greensborough into an integrated town centre, council realised it needed a private development partner that was willing to work collaboratively and had the financial ability and experience to deliver a project of this scale. Council recognised the value potential of their land holdings and realised it was important to attract private development while leveraging significant improvements for the wider community.

Council believed a compatible partner was essential for the project's success. Once the GPAC Structure Plan was adopted, council focused on finding the right partner. The process was rigorous, and involved a number of steps to find a developer that was able to meet key objectives and forge an effective partnership with council.

Finding a partner

Expression of Interest – An Expression of Interest (EOI) was called for developers willing to partner with council to develop and implement the vision of the GPAC Structure Plan. A Principal Commercial Advisor was appointed to represent council's interests and to lead negotiations with potential development groups. Six development groups responded to the EOI. Of these, council selected four development teams to proceed to a Request for Quote (RFQ) to enter into a Strategic Partnership Agreement.

Request for Quote – Of the four selected development teams, three proceeded to a RFQ. The RFQ process was disciplined with selection criteria for the preferred partner based on pre-agreed criteria developed by council. Probity protocols ensured no-one on council's team could have a greater influence in the assessment outcome than another. A significant upfront financial commitment, estimated at \$250,000, was required for each team to prepare their response to the RFQ.



Photo: Peddle Thorp Architects

Selecting a partner

Each of the development teams presented to council. Selection of the preferred partner was based on the technical capacity of the development teams as well as their ability to work collaboratively with council's team.

A consortium led by Lend Lease, Greensborough & Partners/Lend Lease Retail was selected as the preferred project developer. Lend Lease own and manage the Greensborough Shopping Centre (Greensborough Plaza), a 46,000m² retail site within the activity centre.

Working with the partner

Once the partner was selected, council and the developer set about refining the GPAC Structure Plan from a long-term vision to a plan that was ready to be implemented.

The partnership's objective was to develop a plan, implementation program and process that would define how the GPAC could be delivered commercially, while meeting the aspirations of council and the community. In addition, council understood the importance of negotiating and agreeing on how costs would be distributed between council and the developer and of clearly defining the extent and quality of the works expected of the developer.

The outcome

The implementation of the GPAC Structure Plan is the culmination of negotiations and a partnership between council, the community and the developer. It was driven by recognition of the mutual benefits the development would bring to all.

Construction started in early 2010. It will include the Regional Aquatic and Leisure Centre (RALC), the Town Square and office floor space, with enhanced linkages and public spaces.

Lessons learnt so far

Council emphasised that the GPAC Structure Plan was successful because it was high level yet still set out clear strategic outcomes and expectations for the future use and development of the activity centre. Given development costs and the desire for progress in the short to medium term, the council felt that locking into specific development outcomes at an early stage (i.e. built form heights, uses and layout) would have limited opportunities rather than enabled the partnership to create opportunities.

Council established a dedicated team that worked alongside Lend Lease to ensure the GPAC Structure Plan's strategic principles were achieved, and that public interest was not diminished. For example, proposals to reduce the scope of the project due to cost, such as reducing the size of the public Town Square, were tested with experts to see how the cost could be covered using other mechanisms while retaining the vision for the Town Square. In this case, it was agreed that additional revenue raised from commercial activities in the Town Square could be returned to the developer over an agreed timeframe to offset the upfront cost.

Council established a Community Consultative Committee at the project's outset, which kept the community regularly updated and alleviated much local fear and misunderstanding.

FEDERAL AND STATE GOVERNMENT FUNDING

GPAC received significant State and Federal Government support.

The Victorian Government contributed \$7 million to the project, made up of funds from the Department of Planning and Community Development, Community Support Fund and Creating Better Places Program and the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development. A further \$500,000 was provided by Sustainability Victoria.

The Federal Government contributed \$5 million from the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program (RLCIP).

FAST FACT: GATEWAY REVIEW PROCESS

Council adopted the Victorian Government's Gateway Review Process (GRP) to manage and monitor the project's progress. The GRP helps councils monitor whether their investment is being well spent. It also ensures the strategic objectives of business and government are being met while achieving value-for-money outcomes. The GRP is a structured process whereby reviews are conducted by an independent team at key decision points in a project's life cycle, known as gateways.



ACTIVITY CENTRE SNAPSHOT



Photo: Chris Guest courtesy Moreland City Council

COBURG

Coburg Principal Activity Centre (CPAC) is located 9 kilometres from Melbourne's CBD and 10 minutes drive from Melbourne Airport. The redevelopment of CPAC is a \$1 billion plan for jobs, homes and a new heart for Coburg.

Adopting a similar model used by Banyule City Council for Greensborough, this partnership between Moreland City Council, the community and a chosen developer is driven through mutual interest and benefits for all parties. The key difference between the two models is that Coburg is seeking to not only harness and redevelop significant council land, they are also working with VicTrack, a major Victorian Government agency that owns significant land in the area and is also seeking better uses for its assets.



Nolli map for Coburg Principal Activity Centre

Selecting the right tool: understanding your public land assets

Determining the location, size and ownership of public land within CPAC was a critical step in planning the future of the centre. One of the early tools used for visualising the extent of public land in the centre was the Nolli Map. The Nolli Map provides an 'easy-to-read' graphic representation of urban form using a simple, yet effective method of rendering solids as dark grey and voids as white or light shades of grey.

For the Coburg map, all state and local government land holdings were coloured white and included developed sites, vacant land, parkland, roads, footpaths and rail reserves. This exercise revealed the extent of land available in government ownership and highlighted the opportunities to transform the centre through a new urban structure, new development sites and a new public realm.

FINDING THE RIGHT PARTNER

Moreland City Council has embarked on a strategic partnering arrangement with Equiset to deliver the Coburg Initiative. The strategic partner was selected after a rigorous public process inviting development companies to work co-operatively with Council to rejuvenate central Coburg.

The Moreland City Council looked for a team that:

- Understood the Moreland community.
- Shared its vision for a revitalised Central Coburg.
- Had a proven record of achievements in urban renewal projects.
- Could assist Council deliver community value.

Moreland City Council and Equiset understand that the best outcome for the Coburg Initiative will be achieved only through partnerships with the broad range of stakeholders and the local community. Genuine engagement is critical to this approach.



**ACTIVITY
CENTRE
SNAPSHOT**

GEELONG

Geelong is Victoria's second largest city, located 75 kilometres south-west of Melbourne. It has a population of approximately 208,200 people, which is expected to increase to 246,670 by 2021, and a labour force of around 91,930 people employed in more than 10,000 businesses.

In 2002, the City of Greater Geelong and the Victorian Government formed a partnership to develop a vision and framework for the Western Wedge of central Geelong – land located between the Central Activities Area, Corio Bay and Geelong West, including Geelong Railway Station. The vision would respond to the city's growth, address a decline in the area of warehousing and light industry and build on the wealth of major educational and transport facilities.

The Inner Wedge is an important sub-precinct within the broader Western Wedge as it contains some of the most attractive redevelopment opportunities in the central city area. Such redevelopment opportunities are characterised by large land parcels; excellent bay views and convenient access to important destinations and transport (such as the central business and retail areas, the train station and arterial roads).

Some of the most attractive land parcels within the Inner Wedge are owned by parties with an interest in growing and developing Geelong including Deakin University, which had purchased and land banked a number of sites for its future expansion, and the City of Greater Geelong, which owned a number of strategically located sites.

Selecting the right tool: a memorandum of understanding

Before any major decisions could be made about the future of the Inner Western Wedge it was important to recognise the two main land owners Deakin University and the City of Greater Geelong and understand their assets within the precinct and how they could be developed.

In developing a framework for the precinct, these assets needed to be taken into account and redeveloped for the best and highest use, taking full advantage of their geographic attributes.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by the City of Greater Geelong, Deakin University and the Department of Planning and Community Development (then Department of Sustainability and Environment) to explore a range of development options for the various land holdings and commit to a development plan for the precinct.

The MOU clearly articulated:

- the roles and responsibilities for the project
- a governance structure for the management of the project, and
- project objectives, cost and sources of funding.

While the MOU is non-binding, it includes dispute resolution and termination provisions and has been an effective tool in creating a partnership approach and shared purpose for the precinct's redevelopment and future prosperity.

THE VISION FOR THE WESTERN WEDGE

The Western Wedge Framework aims to achieve well managed regeneration of the area, building on Geelong's rich stock of public and private facilities and resources and its ideal setting to the city centre, Corio Bay and transport infrastructure.

The vision for the Western Wedge includes:

- An exciting inner city quarter linking the commercial heart, waterfront and transport hub.
- A 'clever quarter' that extends and connects educational, cultural and business assets as a focus for design and technology and place to meet and do business.
- A lively urban environment with uses spilling onto a network of attractive walkways, creating public spaces for mingling, meeting and creative expression.
- Higher buildings encouraged in locations that share bay views and maximise the overall intensity of development throughout the quarter.
- Improved access from surrounding areas to the station, with adjacent intensive activities complementing its high accessibility.
- Incremental transition along Mercer Street and Latrobe Terrace corridors intensifying buildings and businesses to a scale respecting their context.
- Seamless relationships between the Western Wedge and inner city, with new uses and development complementing established facilities, providers and heritage places.
- New development will integrate and be respectful of heritage places and areas.

5.2

PROVIDING PLANNING CERTAINTY THROUGH FACILITATION

Facilitation plays a key role in implementing structure plans for activity centres - it is the main mechanism for ensuring that “planning certainty” is achieved through clear and detailed planning scheme provisions. These case studies illustrate that the councils had a very clear understanding of the needs of their community, what the key components of successful activity centre meant for them and the opportunity these particular projects presented for delivery of activity centre objectives.

UNIVERSITY HILL CASE STUDY

Planning certainty and an ‘enquiry by design’ workshop involving Whittlesea City Council and land owner MAB Corporation (MAB) helped create a plan for a high quality activity centre, where residents will be able to work, shop and relax within walking distance of home.

Context

University Hill is located in Melbourne’s rapidly expanding northern corridor within the City of Whittlesea. The site is 18 kilometres from Melbourne’s CBD, opposite RMIT’s Bundoora campus. It is situated on Plenty Road, a major arterial road that contains the Bundoora tram line, and is adjacent to the Metropolitan Ring Road. The 104 hectare site was designated as a Specialised Activity Centre (SAC) in recognition of its geographic advantages. SACs are designed to provide a mix of economic activities that generate high numbers of work and visitor trips.

The site was purchased by MAB in 2003. Upon completion, University Hill is likely to provide around 1,000 homes for 3000 residents and employment for approximately 4,000 people.

Selecting the right tool: an appropriate planning framework

When the University Hill site was owned by RMIT, it had a Special Use Zone, a schedule to the zone and a requirement for a detailed Development Plan Overlay (DPO) to be prepared for the whole site. The DPO had been specifically tailored for a high quality technology park linked to the university. When RMIT decided to sell the land, minor amendments to the planning framework were required before it was suitable for sale. Reference to RMIT and the zone’s schedule were deleted, while the DPO was retained.

Delivering planning certainty

To achieve the planning certainty required for the site into a high quality integrated mixed use development, envisaged by the new owners MAB, council agreed to a two stage DPO approval process for the redevelopment of the land.

Stage 1 – MAB prepared a DPO that set out the high level strategic framework and master plan for the site outlining the proposed precincts, use and activities and the quality of development on the site. The DPO incorporated nine precincts with ‘fuzzy edges’ and listed different uses that were themed rather than absolute as well

as the design intent. The identification of the nine precincts had been undertaken through an ‘enquiry by design’ workshop with key stakeholders.

Stage 2 – Approval of the high level DPO relied on the development of more detailed, ‘secondary’ DPOs. These precinct plans, which were developed incrementally as certainty about land use activity became known, provided the detailed planning outcomes for the precincts as required by the DPO.

This allowed MAB time to:

- deliver their infrastructure platform across the site that set out the project master plan and included roads, landscape elements and a large wetland feature
- demonstrate to potential purchasers the vision and quality of the project and attract the highest and best use for the land
- overcome the requirement to develop a highly detailed DPO at the beginning of the process, prior to MAB knowing the commercial viability of the project and the best mix of uses given market constraints.

To support the precinct plans MAB developed an Urban Design Management Plan that outlined the design for the public realm including all the roads, lighting, streetscape design and furniture.

Planning for a mixed use development

MAB and council wanted to create an interesting and diverse form of mixed-use development not found anywhere else.

MAB believed the diversity and mix of uses was a key driver of the development’s success. They felt if the uses were segregated into more traditional land use zones, the project would not be as attractive to potential investors. They also believed sequencing early delivery of project components, such as the main street, would help the project attract the best and highest use across the site.

Street-based uses and activities were planned close to the Plenty Road tram to increase public transport use and promote pedestrian activity.

In addition, the integration of natural features in the site design was important. A total of 12 hectares of open space is being created consisting of formal parks, nature reserves and 10 kilometres of designated walking and bike trails extending throughout the estate and adjacent parkland.



Photo: Rhiannon Slatter

The site has an estimated end value of \$1 billion. Civil construction commenced in September 2005. To date MAB has invested over \$38 million in public infrastructure works and generated 1,100 jobs.

Council's partnership approach

Sharing a common vision, MAB and the council established an excellent working relationship, with the aim of offering something different to current developments in the municipality.

Once the council and the developer agreed on the vision for the project, council ensured there was a whole-of-council understanding of the project, its objectives and the benefits to the Whittlesea community. Implementation was led by the Director of Planning, with the support of the CEO and councillors. Council was pro-active in solving any 'road blocks' and facilitating the desired outcomes for the centre. MAB and their consultant team say this approach was critical to attracting key landholders such as Continental (formerly Siemens VDO), because it provided potential purchasers and tenants with certainty regarding planning approval timelines and an achievable project delivery timeframe.

Council dedicated one principal planning officer to manage all planning applications and maintain consistency throughout the planning approval process. It was a high profile project for all involved. MAB, their lead consultants and council had monthly meetings to ensure the project was on track.

Lessons to date

Putting the urban infrastructure in early, including the general street layout, showed potential purchasers and tenants the value of investing and locating in a high quality urban environment. Shops and services being developed prior to housing was also attractive to purchasers.

MAB argues the success of the project was partially due to an absence of prescriptive planning controls. Flexible planning controls responded to market interest rather than defining development outcomes.

The interfaces between precincts were performance-based, not prescriptive, and the mix of industrial, retail, residential and lifestyle activities has been attractive to owners and tenants.

AN 'ENQUIRY BY DESIGN' WORKSHOP

The vision and master plan for University Hill was developed in November 2003 at a workshop attended by Whittlesea City Council staff, councillors, relevant stakeholders and Victorian Government authorities.

After determining that the best and highest use for the site was as an integrated mixed use development, land owner MAB wanted to explore this concept further via a three-day 'enquiry by design' workshop.

The workshop led to the development of a precinct plan for the site, dividing it into nine broad precincts and incorporating the following elements:

- the town core area with a traditional main street and street-based retail activities
- two business park areas with provision for a range of activities including manufacturing, research and development, offices and medium density residential
- a heritage area with a mix of medium density housing, business and recreation activities
- a lifestyle precinct including medium density housing
- a community, recreation and tourism area adjacent to the Plenty Gorge Park, and
- a high quality residential area on the eastern part of the site.

FAST FACT: DELIVERING QUICK WINS – GENERATING EMPLOYMENT

Part of MAB's commitment to council was to generate employment. The key focus was to generate employment through attracting businesses to the business park by providing a high quality setting within walking distance of numerous amenities, including cafes, shops and childcare. MAB delivered the 'main street' as one of the first parts of the project to position the project in the market and attract the highest and best uses to the site. They argued the main street would generate both physical and economic activity thereby increasing security and the demand for personal services. Research shows that people are attracted to living and working in an area where their day-to-day needs are met, and where a variety of uses support around-the-clock activity.



ACTIVITY CENTRE SNAPSHOT



Photo: Mirvac

MOONEE PONDS

Moonee Ponds in the City of Moonee Valley is a Principal Activity Centre (PAC). It is located 7 kilometres north-west of Melbourne's CBD. Puckle Street, the main shopping street of Moonee Ponds, runs east-west from the train station to the seven-way intersection of Mount Alexander and Pascoe Vale Roads, where the tram-bus interchange is located. Larger-scale retail centres are located on blocks bordering the Puckle Street precinct to the north and south. Two key redevelopment sites in the middle of the centre were vacant and under-utilised for a number of years and were critical to the centre's rejuvenation and success.

Selecting the right tool: appropriate statutory changes

Council, local businesses, landowners and residents were keen to establish and formalise a forward looking vision for the centre as a whole.

A commercially prosperous centre would result by providing business support networks and facilitating the development of entertainment, leisure and recreation facilities and increased employment and accommodation opportunities.

To achieve this aim, council recognised the importance of working closely with landowners and the Victorian Government to plan and implement the redevelopment of large and important sites in the middle of the centre.

In 1999 a planning scheme amendment to the Moonee Valley Planning Scheme was gazetted to redevelop two key landholdings, the Coles Myer Ltd site, for a mixed use commercial development, and to facilitate a proposal by Reading Entertainment to construct a cinema and entertainment complex on a separate site. The amendment sought to place both sites into a Business 1 Zone with a Development Plan Overlay (DPO) which specified a concise list of land use, car parking, design and linkage requirements which had to be met and required an associated development plan to be approved by council.

The requirements of the development plan had been the subject of earlier community and stakeholder engagement over a long period. This meant that the development plan and planning permit applications that were consistent with the strategic intent of the earlier community and stakeholder engagement were not subject to third party notice, decision and appeal rights at the implementation stage.

In late 2006, following an expressions of interest process conducted by Coles Myer Ltd for their landholdings, the land was sold to Mirvac. Mirvac sought to amend the development plan with an emphasis on increased office and retail areas and a future staged residential component in a 12 storey building. Council appointed a project advisor, project manager and a cross-organisational coordination group to facilitate the development approval process. The coordination group involved Mirvac as well.

Council retained transparency in the planning process with its responsible authority role for the development plan and planning permit applications, also its planning authority role. However, in order to facilitate use and development that met the local planning framework for the centre, Council had to facilitate the redevelopment of these key sites as part of its municipal and community responsibilities. There was never any conflict within Council in its multiple, but different roles and responsibilities.

Council approved Mirvac's development plan and planning permit applications and the development of the new Mirvac Moonee Ponds Central Shopping Centre, which is three times larger than the original shopping centre, is now complete. The new development complements the existing Puckle Street shopping strip and is helping to rejuvenate the centre, as a larger regional attractor and an exemplar of good activity centre planning and development.



ACTIVITY
CENTRE
SNAPSHOT

Photo: Haskell Architects

DONCASTER HILL

Manningham City Council's 20-year strategy for Doncaster Hill sets out a plan to build 4,000 new residential apartments in the area and attract five million additional visitors each year. Covering 58 hectares and located at the intersection of Doncaster, Williamsons and Tram Roads, Doncaster Hill is set to become the civic heart of Manningham and is already recognised as a Principal Activity Centre.

Selecting the right tool: a third party independent review

The Doncaster Hill Strategy is Manningham City Council's response to increased demand for more appropriate, sustainable and diverse housing to accommodate the municipality's changing demographic and social needs.

Formally adopted in October 2002, the Strategy envisages Doncaster Hill as a mixed use, sustainable urban village. Throughout the project, council was determined to alleviate concerns about urban growth spreading further into poorly serviced and more environmentally sensitive areas, whilst capitalising on the accessibility, servicing and extraordinary views offered at Doncaster Hill.

At council's request, in June 2007 the Minister for Planning asked the Priority Development Panel (PDP) to conduct an independent performance review of the Doncaster Hill interim planning controls, with particular regard to the zones and overlays as well as opportunities for supporting the Civic Precinct project and development facilitation.

At the PDP's suggestion, the Minister for Planning also appointed a DPCD staff member to be a Doncaster Hill champion within DPCD, to assist council to liaise with the Victorian Government and to promote a whole of government approach.

The PDP briefed councillors in October 2007, concluding that the Doncaster Hill Strategy was well founded and included sound underlying policy assumptions. The PDP recommended that the planning controls for Doncaster Hill be simplified, and an ongoing place management and development facilitation regime be developed. The PDP found the Civic Precinct was an opportunity to provide a focus for the community, and recommended that council be supported in its efforts to forge relationships with relevant Victorian Government agencies and potential project partners.

A Memorandum of Understanding between DPCD and Council was signed in December 2008 and included the establishment of a working group to promote a collaborative and supportive relationship to achieve the objectives for Doncaster Hill.

VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR DONCASTER HILL

The Victorian Government has provided a range of assistance to Manningham City Council to transform and revitalise Doncaster Hill, including around \$5 million towards the Doncaster Hill Community Centre and around \$1.19 million for various planning, place management initiatives, public realm and art installation initiatives.

Manningham City Council has also received around \$6.5 million in Federal Government funding.

MANNINGHAM SUPPORT FOR DONCASTER HILL

Since 2002, Manningham City Council has continued to take an active role in the implementation of the Doncaster Hill Strategy. This has included more than \$4 million for development and implementation, sustained leadership by Senior Officers, Executive Management and Councillors, and appointment of a dedicated Doncaster Hill Officer. Council have also introduced eight planning scheme amendments, dealing with issues such as developer contributions, public acquisition overlays, parking precinct plans and removal of restrictive covenants.

The proposed Civic Precinct will involve the construction of a \$37.73 million 5-star Green Star community facility.

The Civic Precinct (Community Hub) will co-locate a number of cultural, social and community facilities and services, including the library, in a central location to meet the growing needs of the community

FAST FACT: EXPERT CONSULTANT

Since the PDP report, council has engaged an expert consultant to work with the Victorian Government and developers to facilitate private sector development. Recently, an Activity Centre Zone has been applied to land within the activity centre boundary to implement the Doncaster Hill Strategy.

5.3

LAND ASSEMBLY TO CREATE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The examples of land assembly outlined in these case studies demonstrate how councils and the State Government can play a pivotal role in making activity centres development ready. Councils and State Government have used acquired land both to restructure their activity centres and to consolidate land into development ready parcels.

DANDENONG CASE STUDY

To recognise and facilitate revitalisation of the Dandenong Central Activities District the Revitalising Central Dandenong Project is being delivered. This project covers 170 hectares and is the largest urban renewal project in Victoria since Melbourne Docklands. As a result of significant land acquisition by the Planning Minister, the project now has the scope to transform the centre into a thriving community hub.

Context

In April 2006 the Victorian Government launched a shared vision for Revitalising Central Dandenong and announced \$290 million to invest in the redevelopment of the city centre over a 15 to 20 year period. The aim is to restore Central Dandenong as the capital of Melbourne's south east, and ensure it is a great place to live, work, study and socialise.

The Victorian Government and the City of Greater Dandenong recognised that a 'business as usual' scenario with incremental programs to address social and economic decline was unlikely to achieve the community's aspirations for a 21st century centre with improved environmental, health, wellbeing and employment outcomes. Building on council's earlier work from 2000, a shared vision for the centre's renewal and rejuvenation was developed with commitment from council, the Victorian Government, the Dandenong Development Board and VicUrban.

Council commenced the Metro 3175 residential development and the redevelopment of the Produce Market. Council also redeveloped the Drum Theatre with the assistance of a State Government grant.

In 2007, VicUrban developed an Urban Master Plan for the revitalisation of Central Dandenong which built on previous strategic work and further refined the future vision. This 15-20 year framework aims to create a dynamic future for Central Dandenong by attracting more people, jobs and businesses to the city centre. It is estimated the revitalisation will attract \$1 billion in private sector investment as well as help create up to 5,000 new jobs and 4,000 new homes over the next 20 years. The Urban Master Plan outlines new and better street connections for easier and safer access throughout the city, new attractive public spaces and improved links between the railway station, Dandenong Plaza, the retail core, Dandenong Market, Dandenong Hospital and Chisholm TAFE.

The priorities for the Plan incorporate significant new infrastructure including:

- redevelopment of Lonsdale Street as a green boulevard with slow moving traffic, improving its access and amenity
- a new City Street to connect the railway station to the heart of the city
- upgrading the railway station surrounds to provide a new arrival and meeting place, and
- constructing the George Street Bridge to create a new western gateway into Central Dandenong

Selecting the right tool: land acquisition to deliver regeneration

To deliver on the shared vision for Central Dandenong, it was necessary to acquire significant land. The city structure needed to be redesigned to better intergrate a previously disconnected centre and create land parcels that could attract private sector investment and development. Seven hectares of land with approximately 170 different titles were identified for aquisition.

Identifying properties and creating direct routes

Given the dispersed and indirect routes between the railway station and key destinations in the city centre, there was little activity that made Central Dandenong feel vibrant and safe. The Urban Master Plan refined the strategic need identified in council's earlier work to directly connect key destinations with a new City Street and create development opportunities along its path.

The area north of the railway station added to the perception of a fragmented, dispersed central city area. To address these issues, properties were acquired to improve roads, create direct pedestrian routes to key destinations and new public spaces.

The new City Street will create an easy and direct route between the railway station, the city centre, Dandenong Plaza and Dandenong Market. It will become a major route for pedestrians in Central Dandenong, with a range of street level activities such as new retail, apartments, cafes, offices and public spaces.



Consolidating and acquiring land

The 170 acquired sites will be consolidated into about 30 development parcels that are large enough and suitably located to attract private sector investment. It is envisaged each development will have a minimum of five storeys with active frontages at ground level.

Under the Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986, land required for a public purpose can be acquired by Victorian Government departments and agencies. This acquisition can be done either compulsorily or by negotiation. The Act sets out the process to be followed and how compensation is to be determined.

VicUrban was proactive in talking to property owners and providing information about the property acquisition process. They undertook extensive consultation and provided detailed information regarding their intent to acquire properties to implement the Revitalising Central Dandenong Project. Public meetings were held and Guidelines on Property Acquisition and Compensation were published and made available for owner landlords, owner occupiers and tenants.

The majority of property acquisitions were completed over three years between 2005 and 2008.

Putting the right planning tools in place

To help realise Central Dandenong's transformation, the Minister for Planning exercised his powers to amend the Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme to facilitate land acquisition and streamline planning approval in the Declared Project Area. The Minister also appointed VicUrban as the acquisition authority for the purpose of the Revitalising Central Dandenong Project.

Given the Project's scale, level of investment and the coordination required between various government departments and agencies, the Minister for Planning continues to be the responsible authority for the administration of the Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme in the Declared Project Area. In determining planning permit applications in this area the Minister considers advice from VicUrban and the City of Greater Dandenong.

THE URBAN MASTER PLAN

The Urban Master Plan builds on Central Dandenong's rich history and heritage as a meeting place, market town and a centre for business, employment, living, learning and retail.

The Plan reflects the shared vision that was developed with the community in 2006. Community expectations included the creation of new employment opportunities, minimal impact on existing traffic routes during construction, increased activity during the day and night to promote a vibrant and safe city, and a plan to address vacant shops, lack of public spaces and negative perceptions about safety.

The Plan aims to stimulate new investment in commercial, retail, residential, civic and public sector projects and achieve the following outcomes:

- better street connections for easier and safer access throughout the city
- activities at street level with residences and offices above for a 24 hour city
- colour, greening and lighting in the streets to invite pedestrians
- attractive public spaces for people to meet and relax
- slow-moving traffic and well-connected pedestrian paths for easy circulation
- easy access to public transport
- parking for access to shops and businesses
- improved links between the station, Dandenong Plaza, the Market, Dandenong Hospital and Chisholm TAFE

By providing an opportunity to shape the future of Central Dandenong, the community had ownership over its transformation, including the significant change to the urban landscape and the land acquisition necessary to achieve the agreed vision.

For more information visit – www.revitalisingcentraldandenong.com.au



Establishment of the Dandenong Development Board

In 2003 the Dandenong Development Board was established through an Act of Parliament to work with stakeholders to facilitate the revitalisation of central Dandenong and the Greater Dandenong region in accordance with the objectives of Melbourne 2030. This new statutory authority encompassed a range of stakeholders including Council, local businesses and State Government departments who worked together on key projects to facilitate and support central Dandenong and the region and provide a mechanism for high level coordination.

Lessons to date

To transform urban areas such as Central Dandenong, it is necessary to provide:

- planning certainty, in both strategic and statutory planning for the area
- adequate funding and expertise
- catalyst projects to stimulate new investment and development, and
- a partnership approach between local government, state government and stakeholder organisations.

Transformation often requires a restructure of the urban landscape. Land acquisition was a critical component of the Revitalising Central Dandenong Project, enabling various parts of the city to be connected and creating land parcels to attract development interest.

VicUrban emphasised the importance of a transparent process that included extensive consultation, advice and information for potentially affected landowners and tenants. In addition, to minimise market and tenant uncertainty, people were made aware in the most timely manner possible if their land would or would not be acquired.

VICURBAN

VicUrban is the State Government's urban development agency, committed to delivering high quality, sustainable communities that enhance Victoria's liveability while addressing the challenges of the future. Through its projects, VicUrban also stimulates local economies and creates new jobs.

VicUrban's projects are delivered within a commercial framework while also aiming for design excellence, community infrastructure, enhanced environmental performance and affordable housing. VicUrban is one of Victoria's largest residential land developers which includes Land / House & Land developments in metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria for nominated sites including Melbourne Docklands, Revitalising Central Dandenong, Maribyrnong and VicUrban@Officer.

The Victorian Government established the broad functions and responsibilities of VicUrban through the Victorian Urban Development Authority Act (VicUrban Act).

The Act states VicUrban has responsibility to:

- a) carry out urban development
- b) develop the Docklands area
- c) undertake declared projects and
- d) assist in the implementation of Government urban development policies and strategies, including Melbourne 2030

For more information – www.vicurban.com.au



FAST FACT: DELIVERING EARLY WINS FOR CENTRAL DANDENONG

To signify that Revitalising Central Dandenong was underway, VicUrban, the City of Greater Dandenong and the Dandenong Development Board initiated a two-year 'Refresh Program' that took place between July 2006 and June 2008.

The aim was to complete a number of short-timeframe projects that created a visible impact for pedestrians, commuters and motorists and were building blocks to longer term initiatives.

The projects were designed to challenge people's perceptions of Dandenong by building positive messages and good news stories about Central Dandenong, and to generate activity through place-making projects with participation from the local community. Examples of projects include:

Art in the City Program – as part of a larger effort to stimulate cultural activity, the Art in City Program installed temporary artworks from emerging and established artists in the vacant shops and laneways of the city centre. The artworks, which are visible to passing pedestrians, explore, celebrate or present issues that are relevant to Dandenong.

Floral Displays – to add colour and vibrancy to the city's streetscapes, a program of moveable floral displays has been introduced to Central Dandenong. Spectacular flower arrangements in large purpose-built planters are prepared by the Council's horticultural staff and placed at key locations throughout the city centre.

Little India Cultural Tours – Dandenong's Little India precinct is filled with exotic shops selling Indian cuisine, authentic spices and ingredients, colourful sari fashions, jewellery and Bollywood film and music. The City of Greater Dandenong organises twice-weekly tours of Little India for locals and visitors alike, which finish with a delicious meal in one of the precinct's restaurants.



ACTIVITY CENTRE SNAPSHOT



GLEN WAVERLEY

Glen Waverley Principal Activity Centre is identified as Monash City Council's Principal Activity Centre. In the early 1970s Waverley City Council planned to develop the Glen Waverley Railway Station precinct as an important civic, office, hotel and retail precinct. Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s council acquired a number of sites, redeveloped its existing municipal offices and identified sites around the railway station that could deliver multiple benefits to the centre.

Selecting the right tool: land assembly and land swapping

In 2001, Monash City Council and VicTrack (a major land owner in the centre) realised they needed to form a partnership to achieve the best possible outcome for the centre. Both VicTrack and council engaged property experts to ensure each party's financial and strategic interests were met through any proposed redevelopment of their landholdings and the renegotiation of lease agreements.

VicTrack, in consultation with council, developed a proposal for a multi-storey, mixed use residential, commercial and retail facility on VicTrack land immediately to the east of the railway station.

Kingsway is a major access road around the station. To create a viable sized development site of 2,000 m² adjacent to the station and the first stage of improvements to the public realm, the need to realign Kingsway was identified.

In early 2008, Monash City Council entered into a Heads of Agreement with VicTrack to progress the project. Council's major commitments to the project, reflected in the Heads of Agreement were:

- relinquishing its leasehold interest in the commercial and retail tenancies held by council on VicTrack land adjacent to the station, in exchange for gaining freehold title to the central car park currently leased by council from VicTrack

- construction of a multi-deck car park on council's existing at grade car park in Euneva Street and to provide, as an option, access under licence to up to 120 spaces on the top levels of the car park during daytime business hours for the proposed developer (with the developer paying the full cost of the 120 spaces)
- funding for the realignment of Kingsway was shared between council, VicTrack and the Victorian Government.

Negotiations reached a successful conclusion in October 2008 regarding the Land Exchange Agreement between VicTrack and council as outlined in the Heads of Agreement. The Agreement called for a number of conditions and precedents to be met before finalisation of the land exchange. These conditions have been substantially met and the land exchange occurred on 31 December 2009.

VICTRACK

VicTrack is a government rail agency whose charter is to operate commercially in adding value to the state's public transport (primarily rail) assets and to support the delivery of public transport services in a safe and efficient manner. The corporation was created in 1997 under section 8 of the Rail Corporations Act 1996 and is a State Owned Enterprise with an independent Board reporting to its sole shareholder, the Victorian Government. Declaration as a State Owned Enterprise took effect in July 2007 and created a dual reporting line to both the Minister for Public Transport and the Treasurer.

VicTrack is one of Victoria's major land owners and relies on working with key stakeholders including Government departments, public transport franchisees, local councils and businesses to improve the value of assets it manages for the state and deliver a range of commercial services and projects that improve Victoria's transport system and contribute to the state's liveability and sustainable economic development.

For more information – www.victrack.com.au



Image: SJB Urban



**ACTIVITY
CENTRE
SNAPSHOT**

MOE

Moe is part of the Warragul-Latrobe Networked Cities corridor announced under *Melbourne 2030*. Latrobe City Council and State Government committed to the implementation of transit city principles through preparation of the Moe Activity Centre Plan (MACP) which was adopted by Council in December 2007.

One of the key projects of the MACP is the Moe Rail Precinct Revitalisation Project. This project aims to invigorate Moe and contribute to a safe, vibrant and active town centre by providing a new Civic Hub with:

- a library, community meeting rooms and Council services;
- a pavilion building;
- a public plaza and shared space;
- a skate park;
- public open space;
- car parking; and
- potential commercial development sites.

Selecting the right tool: Section 172 of the Planning and Environment Act

To enable development of the civic precinct, the acquisition of 12 commercial properties on the southern side of George Street was identified. Latrobe Council recognised the importance of these properties in contributing to revitalisation of the precinct and set up a working group to facilitate the property acquisition.

It included membership from Latrobe City Council, DPCD, Regional Development Victoria, VicTrack and Department of Transport.

The group considered a number of different legislative options to acquire the properties and recommended that Section 172(2) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* was the most appropriate and preferred method for this project. Section 172(2) allows property acquisition to enable “the better use, development or planning of an area”.

In order to enact this legislation, the approval of the Minister for Planning and the Governor in Council was required before Latrobe City Council could compulsorily acquire the land. Approval for application of the S172(2) legislation was given mid-2009 and Council engaged the Department of Transport Commercial and Property Division as acquiring agent to apply the process set out in the Land Acquisition and Compensation Act. Council entered into a service agreement with the Department of Transport to formalise this arrangement.

It is anticipated the George Street properties will be in Council ownership within 12 months. The property acquisition project was funded by a combination of Regional Infrastructure Development Fund and Council contribution.



5.4

DELIVERING PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS TO CREATE QUALITY PLACES

Well designed places are more attractive to people and businesses. These case studies demonstrate Council's strategic role in upgrading the streets, public squares and open spaces in activity centres to make them great places to be. Investing in public realm improvements in activity centres is likely to attract more private development and, with good planning and strategy, can in turn bring further improvements to the public realm.

BENDIGO BANK HEADQUARTERS CASE STUDY

The City of Greater Bendigo has completed a range of public realm improvements to revitalise Bendigo's city centre and position the city as the major service centre for Victoria's northern region. By locating its national headquarters in the city, the Bendigo Bank has contributed to this renewal.

Context

Over the last decade, Bendigo's CBD has benefited from a series of planning and urban design initiatives that have improved the amenity of the city centre and attracted new development such as Bendigo Bank's national headquarters. This development is the largest commercial development ever built in Bendigo and is an exemplar of private investment strongly aligned with the vision of the City of Greater Bendigo.

In mid 2004 the City of Greater Bendigo commissioned The Bendigo CBD Plan, which recognises Bendigo as a key city with a strong regional role as a Networked City.

The CBD Plan was adopted by council in December 2005 and provides an integrated framework to ensure the CBD maintains its role as the region's highest order activity centre for retail, commercial, professional, hospitality, administration, tourism and cultural activities. Reflecting the complex and multi-functional nature of Bendigo's centre, the Plan takes a 'joined-up' approach, recognising the interdependency of planning and developing cities.

In parallel with the preparation of the CBD Plan, the Bendigo Bank approached the City of Greater Bendigo regarding the redevelopment of its new national head office. The City welcomed the development as a great opportunity to implement a number of policy directions relating to the rejuvenation of the CBD and to generate major benefits in terms of jobs, skills and wealth creation in the region.

Selecting the right tool: public realm improvements as part of a major redevelopment

The Bendigo community and the City of Greater Bendigo were keen to maximise the broader community benefits of the Bendigo Bank development. Supported by Regional Development Victoria (RDV), the City worked in partnership with the bank to redevelop the land around its new headquarters to make it an integral part of the CBD. In turn the bank was keen to leave a legacy for Bendigo and contribute to its social and economic sustainability.

A key component of the project's success was the partnership and coordination of all involved. The community were key drivers in ensuring Bendigo Bank's headquarters remained firmly entrenched in central Bendigo.

Project coordination

A weekly project team meeting was held with senior representatives from Bendigo Bank, the project's architects, the City and RDV. There was a commitment by all parties to complete the project in a timely manner. City of Greater Bendigo officers reported regularly to council on the project's progress and sought resolutions, when appropriate. The project team delivered a streamlined process with no delays.

Planning process

By mid-year 2004 Bendigo Bank lodged a planning application for the precinct which involved consolidation of a number of land titles, demolition of several buildings and the transfer of ownership of two City-owned car parks to the bank. In October, council approved the planning permit for the development.

RDV provided a \$3 million grant for the project which was combined with a bank contribution and spent on public space and public infrastructure including the development of two open air laneways connecting Bath Lane and High Street to a new public square, 'Lyric Square', and the transformation of an open drain into a valued pedestrian boardwalk over the Bendigo Creek. The bank committed to the maintenance of these areas for 20 years.



Photo: Rod Duncan

The new laneways connect Lyric Square to existing and new retail outlets and businesses, expanding the city centre and increasing its activity and functionality. The new building and associated public works have become a focal point for the local community and visitors to the Bendigo CBD.

The \$100 million headquarters demonstrated the bank's ongoing commitment to the city and its economic sustainability setting benchmark ecologically sustainable design and construction standards for regional Australia. The local economy was also bolstered by three years of building with a significant number of local firms involved in construction and fit-out. The new facility includes cycle storage and changing facilities, stimulating a significant increase in the use of sustainable transport by Bank employees.

Land exchange and preserving the public interest

To achieve the best design outcome for the project, the redevelopment site included some parcels of public land. Council and the bank agreed that the value of the City's land would be reinvested in public infrastructure with minimal loss of public land. A balance sheet of public land was recorded in square metres and as the design developed the area of public land was logged and reported – ensuring a transparent process for the community. RDV provided a \$3 million grant for the project which was spent on public space and public infrastructure.

Lessons to date

Redevelopment and investment in Bendigo's public realm has led to a number of related projects to improve connectivity between the Bendigo Bank and the remainder of the CBD. This includes the revitalisation of Pennyweight Walk, a pedestrian linkage between Hargreaves Street and Bath Lane, and an upgrade of Bath Lane itself (funded in part by the Creating Better Places program). The Bath Lane works will provide an improved pedestrian environment and facilitate additional outdoor trading. Combined, the investment in public realm enhancements is contributing to the transformation of Bendigo into a highly accessible and permeable city centre.

LONG TERM PLANNING AND LEADERSHIP REAPS REWARDS

In 2008, the City of Greater Bendigo was awarded the Australian Award for Urban Design.

The judges said, "The Council has shown great public leadership making significant public investment that has stimulated complementary private investment programs, which together have had a focus on people, public amenity, revitalisation and the progressive realisation of its plans over time."

Bendigo has benefited from a sequence of incremental initiatives and commitments over recent years that have transformed a grand but jaded centre into a benchmark for design-led vitality.

Rather than an individual project or space, this project exemplifies the importance and value of holistic planning and leadership, guided by sound principles of urban design and delivery. It addresses completed and current achievements, along with the robust foundations for ongoing implementation.

FAST FACT: PLACE MANAGER

The appointment of a Place Manager in 2006 was critical to delivering the vision for change in the Bendigo city centre. The City recognised that a new and specialist role was required - a place manager was appointed to champion the vision, coordinate across disciplines, liaise with public agencies, private interests and institutions and broker initiatives to make it happen.



ACTIVITY CENTRE SNAPSHOT



MADDERN SQUARE FOOTSCRAY

Maddern Square is the only centrally located civic urban green space in the Footscray Central Activities District. It provides an oasis between Footscray Railway Station, the main Barkly Street Spine, Footscray Market and Footscray's core retail area in the Nicholson Street Mall.

The Maddern Square Improvement Project was seen as a catalyst to demonstrate an early example of the vision for the future of Footscray. In 1999, Maribyrnong City Council completed the Footscray Central Urban Design Framework which documented the vision for Footscray. The Framework identified Maddern Square as a significant and pivotal opportunity to provide a welcoming place for pedestrians to move between key destinations across central Footscray. The Framework found that laneways connecting the Square to these key destinations had low perceptions of safety due to poor lighting, lack of casual surveillance and anti-social behaviour. In addition, the existing landscape elements, such as paving, lawn and furniture were in poor condition and the square consisted of inactive edges with the 'back of businesses' facing on to it. The Square is approximately 2,000 square metres.

Selecting the right tool: early win public realm improvements

The Victorian Government, provided a significant grant for the revitalisation of Maddern Square to support Footscray's wider renewal program, and to help change people's poor perceptions of Footscray. Funding was provided for landscape improvements to the Square and its laneway approaches as well as furniture and lighting. The project also provided the opportunity to demonstrate the benefits of activated public spaces for businesses that rely on passing pedestrian trade.

The Maddern Square Improvement Project aimed to:

- maximise pedestrian activity in Chambers Street
- improve perceptions of safety and community confidence
- maximise retention of good quality site trees and remove poor quality trees
- create opportunities for diverse uses and provide places to sit, gather, relax and play
- provide outdoor seating to encourage adjoining businesses and the broader community to use the Square
- improve views and connections to and from the space

- maintain open views throughout the Square
- incorporate lighting for improved safety.

The broader Footscray community worked with council to develop the preferred design for the space from the start of the project. This included developing the vision for how the Square could be used and developed, coupled with refining the final design for the space.

As part of the project council also worked with landowners and businesses to explore other development opportunities around the Square to activate the retail edges and integrate the space with surrounding land uses. This approach aimed to take advantage of the public realm improvements and investment and create new economic opportunities in Footscray.

Through the exercise, several landowners and occupiers are working with council and the government on development ideas to fully capitalise on the dual retail and residential frontages that the improved Square can offers adjoining land.

FOOTSCRAY RENEWAL

The Footscray Renewal program is a State Government initiative in partnership with Maribyrnong City Council to create high quality, well designed, living, working and socialising environments that are close to public transport.

In the State Government's 2007-08 budget, \$52.1 million funding was provided over four years for a program of works to catalyse the renewal of central Footscray, these include:

- an upgrade of Nicholson Street mall and other main streets in central Footscray
- a new, modern pedestrian bridge and public forecourts at Footscray station to improve access and safety
- assistance with development of strategic sites in the station precinct
- a one stop planning shop for the marketing and development of central Footscray.

In recognition of Footscray's metropolitan importance, and the major revitalisation initiatives funded under the State Budget, in August 2007 the Minister for Planning became the responsible authority for all major planning decisions in the town centre and station precinct.



ACTIVITY
CENTRE
SNAPSHOT

NORTHCOTE

The Northcote Major Activity Centre is located approximately 5 kilometres from the Melbourne CBD. It has a vibrant and active retail and commercial offering and has increasingly been responding to the 'café society' needs of local residents and businesses with the provision of more service related activities in the centre. Darebin Council have been working towards revitalising the centre through the *Northcote Structure Plan* and improving the urban landscape of the centre through the *Northcote Streetscape Master Plan*.

Selecting the right tool: improving connectivity and safety through public realm improvements

Darebin Council identified the need to respond to community concerns of poor connectivity, permeability, personal security and road safety for pedestrian movement between High St and the Northcote train station. The most used routes were through poor quality and unsafe lanes that were not signed or lit at night. Existing strategic plans for the centre, both draft and adopted, identified the need to improve the local environment and to create a more legible and accessible route that improved the connection to public transport.

The *Northcote Wayfinding and Place Making Initiative* which was joint funded with DPCD, was a small catalyst project that aimed to deliver the design, construction and implementation of an upgraded pedestrian link. The public realm improvement works were focused on the area between High Street and Northcote railway station with the objectives of improving connectivity, safety and convenience. The project was also intended to deliver a 'quick win' to demonstrate to the community that positive change was occurring in the centre following extensive strategic planning.

Working closely with the community through several community consultation processes, the project provided an innovative design solution that improved pedestrian way finding, contributed to a safer urban environment and encourages commuters to linger in the activity centre.

The key aspects of the pedestrian wayfinding project were:

- Laneway reconstruction – The laneway design included two outer rows of recycled bluestone and the middle section was replaced with asphalt improving accessibility
- Low energy light bollards installed along the laneway.
- Replacement of the pedestrian raised crossing in a diagonal direction across Arthurton Carpark to improve link to High Street walk through and creation of a landscaped section in the centre of the carpark
- Extension of the raised pedestrian crossing across Helen Street
- Replacement of 16 street lights (in Claude Street, Turnbull Grove, Helen Street and Herbert Street) with low energy T5 fittings that provide improved light and reduced light spill. The light in the Arthurton Carpark immediately adjacent to the laneway was also upgraded
- Fabrication and installation of 33 cast bronze artistic pavement markers along the pedestrian route to provide visual cues to assist navigation
- Commissioning of a "street art" mural for the walls along the laneway
- Painted roadway at pedestrian crossings on the road at the east and west ends of Turnbull Grove and Claude Street
- Wayfinding signs at the entrance of the pedestrian walk-through on High Street (near Stuzzi Café), in the Arthurton Road car park and in Herbert Street near the train station.

Whilst only a small scale public realm project, the outcome has been positively received by the community and an increase in foot traffic along the route can be observed. The final step in the project is to formally close the laneway to vehicle traffic and allow only pedestrian and cyclist access. The statutory process for this will take 6 months and will include an additional process to develop a name for the laneway.

THANK YOU

**Produced by the Department of Planning and Community
Development with assistance from Strategic Outcomes Pty Ltd.**

We would also like to thank staff from the Cities of Banyule, Greater Bendigo, Greater Dandenong, Greater Geelong, LaTrobe, Manningham, Moreland, Moonee Valley, Monash and Whittlesea, Darebin and Maribyrnong City Councils, Dandenong Development Board, Deakin University, MAB, Mirvac, SJB Architects, VicUrban and Victrack for their time and contribution in preparing this toolkit.

