MARIBYRNONG RIVER VALLEY VISION AND DESIGN GUIDELINES

Division  Sustainability & Regulatory Services

Presenter  David Mayes, Manager Strategic Planning & Sustainability

Purpose


Recommendation from Management

2. That the Planning Committee:


   2.2. agree that the Department of Planning and Community Development be advised of the Planning Committee’s support for establishment of the Maribyrnong River Valley Coordinating Committee to oversee the implementation of the Guidelines; and

   2.3. agree that a request be made to the Department of Planning and Community Development to address outstanding issues namely;

      2.3.1. to determine the extent of land to be included in the Environmental Significance Overlay and Flood Overlay; and

      2.3.2. to provide detailed costing of the actions in the implementation plan including the funding arrangements for the proposed Coordinating Committee.

Key Issues

3. A draft Guidelines document was previously considered at the August 2006 Planning Committee and it was resolved to endorse the draft Guidelines in-principle subject to the resolution of the following issues to the satisfaction of the Manager City Strategy.

Environmental Significance and Flood Overlays

4. The draft Guidelines recommend that common Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO) Design and Flood Overlay (FO) are applied to the length to the river. Different planning and design standards will apply to different lengths of the river.

5. At the August 2006 Planning Committee meeting it was resolved to clarify the extent of land that will be subject to Environmental Significance and Floodway Overlays.
6. The Guidelines (refer Attachment 1) state that ultimately, the ESO controls should be applied to:
   6.1. areas of biological significance;
   6.2. sites of faunal and habitat significance;
   6.3. the river itself;
   6.4. abutting private and public land;
   6.5. land adjacent to public land along the river; and
   6.6. areas where future development has the potential to impact on the landscape quality of the river.

7. However, the exact boundary of land that the ESO controls should be applied has not been determined and requires further investigation.

8. the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) acknowledges that more detailed work needs to be undertaken to determine the boundaries of the ESO and that additional funding is being planned to undertake this work as part of the proposed Planning Scheme amendment.

9. The entire 1 to 100 year floodplain of the Maribyrnong River study area is covered by ‘Land Subject to Inundation Overlay’ (LSIO). The purpose of the LSIO is to identify land in a flood fringe or flood storage area affected by the 1:100 year flood. Given the depth of flooding over much of the floodplain it may be appropriate to replace parts of the LSIO with a Flood Overlay to identify high hazard areas that have greatest risk and frequency of flooding.

10. Melbourne Water has recommended that the LSIO currently in place along the Yarra River should be replaced with a Floodway Overlay (FO), where the depth of the floodwater exceeds one metre. However Melbourne Water acknowledges that further work may need to be undertaken to identify similar high hazard areas along the Maribyrnong River on the basis of flooding depth, frequency, and velocity.

11. A summary of the proposed Planning Scheme amendments relevant to City of Melbourne include:
   11.1. incorporating the Guideline’s vision and broad objectives in Council’s MSS;
   11.2. including the Guidelines as a Reference Document in the Melbourne Planning Scheme;
   11.3. considering the need for additional overlay controls; and
   11.4. considering introduction of Floodway Overlay in areas where flood depths are greater than one metre, following a review by Melbourne Water.

Provision of Public Access

12. Within the City of Melbourne section of the river corridor the draft Guidelines specify land to be provided as open space or public access should be a minimum of 15 metres from the top of the bank to the waterway. It was unclear in the draft Guidelines whether open space needed to be acquired to achieve the minimum setback requirements for public access.

13. The August 2006 Planning Committee meeting resolved to identify the affected City of Melbourne land and the potential costs of acquisition to require a continuous 15m public access along the Maribyrnong corridor.
14. An investigation of affected land in the City of Melbourne indicated that acquisition cost inclusive of potential additional compensation payable is prohibitive (about $2 million in addition to any additional compensation costs).

15. The Guidelines has now clarified the intent of the minimum 15 metre public access to indicate that the provision of public access along the river corridor may be achieved through 'setback' requirements associated with subdivision and development. The Guidelines recognise that in some cases open space may be in private ownership and buildings should be setback to achieve the minimum requirement.

**Urban Development and nodes of activity**

16. The Guidelines identified parts of the river frontage between Hobsons Road and Dynon Road as possible sites for ‘intensive urban development’ and earmarks this area as ‘opportunities for a node of activity’. Specific mention of uses in this area included ‘cafés, pubs, retail outlets recreational facilities and boat clubs.

17. Given that Council’s MSS identifies portions of this area for business, advanced manufacturing service industry and high intensity employment uses, it was considered inappropriate to include most of this area in the ‘intensive urban development’/‘node of activity’ designation.

18. The Guidelines has now been modified to reflect Council’s MSS and to restrict the land identified as ‘opportunities for a node of activity’ to part of land at 1-89 Hobsons Road which could accommodate some limited recreation, restaurant and retail opportunities. Council officers, in a separate exercise, are currently reviewing the zoning and appropriate overlays for this land.

**Review of the river character statements**

19. At the August 2006 Planning Committee it was resolved to revise and refine the river character statements to include provisions which allow landscape screening of industrial uses adjacent to the river.

20. The draft Guidelines specify different design and landscape characters for different lengths of the river corridor. The ‘Footscray’ length consists of the river corridor from Smithfield Road to Dynon Road. This length of the river is defined as an urban river where urban activity dominates. There is the potential for mixed use or commercial development within this length, where consistent with existing zoning and the need to provide buffers to sensitive uses. Land at 1-89 Hobsons Road was previously excluded from this river length.

21. Following a review of the local areas that make up the river lengths, land at 1-89 Hobsons Road has now been included in the ‘Footscray’ length.

22. Council’s approach to the public open space along the river between Hobsons Road and Dynon Road is to landscape the industrial uses along the river and there are plans for further revegetation along the river corridor. The ‘Guidelines’ has now been revised to reflect this approach by requiring that that vegetation may be used to frame built form and provide shade in public areas.

**Proposed Mariibyrnong Coordinating Committee**

23. The Guidelines include an implementation plan (Refer Attachment 2 for the relevant City of Melbourne input to the implementation plan). A key component of the implementation plan is the establishment of a Mariibyrnong River Valley Coordinating Committee to provide a forum for Councils and Government agencies to work together to implement a range of recommended actions.
24. The August 2006 Planning Committee requested an agreement on the resourcing required for the proposed Coordinating Committee. DPCD has advised that details of the resourcing have not yet been finalised. However, the Coordinating Committee will be established on a ‘two-year trial’ basis involving the five adjoining local councils, DPCD and Parks Victoria, to implement key priorities including overseeing planning scheme amendments. Its effectiveness, including its role, will be reviewed and its future form will be decided before the end of the two-year period.

25. Since the State Government has responsibilities for the river valley (including planning and river management), DPCD and Parks Victoria will attend meetings and participate in the Coordinating Committee.

26. DPCD intends to provide significant support and guidance for the planning scheme amendments and proposes the Coordinating Committee comprises of the following:

26.1. Councillor and officer representation from the adjoining local councils with the chair rotating among councillors from the four urban Councils;

26.2. meetings held on a quarterly basis, or as needed and the four Councils likely to share administrative costs’ smf

26.3. progressively defining and revising its terms of reference and deciding on funding formulas, whether to appoint an executive officer or whether council officers share administration.

27. Council officers support the proposal for the establishment of the Maribyrnong River Valley Coordinating Committee and that details of its resourcing and terms of reference be finalised upon its establishment.

Next Steps

28. Following endorsement by Councils, the Guidelines will be presented to the Minister for Planning for approval. It is anticipated that a formal launch of the Guidelines will occur during the latter part of 2007 by the Minister in conjunction with the five affected Councils and the implementation plan will be undertaken over immediate, short and long term periods.

29. The establishment of the proposed Maribyrnong River Coordinating Committee, a key component of the implementation plan, will commence within 12 months of approval of the Guidelines and its effectiveness will be reviewed after two years.

30. It is envisaged that the proposed Planning Scheme amendments will commence during 2008 and that the application of the Guidelines will commence after the approval of the Planning Scheme amendments by the Minister of Planning.

Relation to Council Policy

31. Council’s City Plan 2010, Municipal Strategic Statement and the Kensington Action Plan 2005 make references to enhance the Maribyrnong River corridor and the Guidelines are consistent with these aims.

Consultation

32. Extensive consultation has occurred in the form of workshops and public information sessions at various stages of the preparation of the Guidelines. The Guidelines was placed on exhibition for public comment during May 2006.

33. During the public comment period 44 written submissions were received. The submissions were subsequently considered by DPCD as part of the preparation of the final Guidelines. Council officers have been involved throughout the preparation of the Guidelines via representation on the Project Steering Committee.
Government Relations

34. The Department of Sustainability & Environment (now DPCD) managed the project in partnership with the adjoining Councils – Melbourne, Maribyrnong, Moonee Valley, Brimbank, Hume and relevant government departments including Melbourne Water and Parks Victoria. There is a need to continue these relations to ensure the implementation of the project.

Finance

35. Implementation of the Guidelines requires funding that will be sought for some of the actions by the proposed Coordinating Committee. Detailed costing of the actions has not yet been undertaken but will occur as part of a more detailed implementation plan.

36. The detail of funding requirements for the proposed Coordinating Committee will also be clarified after the approval of the Guidelines as part of the more detailed implementation plan.

37. The proposed exhibition of a planning scheme amendment as well as its presentation to Planning Panels Victoria would require Council officer’s resources in addition to funding via normal Council’s budgetary process.

38. There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations in the report.

Legal

39. Divisions 1 and 2 of Part 3 of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 set out the planning scheme amendment process.

Sustainability

40. The Guidelines provide a vision, objectives and more detailed guidance on appropriate building form and works within the river valley and is consistent with the City Plan 2010 themes.

41. The encouragement of public participation through workshops and public information sessions has promoted community networking and is consistent with this theme.

42. The Guidelines recommend a continuous open space link, shared pathway and access to and from the river corridor, consistent with the City Plan 2010 theme for a ‘Connected and Accessible City’.

Background

43. The Maribyrnong River Valley Project was initiated during late 2003, funded partly by a ‘Melbourne 2030’ targeted grant. Additional funding was provided by the Cities of Brimbank, Maribyrnong, Melbourne and Parks Victoria and Melbourne Water.

44. The relevant local councils: Melbourne, Maribyrnong, Brimbank, Moonee Valley and Hume as well as Melbourne Water and Parks Victoria, are represented on the project steering committee along with DPCD.
45. The project steering committee, assisted by consultants, developed a broad vision and objectives for the Maribyrnong River Valley. These were based on previous policies and plans as well as community and stakeholder input at several forums during 2004. The consultants also prepared an urban design and landscape guidelines for the urban section of the river valley and outlined suggested Planning Scheme changes.

46. During late April 2006, a draft document was released by the Minister for Planning for public comment. A total of 44 submissions were received from a broad range of stakeholders and were largely supportive of the Guidelines.

47. A draft final Guideline was prepared in April 2007 after consideration of all submissions and public comments received. A final document was then prepared in July 2007 following further comments received from Government departments.
Project team

The Project Steering Committee:
- City of Maribyrnong: Jules Griffith and Robin Dunstone
- City of Moonee Valley: Simon Cotterill/Rebecca Jenkins/Karen Vassallo
- City of Melbourne: Cletus Kweifio-Okai
- City of Brimbank: Michael Mielczarek
- City of Hume: Kim Giaquinta
- Dept. Sustainability & Environment (Port Phillip Region, Biodiversity): Sue Hadden
- Dept. Sustainability & Environment (Strategy Development): Rhonda Boyle
- Parks Victoria: Paul Dartnell/Alexandra Lewis
- Melbourne Water: Peter Rankin

This report is based on an earlier report (released April 2006) by the following consultants:
- IUM – Lester Townsend & Pia Herbert
- David Mayes Urban Design – David Mayes

Key stakeholders consulted:
- Port of Melbourne Corporation
- VicUrban
- Heritage Victoria
- Environment Protection Authority Victoria
- Department of Victorian Communities
- Tourism Victoria
- Department of Infrastructure
- VicRoads
- Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority
- Local and peak interest groups, including Friends groups, Environment Victoria, Green Wedge Coalition, Bicycle Victoria
- Recreational and boating clubs
- Commonwealth Dept of Defence
- Melbourne Airport
- Major developers with an interest in the study area.

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Definitions

**Master plan** – a land-use vision of how an area will be developed. It generally applies to areas owned or controlled by one agency or body (e.g. an area of public open space). A master plan gives comprehensive guidance for future development and use of public and private land on a site or in a precinct. It defines specific physical design proposals.

**Urban design framework (UDF)** – a strategic planning tool that sets out an integrated design vision for the desired future development of urban places. It combines the direction-setting and coordination aspects of strategic planning with the detailed and practical design process of a master plan, in three dimensions.

**Structure plan** – similar to an urban design framework but generally applies to a larger area such as an activity centre. A structure plan is a framework for the integrated development of urban areas. Within this framework, design plans such as master plans are made for the development of specific sites and precincts. Structure plans are a key tool of Melbourne 2030 for the planning of activity centres.

**River ‘length’** – a length represents a segment of the river for which a single ‘preferred character’ can be defined.

**River ‘reach’** – a straight section of river between changes in direction. A ‘length’ is made up of a number of reaches.

**Node of activity** – concentrations of facilities which attract people to the riverside for recreation. These may include commercial facilities such as cafes and public facilities such as picnic areas and boat launching or landing facilities. They may encompass adjoining private land as well as public land. Private land fronting onto riverside open space could incorporate mixed use development sympathetic to the riverside setting. A node of activity (see section 4.7) should not be confused with an urban activity centre as defined in Melbourne 2030, which is a large scale commercial/retail centre not specifically focused on recreational activity along a waterway. Nodes of activity can be small in scale.

**Shared path/trail** – a path shared by pedestrians and cyclists.

**Urban Growth Boundary (UGB)** – indicates the long-term limits to urban expansion, separating urban and non-urban (Green Wedge) areas. The UGB is included in planning schemes and can only be changed with approval of both Houses of Parliament.
Executive summary and priority actions

Purpose of the report

This study of the Maribyrnong River Valley is an initiative of Melbourne 2030, the State Government’s metropolitan strategy. It has three main purposes:

1. to describe a vision and broad objectives for the Maribyrnong River valley from the Organ Pipes to Port Phillip Bay
2. to articulate design objectives and guidelines for the built form and landscape of the river valley downstream of the Calder Freeway
3. to present priority actions for the next three years, including planning scheme amendments, land acquisition, capital works, further detailed planning, community engagement and promotion.

This report presents design objectives and guidelines with the expectation that they will be introduced into planning schemes of individual municipalities along the river valley. The vision, broad objectives and strategies could also be included in councils’ Municipal Strategic Statements.

The objectives and more detailed guidelines are designed to provide guidance on the appropriate form of proposed buildings and works within the river valley to prospective developers, land managers, landowners and the community at large.

This report is based on a previous consultant report: Maribyrnong River Valley Vision and Design Guidelines, released for community consultation in April 2006. The recommendations put forward in that report have since been considered by State Government and all local councils. This report has been endorsed by State and Local Government and therefore provides current policy for the river valley. It includes endorsed priority actions for the first five years.

Study method and outputs

Vision and objectives

The vision, broad objectives and general principles/strategies for the river valley are based on existing policies in planning schemes of municipalities, a review of previous studies and the results of community consultation carried out as part of this study.

Analysis

The study presents an analytical overview of the river covering valley physiography, flooding, open space, natural assets, heritage, urban settlement and activity, trail network and valley access. The study identifies seven distinct ‘lengths’ along the river (refer Map E1):

1. Brimbank Park
2. Steele Creek
3. Maribyrnong
4. Racecourse
5. Footscray
6. Footscray Wharf
7. Port

Preferred character types

A preferred character has been identified for each length leading to different outcomes. The preferred character types for the lengths are:

- Natural river (Brimbank)
- Secluded river (Steele Creek)
- Suburban river (Maribyrnong)
These character types provide context for a spatial approach to implementing the vision and objectives, and developing planning guidelines for each length.

Design objectives and guidelines

Design objectives and guidelines for a range of development issues are listed under the headings:
- open space management – landscape
- open space management – access
- landform
- urban development interface
- site layout and building visibility
- building design
- infrastructure design – e.g. power lines, lights, bridges, jetties.

Actions

The priority actions are based on recommendations from the previous consultant report and some of the strategies listed in Section 2.4. The actions cover:
- acquisition of additional public open space
- introduction of planning scheme amendments to formalise the design guidelines
- sites for further detailed master planning along the river
- priorities for capital works
- government coordination arrangements
- community engagement and promotion of the valley.

Refer to the Priority Actions below.

Key issues addressed by the study

Planning scheme provisions

The study recommends the insertion or addition of new provisions in planning schemes to clarify the vision for the future of the river valley and to ensure there is a coordinated approach to its planning, protection and development.

A number of important issues are already able to be addressed effectively through other, more broadly based, planning scheme policies and mechanisms, through controls that are not specific to the Maribyrnong River. These include controls over heritage, archaeological sites, stormwater management and water sensitive urban design.

Governance

The need for coordinated governance arrangements among the councils and authorities with land ownership, planning and management responsibilities along the river valley is most evident (and has been expressed strongly in community consultations) where the acquisition of land is recommended, and where coordinated planning for the river valley is necessary.

Broad objectives identified for valley governance in this study are:
- to improve existing levels of cooperation to achieve effective and efficient management
- to involve the community in river valley management
- to inspire and facilitate action to improve the valley and river
- to ensure planning provisions reflect agreed policy, objectives and guidelines.
A number of waterways (Merri Creek, Moonee Ponds Creek, Darebin Creek) have formally established waterway committees that coordinate action and planning along these creek valleys. They are funded by councils but also attract funding from commonwealth and state governments. Section 10.1 outlines the role and membership of the proposed Maribyrnong River Valley Coordination Committee.

Site master plans

At a number of critical locations along the river, detailed, integrated planning is required to achieve the best outcomes including:
- locations where more intensive recreational activity and/or mixed use development is appropriate – (i.e. nodes of activity)
- localities of transition from the ‘natural’ through to the ‘urban’ sections where the emphasis is on how to manage character transitions
- parkland improvements.

Public land acquisition

The report identifies high priority areas for acquisition of land to connect linear trails and to protect vegetation or existing landscape values by precluding or limiting development in some sections of the river.

Key issues for the management of the valley are the creation of linked parklands as set out in *Melbourne 2030* and *Linking People and Spaces* (Parks Victoria, 2002) and the amount of land that should be managed as public open space (or for public access) along the river to:
- provide adequate access to and along the river
- protect the floodplain
- protect indigenous and significant vegetation
- provide habitat
- protect cultural/heritage values
- provide recreation areas.

Capital works

In the middle and upper lengths the main form of movement is by cycling or walking. But the paths have many gaps, particularly along the south/west bank. In accordance with the preferences of many stakeholders, the report commits to completing trails along both sides of the river (except in the vicinity of Woods Street in Ascot Vale and in the port, where connecting trails will need to follow inland routes), with both upper and lower level trails being developed where feasible – mainly in the upper reaches. Funding for public capital works will be required to complete these links and the linking of parkland, sometimes in tandem with public land acquisition. New parkland, trail links and new crossings could also be yielded from larger private land developments.

Other capital works designed to upgrade infrastructure, raise the profile of the valley and encourage sympathetic economic development include boating facilities, signage, lighting and landscaping. Further detail of priority works is provided in Parks Victoria’s Water and Land Access Plan.

Priority actions

Priority actions listed below are already under way or will commence in the next five years. Many reflect recommendations listed in the previous consultant report released in April 2006. Proposed timeframes for commencement of actions are as follows:

Immediate – under way or commence within 12 months

Short term – commence within 1-2 years

Long term – commence within 2-5 years
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Organisations involved</th>
<th>Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Investigate the boundaries for the proposed upper Maribyrnong River linear park as part of developing the Green Wedge Management Plan for the Sunbury Green Wedge. (Page 56)</td>
<td>Hume City, Brimbank City Council, DSE, Parks Vic</td>
<td>Immediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Undertake detailed strategic planning in the Sunshine North area, between orbital Drive and Balfour Avenue, to establish preferred land uses and identify areas of open space and native vegetation to be protected. (Page 57)</td>
<td>Brimbank City Council, DSE</td>
<td>Immediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Investigate mechanisms to protect the remaining undeveloped Brimbank escarpment land including seeking funds for acquisition for public open space. (Page 57)</td>
<td>DSE, Brimbank City Council</td>
<td>Immediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Following disposal of the Defence Site Maribyrnong (DSM) by the Commonwealth, prepare an integrated landscape and development strategy to support structure planning for future development of the entire site. This strategy must ensure public open space is set aside along the entire length of the river corridor. (Page 58)</td>
<td>Maribyrnong City Council, DSE</td>
<td>Immediately following disposal of site by the Commonwealth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Consider funding options for the acquisition, from the Medway Golf Club, of a narrow strip of land alongside the river, east of the footbridge. (Page 58)</td>
<td>DSE, Maribyrnong City Council</td>
<td>Immediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Review open space provision and ownership between Cranwell Park and the rock ford with a view to enlarging public open space to protect the escarpment and transferring any private river frontage land to public ownership. (Page 59)</td>
<td>Maribyrnong City Council, DSE</td>
<td>Short term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Develop structure plans or master plans for potential nodes of activity as needed, and continue to implement existing approved plans, such as the Footscray Riverside Masterplan. (Page 81)</td>
<td>Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Brimbank City Councils, Parks Vic</td>
<td>Short to long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Investigate the optimum non-riverfront route for a shared path south of Lyons Street linking the Maribyrnong trail with the Bay trail south of the West Gate Bridge. (Page 83)</td>
<td>Maribyrnong City Council, PoMC</td>
<td>Immediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Upgrade landscaping and access where there is public access to the river at the eastern end of Francis Street. (Page 83)</td>
<td>PoMC, Maribyrnong City Council</td>
<td>Short term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Investigate opportunities for landscape treatment of the riverfront and improvements to local amenity, transport and access between Lyons Street and Francis Street on the western side. (Page 83)</td>
<td>PoMC</td>
<td>Short term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Seek opportunities to provide spectacular views of port activities, consistent with safety and security requirements, on both sides of the river. (Page 83)</td>
<td>PoMC</td>
<td>Short term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Organisations involved</td>
<td>Priority</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>12. As part of the master planning process for particular parts of the valley, take into account transitions between different ‘lengths’ of the river valley and their preferred characters. <em>(Page 83)</em></td>
<td>Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Brimbank City Councils, Parks Vic PoMC</td>
<td>As master plans are prepared.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Prepare a master plan for the areas of undeveloped parkland in the area of Chifley Drive. <em>(Page 84)</em></td>
<td>Maribyrnong City Council, Melbourne Water</td>
<td>Long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Following completion of action 6 (refer section 7.1), prepare a master plan for open space along the southern side of the river between Waterford Green and the rock ford. <em>(Page 84)</em></td>
<td>Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Brimbank City Councils, Parks Vic PoMC</td>
<td>Long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Seek funds to complete the trail network along the river and extend into the surrounding areas. High priority works include:</td>
<td>Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Brimbank City Councils, Parks Vic PoMC, DSE, DOI</td>
<td>Short to long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o the (non-riverfront) link between the Maribyrnong Trail south of Footscray Wharf to the Bay trail (see Action 8).</td>
<td>Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Brimbank City Councils, Parks Vic PoMC, DSE, DOI</td>
<td>Short to long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o connecting the Afton Street bridge with a future trail along the Defence Site Maribyrnong frontage and completing missing links north along the western bank in Braybrook.</td>
<td>Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Brimbank City Councils, Parks Vic PoMC, DSE, DOI</td>
<td>Short to long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o improving connections along Woods Street to link Maribyrnong and Fairbairn Parks.</td>
<td>Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Brimbank City Councils, Parks Vic PoMC, DSE, DOI</td>
<td>Short to long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(Page 85)</em></td>
<td>Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Brimbank City Councils, Parks Vic PoMC, DSE, DOI</td>
<td>Short to long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Seek funds to develop a secondary trail network along the top edge of the valley open space where appropriate. <em>(Page 85)</em></td>
<td>Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Brimbank City Councils, Parks Vic PoMC, DSE, DOI</td>
<td>Long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Consider funding options for improved pedestrian/bicycle crossings, including bridge approaches, in the following locations:</td>
<td>Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Brimbank City Councils, Parks Vic PoMC, DSE, DOI</td>
<td>Short to long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Shepherd bridge</td>
<td>Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Brimbank City Councils, Parks Vic PoMC, DSE, DOI</td>
<td>Short to long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Lynch’s bridge</td>
<td>Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Brimbank City Councils, Parks Vic PoMC, DSE, DOI</td>
<td>Short to long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Maribyrnong/Raleigh Road bridge</td>
<td>Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Brimbank City Councils, Parks Vic PoMC, DSE, DOI</td>
<td>Short to long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Canning Street/Cordite Avenue bridge, and</td>
<td>Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Brimbank City Councils, Parks Vic PoMC, DSE, DOI</td>
<td>Short to long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o review options and priorities for the two rail bridges in the lower Maribyrnong. <em>(Page 85)</em></td>
<td>Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Brimbank City Councils, Parks Vic PoMC, DSE, DOI</td>
<td>Short to long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Consider funding options for new footbridges across the river in the following locations:-</td>
<td>Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Brimbank City Councils, Parks Vic PoMC, DSE, DOI</td>
<td>Short to long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o between Brimbank Park and Sunshine North</td>
<td>Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Brimbank City Councils, Parks Vic PoMC, DSE, DOI</td>
<td>Short to long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o between Steele Creek and future open space within Defence Site Maribyrnong</td>
<td>Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Brimbank City Councils, Parks Vic PoMC, DSE, DOI</td>
<td>Short to long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o between Edgewater Lake (Burndap Park) and Fisher Parade. <em>(Page 85)</em></td>
<td>Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Brimbank City Councils, Parks Vic PoMC, DSE, DOI</td>
<td>Short to long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Organisations involved</td>
<td>Priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Develop trails to nearby attractions (e.g. Highpoint and Victoria University) and links to residential areas and schools. <em>(Page 85)</em></td>
<td>Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Brimbank City Councils, Parks Vic, DSE</td>
<td>Short to long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Develop and implement a consistent signage plan for the entire valley, including route identification, nearby destinations, facilities along the valley, public transport and interpretation of the valley’s history and assets. <em>(Page 85)</em></td>
<td>Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Brimbank City Councils, Parks Vic, DSE, PoMC, Melbourne Water</td>
<td>Short term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Develop priorities for upgrading of ancillary facilities, including seats, shade, lighting, fountains, toilets and bicycle parking. <em>(Page 85)</em></td>
<td>Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Brimbank City Councils, Parks Vic</td>
<td>Long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Consider funding options for river-based infrastructure based on the Water and Land Access Plan. High priority works include:</td>
<td>Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Brimbank City Councils, Parks Vic</td>
<td>Short term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o reinstating the Flemington Racecourse landing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o a new pontoon for the Footscray Boat Club</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o a canoe/kayak landing at Pipemakers Park</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>o a floating landing at the Tea Gardens</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o a floating landing at Poyntons Nursery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o improving access for disabled people. <em>(Page 85)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Establish a Maribyrnong River Valley Coordinating Committee as a two-year trial involving the five councils, DSE and Parks Victoria. This committee will commence implementation of key priorities, including coordinating the introduction of planning scheme amendments where needed. The effectiveness of the committee will be reviewed within two years. <em>(Page 88)</em></td>
<td>All councils, Parks Vic, DSE</td>
<td>Immediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Review and document heritage assets of the valley, including Indigenous and post-European settlement, prior to considering the need for planning scheme amendments. <em>(Page 89)</em></td>
<td>Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Brimbank City Councils, Parks Vic, Heritage Victoria, Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (AAV)</td>
<td>Long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Organisations involved</td>
<td>Priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Prepare coordinated planning scheme amendments according to listed priorities. <em>(Page 95)</em></td>
<td>Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Brimbank City Councils, DSE</td>
<td>Immediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Maintain a whole-of-Government Maribyrnong River Valley website. <em>(Page 96)</em></td>
<td>Maribyrnong River Valley Coordinating Committee</td>
<td>Immediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Develop a Maribyrnong Valley Heritage Strategy, based on the review of assets (Action 24). The strategy should detail opportunities to interpret the history of the river valley and recommend priority works for the conservation and protection of heritage assets. <em>(Page 97)</em></td>
<td>Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Brimbank City Councils, Parks Vic, Heritage Vic, AAV</td>
<td>Long term</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Map E1: Lengths of the river

- River valley lengths
- Transition points between lengths
- River channel

[Map of the Maribyrnong River Valley showing lengths and transition points]
Map E2: Open space

Locations with special open space issues

Transition points between lengths and character areas

- Open land - subject to Public Aquation Overlay
- Open land - approved or proposed for some urban development
- Open land - with remnant vegetation
- Open land - privately owned
- Open space - publicly owned proposed
- Open space - publicly owned

Primary study area boundary - the river valley edge

Scale: 0 1 2 km
Map E3: Urban activity

- Primary study area boundary - the river valley edge
- Opportunities for a node of activity
- Existing nodes of activity
- Port of Melbourne
- Urban activity centres
- Major sites proposed for urban redevelopment
- Urban settlement - approved
- Urban settlement - existing

Scale: 0 - 1 - 2 km

N
Planning visions for a better river

The valley and its environs are the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri tribe of the Kulin Nation.

On 15 May 1915, George McKay wrote to the Footscray Advertiser:

For years past all the money has been spent on the Yarra ... Our money has been spent on the other side of Melbourne and it is fair that those people should spend some of their money over here. The Maribyrnong River is a better river than the Yarra ... This portion of Melbourne has been neglected in the past and people should recognise that it is worth looking after. (Maribyrnong River Plan, 1984)

Since the mid 1980s there has been a commitment to improving the Maribyrnong, yet many in the west would still agree with the sentiments of George McKay.

The Maribyrnong River is one of Melbourne’s largest rivers. It has a catchment of some 1400 square kilometres, stretching from the Macedon Ranges to Port Phillip. The catchment is predominately rural; as the Maribyrnong enters the built-up area of Melbourne it begins a dramatic journey – a linear corridor through the otherwise featureless western plains – from a natural river to a highly urbanised working river.

Along the way the river and its valley provide places of tranquillity and a diversity of recreation experiences for the people of the western suburbs.

A renewed commitment to the Maribyrnong is needed if it is to reach its full potential as an environmental, conservation and recreation corridor.
1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this report

This study has three main purposes: to set out a vision and broad objectives for the Maribyrnong River from the Organ Pipes to Port Phillip Bay, to articulate design objectives and guidelines for the built form and landscape of the river valley downstream of the Calder Freeway, and to present priority actions for further work including capital works. It does not develop guidelines for the area outside of the Urban Growth Boundary of Melbourne because this area is predominantly rural in use, included within a green wedge and will not be developed for urban purposes in the foreseeable future.

The design objectives and guidelines are intended to be introduced into planning schemes along the river. The vision, broad objectives and strategies will be reflected in councils’ Municipal Strategic Statements as appropriate, and this report is intended to become a reference document in council planning schemes. The vision, objectives and design guidelines are intended to influence the form of proposed buildings and works within the river valley to prospective developers, land managers, landowners and the community at large.

Upstream of the Calder Freeway beyond the Urban Growth Boundary, the vision and broad objectives can be used to inform future initiatives including development of the Green Wedge Management Plan.

1.2 Why has this study been undertaken?

This study of the Maribyrnong River valley is an initiative of Melbourne 2030, the State Government’s metropolitan strategy.

A policy of Melbourne 2030 is:

Policy 5.7: Rectify gaps in the metropolitan network of open space by creating new parks and ensure major open space corridors are protected and enhanced.

A number of initiatives are set out under this policy. This study delivers initiative 5.7.4 in relation to the Maribyrnong River. Complementary work led by Parks Victoria is underway through the Two Rivers Project to deliver on other initiatives in Melbourne 2030.

5.7.2 Extend the chain of parks concept by creating four continuous open space links and trails:

- Western Coastal parklands (linking Point Gellibrand, Point Cook and Werribee)
- Merri Creek parklands (extending to Craigieburn)
- Maribyrnong River parklands
- Frankston parklands (linking existing parks from Carrum to Mornington).

5.7.4 Strengthen current policies and review adequacy of planning controls relating to the Yarra and Maribyrnong rivers to ensure long-term protection of open space, conservation values – with the first priority being the Yarra River corridor between Punt Road and Burke Road.
Map 5: Study area for the guidelines
5.7.5 Continue adding to the recreational and tourism potential of the Yarra River and Maribyrnong River corridors by:

- completing high-priority infrastructure and landscaping for riverbank and water-based activities along the lower Yarra River before the 2006 Commonwealth Games
- identifying and completing high priority infrastructure, landscaping works and enhancement of pedestrian and bicycle trail links along the lower Maribyrnong River
- completing links between the Main Yarra trail and Darebin and Plenty trails, the Maribyrnong trail and Bay trail at Williamstown, and connecting the Yarra trail to the Bay at Port Melbourne.

Parks Victoria’s Yarra 2006 Action Plan and Two Rivers Project relate to initiative 5.7.5. The key component of the Two Rivers Project relevant to this report is the Water and Land Access Plan, a draft of which is due to be released later in 2007.

Other government policies and strategies relevant to the Maribyrnong River are briefly described in Section 2.1.

1.3 What is the study area for the guidelines?

The development of objectives and guidelines is focused on the river valley between the Calder Freeway Bridge in Keilor to its confluence with the Yarra in Footscray. Map 4 shows the primary study area. The river valley edges are defined by the rim to the surrounding hinterland of the western plain. The hinterland to the valley has also been included in the study where it has relevant functional linkages to the valley.

The study area is about 15 km by 7 km covering an area of about 60 square kilometres with a river channel length of about 30 km. The river establishes a valley landscape that varies along its length and is constantly changing over different time scales.

The study area encompasses a wide variation of formal and functional characteristics. Over their length, rivers have an archetypal landscape ‘narrative’ of reaches from headwaters to the sea. The main aim of this study is to capture both the variety of the valley and the overall ‘narrative’ of the Maribyrnong within its urban context.

1.4 Study method and outputs

The study identifies a vision and broad objectives for the river valley from the Organ Pipes to its confluence with the Yarra River based on:

- existing policies in the planning schemes of municipalities abutting the river
- a review of previous studies
- results of community consultation carried out as part of this study.

With these objectives in mind the study presents an analytical overview of the river covering:

- valley physiography
- flooding
- open space
- natural assets
- heritage
- urban settlement
- urban activity
- trail network
- valley access.
This analysis is used to identify distinct characters along the river and recommends a preferred character for each length. The study identifies seven distinct lengths along the river. The preferred character types for these lengths set out a spatial approach for the implementation of the vision and objectives.

The priority actions addresses:
- the open space boundary, including where additional public open space is required
- the potential impacts on the preferred character of the valley of proposed or potential developments on largely open land currently in private or Commonwealth ownership
- the implementation of development design objectives and guidelines, including planning scheme amendments
- sites for further detailed master plans along the river
- recommended capital works
- community engagement and promotion of the valley to the broader community
- governance arrangements.

Figure 1 shows the output of this study – the grey boxes show further work beyond the scope of this report but foreshadowed in the priority actions.

1.5 Structure of this report

This report presents the analysis carried out as part of the project and recommendations for the guidelines. It is structured as follows:

- Executive summary and priority actions
- Section 1 Introduction
- Section 2 Sets out the policy context of the study in more detail and a summary of community values from earlier consultation reports, concluding with a vision for the valley and a set of broad objectives, principles and strategies
- Section 3 Summarises the main issues raised in public consultation during and after release of the consultant report in 2006
- Section 4 Provides a descriptive overview of the river
- Section 5 Sets out the analysis of the river valley
Section 6 Identifies the preferred character for each length
Section 7 Examines issues in relation to the extent of the open space corridor along the river valley
Section 8 Sets out design objectives and guidelines
Section 9 Examines issues related to master planning and capital works
Section 10 Examines governance, the application of planning controls, community engagement and awareness.

The appendices include planning scheme information, a history of settlement in the valley and other useful background information.
2. Vision and broad objectives

2.1 Government policy

In addition to Melbourne 2030, a number of other government strategies inform this study including Linking People and Spaces, the Port Phillip and Westernport Regional River Health Strategy and the Regional Catchment Strategy. These strategies have a range of actions directed at improving waterways and protecting vegetation.

State Planning Policy

The State Planning Policy Framework states at Clause 14.02-2:

*Environmentally sensitive areas with significant recreational value such as the Dandenong and Macedon Ranges, the Upper Yarra Valley, Western Port and Port Phillip Bays and their foreshores, the Mornington Peninsula, the Yarra and Maribyrnong Rivers and the Merri Creek, as well as nominated urban conservation areas, historic buildings and precincts should be protected from development which would diminish their environmental, conservation or recreation values.*

The State Planning Policy Framework also has a range of strategies that deal with conservation, stormwater, open space and building design.

Municipal Strategic Statements

All relevant local councils identify and acknowledge the importance of the Maribyrnong River in their Municipal Strategic Statements. The range of issues covered includes:

- protecting public access to parkland
- developing new parks and open space
- completing linear pathways
- protecting vegetation and natural features
- conserving water resources and managing stormwater
- facilitating specific uses in nominated locations
- managing development in the floodplain
- managing the scale, siting and bulk of new developments in Maribyrnong Valley to protect significant features
- preparing and updating park master plans.

2.2 Other strategies and plans about the Maribyrnong River

Two other areas of work by State Government agencies focus more specifically on the river and its immediate environs, rather than the river valley land which is the focus of the guidelines and actions in this report.

The Two Rivers Project, managed by Parks Victoria, has several components relating to the navigable portions of the Maribyrnong and Yarra Rivers (below Canning Street rock ford and Dights Falls respectively). A number of reports have been released, including the draft Water and Land Access Plan which is closely related to this report. These are:

- River Traffic Management Plan – assessed river traffic levels from the perspectives of maritime safety, recreational amenity of boaters and environmental sustainability. Projected traffic densities indicate which stretches of the rivers are at or near capacity or can accommodate greater volumes. Recommendations to manage traffic levels are included.
- **Event Management Framework** – seeks to ensure that major events on the rivers meet objectives of safety, environmental sustainability, and tourism, as well as accommodating other users.
- **Commercial berthing** – investigated a range of access and licensing issues for commercial boating operators including dedicated berthing locations, ticketing facilities, overnight berthing and support facilities.
- **Dredging** – identified a long term sustainable approach to dredging of the rivers, to enable continued access for boating in view of continuing sedimentation of the river beds.
- **Water and Land Access Plan** – the plan provides a blueprint for the development of new or refurbished infrastructure to cater for recreational, private and commercial boating and major events. This includes land access such as trails and bridges which relate to access points along the river and facilities for boat launching and fishing.

For further information, refer to the Parks Victoria website: [www.parkweb.vic.gov.au](http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au) and follow the links through Marine & Coasts, then Latest Info, then Two Rivers Project.

The **Waterway Management Activity Plan (WMAP)**, managed by Melbourne Water, identifies actions required to manage, remediate and improve stream health for sustainable multi-objective outcomes while retaining as much natural character as possible. The issues and recommended actions will be pertinent to the management responsibilities of Melbourne Water and other agencies. A key product will be development of a prioritised capital and recurrent program of waterway rehabilitation works for Melbourne Water over the next 15 years. The WMAP is broken into 14 reaches beginning in the upper catchment area of Jacksons Creek and finishing near the confluence with the Yarra River at Shepherds Bridge (Footscray Rd). The WMAP is due for completion in late 2007.

The Maribyrnong Project Concept Plan (PCP), also managed by Melbourne Water, builds on the outcomes of the Maribyrnong WMAP and will comprise a plan of on-ground works required for two selected sections of the Maribyrnong River: (1) Raleigh Road downstream to the northern boundary of Pipemakers Park, and (2) Flemington Racecourse between Fisher Parade and Smithfield Road. The lower Maribyrnong River is the major open space attraction for this part of Melbourne, and therefore the rehabilitation of environmental and social assets is particularly important. The PCP is also due for completion in late 2007.

### 2.3 Previous studies

A number of reports and studies have been completed along the river since the early 1980s. While many studies have been very specific, there has never been an overall strategy for the entire river corridor and the open spaces within it. Structural and organisational changes during the 1990s have meant that a coordinated approach has yet to be formalised.

The 1984 *Maribyrnong River Plan* provided the most comprehensive approach to planning the river. The statutory version of this report is the 1984 *Lower Maribyrnong Concept Plan*, formally adopted in 1986. This plan led to the introduction of a range of planning controls to better control development along the valley and a range of capital works programs.

These studies reinforce a range of improvement objectives with the following themes:
- public access to the river and adjoining open spaces
- natural environment and cultural heritage protection
- rehabilitation/improvement of the valley environment
- recreation and cultural activities
- floodplain management
- visual impacts/adjacent land uses and new development/design
- the river and water-based uses
- planning and management and implementation
2.4 Vision and objectives

A review of past strategies, analysis of the river valley, consultation meetings and government policy have informed a vision for the river:

A healthy river flowing through a continuous network of open spaces and cultural landscapes that reflect its journey from a natural river to a working river. A river that provides a range of recreation experiences that value local landform and landscape character, and preserve cultural heritage, including significant plantings. A river that supports indigenous vegetation and fauna.

This vision is broadly consistent with past visions for the river. It applies to the entire length of the river from the Organ Pipes to its confluence with the Yarra River.

Broad objectives

A set of broad objectives has also been identified under the themes:

- river health
- valley and river use
- valley landscape
- valley development
- river access
- valley heritage
- valley governance.

Under these objectives, principles and strategies were identified from previous strategies, reports and through consultation, shown in the table below.

There are two types of strategies and principles:

- Those marked ‘GL’ to guide future development and management of the river valley. Many of these are reflected in the more detailed design guidelines in the report which could be included in planning schemes (either in MSSs or overlay schedules), while others could be incorporated in park master or management plans, or guide river management.

- Those marked ‘A’ that are action-oriented and require action by councils or agencies. Some of the strategies are reflected in the specific priority actions (see Executive summary) for short-term implementation. Other strategies (e.g. relating to river health) are being actioned through separate processes, such as Melbourne Water’s Waterway Activity Plan.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Principles/strategies</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>River health</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To improve streamside and aquatic habitat</td>
<td>Continue programs to identify and remove fish barriers and examine opportunities to re-introduce large woody debris outside major boating channels.</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use vegetation to provide shade and food sources for in-stream fauna.</td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure new buildings or structures do not overshadow the river.</td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To improve the bed and banks of the river</td>
<td>Prevent any commercial and recreational activities, and associated infrastructure, alongside or on the river, or in its connected catchment, which can be shown to be detrimental to river health.</td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maintain and enforce the 5 knot speed limit and allow power boats only downstream of Canning Street, to minimise damage to the river banks and aquatic ecosystems.</td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undertake waterway rehabilitation works as identified in documents such as the Regional River Health Strategy and Melbourne Water’s Maribyrnong River Waterway Management Activity Plan.</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To improve water quality and management to meet SEPP objectives</td>
<td>Continue to implement Council Stormwater Management Plans to achieve targeted and efficient litter trapping near, and at source, and address other priority actions to improve water quality.</td>
<td>A &amp; GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continue to develop and disseminate information to the building industry on best practice site management during construction, and ensure effective policing of local laws.</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pursue opportunities associated with new development to undertake waterway rehabilitation works.</td>
<td>GL &amp; A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To reduce polluted or sediment laden run-off into the river</td>
<td>Ensure new developments address stormwater retention and treatment such that impacts on river health are minimised and stormwater connections can be limited.</td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To establish and manage environmental flows</td>
<td>Maintain and protect minimum environmental flows according to the Bulk Entitlement Order for the Maribyrnong River, allowing no new entitlements to extract water except as allowed under the bulk entitlement.</td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To maintain natural flood storage capacity and recognise existing risks</td>
<td>Ensure new development recognises flood risk and management and maintains hydraulic integrity of floodplain.</td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To reduce risks associated with contaminated sites</td>
<td>Ensure removal or containment of contamination from industrial or other sites at the time of land use change.</td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Valley and river use</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To continue to provide a diversity of recreational opportunities, in a safe and sustainable manner</td>
<td>Manage public areas (including the river) and adjoining private uses to ensure that intended recreational experiences can be sustained and enhanced and that conflicts between different activities and land uses are resolved and minimised.</td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To ensure significant areas free from commercial and intensive recreational activity are preserved within the valley</td>
<td>Provide for low key informal activities, relaxation, adventure and sense of remoteness and solitude away from key traffic routes and other activities which generate noise.</td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To consolidate intensive recreation and tourism development in discrete locations, i.e. activity nodes</td>
<td>Allow commercial or restricted uses on public open space within the valley only if they: • are integral to people’s use and appreciation of the surrounding public land, and are accessible to a broad cross-section of the community • do not detract from the primary recreational and scenic experiences intended for the site as a whole • do not detract from the protection of natural systems or cultural heritage.</td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support existing and new cultural festivals and events consistent with agreed objectives and criteria for event approvals.</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Principles/strategies</td>
<td>Type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitate low key tourist activity based on natural and cultural heritage – including appreciation of industrial and military history and the natural environment.</td>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve the standard and range of public boating infrastructure, including berths, launching and fishing facilities.</td>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manage the demand for recreational boating and limit the development of related infrastructure to the extent necessary to protect river health, intended visitor experiences along the valley, and human safety.</td>
<td></td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure new boating infrastructure on public land is accessible to the wider community rather than particular groups.</td>
<td></td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan for the future development of the working port, including chemical storage facilities, in a way that recognises other community interests such as local amenity, river health, recreation and tourism, and port heritage.</td>
<td></td>
<td>GL &amp; A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure safe access for shipping.</td>
<td></td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect all sites of botanical and zoological significance.</td>
<td></td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect remnant indigenous vegetation wherever possible in order to provide habitat for local fauna and enhance the valley as a wildlife corridor.</td>
<td></td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure planning outcomes are consistent with the Native Vegetation Management Framework which requires a net gain in native vegetation.</td>
<td></td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure open space areas along the river corridor are managed and revegetated in a manner complementary to the stream environment and that opportunities for enhancing that environment are preserved.</td>
<td></td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure amenable plantings of non-invasive and non-noxious species are used on private land, to minimise potential spread to river banks.</td>
<td></td>
<td>GL &amp; A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove pest plants and undertake revegetation in degraded riparian areas using indigenous species.</td>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure new development acknowledges that built form ranges from being a dominant and integral part of the public environment in the lower reaches to having minimal visual intrusion in the upper reaches.</td>
<td></td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide visual links to nearby activity centres and other open space systems.</td>
<td></td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect and re-establish indigenous vegetation in order to create naturalistic landscapes, screen buildings and roads, and provide amenity, including shade, for visitors.</td>
<td></td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use trees to define views from road crossings and other exterior vantage points and to frame natural settings, grasslands and long views characteristic of much of the river environment.</td>
<td></td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect significant trees – both indigenous and exotic – from damage or destruction.</td>
<td></td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure park infrastructure and landscaping reflect landscape design guidelines for a particular site.</td>
<td></td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressively remove, modify or screen infrastructure which is inconsistent with the vision and objectives.</td>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure development involves the creation of visually attractive and naturalistic landforms.</td>
<td></td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Principles/strategies</td>
<td>Type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimise the loss of vegetation on surrounding private land.</td>
<td>GL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To conserve plantings with heritage significance</td>
<td>Conserve sites of landscape heritage significance.</td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To protect and re-establish naturalistic land forms where practical</td>
<td>Protect all sites of geological and geomorphological significance or interesting topography.</td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prohibit further extractive industry within the valley, phase out existing operations, and rehabilitate degraded areas.</td>
<td>GL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley development</td>
<td>Develop guidelines for different river structures such as bridges, wharves, pontoons and landings, riverside establishments, steps and terraces typical of the valley.</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To ensure river structures are sympathetic to the river valley</td>
<td>Ensure any new housing or mixed use development is consistent with the protection of natural and cultural assets and a continuous open space corridor adjoining the river.</td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To ensure new built form is sympathetic to the river valley</td>
<td>Ensure new buildings do not overshadow significant areas of open space or trails.</td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To protect and enhance the preferred character of different lengths of the river valley</td>
<td>Ensure that new subdivisions adjoining the valley give priority to protecting landscape quality, scale and the overall river corridor environment.</td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure new development is consistent with best practice in terms of water sensitive urban design (especially the use of rainwater tanks for stormwater retention), energy efficient subdivision and building design, waste minimisation and integrated transport planning.</td>
<td>GL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To provide continuous public open space along both sides of the river as far as practicable</td>
<td>Ensure the integration of new residential and other developments with the developing river character.</td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River access</td>
<td>Maintain non-indigenous vegetation only where relevant to sites of cultural heritage value.</td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To optimise public access to the river for people of all abilities, within the constraints of ecological integrity and river health</td>
<td>Provide links to and between surrounding residential or mixed use areas, activity centres, educational centres, public transport and other open spaces using paths, bridges, river-based transport and view corridors.</td>
<td>A &amp; GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve public accessibility in terms of public realm design improvements, road and path quality, signage, public amenities and security, and public berthing and fishing infrastructure.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create opportunities for access to the river for boating, swimming, fishing and appreciation of riverside settings.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage improved public transport provision to key sites designed for intensive recreational or tourist use.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To provide continuous public open space along both sides of the river as far as practicable</td>
<td>Ensure any public land immediately adjoining the river is not sold or alienated for uses that may prevent public access.</td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct priority for any further public acquisition or transfer to land immediately adjacent to the river and to land with high natural or cultural heritage value.</td>
<td>A &amp; GL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Principles/strategies</td>
<td>Type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevent any loss of existing public open space within the valley unless replaced with land of equivalent size and value within the same section of the valley.</td>
<td>GL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To provide an integrated trail network with appropriate support facilities and signage</td>
<td>Complete pedestrian and bicycle links along the valley and to other metropolitan trails, including Stony Creek, Yarra River, Port Phillip Bay, Steele Creek.</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote the establishment of strategically located new river and road crossings for pedestrians and cyclists.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley heritage</td>
<td>Review and document heritage assets (Indigenous and post-European) and develop programs to ensure their protection and interpretation.</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To identify and maintain records of heritage assets along the river valley</td>
<td>Protect all known sites of Indigenous (Aboriginal) heritage significance (including archaeological sites) in consultation with local Indigenous communities.</td>
<td>GL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote the link between protecting river health and Indigenous heritage, reflecting the spiritual connection of Aboriginal people to rivers and their traditional way of life.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote Indigenous cultural values and activities as a way of educating the wider community.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To conserve sites and features of identified Aboriginal heritage value</td>
<td>Recognise and interpret industrial heritage and redevelop disused industrial buildings and premises to contemporary uses.</td>
<td>AL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect sites of post-contact heritage significance (including archaeological sites) in consultation with relevant community organisations.</td>
<td>GL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley Governance</td>
<td>Establish and maintain administrative structures and processes to coordinate the planning and management of the river valley by State and Local Government organisations.</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop partnerships between State and local government, community groups and adjoining landowners to achieve common objectives.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate community engagement in planning and management decision-making and activities affecting the river valley.</td>
<td>GL &amp; A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulate public interest and enhance knowledge through information dissemination, interpretation and educational programs.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educate and involve the community to promote stewardship of the river.</td>
<td>GL &amp; A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To improve existing levels of cooperation to achieve effective and efficient management</td>
<td>Raise private sector awareness of opportunities for sustainable and compatible development adjoining the public land within the valley.</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To involve the community in river valley management</td>
<td>Inspire long term commitment from governments and the community through successful implementation and leading by example.</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To inspire and facilitate action to improve the valley and river</td>
<td>Update Council planning schemes in a coordinated fashion, including MSSs and Overlay schedules to reflect the policies, objectives and guidelines in this report.</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To ensure planning provisions reflect agreed policy, objectives and guidelines.</td>
<td>Ensure Green Wedge Management and Implementation Plans reflect the policies and objectives in this report, as relevant to the non-urban portion of the Maribyrnong valley.</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Consultation process and summary of issues raised

3.1 Community views and values

Early in the course of this project, two workshops – held in May 2004 – identified community views and values about the Maribyrnong River valley. People attended the workshops in response to press advertisements; as might be expected, those who attended the workshops valued the river.

The consultation sessions took the form of facilitated discussions around questions posed on a series of photographic images. These images were chosen to illustrate a range of locations and development impacts along the river. Images from other rivers or waterways also helped facilitate discussion.

Overall, participants were keen to articulate and protect the links with the past, to ensure use and development along the river respects natural and cultural heritage, and improves access to the river for all.

The boxes on the following pages summarise the outcomes of these workshops.

At the project’s public launch in April 2004, Peter Somerville, operator of the Blackbird cruises on the Maribyrnong River referred to the river as the ‘Cinderella’ of Melbourne’s waterways and he hoped that the Maribyrnong River Valley Project would be ‘the glass slipper for Cinderella and she’s going to the ball to meet the prince’. *(The Advocate, 4/5/2004)*
Summary of community views and values

A landscape changing for the better

The river is generally seen to be improving – a number of positive changes were reported. However, there were concerns that despite these positive changes there were still problems.

A number of issues were raised as concerns about the future and potential threats to the river – new housing development was identified as a threat.

A connection with nature

Keeping a sense of remoteness in parts was seen as a good idea by some participants:

There are some parts of the river where there shouldn’t be paths … there needs to be some areas that are hard to get to, because if you make it too easy to get to you will attract vandals, you’ll attract idiots.

People valued the wildlife associated with the river.

There was support for the creation of wetlands but a concern about their management.

A connection with the past

The river has a rich history and all participants thought preserving and explaining history was important. Many participants were happy to share their local knowledge.

The potential for increased tourism based around heritage assets was raised in both sessions.

Landscape

A general view among participants was that the landscape along the river should be indigenous, but that exotic planting was appropriate where there was a clear justification: heritage, bank stabilisation, the need for shade and the like.

Shade was raised as an issue by a number of participants.

On really hot days you can walk along there and just boil – There is no shade whatsoever along there. There could be more trees … more shade.

Views of the river itself are also highly valued and shading should not be at the expense of river views.

Public space

There was a concern about private access right up to the river and a general belief that this should be returned to public ownership when properties were sold.

There were mixed views about the benefit of roads running parallel to the river. While the benefits of roads that give people a chance to enjoy the river were recognised, the need to maintain a quiet and peaceful atmosphere was more highly valued.

The issue of commercial development close to the bank was explored. There was general support for this type of activity in limited places provided it focussed on the river and was generally accessible.

It’s another way to enjoy the river … a community and social gathering place.

It's nice to have somewhere you can go that is close to the river with the view.
Development

While preserving the natural values of the river was most important to participants, where industrial development had historically been close to the river participants were not opposed to development close to the river.

Concern was expressed that new development was removing vegetation from the valley. Participants expressed mixed views about development in the river valley. Some participants saw development as an intrusion.

\[\text{You've been riding through quite a picturesque [setting] and suddenly you're confronted with a great block of houses and it intrudes on the experience that you have been having.}\]

Others welcomed it.

\[\text{Personally I love it ... but I wouldn't want too much of it I think because of where it is on a hill, and because they are white, and the way it is set out. But to have too much of it on the valley sides would not be attractive.}\]

Certainly no-one advocated for development where there wasn’t any at the moment, but not all visible development was considered inappropriate. There was some preference for homogeneity in built form.

There were generally negative views expressed about the work and attitudes of modern architecture. However there was support for the modern house styles along Van Ness Avenue, but not for the nearby ‘Horizon’ development that intrudes into the skyline.

While taller structures next to the river (certainly on the lower lengths) were not dismissed by participants, there was a concern that such structures fitted some appropriate context – physical or heritage.

Heritage

Participants valued the heritage places along the river.

Crossings

There was a generally accepted need for more pedestrian crossings, but little support for new road crossings.

There was a need for better facilities – seats, toilets, drinking fountains – along the river for walkers.
3.2 Submissions process

The Minister for Planning released the consultant report: *Maribyrnong River Valley Vision and Design Guidelines*, prepared by IUM and David Mayes Urban Design, on 19 April 2006. The six week period of public consultation that followed included an information session and public submissions process. A total of 44 submissions were received from members of the public, community groups, private businesses and government agencies.

Copies of all submissions were provided to members of the project steering committee (DSE, the Cities of Melbourne, Maribyrnong, Brimbank, Moonee Valley and Hume, Parks Victoria and Melbourne Water). The five councils then formally considered the report, together with the submissions, and provided their responses to DSE in July and August 2006.

3.3 Summary of issues raised in submissions

**Policies, design objectives and guidelines**

Most submissions expressed support for the general thrust of the policies, design objectives and guidelines. Reflecting views expressed at previous community workshops, there was a desire to prevent further development within the valley including the escarpment, particularly in the upper reaches above Solomon’s Ford.

While some submitters supported greater clarity and very specific performance standards, others noted the need for flexibility to cater for particular circumstances.

Some design objectives and guidelines were amended based on feedback received (*Chapters 7 and 8*).

**Public access to the river and land ownership**

There was general support for increasing and enhancing public open space along the valley, particularly along the Brimbank escarpment north of the current River Valley Estate development, around Brimbank Park and creating an Upper Maribyrnong Linear Park up to the Organ Pipes National Park.

The consultant report recommended investigating and acquiring river front land and/or construction of a pontoon near Woods Street in Ascot Vale to provide continuous public access along this river bank. Residents of Woods Street strongly opposed this proposal on a range of grounds. (Refer to *Section 9.2* of this report for discussion and the final agreed position.)

**Vegetation, river health and flooding**

All submissions referring to vegetation and river health supported the report’s emphasis on indigenous plantings and the need to protect and enhance habitat – aquatic, riparian and terrestrial. Particular issues raised included the noticeable reduction in pollution and increase in fish populations in the last decade, the importance of regular water quality monitoring, the potential impacts of snag removal on fish breeding, the importance of water sensitive urban design in new developments, the need to prevent runoff of sediment and other discharges from building sites and road works, and the need to treat eroded river banks.

A few submissions opposed further residential, commercial or industrial development on the floodplain and further alterations to the floodplain profile.

Melbourne Water’s *Waterway Management Activity Plan*, now in preparation, will address these issues.
Public infrastructure

The proposed trail network was supported, including access to surrounding areas and major attractions along or near the valley. Many submissions included ideas or comments about missing links in trails, suggested improvements to bridge crossings, plus suggested new crossings. Priorities for capital works are listed in Section 9.2 with further detail in Parks Victoria’s Water and Land Access Plan.

River Valley Estate

Submissions from River Valley Estate (RVE) Pty Ltd and associated consultants referred to the planning process, consultation and decision-making that has occurred over many years, and the fact that 40 per cent of the site is set aside as open space which is to be landscaped and maintained well beyond establishment. It was also pointed out that the land was previously used for quarrying, soil extraction and other industry and there is a need for a return on the investment made to rehabilitate this degraded site.

Submissions from residents and community groups expressed concern about the development, suggesting that it has destroyed the natural character of this part of the valley, which is seen as a peaceful retreat. Particular impacts mentioned were the loss of vegetation and wildlife, and the impact of construction on water quality and litter.

The issue of land acquisition for additional public open space in the yet-to-be developed industrial portion of RVE is discussed in Section 7.1 of this report.

Defence Site Maribyrnong

A number of submitters stressed the significance of this site (DSM) and the opportunity to set aside a large area as parkland. The proposed integrated landscape and development strategy (refer Section 7.1 in this report) will be one component of an overall structure plan for the site. The vision, objectives and guidelines in this report are intended to guide more detailed planning and encourage an integrated approach to redevelopment of the site and the valley as a whole.

The port

Several submissions from individuals and community groups called for improved public access to the river for fishing, mooring and other activities. When the consultant report was released, there was contention about the future of the Footscray Wharf.

In late 2006, Port of Melbourne Corporation (PoMC) and Maribyrnong City Council signed a MOU which resolved the major issues of contention. (For further information, refer to Section 9.1 in this report.)

River-based recreational activities

Several submissions from anglers suggested that the report should give more emphasis to recreational angling. There are a number of angling clubs close to the river and access for angling is generally good, but several suggestions for improvement were made.

Facilities for launching or beaching of canoes and kayaks at selected points were supported. Parks Victoria’s Water and Land Access Plan deals with the location of fishing, boating and related facilities in more detail. (See also Sections 5.3 and 9.2 in this report.)

Governance and other issues

Several submitters expressed strong support for the State Government leading implementation and ongoing coordination between state and local government through a coordination committee. There
was also strong support for a review and protection of heritage sites, including the need to protect and interpret Indigenous history. Refer to the implementation plan and discussion in Section 10.1.

EPA Victoria drew attention to studies currently under way on fish and eel contamination, and a statutory environmental audit of risk to the lower Maribyrnong from industrial processes and activities.

3.4 Endorsement of report

The three councils that signed the original Melbourne 2030 grant agreement with DSE – Melbourne, Maribyrnong and Brimbank – all supported the consultant report in principle, subject to certain issues (mostly site specific) being further investigated and resolved. These councils, as well as the Moonee Valley and Hume City Councils, supported continued cooperation including in-principle support for the formation of a coordinating committee. The steering committee has since worked together to resolve these outstanding issues in this final report.

This final report has now been endorsed by the State Government and all five councils as an agreed policy framework and basis for further action.
4. **An overview of the river valley**

The river valley changes dramatically in character as it flows from the Organ Pipes to its confluence with the Yarra River.

**Upstream of the Urban Growth Boundary**

Upstream of the Urban Growth Boundary to Organ Pipes National Park, the valley is within the Green Wedge. Covering the area north of the Calder Freeway, it is predominantly rural in nature and is not discussed in this analysis of the urban part of the river valley.

Land uses along this length include grazing of modified pastures, irrigated seasonal horticulture, quarrying and rural residential development. This length of the Maribyrnong River Valley abuts Melbourne Airport.

Indigenous heritage sites have been identified along this stretch of the river, along with significant native plant species. Pest and weed management and soil erosion are a few of the major issues affecting this stretch of the river. These issues should be considered as part of the Green Wedge Management and Implementation Plan.

The ‘lengths’ as identified below are shown on Map 16, page 50.

**Brimbank length**

The river flows between complex rolling valley slopes set within Horseshoe Bend and the rural parkland landscape. Bounded at the valley rim by urban settlement to two sides, the Calder Freeway in the north and the railway trestle bridge in the south, there is an absence of urban settlement in the river valley.
Steele Creek length

As the river flows out of Brimbank Park and before the valley opens out at Maribyrnong, it flows through a generally steep and relatively straight valley. There are some narrow river flats in this steep-sided valley.

The valley supports fauna and there are areas of significant vegetation along the river banks including River Red gums west of the Canning Street grasses and on the plains of Sunshine North at the river valley edge. There is little urban settlement in the river valley at the moment but significant residential development is approved and the first stages developed.

In this length there are a number of large pieces of infrastructure, that by their scale and design, become in themselves monumental landscape elements in the river valley – powerlines, bridges, goods trains, even the constant stream of jet aircraft.

The river flows around a large horseshoe bend at the confluence of Steele Creek, creating an expansive natural amphitheatre including bush conservation areas and with the large Defence Site Maribyrnong in the centre.

Maribyrnong length

There is a strong heritage here of urban recreational engagement with the river – competition rowing, pub, cafe, promenades, boulevards, picnic areas and sports field and residences.
Racecourse length

Downstream from the Raleigh Road Bridge the river opens out to a large open floodplain – mainly sparse urban parkland, sports fields, golf course and marina, with mixed urban settlement at the valley edges.

These valley escarpments are built on with conventional suburban housing from a range of eras and some more recent medium-high density housing.

Footscray length

Here the heritage of Victorian Melbourne becomes prominent. At Saltwater Crossing, between the Hopetoun Bridge (Hopkins St-Dynon Rd) and Shepherd Bridge (Napier St-Footscray Rd), the old wharves of the working river come into view. There is mix of land uses adjoining the river – ranging from heavy industry (mainly on the eastern bank) through to warehousing, medium to high density residential and the Footscray Community Arts Centre complex.

Footscray Wharf length

The history of this small length on the western bank of the river had been strongly tied to land uses along the river’s edge which included recreational boat moorings and a working fishery. Recent development has focused on office and light industrial uses with both construction of new buildings in the Riverside Industrial Park and reuse of existing buildings such as the Lonely Planet site. The area also plays a key role in providing access to the Maribyrnong River Trail Network, with recent upgrades to the shared path network and landscaping contributing to the open feel of the area.
Port length

As the river approaches the bay, container ports, and commercial and industrial settlement cover most of the valley, typical of a working river. Here it becomes a full working river with its dedicated sugar, oil and chemical wharves, commercial shipping and goods rail line. Public access to the river is extremely limited for functional and safety reasons.
5. **Understanding the river**

This section presents an analysis of the river valley. This analysis looks at the river and its natural systems as part of its surrounding urban context, from the perspective of its current role and function. The overall frame of reference is the intersection in the valley of urban settlement and the natural environment.

The analysis has been undertaken to inform the development of guidelines – it is not intended to be a definitive analysis of the valley.

The analysis provides an overview of:
- valley physiography
- flooding
- open space
- natural assets
- heritage
- urban settlement
- urban activity
- trail network
- valley access.
Map 6: Valley contours

Primary study area boundary - the river valley edge

- Thin line: Contours - 1m
- Thin dashed line: Contours - 5m
- Thick line: River channel

Scale: 1 km

North arrow
5.1 Valley physiography

Map 6 shows the contours along the valley. The steep valley sides of the river are shown by the closely spaced contours on the map.

One million years ago eruptions from surrounding volcanoes created the Keilor plain from basalt lava flows, in places up to 70 metres deep. This relatively recent geological surface has indefinite drainage, creating wetlands on the plains surrounding the river and surface rock that has not yet been weathered into soil.

The river and its tributaries have eroded valleys up to 55 metres deep in the basalt plain as it flows to the Yarra delta. At Sunshine North the valley side has been substantially modified by former basalt quarries.

The paired river terraces of the Maribyrnong valley are of particular significance because of the occurrence of fossil remains of ancient Aborigines in the Keilor district. Both sites are in the deposits of the Keilor terrace, which is 12-13 metres above the river bed.

The Maribyrnong River flats form the lowest terrace of the river which further downstream, merges with the Yarra delta about two metres above the present sea level. Six thousand years ago, sea levels were substantially higher than today and the whole of the present day flats of the area were covered by water.

The knolls and rises that once formed the edge of the estuary rise above the river flats. Those rises to the west are new lava-derived basalts of the Keilor plains and are distinguished by steep slopes. Those on the east are gentler slopes derived from the older basalts, now heavily eroded.

The western bank of the river at Footscray forms the edge of the Keilor plains. The topography here consists of a low escarpment in the upstream area to a gently dipping surface to the river in the Yarraville area. There has been a lot of modification of the land surface in this area. Quarrying activity has occurred but in large part the old holes have been filled – for example, the flats next to the river at Yarraville.

The confluence with the Yarra was originally at Footscray, the old Saltwater Crossing, until the Coode Canal was cut. The Crossing describes the settlement that was approximately where the old wharves were between the more recently built Hopetoun and Shepherd bridges. The confluence of the rivers before the Coode Canal excavation was approximately 400 m south of Shepherd Bridge. Since then the river has been highly modified through dredging and the development of wharves at Yarraville and Coode Island. Wharves (or the remains of them) stretch as far as Hopkins Street on the Footscray side and the rest of the riverbanks have been lined with bluestone beaching.
Map 7: Valley topography
The valley form has been eroded out of the basalt plain by the river, tributaries and sea into a complex landscape progressing from gorges of the upper lengths to floodplains of the lower lengths.

The complex topography can be simplified into three characteristic areas:
- the relatively flat land of the basalt plain hinterland
- the valley escarpment
- the floodplain and valley flats.

Steep slopes provide high levels of visual amenity. Properties with views from escarpments and other vantage points are sought after for residential development. However, steep slopes can represent a significant risk of soil erosion.

Three broad types of river valley can be identified:
- A Narrow, steep ‘v’ shaped valley – where the valley is relatively narrow and there is little or no flat land adjacent to the river.
- B A hybrid of narrow valley and floodplains – wider, sloping valley with smaller river flats and islands and peninsulas of high ground.
- C Floodplain and flats – wide, open flats prone to flooding and changing channel location. In these areas the valley slopes are some distance from the river.

Figure 2 shows a cross-section of the valley displaying these three valley shapes. The locations of the sections are shown on Map 7.

Figure 2 Cross-sections of the valley
Map 8: Flooding
5.2 Flooding

The Maribyrnong River is Melbourne’s second largest waterway. It has a catchment of some 1400 square kilometres, stretching from the Macedon Ranges to Port Phillip. The catchment is predominately rural with the lower extent urbanised.

The Maribyrnong has a history of flooding dating back to the 1880s. The largest flood on record occurred in 1906. The depth, duration and flow characteristics of flooding vary greatly along different reaches of the river in any particular flood event. Flooding from the river poses an ongoing safety and property damage hazard. There are currently about 250 residential and about 55 industrial/commercial properties within the Maribyrnong River floodplain. It is essential to continue to manage development in the floodplain of the river.

Melbourne Water is the floodplain management authority for the Melbourne metropolitan region, and as such, is the nominated referral authority for planning permit applications made under the provisions of the Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO). All developments referred to Melbourne Water are assessed to ensure that new development does not increase the risk to public safety, or increase the risk of damage to property resulting from a flood.

The bridges in Kensington held back the flow of floodwaters keeping the lower length of the river relatively free from inundation. Development in the floodplain and related compensatory works – such as the culverts under the rail embankment opposite Kensington Banks – has decreased the extent of actual flooding even though the landscape is still visually one of river flats.

North of the Raleigh Road Bridge and the old Maribyrnong Township there is an area of urban development on the floodplain. This built-up area floods and over time, houses have been bought and the land turned over to open space. Community and council concern over the loss of the Maribyrnong Township through this approach has seen the houses remain and flood warning systems implemented to help manage flood risks. Some areas within the old Maribyrnong Township, previously reserved for Public Open Space, were included within an Urban Floodway Zone when the new format Maribyrnong Planning Scheme was adopted in 1999.

Map 8 shows the land within the LSIO in planning schemes – this is the area affected by a 1 in 100 year flood as identified by the floodplain management authority. The entire 1 in 100 year floodplain of the Maribyrnong River study area is covered by a LSIO with the exception of Commonwealth Land that is yet to be assessed and included in the Planning Scheme.
Map 9: Open space
5.3 Open space

The ‘blue’ park

It is important to recognise that the river itself is a public open space which is used by a range of commercial vessels offering scenic cruises, corporate functions and water taxi services, and private and club-based recreational vessels. Several rowing and canoe clubs have facilities along the river’s edge. The river is also increasingly popular and accessible for angling and several clubs are located next to the river. Improvements in water quality in the last decade or so have led to an increase in fish populations.

There are a number of private jetties along the river providing exclusive access to the water. Significant events on the river include:
- Flatwater Sprints (canoes)
- Moonee Valley Heritage Picnic
- Moonee Valley Festival
- Come and Try Waterskiing
- Footscray Saltwater Regatta
- Henley on the Maribyrnong
- Moonee Valley Raft Regatta
- Inter Schools Championships
- Winter Series Race
- Head of Maribyrnong
- Spring Racing Carnival (including transport to the races)

As Docklands develops with new marinas it is expected that boating pressure on the river will increase. In bad weather a cruise up the Maribyrnong is a good alternative to venturing out into Port Phillip Bay. Rowing facilities are at capacity on the Yarra and pressure for new rowing facilities is also expected.

The green parks

There are large areas of open space and open land along the river valley. Brimbank Park is a metropolitan park in the upper length of the study area. The park has a rural parkland feel with predominantly native vegetation.

South of Brimbank Park there are areas of undeveloped land, literally open space, that are in private ownership. Some of these areas contain significant remnant vegetation.

Between the Western Ring Road and the Canning Street Bridge, public open space includes most of the land on the eastern and northern slopes of the valley. Moonee Valley Council is currently developing a trail along the top of the escarpment to link a chain of open spaces in the Avondale Heights–East Keilor area (refer to Map 14). On the western side, the River Valley Estate is being constructed on what is now open land and a linear park will be created alongside the river. There are opportunities for linking open space at the top of the valley on the south-western side of the river.

Further development of open land in Sunshine North is envisaged under current planning provisions, but acquisition of undeveloped escarpment land for open space has been identified as a priority.

The Defence Site Maribyrnong, although not open to the public, provides a substantial underdeveloped area in the surrounding suburban landscape. Its open character can be seen from several vantage points including the St Bernards Estate, Avondale Heights and the Lily Street scenic viewpoint in Essendon West.
The open land of the Defence Site is matched by parkland on the opposite bank of the river with the open space at the confluence of Steele Creek and the new park at Afton Street.

Downstream of the Afton Street footbridge there is a relatively narrow strip of well-used open space with some private land protected from development by the Urban Floodway Zone. Formal open space areas and sporting grounds are found on the flats at Aberfeldie Park and Maribyrnong Park. Between Raleigh Road Bridge and Dynon Road there is a mix of active and passive open spaces and conservation areas including Fairbairn Park, the Riverside golf course and driving range, Pipemakers Park, Footscray Park and Newells Paddock Wetlands.

There are two areas where existing private development runs to the river. One is located immediately south of Maribyrnong Road where the houses in Woods Street front on to the river. The other is at Fisher Parade where Moonee Valley Council has gradually been acquiring land adjacent to the river to continue the shared use riverside trail.

Downstream of the railway bridge in Kensington, open space along the river is limited. At the Port of Melbourne controlled Coode Island, there is no public access to the east bank of the river south of Footscray Road. The port also controls the Yarraville bank, much of it taken up with wharves and industrial uses that stretch back from the river as far as Whitehall Street. Public access is also restricted to the ends of streets running to the river.

Particular areas where there are issues of public access and/or acquisition of open space to be resolved are shown on Map 9. In some cases new development on adjoining private land is underway or proposed. These sites, most of which are discussed in more detail in chapters 7 and 9, are:

1. Industrial land in Sunshine North where development is possible (Note - anomalous zoning as Public Park and Recreation is being reviewed by Brimbank City Council.)
2. River Valley Estate
3. Along the Braybrook bank through the Medway Golf Course
4. Defence Site Maribyrnong, where there is an opportunity to create new public open space as part of this future development
5. Fisher Parade, where land is being acquired
6. Hobsons Road, where there is a need to define how much open space is required along this portion of the river.

Note that with the exception of the Public Acquisition Overlay (PAO) along the Fisher Parade river frontage, all other PAOs in planning schemes, identified on Map 9, are for road purposes hence the responsibility of VicRoads.
Open space in the upper reaches

Open space in the middle reaches

Open space in the river flats
Map 10: Natural assets

- Open land - with remnant vegetation
- Primary study area boundary - the river valley edge
5.4 Natural assets

There are sections along the Maribyrnong that support important areas of remnant vegetation, flora and fauna and contribute to a significant natural landscape for the Maribyrnong Valley.

Sites in the upper lengths of the valley support greater areas of remnant vegetation and fauna, compared with the more urbanised areas downstream. Native grasslands, escarpment shrublands and riparian woodlands are only a few of the vegetation types to be found. The Slender Tick-trefoil (*Desmodium varians*) and Tough Scurf-pea (*Cullen tenax*) are two threatened flora species known to occur within the valley.

There are areas of significant vegetation in the Sunshine North area on open land mooted for development. Investigations of these areas have been carried out as part of detailed development planning of these areas.

At Afton Street the river banks change from natural banks and some re-naturalised riparian areas to constructed stone beaching as one moves downstream.

The Maribyrnong River is significant in supporting a range of migratory and resident bird species including Egrets, Herons and many species of ducks. There are also records of Galaxias, Australian Grayling, Common Long-necked Tortoise and Platypus in the river. Brushtail Possums, Echidnas, Gould's Wattled Bats, Growling Grass Frogs and Striped Legless Lizards are just some of the mammals, frogs and reptiles living within the valley.
Map 11: Heritage assets

- Further identification of heritage required
- Areas of known Aboriginal significance
- Heritage sites - planning scheme H0
- Primary study area boundary - the river valley edge
5.5 Heritage

Human remains at least 15,000 years old have been found along the Maribyrnong River, with much older signs of human habitation also present. Before European settlement in the mid-nineteenth century, the Maribyrnong River valley was home to indigenous people.

There are numerous important maritime, industrial and farming archaeological sites along the river. Some of these have been recognised and conserved but more work is needed in the areas identified on Map 11.

Urban development

The first party of Europeans to explore the river was led by Charles Grimes, Deputy Surveyor-General of New South Wales, in February 1803. This occurred while the indigenous people still inhabited this land. John Batman is likely to have explored the river in early 1835. With the establishment of the colony of Melbourne later that year, sheep runs were soon established by Edmund Davis Fergusson and Michael Solomon in the Avondale-Heights-Sunshine area. The ford on Solomon's sheep station, now near the west end of Canning Street in Avondale Heights, soon became known as Solomon's Ford. This was the lowest crossing point on the Saltwater (Maribyrnong) River, and was for many years the only way from Melbourne to Geelong and the Western District.

The Maribyrnong area was first settled by Raleigh who established a lard factory at Pipemakers Park as well as a bridge, ‘Raleigh’s Punt’, which took diggers to the goldfields. The old Maribyrnong Township was established here with two pubs and several houses.

During the second half of the nineteenth century much of Melbourne’s industry was located along the river which became severely degraded as a result. With the closure of many industries since the 1960s and 1970s, much river-front land has opened up to form parkland and highly sought-after residential estates.

Features of heritage value within formal parks established early last century, south of Afton Street, include the palm trees and terraces used for rowing regattas.

Appendix D contains a chronology of settlement and key events along the Maribyrnong valley.
Map 12: Urban settlement

- Site proposed for redevelopment
- Major sites with current urban redevelopment proposals
- Approved urban development in progress
- Urban settlement - existing
- Primary study area boundary - the river valley edge
5.6 Urban settlement

The river valley has seen a mix of residential, industrial and open space uses.

Urban development has occurred on the river flats in the past but until recently, development upstream of the Canning Street Bridge in the Steele Creek length has been limited to areas beyond the escarpment and the river has maintained an uninhabited feel. This is changing with the development of the River Valley Estate that is bringing development down the valley slopes.

Rivers have not always been seen as desirable locations for residential development and much of the land along the valley was previously given over to industrial uses and quarrying. Most notable were the large areas of Commonwealth land associated with the munitions industry downstream of Cordite Bridge, and the industrial and abattoir uses in the Footscray–Kensington area.

The munitions industry is no longer based along the river and areas of Commonwealth land have progressively been developed largely for residential purposes (Waterford Green, Edgewater Estate), or are expected to be developed in the near future (Defence Site Maribyrnong).

The saleyards and various abattoirs closed in the 1980s and this land has been redeveloped for housing.

In the upper reaches of the river, former industrial activity on the Avondale Heights side helped to keep residential development out of the valley, as did industrial uses on the Sunshine side. In the Sunshine North area, basalt quarries on the valley slopes have also been given over to residential development or are in the process of redevelopment.

Development also can include revegetation of the riparian strip and treatment of the pest plant problems along the bank. As old industrial land has been redeveloped, developers have worked with Parks Victoria and councils to create attractive riverside public parkland.

In the more intensively developed parts of Footscray and Melbourne, industrial uses have given way to office and residential development.

There are a number of proposals for new development or redevelopment within the river valley (refer map 12):

1. Remaining stages of the River Valley Estate
2. Land behind Larwood Close adjacent Canning Street/Cordite Street Bridge.
3. Defence Site Maribyrnong
4. Edgewater Estate
5. Highpoint Principal Activity Centre
6. Orica site in Ascot Vale
7. Hampstead Road west precinct
8. Hobsons Road
9. Joseph Road and Saltwater Crossing area
10. Footscray Principal Activity Centre.
Map 13: Urban activity

- Primary study area boundary - the river valley edge
- Opportunities for a node of activity
- Existing nodes of activity
- Port of Melbourne
- Urban activity centres
- Major sites proposed for urban redevelopment
- Urban settlement - approved
- Urban settlement - existing
5.7 Urban activity

After flowing near the Keilor town centre, the river is still remote from urban activity and intense urban development until it reaches the recent Waterford Green development adjacent to the Canning Street Bridge. Physical and natural constraints as well as speed limits restrict boating activity on the river, particularly north of Canning Street. The Defence Site Maribyrnong currently adds no activity to the river and restricts river access. On the opposite bank the steep escarpment keeps activity away from the river.

Urban development activity centres begin to exert a presence in the valley downstream of Afton Street. Highpoint and Footscray Activity Centres are both close enough to the river to provide opportunities for linking them to the river. As the river widens into the river flats, urban development becomes a dominant feature of the valley.

Several nodes of urban activity, most of which are downstream of the Afton Street Bridge, can be found along the riverside (refer map 13). These nodes are mostly small in scale and often only one building. They include cafes, pubs, retail outlets, recreation and visitor facilities which act as attractors to the riverside and as staging posts for walking, cycling and boating trips up and down the river. They include:

1. Cafe at Poyntons Nursery
2. Clubs and cafe in Maribyrnong Park and nearby Incinerator Arts Centre
3. Anglers Tavern
4. Clubs in Fairbairn Park
5. Melbourne’s Living Museum of the West in Pipemakers Park
6. Cafe and boating area under construction as part of the Edgewater Estate
7. Footscray Boat Club and function centre
8. Footscray Wharf and arts precinct

These nodes are important activity links between the river and the city it flows through and if spaced at a comfortable walking distance (approximately 30 minutes walk or 1.2 km), they foster a vital promenading culture along the river. There are particular locations in the middle and lower lengths of the river that lend themselves to similar nodes of activity adjacent to the river. These locations present this opportunity because they have some of the following characteristics:

- Are close to the river banks
- Are accessible by trail, road and public transport
- Can offer a good experience and appreciation of the river – views, walks etc.
- Are a part of or adjoin existing or proposed settlement
- Are not part of an extensive area of flood-prone land
- Have been strategically identified for development as more intensive urban precincts.

The specific location of any new cafes and other facilities within nodes or strips of activity will need to be determined opportunistically as sites are planned and developed. They must be designed and managed to be compatible with neighbouring uses.

Further detailed assessment is required of any proposals for new nodes or strips of activity to ensure their viability at specific sites. However as an indication, based on the above site selection criteria, the following locations have been identified as possible candidate sites for nodes of activity:

10. Downstream (eastern) end of Defence Site Maribyrnong, as part of its redevelopment.
11. In the vicinity of the Cordite Avenue Bridge as part of the Maribyrnong Defence Site redevelopment
12. Flemington Racecourse, near Farnsworth Avenue Bridge
13. Between Hobsons Road and the rail bridge on the east bank of the river