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Foreword

The City of Melbourne is developing an Urban Design Strategy entitled Towards a better Public Melbourne to guide the development of Melbourne’s public spaces over the next 10-15 years.

The public environment is the fundamental supporting framework for the economic, cultural and civic life of any urban area. The strategy provides a vision and framework for urban design in Melbourne that builds on the city’s fine history of achievements in planning and design, and addresses contemporary issues and challenges. It identifies values, directions and opportunities for improving the liveability and prosperity of Melbourne’s public realm in social, environmental, cultural and economic terms to ensure that ‘Public Melbourne’ realises its potential and has a sustainable future. It also provides some principles and directions to assist in providing a focus for individuals and groups across the community and Council to identify desirable directions to be undertaken, with potential opportunities to address them.

The public environment is the ‘common ground’ of the city, therefore it is necessary to ensure the opinions of all who share the city are taken into account. Council is now inviting comment on the draft Urban Design Strategy: Towards a better Public Melbourne. A summary version, Towards a better Public Melbourne in Summary, is also available. Council’s objective is to encourage feedback from the community on issues the City believes are important to the future planning of Melbourne’s public environment. The strategy is seen as a significant instrument for enabling Council to work with the community towards outcomes that will genuinely satisfy its needs and desires for public spaces.

Your response will help determine how the issues raised in the strategy are taken forward, so please take the time to share your views about issues contained in this document, or any others you would like to raise. Please refer to the end of this document for details on how and where to provide your response.

Once the final strategy is developed, the Melbourne City Council will consider it for formal adoption.

This document and the summary version of the Urban Design Strategy are available on the City of Melbourne’s website at www.melbourne.vic.gov.au.
The City of Melbourne in 2020 will be inclusive and safe and will exhibit outstanding design qualities and sense of place, ensuring a socially, environmentally, culturally and economically sustainable future for its people.
Part One: Introduction

1.1 What is the public environment?

A city is more than the sum of its parts. Individual streets, parks, buildings and waterways are important, but the character and amenity of a city depend on the way in which these elements are combined with its community to form a complex and dynamic entity.

The public environment is the ‘common ground’ of the city. It comprises all parts of the physical environment that the public can experience or have access to and that form the setting for community and public life. The public realm provides an inclusive setting for cultural, social, recreational and commercial interaction, as well as the physical space and connections that allow movement from one place to another.

Public places hold the various elements of the city together. Streets and plazas link developments and organise buildings into groups. Infrastructure and open spaces punctuate the urban fabric with recognisable boundaries or centres of activity. Waterways offer an underlying natural physical pattern. These connections and groupings determine how a place is experienced and understood by people. In many respects, the public domain defines a city, giving structure and coherence to an otherwise complex assembly of independent parts.

In a social and political sense, the public environment comprises land, buildings, institutions and open spaces that are in collective ownership. Though it supports business and commercial functions and accommodates the needs of individual consumers, its primary purposes are to sustain the communal life of the city and underpin the social and cultural life of its inhabitants.

In a cultural sense, the public environment often carries particular qualities that reflect our identity and memory. It has dimensions that respond to and support our individual and collective desires, expresses our sense of place and identifies our location on the historical continuum.

In a physical sense, the public environment includes all those parts of the city that people are free to use. However, patterns of access and activity often blur the boundaries between public and private ownership. The various levels of ‘publicness’ can be described as follows:

1. Uncontested public space – the publicly owned component of the urban environment where there is an unambiguous right to access and use.
2. Privately owned spaces that invite public access and use, on the basis that the public uses them with an appropriate social conduct. This also includes the facades of private buildings that frame public space, and associated landscape and design treatments.
3. Spaces where an ebb and flow naturally occurs between public and private activity.
4. Private places that are physically inaccessible yet remain visibly accessible to passers-by.

The public environment is therefore best described as a continuum, rather than a simple distinction between public and private, as it involves interactions between the public and private realms. Importantly, it must not privilege private values at the expense of public rights. Various elements of urban design must be consciously brought together so they reinforce one another. Urban design initiatives need to be supported by complementary economic, social and environmental policies and programs to maximise benefits – it is not enough to address the physical environment in isolation.

The benefits of a high-quality public realm are particularly evident in Melbourne. The city’s calendar of sporting and cultural events is supported by a network of large and small venues. In everyday life, citizens encounter Melbourne’s parks, gardens, promenades and pedestrian-friendly streets. Preservation of the city’s 19th century heritage of ordered and finely interwoven framework of streets and other spaces has resulted in a safe, civilised and healthy urban environment conducive to walking as the primary means of local travel.

Melbourne also has a history of generous investment in public places, matching private prosperity with similar capital resources in the public arena. Combined with the city’s subtle natural landform, this means Melbourne is first and foremost a product of design. Whereas other Australian cities benefit from dramatic natural settings, Melbourne depends on conscious, considered enhancements of the public realm for its physical amenities and charm. The ‘uncommon quality’ of the city’s ‘common ground’ contributes to Melbourne’s reputation as an eminently liveable city.
1.2 What is the Urban Design Strategy?

Urban design can be defined as: ‘the design of the buildings, places, spaces and networks (both public and private) that make up our towns and cities, and the ways people use them.’ It is about making the connections between people and places, between public and private space, between the natural and built environment, between movement and urban form, and between the social and economic purposes for which urban space is used. In its broadest sense, urban design contributes to a comprehensive, integrated, and vision-led, design-based, place and community-oriented and culturally responsive approach to how towns and cities are managed. These are inclusive definitions that address both the public and private domains of cities that embrace the social as well as physical dimensions of the urban environment, and are also inherently linked to people’s behaviour and the meanings that people attach to places.

This draft Urban Design Strategy provides values and directions that aim to assist the public sector as well as Melbourne’s residential, business and tourist populations. Public agencies (at local and state level) will find it helpful in formulating policy, setting development objectives and evaluating projects that affect the urban environment. It will assist developers and property investors to better understand the less tangible costs and benefits of the urban developments they initiate. For professionals working in the built environment, such as planners, architects, landscape architects, surveyors, social planners, transport planners and engineers, it has a role in clarifying what realistically needs to be delivered in Melbourne’s central city, municipal and greater metropolitan context. Perhaps most importantly it will help raise awareness of the value of urban design amongst the wider community, and provide a focus for individuals and groups across the community to identify desirable directions, with potential opportunities to address them.

This draft Urban Design Strategy sets out to:

• Provide a vision and framework for urban design in Melbourne that builds on the city’s fine history of achievements in planning and urban design, and addresses contemporary issues and challenges.

• Identify values, directions and opportunities for improving the liveability and prosperity of public Melbourne in social, environmental, cultural and economic terms.

• Establish the importance of the City of Melbourne’s leadership role, and the relationships and partnerships that will ensure that ‘Public Melbourne’ realises its potential and has a sustainable future.

It does this by:

• Presenting a series of urban design principles that are recognised and demonstrated worldwide.

• Providing core concepts to use in future urban design projects and policies.

• Offering some key directions and opportunities in simple language as a basis for discussing current and future urban issues and objectives.

• Identifying key issues and an approach to strengthen our decision-making so the concept of sustainability is incorporated into policy development across a broad spectrum of Council activities.

The people who engage in a wide range of activities create the total human experience that forms the basis for why cities exist. This draft strategy provides a philosophical as well as practical framework within which specific actions and opportunities to enliven and enrich the city can be realised, and provide a better, more liveable place for all people. Urban design matters because it has the potential to help Melburnians live more sustainably, happily and healthily.
1.3 An Integrated Policy Framework

The Urban Design Strategy supports and builds on a range of Council (and State) strategies for improving the urban environment that encompass economic growth and innovation, transport, housing, regional development, social development, health, disability, and culture and heritage. It calls for cross-corporate and inter-government filtration and pooling of ideas and motives that will ensure solutions are planned and designed to meet the requirements for a people-friendly city over any other single purpose requirement.

City of Melbourne

The City of Melbourne’s Integrated Planning Framework comprises a series of corporate and strategic planning tools to help achieve City Plan 2010’s vision for a thriving and sustainable city in Melbourne. City Plan 2010 directly informs the Municipal Strategic Statement which constitutes part of the Melbourne Planning Scheme (1999 – Amendment C60). The links between Council’s key policy documents – relevant across a broad range of topics and physical areas and a hierarchy of statutory importance – are contained in the City’s Policy Map which is available at http://comweb/ccp/spp/policymap/policydefault.htm.

The urban design policies contained in the Local Planning Policy framework (Clause 22) of the Melbourne Planning Scheme attempt to ensure that new urban development conforms to required standards of design and performance within and outside the Capital City Zone. While the Melbourne Planning Scheme provides the legislative framework for control of development form, the Urban Design Strategy has a non-statutory function. It provides a broad range of information additional and complementary to the Local Planning Policies, offers an important source for referral, and acts as an advisory framework for informing locally-specific initiatives.

The Urban Design Strategy forms part of a historical continuity in Council’s urban strategy documents and wider policy. The urban design policies in the Melbourne Planning Scheme were adapted from the design principles and objectives set out in Grids & Greenery – the Character of Inner Melbourne (1987). This document was Council’s last substantial urban design strategy and has been used as a guide for the past two decades (Refer to Section 3.2 below). Grids & Greenery was a re-casting of the 1985 Melbourne Landscape Strategy in an illustrated plain-language publication. The Landscape Strategy was prepared to support the City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1985, and is reflected particularly in the document’s section on the physical environment. ‘Grids & Greenery’ has thereafter been used as a convenient reference for this group of strategic planning documents.

As with all other plans and frameworks developed by the City of Melbourne, this draft Urban Design Strategy sets a framework for collaboration across Council – in this case on matters affecting the design and management of public space. It provides a vital context for other sectoral plans such as community services provision, transport planning, sustainability, city culture, safety and health, events and other areas where policies are in place that deal with these issues. The strategy does not therefore aim to duplicate information contained within these other policy frameworks, but rather offers a complementary set of objectives, directions and opportunities.
Victorian Government

Two Victorian Government policy frameworks merit particular mention. The first is Melbourne 2030 – the Victorian Government’s strategy for sustainable growth, land use and infrastructure investment in the metropolitan area. Of particular relevance to Council’s urban design strategy are Melbourne 2030’s objectives to create:

- **A more prosperous city** – through strengthening its Capital City functions and role as the primary business, retail, sport, entertainment and tourism hub for the metropolitan area; including implementing Yarra Plan and other civic infrastructure.
- **A great place to be** – through good design; a stronger sense of cultural identity and neighbourhood character; a city that is and feels safe; protection of heritage places and values; and more local open space and parks.
- **A fairer city** – through well-located affordable housing; more and equitably distributed social, cultural and creative facilities; and better community transport services, including better managed road systems and use of sustainable personal transport options.
- **A greener city** – through protection of native habitat and areas of biodiversity; and open space planning that addresses the need for a broader metropolitan perspective to maximise the sustainability and integration of urban spaces and precincts.

The second program of relevance to this draft Urban Design Strategy is the Inner Melbourne Action Plan – Making Melbourne More Liveable. At a local level, metropolitan local governments in Melbourne have typically developed their local area plans, transport and community plans and urban design frameworks independently, occasionally liaising with neighbouring municipalities. No formal system for allowing individual strategies to be integrated or enhance each other has been implemented. This program has been developed to enable partnering Councils (Melbourne, Yarra, Port Phillip and Stonnington and Docklands/VicUrban) to provide an integrated response to the directions of Melbourne 2030 and a guide to future development in the Inner Melbourne Region.

It forms a framework for the councils to translate Melbourne 2030’s planning policy directions into local planning strategies, and to develop a collaborative vision and joint initiatives. It also enables the policies and strategies developed by individual municipalities to complement each other and work towards agreed regional frameworks.

Also of note are the following:

- **Yarra Plan** – a spatial development plan representing the objectives of the Victorian Government to link recreational uses and opportunities in the inner Melbourne Yarra River corridor and its environs through a coherent, visible and intelligible network of great public places, venues, spaces and pathways.
- **Southbank Study** – a consolidated guide to future development in Southbank through coordinated private and public sector opportunities to create an integrated, high-quality city district. This study addresses a range of opportunities for improving Southbank’s public environment including: a better pedestrian network; improved local traffic system that encourages public transport, walking and cycling; additional open space offering diverse recreational opportunities; mixed land uses that contribute to the vitality of Southbank’s public environment; and high quality development that respects neighbouring activities.

These policy frameworks collectively provide a good basis for expanding Council’s working relationship with the Victorian Government to achieve mutual objectives. This includes how the City structures its urban design proposals to take advantage of State level initiatives within a metropolitan context, and how Council’s vision for the future form and functioning of the city is applied to other policies and strategic frameworks in the wider public sector.
1.4 Format and Content of the Strategy

This draft Urban Strategy Towards a better Public Melbourne is divided into five parts, broadly described below.

Part One
Introduction

This section describes the purpose, scope and content of the draft strategy.

Part Two
Urban Design Principles

Eight principles for creating and maintaining good public places underpin the strategy. They introduce basic urban design concepts and terminology that have a foundation in published literature. They also provide a context for the directions and opportunities that appear later in the document. The principles are written in general terms, and are applicable to most locations in most cities.

Part Three
Enduring Assets and Melbourne Today

Melbourne has a distinctive tradition of planning and urban design and presents firm foundations for the consolidation and improvement of its enduring assets. However, societal changes have been prevalent over the past two decades and new challenges have presented themselves to today’s city, and a way forward that builds on the city’s legacy of urban design is required.

Part Four
Key Directions and Opportunities

This section provides:

• a vision for each of the directions (note: in practical terms, this structure gives a sense of autonomy to the directions, although in reality there are many mutual objectives or interdependencies);
• a discussion of the issues and objectives relating to various aspects of the direction;
• strategies to meet those objectives; and
• possible ways to provide planning and design guidance and other actions that are broadly described as ‘opportunities’.

The six directions established for Melbourne’s public realm are:
1. A city that is built to last;
2. A city that welcomes all;
3. A walking city;
4. A creative city;
5. A city that balances continuity and change; and
6. A city that realises its potential through leadership, relationships and partnerships.

These directions combine the overlapping physical, social, economic and environmental aspects of the city’s public life. This acknowledges that urban design is as much about achieving clear community outcomes in an integrated manner as it is about providing a well-designed physical setting.

Part Five
Implementation, Monitoring and Review

This is the ‘how to’ part of the strategy. It describes the function of the Urban Design Frameworks and Initiatives (see below) as ways to coordinate place-specific projects or activity-based programs on a local community level. It considers the role of Council – independently and/or in alliances with the private sector. It also describes design issues that Council needs to monitor, a process for monitoring and applicable review cycles. Finally, it identifies performance indicators to measure progress in achieving the objectives of the strategy in line with Council’s commitment to achieving a thriving and sustainable city.

Urban Design Frameworks and Initiatives

A separate working program will be developed to facilitate the implementation of the Urban Design Strategy and other local planning processes. The working program will have two components:

1. Urban Design Frameworks – These will be a series of plans and proposals providing an overall indication of the location and nature of urban design initiatives or spatial relationships among clusters of initiatives. To reinforce the relationship of the urban design strategy to Council’s Integrated Planning Framework, the frameworks will be based on the Local Areas of City Plan 2010 and the Municipal Strategic Statement.

2. Urban Design Initiatives – These are an evolving collection of identified opportunities for site-specific projects, project groupings or urban design programs which are put forward in response to specific community desires or requirements. Many future initiatives have already been identified and rest within a ‘repository’ in Council awaiting an appropriate framework for implementation, recognition as a community priority, and/or Council funding.

The Frameworks and Initiatives act as a kind of ‘strategic engine’ in that they cover both physical or program-based subject matter, and will continually evolve as financial, political, social and environmental circumstances and priorities change over time. The Frameworks are intended to provide a four year view aligned with the Council Plan cycle. The Initiatives offer a mobile channel for adding to on an ad hoc basis, and reviewing annually as part of the bid process for funding by the Council Works Program.
Part Two: Urban Design Principles

2.1 The Sustainable City

Sustainable design enables communities and wider urban systems to minimise their impact on the environment to create places that endure. Central to this approach is consideration not only of the natural environment but the human element as well, locally and globally.

Cities are essential places to achieve sustainable development because most people live there. The constructed environment represents a huge investment. Developments and redevelopments of the 21st century now need to be meaningful community investments that enhance an area’s capacity to meet its lifelong needs. Urban design features that help to achieve these gains include compactness, mixed land use, greater connectivity, and safeguarding of environmentally sensitive areas.

‘Green urbanism’ is the recognition that cities are habitats. The essential components of sustainable cities include environmental integrity, quality of life, economic security and democratic participation. These variables interact in the principles and processes of place making, affordability, accessibility and sustainability. Strong relationships and partnerships lie at the heart of this approach.

Environmental integrity

The design of cities affects the use of materials and energy and the integrity of ecosystems. Like any living system, a community consumes material, water and energy inputs, processes them into useable forms and generates wastes. This is the ‘metabolism’ of a city and making this metabolism more efficient is essential. A well-designed public environment can help ensure resources are used responsibly, reduce the use of non-renewable energy, and preserve the integrity of ecosystems. Broadly, urban design supports energy-efficient buildings and modes of transport; encourages urban consolidation and mixed use development geared towards public transport, pedestrians and cyclists; and calls for designs that stand the test of time, are adaptable to accommodate diverse activities, and therefore reduce the waste of rebuilding. Public spaces and facilities need to be easily modified to accommodate new functions or values.

Sustainable environmental practice also involves protecting ecosystems by preserving natural landscapes and habitat resources and reducing adverse man-made impacts. There are five primary variables for achieving environmental sustainability: energy conservation, land and resource conservation, and air and water quality management.

Quality of life

The design of cities affects their inhabitants’ safety, health and sense of wellbeing. People need better air, better water, less noise, and more space and nature to be healthier. As with all biological systems, diversity is essential for health and renewal. Active street edges, traffic management, the provision of shelter and clear pathways between private and public space all contribute to personal safety. ‘Quality of life’ includes the human qualities of vibrant social and leisure opportunities, social inclusiveness and support for cultural identity, a healthy natural environment, and the simple sense for both residents and visitors that congenial amenities and facilities are available. A better designed urban environment engenders more regular physical activity through walking and cycling. Comfortable and stimulating spaces that incorporate streets, squares, parks and gardens make a vital contribution to the health and wellbeing of residents, visitors, workers and shoppers.

A city is an amalgam of moods, habits, customs and lifestyles. The interrelationships between these elements contribute greatly to the sense of identity of a city and its places. Local culture plays a key role in encouraging rehabilitation of built or environmental heritage to reinforce a community’s sense of belonging and greater city pride.
Economic security

The design of cities affects their economic prosperity and stability.\(^6\) Recognition that good design has direct and indirect economic dividends has been slow to gain momentum in Australian cities. However, attractive and liveable places are vital factors supporting economic growth in a fluid, global economy and influence decisions to invest locally or elsewhere. Cities that give priority to cultural development are seen as more socially cohesive and more economically dynamic and therefore more desirable places to live. Cultural opportunities improve the quality of city life and are one of the deciding factors in settlement patterns.

In Melbourne, the follow-on effects of increased inner city living has introduced new street use patterns as the local population uses the central city as a new recreational base. The public environment supports this increased economic activity – at a macro scale it is part of the image marketed nationally and internationally; at a micro level it is frequently the space that fosters networks to develop in an organised or incidental manner. True economy, however, is a proportioning system – a means of balancing needs, wants and resources – rather than growth for its own sake, let alone growth out of kilter with the environment that supports it.\(^7\) Economic stability and prosperity also involve mutually supportive and complementary land use mixes. Combining facilities and spaces on an urban scale focuses on efficient use of space and prolongs the lifespan of the built environment.

Democratic participation

The design of cities affects social cohesion and cultural vitality via civic interactions and shared activities.\(^8\) A city is sustainable when its people live in harmony in their common space, creating a ‘web of interconnected communities with a strong culture of social justice, equity and open decision making.’\(^9\) For example, the expression of cultural values through conservation of historic places can sit equally alongside the integration of good contemporary design and art into the public environment. A safe, comfortable engaging public realm also helps to attract social activity, foster social connectedness and build a sense of community.

Just as biodiversity is an essential component of ecological sustainability, so is cultural diversity essential to social sustainability.\(^10\) Places should be meaningful (allowing people to make strong connections between the place, their personal lives and the larger world), democratic (accessible to all groups), and responsive (designed and managed to meet the needs and aspirations of users).\(^11\) Social inclusion is regarded as an integral condition of sustainable development, recognising the importance of public space to the processes of social learning, public participation, equity, social inclusion and social integration. The involvement of local residents, interest groups and stakeholders, non-government organisations and groups with special needs is seen as central to the concept of sustainability.

A sustainable city provides a higher quality of life for now and the future. Today, communities are being challenged to examine their expectations and aspirations. They are being invited to develop new partnerships to achieve outcomes of economic, environmental, political, social and cultural value. Communities are becoming increasingly attuned to the spirituality of time and place, the interconnectivity of resources, and the multipurpose functions the landscape can serve.\(^12\)
2.2 What makes a good public environment?

Urban amenity relies on respectful and supportive relationships between individual buildings and between buildings and the public environment. ‘Great’ public spaces are those that support social and cultural vitality, and exemplify the community’s needs and desire for an authentic, local identity. In so doing they also play an important symbolic role that records the origins and aspirations of a community.

If a ‘piece of city’:
– fully engages our senses;
– lets us understand where we are physically within a wider city setting;
– entices us to move, arrive and move on again without ambiguity or encumbrance;
– provides us with innate sense of safety and security;
– enfolds us in the variety of a place, while building on traditional elements that give a sense of order; and
– greets us with the richness and complexity of the city’s daily life

and does this in ways that:
– preserve and enrich the experience for those who come after us; and
– celebrate our role in public life

then we have encountered a really ‘good city’. This is the working ground and objective of urban design.

Recent international research shows conclusively that many benefits of good urban design accrue beyond the site.13 The benefits of high quality urban design accrue to businesses through increased productivity and prestige; to communities in improved city living and safer, healthier places; and to developers and investors in better returns on investment. Providing it is sensitive to context, good urban design therefore adds ‘spill-over’ value for communities, individuals, the economy and the environment. The potential benefits include:
– better public health;
– greater social equity;
– enhanced land values;
– a more vibrant local economy;
– reduced vehicle emissions; and
– more sustainable use of non-renewable resources.

Urban places in Melbourne we enjoy (such as Federation Square, laneways and alleys, Queen Victoria Market, Lygon Street, Birrarung Marr, the Yarra River and Victoria Harbour waterfronts, and the shopping arcades) all tend to have similar qualities in terms of how the spaces, streets and activities are arranged. While the built form and landscape qualities considerably differ, the success of these areas comes down to common themes such as:
– density and intense uses;
– places joined in an intricate web;
– diverse activities;
– places marking key points, framing views, reflecting local identity and celebrating urban life;
– traffic managed for pedestrian priority;
– human scale; and
– the desire to play and have fun.

These places also meet a variety of needs. They:
– can be used by all members of society;
– are responsive to their natural environment;
– are economically successful and have adapted to changing needs;
– are easy to understand and get around;
– are accessible and well connected to surrounding areas; and
– have buildings that respond positively to and interact with adjoining public spaces.

These qualities stem from a structure of activities, streets and places that provide a setting where people and/or businesses naturally want to be.
The following eight urban design principles provide a generic prescription for ‘responsive places’. They introduce basic urban design concepts and terminology that have a strong foundation in published literature and well-known places that, post-occupancy, have recorded very strong (if not remarkable) levels of public engagement, social activity and economic vitality.

While these principles are applicable to most locations in most cities, they provide a rationale and context for building upon the underlying, pervasive physical and cultural qualities of Melbourne.

2.3 Clear Structure

Urban structure is based on the relationship between spaces, natural features and major transport infrastructure, and the density and range of activities an urban area supports. It gives coherency to the intricate patterns of autonomous elements in a city – through form-determining factors such as scale, compactness and legibility – to ensure that it functions effectively.

The structure of the city is evident at different scales; understanding how the components fit together helps people to feel ‘at home’ in an urban environment. At the broadest scale, the metropolitan region is organised around landscape features, lines of communication and movement, and centres of activity. Locally, the layouts of individual streets and sites display recognisable patterns. At either scale, or at any point between them, some of the most important components of urban structure belong in the public domain. The public environment provides the ‘glue’ that holds the city together.

There are two keys to creating a more compact city:
– increased densities; and
– a finer grained mix of uses.

Urban design that promotes a higher density of buildings and public spaces (in conjunction with other conditions, such as mixed use, good building design and adequate open space) relies on three principles:
1. Consolidation – important in bringing life to single-use areas, creating critical mass and bringing vitality;
2. Dispersal – important in making sure the right activities end up in the right locations;
3. Connectivity – adding new links and completing missing links; the latter two of which help support consolidation.

This produces an urban form that can minimise overall land area and transport requirements; deliver savings on land, infrastructure and energy; realise efficiencies in building design and layout; create strong relationships between land uses; and help concentrate knowledge and innovative activity in the core of a city.

Finally, a clear city structure is legible. ‘Legibility’ in urban design relates to people’s ability to ‘read’ the urban environment – to interpret what they see to obtain useful information. As with reading printed language, legibility can be adversely affected if city spaces are poorly organised or cluttered, or if important information is hidden. A well-designed city needs to be intelligible to its audience, the public, and responsive to needs. This will assist people to navigate their way through a city, have a sense of security, and appreciate features with particular meanings.

Urban design is therefore as much about urban structure as it is about the design of a specific place. Urban structure is important because no matter how good the detailed design of a place may be, it cannot overcome structural deficiencies.
2.4 Connectedness

Connectedness has many dimensions. It can mean physical connections like accessible pathways and transport routes, it can mean visual access, and it can mean communication networks that foster personal connections and business and community alliances.

By definition, the public realm is accessible to everyone. However connectedness can be measured in various ways. For example, the area of a city devoted to streets, lanes and public rights-of-way provides a set of spaces which diversifies and enriches it, but the degree of connection within the system is equally important to allow for uninterrupted, intricate and variable movement patterns. Access also depends on destinations as well as pathways. The benefits of a dense network of alternative pathways is best realised if these routes lead to distinctly different places. Well-connected city facilities and neighbourhoods, with high quality connections that are safe and offer convenient access, can greatly increase the likelihood of people walking or cycling.

Every access system should allow unimpeded access for all users, regardless of physical mobility, vision or mental acuity. Universal access includes provision for mobility and visual impairments, with clear paths along building lines and traversable level changes. ‘Good public spaces invite freedom of access and avoid implicit limits, exclusivity or coercion’.15

Accessibility includes visual access as well as physical mobility. This implies broad vistas, direct lines of sight or gradually unfolding views. Conversely, there are also opportunities where ‘surprise pockets’ can reveal themselves without being directly anticipated. Good visual access helps us to locate and comprehend a place, and directs our attention towards our fellow citizens. Visual cues attract interest, just as informal surveillance engenders a sense of personal safety. Without these invitations and reassurances, even the most comprehensive street system can remain impenetrable.

2.5 Diversity

The centres of large cities offer a broad range of experiences and opportunities; intensity and variety contribute greatly to the ‘microtexture’ of city life. People in the community anticipate an everyday experience of visual and social variety resulting from coexisting and interacting uses. Similarly, a diverse community has a variety of needs and differing sets of cultural meanings about use of space. Good urban design supports a mixture of activities, distinctive use of space, form and materials, and offers diverse sensory experiences.

There are many social and visual benefits in mixing uses rather than separating them. It provides points of social contact that help foster community spirit and participation, encourages visual detail at a human scale and other characteristics that appeal to us through our various senses, and fosters local pride and civic engagement and stimulates innovation, creativity and economic opportunities.

Mixed use in an urban design sense occurs where a variety of different activities coexist in close proximity, allowing living and working to be integrated. It operates at the neighbourhood scale or can be applied to the combination of activities within a single building. Urban design that supports mixed-use neighbourhoods can offer people convenience, choices and opportunities, which lead to a sense of personal wellbeing, and increase personal safety and enhance social equity. An accessible mix of complementary uses in close proximity will also help promote local employment and residential growth.

Humans have sophisticated faculties of perception. While most of our information about the public realm comes to us visually and the stimuli supplied by most city spaces present an overwhelming bias towards vision, our ability to hear, smell, taste and touch our surroundings opens up rich possibilities for design. A more enticing public environment will engage the ‘hidden’ senses and bring attention to textures, odours and the ‘soundscape’ of a city to create a vivid experience of public spaces and enhance their sense of place.

A wide range of urban environments, supported by diverse activities, helps to express the needs and aspirations of a multifaceted community.
2.6 Animation

‘Animation’ encompasses the social life of public places and occurs generally in two forms. To a large extent, the animation of a city’s public spaces happens of its own accord, stimulated by the basic principle of public space use: that people attract people. Therefore much of the activity happens spontaneously among people who may have little conscious regard for their physical surroundings. Some of the more customary rituals of urban life (e.g. reading a newspaper, greeting an acquaintance, watching passers-by) demand no more than a suitable micro-climate and a little extra space. In other locations, however, invitations and inducements are necessary to attract a human dimension to public places. Here, careful design and ‘stage management’ can be critical. Informal activity may need to be supported or triggered by orchestrated events.

A third dimension to animation occurs when the social life of a place becomes self-sustaining. The ‘trick’ of animation is to ensure the natural process of people attracting people has a sufficient initial critical mass to promote regular public use. However, no matter how busy a space becomes, monitoring and adjustment are required to optimise use and maximise the fit between the activities and physical setting.

2.7 Continuity and Change

The public environment should locate people in time as well as in space. Just as some elements of a city’s structure and character present people with a vivid ‘map’ of the city, other components of the urban fabric provide a chronological record of its development. Because cities are dynamic entities, it is important to understand the scale and direction of change. This means having an awareness of the past, present and future. The ‘biography’ of a city is best expressed by the interplay between these symbolic references.

Good urban design embraces the way in which districts, precincts or neighbourhoods evolve, including the subtle ‘layering’ of different eras of development. The public environment should contain some constants – sites and artefacts that remind us of our origins and evolution, and are recognisably continuous from one generation to the next. This includes responding to and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development and culture in the urban and landscape context as well as valuable historical characteristics. A community’s sense of place derives strongly from a combination of shared and distinctive cultural meanings. Respect for local character may also lead to more responsible use of non-renewable resources, as conservation is more likely if new development acknowledges existing settlement patterns.

However the public realm should also introduce new concepts that differentiate themselves from the status quo, and indicate possible new directions. Successful places achieve a balance between the established ‘order’ of the heritage attributes and the ‘incident’ of carefully considered new interventions. Coherence in neighbourhood character is generally driven by a community’s desire to retain a valued sense of place, but evolution (including reinvention to accommodate changing priorities and needs) is also critical. The urban environment should therefore contain sufficient variety and distinct parts to sustain interest, and enough regularity to appear coherent or legible. Just as individuals are allowed to be different within an inclusive society, good public spaces offer the right balance between difference and consistency. Complexity attracts our attention and holds our interest, and structure provides some cohesion to the bigger picture.

2.8 Authenticity

The authenticity of a place derives from many sources – its underlying natural landform and the variety of natural systems it contains, and the ongoing interaction, over time, as that landscape is modified through the processes of historical and contemporary development. It also embodies the culture, behaviours and other, often intangible, elements that contain the ‘spirit’ of a place or setting that transcends its component objects or spaces.

By understanding a city as an evolutionary entity, good urban design seeks to uncover, articulate and strengthen the ‘organic character’ of each area. ‘Character’ can be distinguished from the individual attributes that constitute it: density, connectivity, scale, use. It describes the additional benefit that results when such qualities combine to create an amalgam of features and easily recognisable identity (or authenticity). Strong evidence shows that the preservation and/or cultivation of local character encourages community life, reinforces a sense of identity amongst residents, and reactivates people’s sense of engagement with their neighbourhood.

Many of the forces of modern city building tend to produce a ‘standard product’ that fails to recognise the unique features of particular locations and communities. Good public environments resist this trend toward homogeneity by strengthening the positive physical characteristics that make each place distinct by looking to their own, latent characteristics in the urban and landscape context. This does not mean that new development should imitate its immediate surroundings or replicate existing conditions that are perceived to contribute to distinctiveness. New buildings, spaces and functions should respond to underlying patterns such as recurring dimensions, orientation, scale, vital textures, local culture and the distribution of activities.

Urban design that respects and supports local character can also offer people meaningful choices between very distinctive places, whose differences they value. In some situations, it may be more beneficial to ensure that cultural expressions in a community or place have a direct relationship with the local culture, rather than to focus on what distinguishes a location from another. In others, authenticity may be expressed by responding to and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development and culture.
2.9 Equity

In public places, people meet one another as fellow citizens. Provided they respect others, everyone has the right to use and enjoy public space regardless of mobility, age, permanence or transience, or socio-economic status. Our community is made up of students, families, older people, professionals, visitors, residents, people with disabilities, and people with other special needs – all with legitimate expectations that public places are available for them. Several issues regarding equitable access have been developed under ‘connectedness’ (see Section 2.4).

The public environment is also increasingly under pressure from privatisation. The users of public space are subject to commercial messages and people are pressured to consume. An appropriate balance is required between the recognised contribution that commercial activity brings to life in public places, and the invitation for people to linger in the city without obligation to spend.

Finally, the principle of equity places minimal restrictions on personal appearance or behaviour, although there are implicit social ‘codes of conduct’ that apply to public places. It treats citizens as the collective owners of public space, and encourages them to use their city confidently and in comfort.

2.10 Good Fit with People’s Intentions

‘Fit’ describes the extent to which a physical setting helps people to feel comfortable and safe, and allows them to achieve their objectives. The concept may be qualified by the expression ‘loose fit’, because few places actually determine human behaviour or emotions.

In an urban setting, a sense of physical comfort is mainly linked to the microclimate (including sun/shade, temperature, wind), to city noises (mainly traffic- or construction-related), and odours. A sense of psychological comfort, however, is much more complex. It derives from social vitality, self-actualisation (the capacity to initiate and achieve one’s desires and be fulfilled), a sense of safety (both real and perceived) and aesthetic pleasure. Collectively these rely on the relationships between individual developments, nearby places and a supportive public realm.

Good urban design does not guarantee sustainability within an urban context unless, over time, adaptability is inherent within the design and matched in the surrounding environmental and social fabric. Individual spaces usually need to accommodate a wide range of events, rather than one specialised activity: to welcome all and exclude nobody. Different activities may co-exist side-by-side, or they may succeed one another in daily or seasonal cycles. Increasing the capacity of buildings, neighbourhoods and spaces to adapt to changing needs can extend their useful economic life and encourage the conservation of non-renewable resources.

If public environments are to remain viable over long periods, they also need to be flexible enough to attract new uses and cultures that were not imagined when the space was first created, or to be available for adaptive re-use as social needs or cultural values change over time.
Part Three: Enduring Assets and Melbourne Today

3.1 What are Melbourne’s Main Assets?

Melbourne’s first comprehensive direction for urban design was published in 1987. Grids & Greenery – the Character of Inner Melbourne provided a vision for the future of Melbourne. It told the story of Melbourne’s urbanisation, laid down generic urban design principles, and defined elements and relationships that characterise central Melbourne. It described city form in terms that Melburnians recognised and understood, showing how simple things like streets and boulevards, waterways, parks, transport infrastructure and the city centre interact to create familiar yet distinctive city features. A sixth dimension can also be added to these – namely the city’s built form heritage.

The key premise of Grids & Greenery is that, in a context of continuous urban change, the enduring image and identity of Melbourne has been, and continues to be, fixed in these stable natural and constructed patterns, and the interrelationships between them. In combination with a long standing, multi-ethnic population profile and a significant number of students and residents in the central city, 21st century Melbourne emerges as a cosmopolitan oasis.

Today, this analysis of Melbourne’s urban form is just as well placed as it was in 1987 to act as the stimulus for the city’s continuing growth and revitalisation for the next two decades. In an era of rapid change, with subtle modifications appropriate to a new social, economic and environmental context, the ‘enduring assets’ remain remarkably stable.
3.2 A Fine Tradition of Urban Design

'Melbourne is one of several outstanding examples where an integrated, sustained and visionary urban design approach that emphasises quality has contributed acknowledged 'value' to a city.'16

'Civilising the city'17

Melbourne has always exhibited a particularly focused engagement with its public realm. For the traditional people of the Kulin nation, the site on the Yarra River has always been an important meeting place and location for events of social, educational and cultural significance. Melbourne's consciously constructed, modern urban form commenced from the outset of the city's European settlement.

As with any city, the physical form of Melbourne came from the interaction, over time, between an underlying natural landscape and the variety of natural systems it contains, and the ongoing modification of that landscape through the processes of urbanisation.

Four initial structuring patterns have remained as the city's underlying physical imprint, established by the town plan of 1837 as the formative structure of a much larger metropolis:

1. The skewed grid of the central city aligned to the Yarra: The Hoddle grid, based on its grand proportions of streets 30m in breadth and blocks 200m long, was a highly stylised design, with a carefully calibrated internal hierarchy of regular block sizes and alternating sequences of wide and narrow streets. Almost 170 years later, the grid retains its strength and resilience as the centre of a large metropolitan area.

2. The four formal boulevards of 60m width: Laid out in 1851 to provide major formal entries to the central city (at the same time Haussmann was constructing the grand boulevards of Paris). St Kilda Road, Royal Parade, Flemington Road and Victoria Parade are now among the most memorable components of Melbourne.

3. The surrounding 'armature' of north-south oriented grids, with occasional topographic variation, set between major road corridors radiating out from the central city. Many are wide in comparison to streets of other cities, giving Melbourne gracious, open proportions, with formal plantings of street trees to reinforce these qualities.

4. The original reservations of Crown Land surrounding the city that were subsequently formally designed as the public parks and gardens now encircling the city's north-east, east and south.

The enduring integrity of these street patterns was consistent with the city's development over a short period when stable principles of planning were applied, and were fixed in place by the city's rapid growth through the gold rush era and subsequent series of economic booms related to land speculation.

Melbourne's extensive parkland system, its series of smaller gardens and formal squares were similarly purposefully created entities. From 1839, LaTrobe began setting aside large areas surrounding the town settlement for 'the public advantage and recreation' (which could include protection of environmental resources, provision for cemeteries, churches and schools as well as recreation). While some of this Crown Land reservation was later sold, subdivided for road and rail reserves, or more recently captured for various public and semi-public institutions, what remains is a group of large parks and gardens to the north, east and south of the inner city.

The smaller formal reserves and squares had a different, although equally purposeful origin, having been progressively established as part of the city's early, inner area subdivision patterns and quite often as the centrepieces of intense urban development.

The growth of railways, tramways and inner Melbourne largely also occurred simultaneously. With some exceptions, the rail lines did not disrupt the established street patterns but, in exploiting park reserve between the city and the river to the east, did create a divisive element within the open space. The original layout of the tramway network, conversely, was largely responsible for the pattern of strip shopping centres integral to Melbourne's cultural identity. The early pre-eminence of rail transport also established Flinders Street Station as one of Melbourne's most recognised cultural icons and a significant portal to the city.

The city centre has had a long tradition of planning controls applied to it. In more recent times, these have been based on the acknowledgment and protection of the city's distinctive, contextual scale, its building heritage and the valued qualities of its public environment.

Where the city forefathers left a negative legacy was, initially by necessity, allowing the waterways to be dominated by industrial activity – at first by the port activities on a 'monumental scale', followed by smaller scale, highly pollutant manufacturers and industries creating a 'notoriously vile' water quality. This resulted in a highly modified Yarra River and Victoria Harbour, with the city turning its back on what has become only in the past two decades its most significant asset.

Obviously 21st century Melbourne is now much different to its 19th and even mid-later 20th century counterparts. 'The city is no longer uniformly filled with Victorian buildings. It is no longer inhabited by the same sorts of people. It is larger and (much) more diverse. Even with these changes, there are consistent patterns, which make all parts of the city recognisable as parts of Melbourne.'18
Grids & Greenery

While Grids & Greenery represented Melbourne’s first documented strategic direction for urban design, it formed part of a fine tradition of planning and design in the city’s historical development. Grids & Greenery was presented more as a narrative than as a conventional planning document. However, it also built on the policies and implementation strategies established for land use, movement, community services, city structure and the physical environment in the City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1985.

Importantly, the publication focused attention on the unrealised potential of the city’s public realm. It proposed a series of initiatives designed to strengthen connections and fill gaps within Melbourne’s constellation of civic and recreational amenities. It anticipated a host of modest yet far-reaching improvements to streets and laneways. This foresight encouraged City officials to take a resolutely long-term, big-picture view of urban design.

Since 1987, many of Grids & Greenery’s proposals have been incrementally achieved. For each of the ‘enduring assets’ it describes, a retrospective assessment can broadly be made as to:

- what has been achieved and how it was achieved;
- what was successful and what were some of the important (i.e. positive as well as negative) lessons learnt; and
- which of the outstanding initiatives are still to be completed that are relevant within a contemporary context.

Streets

The street pattern of inner Melbourne has developed into five major components: the inner city motorways, the boulevards radiating out from the central city, arterial roads catering to predominantly vehicular traffic, commercial strip streets (often serviced by tram routes), and a wide range of local streets. Many of these are generously dimensioned, making it possible to accommodate both casual interaction and organised street activities on the busiest thoroughfares.

Based on the acknowledgment that ‘… streets are the most extensive and intensively used open spaces in Melbourne …’, the quality, servicing and generosity of streetscape improvement works undertaken by the City as part of a coordinated street improvement program have significantly expanded its walking environment. Livelier and more diverse pedestrian environments throughout the municipality have been encouraged by:

- protecting the fine grain of the city’s historic block pattern;
- increasing residential occupation of, and specialised retail activity within, the little streets, lanes and arcades;
- developing precinct-based tree planting programs to reinforce local neighbourhood character and identity;
- using left over spaces at the intersection of the two grid orientations, together with road closures and other traffic management strategies, to create useful local open spaces;
- increasing animation and social participation via upgraded street edge activities; and
- developing a consistent, elegant and adaptable palette of public furniture, lighting and micro-scale retail throughout the city.
Waterways

‘... the waterways of Melbourne fall into three main categories: the low-lying foreshore of Port Phillip Bay; the port, dominated by industrial activity and almost entirely man-made; and the rivers and creeks, which vary considerably but are generally similar and meandering inland streams, gradually changing in character along their lengths ...’

Today the city’s waterways are its most prominent natural features as they transect the otherwise ordered grid street patterns which rarely vary in their response to terrain. After generations of competing uses along the city’s waterways, recreation and the provision of visual amenities have largely won, driven by the long-standing realisation that water holds a special attraction for people. This transformation is now far advanced, with the Yarra River and Victoria Harbour now fully-fledged catalysts for private residential development, public access, and universal recreational opportunities. This encompasses:

• major redefinition of the waterways as public spaces and scenic resources;
• increased provision for land- and water-based activity along the waterways, as their neighbouring populations increase and intensity; and
• continuous linked open spaces along the waterfront.

Parks and gardens

The city’s parks and gardens have become synonymous with Melbourne’s inner city identity. They consist of five main types:

1. Large parklands of the inner ring, mostly to the north, east and south-east of the central city.
2. Smaller reserves and gardens consolidated around public buildings or groups of public buildings.
3. Squares and plazas, frequently formal in nature and regular in their geometry, with well-defined building edges and a tradition of open public access.
4. Linear spaces, developed along existing or abandoned railway lines and waterways.
5. Isolated pockets of urban land created in an ad hoc manner through occasional public land purchase or demolition within the built-up areas of the city.

The parkland system has been improved and consolidated by:

• developing linear parks along waterways and infrastructure corridors;
• regaining land previously alienated from public access; and
• preparing master plans to coordinate the use and physical improvement of major parks and gardens.
**City centre**

The city centre’s physical prominence derives from the ‘…demarcation of its edges and the visible difference between (it) and the areas around it. (Its) … edges are made obvious by changes in land use; the most appealing and memorable form of this change is in the contrast of the city centre with adjacent public gardens …’ Its perception as a unique place, and its identity, are largely also dependent on the characteristic patterns within the central city – the main streets, little streets, laneways and arcades, and the spaces associated with civic buildings.

Many of Melbourne’s newer (and some earlier) major institutions and public buildings which play a key role in a central city area, combined with the more recent rapid increase in residential growth at Southbank (and its proximity to the city’s major concentration of arts activities and facilities), has resulted in a redefinition of the ‘city centre’ beyond the Hoddle grid. The traditional city centre, however, still retains its distinction by virtue of the physical order of its internal structure and form, the continued strength of its ‘blue chip’ business districts on the two hills at either end of Collins Street, and its physical demarcation from its wider setting along its edges.

Directions for improving the city centre have been achieved largely by the reinstatement, in a contemporary context, of a combination of early urban design principles:

- Vastly increased residential population of the inner city under the Postcode 3000 program. Residential occupation has increased approximately fourteen-fold from 1992 to 2004. The central city residential apartment market, firstly stimulated by various economic incentives, now has its own strong impetus, driven by demand.
- Forty metre mandatory height control applied over the retail core of central city (with some adjoining areas of discretionary control) to maintain the area’s characteristic lower, pedestrian scale of building fabric.
- Reinstatement of the traditional architectural definition of street spaces within the city centre by constructing to the property line, with buildings stepped back at the upper levels to maintain sunlit streets. Continuous and regular development along the streets at the edges of the city centre via infill development to reinforce the contrast with adjacent areas.

**Transport infrastructure**

Whereas Grids & Greenery confined this element to the city’s rail infrastructure, consideration has been extended to include the impact also of the city’s tram and motorway infrastructure. While the rail and tramways evolved relatively in parallel with the development of the early settlement of Melbourne, the motorways cut across the local street, road and in some cases parkland patterns. The tram infrastructure has a different impact on people’s perceptions of the city, being more integrated within its existing streets and therefore offering a finer grain of observation offered by movement along rail lines and motorways.

The fixed interchanges of the railway stations have a local centre function, of social and economic value beyond rail transport itself. Where the rail infrastructure – overpasses, viaducts or at-grade crossings – intersects with the city’s street and road systems, they can function as local landmarks or, occasionally, as landmarks of a more significant regional nature.

Important characteristics in the city’s transport infrastructure have been developed through:

- reducing the impact and barrier effect of railways by track rationalisation and development on decked platforms to accommodate varied public uses; and
- developing land alongside rail tracks for recreational use or increased visual amenity.

A negative trend has developed, however, in the areas where major new vehicular corridors have been superimposed onto the urban fabric. This has resulted in dislocated local streets, consumption and modification of large areas of land, creation of left-over spaces and difficult undercroft areas.
Built form heritage

Today’s city is a place of special importance to the metropolis and its citizens given the ‘principal banks, department stores, government offices, museums, courts of law, theatres, produce markets, art galleries, newspaper offices, cathedrals [and] churches, trade-union buildings, libraries and cinemas …’ that form a highly valued built heritage. Between these prominent civic buildings is an infill of concentrated and dense smaller structures, generally built to the street frontage and characteristic not only of the city centre but of the inner urban commercial and residential areas. This pattern clearly defines the streets as the principal open spaces of the city, and despite changes in technologies, regulations and architectural styles, this building pattern still predominates in Melbourne.

The activity, accessibility and high visibility that the city’s major streets provide to adjacent properties supports commercial development along them. The characteristic Melbourne shopping strip combines vehicular traffic, pedestrians, trams and other services into an intensively used street space. This is reinforced by continuous building frontages facing directly onto the street, and with verandahs whose vertical scale and depth reflect the overall scale of the street and its constituent buildings.

A negative trend of the late 1980s and early 1990s was the development single structures occupying areas that were originally subdivided for many, creating buildings that did not interact fully with their surroundings and in many cases restricted adjacent street life. Heritage controls introduced in recent years relate to a relatively large number of city centre buildings and inner Melbourne residential precincts. These apply to heritage-designated areas or to specific buildings with a heritage listing, and have greatly supported the process of conservation and adaptive reuse.

This includes:
- retaining intact existing frontages built to the property line of streets;
- preserving the shell of some of Melbourne’s most familiar landmarks; and
- inserting new structures comfortably into historic streetscapes by designing contextually.

The focus on recycling rather than demolishing has enabled preservation not only of many ‘traditional’ historic buildings and heritage precincts, but also of structures that provide a visible record of the city’s development, including warehouses, industrial sites, shipping and port infrastructure, railway viaducts, and other various smaller-scale buildings inserted into the streetscape during different eras.

The realisation of the proposals of Grids & Greenery does not imply ‘completion’ of urban design in Melbourne. Rather, it represents ‘work in progress’ as part of the continued renewal of the city. The proposals yet to be realised in most cases represent a natural progression from the planning and projects already in place.

Outstanding initiatives from Grids & Greenery still to be completed include those listed below. It is important to note, however, that in most cases these are more the result of not finding the right timing rather than being initially misconceived or overtaken by subsequent events.

Streets:
- Restoring and expanding Melbourne’s boulevard system, including additional definition to the city’s west; and
- Redeveloping the Haymarket roundabout as one of the most prominent arrival/departure points at the edge of the central city.

Parks and gardens:
- Further consolidating parkland by building over the Jolimont railway lines;
- Increasing the total area of publicly accessible parkland.

Waterways:
- Upgrading the Yarra’s north bank for access, safety and recreational amenity (i.e. implement Northbank Promenade);
- Upgrading amenity and access along the Maribyrnong River as part of a coordinated program between adjacent local municipalities.

Transport infrastructure:
- Integrating the rail viaducts and under-viaduct spaces along the northern edge of the Yarra to better integrate the central city and the river;
- Increasing commercial activity and open space amenity at railway stations to reinforce their local civic role.

In some respects, the 1998 publication Grids & Greenery: Case Studies attempted to provide a retrospective evaluation along the lines of the above analysis. It raised propositions intended to stimulate wider debate amongst decision-makers and implementers of Melbourne’s urban fabric. The case studies identified various issues and drivers for incremental urban renewal, and demonstrated the principles at work in Melbourne’s organising components – streets, city centre, parks and gardens, waterways, transport infrastructure. However, the examples that were intended to be informative and instructive did not provide a vision for the city, nor the strategy, process or opportunities for achieving them.
3.3 Today’s City and its People

Urban life in Melbourne today is about the quality of a very public city in which people interact and engage in vibrant and diverse ways.

Melbourne’s ‘liveability’ has been measured empirically and mapped under the Places for People program. Initiated in 1994 and followed up by a parallel study in 2004, these studies are developed and compiled from detailed research into the character, range and variety of public places in Melbourne’s central city, and surveys of the ways in which people use these spaces. By applying exactly the same methods used 10 years previously, the 2004 study demonstrated the direct relationship between the quality of public open spaces and the amount and type of uses they attract – providing conclusive evidence that a ‘high-quality’ public environment, with the appropriate combination of conditions, leads to a significant increase in occupation, social activity and economic productivity.

The social, economic and political contexts for urban design have changed markedly since Grids & Greenery was published. At that time, for example, few could have anticipated the extent to which environmental and social sustainability would influence choices about the city’s future. Similarly, the upsurge in the popularity of inner city living was unforeseen. These changes have altered the nature of the central city and its daily life from almost exclusively a place of work, to a place of work, recreation and residence in almost equal measure.

The City of Melbourne has a fast growing population that is expected to double to 100,000 residents by 2010. There are a number of special characteristics of this population, including a high student profile and a concentration of people in the 18 to 45 age group. The city is a popular housing choice particularly for the 20 to 34 age groups who choose to live, work and study in the central and inner city. This contributes to its economic strength and diversity and needs to be supported. By 2031 it is estimated that about one quarter of the population of the municipality will be made up of this 25 to 34 age group. Employment growth continues to occur in the finance, property and business services sector, the recreation and personal services sector, the retail sector, communications sector, and in scientific research, biotechnology and higher education. This shift from the manufacturing and industrial sectors to professional services and the creative industries has demographic implications and markedly changing user requirements.

Substantial investment in new (some of them world-class) public places in the past decade has also had a profound impact on the fabric of the city. This includes several whole-of-block redevelopments. Federation Square and QV in particular – but also the Southern Cross Station, Telstra Corporate Centre, SX and Melbourne Central redevelopments – all demonstrate elements that constitute strong urban character and a high quality living and working environment. They are inclusive spaces intended to serve community purposes for improved travel, recreation, retail employment and overall enjoyment for locals and visitors. Further facilities include the Ian Potter Gallery and fully refurbished National Gallery of Victoria, the Melbourne Exhibition Centre, Melbourne Museum, Crown Entertainment Complex, Docklands Stadium, Melbourne Aquarium and the Immigration Museum.

All these projects also represent the expanded role of the private sector in financing and delivering major public facilities and spaces.
At a larger scale, two patterns of change in Melbourne have been of particular significance:

1. **The Yarra River corridor** – Continuing enhancement of the Yarra has created a new recreational and civic spine. The water spaces frequently act as the stage for major city celebrations and events, and the river provides a panorama of central Melbourne closely associated with the physical and cultural image of the city, marketed nationally and internationally.

2. **Docklands** – ‘Melbourne’s New Waterfront’ has moved from a development concept into a new piece of city where people are living and working in significant numbers. While the initial impetus for development was largely residential, an integrated, mixed-use community is becoming well established.

Another major feature distinguishes the city from its earlier counterpart that merits particular attention. Today’s society places much stronger emphasis on the values of tolerance, inclusiveness and equity. Based on the understanding that the many issues facing marginalised groups within the community require a number of different approaches to address them, Council has a key role to play in exhibiting its commitment to continually providing environments, services and activities to meet the health, social and recreational needs of the whole of the community.

This includes:
- ensuring that people with disabilities (physical, intellectual, sensory) can participate in all aspects of city life and engage with other people in diverse situations with independence, dignity, confidence and safety;
- vastly increased awareness of the issues facing Indigenous Australians: recognising traditional ownership, acknowledging that their culture is respected and recognised, welcoming and giving voice, and promoting identity and pride;
- greater understanding of the value of the city’s ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity to actively support multiculturalism, greater participation and promotion of harmony;
- recognising the cultural, educational, sporting and economic contributions of youth to the community, while addressing youth-specific transitional issues, including those of young residents, young city visitors and young people in need;
- recognising that the expanding new generation of older people have different expectations and requirements for facilities and services than in the past, and providing support for age-related lifestyle transitions to promote healthy, positive and independent experiences;
- addressing the diversity of children’s interests, abilities and needs and supporting family involvement in play, learning and care, based on the recognition that strong family relationships (including diverse family structures) are the building blocks of strong communities, and that Melbourne’s children represent the city’s future; and
- increasing user participation through public consultation and other forms of involvement in urban design, on the basis that it can improve the ‘fit’ between design and user needs, encourage increased support for positive change, and reinforce a sense of community and local democracy.

Grids & Greenery’s success presents an unusual and, in some ways, enviable problem. Its analysis of existing city form remains as vivid as it was in 1987, and its premise that identity depends on stable relationships is still valid. However with so many of the original proposals having been implemented, the text has become outdated. As a result, the City now requires an updated and practical strategic framework for new urban design initiatives. Melbourne’s investment in civic amenities continues apace; what is need is a vision that locates individual projects as part of a larger, more enduring order.
3.4 Towards a better Public Melbourne

The message for the City of Melbourne is that while it can certainly acknowledge its achievements it cannot rest on its laurels. In the next agenda – while increased public life has greatly assisted in creating the new economics, new jobs, new investment and new competitive advantages of the city – it is time to look at other, measurable ‘quality of life’ components that will be required to support (and to some extent ameliorate) this continued and projected growth in activity.

The striking momentum in the physical transformation of the city over the past decade or so has been accompanied by many refinements in urban thinking. Strategic urban planners and urban designers now have greater sophistication in their understanding of and approach to residential amenity, neighbourhood character and heritage conservation in the face of greater diversity and rapid urban change. There is greater understanding and conclusively proven evidence of the tangible economic benefits of urban design. Well-designed centres bring specialised knowledge, skills and markets into close proximity with one another, and the economic case for energy efficiency is improving, with the emerging link between green buildings and comfort, health and productivity creating an even more powerful imperative for change. And ‘creative city’ exponents look to culture as one of the pillars of sustainability and have demonstrated that the greatest level of economic activity, growth and development occurs in places that are tolerant, diverse and open to creativity.

The City of Melbourne is now ideally positioned to place new and renewed initiatives in the context of its enduring assets, and finer sense of community needs and aspirations, with an eye to the future.

Key challenges

How we manage places for growth, ensuring integrated social development, cultural vitality and a sustainable future is a critical factor in urban design. As globalisation takes a greater hold on social and economic trends, towns and cities that lose their distinctiveness, use land and resources inefficiently, and are socially dysfunctional are at risk of staying competitive and liveable.

The Urban Design Strategy therefore has a strong role and responsibility to build Council’s relationship with the community and to provide a framework that will genuinely satisfy the community’s needs for its public spaces and offer diverse community benefits.

The key challenges facing ‘the new society’ are a combination of general activities and more site-specific opportunities that draw upon the city’s physical attributes, build on its proud heritage of planning, and are aligned with these fundamental community values.

Activity-based challenges and opportunities include:

- ensuring the design and management of buildings and spaces makes a measurable contribution to the city reaching its target of zero net emissions by 2020;
- better managing the interfaces between all modes of movement, ensuring increased safety and improved public transport, walking and traffic infrastructure;
- preserving the city’s qualities of local place as a strategic advantage to ensure that Melbourne remains a favoured location for the skilled and highly mobile workers of the new economy;
- developing approaches to better reconcile and integrate contemporary landscape design, environmentally sustainable practices, and changing cultural and demographic factors with established heritage objectives in planning Melbourne’s major parks, gardens and heritage precincts and
- balancing the range of uses (many of which are night time operations) with residential expectations for acceptable levels of environmental noise.

At a local area or site-specific level, challenges include:

- strengthening links between Docklands and the city, including coordination with VicUrban to develop durable standards for public open space infrastructure design;
- increasing open space provision in Southbank, including improved street environments, new public spaces, and links from Southbank to the city centre and South Melbourne;
- consolidating development over the remaining open rail corridor between the Russell Street extension and Richmond Station, incorporating low-rise development, improved walking links from the station to the city, and Yarra Park expanded for public recreation;
- developing the Northbank Promenade for access, safety and recreational amenity;
- improving pedestrian environments along Flinders, Elizabeth and Spencer streets commensurate with their function of gathering and dispersing large numbers of people;
- progressively integrating Spencer Street and the west end of the central city with Docklands;
- enhancing the Maribyrnong River and Moonee Ponds Creek as important biodiverse habitats and recreational resources; and
- reinstating the city’s waterfront and built edge to Flinders Street following removal of the Flinders Street overpass.

In summary, while Melbourne has already been widely recognised as one of the world’s ‘most liveable cities’ (on the EIU measure of health and safety, culture and environment) there is much work to do to in maintaining our best features, improving those that need a lift, and exploring new opportunities. ‘If services and human capital are the focus of future economies, then creativity and innovation are core assets, and education, lifestyle amenities and the arts become essential founding investments in that future capital stock.”24 ‘Place and community are more critical factors than ever before.”25
Part Four: Key Directions and Opportunities

The Urban Design Strategy has a role and responsibility to provide specific outcomes for the community – what links ‘communal space’ with the ‘role of citizen’ is how urban design satisfies community, social and cultural development in a huge number of ways, and in an integrated manner.

The Urban Design Strategy has a role at four levels:

1. Preserve the valued qualities of the city.
2. Reinforce or accentuate its valued qualities and to reduce intrusions.
3. Repair fabric that has been disrupted by negative interventions.
4. Create new spaces to give the city a new order and maximise the benefits of change.

Therefore urban design can be as much about subtle reworking as wholesale change or comprehensive redevelopment. What Places for People 2004 conclusively showed was that while many improvements have been substantial, even the most incremental changes to public spaces of the city can make vast changes to its economy, attractiveness and public life.

This section contains six key directions for preserving, reinforcing, repairing, building (and managing) Melbourne’s public realm. These directions deal with Melbourne’s ‘enduring assets’ in a different way to the more elemental approach of Grids & Greenery. They integrate the overlapping physical, social, cultural, economic and environmental aspects of the city’s public life. This acknowledges that urban design is as much about achieving clear community outcomes, as it is about providing a well-designed physical setting for public life.

Each direction starts with a discussion of the background and contemporary issues affecting urban development in Melbourne. These are then linked to a set of possible strategies to achieve the directions, including a brief explanation of the rationale and motives for the strategies. Finally, a number of apparent ‘opportunities’ – for works, new planning controls or guidelines, and other actions – are identified that would support that strategy.

Both strategies and opportunities are not intended to be prescriptive nor exhaustive, fully-resolved nor prioritised. Rather, they are intended to highlight issues that should be considered, to indicate possible actions, and to form the basis for the Local Area Urban Design Frameworks through which the Urban Design Strategy will be implemented. This will allow the central city and its local areas to develop sustainable solutions relevant to their particular circumstances once the right social, financial and political conditions favourably coincide.

In line with its vision for a thriving and sustainable city, Council has developed many policies and strategies that address sustainable planning. Relevant Council documents relating to each direction are referred to so that additional information on that particular topic can be sourced. The directions and opportunities are therefore intended to anticipate or describe the implications that good urban design make on those issues, rather than reiterate (or even foreshadow) the issues themselves.

The key directions for ‘Public Melbourne’ are:

- a city that is built to last;
- a city that welcomes all;
- a walking city;
- a creative city;
- a city that balances continuity and change; and
- a city that realises its potential through leadership, relationships and partnerships.
4.1 A City that is Built to Last

Melbourne is globally recognised as a very liveable city. However, it is not sufficient to simply provide a safe, attractive environment and a high standard of living. There is a need for assurance that the qualities valued by current residents are not being enjoyed at the expense of future citizens. A better place for all in tomorrow’s world uses less energy and has better air, better water, less noise and healthier people.

Sustainability embraces not just the natural environment but all the social, physical, cultural and economic assets that benefit Melbourne (see also Section 2.1). A city is a complex system: interactions between its structural elements, multiple decision makers and timescales, many levels of political, social and economic organisation, and its openings to the outside are all features peculiar to this complex system. The concept of ‘urban metabolism’ is useful in regarding the city as an organism that relies both on its overall physical infrastructure and its internal dynamics, and focuses particularly on the overall wellbeing and health of its people.

The social and economic case for energy efficiency supports at the smallest scale ‘green’ buildings through leading edge design, proceeding through to higher density urban environments at the cumulative scale. Adoption and use of environmentally sound technologies in buildings can be used to reduce resource use by lowering impacts along a supply chain and supporting businesses that uphold product stewardship. Managing urban growth through higher density developments and mixing of land uses supports improved public health, mainly through encouraging greater physical activity (particularly walking and cycling). However, it must also include the provision of quiet spaces and ‘protective’ urban forms to safeguard people from adverse influences of intensity (such as overcrowding and noise impact).

The vision for the ‘green city’ therefore has to be shaped in a different, actually traditional way (i.e. prior to industrial revolution) – from ground level, in the street, from the front door. This does not mean the system-wide perspective should be abandoned, but that the order of consideration should be reversed. Instead of starting with the whole pattern and working down to the units of which it is composed, it is best to start with the units and work up to the systems into which they are organised.

Planning for sustainable urban renewal and redevelopment requires the integration of expertise from many sectors, including energy, water, architecture, transport, waste management, air quality, ecology, climate, earth sciences, social planning and economics – all of whom consider future generations and not just the next five years. New technology also enables us to better manage cities as dynamic systems whose sustainability can be enhanced by better flows of environmental information. A mix of clean environmental technologies with information and communication technologies is a key part of the solution for increasing the eco-efficiency of the city. An ecologically sound urbanism of the future will be both ‘green’ and ‘smart’.

Cities can become more sustainable by modelling urban processes on ecological principles of form and function on natural ecosystems. The characteristics of ecosystems include diversity, adaptiveness, interconnectedness, resilience, regenerative capacity and symbiosis. These characteristics can be incorporated by cities in the development of strategies to make them more productive and regenerative.

Melbourne Principles for Sustainable Cities – Principle 5

A city that is built to last will have:
• more sustainable environmental processes;
• a durable and versatile city form;
• sustainable and diverse landscapes;
• sustainability built into all stages of urban design projects; and
• healthy and long-lived citizens.
4.11 Adopt and promote more sustainable environmental processes.

Connecting today’s city with environmental processes calls for commercial, industrial and residential investment in superior energy-efficient facilities design and water sensitive urban design (WSUD). Over the past couple of years, the City of Melbourne has developed a wide range of environmental policies and programs to create a genuinely more sustainable city. Four main strategies – Zero Net Emissions by 2020, Total Watermark 2004, Growing Green and City Health 2005-2009 – form the backbone of this program which, supported by a range of other interrelated policies, clearly define Council’s commitment to sustainability.

With increasingly more accurate means of measuring energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, Council is in a better position to make real changes that will have a significant and positive impact on the environment. Improving the energy efficiency of buildings through leading-edge design represents a primary means of energy demand management. Integrating open space with conservation corridors, stormwater management systems and recreational facilities is a fundamental objective of WSUD. Elements can be designed for all different types of large and small spaces, and some form of treatment can be applied to any site.

Council’s role as advocate for sustainable practices may include sponsoring local innovation, trialling new types of buildings or open spaces and new construction systems or processes, employing WSUD in innovative ways to create diversity and interest in the urban environment, and commissioning design-led research into topics such as low-impact infill housing or more energy-efficient climate control mechanisms.

Implementing concepts such as ‘green building’ design, alternative travel options to motorised transport, making water harvesting techniques visible and designing around biodiversity can all be done overtly and creatively, with the objective of educating people while simultaneously strengthening the urban environment. They can also be designed so that features have an amenity function as well as fulfilling their technical role. This increases community capacity for increasing understanding of the principles, and makes putting them into practice a more attractive proposition in private developments as well as the public arena.

STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

Minimise the ‘eco-footprint’ of buildings and spaces by:
- reducing non-renewable energy consumption, promoting use of renewable energy, and making more widespread use of passive/low-energy building systems in line with the Green Star Environmental Rating System;
- creating genuine mixed-use development with vertical mixes of retail/offices/community/residential facilities;
- reducing or eliminate waste to landfill; and
- finding acceptable forms of redevelopment for heritage areas.

Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by:
- promoting integrated mixed uses that reduce demand on travel;
- influencing leading edge building design, ‘greening’ the power supply, and advocating commercial, industrial and residential investment in superior energy efficient design to meet emission reduction targets (see opposite); and
- supporting low energy modes of transport, including increased frequency, extended service areas and extended operating times.

Apply practical and innovative water sensitive urban design principles to meet water targets (see opposite) by:
- collecting, treating and recycling grey- and black-water;
- collecting and recycling stormwater from buildings and paved surfaces;
- using drainage elements including bioretention systems, vegetated swales and stormwater diversion techniques;
- reducing building footprints and retaining landscaped open spaces with permeable ground surfaces (of primary concern in inner urban residential areas rather than the central city); and
- promoting the use of smaller, compact housing lots, adjacent to open spaces for community access.

Design healthy and flexible buildings by:
- reducing reliance on artificially modified air temperatures;
- adopting dimensions suitable for a range of uses and adaptation, and avoiding deep floor plans that are difficult to naturally light and ventilate; and
- promoting equitable solar access to all sites. This may result in mandatory height controls which also offer a ‘human scale’ and encourage close attention to detail.

Protect and enhance biodiversity by:
- re-establishing indigenous biodiversity and habitat in public spaces in line with environmental management targets and as a source of delight;
- protecting the value of healthy riparian corridors and wetlands; and
- establishing programs for rooftop greening and community gardens.

Support policies such as Melbourne 2030 and the Green Star rating system. Disseminate information as widely as possible on lessons learnt from ‘green projects’ in the built and external environments.
4.12 Create a durable and versatile city form.

There are three dimensions of sustainability in the urban scale: technology, space and time. Technological advances in materials and processes, efficient use of space and prolonging the lifespan of the built environment are important ways to improve environmental performance. Multiple and intensive uses of space and the amount of building materials and energy needed must be reduced. Other important factors are functional diversity, flexibility and adaptability which are often supported by technical efficiencies.

In the quest for modernisation and efficiency, and to accommodate social and cultural change, the cycle of rebuilding is often rapid, and vast quantities of energy and materials are wasted. This is compounded by planned obsolescence and deliberate construction with a short lifespan. Under these circumstances, superior materials and details with higher capital costs are regarded as unviable. Cheaper components are therefore used, and these often lead to increased maintenance and operating expenses as well as degradation of a city’s appearance.

Sustainable city-building therefore involves balancing the benefits of adaptation and renewal against the cost of periodic reconstruction and cheap materials. This perspective encourages investment in high quality design, permanent materials and flexible layouts that will age well and accommodate unforeseen future uses. Increasing the capacity of urban buildings, neighbourhoods and spaces to adapt to changing needs can extend the useful economic life of buildings and public spaces, and encourage the conservation of non-renewable resources.

STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

- Identify components of public open space with short, medium and long life-spans. Ensure that the durable elements do not become redundant merely because more ephemeral components need to be replaced.

- Ensure new facilities demonstrate exemplary design standards.

- Encourage more intensive and varied activity in underutilised buildings and public spaces via adaptive re-use.

- Design simple robust layouts for public places, using low-maintenance designs for landscape elements and street furniture, and high-quality materials and details that tolerate wear and tear and develop an attractive ‘patina’ through use.

- Give preference to materials, fixtures and fittings that are likely to be available over the long term.

- Design buildings and settings capable of simple refurbishment rather than major structural change.

- Design street furniture that can be retrofitted with new technology. Ensure that the efficiency and utility of fixtures can be improved without costly alterations.

The Postcode 3000 program is one of the City’s most impressive achievements within the last 10 years, and has been highly influential in preserving local character and creating a livelier and safer 24 hour city. Residential occupation increased from approximately 736 dwellings in 1992 to over 10,000 in 2004, of which 6960 were private residential apartments. Notably, this growth has occurred throughout the central city rather than being confined to one or two specific areas.

Postcode 3000 encouraged residential living back into the city by converting a large amount of available empty space in the city’s older, unoccupied buildings into new apartments by subdividing into multiple, individually-owned units. The program focused on retaining and recycling Melbourne’s historic buildings and the widest possible range of built forms. Specific measures as part of this targeted program to attract more residents included:

- offering a range of financial incentives;
- improved architectural treatment to buildings converted to residential through application of balconies and roof extensions;
- changes to building codes and provision of advisory services and technical information to facilitate development approvals; and
- actively promoting inner city living through the combined efforts of the financial and property sectors, professional bodies and government agencies.
Growing Green is Council’s long-term management framework for the city’s open space and recreational facilities. Its vision is that ‘The City of Melbourne in 2050 will have the highest-quality parks, gardens, trees and recreational facilities easily accessible to and enjoyed by all who live in or visit the City. These assets and the life that they support will be sustainably managed on behalf of the community and future users with a reduced ecological footprint.’

Directions and objectives that have particular implications for urban design include:

- Broadening the overall range of tree and other plant species to increase the level of biodiversity, especially bird life while maintaining a mix of exotic and native trees,
- Identifying and developing opportunities for new open spaces as the population of the City increases and ensuring equitable access for everyone,
- Reclaiming where appropriate, a proportion of existing road space for planting trees, plants and creating small community spaces,
- Planting tree and grass species that minimise water and other resource inputs where this is compatible with heritage and design considerations,
- Investing in new infrastructure to improve the environmental sustainability of open space, parks and recreational facilities,
- Reducing the energy input in the management of open space and recreational facilities, and
- Reducing the use of potable (drinking) water for the management of parks, street trees and recreational facilities.

### 4.13 Cultivate a sustainable and diverse ‘green Melbourne’

Heavily developed urban areas such as Melbourne face particular challenges to preserve and enhance ecological diversity in urban greening. Expanding protected areas and improving links between biologically diverse areas are vital for maintaining the overall viability of conservation values – for both natural and heritage landscapes.

Parks and gardens, boulevards and avenues contribute the major part of Melbourne’s ‘green character’, but are amongst the most vulnerable elements to changes over time. Most have been reduced or enlarged, and have undergone changes in their physical structure, appearance and use. With many of Melbourne’s parkland and boulevard trees over 100 years old and declining in health, it is timely to consider how these assets can be managed on a long-term sustainable basis. Replacement planting needs to be considered with habitat, resource consumption and heritage implications in mind.

While there are significant native and some indigenous plants within the city, an historical bias towards exotic or European trees has influenced the evolution of the city’s open spaces. However, there is great diversity in the park plantings, including both exotic and Australian species. Notably, this is the product of two centuries of cultivation and constant change, replacing the city’s natural range of Eucalypt woodlands and other habitats. Issues of selecting introduced or native, deciduous or evergreen trees are complex. Indigenous or native plants, used appropriately, are able to translate even the most formal design objectives into the landscape, with the added benefit of reduced water use and support for greater biodiversity. At the same time, deciduous trees are too many people a hallmark of Melbourne’s parks and gardens and are highly significant to the city’s European cultural heritage.

Ultimately, the management of parks and streetscapes should not be reduced to ‘either/or’ debates, or simple habit, but should be based on considered judgments on the best possible means for protecting the character, amenity and enclosure of public spaces with the greatest longevity and least investment of scarce resources.

The challenge is to ensure ‘the continued protection of diverse environmental values and to progressively increase under-represented vegetation communities in existing and future open space. In protecting cultural values, especially Indigenous culture, the varied experiences, meanings and benefits that can be attached to the landscape will be enhanced.’

### STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

- Incorporate areas of ‘natural environment’ with high biodiversity and complex biomass into the built environment.
- Expand the network of interconnected green open spaces accessible to all, including replacement planting undertaken with habitat provision, resource consumption and heritage implications in mind.
- Use plants that are drought-tolerant and that provide wildlife habitat as well as meeting other design aims.
- Ensure that management of the integrity of boulevards or avenues as a combined unit takes priority over management of individual trees.
- Continue to protect and enhance the riparian vegetation and habitat corridor links along the key waterways: Yarra and Maribyrnong rivers and Moonee Ponds and Merri creeks.
- Rationalise the number and location of structures within parkland that are not dependent on open space.
- Redevelop underutilised street spaces and surplus pieces of public reserve to link otherwise isolated areas of parkland or create other small public spaces to achieve a more equitable distribution of recreational open space.
- Ensure the range of festivals and events in parks and gardens is sustainable and use alternative venues wherever practical.
- Provide incentives for private developments to provide greening and habitats, including roof gardens.
- Protect and enhance the habitat values of Royal Park, and establish ‘green links’ with the Moonee Ponds Creek corridor and the Maribyrnong River.
- Develop a whole of Council approach to ‘greening the city’ and build relationships with the Victorian Government and private sector to encourage more biologically diverse environment in and across parks, gardens and waterways.
4.14 Address sustainability at all stages of urban design projects.

Sustainability must be addressed at the outset of every project, because environmental impacts depend on basic decisions about the location, form and purpose of development. Aims for sustainability will influence the overall character of a project or site as well as the choice of materials used in its detailed design. The environmental footprint of a development depends on the origin and performance of every building component, and the ‘embodied energy’ required to produce a material contributes greatly to this.

There are many applications for this process. Energy modelling of buildings in design phase, for example, has therefore been shown to offer outstanding returns on investment. Given that many energy-efficient features also reduce operating costs, additional capital costs for many energy efficiency measures can be paid back over the lifetime of the building (or less). Adoption of environmentally sensitive design and construction techniques is also part of protecting conservation values in parks and gardens. Planning for water sensitive urban design should be part of any urban development from the outset in land use planning and design concepts. Finally, reducing environmental noise calls for a long-term strategic approach that incorporates changes to public transport, road and building design, and planning for the ways people use public space.

Design decisions should therefore take into account more than the immediate environmental costs and benefits associated with construction. They should also reflect life-cycle costs, including the ongoing consumption of non-renewable resources and the economic value from the added benefits of design quality.

STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

- Consider sustainability at all stages in decision-making – from the feasibility study and formulation of the brief to design, implementation and the programming of maintenance.
- Assess projects in terms of life-cycle costs and benefits. This includes maintenance and other running costs as well as initial capital expenditure.
- Introducing mandatory energy modelling for the city’s larger buildings (e.g. greater than 5,000 square metres).
- Monitor completed projects to ensure that sustainability objectives are being met. Develop new design practices or modify future designs in response to this feedback.
- Require construction and service contractors to meet high environmental and social/safety performance standards. Treat responsible practices as a prerequisite or, as a minimum, a competitive advantage when contracts are awarded.
4.15 Ensure the health and longevity of the city’s future citizens

If Melbourne considers itself a birthplace of world-changing people and ideas, then it must recognise that today’s children are the workforce and parents of tomorrow. Their success is important for the wellbeing of future generations and for ensuring we can support an ageing population.

The social capital of Melbourne’s communities is a defining feature, and determining the social and structural conditions that need to exist to enable people to be physically and mentally healthy is an important role for Council. Increasing evidence points to the direct links between urban design and public health and safety. The significant health benefits of regular sustained physical activity have been conclusively proven by the World Health Organisation, and a better designed urban environment engenders this.

There is, of course, considerable overlap between the physical health impacts of the environment and mental health and wellbeing – consequently public spaces can either be health limiting or health enhancing. How to sustainably look after people and families includes: housing them in affordable accommodation; ensuring their mental and physical health through social inclusion and physical activity; and protecting them from crime and other adverse impacts that can result from inner city living.

Both the quality and extent of social interactions and relationships within a city or community are important indicators of its health. Recreation and leisure are vital elements in facilitating social interaction, active participation and increased health and wellbeing. Similarly, an increased supply of housing options of all tenures and costs will allow Melbourne to continue to attract a diverse and younger creative demographic by affordable means, particularly as inner city living provides the ability to live and work in the same area. Acknowledging and making provision for youth-oriented activities recognises the important contribution that young people make to the cultural, educational, sporting and economic life of the city, now and as older adults in the future.

The impact of the built environment must also be considered to ensure that people with low socio-economic status do not suffer disproportionally from adverse consequences of poor planning and design: A person ‘s ‘place in the world’ includes their socioeconomic status, efficacy, perceptions of opportunity and sense of belonging.

STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

Strengthen the links between the planning and design of public space and public health based on a long-term vision for intergenerational, social and economic equity.

Create varied and ample opportunities for adults and children to meet and interact in both formal and informal settings.

Ensure that spaces for young people are creatively conceived and then designed as a social and urban opportunity.

Use public artworks and art-related programs to form the basis of consulting the community and enable people to reflect on their experiences and their relationship with the environment.

Incorporate a design-against-crime approach (CPTED) in designing for inner-city multi-unit housing.

Recognise and assist where possible in building the capacity of registered and not-for-profit housing organisations to provide and manage an increased number of affordable houses.

Preserve useable public open space for residents and the public within and around Office of Housing estates, and redevelop where necessary to better integrate with adjacent areas.

City Health 2005-2009

City Health outlines how Council, together with local agencies, aims to improve the city population’s health and wellbeing. It provides strategies that cover the following themes: environmental health, urban planning, amenity, inclusion and participation, creative and artistic activities, noise reduction and transport. In providing a rationale for each priority area, City Health identifies the various health risk and preventative factors being addressed, and the environmental dimensions that impact on health and wellbeing.

Vic Health’s Arts and Environment Scheme

Vic Health’s Arts and Environment Scheme was predicated on a view that public space can have a positive impact on public health. Public space is intimately involved in defining a community’s sense of itself and how individuals belong to, and are part of, a particular place. The health dimension is not confined to the use of space, but also incorporates its design and realisation. The view is that people who use public space should have some involvement in its design, and this will enhance their sense of belonging and community. Social connectedness, social inclusion and sense of community, in turn, make people healthier.
4.2 A City that Welcomes All

‘Social capital’ refers to the quality and quantity of a community’s social interactions that operate broadly and inclusively (transcending social divides of religion, ethnicity, age and socio-economic status), and are critical to a society’s economic prosperity and social health. ‘Civic engagement’ is a strong component of social capital in local communities. A city’s street activities, building forecourts, parks and gardens, and varied activity centres provide an environment to support civic engagement.

Human interaction used to be an inescapable part of daily life. When society and human contact depended less on electronic interactions and time was less of an economic commodity, many routine tasks brought people into direct contact with others beyond their immediate household. Today, many economic activities no longer have an overt physical presence. Cities remain places of production and exchange, but more and more activity takes place in the public eye. The consumption of goods and services is following a similar trend. Homes are increasingly self-sufficient and there is less need to leave home for information, entertainment, other forms of recreation, or even work.

Melbourne is well placed to counter some of these trends towards the privatisation and internalisation of public life. Providing common ground in which social inclusion is regarded as an integral condition of sustainable development plays a key role in this. Encounters in the street help generate empathy among different groups and individuals. Face-to-face interaction is vital for building and sustaining personal relationships of every kind. It also kindles shared cultural meanings. When people are given a place to get together for positive experiences, it reinforces their sense of who they are and what they value in society.

Events and activities encourage participation and interaction, not just the provision of physical spaces and infrastructure. Melbourne prides itself in its inclusive, vibrant and proud multicultural tradition of cultural, linguistic and religious diversity. Creating a sense of belonging can involve uniting culturally diverse groups into mainstream communities rather than emphasising difference, equally as celebrating that difference. Events in public spaces, in particular, can play a key role in achieving these dual objectives.

Recreational and cultural venues and activities need to be accessible and relevant to people of all ages with disabilities of all types. Facilities need to meet requirements for particular life stages. Again, building community infrastructure not only involves provision of life-stage specific services and facilities in their own right, but also supporting the social networks that make these facilities work.

Social interaction provides us with some of the city’s most interesting and engaging experiences and also serves an increasingly important economic function. Compact, connected centres bring specialised knowledge, skills and markets into close proximity with one another. In this way they support the kind of networking that underpins most vibrant businesses. Mixed uses support more socially diverse environments as everyone – affluent or poor, young or old – has equal access to facilities, regardless of whether they own a car. Also, different people make use of an area at different times and for different purposes, benefiting local shops and services.

We want our cities to reflect our society. Shopping is a favourite pastime, education is big business and cafés have reinvented the main street. The traditional forms of public space – streets, squares, parks and cafes – are still strong symbols of the meaning of collectivity.

A city that welcomes all will have:
- strong centres of activity;
- a fully supported diverse social fabric;
- personal safety throughout city spaces;
- more opportunities for people to pause; and
- diverse recreational uses in the city’s parks and gardens.

The formation of public space in which social inclusion is regarded as an integral condition of sustainable development recognises the critical importance of public space to the processes of social learning, public participation, social inclusion and integration – all vital processes for enabling a city to realise its full sustainability potential and have places, spaces and a way of life that is self-sustaining.34

From The Sustainable City II (2002)
4.21 Build strong centres.

Interaction is most intense at a centre, irrespective of its size. ‘Activity centres’ as defined by Melbourne 2030 include those multifunctional areas – ranging from principal to neighbourhood centres that provide a focus for services, employment and social interaction. Regardless of this definition, ‘centres of activity’ focus on clustering – rather than dispersing – uses and activities to derive social, environmental and economic benefits for the community and business generally.

Density facilitates the benefits arising from people being close enough to readily access or exchange ideas, goods or services, for business or for pleasure.

Inner Melbourne’s growing population needs additional social and physical infrastructure, and it is important to direct investment to sites and areas with the capacity to accommodate (often higher density) residential and commercial growth. The 19th century layout of the city provides a strong foundation for high density development. Arguments in favour of increasing density in the urban environment have a firm grounding in recent research.37 Higher densities allow a greater number of public amenities and transport facilities to be located within walking distance, thus reducing the need for the car, and contributing to greater social connectedness and higher levels of physical activity. Mixed use brings benefits related to perceptions of personal wellbeing: in the design of streets and other urban spaces there is evidence that the mix of appropriate uses is a building block for safe, successful and thriving public spaces; and combining the primary activities of living and working supports a greater variety of secondary facilities.38 Another economic benefit of high urban density is the enhanced ability to attract and concentrate businesses that are not space-intensive, such as knowledge-based industries.

With an increase of 95 to more than 350 cafes from 1994 to 2004,39 kerbside cafes in Melbourne play a fundamental role in the public life of the city centre, making a valuable contribution to its social and cultural identity, and contributing significantly to the city’s economic prosperity and sustainability. Kerbside cafes provide a space for social interaction and the opportunity to eat, drink and relax while observing street activity.

The presence of people in a kerbside café increases the sense of safety and security in streets and even when empty, the kerbside café suggests street life.40 A key locational characteristic of kerbside cafes is also the trend towards clustering – they thrive in locations or precincts that epitomise the café culture and where businesses can share and compete for clientele.

Beyond the central city there are many other activity nodes. Most of these are commercial precincts – particularly local activity centres and neighbourhood shopping strips. Varied and lively town centres with quality public spaces also provide an important social role to support young people, rather than privately-owned shopping complexes. These are major attractions for young people to spend time together in groups as this is where public transport, cinemas, shops and where everybody else goes: ‘street frequenting’ becomes part of their identity.

One of the few adverse impacts of increasing urban density is environmental noise. This has significant implications for the long-term sustainability of urban growth, as high levels of noise not only affect health but can also have negative impacts on property value, amenity and perceptions of an area. Mixed use development, especially in activity centres – with all its well-recognised advantages – also creates significant challenges in noise management, ranging from commercial sites such as bars, ongoing construction activity, patron activity during all times of a 24 hour period to a range of facilities, and service provision such as waste services.

In line with the intensification of land uses, the public environment and public spaces need to be expanded, better connected, further enhanced and protected. Activity nodes of this nature include special open spaces teamed with civic buildings (e.g. State Library forecourt, or many of the small public spaces at the City’s churches) or new spaces inserted into densely occupied areas. Whatever their scale or purpose, these central locations not only attract greater numbers of people, they also play host to greater diversity. For this reason, a well-designed city will contain inclusive spaces where a broad cross-section of the community feels comfortable at any different time of the day, night or season.

STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

- Encourage mixed use development wherever possible, particularly where higher density, affordable housing, new businesses, hospitality services and recreational venues can be attached to local retail centres.
- Promote a fine-grained mix of land uses on single sites or land development parcels to minimise travel distances between some destinations.
- Develop stronger and more direct connections between and within centres of activity (including more accessible public transport and support for pedestrians and bicycles).
- Provide a safe, civilised and healthy urban environment that is conducive to walking as the primary means of local travel. Facilitate the development of new local centres based on easy walking catchments.

Develop cross-Council initiatives to:
- promote public and private investment in Melbourne’s core retail area;
- attract a wider range of people to the central city during the evening and on the weekend, supporting a 24-hour city;
- protect the identity of local centres while selectively introducing some of the intensity, diversity and specialisation traditionally associated with the city centre;
- support the development of new local centres to provide focal points for community facilities (including shops and public spaces within convenient walking distance of most residents) where expanding populations are poorly served by existing ones (particularly Southbank); and
- address the undersupply of life-stage specific services, including social support systems to boost them.

Develop ‘urban village’ concepts to better manage the growth, future density and changes affecting the City’s mixed use districts of North and West Melbourne, Carlton and Southbank.
4.22 Support the full range and diversity of Melbourne's social fabric.

Melbourne takes great pride in its ethnic diversity and social cohesion and, largely through its many events and festivals, its ability to make visible the diversity of the city’s multi-cultural fabric in public spaces. Secularism, pluralism, freedom of expression and social mobility underpin much of the city’s modern ethics and public policy. Melbourne’s resident population is made up of a broad range of ethnic backgrounds, socio-economic groups and different household types. The provision of high levels of public housing in Melbourne has supported the arrival of new migrants. Public space plays an important role in reconnecting individuals, often living independently, with their communities of origin. Increasing numbers of students are more visible and active in the street scene and make a further contribution to the city’s liveliness and cultural diversity, providing a youthful stimulus and often international perspective.

Community building and cohesion needs to be supported by spaces and places that value, welcome and celebrate other groups, including young people and older people, Indigenous people, gay and lesbian people, the homeless, and people with disabilities or special needs. This poses many challenges for the role of individual public assets to express this diversity without fragmentation or exclusivity.

Young people, for example, have needs in public spaces that are similar to other community members, and places that are popular with a wide range of users are usually popular with young people too. They would generally prefer to share parks and public spaces in the middle of town or busy retail centres with others rather than be isolated from them. However, key issues can be that unemployed young people or early school leavers have few places to gather, or that young people may feel they are only welcome when they are buying something. Clearly, it is important to recognise that young people use public space differently and require opportunities to “do the things that young people do”.

In an ageing community, people are increasingly looking to sustain lifestyles characterised by independence, choice and positive contributions to the community. Positive ageing is based on participating in personal, community and civic life with independence, dignity and equity, and an active lifestyle. How city spaces maximise quality of life for vision-impaired people and people with other special needs is also important – not only in terms of creating a physical environment free of barriers, but also providing quiet spaces with varied sensory experiences.

Finally, as a key feature in the city, kerbside cafés generally provide a range of dining experiences and different environments to allow for people across a broad cross-section of the community to participate in street life and activity. However, given that public space is used to support these seating opportunities, it is vital to ensure they do not become exclusive and continue to provide for people of various ages, income levels and tastes.

Community wellbeing is built on this shared sense of purpose. A healthy society depends, first and foremost, on open, lively and influential cultural activity amongst the communities within it.41
STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

Represent Melbourne’s social diversity in the city’s public places. Allow certain locations to be themed in response to contemporary demographics or traditional associations, while avoiding the appropriation of an entire space by a single group.

Treat public places as neutral zones. Design spaces to be receptive to contributions from a wide range of social and cultural groups.

Find places to express a variety of tastes and interests, including popular culture. Ensure that all socio-economic groups can see their own aspirations and achievements reflected in the city’s public spaces.

Acknowledge and intensify youth-oriented activities, providing places for certain activities (e.g. skateboarding) which have particular spatial requirements where they will no conflict with other public space uses. These should still be visible to other users, both for their spectator value and for casual surveillance.

Provide seating for young people to gather and ‘hang out’, integrated into the urban fabric and positioned where there is passing life and activity. Include ‘magnets’ for young people and provide links between uses.

Design facilities that cater to different ages, interests, abilities and the special needs of children and their families – combining safety, play and learning environments for young people with sociable environments for parents.

Provide for stable residential populations as well as isolated older people who may be moving through seeking refuge and support.

Establish social and support activities and spaces for multicultural senior groups.

Consider how the public environment can support the homeless without impinging on the aesthetic quality of spaces or perceptions of safety.

Children and young people are greatly influenced by the environments in which they live, play, learn and work. Diverse, stimulating and safe environments enhance development by providing opportunities for recreation, exercise, and learning – providing spaces in urban centres that foster child and youth development is an important area where communities and local government play valuable roles.

In addition, fostering an appreciation of the natural environment among children and young people also helps to ensure its protection and enhancement for future generations.

From the Sustainable Development for New Zealand – Programme of Action (2003)

The City of Melbourne has a culturally, linguistically and religiously rich population.

According to the 2001 Census, around 38 per cent of the city’s population was born overseas. Approximately 30 per cent was born in a non-English speaking country. There are more than 180 languages spoken in metropolitan Melbourne with around 10 per cent of the population speaking a language other than English at home. More than 100 religions and faiths are practised or followed by Melbourne residents.

With people form all over the world living in or visiting the City … [Council is committed to] better understanding this diversity when planning for the future … and capturing these many viewpoints and perspectives that exist within the municipality.

From Growing Through Difference Multicultural Strategy
4.23 Improve personal safety in city spaces.

Personal safety is a prerequisite for peoples’ desire to participate in the life of public places. It has two aspects: actual safety and perceived safety. Most people are instinctively on the alert for hazards in their environment. People are particularly adept at recognising the signs of ‘no go’ areas: the unchecked spread of graffiti, uncollected refuse, insufficient lighting, dirty pavements, lack of legitimate users, vacant shop fronts or low-rent tenancies. In certain combinations, these can trigger anxiety and prompt a brisk retreat to less threatening surroundings. The presence or absence of other people can also have mixed effects. On the one hand, a deserted space in the middle of an otherwise bustling city can be intensely forbidding. We are most comfortable in the presence of other people. Conversely, crowds can also seem threatening to different members of the community at different times.

It is often difficult to assess whether a safety problem is caused by social factors, the physical deficiencies of a space, or a combination of the two. Adopting measures for addressing safety, however, can be relatively simple and can do much to improve a perceived sense of security as well as actual safety in the public environment.

The importance of safety – both perceived and actual – is emphasised as a necessary condition if walking is to be encouraged as a principal mode of movement. It is also a key to attracting families with children. Quite simply, safety is to be improved in places where people go about their daily lives – neighbourhoods, local shopping areas and transport hubs, entertainment precincts, and on transport between these public places. Both residents and businesses consider that mixed use offers security – it is linked to the enhanced natural surveillance from the number of people activities attracts diverse users over extended hours and this contributes to safety. Personal safety is also supported access to ‘escape routes’ and alternative pathways, and overlooking by other activities (i.e. a ‘silent police’ function).

Another dimension of personal safety is the protection of pedestrians from motor vehicles. Road safety can be improved, firstly by reducing traffic speed via traffic calming devices, narrowing movement corridors, or more creative, socially-oriented techniques (see Section 4.43). Interestingly, kerbside parking acts as a buffer between pedestrians and the traffic corridor and a source of ‘friction’ that also reduces vehicle speeds.

Attracting more pedestrians to a street discourages crime and helps people feel safer. Thus a shift from car use to walking and public transport can address both real and perceived safety; both crime prevention and accident prevention.

STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

- Analyse the information from safety audits of public thoroughfares and open spaces to identify perceived risks as well as actual hazards, and use applicable measures or techniques to rectify.
- Encourage passive surveillance of streets and other public places. Ensure ground floor uses to buildings edging public space are active or involve some regular inhabitation, and that ground floor interiors and other building frontages at and above ground level contain frequent, transparent openings. Promote re-use and refurbishment of the upper floors of older central city buildings, including opening up facades to create a visible street presence.
- Minimise opportunities for concealment or entrapment by removing or illuminating alcoves. Maintain unobstructed sightlines between and around buildings wherever possible. Avoid paths close to alcoves where potential hiding places are of architectural significance.
- Remove or redesign any physical features that are known to compromise safety and security.
- Improve the quality of lighting in streets, parks and other public spaces. Encourage energy efficient lighting of private sites and buildings to contribute to the safety of adjacent streets and open spaces.
- Ensure the design for new public spaces, streets and inner-city multi-unit housing minimises crime and supports community safety by applying Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)’s Safer by Design Guidelines.
- Provide clear paths along building lines and traversable level changes, and introduce ‘soundmarks’ and auditory features to aid navigation for vision-impaired people.
- Locate pocket parks and plazas alongside busy pedestrian thoroughfares.
- Use street closures, partial closures, roundabouts and other traffic-calming techniques to protect local streets from the impact of through traffic, improve safety for the local community, and contribute to the use of their streets as local, open recreation spaces.
- Ensure that public spaces are well maintained and free of graffiti. Monitor their condition regularly. Repair damaged or defaced elements quickly.
4.24 Give people more opportunities to pause.

Melbourne is famous for its broad leafy streets and elegant parks. However, the city is less well-endowed with public spaces that encourage people to pause as they go about their daily routines. Many streets have healthy levels of foot traffic, and restaurant and alfresco dining abounds, but there are not enough freely accessible places for lingering and simply watching the world go by. Informal meeting places are equally important. In everyday life, spaces encourage citizens to become both performer and spectator in the spontaneous display that fills parks, gardens, promenades and pedestrian-friendly streets.

Kerbside cafés commonly provide a space for social interaction and the opportunity to withdraw from pedestrian movement in the street and rest. However, while they make a valuable contribution to the social and cultural identity of the city and contribute significantly to its economic prosperity and sustainability, this ‘appropriation’ of public space for private uses may need to be reviewed and balanced by more opportunities for public seating.

Informal meeting places are required to support the increasing density of housing, business and retail occupation within the city centre, and there is corresponding pressure for more universally accessible, sheltered, well-conceived and varied public spaces. All people must feel welcome in the city and benefit from various forms and durations of respite without having to spend.

The kerbside bench is therefore a well-established and essential component of the city’s street furniture. In many locations, however, it has either been physically replaced, or its use detracted, by the installation of kerbside cafés. The variable range of public furniture users – families and children, students, the elderly (active and infirm), people with disabilities, groups of people or individuals – all benefit from various forms and durations of respite. Opportunities for social interaction are most likely to occur when people slow down and participate in exchanges.

STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

- Analyse the information from surveys of stationary activities in pedestrian behaviour to identify areas where places to pause are absent or inadequate, and install public seating.
- Increase the number and variety of places to pause along busy walking routes including places to sit, perch or lean. Include informal seating opportunities such as steps, ledges and other landscape features as well as purpose-made chairs and benches, protected where possible from the sun, rain and wind. Include movable as well as fixed furniture where practical.
- Improve the quality and distribution of toilet facilities and drinking fountains throughout the city. Provide a range of options for seating, perching and leaning.
- Provide respite areas that cater to families with children, people with disabilities, older people or those simply wishing to pause.
- Develop a ‘schedule’ of areas that could be developed in the longer term as quieter pedestrian thoroughfares and quiet spaces for the general public.
- Pay attention to acoustic issues when designing areas of respite, including environmental/ambient noise reduction, creation of interesting ‘soundmarks’ and variety in soundscapes, and enhancement of the urban environment for vision-impaired people.
- Where private developments open onto public thoroughfares, encourage owners to provide seats and other opportunities for passers-by to stop and rest. Limit the displacement of public seating areas by private café enclosures.

‘Resting is an integral part of pedestrian activity patterns. The provision of frequent seating opportunities gives people the opportunity to rest in order to be able to enjoy public life and the hustle and bustle of the city … Other factors such as views, shade and comfort, location on important pedestrian links, and orientation to street activities are important in order to provide a good seating ambience. … This reflects the sweeping emphasis on outdoor lifestyle and appreciation of a rich diversity of cultures in Melbourne. It is a sign of a city catering more and more to the local community and people visiting, inviting them to stay longer and participate in the public life of the streets … [and] all the activities people engage in when not walking: standing, sitting, watching, leaning, listening, playing and so on. These are regarded as ‘incidental’ activities that can truly reflect the value of a place to ‘be in’ for its own sake, rather than just move through …’

From Places for People – Melbourne 2004
4.25 Protect diverse recreational uses in the city’s parks and gardens.

The city’s parks and gardens are some of Melbourne’s finest places. The major parklands constitute a series of physically discrete, open green spaces set aside for a variety of public uses. Within the extended street and block patterns of the city, other various small parks, gardens and plazas have been inserted into this general pattern of settlement. These are more the result of haphazard opportunity than from any premeditated plan. These small-scale spaces are integral to the sense of place experienced by local communities, and their uses have developed to provide often complex mixes of passive and active recreation. The interconnected, wider open space network is increasingly important on a local and regional level for social, recreational and environmental reasons.

Melbourne’s parks and gardens support different forms of interaction from those available in city streets. They often provide for complex mixes of passive and active recreation. Traditionally, older people and families with children have been the main users of parks. However with changing employment structures, declining household sizes and the fact that more people are living on less land at higher densities, easily accessible open space has already become a central part of local communities. People claim and need recreational space within easy reach of their neighbourhood.

Diversity applies to many components of open space, including environmental, landscape and cultural values, the layout and design of recreational settings, and the needs and values of the community that uses it. Increasing diversity is influencing people’s expectations for leisure opportunities – indoor and outdoor, public and private. More open spaces and recreation facilities are required that cater for the need of emerging populations or specific target groups – for example, specific cultural groups, parents at home with young children, individual pursuits by younger people, family groups and new programs for older adults, people with low incomes – as well by locality. This includes demands for areas catering for multiple uses as well as specialised facilities; local open spaces for exercise benefits as well as strengthening social fabric; creative and structured play areas as well as free areas allowing children to interact with the natural world; and places catering for people from different ethnic backgrounds as well as public lands designed and managed by working in partnership with local Indigenous communities.

The value of parks is reflected in the social benefits of health and wellbeing, the environmental benefits of protecting conservation and biodiversity values, and economic returns arising either directly or indirectly from the tourism, education, health, transport and leisure industries. This is central to urban liveability, health and wellbeing, and to civic pride.

STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

Protect parks from encroachment of private use, or from too overt a private presence by overlooking residential buildings. Protect open spaces from overshadowing or lack of sunlight from private development.

Remove activity or buildings that alienate park space from inclusive public access and use.

Integrate small parks and gardens and the surrounding streetscape by developing active edges in adjacent properties where possible and reducing or downgrading the vehicular zone.

Improve access to well-located, high quality, universally accessible public open spaces, including:
- formal parks and gardens, public squares or pocket parks planned as parts of subdivision;
- spaces created on an ad hoc basis through occasional public land purchase of isolated areas of inner urban land or demolition within the built-up areas; and
- left-over linear spaces associated with infrastructure including railways and freeways, and along waterways.

Create stronger links with Indigenous communities in the future planning and management of parks and open space.

Develop a network of well-lit, safe walking routes across the city’s parks and gardens encircling the central city to avoid them becoming a barrier to pedestrian movement at night.

Rationalise left-over spaces, linear corridors or isolated pockets of inner urban land to form new public open space links.

Enhance the qualities of local open space for active and passive recreation as well as simply socialising.

Provide appropriate directional, informational and regulatory signage.
4.3 A Walking City

If a city is good for walking in, it is good for most other activities as well. Almost everybody walks at some time or another. Drivers become pedestrians the moment they park their cars. Rail and tram passengers start and finish their journeys on foot. A safe and attractive walking environment, incorporating continually accessible paths of travel, is a prerequisite for encouraging non-motorised journeys.

When people walk, their awareness of their surroundings increases. They are confronted by the variety and unpredictability of life in public places, and they encounter a wide cross-section of fellow city users. Compared with motorists, pedestrians are more likely to participate in street activity. When people are on foot, their encounters can be spontaneous and fleeting. As a result, it is easier for people to stop and become involved with their surroundings. They develop their own ‘conceptual maps’ of the city based on varied journeys and destinations.

Good connections encourage physical activity and reduce car dependence. There is increasingly compelling evidence about the health benefits of increased physical activity in general, and also about the specific health benefits of walking and cycling – especially if these activities are part of everyday life. Connections that are high quality, visible, safe and offer quick, convenient access to facilities increase the likelihood that people will walk to work or anywhere else.

Part of Melbourne’s reputation as a liveable city is based on its high quality, equitably accessible pedestrian environments. Its streets and lanes are generally pleasant to walk through, but the best thoroughfares are also attractive destinations in their own right. They invite people to linger, and they provide venues for informal social activity ranging from people-watching to business meetings. The combination of an easily-walked block and street structure, multiple recreational destinations, concentrated seasons of inner city events and festivals, together with a relatively mild climate, have established the streets of inner Melbourne as the setting for a richly walked city.

Accessing the city is increasingly a 24 hour, 7 day a week phenomenon. A new recreational base of restaurants and cultural venues, together with inner city living, support night-time and weekend activities during periods that were previously relatively inactive, and leads to a livelier and safer city at night.

Because the benefits of walking are so diverse, pedestrian and cycle-friendly initiatives are incorporated into many of Council’s policies and strategies addressing sustainable planning. Foremost in this is the need to co-ordinate policies to ensure a consistent approach to promoting all modes of non-motorised movement, to traffic management and to the provision of car parking, by identifying objectives, standard indicators and benchmarks so that all Divisions of Council share common goals.

The provision of safe, legible and easily accessed streets and public spaces also helps people with difficulties, homeless people and people with little disposable income to enjoy the city, in places meant for everyone.

A walking city will have:

- balanced provision for pedestrians, cyclists, motorists and public transport;
- a supportive public transport environment;
- increased connectivity within the city’s network of pathways;
- improved street edges and activities; and
- waterways supporting access and recreational uses.

The benefits of walking are clear and well documented. Walking is healthy, fun and virtually cost free. It also results in proven benefits for economic activity and social interaction within the community and is one of the easiest and most efficient ways of making short trips. …On paper therefore, walking appears to be an activity that is relatively easy to promote and encourage. …Creating a walking culture will help overcome psychological barriers to walking and promote a more sustainable future.

From Making London a Walkable City
4.31 Balance the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, motorists and public transport.

Throughout Melbourne, streets accommodate multiple modes of transport and perform multifunctional roles – carrying through traffic, local traffic and accessing abutting properties. A mixture of cars and pedestrians, bicycles and trams is a source of colour and vitality. This mixture also has practical benefits by enabling different modes to operate concurrently and by supporting interchanges between modes. It is seldom desirable to devote a whole thoroughfare to a single mode. Most walking involves relatively short trips and many of them, these are either self-contained or learned with other forms of transport, such as bicycle, car, bus, tram or train.

However, space is limited in most streets. Various forms of movement compete with one another and with amenities such as street trees, parking or kerbside cafes. Competition occurs in other ways as well. Clearways and traffic signal cycles timed to maximise vehicle capacities frequently degrade the amenity of strip shopping centres and reduce pedestrian and cyclist convenience. The effects of changing tram infrastructure (notably the introduction of tram superstops) have also had a significant impact on other, shared uses of the street.

Melbourne 2030’s targets for reduced car use and increased use of public transport, walking and cycling rely heavily on areas like the central and inner city to compensate for others less well-served by public transport where the potential for change is limited. Melbourne’s fine-grained mix of land uses minimises travel distances between many destinations, with the result that numerous trips are made by walking and cycling rather than motor vehicle, particularly when teamed with small-scale design conditions that support safety and connectivity. Improving cycling links and facilities throughout Melbourne has led to dramatic increases in bicycle use on some routes. The stronger the separation between bicycles and cars, the more people will cycle, but much more needs to be done.

Often it is not simply the space assigned to each activity that matters, but the overall character that results from a particular combination of cars and pedestrians, movement and stationary activities. Finding the right balance among all these functions is essential if Melbourne is to realise the full potential of streets as public places.

STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

Ensure that improvements to streets take account of their role as social space, not just their role as an efficient means of vehicle movement and distribution.

Increase the number and status of pedestrian- and cycle-oriented routes within the city’s street hierarchy. Ensure that even the most important arterial vehicular streets also provide for universal access.

Dedicate more of the public right-of-way to pedestrians. Use streetscape design and traffic management techniques to reduce vehicle speeds, discourage through traffic and improve safety in local streets and in other thoroughfares which have been assigned a pedestrian orientation.

Improve bicycle access along on-street routes through:
- dedicated on-street bicycle lanes or wide kerbside lanes wherever possible;
- smooth pavement surfaces on bike lanes;
- advanced start lines and storage boxes at signalised intersections; and
- traffic signal operations to favour cyclists.

Ensure that cycle provision meets all relevant standards or local requirements for pavement surfaces, gradients, lighting, signage and bicycle parking. Implement traffic campaigns to increase motorist awareness.

Improve the quality of pedestrian/tram interchanges within streets, ensuring the safety of both boarding and alighting passengers as well as pedestrian passers-by.

Improve the layout of irregular intersections around the perimeter of the Hoddle Grid. Reconfigure these areas to provide clearer, more direct pedestrian connections. Develop residual spaces as pocket parks or to provide sites for distinctively shaped buildings.

Introduce children to the habit of walking through community initiatives such as the ‘walking school bus’.

Develop a comprehensive city signage system that serves the particular needs of pedestrians. Include regulatory information and other devices to manage skateboarding and rollerblading on pedestrian thoroughfares.

Provide maps, guides and other detailed information on favoured walking routes. Tailor this information to individual neighbourhoods and user groups. Include points of interest as well as times, distances and directions.
4.32 Develop a supportive public transport environment.

Walking, cycling and public transport are inseparable components of sustainable urban development. Public transport supplies the majority of Melbourne’s foot traffic, bringing workers and shoppers into the central city. Public transit also removes countless vehicles from the city’s streets, enabling the development of attractive people-friendly spaces. Public transport is also important for people with low incomes; improvements in design and infrastructure must therefore not adversely impact on affordability.

The physical conditions that can encourage people to change their mode of transport – at least for predominantly local trips – are a combination of sensitive public space design and relative proximity of activities and destinations. Transit stops themselves should create a safe and pleasant environment that encourages people to use public transport. Melbourne’s tramsways are strongly attached to people’s perceptions of the city and play an important role in its ‘typical’ retail strips. With a few exceptions, the city’s tram routes follow its street systems. The key issue is integrating trams and pedestrians within the street’s cross-section. While the introduction of the tram superstop has been designed to provide for disabled access, its limited access points result in pedestrian congestion at busy stops, and its single-function use for waiting, seating and leaning for tram passengers precludes its wider general use, particularly its traditional role in providing a mid-street safety zone.

Railway stations have a local centre function of social and economic value beyond rail travel itself. Where rail infrastructure such as overpasses, viaducts or at-grade street crossings intersect with the city’s street and road systems, they can function as local landmarks or, occasionally, as landmarks of a more significant regional nature.

More indirectly, private development can contribute to the quality of public transport through providing active frontages near tram or bus stops to provide passive surveillance, and incorporating weather protection over footpaths at tram and bus stops to eliminate the need for separate shelters that could otherwise intrude into valuable footpath space.

The quantity and distribution of car parking has a major effect on the city’s pedestrian environment. On one hand, carefully placed parking facilities on the edge of the central city can encourage walking and support public transport within the core. However, providing parking limits development density by reducing real land use densities and degrading the quality of the environment. Increasing the number of car parks entices more motorists into the city. This reinforces a car-oriented culture, and makes it more difficult to achieve a good walking environment and a well-patronised public transport system. Conversely, access to car parks should allow for sharing of spaces between different user groups. The more widely parking is shared, the more each space can be used, particularly given the differing peak requirements.

All these issues need to be addressed through urban design in the quest to support a dramatic increase in the proportion of trips made using public transport, walking and cycling.

STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

- Integrate transit stops into the streetscape, ensuring the safety and amenity of transport users and pedestrian passers-by. Incorporate clear signage for access and egress. Ensure DDA compliance by eliminating trip hazards, uneven paving treatments and changes in level, and addressing all other aspects that affect access for all abilities.

- Work with Yarra Trams to provide convenient street crossings, shade from canopy trees, public lighting, and real-time travel information. Where practical, suspend overhead wires from buildings to reduce the number of poles in footpaths.

- Include other amenities at bus and tram stops such as protective canopies and seating, public phones, bins, ashtrays and local information panels.

- Improve the quality and security of public space around major transit interchanges. Incorporate buildings or facilities that offer additional amenity and safety to transport users, accessible where possible for both day and night use. Cultivate a well-presented public image and high levels of activity.

- Increase the number and improve the condition of fully accessible, at-grade pedestrian rail crossings to ensure that railways do not become barriers between one part of the city and another.

- Design rail bridges, overpasses and other rail structures to act as local landmarks, maintain them in good condition and keep them free of commercial clutter. Encourage public transport authorities to upgrade back-of-house rail corridor or reserve spaces.

- Incorporate strategies that discourage graffiti along rail corridors and at transit shelters and stations.

- Halt or limit the growth in central city parking spaces. Promote more efficient use of existing public and private parking facilities (e.g. via shared day/night occupation).

- Balance the corporate desire to brand privately-owned transport services with the need to create a visually coherent public domain. As far as possible, standardise the style, format and content of advisory, regulatory and marketing information so that users perceive a seamless system. Limit advertising and other commercial promotions on rolling stock and infrastructure.

The Victorian Government’s Mode Share Target for Public Transport Use of 40 per cent by 2020 calls for:

- a reduction in private vehicle travel of one per cent per year;
- an increase in commercial vehicle travel of two per cent per year;
- an increase in public transport patronage of five per cent per year; and
- a combined increase in walking and cycling trips of three per cent per year.
4.33 Increase connectivity within the city’s network of pathways.

Melbourne’s street patterns provide an excellent basis for walking. The city centre is compact and clearly defined. The simple grids assist orientation, and provide a choice of paths. The Hoddle grid’s most characteristic feature is the sequence of alternating east-west oriented wide and narrow streets. As a result, pedestrians are never more than a short city block from the intimately scaled ‘little’ streets where walking dominates and there are abundant, narrow commercial and residential frontages.

In the north-south direction, permeability depends on Melbourne’s arcades and laneways. As these routes were added to the original street grid in a series of ad hoc private subdivisions, there is no regularity in their layout. Parts of the city are honeycombed with these routes, while other areas remain relatively impermeable. Until Council began a vigorous defence of the city’s lanes and alleys, there was a tendency for them to disappear beneath the footprints of larger building developments which aggregated large land parcels that were formerly part of the centre’s finely-grained and varied land subdivision pattern (see also Section 4.34). With the increase in inner city living, these smaller access networks now have the additional requirement to provide user-friendly and safe thresholds for entry to many businesses and residences.

Walking connections between the central city and the inner neighbourhoods have become more significant with the spread of commercial and cultural facilities beyond the traditional city core, and with the city’s expanded residential community. However pedestrian connections tend to be more disjointed around the perimeter of the Hoddle grid. The eastern parklands and institutional precincts separate adjacent street patterns, and create gaps in the city’s path network (even though many of the formal gardens, such as Fitzroy, Carlton and Flagstaff gardens were also originally designed as part of a pedestrian system leading between various points of intersection with surrounding streets).

Gaps in the network beyond the city centre have largely arisen from historic decisions or changing needs. These include: important open space links that have never been established (such as along some parts of the Yarra and Maribyrnong rivers); existing open space areas that have been severed by road or rail projects; and potential links between open space areas that have never been properly established.

Cyclists also require convenient connecting routes, although longer routes through less active areas are more acceptable for cyclists than for pedestrians, and cycling in confined busy spaces is to be avoided.

To provide connections that simply allow through-access for pedestrians is insufficient – there must also be attention to the quality of those connections if they are to attract use. In summary, an appropriately interconnected street, road and trail network, allied with good-quality public space and landscape design, provides conditions that encourage walking and cycling for local and wider trips, and leads to health benefits.
STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

City centre:
Improve the legibility and appearance of pedestrian routes within the city centre, from principal streets to the range of minor pathways, lanes and alleys.

Retain arcades and laneways (wherever possible in Council’s ownership) to perpetuate the city’s characteristic mix of built form and public access patterns. Promote longer opening hours when these routes are enclosed and in private ownership.

Connect north-south lanes and walkways with mid-block pedestrian crossings. Create new through-block connections at ground level in areas of low permeability.

Ensure that redevelopment of large sites contributes to a fine-grained network of public pathways interconnected with surrounding streets and lanes.

Program traffic lights to give more priority to pedestrians through longer crossing times and shorter waits.

Wider city:
Provide direct, legible pedestrian routes through institutional precincts, ensuring these connect with surrounding rights-of-way or other destinations.

Conserve and manage the existing avenues in parks and gardens to support the cross-links. Designate safe paths through city parks for use after dark.

Improve pedestrian access across rail corridors and boulevards, and develop strategies for crossing other major vehicle barriers such as Kings Way and City Road.

Work with VicRoads and Bicycle Victoria to fill gaps in Melbourne’s Principal Bicycle Network (PBN – which primarily includes on-road arterial routes catering to commuter cyclists), and with Parks Victoria and adjacent municipalities to fill gaps in the Metropolitan Trail Network (MTN – which includes on- and off-road recreational paths).
4.34 Improve street edges and activities to support their public role.

Streets are not just simple corridors of space. They divide into parallel activity zones where people and activities cluster predominantly along the interface between buildings and open space. Vehicles may dominate the centre of a street, but its layered edges should cater primarily for pedestrians. Walkable streets have plenty of openings and other human-scale features at ground level, such as display windows and ground floor interiors revealed through entrances that attract the interest of passers-by and encourage exchange between public and private domains. This also contributes ‘eyes-on-the-street’, enhancing personal safety by providing passive surveillance over the adjacent public space.

Council’s investment in amenities such as trees, lighting, high-quality furniture and bluestone paving have greatly improved the city pavements and enhanced the status of pedestrians. Implementing the two key Urban Design Policies under the Melbourne Planning Scheme – the Sunlight in Public Spaces and Active Edges policies – has also been very beneficial. This has resulted in protection of sun and light access to the streets and laneways; the provision of physical details well-suited to peoples’ visual range; and a scale of buildings easily related to the human figure. Ground floor facades have a far greater emotional impact on us than our perception of the rest of the building or the street – the latter we experience with greater distance and therefore correspondingly lower intensity. This is what Gehl refers to as ‘close encounter architecture’.45

However areas still exist in Melbourne that pose ‘mental challenges’ to circulation. These include: poorly related ‘ground’ levels; exposure to winds, turbulence, heavy traffic noise and fumes; absence of shelter; inconsistent attention to finishes, street furniture, and other design elements that support walking; over-provision for use of cars; and barriers including large buildings and busy roads with widely spaced signalised pedestrian crossings. The experience of walking through the city is also not always rewarding at major street intersections. Melbourne’s traffic lights conspicuously favour vehicles. The lack of mid-block crossings over the principal streets or little streets also limits the effectiveness of the laneway network. Crossing the street can be especially protracted around the perimeter of the Hoddle grid where the different street grids meet in relatively complex intersections.

The City’s ‘standard approach’ of low-key but highly effective streetscape improvements has been implemented widely throughout the municipality. The ‘public space’ in road reserves can be successfully used to support this, and should be developed to a similarly high standard, especially with seating. Here again, universal access, visibility and safety are to be ensured, and the spaces designed wherever possible to cater for diverse recreational activities (including different uses in different spaces). Adjoining buildings should provide active frontages onto these spaces, accommodate complementary uses, avoid any overshadowing, provide overlooking windows at and above ground floor to support passive surveillance, and exhibit high quality architecture.

On-street parking is inherently able to be shared between multiple user groups. Its usual short stay nature contributes to pedestrian amenity and personal safety by helping to generate activity in streets. It also supports adjoining land uses and encourages buildings and new developments to address the street as a pedestrian space.

The combined concepts of mixed use and adaptability to encourage different users at different times has underpinned the development and regeneration of many successful streetscapes and entire cities. Melbourne benefits greatly from the important characteristics identified by Jacobs (1961) including: short city blocks for ease of access and movement; small block sizes providing human scale and encouraging street life; a mixture of building types, ages, condition and cost to allow for pockets of diverse enterprises, and relatively high densities to support varied activities in a compact area.46 This is precisely the character and form of Melbourne’s main streets, ‘little streets’ and laneways.
STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

Create generous pedestrian zones on both sides of the street wherever possible, focusing on the more valuable sunny south side where space is limited. Place the best materials and the most intricate details at the edges of streets where people will notice them, building on the preference of people for staying at the edges of spaces. Ensure that building frontages contain a high proportion of openings at ground and first floor levels.

Use streetscape design to differentiate between movement spaces and ‘exchange spaces’.

Ensure that cafes complement their local urban character, heritage context and other significant elements such as trees, public art and city decorations. Integrate existing verandahs and street trees into the siting and layout of cafes to create a comfortable environment for patrons.

Reduce physical and visual ‘clutter’ in streets and public places.

Improve the quality of night illumination along pedestrian pavements (without relying solely on lighting to provide a perception of safety). Ensure that street lighting extends into side streets and lanes, and that building forecourts and the undersides of verandas are well lit, while minimising light spillage and/or wastage.

Encourage private development generally to contribute to the quality, vitality, containment and activity of public spaces, especially city streets.

Require high-rise residential or commercial buildings to provide retail, small offices and other uses at street level to activate the street frontage and provide residential services. Where active frontages to pedestrian routes are not, at present, likely to support viable tenancies, make provision for future conversion to active use through the design of the building (i.e. plan for future scenarios, not just for the way things are now).

Encourage private landowners to develop their private realm to enrich the quality of the street or public place. Remove all visually impermeable shutters or roller doors, and promote extensive, frequently changing display windows along retail frontages, preferably illuminated with low wattage supply outside business hours.

Reinforce the three-dimensional enclosure of the street via tree planting scaled appropriately to the street cross-section.

Treat streets according to their hierarchy – the wider streets with greater regularity and the narrower streets with greater idiosyncrasy and informality – and reflect precinct or neighbourhood character.

Support streetscape improvement programs through audits of street safety, accessibility, public space quality and lighting.

Ensure that the location of parking facilities and design of car park facades contributes to, rather than detracts from, the pedestrian environment and street vitality.
4.35 Treat Melbourne’s waterways as pathways

Five waterways are central to Melbourne’s identity: the Yarra River, the Maribyrnong River, Victoria Harbour, Moonee Ponds Creek and Port Phillip Bay. Although the original shorelines have been greatly modified, these water bodies still provide a reminder of the natural features that helped to shape the city. Today, the city’s waterways have become important interactive spaces that complement its streetscapes and public plazas, parks and gardens.

Historically, Melbourne’s waterways were important conduits for people, goods and waste. Because they are continuous and cut across the city’s street grid, the rivers became attractive corridors for main roads and railway lines. The waterways also created a barrier to movement, made worse by the parallel railways and roads. Cross-river connections were concentrated at a few strategic locations which soon became choked with traffic. These bottlenecks combined with infrastructure along the water’s edge to produce a degraded environment that was unattractive or inaccessible to pedestrians.

In Melbourne, this process of isolation and degradation has been quite considerably reversed. The amenity and recreational opportunities offered by urban waterfronts are now well understood. Like many other cities, Melbourne is claiming back its water edges as public space and using them to fill gaps in its open space networks. The city’s substantial western water frontage at Victoria Harbour provides a different form of public open space: a ‘blue park’ that supports a range of land-based (via the public promenade) and water-based recreational uses.

A similar (if less ambitious) transformation is occurring along the Maribyrnong River. Moonee Ponds Creek has benefited least from these trends, and has also suffered from the construction of City Link.

STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

Create continuous, fully accessible public walkways and cycle paths along rivers. Integrate these routes with the city-wide network of open space corridors, including:

- the Metropolitan Trail Network and Principal Bicycle Network; and
- linear parks and systems of public access linking existing parks into the wider metropolitan park system.

Build more footbridges across the Yarra River to link major attractions and destinations on the north and south banks.

Improve pedestrian connections between waterfronts and inland amenities including parks and neighbourhoods.

Work with key stakeholders to develop appropriate shore-based infrastructure to support development and growth of water-based sport and recreation and water-based public transport.

Develop the Maribyrnong River and Moonee Ponds Creek as wildlife habitats and public recreational resources in collaboration with the cities of Maribyrnong, Moonee Valley and Moreland.
4.4 A Creative City

Cities are the engines of culture. Ideas, values and forms of social organisation are more complex in urban cultures. Traditionally, the term ‘culture’ has been used in public dialogue as a slightly expanded notion of ‘the arts’ and/or the promotion of contemporary arts and cultural activities that demonstrate artistic excellence and innovation. On another level, culture often refers to ‘multi-culturalism’. In this respect, Melbourne has an important strategic asset – while the city is characterised by great ethnic and social diversity, it is also more socially integrated than many other large cities. The variety and accessibility of different social groups offer incentives to participate in the city’s rich urban life and celebrate its unusual blend of cohesion and diversity. ‘In a world where difference often leads to conflict, the arts help us appreciate the value of diverse perspectives.’

On another level again, culture refers to some of the intangible qualities of the city and the values and aspirations of its society as a whole. These may include participation, engagement and democracy; tolerance, compassion and inclusion; peace, safety and security; health, wellbeing and vitality; creativity, imagination and innovation. A culturally vital society is one in which public debate, discourse and discussion engages communities.

Urban design has a strong role to play in investing in the lifestyle amenities that people really want and use often, as opposed to using purely financial incentives to attract and retain people. What residents and workers look for in these creative communities is abundant high-quality services and experiences, and they make ‘quality of life’ demands. Given today’s more portable work practices and flexible schedules, people want ready access to recreation on a ‘just-in-time’ basis, and increasingly act like visitors in their own city. Nightlife is considered a vital component of the creative city’s lifestyle and amenity mix.

Recent case studies throughout the United States, Europe and other countries have demonstrated that the greatest level of economic activity, growth and development occurs in places that are tolerant, diverse and open to creativity. These ‘creative centres’ are succeeding largely because creative people want to live there, and therefore they yield tangible creative economic dividends. There is increasing evidence that cities need a people climate even more than they need a business climate. This extends to the widest possible cross-section of people, in which peculiarity, individualism and even eccentricity is embraced just as strongly as the more traditional notion of city worker or city resident. This broader acceptance creates a climate oriented to young people, and in which middle aged and older people can also enjoy stimulating, dynamic places with high levels of cultural interplay.

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A creative city will have:
- art and design integrated into buildings and open spaces;
- animated public spaces;
- cultural facilities reinforcing urban structure; and
- a vibrant creative economy.

Cities are also centres of innovation where communities thrive on adaptation and experimentation. Melbourne ranks highly as a creative city and a recognised centre of innovative design in food, fashion, architecture and urbanism. It is renowned for its galleries, museums and performance venues as well as its calendar of sporting, cultural and entertainment events. Council has many programs in place that support creative thinking and production, including awards, small business development grants and extensive arts funding programs. Melbourne is also well-placed to participate in the new ‘knowledge economy’ via its universities and high-tech industries.
4.41 Integrate art and design into buildings and open spaces.

Melbourne’s creative achievements compare favourably with those of other major cities around the world. The city’s ambitious goals and international perspective encourage local excellence. This outlook also invites leading artists and designers from many cultures to live and work in Melbourne. Attracting and rewarding recognised exponents of art and design is one way to promote contemporary culture. Another is to nurture emerging talent, and support risk-taking. The second strategy is more ground-breaking for public agencies. Outcomes may be more controversial, but the value of the work lies in its innovation. Emerging talent represents the future of art and design and is likely to be an important source of innovation. If Melbourne is to be a centre for cultural production, the city must support both kinds of creative endeavour: uncertain explorations as well as recognised excellence.

The City of Melbourne currently commits around four per cent of its total operating expenditure on the arts in its own right, but a much greater net effect can be achieved by providing a role for artists to work with urban designers and architects from the inception of a project and participate directly in the design process. In some cases, public space itself may be a work of art (e.g. Webb Bridge at Docklands). Public spaces may also be a “container” for works of art (e.g. Federation Bells at Birrarung Marr), but increasingly art is being built into city buildings and public spaces.

The inclusiveness of Council’s arts grants programs ensures there is broad cultural representation. A primary goal is to build on its leadership in Indigenous arts and culture, ensuring the contribution of Indigenous communities is reflected in the fabric of the city: in the physical landscape (through urban design, signage, memorials and public art, etc) and through participation in both special and mainstream festivals and events.
STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

Encourage cultural expression through art and design.

Sponsor emerging talent as well as celebrated exponents of contemporary art and design.

Enable the inclusion of contemporary artworks in developments across the city as an integral component of public buildings, spaces and activities. Promote awareness of art as a process and a lifestyle and not merely a performance or an artefact.

Encourage creative collaborations between different design disciplines. Ensure that artists are involved from the earliest possible stage to participate in the conceptual design process.

Identify and pursue projects where creative risks can be taken, without damaging results in case of failure.

Recognise, promote and protect the intrinsic artistic merit of various types of designs – including works of engineering, architecture, landscape architecture and industrial design – as well as works of ‘Art’.

Develop distinctive examples of how to transform the image and use of spaces that are usually considered to have little potential as public space, including ambient noise reduction and artistic interventions.

Encourage the long-term benefits of the participation of children in the arts and place-making programs.
4.42 Animate public spaces.

‘Animation’ refers to measures (involving both physical design and applied processes) that invite and encourage the active, intensive and cyclical use of a city’s public environment. In terms of physical design, there are many ways of providing ‘attractors’ to public space, including permanent and temporary installations, public art, and facilities that support 24-hour activities.

An important initiative, for example, is the laneway commissions program that temporarily transforms city lanes into contemporary art spaces. This offers challenging opportunities for local artists to create their works around a specific location, taking the lane’s function, usage pattern and history into account. The installations are introduced at intervals and removed after a few months. They invite people to visit locations in the city otherwise rarely visited, and thus contributes to a greater awareness of the city’s often ‘hidden’ character.

The City’s public furniture has introduced another layer of animation to public spaces. The design of the newspaper and magazine pillar and kiosk, the fruit-vending stall, the flower kiosk, information hub and the retractable kerbside café canopy all address the practical requirements of these operations, but also contribute greatly to anchoring people in streets and other places, and further stimulate their use and activity levels.

Finally, animation of public spaces can extend into areas traditionally regarded as requiring purely functional solutions to ubiquitous problems. One example is the increasingly popular shift towards transforming streets into enriching people-oriented environments to resolve areas blighted by previously poor traffic management systems (refer opposite).

In terms of ‘superimposed’ animation, Melbourne’s calendar includes over 8,000 cultural, sporting and social events. The city hosts large and small events at a variety of venues throughout the municipality. Each event attracts a specific audience, but Melbourne’s culture is enriched when these spectacles come into contact with the wider public. Minor events can also make a strong impression within their own local areas or neighbourhoods. The annual cycle of activity gives city life a cadence which is noticed and enjoyed by all Melburnians and visitors to the city.

Effective urban design therefore continues long after a new public space is built and occupied. Animation is as much about expressing unconscious values in the shaping and design of public places as it is about consciously applying strategies to activate spaces, once the ‘public stages’ of a city are in place. No matter how well-planned places are, they need constant monitoring and stimulus if they are to retain their value and realise their full potential. Conversely, animation also extends to exploring opportunities to orchestrate the ‘natural’ use of spaces, allowing them to take on their own life and for people to appreciate these capricious patterns of use.

STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

- Proactively manage public places, addressing all operational issues associated with one-off or recurrent events, and including security and maintenance.
- Develop the role of the ‘public animator’ to include event promotion, arts programming and informal activities such as busking.
- Expand the presence of integrated urban art, installations (permanent and temporary) and interactive landscape in public spaces. Select locations and subjects that engage passers-by and promote spontaneous social interaction.
- Be open to opportunities for public spaces to be used in surprising and innovative ways. Ensure that spontaneously occurring activities are not compromised by orchestrated events. Be alert to the insights that such events, installations and appropriations can generate. Use these observations to continuously improve responsiveness to community needs.
- Promote activities and events that draw attention to Melbourne’s unique cultural assets. Synchronise events with public installations and performances, and use these where possible as the catalysts for other spontaneous activities.

In his various recent publications, David Engwicht calls for wholesale rationalisation of standardised traffic ‘control’ devices and regulatory signage in favour of a much more creative approach. Techniques include:

- introducing ‘non literal’ forms of communication for traffic management (e.g. where vehicle speeds need to be slowed in ‘sensitive areas’ make the streetscape reflect or reveal the land uses on adjacent sides);
- changing the street geometry by installing positive, community-building infrastructure, such as seating areas, planted plots for water management, public art, etc (i.e. make the street look more like an ‘outdoor living room’ and less like a traffic corridor); and
- removing ‘travel space’ cues in what is actually ‘social space’, and creating activity nodes and edges that will build the social life of the street.

The success of employing this creative approach has been conclusively demonstrated in cities throughout the world.
4.43 Use cultural facilities and other public institutions to reinforce urban structure.

Cultural and entertainment venues and academic institutions are important nodes in contemporary cities. The growing prominence of these facilities matches the expanding roles of cultural activity and learning in modern economies. Increasingly, museums, art galleries, theatres and sports stadiums provide a form of ‘symbolic common ground’ for Melbourne’s citizens. They provide some of Melbourne’s most memorable landmarks, and they help visitors and citizens to navigate their way around the city. They also play an important role in attracting outer metropolitan residents to the city and develop the wider social and cultural identities of the capital city for all Victorians.

Melbourne as a University City is expected to undergo increasing growth, fuelled by increasing numbers of international students. The presence of major research universities in the city is also a strong advantage as they play a multi-faceted role that reflect the ‘3T’s’ of creative places – technology, talent and tolerance. Within the extended street and block patterns of the city, these have tended to be – together with hospitals and other institutional precincts – self-contained land parcels. They are generally inwardly-focused layouts of building and spaces which, in contrast to the individual cultural landmarks, are often uninviting and are poorly connected to their surrounding local areas. The value of having students as such a large proportion of the city’s population needs to be embraced by absorbing them into the wider community.

Integrating institutions and other segregated uses can be supported by: extending institutions into the community (e.g. using public spaces for activities related to the specialised function of the institution) to enrich the whole area; bringing the community into the institution (e.g. providing local ‘outreach’ programs, exhibitions, festivals, events, or other initiatives of community interest); and facilitating shared use of space and facilities, both indoor and outdoor, between the sites of institutions and public spaces in other areas or developments.

Social belonging and connectedness between all members of the community will be greatly strengthened by introducing this permeability into the urban structure.

STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

Use investment in cultural activity as a catalyst for wider development and as a stimulus to public life. Link new cultural facilities to ‘supportive’ public spaces, including streets, laneways, buildings and parks that enhance the profile and accessibility of these locations.

Integrate universities and other campus developments with the surrounding urban fabric by using smaller, varied open spaces and internal pathways available to the public that connect key destinations.

Ensure that buildings with a significant public role are exemplary in adding amenity and vitality to surrounding public spaces.

Develop a city-wide strategy for locating new cultural facilities and entertainment venues. Disperse these attractions to activate a larger area of the metropolitan core.

Develop an integrated open space network with specific design elements to reinforce the collective identity of the arts and performance precinct in Southbank.
4.44 Nurture and expand the creative economy.

Creativity has been widely acknowledged as ‘the new development force’. Increasingly, public art and environment are seen as being integral to the cultural enhancement and renewal strategies for cities, which are linked in turn to economic growth. The emergence of the so-called ‘creative class’ arose out of the rapid expansion and technological changes of the late 20th century, where the ‘production spaces’, depending more on manufacturing and natural resources, were replaced by the ‘thinking spaces’ of technology and the ‘consumption spaces’ of culture and entertainment. Businesses and employees of the ‘knowledge society’ demand that cities and towns are also high-quality living areas, where the best possible lifestyle opportunities are available to retain skilled workers who could live in any number of cities, and are looking also for the intangible qualities associated with the ‘buzz’ of cities and their fast exchange of ideas, goods and services.

The ‘creativity’ characteristics of an area include acceptance of social diversity, alternative lifestyles, clusters of specific activities and multiculturalism, mixed with a vibrant street culture, music scene, nightlife and open spaces. Maintaining liveability for the creative workforce is therefore an essential part of sound economic management.

A high quality public realm will support enhanced urban economic performance by attracting more people and activities, encourage greater participation in community and cultural activities, and enhance civic pride and commitment to the community. ‘Quality of life’ is increasingly the basis on which towns and cities compete for inward investment and population growth. Tourism is a key component of Melbourne’s economy and is one of the fastest growing industries. And economic research also shows strong links between regions with young populations and economic prosperity.

Finally, more and more of the city’s laneways have become locations for new economic activity. This is Melbourne’s new central focus for small to medium scale creative enterprises. Sub-sectors such as fashion, ceramics, jewellery, furniture design and the plastic arts have seen substantial growth led by increased consumer demand for distinctive products.

STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

Ensure that factors including (but not limited to) effective transport systems, high environmental quality, good leisure and recreation opportunities, thriving cultural centres, arts and historic heritage, and a distinctive local identity all continue to underwrite urban planning and design throughout inner Melbourne.

Promote arts initiatives to meet a wide range of public objectives including social inclusion, community strengthening, communications and promotion, enhancement of the urban environment and economic development.

Continue to upgrade and maintain the physical form and condition of laneways to support greater diversity of use and increased interface and engagement with the commercial environment.

Increase use of laneways for popular cultural events and to act as ‘drawcards’ to the city.
Good cities achieve a balance between the inevitable processes of change experienced over time and the stable, consistent patterns of physical, social and economic conditions or circumstances that continue to prevail. Council often has responsibility for being responsive to immediate, specific community needs as well as broader scale initiatives to meet strategic or regional needs. This involves defining and managing local desires for stability with more strategic pressures for change.

In Melbourne, a memorable character results from its underlying natural landscape and the built urban form. Both the Municipal Strategic Statement and City Plan 2010 stress the importance of Melbourne’s ‘enduring assets’ in describing the city. Melbourne’s settlement patterns are reflected in its range of heritage areas whose integrity, together with many individual buildings, has been preserved largely intact. These areas of stability are characterised by strong architectural definition of street spaces originally built up to the property line, and during the 19th century elaborate facades were grouped into continuous street frontages. Melbourne’s 20th century architecture broadened the range of styles and scales, but the obvious order of the city’s street grids unites these disparate buildings into a coherent whole, yielding a favourable combination of simple streets and complex buildings. The consistency and quality of public space design, avenue planting and building form represent a well-conserved legacy and are well-suited to the formal grid-based street pattern. Outside the central city, neighbourhoods are typically low-rise residential and mixed use areas serviced by strip centres, largely intact precincts of high heritage value, a narrow fronted rhythm, fine-grain connected street and laneway patterns, and minimal setbacks creating a ‘streetscape wall’. Finally, while the city’s parks and gardens retain the essential form and character of their early settlement designs, they are also part of the city’s contemporary cultural landscape. Throughout the ebb and flow of change, the city’s parks and gardens have always been consciously artificial landscapes – the creations of culture rather than of natural forces.

Successful places also achieve a balance between ‘order and incident’ in that they contain enough regularity to appear coherent or legible, but sufficient variety and distinct parts to sustain interest. In most cases, the public realm provides coherency and order while countless private ventures introduce variation and interest. However, in a few celebrated locations public agencies are responsible for landmark buildings or civic open spaces. Here, the relationship between the public and private components of the city’s fabric is reversed. The two conditions are, however, mutually beneficial. On the one hand, Melbourne’s simple grid and disciplined streetscapes could seem dull and repetitive without the accents and originality of individual buildings. On the other hand, the city could easily degenerate into a confusing collection of ‘accidents’ if not for the unifying influence of streets and public spaces.

Ultimately, a sense of ‘authenticity’ offers real, unique and original experiences: ‘real’ as in a place that has real buildings, real people and real history.61 This can equally apply to established neighbourhoods with historic architecture as to others asserting their identity through genuine, consistent expressions of a new social or ethnic mix. A community’s sense of place derives strongly from a combination of shared and distinctive cultural meanings.
4.51 Connect contemporary urban life with the ideas, values and practices of earlier generations of Melburnians.

The built environment and its artefacts provide one of the most enduring and emphatic records of human development. One way to keep this history relevant to modern life is to create an urban environment which encourages both retrospection and innovation. Melbourne’s citizenship and sense of identity will be strengthened if heritage buildings, sites and other elements play a conspicuous role in the city’s public life, and physical traces of earlier generations of Melburnians are retained – extending from its Traditional Owners to the ethnic and cultural groups that have participated in the urbanisation of the city.

Within the central city, the laneways, arcades and ‘little streets’ form an intricate and historic network that is one of the special, authentic and defining characteristics of Melbourne. Once neglected, the renaissance of the laneways has been achieved through local planning policies and built form, heritage, community safety and environmental controls, and above all, recognising that pedestrian amenity and community participation thrives in those places that tend to be compact, with diverse, small-scale elements in close proximity. The laneway network continues to be maintained, expanded and enriched as a significant determinant of the city’s built form, urban design, circulation system and cultural identity.

Over time, various sub-precincts in the city centre have developed a conspicuous character and identity. These include: the Chinese community in and around Lt Bourke Street, the mercantile zone near Customs House in Flinders Street, clothing trade in Flinders Lane, legal district in William Street, medical profession at the east end of Collins Street and the Greek community in Lonsdale Street. The manner in which these various grouping of activities have positioned (and perpetuated) themselves within the central city has contributed notably to the social and architectural identity of each area. The sum of these qualities still maintains a strong positive presence in the city today.

STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

Retrace and retain physical traces of earlier generations of Melburnians. Ensure that heritage ‘markers’ either overtly or discreetly represent all the people that have been part of Melbourne’s story.

Create ‘signifying places’ that respectfully acknowledge Indigenous Australians, raise awareness and promote positive connections with the wider community, incorporating art works and other design features generated through inclusive collaborations.

Reinforce the basic principle that history continues to unfold, and that this period is a point on the historical continuum. Support inventive reuse of heritage sites so they remain an integral part of modern life. Protect significant features of the city’s recent past including the best representations of contemporary architecture, art and landscape design.

Provide materials that interpret Melbourne’s heritage so that the place in history and role of buildings, sites and artefacts can be understood. Ensure these components retain their social, cultural, physical and/or scientific integrity.

Preserve historic buildings and introduce small-scale improvements to urban fabric to support a return to inner city living and to stimulate local economic revitalisation.

Identify the physical patterns which characterise heritage areas and precincts. Tailor design guidelines to the needs of individual localities.

Strengthen the identity and distinctive character of the city’s precincts. Ensure that urban design standards encouraging particular stable or emergent identities are equally applied in areas that are not designated precincts.

Balance identified heritage issues with an equally strong tradition of critical landscape re-examination, ecologically sustainable design, and the introduction of strong contemporary landscape ideas when developing master plans for parks, gardens and streetscapes.
4.52 Use the public domain to organise the city’s fabric. Encourage the private domain to enable differentiation.

At the risk of simplification, these two conditions can be summarised as follows: while the essentially more stable elements of public space supply uniformity and order, private developments can supply variety and idiosyncrasy to the urban setting (preferably taking account of local heritage assets). Public works tend to be conceived on a large scale, or if they are implemented gradually, they are controlled so that a consistent result can be achieved over a wide area and a long period.

A starting point is the formal symmetry, regularity and grand landscape scale of the boulevards, which represent key organising elements of the city’s fabric. The boulevards lead into the skewed, regular grid of the central city, and between them is a framework of north-south oriented grids, with occasional topographic variation and changes in block dimensions. Across this fabric lie the city’s parklands and waterways. Within the extended street and block patterns of the city, certain self-contained land parcels stand out, including parks, gardens and plazas, and other features of the public domain where public authorities are responsible for coordinating development. In the city centre, the little streets, arcades and laneways make a more lively contribution to the characteristic three-dimensional mix of the city’s built form and public access patterns. At the end of this spatial hierarchy, private buildings and developments usually bring a diverse range of scales, materials, styles and purposes to the urban environment. While also providing a cohesive enclosure for the public realm, they establish their own particular ‘signature’ through architectural style, form, articulation and materials.

STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

Apply a consistent, city-wide approach to the design of streets and other ‘everyday’ public places. Support the current practice of applying consistency and idiosyncrasy, respectively, to larger streets and the more informal ‘little’ streets and laneways.

Develop strong termini for the city’s boulevards – both at the inner termination with the central city, and to create a memorable public landscape at the outer termination by coordinating with neighbouring councils.

Organise major public buildings and focal open spaces as memorable sequences. Allow individuality and distinctiveness to play a role in key locations (e.g. at Federation Square).

In neighbourhoods, seek design references from the local area context.

Demand exemplary design standards for significant developments, landmark buildings and civic open spaces.

Conserve and sustainably manage the strong, regular qualities of spatial enclosure of Melbourne’s boulevards by:

– maintaining their traditional four lines of trees via a sustainable management and replacement program, and ensuring that their cross-section of footpaths, street parking, vehicle movement and public transport corridor provides the best achievable safety scenario; and

– expanding the network to include a western gateway to the City (Footscray Road and/or Dynon Road), creating a strong link as well as providing a positive entry experience from this side of the city.
4.53 Manage the interfaces between areas of stability and areas of transition.

Change is an inevitable process in cities. Fitting an urban area together is important – how stable and new areas mesh is crucial, whether interventions are large (e.g. major building infrastructure, redeveloped industrial precinct) or small (e.g. individual buildings, block developments, new open space). There is a point at which, where a lot of change is happening, it is necessary to fit within an urban structure and wider character as a whole and avoid a ‘collision’ of areas alien to each other.

But differentiation is also important – it’s about finding ways of allowing change without losing what people most value. However, this is not just a case of applying heritage overlays to restrict change – enabling positive change is the critical issue.

There are three main components of transition in Melbourne:
1. the need for more housing for an increasing population;
2. better use of underutilised areas for local amenity; and
3. repairing ‘disjunctions’ in urban fabric, generally at ground level, created through superimposed transport infrastructure.

New residential development is important in order to increase the amount and diversity of housing. However, it must be approached sensitively, largely by using opportunities to redevelop sites and precincts rather than disrupting the rhythm of historically significant streetscapes and character. Support for local character is strongest at the scale of individual neighbourhoods. This is important because urban neighbourhoods, as well as being functional units, provide an important source of ‘identity’ or ‘meaning’ for their residents. They mediate between the individual and the metropolis, making urban life more attractive.

Unused or underutilised areas exist in and around the city, both large and small. For example, in the undercroft spaces below the West Gate Freeway activities other than long-term car parking are possible and highly desirable. Consolidation of these fragmented Crown Land leaseholds could enable development of usable sites (permanent or temporary) for institutional, public open space or private development.

This would also assist in linking currently separated areas of open space, introduction of recreational facilities (e.g. skate park, basketball courts, or other uses as identified through local neighbourhood audits) and an enhanced visual landscape. Most of these spaces have an exposure to streets that would support a variety of adjacent uses, and thereby increase amenity of public space through a large swath of Southbank.

Similar areas are located around the City Link interchange. These are made of up fragments of land between the road alignment and boundaries of properties acquired for the road works, and pockets trapped between off-ramp. It would also be possible to consolidate some of these fragments (possibly with adjoining private properties) to create access to island sites and more usable development parcels to help meet the local demand for more public open space. Any other public lands may offer long-term scope for redevelopment as existing facilities age and the delivery of public services adapts to changing needs.

At a more local level, recently completed road projects such as City Link and Wurundjeri Way have diverted traffic around the central city. This new infrastructure provides an opportunity to ‘re-tune’ priorities within the Hoddle grid and other inner city streets, making changes which will benefit pedestrians.

Put simply, in areas where historic building stock generally sets the urban context, stability needs to prevail. In other areas, opportunities for development may be realised through the City working with developers to encourage and assist in positive, contextually supportive interventions or redevelopment. The key is to provide an approach that balances blending with distinctiveness, and the demands of heritage considerations with modern needs.
STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

Require new development in established areas to respect the legacy of the classical street presentation and built form.

Strengthen the identity and distinctive character of the city’s commercial and cultural precincts. Ensure that urban design standards encouraging particular stable or emergent identities are applied where relevant in other areas.

In areas of change, identify preferred characteristics and demand high design standards.

Improve the appearance of railways and freeways as seen from natural ground level from their surrounding areas.

Take advantage of opportunities for converting surplus poorly used or ‘ornamental’ spaces within the freeway or railway system to accessible, usable pedestrian places – or for buildings, thus releasing other superior sites for open space.

Redevelop freeway undercrofts to support uses other than car parking, including recreation and pedestrian and bicycle access.

Improve the environment around railway stations, wherever possible to create vibrant, active local centres and community focal points.

Stimulate development on residual or redundant land either for permanent or temporary uses.

Preservation of the intrinsic qualities of built heritage usually helps stimulate economic revitalisation. ‘Small-scale improvements’ to an area’s historic urban fabric can generate a market-led return to urban living, supporting existing communities and adding to the local economic base. ‘Older ‘character’ buildings and precincts may have acquired greater economic value in recent years because they fit the smaller business units (or ‘modern workplaces’) of the ‘New Economy’. Older buildings are alsofavoured because they are distinctive, and are often part of a highly differentiated locality.65

From The Value of Urban Design (2005)
4.54 Reinforce the natural patterns within Melbourne’s urban landscape.

Environmental responsiveness is a key way of developing character and identity. Melbourne’s natural terrain is subdued, but natural features account for the origin of the city and represent enduring elements in its urban form.

Because they are relatively subtle, geographic features can disappear with patterns of development that blur the true nature of the underlying patterns of the city’s topography. For example:

• The rail yards at Jolimont and at Spencer Street (formerly Batman’s Hill) were originally man-made through excavation of the ground plane. These areas are again being transformed through gradual building-over of the rail corridors. Air rights are being used to develop new artificial ground planes, coupled with the extension of key east-west and north-south Hoddle grid streets (across the Spencer Street rail corridor to connect with Docklands and across Jolimont to connect with the Sports and Recreation Precinct and major traffic routes east).

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In many cases, these ‘superimposed’ patterns can still be visually understood as variations to the city’s natural topography. However they have the potential to further obscure the underlying natural patterns if extended over significantly larger areas. Therefore urban design has a dual role: to increase the legibility of Melbourne’s natural landscape while taking advantage of the interaction between the city’s natural and constructed geometries. Where tangible aspects such as the underlying landform of the city have been eroded beyond redemption, we increasingly rely on artistic interpretation and intervention to recall original conditions or earlier incarnations.

Melbourne’s boulevards, railways and freeways provide self-contained and continuous routes laid over an underlying landscape of local areas and local features. However, they can also create dramatic experiences of the city, with broad outlooks, transitions, and senses of orientation, entry and arrival. Somewhat ironically, this provides people with a visual experience of the city and its setting unobtainable from within the city’s street system. While they assist in revealing the underlying subtle topography and patterns of parks and waterways, poorly conceived areas have usually resulted where they intersect with each other or with major landscape features.

STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

- Reinstate where possible components of the region’s subtle topography that has been modified through urban developments (such as levelling of hills and undulations and construction of artificial ground planes) by expressing through new features – constructed or natural.

- Reinforce the legibility of Melbourne’s natural landscape while taking advantage of the interaction between the city’s natural and constructed geometries.

- Use built form and open space to interpret natural features.

- Repair ‘disjunctions’ where major elevated or below-ground transport corridors intersect with surface streets (see also Section 4.53).

- Amplify the effects of seasonal variations in weather and vegetation.

- Introduce recordings of major natural events in the city’s history (floods, droughts, fires, etc) into public spaces.

- Support certain artificially reinforced physical patterns within the central city, for example, the two hill pattern of concentrated, high-rise office buildings in the east and west ends of the central city.
4.55 Enhance the unique roles of arcades and laneways.

Balance of order and incident in the City’s streets is an underlying contributor to the rhythm of Melbourne’s urban form. Melbourne’s main streets have a characteristic physical structure and consistent formal qualities that stem from the historical layout of the city. The little streets, lanes and arcades within the city blocks, however, form a set of spaces that diversifies and enriches the city while retaining the formal structure of the grid. In so doing, they make a lively contribution to the three-dimensional mix of the city’s built form and public access patterns. They create opportunities for innovation, surprise and unique approaches to both permanent and transitory design. Laneways also offer much more than utilitarian functions and are said to be the ‘lifeblood’ of the city – this indicates the deep emotional attachment to laneways in the public eye of Melburnians.

The move to preserve and restore the laneway network has coincided with the rediscovery of the inner city as a place to live. Lanes and arcades support sustainable inner city development, by allowing retention of heritage streetscapes to coincide with increased residential density and better use of inner city amenities. A characteristic mix might be as follows: former office, factory and warehouse buildings now housing innovative small businesses, boutique shops, niche-market hotels, small galleries, design studios, intimate cafes, bars and restaurants; upper floors given over to apartments, lofts, offices and studios.

Lanes provide an intimately scaled setting for people, buildings and activities – and more importantly the exchanges between these elements. The requirements for façade design and articulation become more demanding at this scale, and call for interesting and varied experiences for passers-by, with openings where possible so that activities inside buildings and outside in public space are connected visually and thus can enrich and inspire each other.

A future strategy for laneways should build on three distinct, but interrelated, directions:

1. Continuing to upgrade and maintain the physical form and condition (based on identifying their propensity for physical change).
2. Aligning this with an economic development strategy for the creative industries contained in them.
3. Fostering further extensions of the laneways commission program – for permanent as well as temporary installations.

STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

Maintain lanes in their traditional, open physical form. Reconcile ‘front door’ and ‘back door’ activities in the roles of lanes and their relationship to the larger street system.

Adopt the following initiatives (as much as is possible) when redeveloping lanes, alleys and ‘places’:

– enable access 24 hours, with closures to vehicle and service vehicle access during high-use periods;
– retain, repair and/or highlight heritage features;
– provide through connections to little and main streets and/or links to popular destinations;
– enable safe, secure and universally accessible pedestrian routes; and
– encourage renewed, micro-scale street-level activity.

Require arcades and other semi-public thoroughfares to be open and safe for extended hours.

Provide eye-catching architectural detail at ground level. Ensure the scale and design of adjacent building facades contributes positively to the role, amenity, function and character of each laneway as a public space in its own right.

'Sometimes stylish, always intimate and often secretive, a labyrinth of lanes, alleys, little streets and arcades burrows through the chunky city blocks. Some are almost forgotten and hint at a bygone era of lost craftsmanship and opulence, while others are newly renovated and packed with workers and residents alike … But whatever the state of these thoroughfares, each has its own character waiting to be discovered and renewal, regeneration and rebirth are constant themes.'

Mark Ellis from ‘Arcades, Lanes and Little Streets’
4.6 A City that Realises its Potential through Leadership, Relationships and Partnerships

Melbourne 2030 underlines the particular relationship between the City of Melbourne as the strategic centre for the metropolis and the City as a local place at the centre of the larger city. In state, federal and global terms, it is the formal representative of metropolitan Melbourne as the State Capital, one of Australia’s principal cities, and as a world city connected to major international cities. At the local scale, it is a collection of distinctive local districts each with their own dynamic, local issues and their own closely associated residential and working populations.

Public investment is the catalyst for many developments across both local and wider contexts, and strategic alliances including public-private partnerships are necessary for the implementation of large projects. The public sector is best placed to play a leading role in promoting sustainable urban development because it makes a longer-term commitment to buildings and spaces than most commercial organisations. The City of Melbourne has a culture of placing design at the forefront of civic decision-making. Many projects that have a high public profile can provide benchmarks by conforming to higher performance standards, as well as ‘raising the bar’ as new technologies, materials or processes come to light. They provide an opportunity to adapt recognised international best-practice to suit local conditions. Following this lead, the City could become a nationally recognised source of information on sustainable urban design.

Good governance and development of the city also requires linking community and government through partnerships that integrate physical and social planning. Many actions need to be undertaken by the Victorian Government and the City of Melbourne – acting individually, jointly or in partnership with developers and local institutions – to coordinate future infrastructure and services to support population growth, particularly in areas such as housing and public health. This includes advocating for community needs, identifying local needs and developing innovative responses, and recognising as needs change over time.

In many (in fact increasing) circumstances, combining public interest with private initiative will enhance the economic advantages of urban design and generate wider spin-off benefits, contributing to the wellbeing of the community as a whole. It provides a way of harnessing the shorter-term financial considerations of private development with the longer-term, broader policy goals of the public sector. The purpose of the partnership approach for sustainable development is to:

- combine efforts and resources towards common aims;
- share information and expertise;
- understand different points of view;
- make better decisions;
- create more ‘win-win’ outcomes; and
- optimise the performance and longevity of investments in the urban environment.

A city that realises its potential through leadership, relationships and partnerships will have:

- a balance between local and strategic initiatives;
- collaboration between Council and other public agencies and municipalities;
- collaboration with the community; and
- public and private sector partnerships providing public benefit from private development.

From The Value of Urban Design (2005)
4.61 Balance local and strategic initiatives.

As a capital city, Melbourne performs state and national functions. As the centre of a large metropolis, it contains almost all the major institutions of governance, arts, sport and entertainment facilities, major public and ceremonial spaces, universities and hospitals, conference and exhibition facilities, business and retail centres. Collectively these serve regional needs. Traditionally, these major civic functions were concentrated in the city’s core, while the day-to-day needs of local communities were catered for in suburban neighbourhoods. Today, the pattern is more complex. The boom in apartment living means the central city is home to an increasing proportion of Melbourne’s permanent residents. Conversely, some important public institutions and many commercial enterprises of state significance have moved to peripheral locations outside the traditional business core. Provided these collective functions and obligations of the city are kept in balance, the mix can be good for everyone.

The results are now evident in a city that consistently builds to reinforce the local characteristics of its environment. Distinct localities add variety to a city, and help to satisfy a growing preference for diversity over standardisation. People appreciate having access to a range of distinctly different places, which is part of a more widespread demand for a greater choice of commodities, work patterns and lifestyles. Therefore strategic activities are supported by the attractive physical environments of the inner city neighbourhoods. Local communities benefit from the added variety and vitality. In the central city, its qualities of local place are a strategic advantage in their own right (in a public environment sense) in that Melbourne is comparatively favourably regarded by the skilled and highly mobile workers of the new economy – qualities that can be extremely vulnerable in a globalised society.

Actions that have impact at either a broad strategic or a local level may differ in their focus and their objectives, with the result that what is regarded as appropriate community outcomes by one group may be in conflict with those of another. In partnership with the Victorian Government and other major stakeholders, Council needs to ensure that established communities have reason to welcome the strategic development occurring on their doorstep, and conversely that any capital city oriented initiatives will also meet the local demands of individual neighbourhoods.

STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

Integrate Melbourne’s capital city role with the protection of traditional local neighbourhoods. Balance the demand for strategic development with community-based concerns for the quality of existing urban environments reflecting local outcomes.

Develop collaborations and/or working partnerships between Council, the Victorian Government (including its various agencies of development and growth), other local councils, and the city’s varied institutions of local interest.

Develop a thorough understanding of inner city neighbourhoods. Identify areas where stability is crucial for the maintenance of local character. Identify areas of rapid or widespread change where new identities are emerging.

A genuinely sustainable urbanism does not depend alone on technical solutions to environmental problems – rather it is predicated in the idea of locality. Michael Sorkin in City Edge.
4.62 Collaborate with other public agencies and municipalities.

Melbourne’s public space assets seldom conform to political boundaries. Frequently, these borders impose artificial limitations on the design and management of infrastructure and open space. Municipal boundaries can mean that broader scale patterns of land use are overlooked or managed differentially on either side of the boundary line. Just as the individual elements of urban design work best in combination, urban design decisions are most effective when they result from integrated policies, objectives and values of many parties. Boundaries can also make it difficult to focus attention on areas at the margins of neighbouring jurisdictions. Choosing the right direction for sustainable growth becomes more difficult because social, economic and ecological impacts usually need to be managed on a regional basis.

The city’s impact on biodiversity, in particular, extends beyond municipal boundaries. Waterways, such as the Yarra River, Maribyrnong River and Moonee Ponds Creek, are vital ecosystems whose preservation or improvement of ecological value will require working in partnership with adjoining municipalities and land management authorities.

STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

Establish protocols for more effective cooperation among inner metropolitan cities to ensure well-coordinated and complementary treatment across municipal boundaries wherever their interests converge or would be of mutual benefit. Prepare joint objectives and initiatives for public space development.

Pay attention to the areas that straddle municipal boundaries. Focus on meaningful communities, local character areas or environmental systems rather than arbitrary political entities.

Participate where relevant in negotiating agreements between government agencies. Assist local interest groups to adopt a collective vision of how their communities should develop.

Disseminate information on public space performance to the Victorian Government, City Councils and other interested parties.
4.63 Collaborate with the community.

Consultation with the community has for a long time been part of the development of local area plans, activity programs and site-related projects. Current practice increasingly relies on engaging with the community to define what is important to them. The involvement of local residents, interest groups and stakeholders, non-government organisations and groups with special needs is seen as central to the concept of sustainability. The participation process engages and informs these people, who consequently feel better connected to their communities and empowered to provide judgments reflecting their specific interests. Individual actions strengthen a community, and a strong sense of community inspires and motivates individuals. Users are a vital source of information about local conditions and community needs, which can greatly assist the designer to better respond to particular requirements.

While the design flair of an individual can create buildings and places of inspiring quality, good design is more a matter of process. Processes that establish clear needs and outcomes, have a good analysis of the context, have the right mix of participants, and integrate ideas and concepts, lead to good outcomes. There are many arguments in favour of user participation:

- Users are a source of wisdom and information about local conditions, community needs and attitudes.
- Realistic, more informed public expectations and understanding can develop.
- A better ‘fit’ between design and user needs can be achieved.
- People can see how their individual needs or concerns fit into the wider picture and are more likely to support positive change.
- People tend to gain a stronger sense of community and local democracy.
- A stronger sense of ‘user ownership’ over the changes may develop.
- The interests of people whose needs might otherwise be overlooked are protected.

In so saying, however, successful user participation complements, rather than replaces, professional design and technical expertise.

Current practice also calls for involving young people earlier in the design process in planning initiatives for public space. An inclusive design process enables designers to be better informed of young people’s needs; facilitates understanding between different groups about their common needs and differences in the use of public spaces; and it encourages them to take ownership of and responsibility for public spaces and features that they have assisted in creating.

The consultation process can strike a fine balance between the personal and the public, in that individuals are encouraged to tell their stories, and these are treated as valuable contributions that can be distilled into public works that enclose a community’s culture, background and experience.

STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

- Develop properly conceived and well-managed consultation processes.
- Extend user participation where possible to include other forms of interactive involvement in project design processes, such as public surveys, planning workshops, and design workshops to develop or test design options with user groups.
- Assist local interest groups to adopt a collective vision of how their communities should develop.
- Involve young people in planning initiatives for public space.

The overwhelming benefit of user participation in design is to improve the fit between design and user needs, and in doing so, to make more effective use of resources. The result of a properly conceived and well-managed user participation process is simply better, more responsive urban design.

From The Value of Urban Design (2005)
4.64 Promote public and private sector partnerships to ensure public benefit from private development.

Private investment plays a wide-ranging role in financing and delivering public facilities and spaces in Melbourne. Achieving mutual objectives between the private sector and the public authorities who own, or are responsible for managing, the spaces impacted by private development requires coordination and cooperation. In this respect, Council can effectively act as a ‘broker’ between public and private interests. While there is currently no formal process by which this occurs, a history of successful outcomes demonstrates the value of dialogue between both parties from pre-planning permit application stage right through the design development process. Advantages for the developer include planning permit and building applications that are less likely to be refused, potentially faster approvals, and proposals that are less likely to be subject to significant changes at more advanced stages of the project. Overall, the process is directed at resolving issues in ways that avoid public downsides, achieve high quality, innovative design, and simultaneously meet private objectives, interests and needs.

Sustainable development in the public domain now has the added advantage of tapping into the growing interest from the private sector in the benefits of good urban design, the growing support for triple bottom line business, and increasing consumer support for ‘mainstreaming’ environmental issues. A clear urban strategy for the public arena gives private development a reference point, and enhance opportunities to add to the fabric of the city. Public works can be important in changing the context for development, and thereby influencing the way in which development unfolds. If implemented in a timely manner and complementing private developments, these public initiatives will help lead to development outcomes with significant direct and indirect benefits for the wider public.

Private development often tends to respond to the quality of public spaces surrounding it, and if they are not attractive or supportive, it will inevitably lead to poorer design quality. Alternatively, measures should be put in place to demonstrate what a future permanent state is likely to be if public areas are in transition.

From the public sector point of view, the objective is to provide critical assessment of the design implications and manage the range of potential impositions by private development on the city’s public spaces. This may involve illustrating how new building development best coexists with the elements of the existing site and its surrounding context, including better integration into the streetscape, provision of active frontages, preserving heritage, increasing site permeability, and allowance for future development on adjacent sites.

In some cases, Council (or the Victorian Government on larger scale sites) acts as a direct agent of development on the public’s behalf for key development sites or large blocks where the City (or State) is either landowner or is directly involved as a partner in the development. This again ensures that privately-funded development combines strong attractions for private investment with the delivery of new public space assets and access.

STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

Advocate for private developers to coordinate with city authorities (principally Council and the Victorian Government) from pre-planning permit application stage through the full design process. Consider formalising this process.

Identify where heritage or crucial local character issues will require a comprehensive planning approval process.

Promote development of brownfield sites within the municipality, and vacant/underutilised sites within the central city, to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes for private investors and the public.

Look at opportunities for land swaps for sites in private ownership with public land where it is not well located for parks or other public space or community assets.
4.65 Manage the public space demands of privately owned services and infrastructure.

Until recently, most of the city’s infrastructure was provided by public agencies. While these bodies did not always collaborate, there was a high degree of predictability in the way they worked, and the visible ‘furniture’ of transport systems or service reticulation became a recognised part of the public domain. Most of these services have now been transferred into private ownership. While the new utility companies provide more customer-focused business practices, they are installing infrastructure which has become a vehicle for branding and advertising. Originally free of commercial content, these components can detract from public places by the resulting visual and physical clutter. In some cases, competition has also led to the duplication or fragmentation of facilities.

Two other issues requiring coordination between public and private agencies arise at a more local level. Firstly, high levels of environmental noise, especially from vehicular traffic, nighttime activities, waste collection and building construction, significantly detracts from a positive urban experience, and where pervasive can cause stress for individuals. Secondly, while outdoor seating at kerbside cafes throughout the city has obvious benefits in increasing street life, social interaction and stimulating economic vitality, the appropriation of public space for private uses needs to be reviewed and balanced by substantially more opportunities for public seating. All people must feel welcome in the city without having to spend.

STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

- Promote urban design issues and objectives when decisions are made regarding new infrastructure.
- Participate in discussions and coordinate with private companies to:
  - coordinate the treatment of public rights-of-way and set limits for commercial encroachment into public space;
  - moderate the location and appearance of privately-owned infrastructure which occupies a visible place in the public domain; and
  - ensure the infrastructure of privatised transport systems is compatible with preferred streetscape character.
- Substantially increase the undergrounding of overhead services and relocation of existing underground alignments where these conflict with opportunities for ‘greening the city’ through street trees and other plantings.
- Address noise mitigation through design and management interventions such as acoustic barriers and traffic re-direction.
Part Five: Implementation, Monitoring & Review

5.1 Making it Happen

The Urban Design Strategy describes a wide range of principles, issues, directions and opportunities. Most of the strategy’s recommendations focus on public places, other Council-owned assets, and private assets with a direct impact on public space. At one level, the Urban Design Strategy presents ideas and generic intentions rather than providing particular solutions. At another level, it refers to realisable outcomes via recommended programs of action, site-specific projects and groupings of like-projects or activities.

Implementation sections in most Council strategies typically entail setting out a program of work, with outline budgets attached, to occur over a set period of time. An urban design strategy needs to operate somewhat differently. The nature of cities is such that the circumstances that shape them are often unpredictable and subject to the impact of social, environmental and political factors. It is therefore difficult to propose a comprehensive, or inter-related, program of intended project work over a defined period. The strategies and opportunities are really suggestions only, and need to be fully investigated, opened to consultation and set within a logical implementation framework. Priorities will largely be determined, evaluated and programmed once the community has been consulted regarding their efficacy and in accordance with Council budget processes.

Without a clear focus on effective implementation, however, the strategy will be of little more than academic interest. Many different delivery mechanisms will assist this. The Urban Design Strategy is intended to provide a platform for Council to float a range of well-conceived urban design directions or opportunities which can be rapidly shaped into specific, budgeted projects once timing, the intentions of other stakeholders and Council’s own circumstances favourably coincide. Many will translate into neatly defined and budgeted capital works or process-based projects while others may take the form of a cluster of sequential or parallel actions.

Works in public spaces throughout the Melbourne municipality over the past two decades have been directed by the consistent application of a variety of implementation tools aimed at reinforcing the strengths and qualities of the city. Non site-specific initiatives involve building certain strategic directions that address physical or social changes in the community into the way projects are approached or processes are delivered. Place-specific or area-based initiatives are often delivered through action plans, master plans, streetscape programs, or through a range of projects under the Council Works and Asset Renewal Programs. In Council’s Integrated Planning Framework the Local Area Action Plans, in particular, form the basis for planning local improvements and assisting in community consultation and participation. They tend to deal with both physical actions as well as programs of activities.

The Urban Design Strategy aims to provide a broader context and build synergies across operational programs and resources. It is vital that the public sector lead by example and insist on quality design in all physical construction projects. A partnership approach across Council divisions and branches will be a critical factor in the ongoing success of the urban design strategy, involving awareness of mutual objectives and close cooperation at an inter-Divisional level. The opportunity (and challenge) now exists for the Victorian Government and Council to cooperatively define their individual and collective roles and responsibilities to guide ongoing local redevelopment through coordinated public and private sector initiatives.

Helping create liveable urban environments is a process of constantly learning, revising and communicating. Properly done, it involves the community, has measurable actions and outcomes, and is part of Council’s ‘bigger picture’.

From Creating great places to Live + Work + Play (NZ, 2002)
5.2 Urban Design Frameworks and Initiatives

The ‘bridge’ in the Urban Design Strategy between the strategy’s principles, directions and opportunities and projects for specific locations and sites will be built by developing the Urban Design Frameworks and the Urban Design Initiatives that will ultimately stem from the Strategy.

The Frameworks are intended to provide a four year view, aligned with the Council Plan cycle, to allow for periodic review, input and updating. The Initiatives offer a vehicle for adding to on an ad hoc basis, and reviewing annually as part of the bid process for Council funding. Although some initiatives are linked and need to be considered collectively, the total list of proposals is open-ended and is constantly evolving. It provides a pool of project intentions to be partially drawn on in any one budget year, depending (as indicated above) on the coincidence of strategic agreement, appropriate timing, an opportunity to proceed, available budget and the convergence with other Council objectives and interests.

Preparing the Frameworks involves a series of planning and consultative processes that focus on a local area or neighbourhood within a local area, and will involve close consultation with the community on a range of issues affecting their local environment. The outputs of these processes are a series of plans and proposals that indicate spatial relationships among urban design initiatives or clusters of initiatives. Thirteen frameworks address established neighbourhoods and areas for strategic development which generally correlate to the ‘Local Areas’ defined in City Plan 2010 and the Municipal Strategic Statement. The Frameworks draw from and complement the Local Area Action Plans and will provide guidance at a scale that addresses relationships between the local areas and the city as a whole, as well as specific community outcomes. The content of the Frameworks will tend to vary widely between areas of stability (which require fewer physical interventions) and areas of change (that will contain more comprehensive recommendations). The frameworks therefore allow site-specific projects to be considered within a wider context, demonstrating how a series of localised changes can come together to produce a wider effect.

The Urban Design Initiatives will comprise an evolving collection of identified opportunities for site-specific projects, project groupings or urban design programs which are put forward in response to specific community desires or requirements. The Initiatives offer a vehicle for adding to on an ad hoc basis, and reviewing annually as part of the bid process for Council funding.

The Initiatives tend to focus more on a specific element of physical infrastructure, and represent preliminary proposals for urban design projects. Effectively, they represent opportunities to translate the strategy’s aims and objectives into achievable results within an integrated local planning context. Initiatives differ widely in character and content. Proposals are not restricted to physical outcomes. Some of the strategy’s aims and objectives are best achieved by activities such as policy developments or improved business practices. As a result, initiatives can be developed under six different categories:

- **Physical**
  - (i) Links
  - (ii) Places
  - (iii) Districts

- **Non-Physical**
  - (iv) Processes
  - (v) Policies
  - (vi) Management

For the sake of clarity and consistency, all initiatives will be encouraged to broadly conform to the following process:

**Step 1:** Opportunity – identification of unrealised potential or a perceived opportunity

**Step 2:** Analysis – description of conditions, practices or circumstances supporting the opportunity, and identification of community outcomes

**Step 3:** Response – actions designed to realise the full potential of a place or process.
5.3 Monitoring and Review

A key element of success for any long-term process is to monitor and evaluate progress over time. Sustainable development is a way of thinking and a process. An important aspect of the sustainable development approach is to ensure that connections between the various pieces of work and feedback loops are encouraged and understood. An efficient monitoring process requires well-defined targets set at the design stage, and performance indicators regularly measured during the lifetime of any project aimed at achieving the goals of sustainability.

Design and management of public places is an iterative process. It extends well beyond the initial development of an asset to its ongoing maintenance and review of its continued operation and relevance. Monitoring and evaluating this progress over time may also allow, if necessary, to introduce remedial measures and actions.

Monitoring and review are formal processes for facilitating progress and taking accountability for effective implementation. The measurement of achievements against a range of performance indicators will also assist in evaluating the strategy’s effectiveness and continued relevance, adjusting key directions where necessary, and maintaining the momentum of its actions and outcomes into the future.

Monitoring and review involve measuring:

- how well the strategy is realising its principles, objectives and sub-strategies; and
- the performance of projects to ensure that, at an individual or collective level, they meet with the strategy’s performance criteria and thereby that its directions are still valid.

Procedures would include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Monitor the performance of the city’s public spaces. Identify ‘standards’ for evaluation methods and assessment criteria, and apply these consistently so that comparisons can be made among different times and locations.
- Aggregate performance information within consistent data bases. Use these to inform project briefs for the design and management of public places.
- Develop systems for problem diagnosis and performance monitoring. Include these functions within design briefs and service contracts.

Regular observation and systematic recording of executed projects needs to be undertaken at progressive stages:

- Post project completion, to measure the achievement of the objectives of the project against the brief.
- Post-occupancy evaluation – immediately following occupancy and in the medium to longer term, and taking into account evolution and change over time.

In each of the above cases, measurement of outcomes may instigate adjustments to an existing situation, and/or become part of a collective knowledge affecting the development of future urban design proposals or processes.
Performance Indicators

The following indicators have been established to track progress in achieving the objectives of the Urban Design Strategy. An important consideration in developing indicators is the capacity of the responsible organisation to:

- collect relevant information;
- review it for its reliability and implications;
- build the information gained into modifying existing conditions or the way in which new ones are developed; and
- communicate this to the wider interest groups/relevant stakeholders.

The list covers both ongoing processes and key projects, but is not intended to be exhaustive as other performance indicators will arise over the passage of time. Each indicator is assigned a unit of measurement.

However ‘perceptions’ can also be a powerful tool for measuring achievements. Sometimes, for example, even the most incremental change in a place’s physical environment can result in different patterns of use or people’s behaviour.

[The following section is under development]
Endnotes

1. NZMFE (2005a), The Value of Urban Design: 48-49
2. NZMFE (2005a): 1
3. NZMFE (2002), People + Places + Spaces: 5
5. DSE (2004): 4
6. DSE (2004): 4
8. NZMFE (2005a): 4
11. NZMFE (2005a): 52
13. NZMFE (2005a): 18
15. DSE (2004): 5
16. NZMFE (2005a): 49
17. Drawn from the title of Civilising the City, G Whitehead (1997)
18. Grids & Greenery: 10
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Acknowledgments

Photographic credits

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** Website links are accurate at the time of publication. If no longer accessible, please contact the responsible authority or publisher.

Other useful websites

Victorian Government, Department of Sustainability & Environment - Planning

New Zealand Government, Ministry for the Environment
http://www.mfe.govt.nz

Walk 21 – Walking Forward in the 21st Century
http://www.walk21.com

Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, UK
http://www.cabe.org.uk

Cities for People, Denmark
http://www.citiesforpeople.dk/
Sharing your views

This draft strategy Towards a better Public Melbourne is available for public comment in conjunction with the abridged version Towards a better Public Melbourne in Summary. Council’s objective is to encourage feedback from the community on matters of importance for the future planning of Melbourne’s public environment. The strategy is seen as a significant instrument for building Council’s reciprocal relationship with citizens by providing a framework that will genuinely satisfy the community’s needs and desires for its public spaces, and offer diverse community outcomes.

Your response will help determine how the issues raised in the strategy are taken forward, so please take the time to share your views about matters contained in this document, or any others that you would like to raise.

Please respond in writing by 27 October 2006 to:

Ms Jenny Rayment
Design and Culture
City of Melbourne

Both this document and the summary strategy are available on the City of Melbourne’s website at www.melbourne.vic.gov.au.

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