

## 21.05 HERITAGE, LANDSCAPES AND URBAN CHARACTER

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### 21.05-1 Overview

04/05/2017  
C230

The character of our City is one of the key features that makes Boroondara special, being derived from both the natural setting in which it is located and the manner in which the City has been developed over time. The inter-war and post-war subdivision patterns are very distinctive. The use of municipal by-laws and single dwelling, setback and building material covenants have contributed greatly to the character that the City's residential areas display today. Historically, the City has also been a prime example of the Garden Suburb form of development, leading in the development of nature strips and private gardens. These are distinctive features of the City.

The recognition of the importance of this distinctive character is highlighted in the Council Plan through the following agreed strategy for the City, which states:

“Conserve and enhance the high quality urban environment, including our neighbourhood character, livability and amenity.”

Boroondara's visual landscape is characterised by an abundance of trees and other vegetation found within reserves, streets and private gardens. The value that such vegetation contributes to the character of the City is keenly recognised by our residents. This is even captured in the name of the City, Boroondara, which is Aboriginal for "A place in the shade". Council's Neighbourhood Character Study also identifies vegetation as a key contributor to the overall character of our residential suburbs. The City is also unique in having watercourses making up a significant stretch of its border with its neighbours. This, together with the dramatic nature of the landscape of the Yarra River, has created a strong and distinctive sense of character for the City.

The River Concept Plans (prepared for the Middle and Lower sections of the Yarra River in 1986, 1990 and 1993) highlighted the significant landscape areas and scenic views within the valley environs which can be defined to comprise the river banks, floodplain, steeper valley sides and higher terraces and ridges. Much of this distinctive riverside landscape is protected in our public land, as recognised in Council's Open Space Strategy. There is also a need to manage development on privately owned land to protect views from the river (both foreground and skyline) as well as to provide views towards the river.

The City also derives a great deal of its character from our shopping areas and the characteristics that they display as places of community gathering and activity. Many are made up of shops which are generally two storey in height and which, in many cases, are consistent in the style of their facades. The presence of verandahs, a mix of different signs and the development of newer buildings, all contribute to the unique character of these commercial townscapes. In recognition of their contribution to the City's heritage and urban character, a number of the City's commercial and shopping areas have been identified as having heritage significance, including areas within Kew and Camberwell Junctions, and the shopping strips along Auburn, Union and Glenferrie Roads. In recognition of these elements, Council has prepared structure plans for the City's larger activity centres – Camberwell Junction, Kew Junction and Glenferrie – which incorporate design and land-use considerations in their recommendations. Several streetscape master plans have also been prepared for various shopping centres. A set of sign guidelines have also been prepared for the whole of the City.

Residential suburbs make up the major proportion of land use within the City. Parks and open space corridors, in addition to nature strips, significant numbers of street trees and well maintained private gardens, provide the City with its much valued leafy ambience. The importance of the distinctive character of our residential areas was recognised in the preparation of Council's "Residential Urban Character Study" (1996).

The changing values and housing needs of our community over time have resulted in successive periods of development and re-development. This has resulted in residential

areas displaying a range of lot sizes, from the very large to the quite small, and with homes ranging from the quite grand to the more modest.

Distinctive areas and individually significant examples of preserved Victorian, Edwardian, inter-war and post-war residential and commercial areas are to be found throughout the City. These are alongside areas that have been transformed through more modern, yet sympathetic, forms of development. Both contribute to the overall appeal of our suburbs. Not only has the City been able to embrace new development and growth, but it has also been able to preserve elements that reflect its physical and social heritage.

However, poorly designed development and sub-division threatens the very character and amenity of the City which attracts new development in the first place.

The heritage values of the City have been identified in a range of studies undertaken over the last 20 years with St James Park Estate in Hawthorn, being the first heritage estate to be identified in the mid 1970s. Today, heritage precincts and individual heritage places cover approximately 20% of our urban area and make a significant contribution to the character of the City. Also of great heritage and cultural significance are the number of aboriginal sites found in the City, particularly within proximity to the Yarra River.

Our heritage, both in terms of built form and cultural sites, are under potential threat from new developments. We need to balance the need for the preservation of our heritage while encouraging appropriate development and growth. Council is currently undertaking projects that seek to implement the findings of our heritage studies. This will ensure the ongoing preservation of our heritage and cultural assets, while still facilitating growth and development.

Landmarks are an important component of the Boroondara character as they convey to our residents and visitors a sense of identity and orientation.

Landmarks may be significant by virtue of their scale and prominent location, such as the dome of Our Lady of Victories Basilica in Burke Road, Camberwell, or may be of cultural heritage significance such as the Raoul Wallenberg Monument in Princess Street, Kew.

Given the significance of landmarks in the City, it is important that their integrity be preserved and enhanced. Council will seek to ensure that new development is sensitively designed to complement and respect existing landmarks.

Gateways convey either a sense of arrival or of departure. Boroondara has some very distinctive gateways to the City, for example as one approaches from the west, crossing the Yarra River. These gateways are emphasised by the nature of the landscape, that is, a transition from the flatter areas to the west to the prominent ridge-line along the eastern bank of the Yarra River, as well as the form of development found in close proximity to them. Other gateways within the City are the entry points to shopping centres. It is important that new development respect and contribute to the value of these gateways by being thoughtfully designed and located.

**21.05-2 What are the main heritage, landscape and urban character issues?**

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The distinctive character of the City is fundamentally important to its identity and to its residents.

Individual heritage places and heritage precincts contribute significantly to the character of the City.

Growth and development need to be facilitated in such a way that they complement and enhance this distinctive character, whilst ensuring the ongoing preservation and protection of individual heritage places and heritage precincts.

**21.05-3**  
04/05/2017  
C230

## **Objectives, strategies and implementation**

### **Objectives**

- To ensure that the City has its own distinctive urban character identity, setting it apart from other areas in Melbourne.
- To identify and protect all individual places, objects and precincts of cultural heritage, aboriginal, townscape and landscape significance.
- To conserve vegetation which contributes to the character of the City.

### **Strategies**

- Conserve and enhance the City's characteristic built environment.
- Protect gateways and landmarks which create a sense of identity for our community.
- Enhance and promote key commercial urban character features that contribute positively to the City's economy.
- Conserve and enhance individual heritage places and heritage precincts and aboriginal or cultural features within the City.
- Conserve and enhance distinctive landscapes within the City.
- Maintain and promote the City's treed and leafy environment.

### **Implementation**

These strategies will be implemented by:

### **Policy and exercise of discretion**

- Applying local policy (Neighbourhood Character Policy at Clause 22.07) to actively facilitate development which responds and contributes positively to the overall character of the City.
- Applying local policy (Heritage Policy at Clause 22.05) to protect, conserve and enhance all heritage places within the Heritage Overlay.
- Applying local policy (Discretionary Uses in Residential Areas Policy at Clause 22.04 and Institutional Uses Policy at Clause 22.06) to ensure that non-residential activities are accommodated without impacting adversely on character or amenity.
- Applying local policy (Advertising Signs Policy at Clause 22.01) to ensure the form and amount of outdoor advertising is appropriate to the character of the area and the building on which it is located, and to ensure signage appropriately defines gateways to business centres and complements the image of centres.
- Applying local policy (Telecommunications Policy at Clause 22.11) to minimise the future impact of the provision of mobile telephony services.
- Applying local policy (West Hawthorn Area Policy at Clause 22.15) to the defined area within West Hawthorn to ensure appropriate development.
- Applying local policy (Camberwell Junction Policy at Clause 22.02) to the Camberwell Junction Shopping Centre area to ensure appropriate development.
- Applying local policy (Toorak Road Mixed Use Policy at Clause 22.12) to the Toorak Road mixed use area to ensure appropriate development.

- Applying local policy (Office Use and Development Policy at Clause 22.08) to facilitate appropriate forms of development at the interface between commercial centres and surrounding residential areas.
- Applying local policy (Kew Junction Policy at Clause 22.17) to the Kew Junction Activity Centre to ensure appropriate development.
- Applying local policy (Glenferrie Activity Centre Land Use Policy at Clause 22.18) to the Glenferrie Major Activity Centre to ensure appropriate development.

### **Zones and overlays**

- Applying the Residential Growth Zone, General Residential Zone and Neighbourhood Residential Zone to appropriate areas of particular character.
- Applying the Heritage Overlay to protect all identified heritage precincts and individual heritage places of cultural, natural, and aboriginal heritage significance.
- Applying Design and Development Overlays to protect the distinctive character of special areas (Monomeath Avenue and Willsmere).
- Applying a Design and Development Overlay to the Kew Junction Activity Centre to ensure an appropriate design and scale of new development.
- Applying a Design and Development Overlay to the Glenferrie Activity Centre to ensure an appropriate design and scale of new development.
- Applying a Design and Development Overlay to the West Hawthorn Area to promote the achievement of the desired outcomes for this area as established in the West Hawthorn Urban Design Framework.
- Applying a Design and Development Overlay to the Centreway Shopping Centre to promote the achievement of a particular development outcome for this area.
- Applying a Design and Development Overlay to the Willsmere Historical Building Area to ensure sympathetic development.
- Applying an Environmental Significance Landscape Overlay to the area between the Yarra River and Yarra Boulevard to protect its riverine parkland character and views to, through and over the area.
- Applying an Environmental Significance Landscape Overlay to the remainder of the Yarra River valley (from banks to skyline) to protect the visual backdrop to the river and skyline views.
- Applying a Vegetation Protection Overlay to recognise the special landscape significance of the Willsmere area (and the Yarra Bend Park) and to conserve trees of historical, visual, landscape or botanical significance in the area.

### **Further strategic work**

- Identifying distinctive "urban character areas" and elements, for protection of their particular character.
- Developing local policy to ensure that the contribution existing Single Dwelling Covenants make to the City are recognised.
- Preparing a local policy to apply to development in the vicinity of gateway points and landmarks in order to enhance and preserve these locations in the City.
- Preparing Design and Development Overlays, or other controls as appropriate, to apply to gateway points and landmarks to ensure that the design, siting, mass, scale and bulk of new developments are sympathetic to them.

- Preparing Structure Plans for select commercial centres, to promote the character and image of each centre, direct the form of new development within these shopping centres and ensure appropriate development at the gateways to shopping centres.
- Undertaking study to further identify places of cultural, natural and aboriginal heritage value, and prepare strategies for their protection.
- Preparing a concept plan for the Gardiners Creek area.
- Undertaking further study to identify other significant landscapes in the City and prepare strategies for their protection.
- Preparing a Vegetation Policy for both public and private land, which conserves and reinforces the vegetation character of identified areas.
- Preparing a Significant Tree Register to identify and protect vegetation which makes a significant contribution to the character of designated residential areas.
- Preparing guidelines for tree preservation, maintenance and replacement on private property in residential, commercial and industrial areas and apply a Vegetation Protection Overlay or other control, as appropriate.

#### **Other actions**

- Preparing short and long terms strategies to place all cabling underground.
- Preparing and implementing various Streetscape Master Plans for shopping centres and undertaking streetscape beautification programs.

#### **Reference documents**

City of Boroondara Neighbourhood Character Study Precinct Statements, 2013

City of Boroondara Neighbourhood Character Study Methodology and Implementation Report, 2013

City of Boroondara Street Tree Masterplan

Guidelines for Signs in the City of Boroondara, 1996

Camberwell Conservation Study, City of Camberwell, 1991

Kew Urban Conservation Study, City of Kew, 1988

Hawthorn Heritage Study, City of Hawthorn, 1993

River Concept Plans:

- Lower Yarra - Punt Road to Dights Falls 1986
- Middle Yarra - Dights Falls to Burke Road 1990
- Middle Yarra - Burke Road to Watsons Creek 1993

Lower Yarra River - Landscape Guidelines 1988

Lower Yarra River - Urban Design Guidelines 1992

Camberwell Junction Structure Plan, 1993

Kew Junction Structure Plan 2009 (updated 28 December 2011).

Glenferrie: Heart of Hawthorn Structure Plan and Implementation Plan, 2010 (updated 28 December 2011)

City of Boroondara Office Development Urban Design Principles, 1998

City of Boroondara Discretionary Uses Code, 1998

URBAN CHARACTER

