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FUTURE PRESTON

Urban Design Issues and
Opportunities Paper

June 2020

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Tract

for
City of Darebin



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Overview

Preston is currently a place of change - socially and physically. It is a place where city-shaping demographic and social trends are intersecting with the 'old suburbs of the inner north', where migrant and working families traditionally settled, and thrived.

It is experiencing the pressures of urban renewal visible all around Melbourne - but realised here in a very 'Preston' sort of a way. The opportunities of higher-density living, revitalised urban liveability, and an increased community demand on public transport mean that this project and its aspirations come at a great time for the area, and the community.

A number of key renewal projects are underway within the Centre, that have the ability to be transformative for urban environment, and the character of Preston Central into the future. These include the redevelopment of the Preston Market site (currently subject to a State Government Planning Framework process) and the redevelopment of both Preston and Bell Train Stations (as a project within the Level Crossing Removal Project / LXRPP infrastructure level crossing removal program).

Similarly, High Street is undergoing somewhat of a transformation - underpinned by the renaissance of 'shopping local' and particularly the rise of the 'foodie culture' across Melbourne, and the inner north. This is altering retail tenancies, the local retail offering, and the way in which people use the street, as well as the times of day and night people use it.

As the culture and demographics of communities change, as transport choices expand, and as the role of the public realm adjusts to different needs, there is the opportunity to re-evaluate how we use public space and the balance between the shared functions of the public realm. Renewal has come reasonably rapidly to Preston Central, although the suburb and Centre has been in a state of evolution for many years now.

The pressures of higher density living, the changing role of retail, evolving elements of liveability and an increased focus on walkability and cycling movement means that Preston Central needs to embrace a transition in its urban fabric.

This project aims to consider the positive ways these factors can improve the way people use, live in and enjoy Preston Central.

1.2 Key Drivers of Change

Since the 2006 Preston Structure Plan was adopted, there have been a number of substantial changes that have taken place within Preston Central that potentially impact the integrity, accuracy and robustness of the plan and its vision for Preston Central.

These include:

- **State government policy** – identifies Preston as an Activity Centre and as an area which should accommodate greater development potential, and to leverage proximity to fixed rail infrastructure for increased densities.
- **Substantial increases in population forecasts for Preston and Darebin more broadly** – need to accommodate additional growth.
- **Changes in demographic and housing trends in Preston** – smaller households, potentially a greater proportion of renters and an aging population.
- **Transport upgrades** – State government commitment to remove the railway crossing at Bell Street, Cramer Street, Murray Road & Oakover Road.
- **Significant private investment** – Preston Market is central to the character and identity of Preston Central. Its future redevelopment could potentially influence the look and feel of Preston Central, as well as provide the catalyst for future development.
- **Deviations from the Structure Plan** - In particular, changes to built form heights and landmark sites.

While the Structure Plan allows for change, these changes are significant and will have a number of implications on the future planning and development of Preston Central that was not previously contemplated.

1.3 Purpose of this Paper

This Urban Design Issues and Opportunities Paper (Paper) is a high-level strategic document that aims to guide future planning within Preston Central, relative to character and identity, built form, public realm and movement and access. It will also be used to inform the preparation of a future Structure Plan for Preston Central. A key aim of this planning is to create a diverse, compact and well-connected community that is affordable and rich in local jobs, transport access, services and culture.

Key components of this paper include:

- **Introduction** – Sets the scene for the Urban Design Issues and Opportunities Paper, its purpose, key change drivers and the process undertaken.
- **Elements of the Vision** – A summary of the most important elements of Preston Central that will be at the core of all key decisions made into the future.
- **Opportunities for the Structure Plan** – Recommendations to be considered by the Structure Plan.
- **Key Challenges for the Structure Plan**
- **Developing a Structure Plan**

The recommendations contained within this paper have been informed by a Background Summary Paper, Consultation / Community Directions Report, Council feedback and site visits. Refer to section 1.4 for further details.

It is important to note that this paper is not intended to be a comprehensive list of analysis, strategies or actions as a Structure Plan might achieve, but rather outlines key ideas and opportunities for the future transformation of Preston Central. These will provide a starting point for further testing and refinement, as part of the development of the Preston Central Structure Plan.

Further detailed investigations by specialist consultants and confirmation of key strategic projects within Preston Central (including level crossing removal projects, the Preston Market redevelopment etc) will also be required to ensure a comprehensive update to the Preston Central Structure Plan.

1.4 The Process So Far

This report is the culmination of work undertaken across a number of stages, and across a number of years.



Figure 1. *Precinct Plan - Project Stages*

Given the scale of change planned and occurring across Preston - particularly around key components of the urban fabric such as the Preston Market, and the Preston Train Station - it has been challenging at this time to compile a comprehensive or fully integrated Urban Design Issues and Opportunities Paper that reflects all of the Government works programs occurring within the Centre.

1.4.1 Limitations of this Document

There are a number of key inputs, that are addressed at a necessarily high level in this study, and would need to be further investigated in detail for the Structure Plan process.

These include:

- Preston Market Framework, once completed and made public through the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) - a '(state government)' authority process,
- The new Preston and Bell Train Stations, once the LXP design and construction processes are complete.

In addition, the following are being run concurrently with this paper including the:

- Preston Land-Use Study;
- Preston Transport Plan 2; and
- Preston Vision.

1.4.2 Background Summary Paper

The Background Summary Paper provided a discussion of the key urban design challenges and opportunities facing the future planning and design of Preston Central.

This analysis has provided background for the opportunities contained within this report.

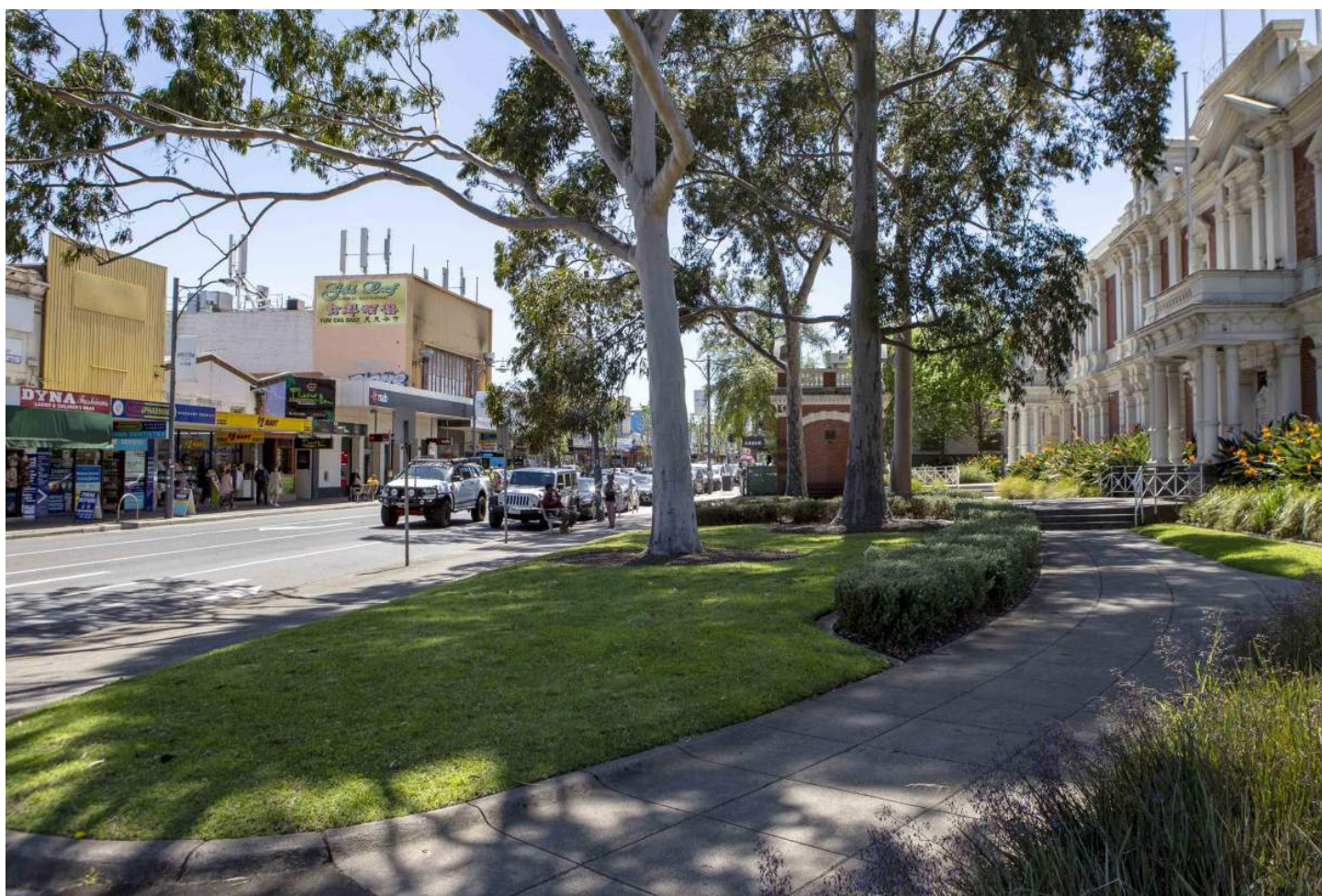
A copy of the Background Summary Paper and Community Directions is provided as an appendix to this paper.

1.4.3 Consultation / Community Directions Report

The aim of the consultation process was to understand local community values, concerns and ideas for the future of Preston Central. It involved a number of engagement activities and approaches to acquire a range of inputs, suggestions and comments from the local community.

This engagement process and the subsequent conclusions are summarised in the **Future Central Preston - Community Directions Report** (Place Partners, 31 October 2018 V1).

The outcomes and themes of the engagement process have informed the aspirations and opportunities contained within this paper.



2. VISION

2.1 2006 Structure Plan Vision

The Preston Central Structure Plan (2006) sets out a vision to express Council's aspirations for the development of Preston Central.

“Preston Central will strengthen its role as the main focus of community activity, independent shops and government and business services for the northern suburbs of Melbourne. At the same time, it will become more socially inclusive, economically prosperous and environmentally sustainable. This will be achieved by intensifying and broadening its mix of activities, enhancing its accessibility and physical environment, and demanding environmentally-responsive buildings, while maintaining its traditional street-based form and articulating and celebrating its diverse culture and character.”

Much of the 2006 vision remains relevant still, with the current phase of Future Preston work revisiting and updating this vision through community engagement.

2.2 Future Preston Vision

The Future Preston Vision is a statement of the preferred long-term future for Preston Central. It has been developed by Council from the findings of community engagement for projects such as the Future Preston Community Directions Report and advocacy for the Preston Market Structure Plan. It incorporates a number of aspirational elements that convey a sense of how Preston Central should look, function and feel in the future. The Vision will be presented to the community for engagement as part of the suite of background documents informing the Structure Plan.

Elements of the vision are outlined on the following pages:

Preston Central is a focal point of cultural, civic, jobs and retail activity in Darebin and the north of Melbourne



How this might play out:

- Accommodate high quality and diverse new jobs and services
- Diversify current retail offer to include a wider range of offers trading throughout the day and night
- Create opportunities for new public and private arts and culture infrastructure
- Broaden and intensify commercial offer

**THE CULTURAL, JOBS,
CIVIC, AND RETAIL
NUCLEUS OF THE
NORTH OF MELBOURNE**

The Central Preston community continues to live its values of equality, sustainability and fairness



**SOCIALLY
RESPONSIBLE**

How this might play out:

- Support and promote local social welfare agencies and not-for-profits
- Support more businesses to grow their ethical, social and environmental leadership
- Support the community to mobilise around social activism, volunteering and grassroots campaigning
- Acknowledge, respect and support Preston's First Nations communities

Central Preston has built on the core of its valued neighbourhood character, as it has urbanised and grown



How this might play out:

- Achieves high quality design, liveability and sustainability
- Improves the public realm
- Has a human scale and pedestrian focus
- Integrates well to the context of existing streets

**FILLED WITH
CHARACTER**

Everyone is welcome here



How this might play out:

- Negotiate, advocate and deliver affordable and diverse housing
- Embed cultural uses, elements and meaning that reflect the diverse Darebin community
- Engage with diverse communities in the development of projects, programs and services
- Embed accessibility into streetscape design, commercial premises, public buildings and open spaces
- Find ways to connect people to each other

**EVERYONE IS
WELCOME, AND
CONNECTED**

Preston is known and loved

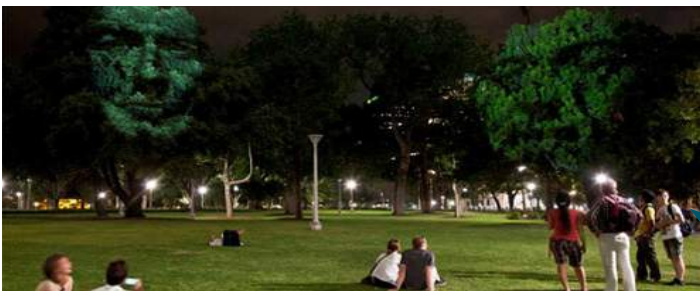


How this might play out:

- Articulate and strengthen Preston's unique brand as a place
- Promote Preston's unique assets and features
- Maximise opportunities for local, small and unique businesses
- Nurture local artists and cultural creatives

**NURTURING, KNOWN
AND LOVED**

Central Preston has generous and inviting green and open spaces



How this might play out:

- Acquire new green spaces
- Acquire new gathering spaces
- Maximise the usability and accessibility of existing green spaces
- Maximise opportunities for greening smaller spaces such as nature strips, bus stops, rooftops, etc.

**GENEROUS GREEN
AND OPEN SPACES**

Central Preston's precincts and experiences are spatially and relationally connected and integrated



How this might play out:

- Create new partnerships between government, private, education, welfare and arts sectors to look at problems in a more joined up way
- Intensify activity and create vibrancy on the edges of precincts and between them, especially on streets with high footfall

INTEGRATED
PRECINCTS



2.3 Reinforcing the Future Preston Vision

The challenges and opportunities drawn from our analysis largely align with the vision elements included in the Future Preston Vision.

Specifically this is via:

- Concentrating and diversifying non-residential activity, including encouraging a greater range of retail and hospitality land uses and developing a more established commercial office sector.
- Supporting the provision of more affordable and diverse housing options.
- Protecting and enhancing Preston Central's multicultural diversity including by providing improved opportunities for creative and cultural uses in the precinct.
- Maximising opportunities for small and local businesses including via the retention of the fine-grained High St character and reinvigorating Council assets such as the DAEC.
- Further enhance food-focus of the Centre by exploring opportunities for small-scale food production. Opportunities for small-scale food production – bakeries, craft-breweries, urban wineries – to locate in employment focused areas exist to further enhance the food-focus of the Centre and leverage off the Preston Market. As above, these will need to be carefully considered to avoid potential land-use conflict and amenity impacts while ensuring low-risk land uses that may be considered as 'industry' in a land-use context are not prohibited or unduly burdened with regulatory requirements.
- Improve night-time activity and consider temporal versatility of land uses, where opportunities exist to consider land-uses outside of a "9-to-5" format. Investigate ways in which sites can be activated across a 24-hour period, through initiatives such as co-locating creative and cultural uses, or secondary uses for office space to transform into gathering spaces and performances, meeting rooms etc.

The following items represent further opportunities to respond to the Future Preston Vision.

- Opportunities for creative and cultural spaces to add vibrancy to the Centre and leverage off existing cultural identity, including the redevelopment of the DAEC. This may include small-scale creative manufacturing with a retail element (i.e. furniture makers, clothing or jewelry designers) located in areas with less of a residential focus such as the Auto Alley or Bell Street precincts. These will need to be carefully considered to avoid potential land-use conflict and amenity impacts while ensuring low-risk land uses that may be considered as 'industry' in a land-use context are not prohibited or unduly burdened with regulatory requirements.
- Student housing in relation to nearby higher education facilities. The Centre's proximity to Melbourne Polytechnic Preston Campus and La Trobe University may offer opportunities for student housing development, assisting in providing a diversity of housing options.

3. LAND-USE

3.1 Context

A study focusing on land use challenges and opportunities was undertaken by Tract Consultants. The following section provides a summary of the preliminary key findings from this report. These findings are subject to further input from the community and therefore may be subject to change.

Preston Central is a Major Activity Centre with a well-defined role as a main street shopping centre, with a large focus on community activity, fresh food, price sensitive shopping, independent shops and government services. It performs an important cultural and community role as a hub for the diverse population due to the presence of the Preston Market, Council offices and other government services. The Centre currently has a number of unrealised opportunities for commercial office development which limit the availability of medium-large format office tenancies. The redevelopment of the Preston Market site offers a major redevelopment opportunity that is currently subject to planning review by the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA).

With respect to built form, the development potential of the Centre remains relatively unrealised with a handful of larger developments occurring in recent years. The Centre is characterised by a fine-grained High Street retail character, with small lot sizes resulting in a limited number of larger development sites. A number of at-grade car parks offer opportunities for more intensive development once land prices make this viable. The High Street corridor north of Murray Road (formerly 'Auto Alley') incorporates larger lot sizes, but given its existing role in providing important employment land, development outcomes have been muted. The Centre's existing residential hinterland is considered well-intact.

The Centre is well-located with respect to public transport with a number of modal options in close proximity. The LXP level crossing removals offer further opportunities to improve movement to and within the centre, including the provision of improved cycling and pedestrian linkages.

Preston Central, along with Northcote, Reservoir and Northland is one of four major activity centres in Darebin. The Northland Urban Renewal Precinct (NURP) is a significant Council planning project, and also forms part of the La Trobe National Employment and Innovation Cluster (La Trobe

NEIC), the planning for which is being led by the Victorian Government. The Department of Land, Water and Planning's (DELWP) recent Melbourne Industrial and Commercial Land Use Plan identifies the broader NURP area as part of a regionally significant industrial precinct, where industry and other employment uses are the designated focus for future planning.

While the future role and function of the NURP is yet to be determined, it may represent competition for the development of a commercial office hub in the future. More broadly however, the two activity centres are relatively independent, with Preston Central retaining a more localised focus of retail and fresh food and community and government services.

Analysis of planning permit applications in Preston Central provides the following key findings with respect to land use:

- The number of large format commercial office developments was limited, with only one development above six storeys (332-340 Bell Street) contributing a substantial degree of new office floor space.
- New development was primarily residential, with larger developments typically incorporating non-residential land uses at ground floor only.
- Following from the above, developments rarely incorporated a range of different land uses, with the mixed-use component typically consisting of retail premises or office space in addition to the primary residential land use.

3.2 Land Use Challenges

The key land-use challenges identified for Preston include:

- Limited **major redevelopment opportunities** making underdevelopment a key risk, given the existing fragmented ownership and smaller lots within the Centre.
- Balancing demand for residential densities with provision of **employment opportunities**, particularly larger-format commercial office spaces.
- The **relationship to other activity centres** and maintaining a retail hierarchy and ‘**point of difference**’.
- The need to **protect and enhance the unique cultural identity and function** of Preston Central.
- The need to ensure **retention of local businesses** in redevelopment, including in the Auto Alley and along Bell Street in comparatively low-pedestrian amenity areas.
- Maintaining **affordability and inclusivity** of Preston Central, with respect to both housing affordability and commercial rents.
- The need to maintain **a civic focus for Preston** through the provision of community services, public open spaces and cultural spaces.
- Relatively **underdeveloped restaurant and dining offering** considering centrality of food to the Activity Centre and **limited night-time activity** resulting a lack of passive surveillance outcomes.
- Maintaining **appropriate supply and effective management of both on and off-street parking** and consideration of alternate uses for public space.
- The identified **lack of integration of Melbourne Polytechnic Preston Campus** into the broader precinct.

3.3 Land Use Opportunities

- Redevelopment of **Preston Market**, which offers significant opportunities for greater residential and commercial densities including the provision of public open space and affordable housing.
- Greater **housing affordability and diversity** via residential redevelopment, which will provide opportunities for affordability and diversity of housing while reducing the need for private motor vehicle use for local travel.
- Creating Preston as the **major commercial office hub** for Melbourne’s north, reinforcing the opportunity to capitalise on its strategic location and the presence of existing government and community services to act as a hub for the commercial office sector in Melbourne’s northern region.
- Leveraging the **existing services sector** in relation to government and community services as well as Technical and Further Education via Melbourne Polytechnic Preston Campus.
- Enhancing the **civic focus** through a redeveloped Civic Precinct to provide additional community services.
- Diversifying the **unique and ‘authentic’ food and cultural offering** by protecting and enhancing existing ‘fine-grained’ retail character.
- Redeveloping **at-grade car parking**, to create both residential or office development in the core of the Centre, as well as important public spaces at street level.
- **Specific industry opportunities** (floor space forecasts over 20-year period). The Preston Development Opportunities Assessment (2018) outlined the following industry specific opportunities for additional floor space over the next 20 years:
 - Office – 10,000-15,000sqm, with demand from business and health services, together with various other small businesses including those that may locate within co-working spaces.
 - Health services – 3,000-5,000sqm, primarily non-specialised services with need for retail frontage.
 - Childcare – 1,500sqm, with need for upper level access to provide for open space requirements.

4. CHARACTER AND IDENTITY

4.1 Context

Plan Melbourne 2017-2050 designates Preston as a Major Activity Centre, which will accommodate new homes, jobs and infrastructure.

Preston Central has a strong local community identity, underpinned by its socially inclusive nature and its multicultural residents and its well known association with fresh produce and a diverse ethnic food offering. It is a character under evolution and change, with development pressures from the south and the changing nature of retail (and commercial) along Plenty Road, High Street and St Georges Road spreading north into Preston. This means the local distinctions and nuances are perhaps becoming less defined.

The vision for Preston Central must be authentic and local if they are to be supported by the local community. The future structure plan must capture the imagination of locals to acknowledge and balance both 'old' and 'new' Preston, equally and in interesting ways.

The identity of Preston Central should continue to be underpinned by its diversity and character, while also ensuring elements of liveability and affordability are retained across the Centre, and the wider suburb.



Preston Market should remain at the heart of Preston community.

Key elements influencing Preston Central's character and identity include:

- Preston Central's 'main street' strip shopping Centre, which is home to Melbourne's second largest fresh fruit and vegetable market (Preston Market).
- A number of key civic and community uses, including Council offices.
- Its association with fresh produce and its diverse ethnic food offering, in particular Preston Market, which is located at the heart of the Centre.
- The future redevelopment of Preston Market. This could potentially influence the look and feel of Preston Central, as well as provide the catalyst for future development.
- A strong local community identity underpinned by its socially inclusive nature and its multicultural residents.
- The artistic roots of Preston, including the presence of DAEC.
- Heritage sites and precincts that are important to the character of Preston Central and contribute to a sense of place that is authentic and distinct.
- The character of neighborhoods which is varied and diverse, reflecting Preston's rich heritage.
- The need to balance change, including growth and development, with preserving the valued qualities and heritage of Preston Central.
- Civic Precinct.



Celebrate the local history and identity of Preston Central by protecting valued built form, where appropriate.

4.2 Opportunities for the Structure Plan

In order to support, foster and realise the Vision for Preston Central, the Structure Plan should respond to the following character and identity related opportunities:



Celebrate the **local history and identity of Preston Central.**



- Communicate the sense of 'local Preston' throughout the Centre in interesting, engaging and culturally diverse ways,
- Embed a reinvigorated and redeveloped Preston Market at the 'heart' of the Centre, and of the growing community,
- Protect valued built form and vegetation assets; where appropriate; and encourage quality and complementary detailing and landscaping in new built environments,
- Ensure a redeveloped Civic Precinct reinforces the strong local identity of Preston.



Position **Preston Central as an employment Centre** for Darebin.



- Encourage commercial and/or office development within close proximity of retail and civic uses,
- Support increased office accommodation in the heart of Preston, walkable to Preston and Bell Train Stations,
- Ensure a balance between employment and residential uses to secure a true mixed-use activity Centre environment into the future,
- Consider planning controls to avoid predominantly residential high-density development, and encourage local employment



Reinforce and expand **Preston Central as the premier food destination within the region**



- Grow the local night-time restaurant and dining offering as well as bars and music venues focused around the High Street corridor,
- Incorporate food and hospitality tenancies at street level within the redevelopment of the Preston Market,

*** Ensure the redeveloped Preston Market remains a key destination and feature of the Centre.**



- Support a redeveloped Preston Market that build on its unique character, and is a 'heart' for the community,
- Support and retain existing traders and future similar multicultural traders,
- Embed affordable housing in the future development,
- Create new active and engaging public open space,
- Create a street frontage for the market,
- Establish new strong links to High Street, Preston Train Station and the civic precinct

*** Foster a culture of community events and festivals for Preston Central**



- Promote community events and festivals throughout the year within the streets and public spaces of the Centre,
- Create and coordinate a calendar of local events that celebrate Preston Central's diversity of people, culture, activity, shops and food.
- Create flexible public spaces suitable for holding public events and activities i.e. Preston Oval, plazas, and forecourts etc
- Develop infrastructure supply points (3 phase power, drainage, water supply) in priority locations such as Preston Oval and plazas to support temporary event based uses.

*** Pursue opportunities for public art and cultural interpretation of local stories and history.**



- Pursue opportunities for public art and cultural interpretation of local stories and history within existing and new public spaces in particular around DAEC
- Ensure Preston maintains a high degree of cultural and linguistic diversity, with the Market and surrounding businesses acting as a hub for local artistic and cultural expression,
- Create opportunities to utilize new and emerging technologies such as augmented reality, smart phone apps and other platforms should also be considered to provide a rich and layered experience.

*** Define and improve the sense of entry into Preston Central**



- Improve entries into the Preston Central by providing additional planting, landscaping and public art along main roads (i.e. High Street, St Georges Road, Plenty Road, Murray Street, Bell Street and Murray Street)
- Provide strong built form presence on prominent sites, key corner sites and in locations adjacent to existing and proposed public spaces;
- Consider landscaping and street lighting as a distinctive feature to activate and improve public areas at night, as well as emphasising key features of the Centre.

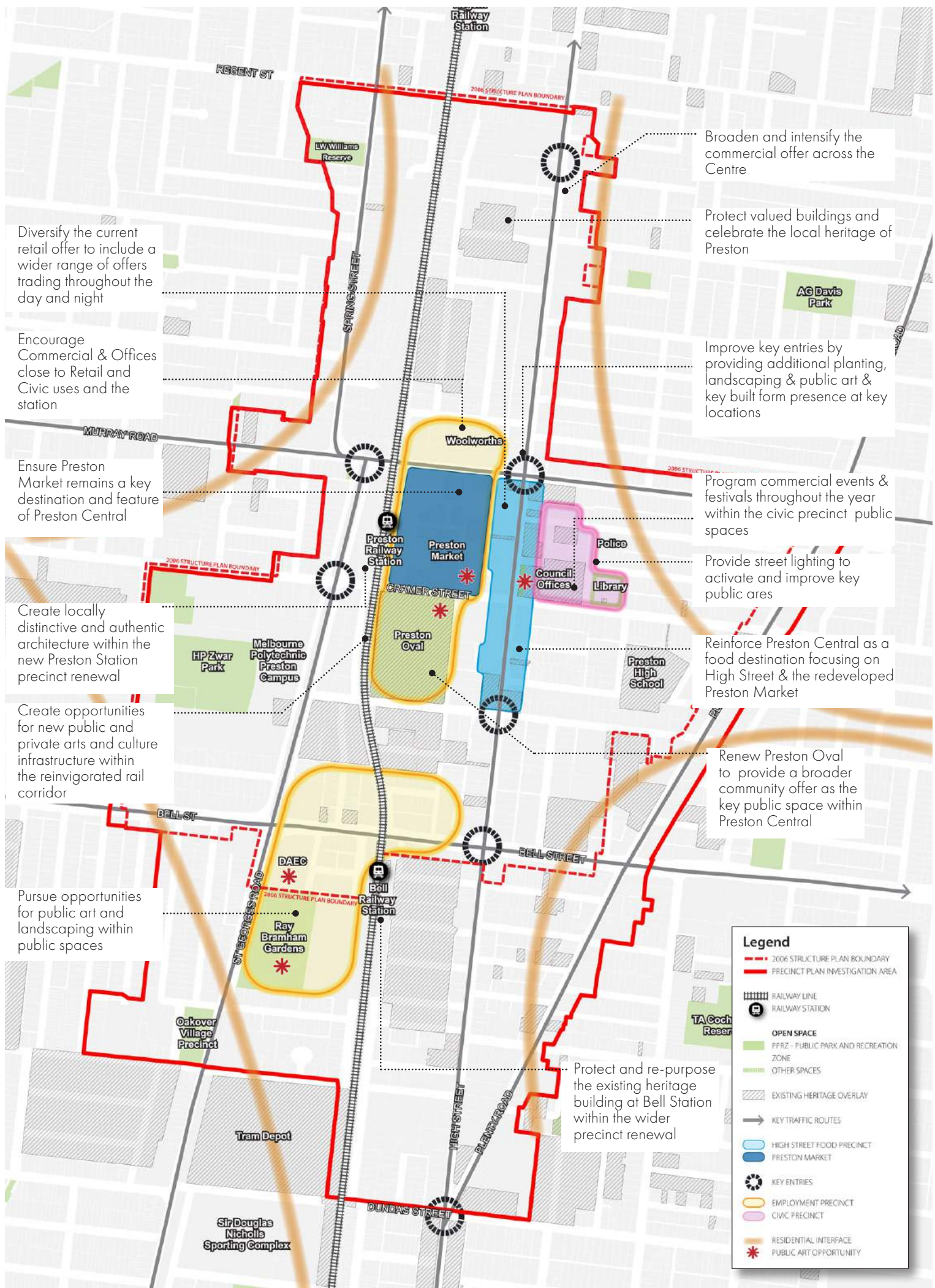


Figure 2. Character and Identity

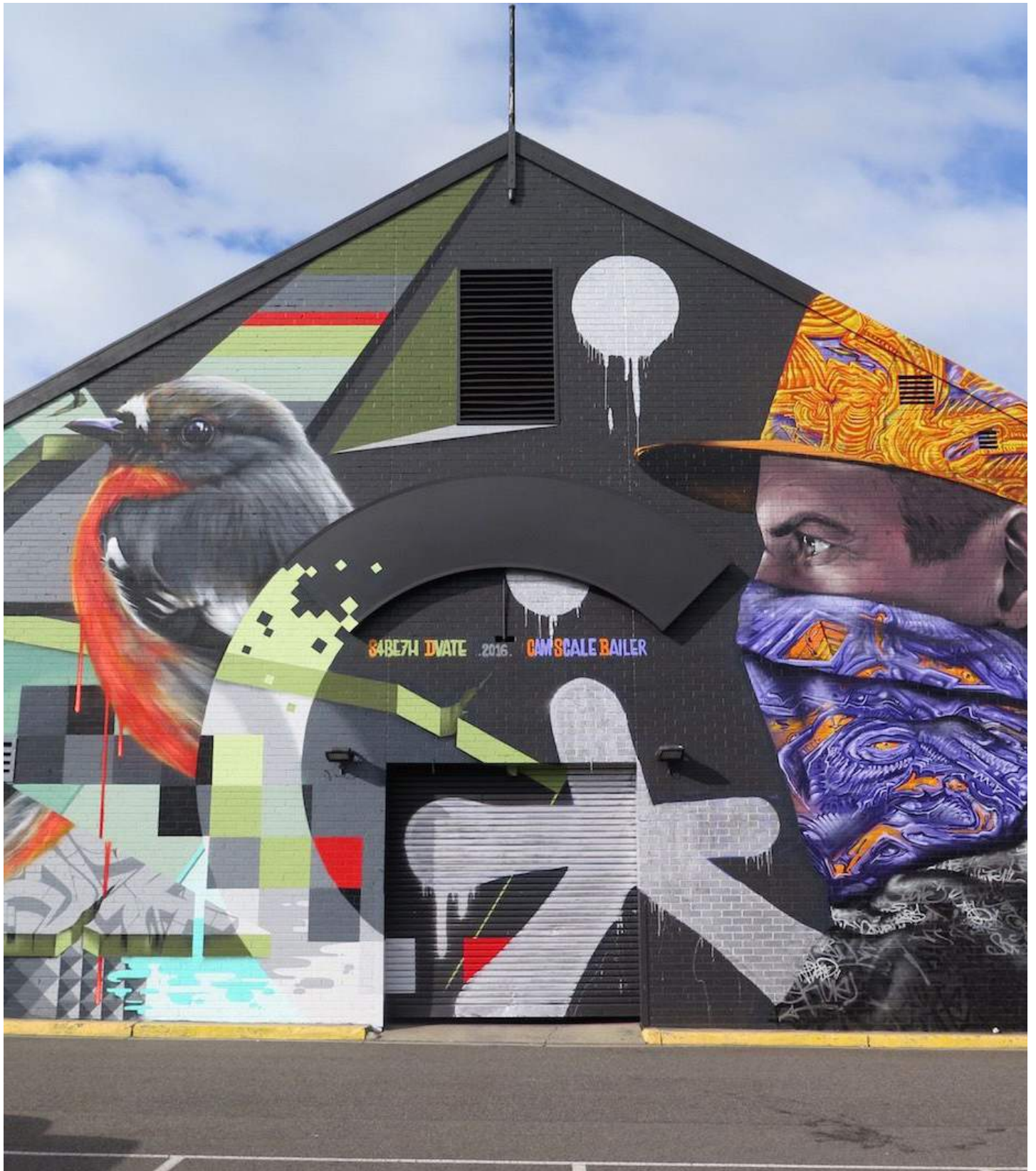
4.3 Areas for further consideration within the Structure Plan

Important character and identity considerations for the preparation of the structure plan include:

- **The mix and location of future land uses within Preston Central.** While outside the scope of this project, the future mix of land uses will impact the character and identity of Preston Central. These uses should build upon the qualities that make Preston Central unique and valued, including its association with fresh food, its multicultural influences, its diversity and access to transport,
- Understanding the **changing role of employment uses** within Preston Central and more broadly Melbourne and identifying the potential role and capacity for employment in the future. For example, consider the future role of the Northern Gateway, what employment opportunities are appropriate to Preston Central and where are these best located?
- **The level crossing removals, elevated rail corridor, renewed train stations and Preston Market redevelopment.** It will be important to advocate for and support a design and layout for the Preston Station precinct and Preston Market site that reinforces their importance within the community and embodies the valued characteristics of Preston Central (Note: While Council can advocate for these outcomes, both projects are State Government initiatives).
- Establishing **a visual cohesiveness and identity** for Preston Central which draws upon and enhances its local identity and sense of place.
- **The role and function of the Civic Precinct.** Preston Central currently has a major civic and community focus through the presence of the Council offices, library, intercultural centre and other institutions. The presence of these facilities and services within Preston reinforces its importance within Darebin and contributes to the Centres existing character and identity. There is the opportunity to enhance this civic focus and provide additional community services through the redevelopment of the Civic Precinct.



Community events and activities that reinforce Preston Central as the premier food destination in the region.



5. BUILT FORM

5.1 Context

The Vision for Preston promotes a new urban character with excellence in the quality of the built form.

Anticipated population growth, changing housing needs and strategic policy will significantly influence the scale and form of future buildings in the study area. The generally one and two storey residential, retail /commercial and large industrial developments that once characterized the area, are less dominant and a denser built form character is emerging, particularly along key transport corridors to the south. This provides an opportunity for new buildings to define a contemporary and exciting character for Preston Central.

One element of a strong built form character is taller buildings, which punctuate the skyline and assist legibility, wayfinding and visual interest. Currently, the only buildings of significant scale (6-8 storeys) are located along Bell Street or to the north of Murray Road. The Preston Market site will however re-frame the aspirations and framework for heights and built form at the core of the Centre and encourage greater intensification across Preston Central.

The Urban Design Issues and Opportunities Paper aims to locate taller buildings to locations within the commercial core of Preston, around the renewal works of Preston and Bell Stations, and on larger redevelopment sites and in prominent locations to contribute to creating stronger entrance experiences into Preston Central.

In addition the Urban Design Issues and Opportunities Paper aims to ensure:

- Built form respects the height, scale and proportions of adjoining heritage places or buildings within the Centre,
- Development reinforces the traditional fine grain and vertical rhythm of streetscapes,
- Tall buildings are designed to maintain a diverse and interesting skyline and carefully consider viewlines and visual relationships to the public realm spaces,
- Building form, height and architectural character responds to the surrounding context and the pedestrian experience,
- Development establishes a clear relationship between the appearance of new development and the locally valued character.



The Town Hall fronting High Street and Gower Street is a key element of Preston Central's character.



Reinforcing the local Preston identity through the redevelopment of the Market site is important to the sense of community



Gradual redevelopment and increases in building height are reinforcing the Bell St corridor

Key elements influencing Preston's built form include:

- Population forecast that look to see Preston double in size by 2041, and changes in demographic trends, including an aging population and smaller household sizes. This will significantly influence the scale and form of proposed buildings.
- Melbourne's northerly expansion and the pressure for intensification and development (including denser and higher built form), particularly along key transport corridors to the south.
- The affordability advantages Preston has over its southerly neighbours.
- Heritage Overlays which apply to a number of sites and precincts within Preston and provide challenges for higher density built form.
- A Special Building Overlay which applies to large areas of land along St Georges Road and High Street. Built form and development within these areas are subject to inundation and require a minimum free board.
- Several planning policies and zones which control built form height across Preston Central.
- The existing 1-2 storey scale of buildings, in particular within residential areas.
- Recent development applications which have challenged existing building height controls, particularly in locations where there are large sites, close to shops and public transport.
- State policy which encourages additional housing both within commercial and residential areas and along key public transport networks and in the form of mixed-use development.
- The narrow shop fine grain built form along High Street and the positive contribution this has on the diversity and mix of uses and street level experience within Preston Central.
- Emerging built form design challenges including the visual and architectural quality of buildings, ensuring street level activation, treatment and appearance of larger site developments and providing adequate upper level building separation to adjoining existing single or double storey dwellings.
- Planning controls being prepared by the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA), for Preston Market. Heights determined will provide the catalyst for building heights across the Centre.



The built form scale and character of the Preston Central - High St



Typical residential built form of neighbourhoods and streets

5.2 Opportunities for the Structure Plan

In order to support, foster and realise the Vision for Preston Central, the Structure Plan should respond to the following built form related opportunities:



Enhance the **fine grain retail streetscape** of Preston



- Reinforce the fine grain smaller shopfronts and vertical rhythm of the streetscapes - particularly High Street between Bell Street and Murray Road,
- Ensure larger sites such as the Preston Market, incorporate smaller frontage shopfronts at street level and provide modulation in the street façade,
- Encourage lower levels of the buildings accommodate a range of tenancy sizes, including smaller tenancies, particularly larger development sites within the Bell Street corridor.



Create **active frontages** at street level



- Ensure buildings integrate with and contribute positively to streetscapes and public spaces by providing active frontages with clear glazed ground floors, in particular along High Street, Cramer Street, Murray Road and Bell Street,
- Co-locate any publicly accessible parts of a building with adjacent public space or pedestrian connections.
- Locate new publicly accessible areas in the lower levels of a building so that they have a direct visual and physical connection to key pedestrian routes



Clearly **distinguish between the retail centre and surrounding residential** neighbourhoods



- Define a clear edge to the retail centre to help delineate it from adjoining residential streets and neighbourhoods,
- Ensure a transition in building height between commercial areas and lower scale of adjacent residential streets,
- Step down building height, scale, street presence and massing from the core of Preston, to local streets particularly east of High Street, and south of Preston Oval



Identify **key strategic sites**



- Clearly identify important sites, and typical key street corners where higher density housing and commercial development can contribute positively to the Preston skyline, and streetlife,
- Encourage site amalgamation (where practical) through the Northern Gateway of High Street to enable strategic sites for high quality development,
- Encourage key corners within Preston to be reinforced, over time, with significant, well designed built form that addresses the street frontages and can help to form local landmarks .



Respond sensitively to the **scale and character of local heritage**



- Encourage new development to complement their heritage significance, where it adjoins heritage sites and precincts,
- Adopt street wall heights, upper level setbacks and appropriate building separation, to respond to the scale of adjacent heritage buildings.
- Ensure appropriate setbacks for new built form mitigate against new development dominating adjacent lower scaled heritage places.



Provide **broader housing choices within Preston**



- Provide broader housing choices within Preston by prioritising the provision of various sizes and types of dwellings for different lifestyles and stages; families, couples, multi-generational and singles, (walkable to public transport),
- In particular support new low-rise townhouse and terrace housing in keeping with residential streetscapes to complement the higher density apartment housing in the core,
- Encourage varied housing models particularly within the High Street corridor north of Murray Road.



Facilitate **affordable housing** delivery into the growth of the Centre



- Protect existing affordable housing and plan for new dwellings that are accessible to people from a wide range of backgrounds and incomes,
- Support new affordable housing development particularly along the High Street corridor and Bell Street corridor within walkable catchments to public transport services,
- Investigate ways of incorporating affordable housing provisions into redevelopment of key strategic sites, or amalgamated sites within the Centre.



Ensure **excellence in building design**



- Encourage excellence in building design so that development responds to the character of Preston, and its local context,
- Ensure design diversity in the development of large sites,
- Embed a design review process to create exemplary architecture where higher built form transforms the Preston skyline.



Enhance the **'human scale experience' at street level**



- Ensure buildings do not overwhelm the footpaths of retail areas, with taller elements recessed from the street,
- Maintain and improve the quality of existing pedestrian connections and arcades as new development occurs - particularly connecting into the High Street corridor
- Pedestrian connections should be direct, attractive, well-lit and provide a line of sight from one end to the other.
- Reinforce an urban block structure that is sufficiently fine grained to support walking as the primary mode of transport,



Support the **transformation of High Street north of Murray Road**



- Support higher density, mixed-use sites that complement the character and identity of the High Street corridor,
- Identify strategically important built form for key corner sites to hold the corners as landmarks,
- Ensure new built form heights fronting High Street are appropriate to the Activity Centre while ensuring considered transitions to residential streets behind High Street



Establish Preston as the **local benchmark for environmental sustainability** within Darebin.



- Ensure Council provides leadership through future sustainable development within the civic precinct.
- Ensure that all development supports the community aspirations for a sustainable Activity Centre through implementation of best practice Environmentally Sustainable Design standards,
- Work with developers to support new local benchmark buildings incorporating high ESD standards, including energy efficiency, water management and use of low embodied energy materials.



Strengthen the **sense of place and arrival** in the Centre



- Encourage buildings of exemplary architectural quality on prominent sites, key corner sites and in locations which visually signify entries into Preston Central
- Establish high quality architecture of higher built form and density to the High Street corridor north of Murray Road to reinforce the sense of a northern gateway,
- Continue to visually reinforce the Bell Street corridor around the station with significant buildings.



Strengthen built form character with **visual diversity in development** for important sites



- Strengthen the core of the Preston Centre through the presence of significant mixed-use development, beyond residential development, to the Preston Market site, the Woolworths site, and other larger sites,
- Encourage innovative and engaging architectural schemes that use form, articulation and materials with in a design narrative appropriate to Preston Central.



Ensure higher **buildings contribute positively to a transformative skyline**



- Undertake skyline design assessments for major strategic sites to assess implication of higher built form, including the Preston Market site, adjacent key sites in the core, and along the Bell Street corridor,
- Ensure higher built form respects the height, scale and proportions of adjoining heritage places or buildings (where applicable) and also adjoining public open spaces
- Ensure architectural schemes maintains a diverse and interesting skyline through the design of facade and roof profiles



Adopt a **'good neighbour' approach to new development interfacing with residential neighbourhoods**



- Encourage upper floor levels of buildings to be well articulated, and recessed from rear and side boundaries, which abut or are opposite residential properties, in particular either side of the High Street and Bell Street corridors,
- New development within Preston should establish a vertical grain, rhythm and respond to the varying scale of adjacent buildings.
- Ensure upper level built form is recessive adjacent to residential neighbourhoods.

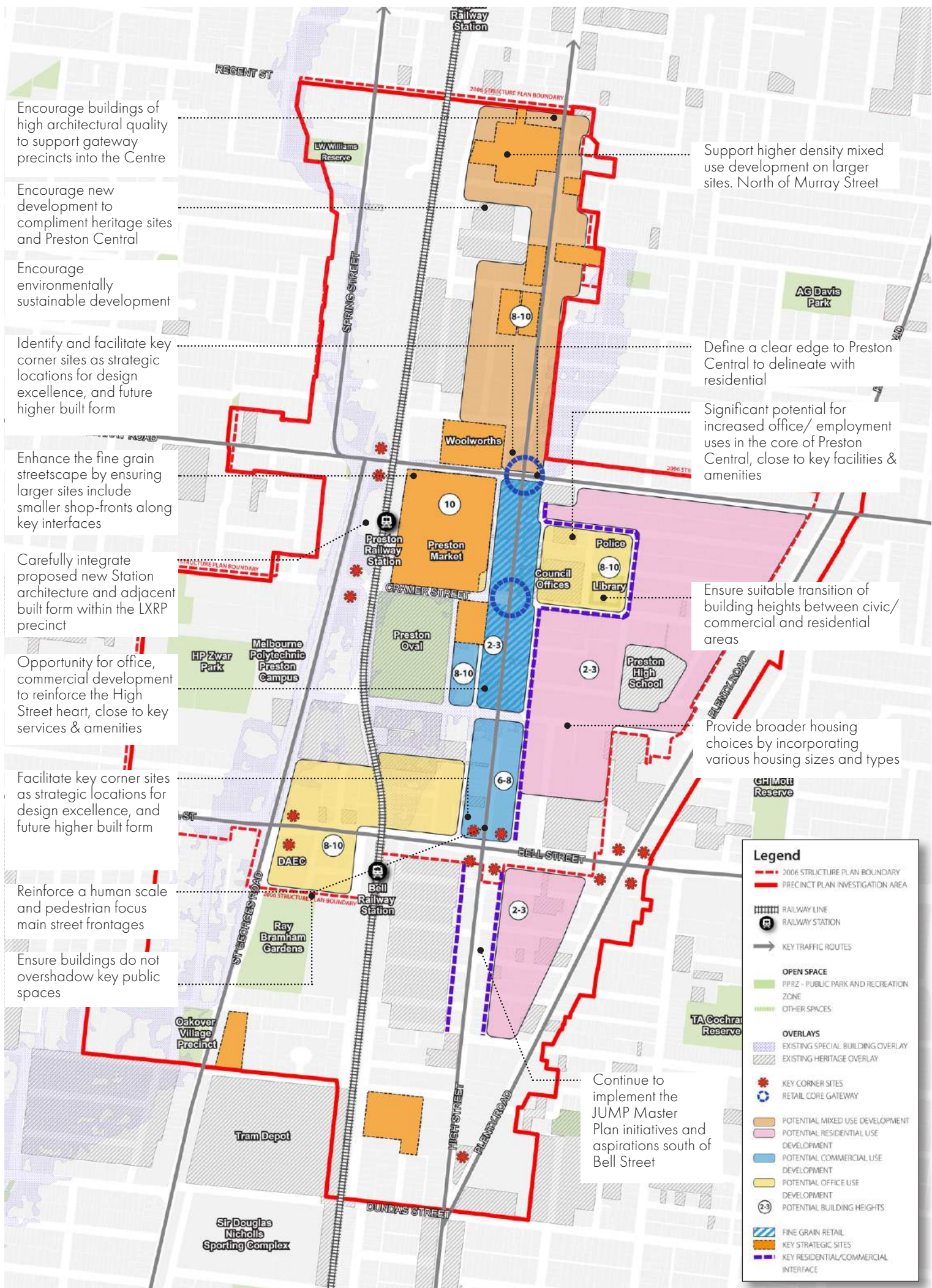


Figure 3. Built Form

5.3 Areas for further consideration within the Structure Plan

Important built form considerations for the preparation of the structure plan include:

- **Integrating the development aspirations and planning controls for the Preston Market site** (once finalised by the VPA) with that of Preston Central, including building heights and land uses for the core of the Centre,
- **Balancing heritage considerations** with the need to accommodate **additional population growth**.
- **Integrating the future elevated rail corridor** and associated renewal works around Preston and Bell Stations, in particular connecting public realm paths and links, reinforcing sight-lines to Station entries and forecourts, and integrating the Station parking, bus and vehicle movement works to synthesise with the aspirations for the wider Centre,



Encouraging increased commercial and employment uses to provide opportunities for jobs



Planning new dwellings that suit a range of user needs and lifestyles



Ensuring buildings contribute positively to local streetscapes

6. PUBLIC REALM

6.1 Context

The Vision aims to provide streets and public spaces that are inspiring and people oriented. This theme provides initiatives on how the public realm should respond.

Public spaces are important to the identity and culture of a place and provide a framework around which a community can develop. The streets and public realm of Preston Central not only play an important role in moving people around but also as places and spaces supporting shopping, social interaction and recreation, supporting physical and visual connections, for environmental processes (such as drainage) and for urban landscape.

Within the study area, there is an under supply of significant public spaces, including parks and reserves, in particular within residential areas. Therefore streets become an important place for people to meet and socialize. Potential population growth and the emergence of smaller households (with limited areas of private open space) are likely to place pressure on existing spaces to provide for more users. Additionally there are a number of public spaces that could benefit from public realm improvements to enhance the amenity

Key elements influencing Preston's public realm include:

Open Spaces

- A park system largely made up of individual sites including local and neighbourhood parks, as well as streetscape. The character of these space is mixed.
- Preston Oval and Ray Bramham Gardens as key public spaces within Preston Central. These however provide for limited uses and are largely underutilised.
- Substantial increases in population forecasts for Preston, and the emergence of smaller households. This is likely to place pressure on existing spaces to provide for new and additional uses.
- An aging population, likely to result in many older adults facing reduced mobility and / or being unable to drive.
- The provision of open space across Preston Central is not equitable, with residents that are more than 5 minutes' walk to a usable public space.
- The proposed elevated rail corridor which proposes new open spaces below the rail bridges and new plaza/ urban spaces associated with upgraded stations at Bell and Preston.



Preston Oval is a key public space within Preston where there are opportunities to improve access to and utilisation of the space.

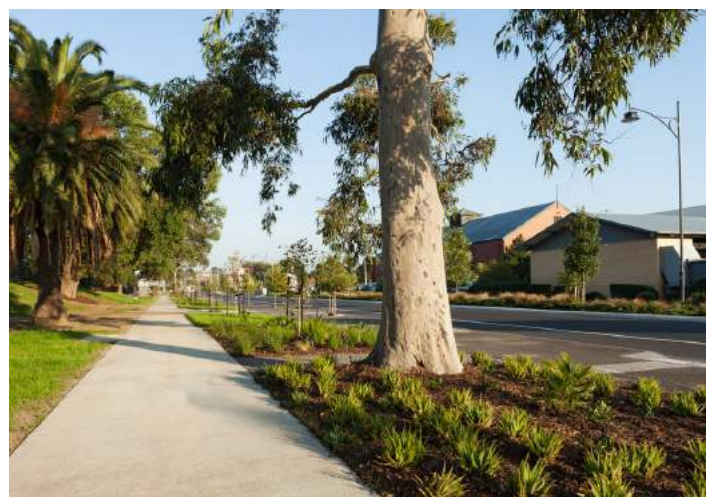


Proposals for the future LXR Preston Station should consider forecourt and public realm renewal (Murumbeena proposal shown).

- The recent purchase a property along High Street (by Council), to facilitate a mid-block link to Preston Station.
- A general absence of a significant civic space for the community to come together i.e. a civic square-type space.
- The JUMP masterplan which identifies a number of strategies to improve the provision of open space south of Bell Street, including the Oakover pop-up park.

Streetscapes

- High Street as a focus for retail activity in Preston. The street is however dominated by car use, limiting space for pedestrians and opportunities for outdoor dining.
- Streets which have become important places for people to meet and socialize where there is an absence of open space (i.e. spaces around the library and Council offices).
- Recent streetscape improvements including along High Street, south of Bell Street, and along Cramer Street between High Street and the railway line. These have provided additional tree planting and landscaping, improving the amenity and character of the street.
- The grid pattern of residential streets providing a highly permeable network for pedestrians.



Recent streetscape improvements have sought to enhance the pedestrian environment along Cramer Street through street tree planting and water conservation initiatives.

- There is however a lack of north-south links to east of Civic precinct
- There are opportunities to improve the amenity of key links to encourage people to walk and cycle to get around.
- Plenty Road, a vehicle heavy street which has a varied appearance and provides for a mix of uses.
- St Georges Road, featuring a distinctive and valued central median with linear shared path and tree planting, connecting to the Merri Creek Trail. This is a key unifying element of the street making it recognizable and unique. In some locations this is compromised by turn lanes etc.



The median along St Georges Road is distinctive and valued, but could be enhanced.

6.2 Opportunities for the Structure Plan

In order to support, foster and realise the Vision for Preston Central, the Structure Plan should respond to the following public realm related opportunities:



Reimagine the role of **Preston Oval** as the **premier civic park** within Preston Central



- Increase the level of public accessibility for the precinct,
- Utilise the significant area of land around the oval for public use and informal gathering, and new community facilities,
- Provide infrastructure to support and enhance the use of the space for community gathering and events,
- Respond to the public realm works of the level crossing removal at Preston Station, including proposed interfaces and connections,
- Provide pedestrian links to Cramer Street and Preston Station.



Maximise **activity along streets and laneways**



- Strengthen key pedestrian connections such as Cramer Street and other important links through landscaping, improved footpath connections and lighting,
- Create a new street frontage as a 'front door' to the Market,
- Position active uses to address main street, street and laneway frontages, and align buildings to the street at ground level,
- Enable the creation of new public plaza spaces which support stationary activities away from busy footpaths.



Create **mid-block connections** to support a more walkable Preston



- Retain, improve, and complete connections to contribute to a reduction in urban block size and walking distances through Preston Central,
- Ensure a mid-block pedestrian connection is completed where a development has the potential by extending an existing or proposed connection on an adjoining site,
- Ensure the provision of an activated mid-block link between Preston Station and High Street, through the redeveloped Preston Market site.

* Link the Bell Station and Preston Station precincts with a seamless 'ribbon' public spaces, places and paths



- Work with LXP to provide a linear open space and shared trails along as part of the elevated rail corridor.
- Consider the potential to provide additional open space areas and amenities for surrounding residents,
- Curate the character of this corridor to provide local public arts and cultural expression initiatives within the new public spaces.

* Advocate for the new Train Station public plaza spaces as **key pedestrian and community hubs**



- Advocate to ensure the provision of high quality and well considered public plazas as part of proposed upgrades to Bell and Preston stations, and that connect and engage with the station and adjacent uses (i.e. Preston Market).
- Maximise the public open space, and ensure it is the highest quality, multi-purpose, accessible and durable,
- Protect and re-purpose the existing heritage building at Bell
- Embed local cultural expression into Station architecture to make it locally distinctive, and authentic

* Re-imagine the **Civic Precinct at the core of the Preston community**



- Undertake an integrated master plan process for the Civic Precinct, to improve civic and community functions,
- Connect the new Civic Precinct as the eastern anchor of the east-west spine across High Street to the newly developed Preston Market and Train Station as the western anchor,
- Improve the presentation and functionality of the area around the Town Hall, Library and Kelvin Grove. This should include the provision of a new and/ or enhanced civic space that is highly visible, connects to High Street and is suitable for events.

* New public spaces and places **supporting the redeveloped Preston Market**



- Support the redevelopment of the Preston Market to deliver a sustainable, liveable & accessible public precinct,
- Encourage a pedestrian and cycle friendly precinct, and prioritise street level places and spaces for people, over vehicle movements,
- Connect to and engage with High Street and Preston Station,
- Create culturally diverse public realm and adaptable community spaces.



Continue to **establish and transform streets into pedestrian friendly spaces** throughout Preston Central



- Balance the various transport considerations within local streets to provide safe and attractive streets for the local community to not only use, but also enjoy and be proud of,
- Create streets and neighbourhoods that are safe, green, clean and welcoming, and improve access to public open space,
- Utilise space within the streets to create a network of smaller spaces that offer a diversity of experiences and activities,
- Providing additional recreational activities to support local schools and residential population.



Enhance **Ray Bramham Gardens** as a key open space destination.



- Expand its role and function to provide for and attract a broader range of users,
- Improve the quality and amenity of the space, including play spaces that cater for a range of age groups and abilities,
- Enhance pedestrian and cycle connections to DAEC and Bell Station, as well as surrounding residential areas,
- Create public art to reinforce the connections to DAEC.



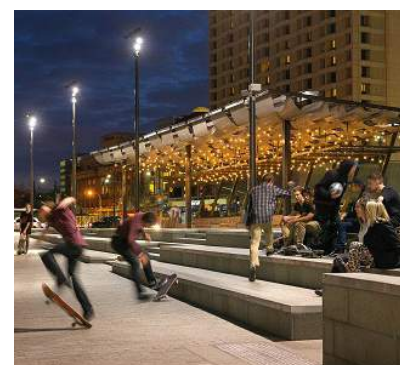
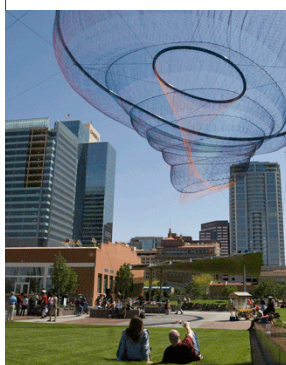
Provide **greater tree canopy cover** for a cooler, more comfortable urban Centre



- Increase street greenery and tree cover throughout Preston Central to cool down public spaces, provide shade and create a visually pleasant public realm,
- Provide shade to meet environmental standards (20/20/20 agenda) and to a level where it facilitates pedestrian movement,
- Maximise the provision of continuous weather protection along High Street and within the Preston Central,
- Create a long-term tree planting strategy consistent across Preston Central.



Support **comfortable, and equitable places and spaces** for people of all ages and abilities



- Improve the physical comfort and convenience of public places within the Centre to encourage longer stays by providing wind and rain shelter, access to sunlight, well-placed comfortable seating and hard and soft landscaping elements, particularly along High Street, around the civic precinct and Preston Station.
- Plan for public spaces that are welcoming to all people and support increased streetlife and activity,
- Ensure as new public plazas are created with development sites, these spaces are publicly accessible and avoid perceived privatisation of the public realm.



A **sustainable public realm** that reflects the community engagement with the environment



- Create a more sustainable precinct that reduces energy use,
- Ensure public realm and streetscape upgrades support a sustainable practices such as innovative water conservation, harvest and reuse strategies,
- Set targets for tree canopy cover to ensure shaded, sheltered and cooler public realm spaces within the Centre,
- Plan for increased digital connectivity for the community,
- Plan for increased access to e-vehicle and e-bike charge points.



Create a **safe and secure night time environment** for Preston into the future



- Embed Universal Design and Crime Prevention through Environmental Design Principles in all future capital works,
- Facilitate building frontages that contribute to the use, activity, safety and interest of the public realm,
- Create footpaths that are safe and free of entrapment spaces and areas with limited passive surveillance,
- Emphasise pedestrian connections that are high quality, safe and attractive, accessible by people of all abilities and easily identified and legible.



Provide **equitable access** for people of all abilities



- Provide equitable access for people of all abilities to the open spaces and parks. All residents should be within 5 minutes walking distance to safe and well maintained public open spaces,
- Investigate 'new' open space opportunities between Regent Street and Murray Street where there is currently an absence of public space,
- Investigate opportunities for large scale developments to provide for 'new' and/ or the enhancement of existing open spaces areas.

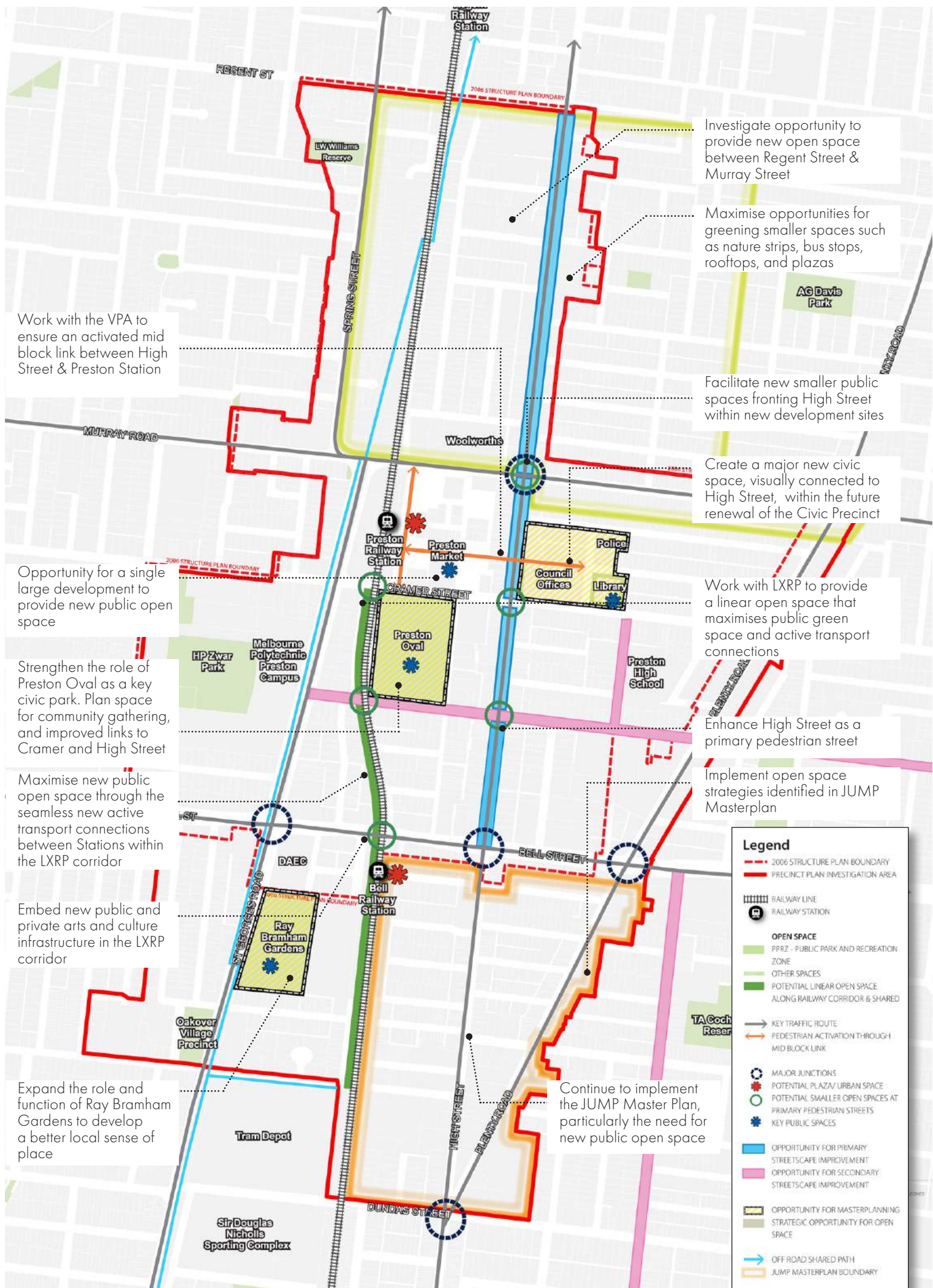


Figure 4. Public Realm

6.3 Areas for further consideration within the Structure Plan

Important public realm considerations for the preparation of the structure plan include:

- **Strengthening the role and function of Preston Oval as the premier civic park.** This includes improving accessibility and the amenity of the oval, as well as providing opportunities for a range of uses to occur within the space including events.
- **Capitalising on the opportunities provided by the elevated rail corridor.** Grade separation could allow for the provision of a linear trail along the railway corridor, as well as additional links and areas of open space for local residents to enjoy.
- Enhancing **visual and pedestrian connections to Bramham Gardens.**
- **The potential for large renewal site** within the Centre; particularly along Murray Road, High Street and Bell Street; to provide improved connections and access to public open space.
- While the Open Space Strategy for Darebin identifies a number of **mechanisms to deliver new additional open space areas** for existing and future residents, including acquisition and re-purposing, further investigation of appropriate opportunities is required.



A civic space near the Town Hall should be suitable for events and public gathering.



The role and function of Ray Bramham Gardens should be expanded to meet existing open space gaps and attract more users to the



The proposed linear trail and shared path along the railway corridor, as part of the elevated railway line could provide opportunities for additional open spaces for residents.



Widened footpaths and additional planting along High Street could improve pedestrian amenity .

7. ACCESS AND MOVEMENT

7.1 Context

The Vision aims to transform Preston Central into a transit-oriented activity Centre, with excellent public transport access to Melbourne and surrounding areas and a connected and comprehensive walking and cycling network. While Preston Station should be the focal point of this active transport network, local active transport access to the Preston Markets and other key activity generators are also important.

Walking and cycling are enjoyable and easy forms of transport that bring significant health, economic and environmental benefits. This Paper proposes a number of walking and cycling improvements which will create clear priority and make walking and cycling the preferred mode of transport for short trips within Preston Central.

The Urban Design Issues and Opportunities Paper delineates a network of streets within the core where the highest level of pedestrian priority should be provided. A number of projects are proposed in this area including streetscape upgrades and measures to make the streets less car-dominated and more pedestrian friendly.

A particularly important link is the connection from the Preston Station to High Street and civic and community facilities located along Gower Street. A critical component of this link will be the redeveloped Preston Market. The details of the proposed redevelopment are largely unknown, however a clear and logical path network between these destinations should be established.



The proposed elevated railway corridor provides opportunities to enhance connections throughout the Centre.

Key factors influencing Preston Central's access and movement include:

- Substantial increases in population forecast and a need to service more residents and visitors in the future.
- Changing demographics likely to result in many older adults facing reduced mobility and being unable to drive, as well as less young people driving and /or with access to a vehicle.
- Existing access to a wide range of public transport options including train, tram and buses.
- State Government commitment to the removal of level crossings at Bell Street, Cramer Street, Murray Street and Oakover Road (simultaneously), as well as the delivery of two new stations, at Bell and Preston.
- An elevated railway corridor providing opportunities for new open space links and improved east west and north south connections.
- Recent projects, including the Cramer Street streetscape improvements which have sought to reinforce and enhance walking and cycling connections.



St Georges Road, Murray Street and Plenty Road are key vehicular streets within Preston.

- Proposals to create a future mid-block connection from High Street' to Preston Station, via the Preston Market site.
- Strong and continuous growth in rates of cycling across Darebin.
- A connected walking network that benefits from a permeable street grid and flat topography. There are however some missing links and opportunities to improve the amenity of footpaths.
- Increased community awareness of the benefits of active transport (i.e. environmental, health and social).
- St Georges Road, Murray Road and Plenty Road as key vehicular streets, providing through access, as well as connections to several car based destinations and car park areas.
- The role of the Centre as a destination for local convenience that draws people in from the surrounding residential catchment.



The High Street corridor at the heart of the Centre will need to continue to balance all transport modes.



Bike parking should be provided at key locations to encourage cycling within Preston.

7.2 Opportunities for the Structure Plan

In order to support, foster and realise the Vision for Preston Central, the Structure Plan should respond to the following movement and access related opportunities:



Improve pedestrian access, safety and priority through the Streets for People program



- Implement 'Streets for People' and transform key local streets into more people friendly spaces,
- Extend the 'Streets for People' initiative to identify and deliver improvements around the Bell Station Precinct.



Continue High Street improvements to reinforce its status at the core of Preston Central



- Provide more footpath space to support retail and café uses along High Street, as the key north-south pedestrian axis within Preston Central, and the hub of pedestrian activity,
- Design for cohesive streetscape treatments and improvements, and traffic calming and speed reduction measures for vehicles that are consistent with the Preston character and identity,
- Ensure pedestrian priority is maintained at vehicle crossovers and entries to car parks,
- Improve pedestrian comfort and safety, including the provision of lighting an awnings, to support the growing night time economy.

* Prioritise the **completion of missing pedestrian links** across the Centre



- Continue to improve pedestrian and cycle paths and complete missing connections to provide a network of high-quality public spaces and pedestrian friendly streets
- Connect people from the stations to key destinations such as High Street, Preston and Bell Station, Ray Bramham Gardens / DAEC and the Town Hall / Library / Council Offices. Improve north-south pedestrian/ bicycle connections to east of Civic precinct
- Facilitate, over time, a fine grained urban block structure around rail stations to support walking connections.

* Embed a **new Preston Market mid-block link** into the pedestrian network



- Encourage pedestrian permeability between Preston Station and the High Street is supported via connections between the station entries and Cramer Street and via an activated mid-block link through the redeveloped Preston Market site.
- Over time, investigate opportunities for a pedestrian link through the Civic Precinct east of High Street,
- Connect the mid-block link seamlessly into the elevated rail corridor works at Preston Station and ensure there are clear viewlines to the Station public realm.

* Provide **bicycle parking and facilities throughout the Centre** to support commuting and short trips



- Create a visibility for cyclists within Preston through a wayfinding and signage program to support increased safe cycling,
- Provide bicycle parking within along High Street, at Preston and Bell Stations, Ray Bramham Gardens / DAEC and the Town Hall / Library / Council Offices to encourage people to cycle to the Centre,
- Encourage the provision of high quality trip end facilities for cyclists and walkers, including, lockers, showers, change rooms and clothes drying room, in particular within the new Preston and Bell Stations and all new developments.

* Integrate the **new transit connections and station environments** into existing streets and paths



- Work with LXP to ensure the new Preston and Bell Station provide high-quality environments users of all abilities,
- Ensure that surrounding uses enhance activity and safety around the station, at all hours of the day.



Work towards a **DDA compliant**, seamless and contiguous pedestrian environment across Preston Central



- Ensure new public realm works provide for a high level of DDA compliance, particularly around existing and new public transport nodes such as the new train station environments.
- Identify gaps in the DDA compliant network and prioritise these in capital works programs,
- Continue to improve the DDA compliance of the High Street corridor as the key pedestrian axis and heart of Preston.



Reduce through traffic within the core of Preston



- Focus major vehicular movements onto arterial and connector roads i.e. Plenty Road, St Georges Road and Murray Street
- Work to reduce the impact of through traffic along High Street as the key north-south corridor, and develop its role as a pedestrian street,
- Mitigate east-west traffic movements across the High Street corridor, by promoting Murray Road as a vehicle priority road, and Cramer Street as a pedestrian priority street within the Activity Centre.



Develop the **Bell Station Precinct connections**



Artist impression only. Subject to change.

- Improve pedestrian safety and access between Bell Station and DAEC / Ray Bramham Gardens, in particular along Isaacs Street and Garnet Streets.
- Create enhanced sight-lines, high quality landscape treatments, lighting and activation for the Bell Station precinct,
- Facilitate surrounding or adjacent sites to renew and/ or redevelop, over time, to engage with and positively activate the Bell Station precinct.



Minimise the **impacts of car parking** on the public realm



- Provide safe and convenient pedestrian access to existing and proposed off street car parks through the implementation of pedestrian links between car park areas and adjacent streets,
- Minimise the impact of vehicle entries on pedestrian experience,
- Locate car parking underground to prevent negative impacts on the public realm or sleeved by active uses to main streets and streets.

* Future proof Preston for **emerging transit modes**



- Encourage the inclusion of electric vehicle re-charge points in new car park designs, particularly within Preston Market and the Civic Precinct redevelopments,
- Promote Preston as 'e-vehicle friendly' destination as part of the local identity,
- Ensure future development sites support e-vehicle capabilities.

* Support **increased use of car share and alternative transport modes**



- Encourage car-share services and parking to reduce the car dependency across Preston Central,
- Create a car-share network for Preston Central with planned, allocated spaces in convenient locations on High Street, around Preston and Bell Stations, and within the Civic Precinct,
- Support the provision of car-share models within new developments in conjunction with potential reduction in parking requirements.

* Provide **new car parking areas** to basement or podium levels away from street level



- Locate additional car parking, particularly within proximity to the station, retail and civic uses, that can be accessed with minimal disruption to High Street and Cramer Street.
- Ensure vehicle entries do not create traffic conflict, particularly to Cramer St, High St and Bell St,
- Minimise the effect of car parking entries on the streetscape environment,
- Ensure multi level and basement car parks are capable of possible future adaptation to other uses.

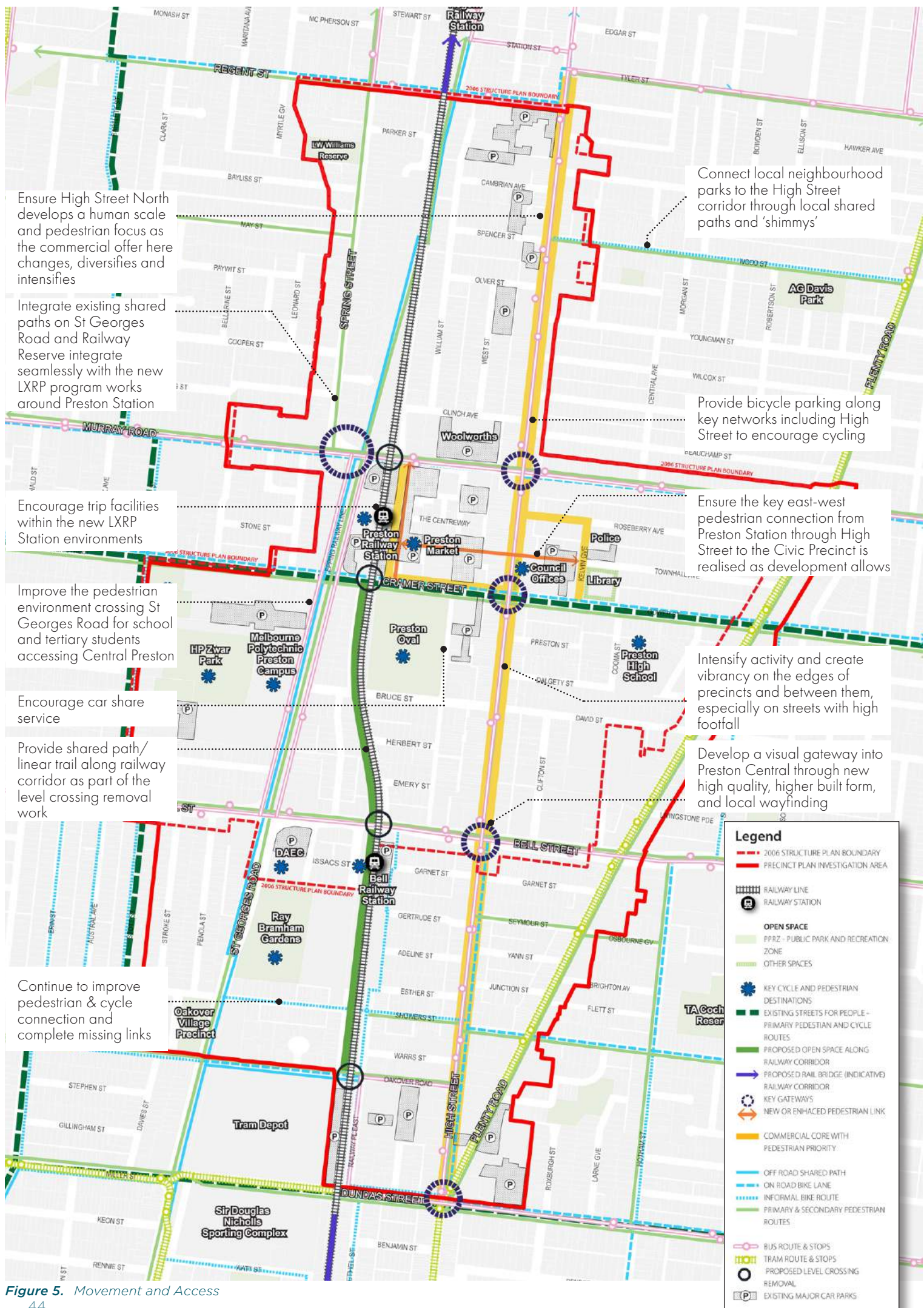


Figure 5. Movement and Access



Widen footpaths to allow more space for pedestrians and outdoor dining along High Street.



Connect cycling infrastructure and network seamlessly into the new public transport nodes and stations



Lighting and activation should be a key consideration of providing an activated mid-block link through the Preston Market site.



Ensure co-located bus and train transit services are connected to local pedestrian and cycling links for a seamless travel environment.



Ensure new public realm works provide for a high level of DDA compliance and allow for all abilities access.

7.3 Areas for further consideration within the Structure Plan

Important movement and access considerations for the preparation of the structure plan include:

- The **capacity of existing and planned infrastructure and services** and the likely impacts of future demand. Traffic and transport investigations will be required to ensure appropriate transport infrastructure is provided for the future.
- The **Preston Market redevelopment**. It will be important to ensure improvements to Preston Station and the surrounding precinct integrate with the revitalised Preston Market site,
- The **proposed Level Crossing Removal program works**, to ensure direct integration into works completed through the LXR program at both Preston and Bell Train Stations - particularly provision of walking, cycling and public realm infrastructure.
- **New and emerging transport modes**. The future movement networks should be flexible to adapt to changing needs i.e. potential autonomous vehicles, electric scooters, trackless trams.



Pedestrian links should enhance access and egress of off-street car parks.

8. NEXT STEPS

8.1 Developing a new Structure Plan

The existing Preston Central Structure Plan has undergone review, including an internal City of Darebin study to ascertain which components of the plan have been delivered, and which components are outstanding. Some of those outstanding initiatives still have ongoing relevance, while others need a adaptation or update provide a set of clear objectives for the ongoing use and development of the precinct.

Continued investment and strategic work is required to deliver the desired outcomes and to revise and fine-tune the planning controls that apply to the Centre. This paper will provide guidance for the development of an updated Structure Plan for Preston Central.

The recommendations contained within this report should be considered; along with other relevant strategic documents and technical reports from specialist consultants; in order to develop a robust, integrated and sustainable structure plan for the future. The translation of these recommendations should be underpinned by a design focused approach.

Once complete, the Structure Plan will provide a clear framework for managing the future growth and change of Preston Central. It will help to guide public and private investment while ensuring the Centre develops in an orderly and sustainable way, into the future.



Figure 1. Plan Title