



City of
DAREBIN

the place
to live

Alai Pan
Bakery

French Mì Thập - Vietnamese Pork Roll

C-CULTURE
CHINESE RESTAURANT

BLVD 亚洲食品

MARKET ENTRY

Dong
INTERNATIONAL FOOD STORE

Hung Sunn Barbecue

123 Vietnamese Chinese Restaurant

HIGH STREET PRESTON STREETSCAPE UPGRADE

BACKGROUND ANALYSIS

August 2025

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS

Darebin City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the traditional owners and custodians of the land and waters we now call Darebin and pays respect to their elders, past, present and emerging.

Council affirms that Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people have lived on this land for millennia, practising their ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal.

Council respects and recognises all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their values, living culture and practices, including their continuing spiritual connection to the land and waters and their right to self-determination.

CONTENTS

- 1. Introduction 3
 - 1.1 Site 5
 - 1.2 History..... 7
 - 1.3 Demographics..... 9
- 2. Site Analysis 11
 - 2.1 Access & Connectivity 13
 - 2.2 Business 15
 - 2.3 Movement..... 17
 - 2.4 Place 19
 - 2.5 Parking..... 21
 - 2.6 Land Use & Development 23
 - 2.7 Drainage 25
 - 2.8 Figure Ground 26

1. INTRODUCTION

This report describes and illustrates the analysis undertaken to inform the development of a future streetscape concept plan for High Street, Preston, between Bell Street and Murray Road. The report was prepared by Darebin City Council.

High Street Preston is the centre's primary shopping strip in the Preston Central Major Activity Centre and offers a diverse range of retail stores, services and dining opportunities.

In 2024, the Victorian State Government released *Victoria's Housing Statement – The Decade Ahead 2024–2034* which identified 10 activity centres and their surrounds, including Preston, as key locations for a pilot program which aims to facilitate increased housing supply.

The purpose of the Activity Centre Program is to unlock 60,000 new homes by 2051, with the Preston (High Street) activity centre and catchment area proposed to contribute between 11,800 to 15,300 new homes.

Despite its importance, the street environment is currently compromised by poor pedestrian connectivity, a dominance of vehicles, and an absence of kerbside activity. The street also favours vehicles over all other forms of movement, particularly walking and cycling which are largely discouraged by constant traffic flow, on-street car parking and clearways. Pedestrians are generally confined to narrow footpaths, while cyclists are forced to mix with vehicles on busy, and at times narrow traffic lanes.

This project has presented a unique opportunity to re-imagine the High Street streetscape in a holistic and

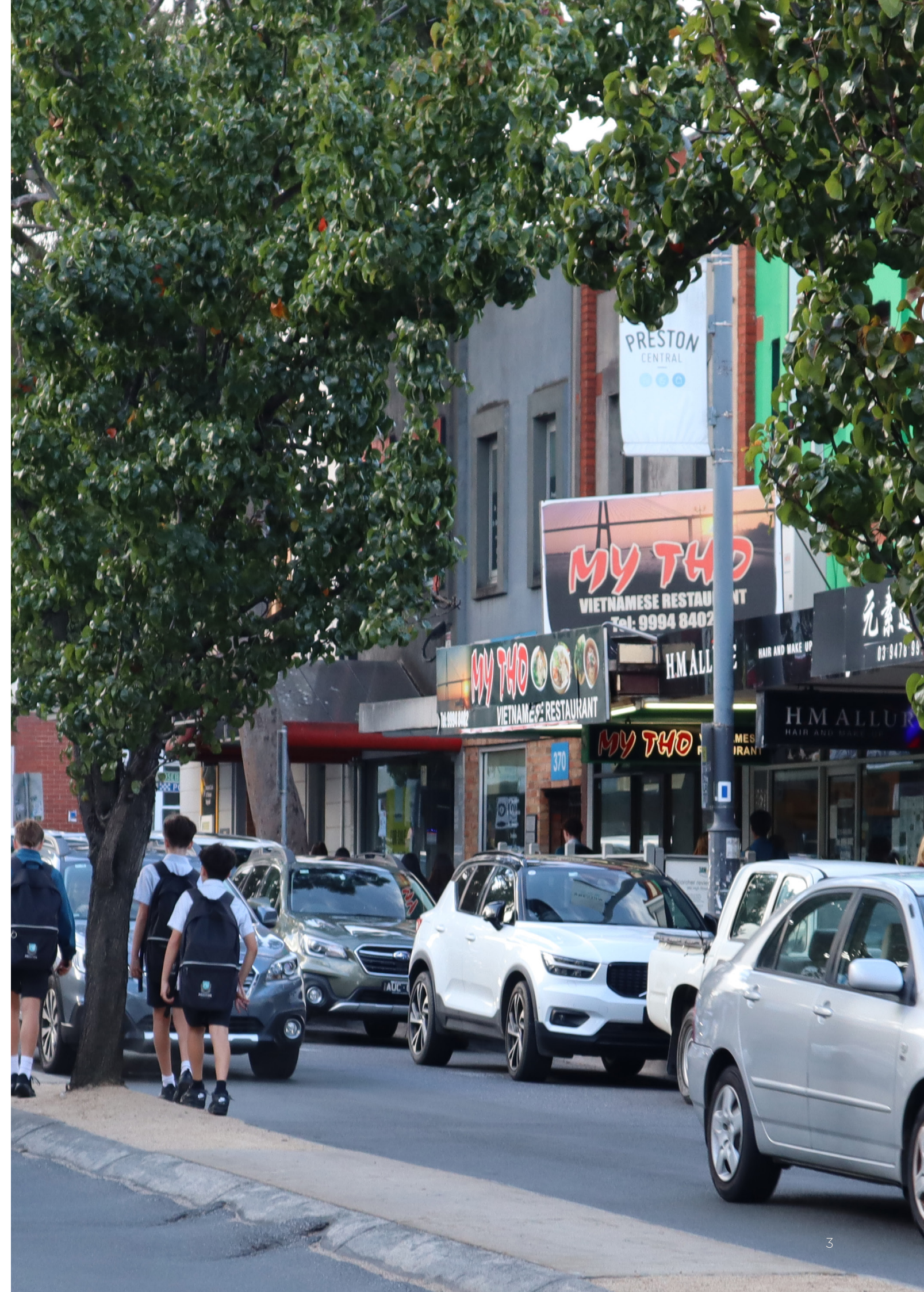
coordinated manner, enabling the potential of the public domain to be fully explored to create attractive new community spaces.

It has also allowed for movement systems that embrace and integrate pedestrian access as safe, convenient and highly desirable components of the urban fabric to be explored, including through the removal of clearways. These key changes to the public domain will provide a catalyst for much-needed urban renewal of High Street, Preston.

The project involves developing a concept plan which will then be used to develop a complete documentation package.

This level of detail will provide Council with confidence that proposals have been developed with sufficient rigour and consideration to appropriate design standards for road layout, lane widths, pedestrian crossings, turning manoeuvres, sight distances and parking.

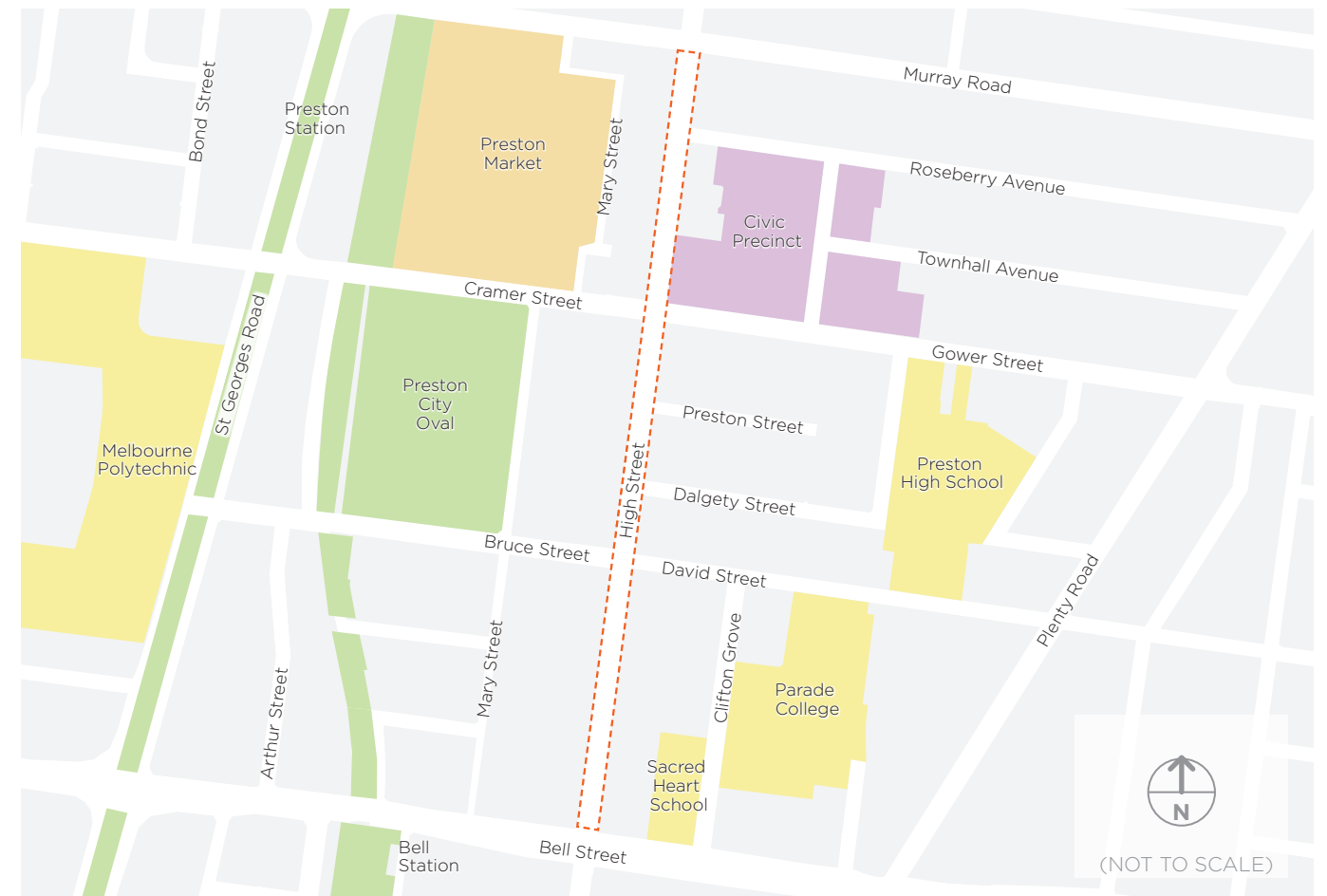
It will also provide a basis for cost estimates as construction budgets and grant funding become available.



1.1 SITE



Location plan



Study area



Typical streetscape section of High Street Preston

1.2 HISTORY

Preston Central is on the traditional Country of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people of the East Kulin who have occupied these lands for over 40,000 years. Preston Central largely falls into the Parish of Jika Jika which was surveyed by Robert Hoddle in 1837.

At the beginning of the twentieth century and into early 1900's while Northcote established as planned retail activity centre, Preston was largely used for agricultural purposes serving farmers, graziers, and market gardeners.

Around 1850s, two centres of activity developed in the area, one at the corner of High and Wood streets and the other at High Street and Plenty Road intersections.

Between 1860s and early 1900s a range of manufacturing operations developed in the area such as tanneries, brickworks, and bacon-curing factories. Serviced by newly introduced cable trams which was followed in 1889 with the construction of the Whittlesea railway line and associated stations, many residential estates developed in the area.

After First World War in 1918, many interwar developments began with the arrival of families of servicemen and women into the area. In 1921, the rail line was electrified improving connectivity of the area and catalysing the middle Melbourne suburban expansion accommodating the influx of migrants.

By 1926 Preston transformed from a Shire to the City of Preston. A new Preston Townhall was built at the corner of High and Gower streets in 1929 and is a central landmark for Preston Central.

Postwar expansion occurred from the 1950's with the arrival of people from Europe. Preston served as one of five District Business Centres (DBC). The Melbourne Metropolitan Planning Scheme of 1954 sought to control sprawl and strengthen the role of retail centres. Older industrial uses become redundant, and Preston Market was developed over a tannery site in the 1960s while Northland Shopping Centre was developed in 1966.

The migration pattern shifted in the 1970's with people coming to settle from Vietnam and then from China in the 1980's. Together, over time the fresh waves of migrant population into the area have resulted in Preston being one of the most culturally diverse suburbs.



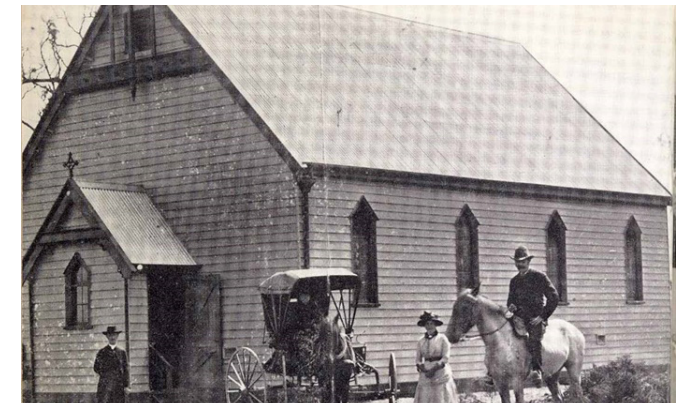
High Street Preston looking south from Murray Road c. 1920s. Image courtesy of Darebin Libraries.



The original Preston Fire Station operated between 1888 and 1910 before being replaced by the current building. Image courtesy of Darebin Libraries.



Preston Library in its former location on High Street with the post office to the left and Town Hall on the right. Image courtesy of Darebin Libraries.



The original All Saints Church was built in 1889. Image courtesy of Darebin Libraries.



Council Club Hotel c. 1890s (formerly located on the corner Cramer and High). Image courtesy of Darebin Libraries.

1.3 DEMOGRAPHICS

Darebin City Council recognises the Traditional Owners of the land, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and pays respect to and celebrates the long-standing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage within our community.

Preston Central’s community is richly diverse, comprising people from a range of backgrounds, cultures, languages, religions, ages, and socio-economic status.

Preston Central’s cultural and linguistic diversity is a unique asset. Over 42% of residents speak a language other than English at home, compared with 34% in Greater Melbourne, and 44% of residents

were born overseas, compared with 35.7% in Greater Melbourne.

The community is forecast to grow significantly with an increase in population from 4,798 in 2021 to 19,505 by 2041. It is anticipated that an additional 5,438 new dwellings will be needed to accommodate this growth.

The Centre is appealing to people who want to settle. 52.5% of people living in the Centre are either from young workforce or parents and homebuilders age cohorts, compared with 37.5% in Greater Melbourne. Current forecast indicates continued growth of the younger workforce age group to 2041.

	YOUNG WORKFORCE (25 - 34) / PARENTS & HOMEBUILDERS (35 - 49)	52.5% of people living in Preston Central Major Activity Centre 42.2% of people living in the City of Darebin 37.5 of people living in Greater Melbourne
	LIVE IN A LONE PERSON HOUSEHOLD	34.2% of households in Preston Central Major Activity Centre 29.4% of households in the City of Darebin 23.7% of households in Greater Melbourne
	HAVE A BACHELOR DEGREE	41.5% of people living in Preston Central Major Activity Centre 39.6% of people living in the City of Darebin 32.8% of people living in Greater Melbourne
	WORK PART TIME	31.8% of people living in Preston Central Major Activity Centre 32.5% of people living in the City of Darebin 31.6% of people living in Greater Melbourne
	INVOLVED IN HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	14.7% of people living in Preston Central Major Activity Centre 14.8% of people living in the City of Darebin 13.5% of people living in Greater Melbourne
	TRAVEL TO WORK	34.4% of people living in Preston Central Major Activity Centre 38.5% of people living in the City of Darebin 49.7% of people living in Greater Melbourne



2. SITE ANALYSIS

This section of the report illustrates the background analysis undertaken to inform the development of a future streetscape concept plan for High Street, Preston, between Bell Street and Murray Road.

The report has been divided into the following sections:

- Access & Connectivity
- Business
- Movement
- Place
- Parking
- Land Use & Development
- Drainage
- Figure Ground



2.1 ACCESS & CONNECTIVITY

Preston Central is well serviced by Public Transport, including bus, train and tram. Off- and on-road cycling facilities and off-road carparking are also well provided.

Key considerations include:

- High Street is serviced by the nearby Preston Station on the South Morang line. The station and train line have recently undergone redevelopment and grade separation.
- As part of the station works, an off-road cycling path was constructed under the elevated rail line. An additional off-road cycling path is located along the St Georges Road median strip. Both bike paths run north-south.
- On-road cycling lanes are located on Gower/Cramer Street and along parts of Murray Road, and run east-west.
- There are several buses that service the area including along High Street, Murray Road and Bell Street.
- The route 86 tram line runs along Plenty Road directly to the east of Preston Central.
- There is a large number of time-restricted off-street car parks in the vicinity of High Street including at Preston Market, Woolworths and the Civic Precinct.



Legend



(NOT TO SCALE)

- Train line
- Train station
- Bus route
- Tram route
- On-road bike lane
- Off-road bike lane
- Off-street parking



Preston Central is well serviced by Public Transport including bus, train and tram.



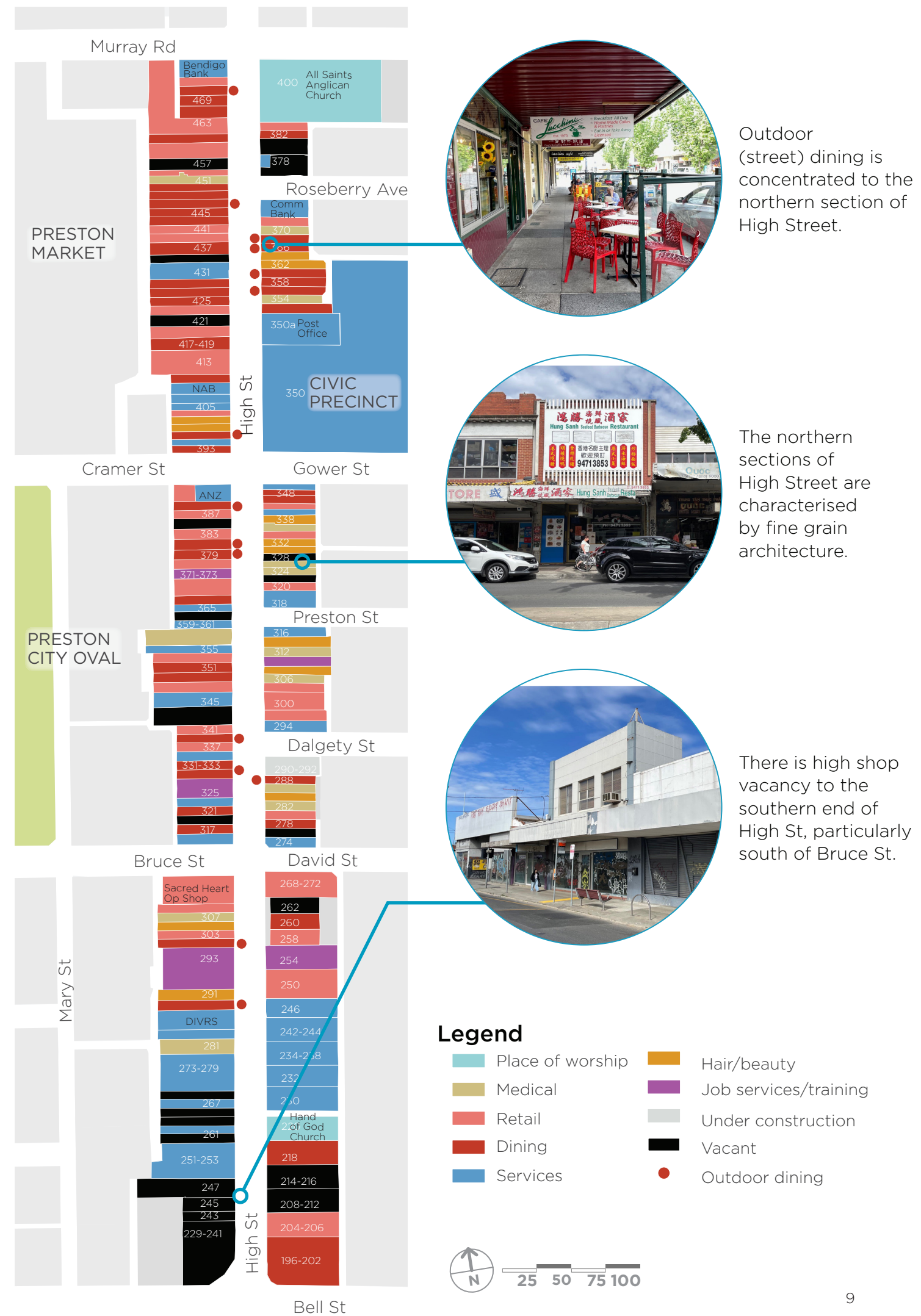
Preston Central has a large number of off-street carparks including at Preston Market.

2.2 BUSINESS

The streetscape environment and activation level of High Street, Preston is strongly influenced by the function and scale of the buildings, and their proximity to significant landmarks.

Key considerations include:

- Footpaths along High Street are relatively narrow and currently offer limited streetscape appeal to attract further activation.
- There is a high concentration of restaurants and cafes along the northern part of High Street (Gower to Murray), which includes a nighttime economy;
- Outdoor (street) dining is also concentrated to the northern section of High Street, however capacity is limited due to the narrow width of the footpaths;
- There is a lack of street activation due to lower pedestrian movement, larger building 'grain' and high shop vacancy to the south of Gower Street, and particularly south of Bruce Street;
- There is a high concentration of employment agencies and Aboriginal service providers in the southern section of the study area.



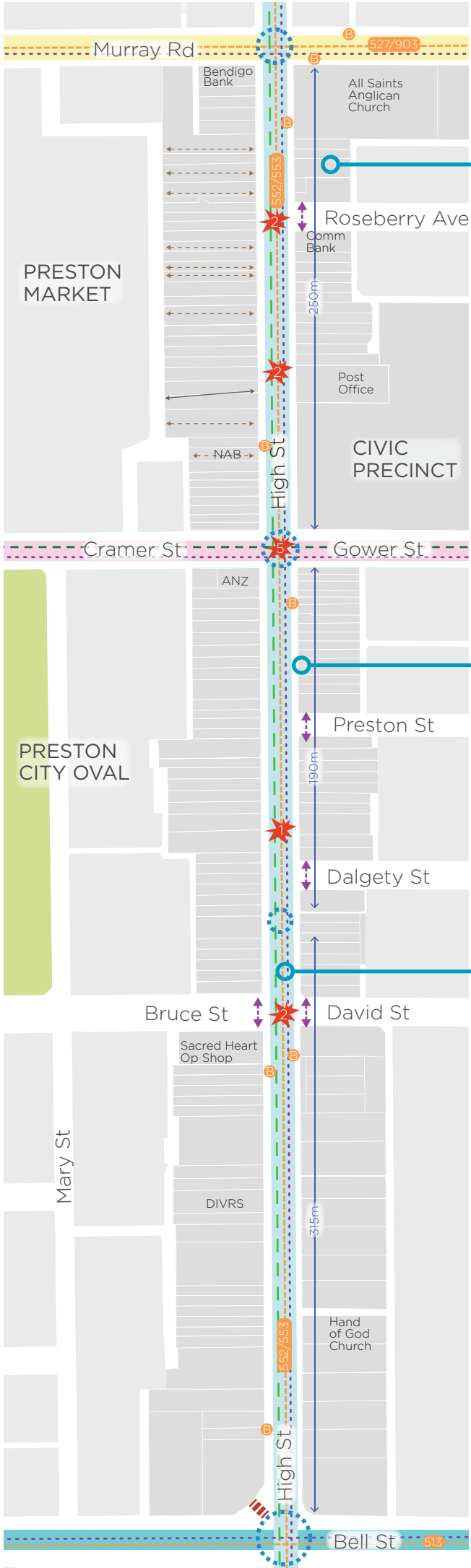
2.3 MOVEMENT

Vehicle access and movement is the most significant influencing factor on the existing urban fabric and streetscape character of High Street.

Key considerations include:

- Clearways operate at peak times (inbound 7-9am) and (outbound 4.30-6.30pm) resulting in two lanes of traffic movement which prioritises vehicular movement over place users such as pedestrians and cyclists.
- Council undertook work to understand the impact of removing clearways. As part of this work, Council commissioned a Movement and Place study, a Traffic Impact Assessment and a Traffic Signal Modelling Assessment. The reports show the following
 - o There is no significant delay to the network as a result of clearway removals.
 - o Removal of the clearways will move Council closer to 'optimum' movement and place targets for an activity centre, especially walking and safety.
 - o The removal of the clearways will also downgrade the movement function of High Street which aligns with Council's longer term strategic view that through traffic movements should be diverted to either St Georges Road or Plenty Road, which are declared arterial roads.
- Vehicle movement includes traffic either passing through or arriving at the centre as a destination.

- High Street is managed by Council and is classified as a Secondary Multi Modal Street. This type of road is intended to provide for a mixture of different transport types and road uses, with priority given to pedestrians and cyclists.
- St Georges Road and Plenty Road (400m to the west and 500m to the east of High Street respectively), are managed by the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) and are classified as arterial roads which are the principal routes for the movement of people and goods. Despite this, a large number of heavy vehicles use High Street as a thoroughfare.
- High Street is a Key Cycling Corridor which means it is a cycling route of Council importance. It is also a Primary Pedestrian Route which is where the highest level of pedestrian activity is expected. High priority is given to pedestrians at these locations.
- The central median strip plays an important role in reducing traffic speeds, and provides a refuge for those crossing the street, however it limits ability to informally cross the street for those with disability.



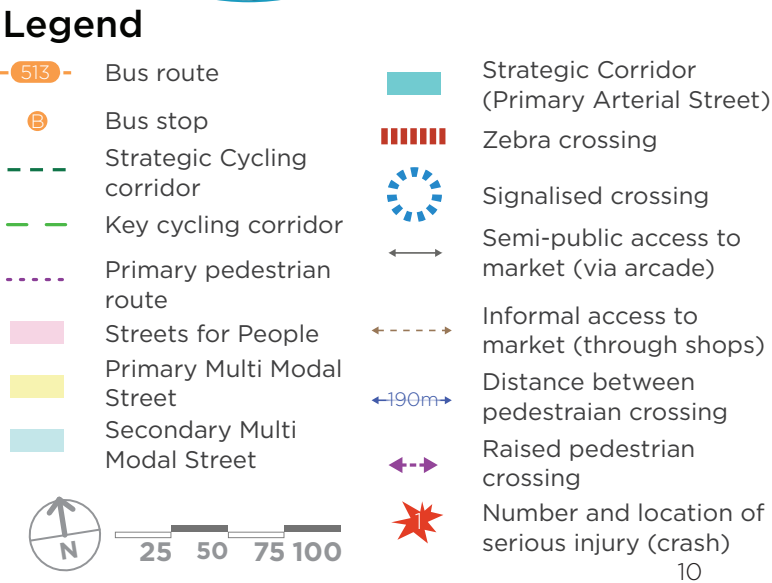
Clearways result in an increase to the number of vehicles and associated noise which impacts the amenity of the street.



There is limited room for cyclists between the row of parked cars and traffic lane.



Despite its local road status, High Street sees a large number of heavy goods vehicles using it as a thoroughfare.



2.4 PLACE

The visual character of the existing public domain in High Street, Preston offers limited visual appeal and is central to creating a more vital streetscape environment.

Key considerations include:

- There majority of the established street trees are in the median strip and offer limited sun protection;
- As part of a tree planting project in 2023, a large number of trees have been planted in the footpaths of the southern part of the subject site. The trees were mostly native and were chosen for their hardiness to harsh urban environments.
- The presence of shop-front awnings/ verandas limits additonal tree planting opportunities;
- Footpaths are narrow, and at times congested and don't reflect the existing land-use and user experience intended for a an activity centre with strip shopping.
- Existing surface materials and street furniture within the public domain generally offer limited street appeal;
- The established garden areas and canopy trees of the All Saints Anglican Church and the Civic Precinct offer some relief from the surrounding built form.
- In the study area, there are only two small seating nodes for people to pause and rest.
- Several murals have been installed to help deter graffiti, however they also add to the character of Preston.

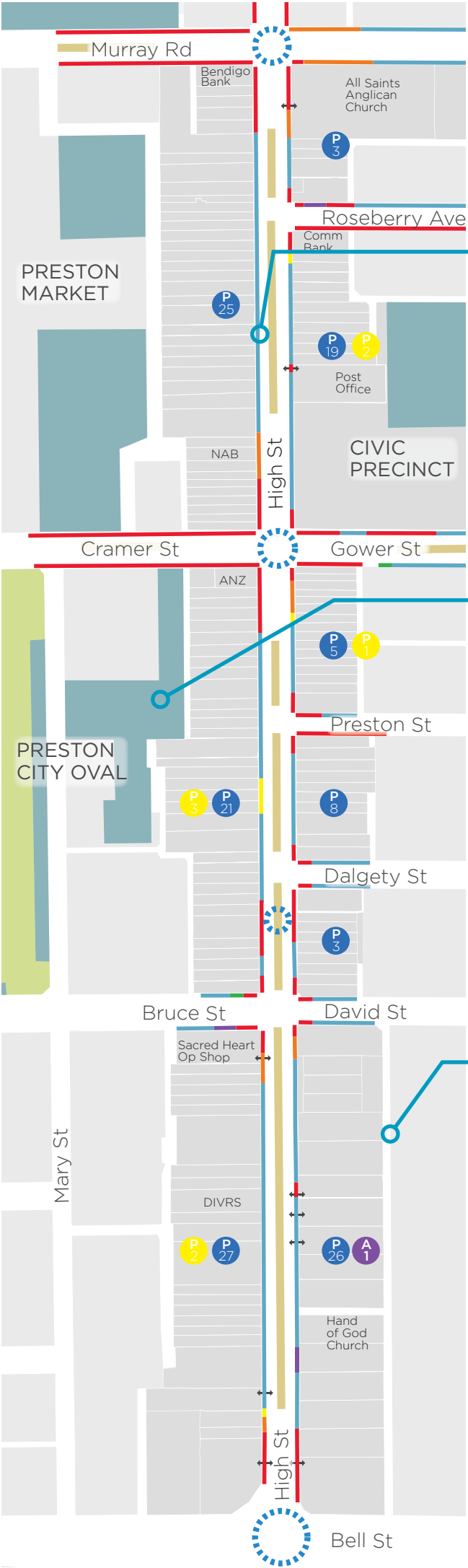


2.5 PARKING

The provision and accessibility of car parking is an important factor influencing the function and perceived attractiveness of High Street, Preston.

Key considerations include:

- High Street and surrounding streets are largely serviced by time-restricted parallel parking bays;
- There are a number of accessible parking, car share, and taxi bays within close proximity of High Street;
- Delivery of goods is facilitated by several loading zones and via rear laneways;
- There is currently one EV car charging station in the study area, located in the Council carpark on Gower Street.



The majority of on-street parking along High Street and surrounding streets is time-restricted to 1-2 hours.



There is a significant number of off-street car parks in the vicinity including at Preston Market and around the Civic Precinct.



Laneways to the rear of businesses and loading zones on High Street provide for the delivery of goods.

Legend

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| On-street parking | Vehicle crossover |
| No Standing zone | Median strip |
| Bus zone parking | No. of on-street car parks. Length of stay: varies. At other times: clearway/unrestricted. |
| Car share zone | No. of loading zone car parks. Day/time restrictions: varies. Clearway/unrestricted at other times. |
| Loading zone | No. of accessible car parks. Length of stay: 2 hours (Mon-Fri). At other times: clearway. |
| Accessible parking | |
| Off-street parking | |
| Signalised crossing | |

2.6 LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT

The built form along High Street is typically made up of two storey buildings of different styles and eras.

There is a cluster of heritage shopfronts to the north of David Street and to the north of Gower Street (east side). There are also several individual heritage buildings at intersections, such as Preston Town Hall, which create important visual landmarks in the landscape.

The majority of sites are small and narrow with lot depths ranging from 30m-70m and lot widths mostly around 5m-10m.

Key considerations include:

- In late 2023, Council adopted the Draft Preston Central Structure Plan, which is a long-term strategy that provides the framework to guide and facilitate change and growth in Central Preston.
- The structure plan is underpinned by a community vision, and sets out how land should be used and developed within the Centre.
- Earlier this year, the Victorian State Government released Victoria’s Housing Statement – The Decade Ahead 2024-2034 which identifies 10 activity centres and their surrounds, including Preston, as key locations for a pilot program which aims to facilitate increased housing supply.
- The purpose of the Activity Centre Program is to unlock 60,000 new homes by 2051, with the Preston (High Street) activity centre and catchment area proposed to contribute between 11,800 to 15,300 new homes.
- The state government released design controls for the Preston Central Activity Centre in April 2025

which is anticipated to encourage development within the centre.

- There are a number of existing multistorey, mixed-use developments, with some under construction.
- Near the corner of Bell and High Streets, there are a several large vacant sites, and also several large sites for sale.



2.7 DRAINAGE

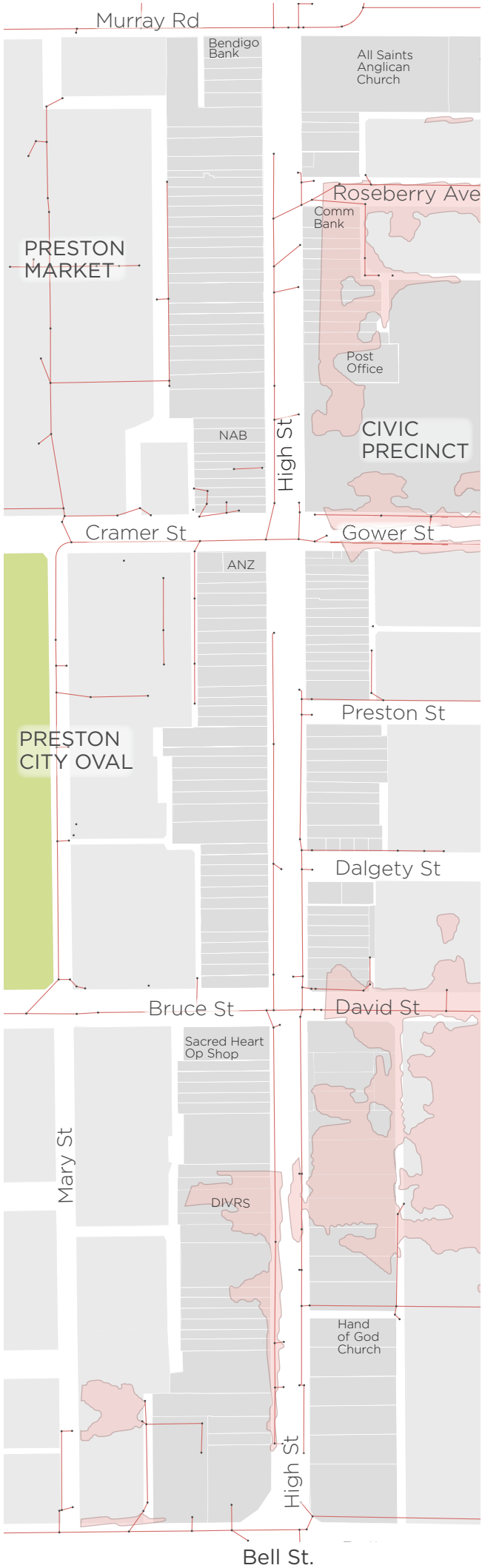
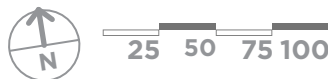
Drainage along High Street is an important factor given the majority of the street is subject to flooding.

Key considerations include:

- A study has been undertaken by Melbourne Water to update the existing flood extents and flood overlays within Darebin.
- Parts of the study area are currently subject to a Special Building Overlay (SBO2).
- The SBO is currently being audited by Melbourne Water, and is expected to be released as a final draft in late-2025.
- Findings from the audit will inform the future design of the street.

Legend

- SBO2
- Drainage line and pit

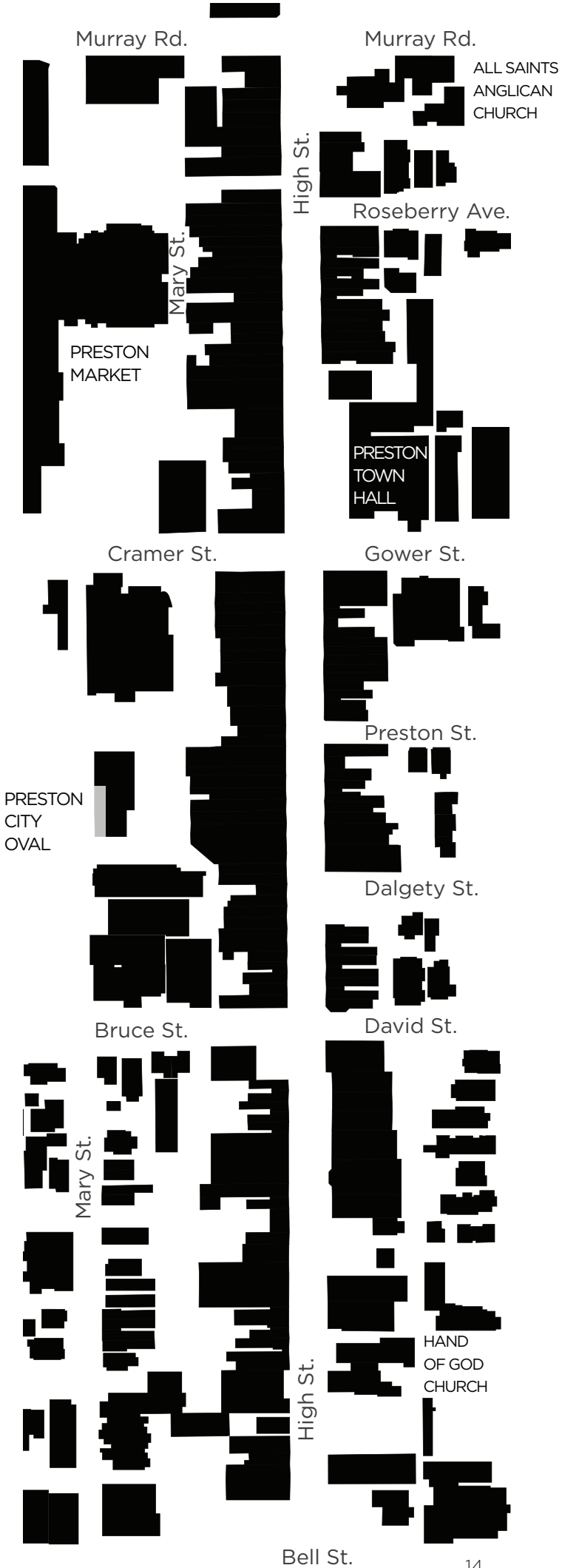


2.8 FIGURE GROUND

The diagram shows the relationship between built and unbuilt spaces along High Street.

Key considerations include:

- The majority of buidlings along High Street are built to the footpath with no setback.
- All Saints Anglican Church and Preston Town Hall offer considerable setbacks, boasting seating, lawn areas and significant canopy trees.
- Hand of God Church is set back a small distance from the footpath providing a small shaded space to gather.
- A series of shops on the eastern side of High Street to the south of David Street are set back several metres and currently provide outdoor dining or small grasssed areas.
- Car yards, vacant lots and carparks make up the remaing unbuilt spaces along High Street.



**CITY OF
DAREBIN**

274 Gower Street, Preston
PO Box 91, Preston, Vic 3072
T 8470 8888 **F** 8470 8877
E mailbox@darebin.vic.gov.au
darebin.vic.gov.au

274 Gower Street, Preston
PO Box 91, Preston, Vic 3072
T 8470 8888 **F** 8470 8877
E mailbox@darebin.vic.gov.au
darebin.vic.gov.au



National Relay Service
relayservice.gov.au

If you are deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment, contact us through the National Relay Service.



 **Speak your language**
T 8470 8470

العربية	Italiano	Soomalii
繁體中文	Македонски	Español
Ελληνικά	नेपाली	اردو
हिंदी	ਪੰਜਾਬੀ	Tiếng Việt