

# PRECINCT STRUCTURE PLANNING GUIDELINES

## ONE Overview Of Growth Area Planning





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# FOREWORD



The planning and development of Victoria's growth areas provides us with a unique opportunity and responsibility to create new parts of Melbourne that 'get it right' at the outset. The benefits will apply for decades and generations to come.

These Precinct Structure Planning Guidelines reinforce our Government's commitment to introduce a simple planning tool for designing and delivering better quality communities on greenfield sites faster.

There are many challenges we need to address in creating sustainable, long lasting places. Providing more jobs closer to home, variable future social and economic conditions, population pressures and a changing climate all have to be factored into what Victorians build today.

Our responsibility is to make sure these new communities stand the test of time by providing people with affordable and well designed housing and access to jobs, open space and services.

Not only do we have to provide for the needs of new residents, we also have to meet the needs of people living in these suburbs for many decades in the future. This means that we must ensure our precinct structure plans are sufficiently flexible to address changing circumstances and needs.

This is not a crystal ball exercise, but a rigorous process that is designed to get the planning right so that our newest suburbs are well connected and leave a lighter environmental footprint.

These Precinct Structure Planning Guidelines set out one clear and consistent planning process for use by councils, government agencies, infrastructure providers, developers and the community. While this is a single process, there will be many diverse outcomes that reflect local conditions and aspirations.

I am pleased to approve these Guidelines to guide the production of precinct structure plans in accordance with Ministerial Direction No.12.

The Guidelines come in two parts. Part One provides an overview of planning in the growth areas, and Part Two provides a step-by-step guide to preparing a precinct structure plan. The Growth Areas Authority will produce PSP Notes setting out further guidance from time to time.

I commend the Growth Areas Authority for its work in preparing these Guidelines and I thank the councils, state agencies, developers, industry bodies and infrastructure and service providers for their input via the 40 submissions, that have helped shape this blueprint.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Justin Madden". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Justin Madden  
Minister for Planning





# PART ONE

## Overview of Growth Area Planning

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Part One provides an overview of planning in growth areas, including a description of the structure of the Guidelines, an explanation of where the precinct structure plans fit in the planning hierarchy and the objectives for growth area planning.

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#### PART TWO PREPARING THE PRECINCT STRUCTURE PLAN

Part Two provides a step-by-step guide to preparing a precinct structure plan in growth areas.

#### PSP NOTES

This includes a series of documents providing more detailed guidance to planning in growth areas. These are expected to be updated from time to time.



# 1.0 Introduction

Precinct structure planning is fundamental to making Victoria's growth areas great places to live, both today and for future generations. The development of greenfield sites, along with urban consolidation, is an important part of the State Government's strategy to address strong population growth and the housing and employment demands that flow from this.

Precinct structure plans are created to set the blueprint for development and investment that will occur over many years. They provide an up to date approach to addressing current global issues such as adapting to climate change, reducing carbon emissions, rising living costs and pressures of increasing travel distances as our cities grow.

Precinct structure plans provide a balance between meeting complex policy requirements and providing affordable development. Any balancing of conflicting objectives is made in favour of net community benefit and sustainable development.

The goal of the Growth Areas Authority is to create diverse, compact and well connected communities that are affordable and rich in local jobs, transport access, services and culture. The provision of local jobs is particularly important for growing communities. We should be aspiring to provide one job within the region for every new household. Protecting valuable natural and historic features and using land more efficiently is also important to building a sustainable community.

The introduction of the Urban Growth Zone in March 2008 places greater emphasis on the use of precinct structure plans to guide development and the need for integrated planning at an early stage in the process.

The Precinct Structure Planning Guidelines build on the approaches of the past and further develop planning in areas that have been incomplete. It is important to plan for the infrastructure needs of new communities, such as public transport, roads and community facilities, even though these cannot be fully funded when the first new residents arrive.

Better planning will assist private developers, councils and the State Government to set priorities for infrastructure so it can be provided sooner than it has been in the past.

These Guidelines do not propose a "one size fits all" approach, but instead offer an integrated planning approach which responds to local conditions and needs. They set out the critical issues to be examined by planners, developers, service providers and government in the planning for new communities. Planning for growth is a complex activity that requires all parties to work collaboratively to get the best outcomes. These Guidelines set out what needs to be achieved for planning Victoria's growth areas and gives clarity on how this can be done.

The guidelines are intended primarily for Melbourne's growth areas, although they may be used to guide development in regional areas experiencing urban growth around Victoria.

## 1.1 Purpose of these Guidelines

The Guidelines apply to the preparation of precinct structure plans for **new residential communities** and **new employment areas**.

The purpose of these Guidelines is to set out what should be addressed in preparing or assessing a precinct structure plan. They seek to:

- Increase consistency and certainty in growth area planning;
- Assist in the timely preparation and completion of precinct structure plans;
- Support the drafting requirements of the Urban Growth Zone and related parts of the Victoria Planning Provisions; and
- Facilitate the creation of unique new communities that are better places to live and which respond to the challenges of the future.

## 1.2 Role of the Growth Areas Authority

The Growth Areas Authority is a statutory authority responsible for overseeing the preparation of all precinct structure plans in Melbourne's growth areas and advising the Minister for Planning on their approval.

Precinct structure plans can be prepared by a local council, the Growth Areas Authority or other agencies directed to do so by the Minister for Planning. In all cases the process will require the active involvement of land owners, developers, service and infrastructure providers and councils.

The role of the Growth Areas Authority is to ensure that planning for new communities is coordinated across government, so that

decisions about land use patterns, transport, environment and other infrastructure investments, and the environment occur in an integrated way.

The approval of a precinct structure plan will depend on whether it will enable effective delivery of the government's objectives for growth area communities as well as other government objectives and policies.

It will also depend on the outputs detailed in these Guidelines being prepared to a satisfactory standard.

*See PSP Notes for information about the role of government agencies, council, developers, land owners, and other community representatives in the precinct structure planning process.*

## 1.3 Structure of these Guidelines

There are two parts to these Guidelines.

Part One: describes the objectives and the process for planning new communities in the growth areas.

Part Two: sets out the content, form and process for preparing and implementing a precinct structure plan.

*PSP Notes* will also be produced setting out more detailed processes that will be critical to creating a precinct structure plan in an integrated manner. These notes will be updated from time to time.

The government has introduced a number of important strategies, policies and programs to help plan Victoria's newest communities. Strategies or action plans particularly relevant to the preparation of a precinct structure plan are listed at the end of Part Two.



**Figure 1: Role of the Precinct Structure Plan within the planning hierarchy**

## 2.0 Planning Context

### 2.1 Planning Hierarchy

Precinct structure plans sit within the planning hierarchy that comprises a framework of State, regional and local policies that enable decisions about the use and development of land to be made, including:

- The State and Local Planning Policy Framework (including *Melbourne 2030*)
- Growth Area Framework Plans
- Precinct Structure Plans
- Planning Permit Applications (ie. subdivision)

These stages are shown in Figure 1.

#### Planning Policy Framework

The State Planning Policy Framework (SPPF) within the Victoria Planning Provisions provides overarching policy to guide land use, subdivision and development in Victoria. It includes policies relevant to the preparation of precinct structure plans such as activity centre development, transport planning, service provision and industrial development and provides specific objectives and strategies for metropolitan Melbourne (see also *Melbourne 2030* and *Melbourne 2030: A Planning Update - Melbourne @ 5 million*).

The Local Planning Policy Framework (LPPF) provides local policy context to the preparation of precinct structure plans, and may need to be updated to reflect the new precinct structure plan.

Figure 1 shows the three-step approach to planning in the urban growth zone. Potentially, a municipal council may produce a precinct structure plan for an urban expansion outside the designated growth areas where no urban growth zone applies. If this is the case, an alternative planning process will apply.

#### GROWTH AREA FRAMEWORK PLANS

Growth area framework plans set the regional framework for urban growth based on the strategic directions of *Melbourne 2030*. They show broad land use patterns, committed and proposed transport networks and regional open space, significant waterways and areas of potential environmental sensitivity. Growth area framework plans were approved for Melbourne's growth areas in September 2006 and are updated from time to time. In some cases, detailed precinct structure planning may lead to refinement of growth area framework plans.

#### PRECINCT STRUCTURE PLANS

A precinct structure plan sets the future structure for the suburb. It provides more detail on the land uses defined by the Growth Area Framework Plan. It shows:

- Housing yields
- Employment land provision and location
- Transport networks
- Open space and natural systems
- Activity centres
- Community facilities

The precinct structure plan is incorporated into the local planning scheme to guide the use and development of land in the precinct over the long term. Precinct structure plans should:

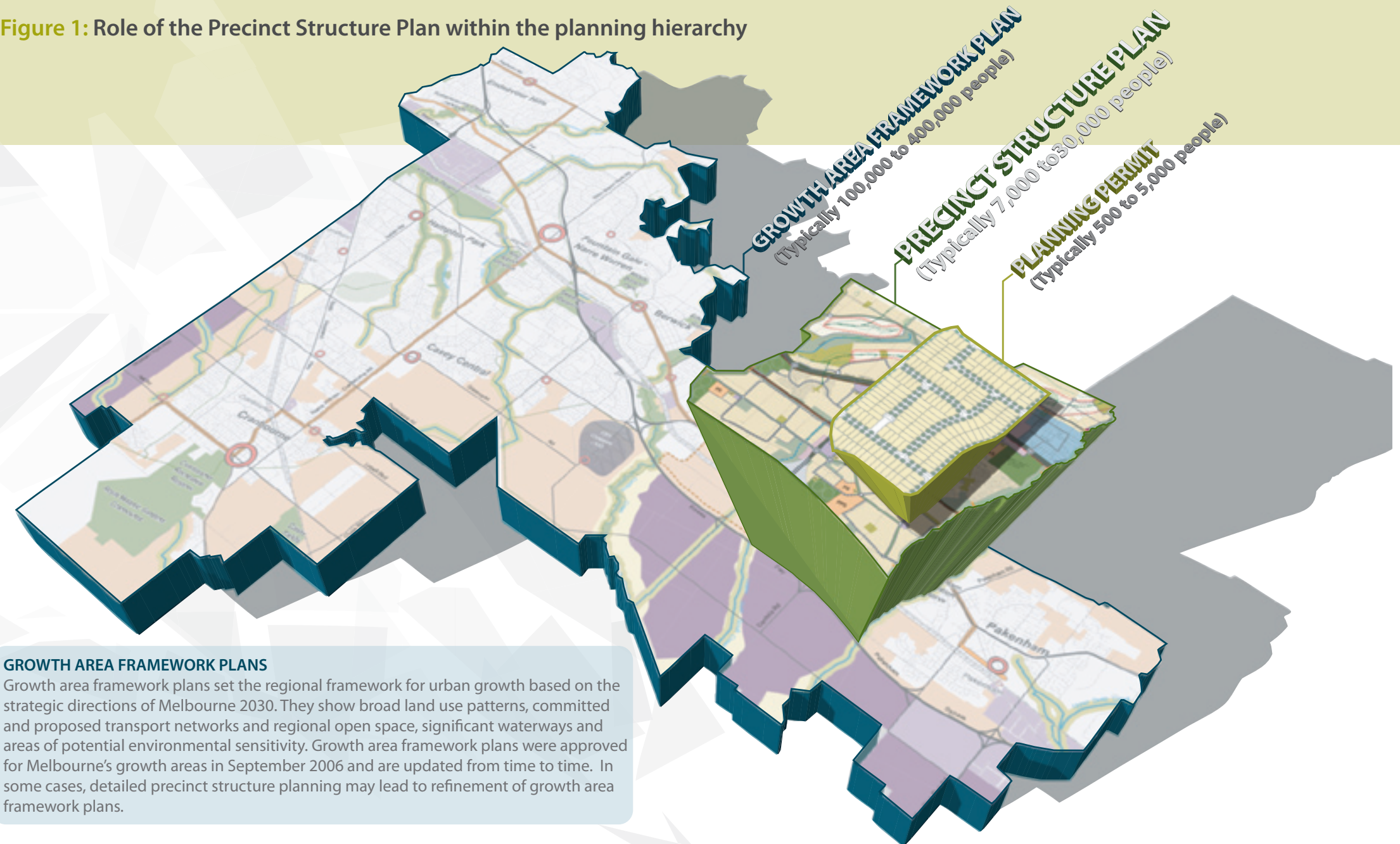
- Meet state planning policy objectives and resolve competing issues;
- Create a structure for urban development that will deliver practical outcomes;
- Provide the framework for statutory planning controls, including specific implementation provisions;
- Give local communities, developers and other investors greater certainty and confidence about future development in the growth areas; and
- Allow for whole of community involvement.

#### PLANNING PERMITS

A planning permit can be issued in response to an application for planning permit to subdivide, develop or use a parcel of land. The planning permit must generally be in accordance with the precinct structure plan and will include the conditions to be met by the applicant. Permit applications will be referred to referral authorities based on clause 66 of the Victoria Planning Provisions.

Planning permits show the precise detail for laying out streets and lots and for developing a site.

Plans are generally at a smaller scale than the precinct structure plan.





## 2.2 Precinct Structure Plan Program

Precinct Structure Plans are required to enable urban development on land included in the Urban Growth Zone. The Growth Areas Authority will work with the relevant growth area council and key state agencies to determine the overall precinct structure plan program for growth areas.

This will include a definition of the area to be covered by an individual precinct structure plan, and a timetable to bring these forward. The indicative timelines shown on page 17 will vary depending on the complexity of the precinct structure plan.

Development Plan Overlays and Design and Development Overlays are not to be used for subdivision approval purposes where a precinct structure plan is in place.

The latest precinct structure plan program is published on the GAA website.

## 2.3 Urban Growth Zone

The Urban Growth Zone has been applied to farming land identified for urban development in Melbourne's growth areas. Ministerial Direction No.12 requires that these Guidelines be used to guide the preparation of precinct structure plans within the Urban Growth Zone.

Application of the Urban Growth Zone requires that a precinct structure plan be approved by the Minister for Planning and incorporated into the local planning scheme at Clause 81 before urban development can proceed (note: some exemptions apply). Implementation provisions must also be included in the schedule at Clause 37.07 to guide land use and development decisions.

Once a precinct structure plan has been incorporated into the local planning scheme, planning permits can be granted by the relevant authority (usually the local council). These permits can usually be issued without further advertising provided the proposal is generally in accordance with the approved precinct structure plan.

The Precinct Structure Planning Guidelines can be used to guide the preparation of a precinct structure plan outside Melbourne's growth areas, and in localities where the Urban Growth Zone does not apply. However, in both these cases, implementation provisions may vary, and some of the standards may not apply. These guidelines can also be used to guide the preparation of a precinct structure plan for localities where the Urban Growth Zone does not apply, although the requirement for implementation provisions may vary.

For more information see:

[www.gaa.vic.gov.au/Assets/Files/UGZ\\_practice\\_note.pdf](http://www.gaa.vic.gov.au/Assets/Files/UGZ_practice_note.pdf)

## 2.4 Residential Subdivision Provisions

The planning requirements for the layout and design of residential subdivision are set out in Clause 56 of all local planning schemes. These requirements embed the neighbourhood design principles of *Melbourne 2030*. No equivalent provisions exist for employment or industrial subdivisions, although Clause 17.03 is relevant.

The precinct structure plan shows how the objectives set out in the residential subdivision provisions will be achieved within the precinct. The precinct structure planning process resolves any competing standards required to meet these objectives and provides the framework for development within the precinct. This means that in some cases, the land use and development requirements specified in the precinct structure plan will meet an objective of Clause 56 but may not meet the standard.

This means that the precinct structure plan will have already determined how Clause 56 will be met for subdivision issues.



## 3.0 Objectives for Growth Area Planning

The overarching objectives for precinct structure plans are:

- To establish a sense of place and community;
- To create greater housing choice diversity and affordable places to live;
- To create highly accessible and vibrant activity centres;
- To provide for local employment and business activity;

- To provide better transport choices;
- To respond to climate change and increase environmental sustainability; and
- To deliver accessible, integrated and adaptable community infrastructure.

Precinct structure plans must respond to all of these objectives in an integrated way and be flexible enough to respond to the challenges of creating sustainable, long lasting and diverse communities.

## objective one

### To establish a sense of place and community

We can create a strong local identity with a focus on community activity if:

- Neighbourhoods are safe and compact, making it easy to walk or cycle to shops, local jobs, schools, community facilities and public transport stops;
- Public spaces and community facilities are well designed to promote healthy lifestyles and strong, diverse communities;
- Residents and workers have access to a variety of open spaces (parks, gardens, plazas and reserves) for relaxation and recreation;
- Strong local character is created through distinct natural and cultural features as well as the urban form; and
- Everything we design and build today is of a high quality that will promote positive experiences in the growth areas for generations.





## objective two

### To create greater housing choice, diversity and affordable places to live

We can build an affordable, liveable place that is full of variety and choice, if:

- Housing meets a range of population needs as the community ages and grows over time;
- There is an average net density of 15 dwellings per developable hectare or more;
- Higher density dwellings are located within and around activity centres, along bus routes and around railway stations and close to public open spaces ;
- A range of lot sizes and housing styles is provided across the precinct;
- A mix of private, affordable and social housing is located in and around activity centres for households on low to moderate incomes;
- Federal, state and local government, private and community sectors work collaboratively to improve affordable housing options;
- Jobs are closer to where people live;
- Housing is flexible enough to meet the needs of households as they move through life cycle changes;
- A range of transport options are provided to all households;
- Individuals and families have access to affordable food, water and other household essentials; and
- Urban life is created through a culture of local food shops (such as fruit and vegetables, meat and fish and daily grocery items) and cafés that people can walk to.

## objective three

### To create highly accessible and vibrant activity centres

We can develop attractive, accessible and functional activity centres that serve as the focus for their communities if:

- Precinct structure plans identify a clear hierarchy of activity centres that is consistent with the intent of the relevant Growth Area Framework Plan and *Melbourne 2030*;
- Principal, Major and Specialised activity centres are located on the Principal Public Transport Network (PPTN), and have a high employment density and/or frequent visitors, such as substantial office developments, retailing and community facilities;
- The location and design of activity centres is clearly linked to and encourages the use of the public transport system;
- Neighbourhood activity centres are a key focus of the whole community providing residents with convenient access to local shops, services, meeting places and jobs;
- Activity centres provide for a mix of uses including housing, community facilities and a variety of employment activities that provide for the needs of the local workforce and community;
- Activity centres have an inbuilt capacity for growth and change so they can be adapted over time as the needs of the community evolve; and
- Activity centres are designed to ensure that they are attractive, lively and convenient focuses for the communities they serve and include the provision of quality public spaces.





## objective four

### To provide for local employment and business activity

We can attract businesses to the area and create local employment if:

- The provision of jobs within the precinct and region is maximised;
- Sufficient land has been identified and provided within the precinct structure plan for employment growth over time;
- Employment areas are designed to the highest quality to attract businesses and workers;
- People can easily access local jobs by walking, cycling, public transport and by car;
- Employment areas (including activity centres) are easily accessible by freight;
- Activity centres are designed for a vibrant mix of land uses, including housing, shops, offices and community facilities;
- Opportunities are provided for people to work from home through purpose built housing and up-to-date telecommunications;
- Employment precincts and activity centres allow for future growth and diversity in local jobs;
- The community has easy access to education and vocational training opportunities; and
- The design of buildings and employment areas include a variety of built forms and land uses and are attractive places to be. They also need to be flexible to ensure future innovation and growth.

## objective five

### To provide better transport choices

We can increase the use of public transport, cycling and walking if:

- Safe and efficient walking, cycling, public transport and motor vehicle access is provided to connect residents directly to activity centres, employment areas and community facilities within and adjoining the precinct and to wider regional networks;
- All areas can be efficiently and adequately serviced by buses that enable people to access jobs, goods and services;
- Higher density housing is concentrated within and around activity centres and along public transport routes;
- A mix of land uses are concentrated within and around activity centres;
- Activity centres are located on the Principal Public Transport Network (PPTN) or local bus routes to encourage transit-oriented development, optimising the use of existing and planned rail routes where these exist;
- Streets and urban form are designed to cater for a people's choice in movement - walking, cycling, public transport, car and other motorised vehicles;
- Transport options encourage walking, cycling and public transport, to reduce carbon emissions and promote access for the whole community.





## objective six

### To respond to climate change and increase environmental sustainability

We can respond to climate change and protect biodiversity and cultural heritage if:

- The precinct is planned with the intention of reducing the extent of car use by minimising travel distances and facilitating alternatives (e.g. public transport, cycling and walking) to car use;
- The environmental footprint of the development is minimised through careful use of resources such as land, energy and water;
- The use of renewable energy options are promoted such as passive solar energy (refer to the *Sustainable Victoria Smart Energy Zone Program*);
- Development planning is responsive to climate change risks;
- Opportunities are created for integrated water management, including water sensitive urban design, re-use of stormwater and recycled water;
- Waterways and ecologically significant areas of native vegetation and other important habitat areas become key community assets;
- Land required for community purposes such as easements, drainage, community facilities, retarding basins etc. is used efficiently for multiple purposes;
- Areas retained for environmental purposes and Aboriginal and post-contact heritage form part of the open space network, providing for both conservation and recreation needs;
- Development is responsive to environmental constraints and risks such as salinity, soil erosion, flooding, coastal inundation, bushfire risk and increased predicted temperatures; and
- Land management, river health and biodiversity are enhanced.

## objective seven

### To deliver accessible, integrated and adaptable community infrastructure

We can service the needs of a community as it grows and changes if:

- The needs of diverse communities of residents, workers and businesses for different goods, services and facilities are well understood and planned for;
- Community services are provided early on in the development of the precinct;
- Community facilities are co-located and integrated to enable shared community use and flexibility in service provision as the precinct evolves;
- Community facilities are located where people can easily access them by walking, cycling and public transport;
- Land is used efficiently for utilities and community facilities; and
- Opportunities are created for people to contribute and participate in their local community and for people to maintain healthy lifestyles.







## 4.0 The Planning Process

The process for planning precincts in the growth areas is shown in the flowchart in Figure 2 below. Precinct structure planning should generally take 18 to 24 months to be prepared and incorporated into the local planning scheme.

Figure 2: Planning Process Flowchart





# acknowledgements

Submissions were received from the following organisations on the draft precinct structure planning guidelines:

- @leisure
- Aboriginal Affairs Victoria
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- Department of Human Services
- Department of Sustainability and Environment
- Department of Transport
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- HIA
- Hume City Council
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- Parks Victoria
- Property Council of Australia
- SMEC Urban
- South East Water
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