



# DRAFT Preston (High Street) Activity Centre Plan

WURUNDJERI COUNTRY

August 2024



## Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians

We proudly acknowledge Victoria's First Peoples and their ongoing strength in practising the world's oldest living and continuous culture.

The Preston (High Street) activity centre is located on the lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People of the East Kulin Nation and we acknowledge them as Traditional Owners. We pay our respects to their Elders both past and present, and we acknowledge that they have never ceded their sovereign rights to lands and waters.

We recognise their unbroken connection to Country, we celebrate their culture and history, and we honour their rights as custodians.

## Copyright notice

© Victorian Planning Authority, 2024

The *Preston (High Street) Activity Centre Plan* has been developed for the Preston (High Street) activity centre precinct by the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) for the Department of Transport and Planning, and other Victorian Government departments and agencies.

Any projections are based on reasonable assumptions at the time of publication but should not be relied upon without first seeking appropriate expert advice. Although every effort has been made to ensure the information in this document is factually correct at the time of publication, the VPA does not warrant the accuracy, completeness or relevance of the information. Any person using or relying on this document does so on the basis that the State of Victoria shall bear no responsibility or liability whatsoever for any errors, faults, defects or omissions in the information.

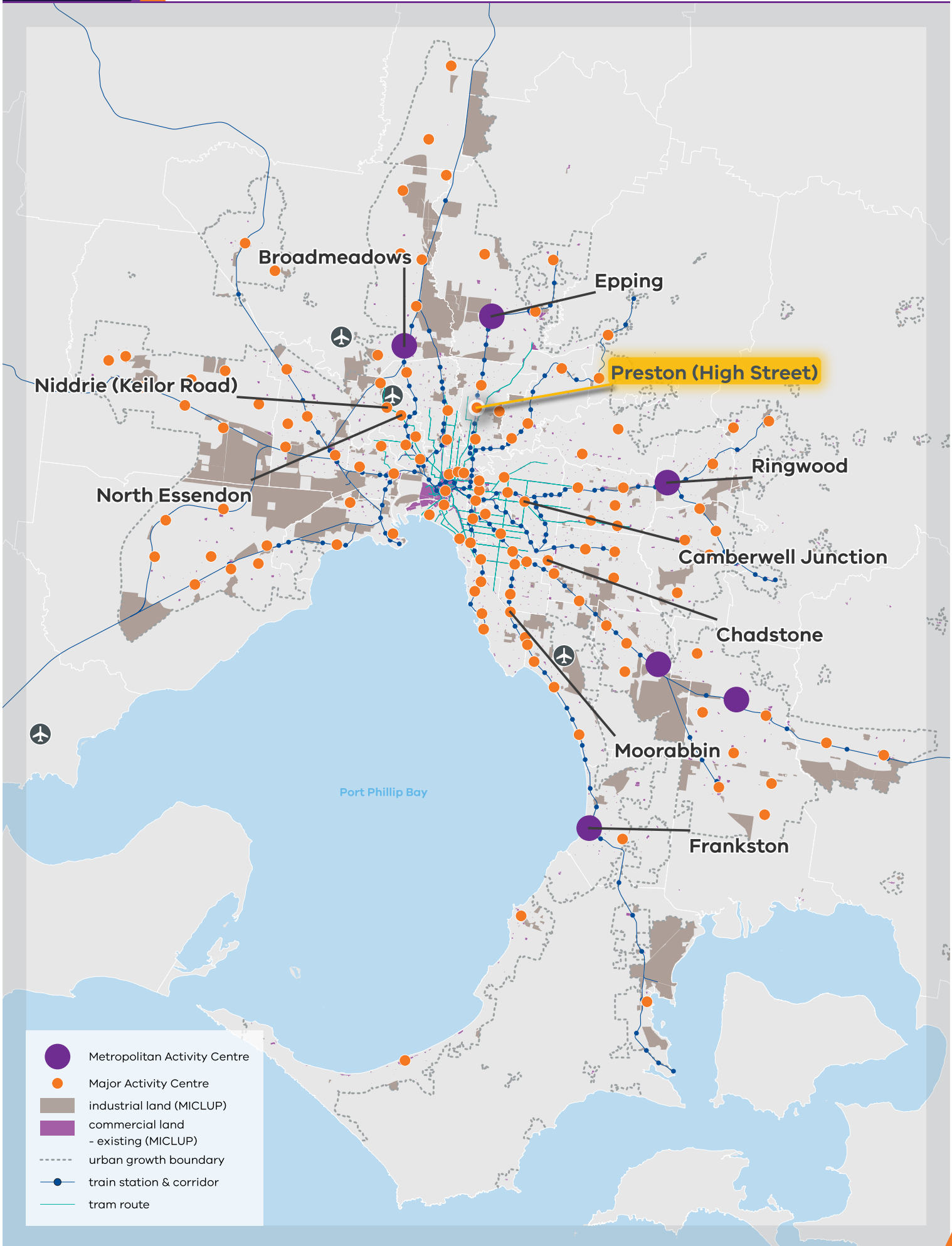
## Accessibility

The Victorian Planning Authority is committed to ensuring that all persons, including those with disabilities, can access information about our key planning projects, are able to participate in community engagement and consultation activities and have access to our premises.

This document has been optimised for compatibility with screen readers. We welcome any feedback you have especially where you feel we are not compliant or could provide better accessibility. If you would like us to send you a printed or electronic copy of this or any VPA publication, please contact us at [accessibility@vpa.vic.gov.au](mailto:accessibility@vpa.vic.gov.au)

# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>A network of activity centres</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1	Strategic context	5
<b>2</b>	<b>Purpose of this document</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1	Activity Centre Program	7
2.2	Preston (High Street) activity centre	8
2.3	Catchment area attributes	9
<b>3</b>	<b>Catchment area</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1	Defining the catchment area	10
3.2	Proposed residential change	10
3.2.1	Examples of four to six storey development precedents	11
3.3	Non-residential areas	12
3.4	Key attributes of the activity centre catchment area	12
3.5	Existing planning provisions	12
3.6	Phase 1 community engagement	13
<b>4</b>	<b>Implementation</b>	<b>14</b>
4.1	Preston (High Steet) activity centre	14
4.2	Future strategic planning work	14
4.3	Aligning existing controls	14
4.3.1	Activity centre	14
4.4	Infrastructure delivery	15
4.4.1	An innovative approach to infrastructure contributions	15
4.5	Affordable housing	15
4.6	Identification of environmental constraints	16
4.6.1	Potentially contaminated land – catchment	16
4.6.2	Noise	16
4.6.3	Amenity and buffers	16
<b>Plans</b>		
<b>Plan 1</b>	Regional context	4
<b>Figures</b>		
<b>Figure 1</b>	Preston (High Street) activity centre and catchment area	7
<b>Figure 2</b>	Building height in the Preston (High Street) activity centre and catchment areas	9



# 1 A network of activity centres

## 1.1 Strategic context

In September 2023, the Victorian Government released *Victoria's Housing Statement – The Decade Ahead 2024–2034\** which identified 10 activity centres and their surrounds as key locations for a pilot program. The distribution of the centres is shown at [Plan 1 Regional context](#). This builds on existing policy encouraging increased housing diversity and density in activity centres in *Plan Melbourne 2017–2050\*\** and in the new plan for Victoria (under development in 2024).

Activity centres are identified as key locations for increased housing supported by additional jobs, services and amenities. This strategic work for activity centres will complement the new plan for Victoria which is currently being developed to reimagine the future of our cities, suburbs, towns, and regions. This will support delivery of new homes in locations with great public transport access and closer to jobs and opportunities.

**The pilot program's seven objectives aim to facilitate increased housing supply through:**



### **Built form controls tailored to place with guidance for ensuring place identity (public realm, amenity & heritage)**

The Activity Centre Program will deliver a coherent, clear and consistent planning approach. This will include implementing a tailored suite of tools and planning controls to ensure local areas of significance are recognised and enhanced.



### **A new and simplified approach to infrastructure contributions**

The program will deliver a simple approach to infrastructure contributions to contribute to the funding of community infrastructure, open space, walking, cycling and transport infrastructure. The infrastructure will support these growing centres and will include mechanisms to contribute to funding their delivery.



### **Focus on walkable catchments, encouraging new housing types and diversity**

As well as providing clearer controls to facilitate density in the activity centre core areas, the program will provide guidance for the catchment of the centre, supporting greater housing diversity in areas that are within walking distance.



### **Transparent plans (as an alternative to traditional structure plans) that set out place objectives, local values, built form requirements, growth expectations and future vision**

An activity centre plan will be prepared for each activity centre and will have clear planning controls that provide certainty of the built form outcomes. This will drive investment into the centres and provides the community with certainty of the long-term development expected.

Introducing deemed to comply standards will provide greater certainty on the supported built form outcomes in each centre. These built form outcomes have been tailored to the local context and ensure development expectations are known.

\* State of Victoria (Department of Premier and Cabinet), *Victoria's Housing Statement – The Decade Ahead 2024–2034*, 2023.

\*\* State of Victoria (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning), *Metropolitan Planning Strategy: Plan Melbourne 2017–2050*, 2017.



### **Shorter amendment pathway and streamlined approvals**

Streamlined planning scheme amendment processes ensure development-ready land is available as soon as possible. Coupled with efficient planning permit processes, this means more homes for Victorians sooner.



### **Affordable housing**

Activity centre planning will encourage the delivery of affordable housing by being clear on affordable housing needs and giving greater planning certainty when affordable housing is provided.



### **Using State Government landholdings to showcase new approaches and deliver housing and services**

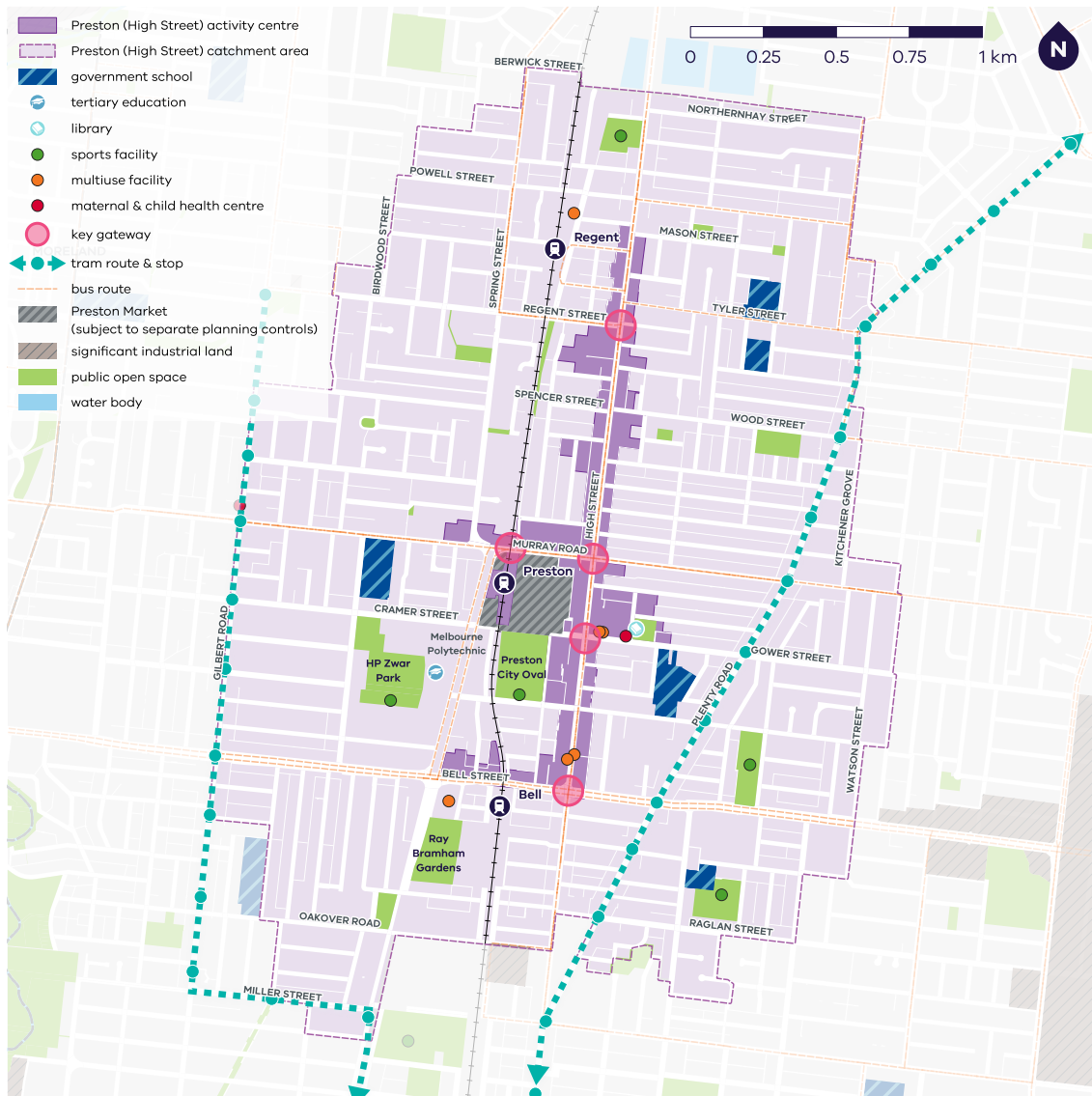
Utilising existing State Government landholdings within the centres provides an opportunity for the government to lead the sector in innovative ways to provide greater housing choice and services.

# 2 Purpose of this document

The Draft Preston (High Street) Activity Centre Plan addresses development outcomes within the Preston (High Street) activity centre and surrounding residential catchment areas, shown in [Figure 1 Preston \(High Street\) activity centre and catchment area](#).

This draft plan is for consultation and will be refined to inform a planning scheme amendment proposed to be completed by end 2024.

**Figure 1** Preston (High Street) activity centre and catchment area



## 2.1 Activity Centre Program

Victoria is the fastest growing state in Australia, with the population set to reach 10.3 million by 2051. By the 2050s, Melbourne is expected to be home to more than eight million people. However not enough homes are being delivered to support this growing population\*.

The purpose of the Activity Centre Program as identified in *Victoria's Housing Statement – The Decade Ahead 2024–2034* is to unlock 60,000 new homes by 2051. These homes are to be located in the 10 activity centres and their surrounds identified as having great access to services, jobs and transport. This plan outlines how the Preston (High Street) activity centre and catchment area can contribute 11,800 to 15,300 new homes.

\* State of Victoria (Department of Premier and Cabinet), *Victoria's Housing Statement – The Decade Ahead 2024–2034*, 2023.

## 2.2 Preston (High Street) activity centre

The Preston (High Street) activity centre is the commercial core of the precinct. Activity centres are the heart of local businesses, community, transport, leisure, and more intensive styles of housing. They are the places where people come to shop, work, meet, relax and live. State planning policy recognises that activity centres are ideal places to support residential growth.

Darebin City Council has already consulted with the Preston community to develop the *Draft Preston Central Structure Plan* (2023). The structure plan seeks to enhance the role and function of Preston Central through proposed new built form planning controls that will facilitate an increase in population, supported by increased density and better design.

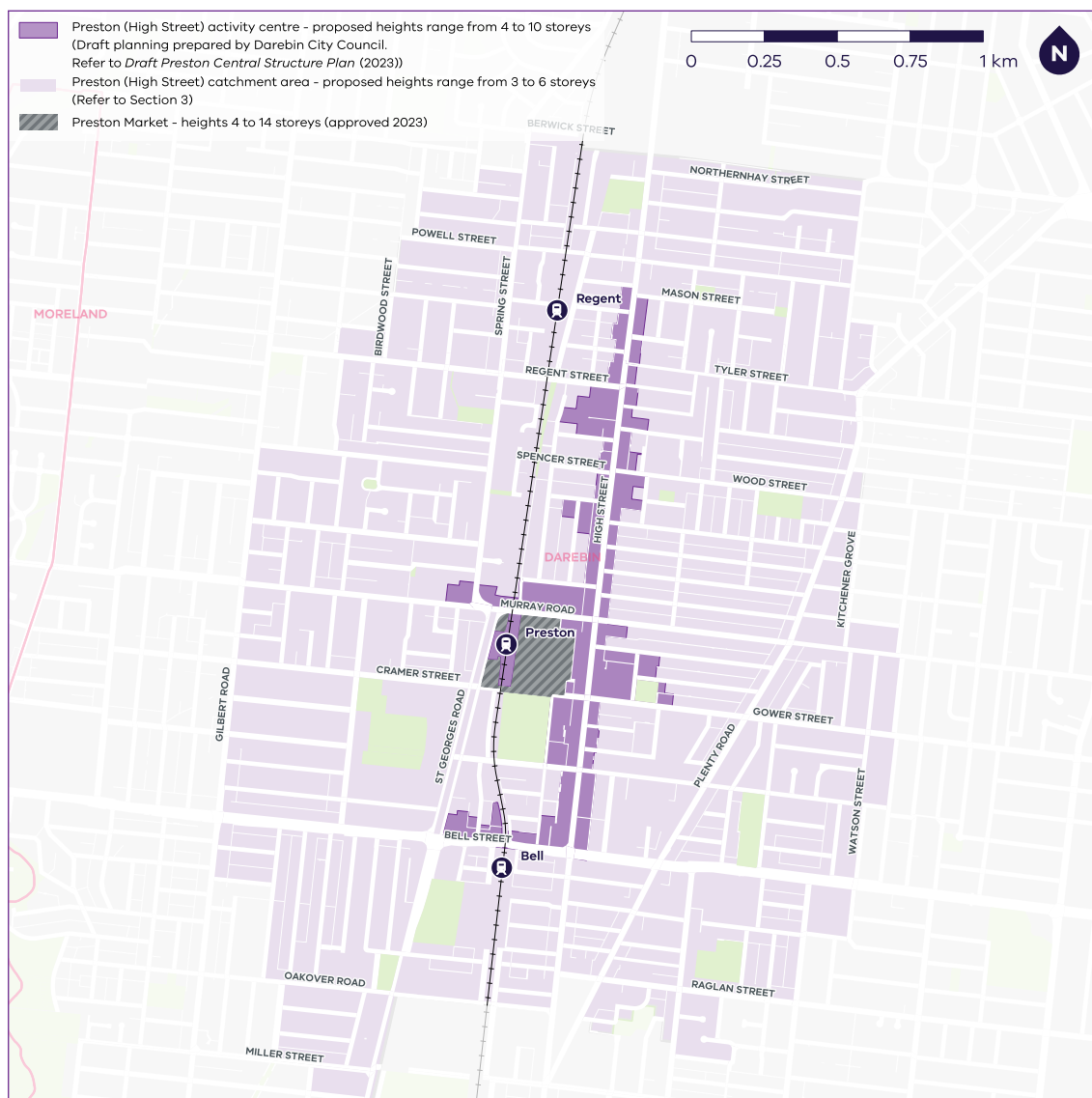
Built form in the Preston (High Street) activity centre is proposed to be guided by the structure plan (see [Figure 2 Building height in the Preston \(High Street\) activity centre and catchment areas](#)). The structure plan identifies areas for growth in the activity centre and is generally aligned with State policy intention but remains subject to further review. The structure plan and the *Draft Preston (High Street) Activity Centre Plan* are proposed to become background documents at Clause 72.08 of the *Darebin Planning Scheme*.

The *Draft Preston Central Structure Plan* is available at the Darebin City Council's website.

Preston Market and land located west of the Preston train station zoned Activity Centre Zone (ACZ1) are subject to separate planning controls. The *Draft Preston (High Street) Activity Centre Plan* proposes no change to planning controls that apply to Preston Market and adjoining ACZ1 land.



**Figure 2** Building height in the Preston (High Street) activity centre and catchment areas



## 2.3 Catchment area attributes

Housing growth in catchment areas around activity centres is a longstanding State policy. Government is seeking to give clearer direction on the level of growth needed in these locations in alignment with our housing needs as identified in *Victoria's Housing Statement*.

The *Draft Preston (High Street) Activity Centre Plan* builds on the strategic work undertaken by Darebin City Council by focusing on additional guidance for the catchment area. Key findings relating to Preston (High Street) activity centre and surrounding catchment from phase 1 consultation are detailed in [3.6 Phase 1 community engagement](#). These initial findings were considered in establishing the catchment area.

The catchment area is made up of the residential, retail, commercial and industrial neighbourhoods surrounding the Preston (High Street) activity centre. The catchment provides an opportunity to increase accessibility for more people to meet most of their daily needs within a walkable distance to and from their home.

Built form implementation in the catchment is under investigation.

The extent of the catchment and the proposed types of housing are described at [3 Catchment area](#).

## 3 Catchment area

The catchment is the area within walking distance of the local jobs, services and public transport of the Preston (High Street) activity centre. Building more homes here is a good way to create a more lively, inclusive and sustainable local community.

The plans will make sure Victoria builds the right types of homes in the catchment, in the places they fit best.

The plans will encourage greater housing diversity to meet the community's changing needs. This will encourage more efficient use of land through site consolidation, creating space for trees and greenery as well as liveable and sustainable homes and neighbourhoods.

The catchment area is generally up to 800 metres of the edge of the non-residential areas of the activity centre. The extent of the catchment area is shown at [Figure 1. Preston \(High Street\) activity centre and catchment area](#).

### 3.1 Defining the catchment area

The catchment was defined by undertaking a number of steps.

Firstly, the activity centre's residential and non-residential areas was identified.

From the edge of the activity centre's non-residential areas, an 800-metre walkable catchment was identified using streets, rather than "as the crow flies".

This catchment area was then refined to generally apply to whole blocks, and was further reduced where there are:

- Natural and physical barriers
- Limiting planning controls or environmental constraints that make these areas inappropriate for the proposed residential change
- Areas subject to future planning investigations.

Non-residential uses will be removed from future planning approaches within the catchment.

### 3.2 Proposed residential change

The catchment will provide an opportunity for more housing diversity including quality social and affordable housing, focusing on higher-density apartments, medium-density apartments, townhouses and semi-detached homes close to the activity centre.

Over time and on appropriate sites, small apartment buildings may be possible up to three to six storeys, mixed with townhouses and detached, semi-detached houses. Examples of different residential apartment building sizes are shown below.

Only the largest blocks of land in the catchment will be able to build up to five to six storeys. Smaller blocks will only be able to build up to three to four storeys, and some homes and buildings may not change at all.

The size and height of buildings will need to respond to standards to:

- Ensure good internal amenity within the new homes
- Opportunities for planting of canopy trees
- Appropriate provision of car parking and storage facilities
- Minimise impact on neighbours.

Planning controls will be reviewed to create these opportunities.

### 3.2.1 Examples of four to six storey development precedents

#### 4 storeys



##### **Aboriginal Housing Victoria**

Developer: Aboriginal Housing Victoria

Architect: Breathe Architecture



##### **Merri Green**

Developer: MAB

Architect: Six Degrees Architects

#### 5 storeys



##### **122 Roseneath Street**

Developer: Wulff Projects, Icon Developments and Assemble

Architect: Fieldwork Projects



##### **Averi Apartments**

Architect: Jackson Clements Burrows Architects

#### 6 storeys



##### **Ferrars & York**

Ferrars & York, enabled by HIP V. HYPE, designed in collaboration with Six Degrees Architects and built by Ironside.

Photography: Tess Kelly



##### **Balfe Park Lane**

Developer: Aspekt

Architect: Kerstin Thompson

### 3.3 Non-residential areas

Land in the catchment area that is not currently zoned or used for residential purposes has not been identified for more housing.

Existing planning provisions are proposed to be retained in these areas.

### 3.4 Key attributes of the activity centre catchment area

Figure 1 Preston (High Street) activity centre and catchment area shows the some of the community and transport infrastructure for the activity centre and the catchment. The catchment for the Preston (High Street) activity centre is approximately 4km from north to south centred on High Street, Preston. It is serviced by three train stations: Regent, Preston and Bell; tram route 86, and there are bus routes and cycling paths throughout the catchment.

Local features include Preston Market, Preston City Oval, and other parks.

The area is predominantly characterised by a rectilinear street pattern with regular lots.

### 3.5 Existing planning provisions

This section outlines existing planning provisions within the catchment study area and describes where there is a planning control with a significant relevance to development opportunities.

The General Residential Zone (schedule 2) is the predominant zone in the catchment area along with some areas of Neighbourhood Residential Zone (schedule 1) and Residential Growth Zone (schedule 1).

The General Residential Zone (schedule 2) in the catchment has no variations to the requirements of Clause 54 and 55.

The Neighbourhood Residential Zone (schedule 1) has no variations to the requirements of Clause 54 and 55.

In parts of the catchment are the following zones:

- Transport Zone
- Public Use Zone
- Public Park & Recreation Zone
- Mixed Use Zone
- Priority Development Zone
- Commercial 1 Zone.

Parts of the catchment have a Heritage Overlay, Special Building Overlay and Environmental Audit Overlay.

The Development Contributions Plan Overlay Schedule 1 Darebin applies throughout. The Development Contributions Plan Overlay Schedule 2 Preston Market Precinct applies to the Preston Market Precinct only.

The Design and Development Overlay applies design objectives and specific requirements relating to the design and built form of new developments in the following areas:

- Schedule 3 The Junction – South Preston
- Schedule 16 St Georges Road Corridor
- Schedule 17 Plenty Road Corridor
- Schedule 22 Showers Street – Residential Growth Area.

The Development Plan Overlay is also applied in three locations through:

- Schedule 5 Former Preston and Northcote Community Hospital
- Schedule 11 Oakover Village, West Preston
- Schedule 14 Preston Market Precinct.

### 3.6 Phase 1 community engagement

Consultation was undertaken from March to May 2024. The purpose of Phase 1 community engagement was to:

- Build community understanding about what will change in local neighbourhoods, the new planning controls, and what the community can influence.
- Learn from the community to inform our plans.

Darebin City Council undertook two stages of community engagement on the *Draft Preston Central Structure Plan* in 2018 and 2022. Stage 2 consultation in 2022 sought community and stakeholder feedback on:

- The *Vision for Future Preston Central*, the draft *Preston Central Built Form Framework* and the proposed strategic actions for Preston Central
- Local Preston Central precinct design objectives and controls
- Issues and opportunities in Preston Central.

As the Activity Centre Program intends to use the council's plan for the activity centre, further broad community consultation was not undertaken. Instead, a community reference group was established for the Preston (High Street) activity centre and surrounds. The intent of the community reference group was to allow representatives from the community to provide focused input on the issues and opportunities for the activity centre and surrounding area, and to build upon existing engagement by council.

We heard comments relating to the following:

- Road infrastructure was a recurring concern. Competition between different modes of transport, such as trams, buses, and cars, exacerbates traffic congestion.
- Recommendations for mitigating traffic congestion that addressed all modes of transport including tram, train and buses as well as cycling and pedestrian connections.
- Desire for increased investment in community infrastructure and open space.



## 4 Implementation

The proposed changes to the land use and development controls on affected land will be implemented via a planning scheme amendment. The Activity Centre Plan will also be implemented through other statutory and non-statutory measures including, but not limited to, identified future strategic work, establishing infrastructure contributions, and infrastructure projects as well as affordable housing requirements. It is intended that the planning scheme amendment/s to implement this activity centre plan be completed by the end of 2024.

The preferred planning tool for the catchments is to be confirmed. It is not proposed to remove heritage overlays through new provisions.

### 4.1 Preston (High Steet) activity centre

Land use and built form in the Preston (High Street) activity centre, is proposed to be guided by the *Draft Preston Central Structure Plan* (adopted 2023) prepared by Darebin City Council. This is proposed to be introduced as a background document at Clause 72.08 in the *Darebin Planning Scheme*.

The land use and built form outcomes described in the *Draft Preston Central Structure Plan 2023* are proposed to be implemented via a new planning tool, likely a zone and/or overlay, in the Darebin Planning Scheme.

### 4.2 Future strategic planning work

The preparation of this plan has identified additional work to be undertaken by the Victorian Government, Darebin City Council or other agencies. This includes:

- 1 A new simplified and standardised infrastructure funding approach
- 2 Possible preparation of a Parking Precinct Plan and the introduction of a Parking Overlay
- 3 Possible introduction of updated flood management controls (subject to further work with Melbourne Water)
- 4 Possible precinct-wide review of potentially contaminated land across the activity centre (core) to inform the need for further assessment.

Other non-statutory work has also been identified. This includes engagement with Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation on how to celebrate Aboriginal cultural and values in the design and development process, especially for large opportunity sites and delivery of transport, and community infrastructure including open space.

### 4.3 Aligning existing controls

#### 4.3.1 Activity centre

Planning controls that are to be replaced by the new land use and built form controls will be removed to streamline assessments and make the planning scheme clearer. No planning overlays are proposed to be removed from the activity centre.

No change is proposed to planning controls (zones and overlays) that apply to Preston Market and adjoining ACZ1 land.

The planning overlays proposed to be retained in the activity centre are:

- All heritage protection (HO)
- Special Building Overlay (SBO)
- Environmental Audit Overlay (EAO)
- Development Contributions Plan Overlay (DCPO1 and DCPO2)
- Overlays applying to Preston Market (DPO14, PO2, DCPO2).

## 4.4 Infrastructure delivery

The population of the Preston (High Street) activity centre and surrounding catchment is expected to increase with additional housing required to accommodate the growing population. The additional dwellings required is anticipated to be between 11,800 to 15,300 dwellings by 2051.

As more people call Preston (High Street) home, it is important that the local schools, services and infrastructure have the funding they need to grow. During consultation the community has been clear that vibrant places with green parks and local community facilities are important to support housing growth.

### 4.4.1 An innovative approach to infrastructure contributions

The State Government is exploring options for a simplified infrastructure funding mechanism to fund the things the future suburb needs.

This mechanism could provide direct contributions for councils and State Government to deliver essential infrastructure like roads, community centres and local sporting facilities to support growing and changing communities.

The activity centre plan will guide investment in the things a growing suburb needs like community facilities, bike paths and upgrading parks and open spaces.

We are consulting with the community on their priorities for investment in infrastructure.

## 4.5 Affordable housing

Affordable housing is defined in the *Planning and Environment Act, 1987* (The Act) as “housing, including social housing, that is appropriate for the needs of very low-, low- and moderate-income households.” The Act specifies annually updated income range classifications for very low- to moderate- income households.

Applications for residential subdivision and development should consider how they contribute to meeting the need for affordable housing.

Where affordable housing is provided, it should contribute to meeting the needs of very low- to moderate-income ranges.

This contribution can be delivered via the following options:

- Discounted sale or gifting of homes to a registered housing agency or Homes Victoria which provides affordable housing
- A cash contribution equivalent to the above to the Social Housing Growth Fund or nominated trust account to the satisfaction of the responsible authority.
- Any other delivery method that provides for affordable housing, subject to the approval of the responsible authority.

This is in conjunction with the other local, state and federal government initiatives aimed at delivering more affordable housing such as:

- Unlocking surplus government land (State)
- The *Development Facilitation Program* (State)
- The *Short Stay Levy* (State)
- The *Regional Housing Fund* (State)
- The *Big Housing Build* (State)
- The *Public Housing Renewal Program* (State)
- The *Affordable Housing Investment Partnership* (State)
- The *Social Housing Accelerator* (Federal); and
- The *National Housing Accord* (Federal)

In addition, government is seeking feedback on the “Big ideas for Victoria’s future” through the plan for Victoria consultation process. Ideas include setting a minimum amount of social and affordable housing in new developments.

## 4.6 Identification of environmental constraints

To ensure that future residents are afforded a high-quality environment where potential risks of harm to amenity and human health are avoided or mitigated, the activity centre plan highlights the need to consider potential contamination, noise and vibration, as well as amenity and buffers at the permit application stage.

### 4.6.1 Potentially contaminated land – catchment

Identifying contamination is important because it can cause harm to human health and the natural environment. Where a site is contaminated, the local environment, including the soil, indoor or outdoor air, and/or surface water or groundwater may be unsafe for site occupants. Immediate and long-term health effects may occur where people are exposed to harmful levels of contamination.

It is anticipated that council's own strategic work will address matters related to potentially contaminated land within the Preston (High Street) activity centre. However, the approach to planning for housing supply in the catchment area does not require any changes to the underlying residential zoning and will not change existing land use arrangements. As such, across the catchment, council's assessment of an application for a planning permit is the appropriate time for the proponent to address the potential for contamination and mitigate risks posed to human health or the environment, having regard to Section 60 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (the Act).

Section 60 of the Act requires a responsible authority, before deciding on a permit application, to consider *"any significant effects which the responsible authority considers the use or development may have on the environment or which the responsible authority considers the environment may have on the use or development"*. Section 60 is applicable to potentially contaminated land, which may affect, or be affected by, use or development\*.

### 4.6.2 Noise

Consideration of noise and vibration is important to ensure that future residents are able to undertake normal activities in and around their home and have access to an adequate sleeping environment.

To accommodate future growth, development should (where possible) seek to incorporate:

- Appropriate building siting
- Appropriate design, including orientation and internal layout
- Urban design, and
- Land use separation techniques appropriate to the functions and character of the area.

### 4.6.3 Amenity and buffers

It is important to ensure that intensification of existing residential use and the associated development of land is compatible with adjoining and nearby land uses, particularly where there is potential for off-site impacts from commercial, industrial and other uses, such as dust or odour.

Where appropriate, development proposals will be required to demonstrate that the amenity and human health of future residents will not be adversely affected by these uses.

\* Department of Planning & Transport, *PPN30: Potentially Contaminated Land*, updated May 2024, available at [www.planning.vic.gov.au](http://www.planning.vic.gov.au)



