

# PART 4

## STRUCTURE PLAN FRAMEWORK



# Overview

This chapter provides the core basis for delivering planning and design improvements to the Newport Activity Centre. In reading the structure plan framework, it is useful to note the following with respect to the function of its components:



## VISION

Provides a foundation for all strategic measures contained in this Structure Plan by recognising the qualities and characteristics of the Newport Activity Centre and envisaging how it should mature and develop into the future.



## OBJECTIVES

A series of specific outcomes that are sought in order to achieve the vision.



## STRATEGIES

Specific strategies that will be employed to assist in delivery of the objectives.



## ACTIONS

Specific actions, including further work, that will be implemented to achieve the objectives.

# 6

## VISION NEWPORT

### 6.1 Vision Context

Newport is an interesting and complex place to understand and define. It is a place with a definite sense of purpose in its underlying urban structure and built form, much of which is still discernible today in its gridded street layout and strategically positioned heritage buildings. Over time, however, the urban structure has been subject to some significant layering of infrastructure which have effectively bisected the village and compromised the intent of the original urban design.

In Newport, the competing forces of placemaking and engineering come together in a unique way. The original planning and design brings a fundamental sense of place, village scale and heritage charm. Large scale infrastructure has improved Newport's accessibility and commerciality, whilst contributing a sense of grittiness and a less straightforward way of navigating and experiencing the village.

This juxtaposition of village and infrastructure, urban design and engineering, cars and people, fine grain and coarse grain, heritage charm and industrial grit, wayfinding and discovery is part of what makes Newport special. It is the essence that should be handled with care when making decisions about its future. Balance is key in articulating a vision to take Newport into its next phase.

As Newport continues to grow and comes under pressure for growth and redevelopment it is essential that:

- > New development continues to reinforce and support the village scale that Newport was founded on;
- > New buildings respect the finer grain heritage charm and scale of the village, and contemporary built form is encouraged to define and differentiate architectural eras and reinforce the distinction between old and new;
- > Redevelopment of heritage sites is carefully controlled to achieve high quality design that creatively interprets and responds to the surrounding historic context;
- > Heritage precincts are subject to minimal housing growth in order to conserve their significant heritage character;
- > New development achieves an appropriate transition between densities and key interfaces to surrounding low-scale heritage precincts;
- > The public realm returns to the principles of balancing function, form and placemaking;
- > Roads retain and improve their access and circulation function, whilst also transitioning to quality streetscapes that support village activity and socialising;
- > Pedestrians and cyclists can safely share spaces with cars, and all modes are given equal opportunity and consideration;
- > Retail is supported within the core village area and activity restricted to a finer grain, especially as part of redevelopment;
- > Industrial and engineering infrastructure elements are recognised as not being of a scale that can be hidden, but rather celebrated as part of the fabric or palette of Newport and used to inform materiality, landscape and art;
- > A sense of discovery forms part of the way Newport is accessed and experienced.

These factors require a focus on Newport as a place of competing, but complimentary forces and tensions that must be acknowledged to guide the Centre's way forward. The challenge of this Structure Plan and for Newport's future is how to create a sense of balance and harmony between the two forces, in a way that strengthens the role and influence of both. Bearing this tension in mind and using it to inform Newport's future, this Structure Plan articulates the following vision for the future of Newport:

## **Newport Vision**

**The Newport Activity Centre will build on its intrinsic village charm and heritage character, while recognising the importance and influence of major infrastructure as part of its urban fabric. Quality built form and public realm improvements will provide the key ingredients. Buildings will comprise a mix of heritage and mid-rise contemporary architecture which interprets and responds to Newport 's heritage and industrial context.**

**Heritage precincts will maintain a traditional low-scale character, reinforcing Newport's historic identity.**

**Well-designed streets, plazas, and public areas will stitch together scattered spaces, and provide a bridge between place and infrastructure needs.**

The vision for Newport will be given effect via a series of objectives, strategies and actions that have been divided into the following key themes:

- > Identity
- > Land use and Activity
- > Residential
- > Built Form and Heritage
- > Public Realm and Open Space
- > Access and Movement



## 6.2 Identity

Newport's identity derives from a number of characteristics, including its railway and industrial heritage, iconic built form, evolution from 'industria to suburbia,' open space network, access to the water, and position as the gateway to Williamstown.

The Activity Centre's sense of place began to be defined when commercial and residential development first occurred in response to construction of the train station, followed by subsequent boom periods, as previously described. The manner in which this development occurred laid the foundations for Newport in terms of

its village feel and civic attributes. The construction of the Melbourne Road overpass in the 1960s, although an important project, changed the trajectory of how Newport's identity evolved thereafter.

The impact of the activity centre was significant, however residential development continued to steadily occur. Adaptive re-use of the former Substation building as a major arts and culture hub, the annual Folk Festival, and the establishment of businesses that cater for lifestyle related demand are evidence of community based responses to the opportunity to establish Newport as an active place.

A key challenge facing Newport today is how to continue the maturation process from 'industrial to suburbia,' and then into a thriving 'village.' Maturation is important not only within residential areas and select sites, but also in terms of the form and composition of the Activity Centre as a whole.

A related and critically important challenge arises from the need to protect the village feel and heritage characteristics of the Centre, and steer where and how development occurs, to ensure growth doesn't compromise Newport's valued heritage.

Balance is important. On the one hand, Newport needs a level of coherence within the urban fabric to continue its maturation and address the fragmentation created by infrastructure. On the other, the idiosyncrasies between spaces that have arisen from the fragmentation have resulted in the creation of Precincts with desirable characteristics.

In its current form, the Activity Centre has become a collection of spaces that create an experience of discovery. The manner in which people experience

Newport is not linear or obvious. Rather, it is a process of discovery, as residents and visitors find themselves going over and under infrastructure elements to travel between spaces, and experiencing differences between spaces. Accordingly, it is necessary to address the tension between creating a holistic Activity Centre narrative, while also enabling individual spaces/ precincts to develop organically.

### What's Missing?

- > Clear direction for how the Activity Centre will enter its next major phase of development, while conserving and enhancing significant heritage precincts;
- > A sense of arrival;
- > Legibility of the Activity Centre and how it functions; and
- > Spatial relationships between Precincts.

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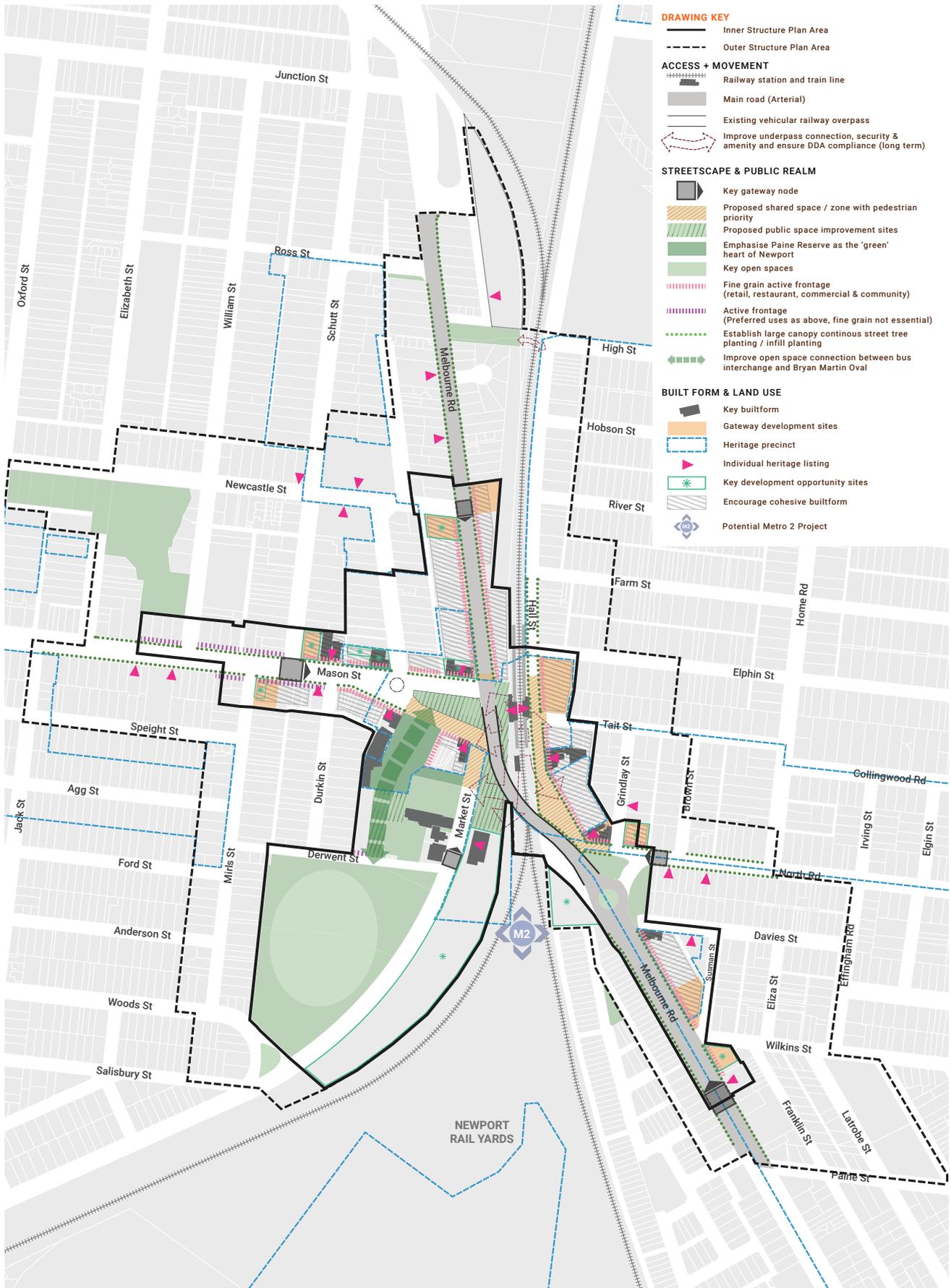


Figure 12 - Newport Activity Centre - Identity Plan

## OBJECTIVE

- I-1 To build a cohesive identity for Newport as a village, while enabling development within specialised Precincts.

## STRATEGIES

- I-1.1 Improve the sense of arrival by encouraging gateway developments at the identified locations in the Northern and Southern Gateway Precincts, and the Hall Street Precinct (see Figure 12).
- I-1.2 Create a legible and recognisable Activity Centre by stitching individual Precincts together through cohesive built form and public realm improvements.  
(Refer to detailed strategies related to built form, heritage, public realm and open space.)  
**Note** Physical connections cannot be improved in all locations due to limitations created by the Melbourne Road overpass. Improvement measures accordingly focus on other strategies which communicate the urban structure and form.
- I-1.3 Reinforce the village feel by supporting small format tenancies which generate activity, while avoiding uses that require large footprints and associated at grade car parking.
- I-1.4 Encourage adaptive re-use and sensitive re-development of heritage buildings.
- I-1.5 Encourage development focused on arts, culture, lifestyle, sustainability, and other such themes that enhance Newport's reputation as a cultural hub.

## OBJECTIVE

- I-1.2 To strengthen cohesion within the public realm through improved spatial relationships between Precincts.

## STRATEGIES

- I-2.1 Connect Paine Reserve to a greater extent with a re-imagined urban/transport plaza to the north, recreational facilities to the south (the bowls club, scouts, and RSL), and Bryan Martyn Oval.  
**Note** Refer to public realm strategies in connection with the urban transport plaza and other key spaces.
- I-2.2 Improve the sense of civic pride in spaces where pedestrians and traffic would ordinarily slow or linger (such as at the corner of Mason Street and Melbourne Road, and the intersection of Melbourne Road and North Road).
- I-2.3 Encourage amenity improvements within and surrounding the railway reserve, recognising it as a key part of the urban structure.

## ACTIONS

- IA-1 Engage and support business groups through forums, economic development and place management.
- IA-2 Engage with the RSL, scouts, and bowls club to improve inter-precinct relationships.  
(See also the actions specified with respect to land use, and public realm and open space.)
- IA-3 Liaise with VicTrack to undertake a strategic assessment of circulation spaces that can be improved within the railway reserve, having regard for both short and long terms measures.

**Note** The objectives, strategies, and actions that are detailed in relation to identity are those which have an overarching influence on the Activity Centre. Aspects of identity are also interwoven into other areas, and are developed further in the subsequent sections.

## 6.3 Land Use and Activity

The existing land use pattern reflects the Precincts that have previously been described, providing positive foundational elements within each area that can be built upon. However, there are a number of uses such as tyre repairs, that are located in a highly prominent part of the Activity Centre, but do not contribute to its activity, amenity and appeal. Such uses may be better located in less strategic parts of the Activity Centre. In addition, land use and activity appear limited in scale due to heritage constraints.

To date, heritage features have not been adequately addressed in terms of their relationship to future development within the Activity Centre.

The future of land use within the Activity Centre will be influenced by two key factors. Firstly, gentrification trends in the area will affect future settlement and built form. Secondly, the desirability of the suburb will be augmented by the position that Newport has within the Activity Centre's hierarchy as a Neighbourhood Centre on Melbourne's doorstep, with excellent access to the Principal Public Transport Network (PPTN). In response, land uses and activities will need to mature from their present state into a mix that is tailored to a greater extent towards the expected future population.

### Retail + Commercial

The Activity Centre Strategy Technical Report identified that "47 percent of available retail spending of Hobsons Bay residents is directed to retail facilities located outside the municipality." It is understood that trends in Newport align with the general Hobsons Bay trend of escape expenditure.

Another key matter to note is that the report identifies that land use within the Activity Centre comprises approximately 50 percent retail uses and 50 percent non-retail. When this proportional split is put within the context of broad escape expenditure in the area, questions arise as to whether the proportion of retail can be increased over time. In this regard, it is relevant to note that there are a number of large footprint uses which impact the grain, rhythm, and levels of activity that could be established within the centre. Examples of such uses include tyre repairs, car wash, and mechanics, which occupy prime space that can be better utilised. With rising land values, market forces are likely to combine with policy and zoning provisions to incentivise using land in a manner that realises its economic potential. While it is appropriate for some uses to remain, there is a prospect of changing the proportion of non-retail uses in favour of retail at ground level.

Generally, the uses envisaged involve retail, convenience, lifestyle focused tenancies, and small-scale commercial uses which help strengthen the fine grain nature and feel of the Activity Centre. A convenience supermarket is located on the north-eastern corner of Mason Street and Walker Street.

Further, it is noted that office uses within the Structure Plan area are limited. This is likely to be attributable in part to the closeness of the study area to Melbourne and larger Centres and employment clusters, which attract office uses. However, should demand be expressed, it is considered appropriate for office uses to be located within Newport in future.

### Community Uses + Social Infrastructure

Newport benefits significantly from having a community 'heart' created by the co-location of the library, community hall, and Paine Reserve. There is scope to celebrate this central node to a greater extent and create better relationships between it and the surrounding developable areas.

Educational uses, child care centres, and medical and associated centres are well-distributed in proximity to the Centre. These provide valuable components of a liveable community and increase the attractiveness of the Activity Centre and its periphery as places to reside. While these spaces are primarily outside the Activity Centre boundary, their influence is relevant to the Structure Plan. Conversely, it is also noted that the demand for and pressure on these uses may increase over time due to growth within the Centre.

### Recreation + Culture

Recreational and cultural spaces are among Newport's strongest assets. The open space network is extensive and includes spaces within and surrounding the Activity Centre. Arts and culture in Newport are epitomised in the Substation, a re-purposed industrial building which now includes space for exhibition, performances, and creative pursuits. These elements are embraced within the Structure Plan and similar or complementary uses are encouraged.

The strategic location of the Newport Bowling Club offers an opportunity for revitalisation and better integration with Paine Reserve and the Newport Community Hub.

## Residential

Prior economic assessments have identified that residential development should be encouraged within the Activity Centre (on upper levels) in order to support the existing land uses and assist in attracting additional commercial uses.

The Mason Street Precinct and Northern Gateway Precinct have been specifically identified as areas suitable for intensification, subject to heritage and MHF considerations. Both Precincts have seen higher density residential development in recent years - on the corner of Mason Street and Walker Street, and the corner of Newcastle Street and Melbourne Road. Higher density development has also occurred in the Southern Gateway Precinct. Such development contributes towards supporting the existing retail and commercial uses, and will contribute to a greater extent in future.

Overall, future residential development will need to cater for housing growth within the inner structure plan area (with comparatively limited change in residential heritage precincts), diversity in housing stock, affordable housing for households on very low to moderate incomes, and the strengthening of patronage sources for retail and hospitality. The outer structure plan area will accommodate minimal housing change to prioritise conservation of heritage precincts.

## Industry

Industrial uses (other than tyre/vehicle repairs) are generally absent from the Activity Centre. This is appropriate, given the context and location of the Centre.

To the north of the Centre, there are significant MHFs which store, process, and transport dangerous goods. For safety reasons, these facilities limit the type and intensity of development in areas to the north of the Activity Centre. The MHFs have inner and outer planning advisory areas, for which non determinative advice is provided by WorkSafe Victoria. Specifically, inner areas are considered inappropriate for any land uses other than low density industrial uses or land uses with a low employee density. Land use and development in outer areas is also intended to be limited, so that people who are unable to respond to emergency events are not located within the area, and the number of people on site is limited.

Additionally, there are several industrial uses surrounding Newport, which have historically defined the suburb.

## Other Uses

Transport uses have a major bearing on the Structure Plan area:

- > The railway station and its surrounds are an intrinsic part of the urban fabric;
- > The transit plaza on Mason Street has a strong relationship with and may be considered part of the civic heart. Mason Street has a strong relationship with "Paine Reserve"
- > The railway land to the south of the substation comprises the single largest area within the Activity Centre. The Activity Centre Strategy Technical Report identifies that this land "has a high net worth and the availability of large capacity free car parks discourages more active links with railway stations - for example by cycling and walking."
- > The rail yards located to the south of the Activity Centre are an intrinsic part of Newport's history. These continue to play an important role and provide a heritage context which informs the character of Newport.

These transport uses and spaces are of critical importance in terms of their current and future role, as well as planning for adjoining uses.

## Planning controls

Figures 13 and 14 illustrate the Zones and Overlays which apply within and surrounding the Activity Centre. Of particular note, is the Commercial 1 Zone (which informs the mix and scale of uses which locate in the Centre) and the Heritage Overlay (which affects how development can occur within and abutting the Activity Centre).

## What's Missing?

- > A strategy for capitalising on Newport's access to the PPTN;
- > Residential/offices on upper levels;
- > Retail and leisure activity (proportionate to the Centre's role);
- > Connections and/or discernible relationships between precincts.

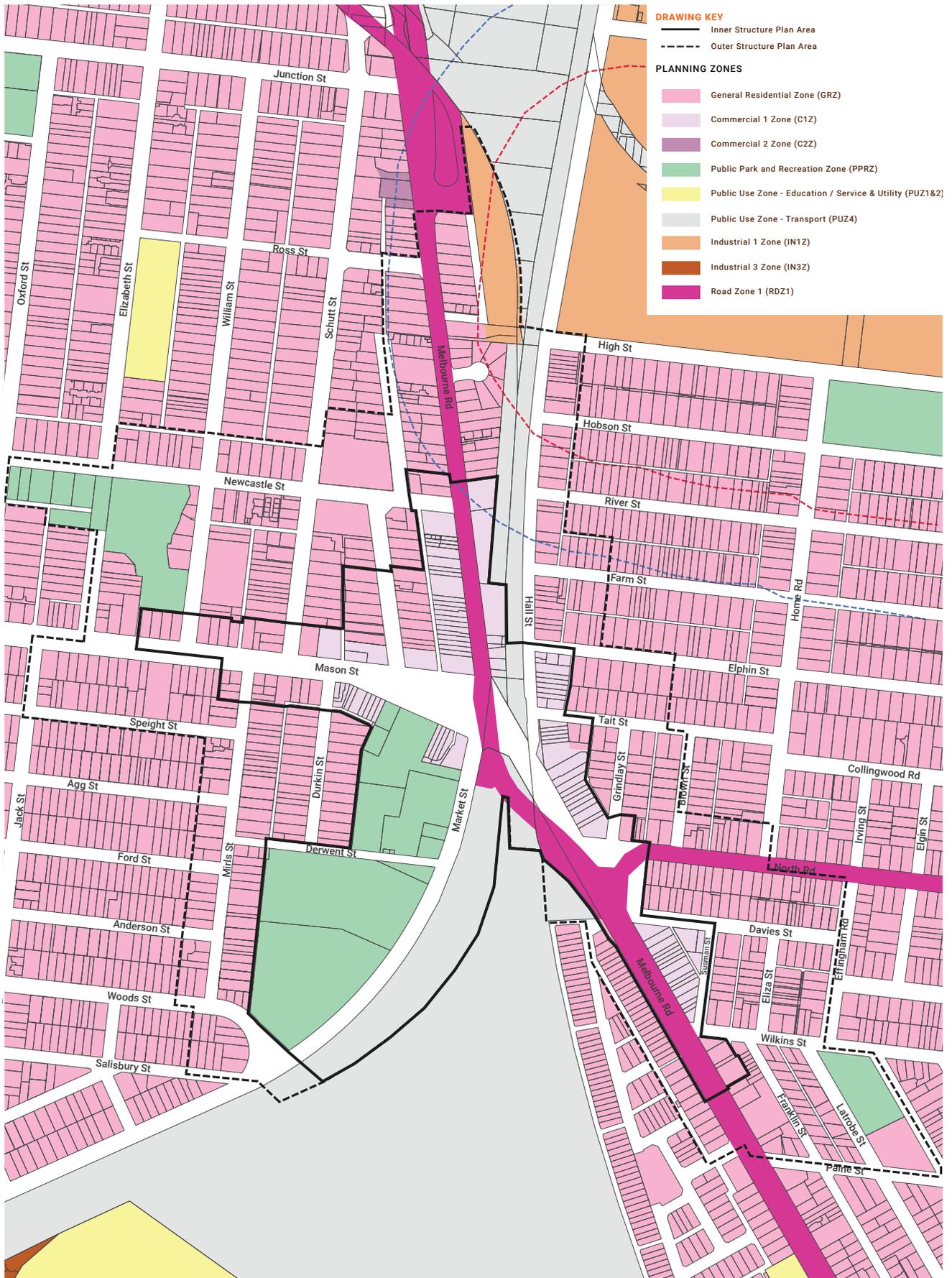


Figure 13 - Newport Activity Centre - Existing Planning Zones



Figure 14 - Newport Activity Centre - Existing Planning Overlays & Buffers

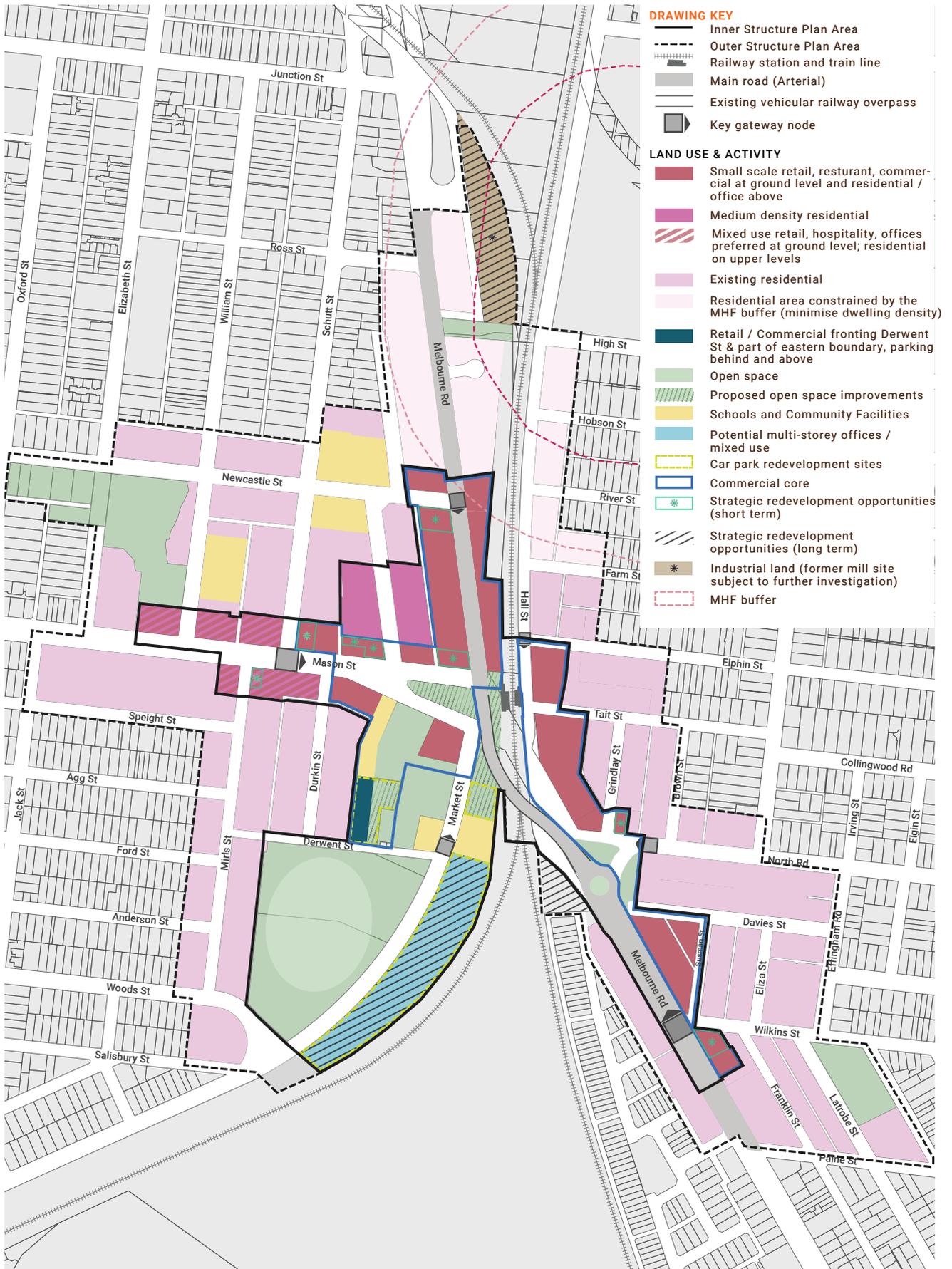


Figure 15 - Newport Activity Centre - Proposed Land Use Plan

## OBJECTIVE

- LUA-1 To increase economic activity and strengthen Newport's role as a vibrant Neighbourhood Activity Centre, with an emphasis on culture, food, retail, and convenient living.

## STRATEGIES

- LUA-1.1 Encourage increased residential density (mid rise) above ground level within the Activity Centre to provide housing in proximity to transport, increase the diversity and stock, and enhance patronage sources for ground level commercial uses.
- LUA-1.2 Support upper level office uses to suit small to medium sized firms.
- LUA-1.3 Strengthen street level activity by increasing ground level retailing, hospitality/leisure, convenience and fine-grain commercial uses.
- LUA-1.4 Facilitate the transition of industrial uses out of the Activity Centre to vacate sites for redevelopment.
- LUA-1.5 Facilitate the re-development of surface level car parking areas for higher order and higher density uses, while ensuring no net loss of parking.

## OBJECTIVE

- LUA-2 To strengthen the mix of land uses within the Activity Centre which activate core streets.

## STRATEGIES

- LUA-2.1 Encourage retail, hospitality, entertainment, leisure, and other such uses and activities that complement and enhance the vibrancy of the Activity Centre.
- LUA-2.2 Enable higher density mixed uses (mid rise) within the inner structural plan area, focusing on ground level retail/commercial, and upper level residential and office space to create a discernible mass.
- LUA-2.3 Support a mix of dwelling sizes and typologies within apartment developments to suit the needs of a range of demographic and social cohorts seeking to reside in Newport.
- LUA-2.4 Support appropriate parking dispensation for redevelopment involving three or more storeys and providing diverse housing forms within the Activity Centre, having regard for the high degree of public transport availability.
- LUA-2.5 Facilitate a mix of higher density residential use and other uses such as home occupation, small scale offices, medical centres within the outer structure plan area.
- LUA-2.6 Explore the feasibility of redeveloping the at-grade car park south of Paine Reserve with:
- A landscaped pathway from Paine Reserve to Derwent Street;
  - Commercial tenancies at ground level, oriented towards Bryan Martyn Oval and the proposed path;
  - Potential office uses on the upper level(s);
  - Consideration of parking required to support the Activity Centre and future uses; and
  - A development that responds to the existing context in terms of height, setbacks, built form and sensitive residential interfaces.
  - Consideration of heritage values
- LUA-2.7 Investigate revitalisation of Newport Bowling Club to create a destination venue for social bowling.
- LUA-2.8 Evaluate the feasibility of accommodating office activities south of the Substation building (with well-presented car parking below and tenancies above), and within a new car parking structure to the south of the Newport Library.
- LUA-2.9 Manage the transition of land uses along the periphery of the inner structure plan area.

## OBJECTIVE

- LUA-3 To guide the type and intensity of residential development on the outer structure plan area, based on the planning context specific to each location.

## STRATEGIES

- LUA 3.1 Maintain the low scale character of residential areas that are located within both the Heritage Overlay and MHF advisory areas, subject to further consideration as part of a Neighbourhood Character Study.
- Note** The former Mill site would ordinarily afford a key redevelopment opportunity, but falls within the MHF Inner and Outer Advisory areas, where the objective to minimise density and human activity applies. This creates a tension that requires dedicated consideration - the site has considerable significance and cannot be dismissed altogether as a potential redevelopment site, while simultaneously, exposure and risk are significant factors that constitute essential considerations. The site has accordingly been identified as an investigation area with respect to its long-term planning. Refer to Figure 15.
- LUA-3.2 Apply the Neighbourhood Residential Zone (NRZ) to residential areas in the outer structure plan area to preserve the valued heritage character of those neighbourhoods. (in accordance with the zoning recommended in Chapter 8 Implementation).
- LUA-3.3 Encourage incremental housing growth within the outer structure plan area by applying the General Residential Zone (GRZ) where heritage is not a constraint (in accordance with the zoning recommended in Chapter 8 Implementation).
- LUA-3.4 Encourage lot consolidation in residential neighbourhoods within the outer structure plan area to increase the potential for more intensive residential development.
- Note:** Account for areas which are within the Heritage Overlay.

## OBJECTIVE

- LUA-4 To plan for the development of strategic development sites and investigation areas.

## STRATEGIES

- LUA-4.1 Guide and facilitate the re-development of sites identified as providing short term strategic redevelopment opportunity, in accordance with the land uses shown in Figure 15.
- LUA-4.2 Plan for sites identified as having long term strategic redevelopment opportunities, taking into account the proposed land uses shown in Figure 15.
- LUA-4.3 Investigate the nature and extent of long term development that may be appropriate for the former mill site.
- LUA-4.4 Encourage the use of strategic development sites and investigation areas to incorporate a proportion of affordable housing.

## ACTIONS

- LUA-A.1 As Committee of Management, liaise with the Government to investigate the potential redevelopment of the car park to the south of Paine Reserve.
- LUA-A.2 Liaise with VicTrack to explore the feasibility of the redevelopment of at-grade car park to the south of the Substation, such that commuter and tenant parking is provided on lower levels, with attractive street interfaces, and office and/or residential development on upper levels.
- LUA-A.3 Investigate options for the former mill site, in consultation with the MHF operators and State agencies.
- LUA-A.4 Undertake a dedicated options assessment in consultation with VicTrack, regarding the VicTrack land on the western side of the Melbourne Road roundabout.
- LUA-A.5 Evaluate options for the redevelopment of 400-432 Melbourne Road, in discussions with development proponents to overcome the narrowness of the site and the presence of the major energy pipelines (especially in the southern section of the site). Consider allowing greater height and lesser upper level setbacks on the proviso that:
- High quality architectural responses, which respect and positively contribute to the streetscape, are developed;
  - A public space is provided in the southern section of the site; and
  - Car parking is not allowed to dominate the southern section of the site (due to its visual prominence and value to the urban core).
- LUA-A.6 Apply the Commercial 1 Zone (C1Z), Mixed Use Zone (MUZ), Residential Growth Zone (RGZ), General Residential Zone (GRZ), and the Neighbourhood Residential Zone (NRZ) in accordance with the proposed zoning in Chapter 8 Implementation.
- LUA-A.7 Monitor the impacts imposed by the development of Strategic Redevelopment Areas (SRAs) around Newport.
- LUA-A.8 Investigate affordable housing opportunities within strategic sites and investigation areas.
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Considerations for residential zoning on the periphery of the Centre:

- > Land subject to the MHF buffers should be included in the NRZ.
- > Residential areas within the Heritage Overlay should be subject to the NRZ as per the Revised Hobsons Bay Housing Strategy 2019, Hobsons Bay Neighbourhood Character Study and the Planning Practice Notes 90 and 91. Heritage precincts in Newport contain a special heritage character that warrants protection, therefore only minimal housing growth is sought. The NRZ will result in minimal to no change within these heritage precincts. Residential areas immediately abutting the activity centre, and not subject to the MHF advisory areas or in the Heritage Overlay can be included in the GRZ to facilitate moderate housing growth.. Surrounding heritage precincts can be respected through design responses, and density does not necessarily need to be restricted. The density and scale of development should be determined at a site and proposal specific level.