

# MORWELL ACTIVITY CENTRE PLAN BACKGROUND REPORTS Urban Design & Built Form

Discussion Paper

Prepared by **Hansen Partnership**  
for **Latrobe City Council**

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# 1.0 Introduction

## Project Background & Process

Hansen Partnership has been engaged by Latrobe City Council in June 2020 to provide urban design input to Council's Morwell Activity Centre Plan. This Background Paper focuses on urban design analyses, with input from Council (Urban Planning) and Movement and Place Consulting (Traffic and Transport).

Morwell is a regional centre with a rich history in industry and significant opportunity. Today with its designation as a 'Transit City' with nearby Traralgon and Moe, its role in the Gippsland Regional Growth Plan, the Morwell CBD must continue to be reactivated and redefined to cater for its dynamic community and to complement established precincts of different offerings. To achieve this the urban design, built form, transit and car parking attributes of Morwell must be carefully guided through detailed investigation and innovative strategy making. This is the purpose of this Project.

The strategic work completed to date for Morwell has served as durable documentation. However, prior work now requires critical review, consolidation and updating as the first step in developing a shared vision for the Morwell CBD. Key to the process of shaping a future built form and urban design proposition will be identifying and investigating gaps in previous bodies work.

Specifically, the purpose of the project as outlined in the Project Brief is to:

- Respond to the Urban Design Charter (Department of Planning & Community Development, 2009) of which Latrobe City Council is a signatory;
- Analyse the MAC as a whole but also at a precinct level to ensure more detailed planning and urban design recommendations (including current and future land uses, key development sites and suitable locations for medium density housing);
- Provide design objectives and guidelines including streetscape character, built form character (including heights, setbacks and materials), landscape character, sustainability, public safety and land use interface guidelines;
- Provide recommendations on the appropriate form and scale of signage within the MAC;
- Present Council with a number of highly innovative and imaginative concept designs for key sites or streetscapes which have the potential to act as catalysts for the MAC; and
- Provide a basis for the development of an Implementation Plan.

Ultimately, the importance of this project is understanding the anticipated type and scope of change in the future for the Morwell CBD. To support this change, Morwell needs to be equipped with innovative urban design, built form and transport strategies as well as the appropriate decision-making tools for Council to implement them.

This initial output seeks to:

- Review existing background documentation to identify strategies still relevant, as well as gaps in information to help inform the project direction;
- Record initial observations through site visit and existing conditions mapping; and
- Identify early opportunities to inform the next phases of the project - Key Stakeholder Engagement and Urban Design Key Directions.

## The Study Area

The Morwell CBD Activity Centre Plan study area definition is provided by Council. It includes land within approximately 400-500m from the Morwell Station which anchors the study area. It predominantly comprises land zoned C1Z and MUZ with a presence of RGZ and GRZ to the north and south respectively.

The Morwell CBD/Transit City boundary was initially defined by the Morwell Structure Plan (2007) and Morwell Housing Framework Plan (2019). The study area boundary includes all land identified as Morwell CBD and includes additional areas:

- **West:** C1Z and MUZ properties fronting Princes Drive and Commercial Road, and residential land on the western side of Maryvale Crescent, connecting Princes Drive and the Morwell Recreation Reserve.
- **South:** residential properties on the south side of Elgin Street (1 allotment deep) and Morwell Town Common.
- **East:** properties fronting Princes Drive currently in MUZ, C1Z and RGZ and framing Macdonald Street.
- **North:** Buckley Street west of McDonald Street, and the MUZ and immediately abutting RGZ properties, east of Latrobe Road.



The study area



# 2.0 Background Review

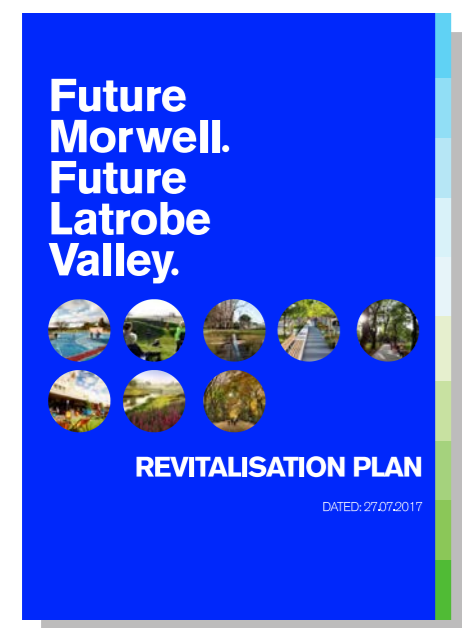
This review seeks to understand the objectives and actions set out in work completed to date, most relevant to Urban Design & Built Form, including Future Morwell, Morwell Structure Plan, Latrobe City Council Urban Design Guidelines, Latrobe Transit Centred Precincts – Morwell 2004, Latrobe City Council Retail Strategy, Latrobe City Tracks, Trails and Paths Strategy and Latrobe Bicycle Strategy.

In addition to those summarised in greater detail, other background documents that provide high-level direction for the City of Latrobe and Morwell that have also been reviewed as part of this process include:

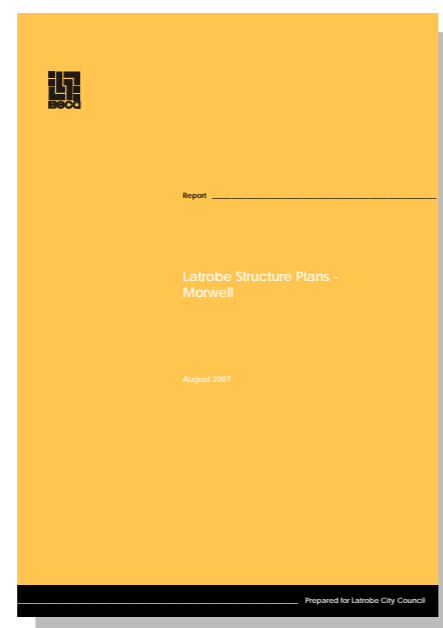
- Latrobe City Council Plan 2017-2021;
- Community Engagement Action Plan 2015-2019;
- Latrobe City Events & Tourism Strategy 2018-2022;
- Morwell Outdoor Recreation Plan 2008;
- Public Open Space Strategy - Volume 1 & 2 2013;
- Latrobe 2026 – The Community Vision for Latrobe Valley; and
- Morwell Brand & Style Guidelines.

In addition to documenting relevant strategies from the reviewed documents and identifying 'gaps' in information, to review implementation actions and grade them accordingly:

- Has been implemented;
- Has been partially implemented or is currently undergoing implementation;
- Potential to be implemented in short term (pending further analysis); and
- Potential to be implemented in medium to longer term (pending further analysis).



Future Morwell document



Morwell Structure Plan Document

## Future Morwell Revitalisation Plan, 2017

A strategy with emphasis on the rejuvenation of Morwell, particularly through image and public realm works in the CBD – some of which have been implemented and constructed, particularly south of the rail corridor.

While the document contains many strategies regarding public realm and movement networks, there is little regarding land use and built form.

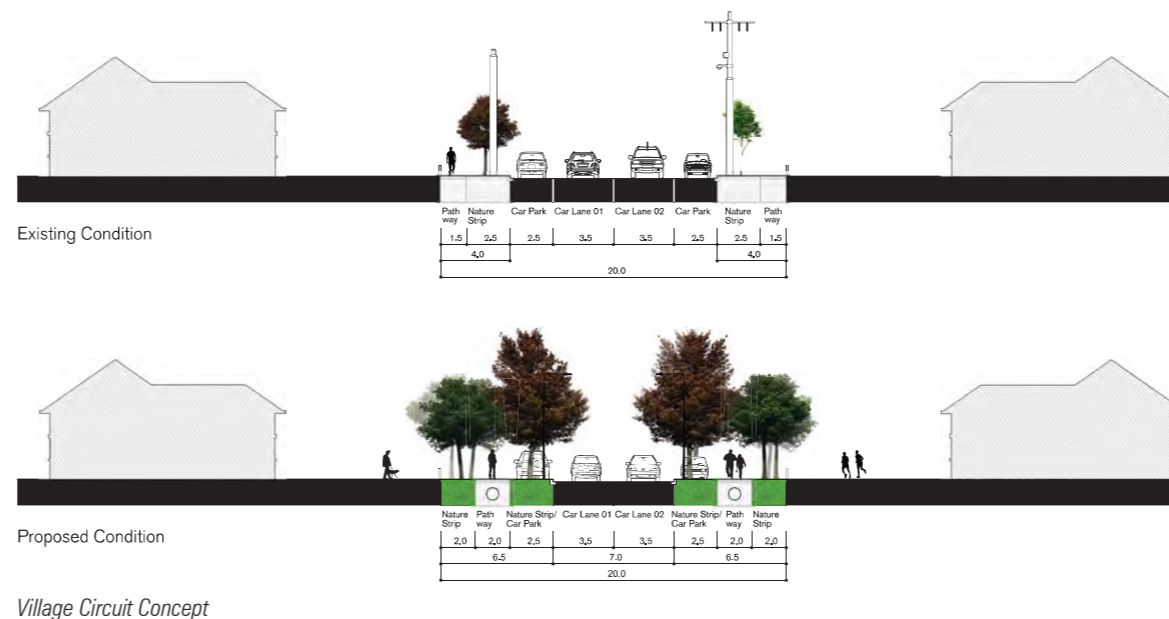
The overarching objectives are high-level and remain relevant today. More specifically, 'Hub A: Local Village' presents most relevance to the study area as it encompasses the CBD. It is our view that the following strategies remain relevant for the Activity Centre Plan:

- Clearly define the Latrobe Regional Gallery and Government services precinct as a bookend Commercial Road west.
- To develop and implement a circuit that acts as a framework for other activities, infrastructure and actions to stem from, and contributes to the health and safety of the area.
- Consolidate and direct retail, commercial and social enterprises to the following areas:
  - Commercial Road (between Chapel Street and Hazelwood Road);
  - Tarwin Street (between George Street and Commercial Road);
  - Church Street (between Princes Drive & Buckley Street).
- Develop concept plans for a town square located at the corner of Tarwin Street and Commercial Road supporting the idea of an identifiable heart to the Village Hub.

- To develop a circuit around the Village Hub that prioritises the bicycle and pedestrian network, and provides safe inclusive access for all during the day and evening.
- To develop a clear entrance and navigation through the town
- To conduct a feasibility study on the relocation and renewal of the Sunday market in the town centre. Investigate ways to consult with private owners about bringing Sunday Market into town centre. Develop a curated events and activities calendar to activate the Village Hub, and celebrate place + community, supported by the circuit and piazza

### Gaps & Implications

- Aside from the notion of 'consolidating retail, commercial and social enterprises' to specific areas, there is a lack of detailed land use guidance for remaining areas of the centre – or how this consolidation can be achieved.
- Built form guidance – ensuring appropriate built form interfaces to initiatives such as public realm upgrades and the village circuit.



Village Circuit Concept



## Morwell Structure Plan, 2007

The 'Urban Growth Structure Plan' identifies the core of the CBD as a 'Primary Activity Centre', skirted by 'Existing Urban Areas.'

The Structure Plan aims to achieve eight major objectives in relation to the issues identified within the Issues, Values and Constraints section:

- 1. Create a vibrant and active town centre.
- 2. Improve transport routes and ease of movement.
- 3. Improve and protect visual amenity.
- 4. Provide for high amenity housing choice.
- 5. Redevelop rundown and underutilised, but well-located industrial sites for residential uses.
- 6. Protect areas for future urban growth.
- 7. Diversify the stock of industrial land, in particular providing for high amenity industrial uses.
- 8. Establish walkable neighbourhood centres in growth areas.

### Objective 1: Create a vibrant and active town centre

- Strengthen the Morwell Town Centre in accordance with the Transit Cities Precinct Study (Area 3)
- In the northern precinct (i.e. north of Princes Drive) encourage the development of the following goods and services - food and drink premises, accommodation, community services, business services and industrial services.
- In the southern precinct (ie. south of Princes Drive) encourage the development of the following goods and services – retail and office precinct.

### Objective 2: Improve transport routes and ease of movement.

- Complete the transport network for all modes of transport within the existing urban area, in order to provide a continuous and seamless network (Existing Urban Areas (Transport Structure Plan Maps)
  - Introduce bus services to southern Morwell.
  - Focus on establishing east-west on-road bike routes that feed into the existing northsouth routes.
  - Clearly mark bike lanes for their purpose.
  - Complete off-road paths.

- Improve accessibility to the transport hub by improving pedestrian and cycle paths to/from this location.
  - Bus and train station to be co-located, with bus services stopping directly outside the station in order to maximise the connection between modes.
  - Increase bicycle parking.
  - Provide an information display board detailing train, bus, cycle and pedestrian paths.
- Improve pedestrian and road safety for local residents
  - In dialogue with key stakeholders, encourage the establishment of preferred trucking routes and operating times.

### Objective 3: Improve and Protect Amenity

- Landscaping of the Morwell town entrances
  - Provide a high amenity entrance into Morwell's eastern and western entrances.
- Minimise the conflicts between neighbouring land uses
  - Provide residents with a high amenity environment.
  - Protect industry from residential encroachment that may impact on industry operations.

### Gaps & Implications

- The Structure Plan defines the role of the CBD and has been implemented into the Planning Scheme.
- The overarching themes and objectives of the Structure Plan continue to be relevant.
- However, they are high-level, and lack more granular direction for the CBD area, beyond labelling it as a 'Primary Activity Centre.'
- There is no built form guidance provided in the Structure Plan.

## Latrobe City Council Urban Design Guidelines 2019

Forming part of the Live Work Latrobe Project, the Urban Design Guidelines apply to Latrobe's residential, industrial and commercial areas. The guidelines specify requirements for new development and streetscapes within both established and greenfield areas.

The guidelines comprise four components which are:

- Residential Guidelines
- Commercial Guidelines
- Industrial Guidelines
- Streetscape Guidelines

Most relevant to the study area are the Commercial Guidelines which apply to new development with land zoned C1Z and MUZ. Complementing this are the streetscape guidelines that aim to advocate for improved walkability, pedestrian amenity and clear cycle networks, while maintaining the effective and safe movement of vehicles. It also provides residential guidelines which broadly comprise site planning and building presentation guidance – relevant for residential areas within the study area.

The Commercial Guidelines provide objectives and requirements under the following headings:

- |                                |                                |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ▪ Building Height              | ▪ Signage                      |
| ▪ Heritage                     | ▪ Landscape & Fencing          |
| ▪ Street Presentation          | ▪ Weather Protection           |
| ▪ Building Design              | ▪ Material Selection           |
| ▪ Upper Levels                 | ▪ Environmental Sustainability |
| ▪ Vehicle Access & Car Parking | ▪ Services & Ancillary         |

These provide robust guidance and tools for assessing commercial development across the City of Latrobe, however it is not a Morwell specific document and does not contain strategic directions. These guidelines are thorough and relevant to contemporary commercial development and will be useful in complementing a future built form vision for the Morwell CBD.

### Gaps & Implications

- The guidelines provide useful direction for site planning, interface management and streetscape matters relevant to typologies found within the Morwell CBD.
- However, across the background documentation there is a lack of prescription regarding the preferred character of the Morwell Activity Centre that these urban design guidelines can cater towards.

## Latrobe Transit Centred Precincts – Morwell 2004

Transit Cities was a State Government initiative that aimed to encourage higher-density, mixed-use development – particularly housing – in Melbourne and Victoria’s key regional activity centres that are connected to each other by rail. This aimed to create environmentally sustainable, socially inclusive and commercially successful centres.

Since the document was adopted, some actions have been performed including the upgrade to the pedestrian underpass, Church Street beautification work and public realm upgrades around the bus terminal. Other than that, a large percentage of the implementation remains unactioned.

The document identifies key development opportunities with aligned strategies and actions under the following headings:

- Railway Land North;
- Princes Drive North;
- Buckley Street;
- Church Street;
- Council Offices;
- Manny’s Market Site;
- George Street Car Park;
- Coles Car Park;
- Collins Street School Site; and
- Erricson Site.

Under these headings, the following ‘opportunities’ remain relevant:

### Princes Drive North;

- Vacant and underutilised properties on the north side of Princes Drive could be developed to higher densities. Currently occupied premises may also be redeveloped to higher densities in the future.
- Office development or tourist accommodation is most appropriate on these sites. However, apartments should not be precluded at upper levels if they are necessary in order to make a development viable.
- Development of 2-4 storeys, well-articulated buildings would be appropriate. Careful architectural design is required to create high quality development.

### Buckley Street;

- Vacant and underutilised properties along Buckley Street (between Latrobe and Hoyle Streets) present an opportunity for higher-density redevelopment. The relocation of the light industrial activities to more appropriate locations could create further development opportunities.
- Shops, small offices or community uses at ground floor with apartments above is most appropriate, to allow the retention of existing occupiers and the development of an active street environment, while recognising the potential for urban living accommodation.
- Walk-up buildings of 3-4 storeys are appropriate given the low-rise context. Careful architectural design is required to create high quality mixed-use development that will lead the market.
- The car park north of Buckley Street and west of Church Street creates an ideal opportunity for a ‘catalyst’ or ‘demonstration’ mixed-use apartment project.

### Church Street;

- The opportunity exists to develop Church Street as the ‘urban lifestyle hub’ for the area surrounding the station through the attraction of appropriate businesses.
- ‘Shoptop’ apartments could be provided at upper levels

### Manny’s Market

- Re-establishing a continuous, active retail street frontage to George and Tarwin Streets on the Manny’s Market site would contribute to a more compact and pedestrian-friendly retail environment. Offices or apartments could be provided on upper floors.

### George Street Car Park

- The opportunity exists to develop new retail outlets (with offices above) facing into the car park along its northern edge.
- A new shop in front of Anglicare on George Street would provide a more well-defined edge to this street frontage and the carpark.
- Enhancing the car park through landscaping measures and shading devices, would further enhance its pedestrian amenity.

### Coles Car Park

- Blank frontages currently face on to the Coles car park, creating a largely inactive public space. The potential exists to redevelop the southern part of the car park between Coles and the row of shops facing Tarwin Street.

## Public Realm Opportunities

### Princes Drive

- Princes Drive is relatively broad, presenting an opportunity to develop a distinctive streetscape treatment to enhance the pedestrian amenity of the station area. This may take the form of a new central median and a formal avenue of underlit canopy trees in the median and along the parking lanes/ nature strips.
- The opportunity exists to ensure more parking is available for visitors to local businesses by providing a greater number of 2-4 hour parking spaces on Princes Drive.

### Buckley Street

- Buckley Street contains a central, treed median between Collins and Church Streets. The opportunity exists to continue this treatment in the blocks to the east and west to enhance its pedestrian amenity.

### Public Square

- The opportunity exists to design the areas at each end of the station underpass as a public square, to act as a focal point for social activity. The squares should incorporate cafes to animate the space.

### Gaps & Implications

- The document provides a range of strategies, balanced across themes of built form, public realm and movement.
- While there is some reference to consolidating land use precincts such as office, retail, government and food and beverage, further investigation is required to guide how this can materialise through the planning scheme.



## Latrobe City Council Retail Strategy 2019 (Amendment C119)

Amendment C119 implements the findings of the Latrobe City Council Retail Strategy 2019 (the Strategy). The Strategy provides the strategic basis to coordinate future planning and development of the municipality's retail sector and activity centres. Key findings relevant to the Morwell CBD and its surrounds are as follows:

- The strategy identifies the Morwell CBD as an under performing centre for reasons including lack of population and spending growth, lack of private sector investment, poor urban environment and public realm and the growth of Traralgon as the major retail centre in the region.
- Morwell CBD, with a vacancy rate 16% which includes a high 30% vacancy rate for shopfronts located to the north of the railway line.
- It identifies Morwell as a 'sub-regional retail centre,' second in the Latrobe City Retail Hierarchy, next to Traralgon as the only 'regional retail centre.'
- In this hierarchy, the 'Retail Role' of Morwell CBD is *"Full-range of convenience retailing serving the surrounding region and workers. Centre includes multiple supermarkets, café/restaurants/ takeaway food and limited range of non-food retailers."*
- The 'Complementary Role' of Morwell CBD is *"Morwell CBD also performs an important government sector role, including Latrobe City Council offices and other local and State government agencies. A limited range of entertainment, community and commercial offices are also provided."*
- The main retail tenants of the Morwell CBD are Coles, ALDI, Cheap as Chips, NQR and Harvey Norman, comprising a total of 31,280m2 of retail floorspace.
- The strategy states that 'Morwell CBD north *"will require further investigation to determine whether the current land zoning is appropriate or if an alternative zone would more adequately facilitate their proposed role as identified in the Retail Hierarchy. Potential rezoning of these retail centres, or specific parcels of land in the centres, will need to undergo a separate investigation and this may include an Activity Centre Planning or Structure Planning process, informed by the Retail Strategy. While these areas have been identified as part of this strategy, other rezoning needs may be discovered through the undertaking of further strategic work."*

Relevant Actions for the Morwell CBD are outlined below:

- Action 2.8 - Prepare and implement the Morwell CBD Activity Centre Plan, which focuses on the revitalisation of the centre (including areas to the north of the railway line), and which consolidates recent urban design and other strategic work to provide a comprehensive up-to-date land use and development vision.
- Action 2.9 - Support the implementation of the recommendations from Future Morwell/Future Latrobe Valley (2017).
- Action 2.10 - Develop and implement an action plan for the Morwell CBD's night-time economy in order to support on-street activity at night and to provide after-hours opportunities for retailers and other service providers. This may involve events, street-fairs, pop-up bars, and other hospitality and entertainment features.
- Action 2.11 - Support mixed-use and office development to broaden the appeal of the centre and attract a higher level of spending available to retailers.

## Latrobe City Bicycle Plan 2007-2010

The 2007 Latrobe City Bicycle Plan was developed to review the success of the previous 1998 Latrobe Bicycle Strategy Plan and made recommendations to update and improve the plan based on modern cycling standards and practices.

It's vision is to *"provide a network of suitable cycling facilities and education programs to increase cyclist safety, encourage cycling as an activity for the health, well-being and social benefits and to promote the Latrobe City as a tourist and competition cycling destination."*

Relevant to the Morwell CBD, the strategy recommends:

- An on-road bicycle lane route should be developed along Commercial Road including through the commercial area;
- Provide cyclist warning signs at 5km intervals along Latrobe Road;
- Widen the Maryvale Crescent footpath and formally sign it as a shared trail, suitable for usage by cyclists.

The Bicycle Plan is currently going through another revision.

## Latrobe City Tracks, Trails and Paths Strategy 2016

The Latrobe City Tracks, Trails and Paths Strategy is a municipal wide strategy to guide planning, development, management and promotion of tracks, trails and paths.

The municipality has an established network of paths, tracks and trails that provide connection between many locations, however their usage in places is very low. The strategy looks to fill gaps in the network and examines ways to promote greater use.

A main objective was to establish principal pedestrian networks in the four major towns of Traralgon, Morwell, Moe and Churchill based around key activity centres.

Within the study area for the Morwell Activity Centre Plan, the strategy identifies the following as existing 'priority routes':

- Latrobe Road – on road
- McDonald Street – on road
- Holmes Road – on road
- Princes Drive between Latrobe Road and McDonald Street – on road

The strategy identifies the following as proposed 'priority routes':

- Commercial Road – on road
- Princes Drive, west of Latrobe Road – on road

Additionally, the strategy identifies Church and Elgin Street as existing on-road 'local routes.' It proposes George Street and Tarwin Street and Hazelwood Road (north of George Street) as proposed on-road 'local routes.'

After implementation, these on-road routes facilitate bicycle movement through road markings and dedicated bike lanes that provide safety and separation from vehicle traffic lanes.



# 3.0 Existing Conditions

## Planning Zones

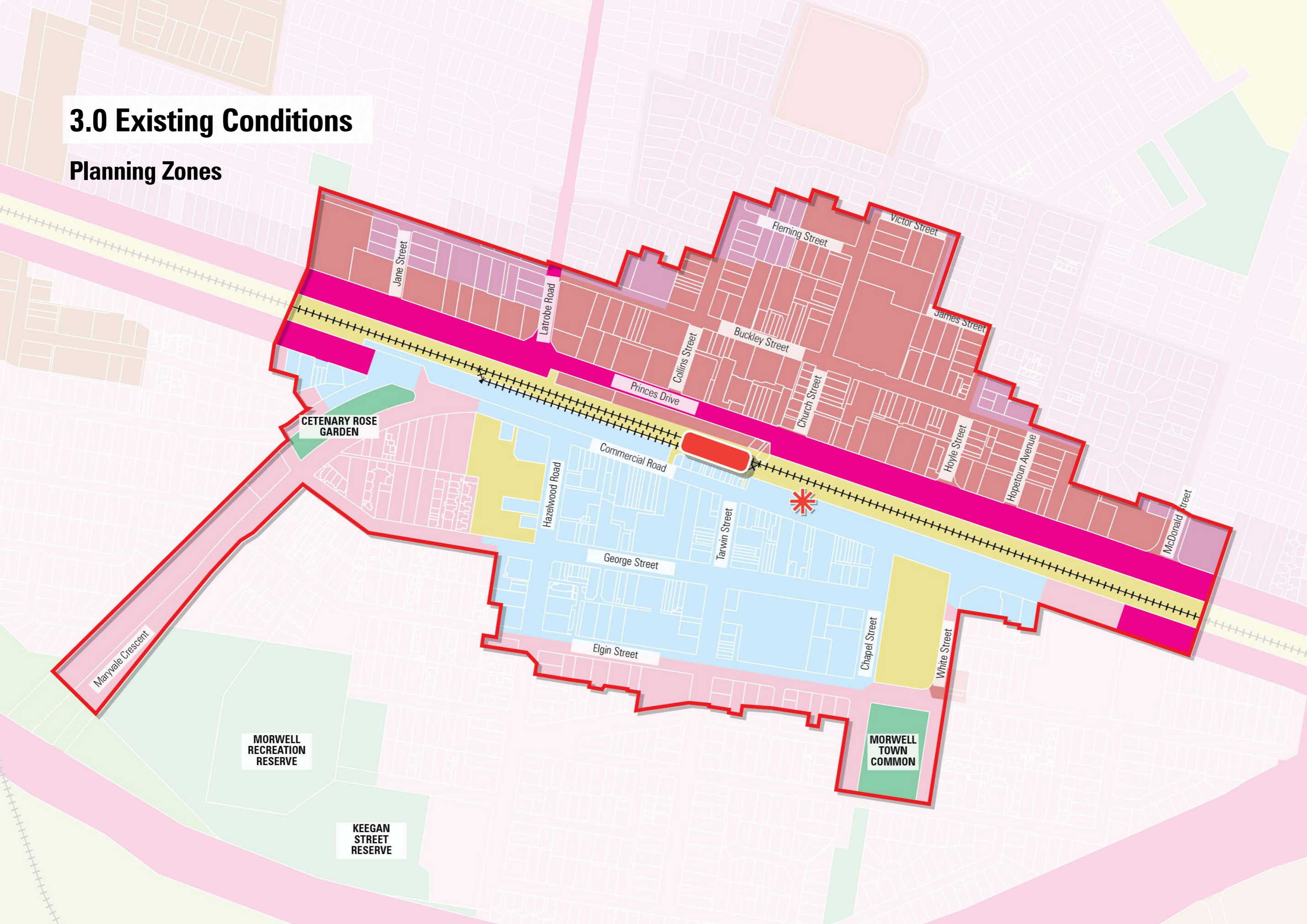


Morwell Activity Centre Plan

Planning Zones

### Legend

- Study Area
- Open Space
- Railway Line
- Morwell Station
- Bus interchange
- Commercial 1 Zone (C1Z)
- Mixed Use Zone (MUZ)
- Residential Growth Zone (RGZ)
- Neighbourhood Residential Zone (NRZ)
- Public Parks & Recreation Zone (PPRZ)
- Public Use Zone (PUZ)
- Road Zone 1 (RDZ1)



Project Ref: 2020.0309  
 Dwg No.: UDD-001  
 Scale: 1:5,000 @A3  
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hansen partnership pty ltd  
**melbourne** | vietnam  
 level 4 136 exhibition st  
 melbourne vic 3000  
 t 61 3 9654 8844 f 61 3 9654 8088  
 e info@hansenpartnership.com.au  
 w www.hansenpartnership.com.au



# Planning Overlays



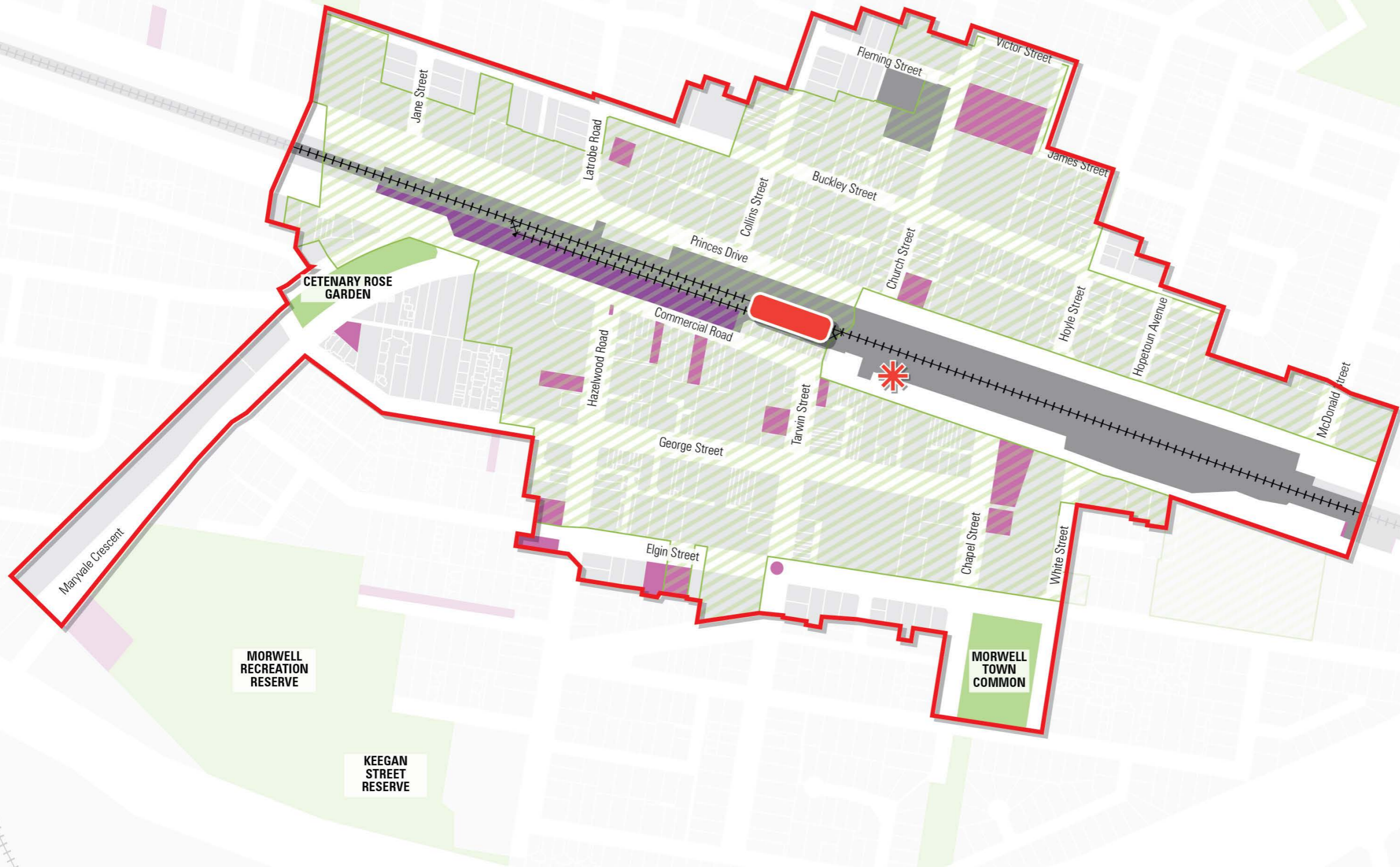
## Morwell Activity Centre Plan

### Overlays

#### Legend

- Study Area
- Open Space
- Railway Line
- Morwell Station
- Bus interchange
- DDO - Design and Development Overlay\*
- SCO - Specific Controls Overlay
- HO - Heritage Overlay
- PO - Parking Overlay

\* DDO2 proposed to be removed via Amendment C122



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hansen partnership pty ltd  
**melbourne** | vietnam  
 level 4 136 exhibition st  
 melbourne vic 3000  
 t 61 3 9654 8844 f 61 3 9654 8088  
 e info@hansenpartnership.com.au  
 w www.hansenpartnership.com.au



Legend

- Study Area
- Open Space
- Railway Line
- Morwell Station
- Station Entrance
- Train Station Radius (400m-800m)
- Arterial Road
- Princes Freeway
- Bus Route
- Bus Stop
- Bus Interchange
- Signalised Intersection
- Pedestrian Crossing
- Roundabout
- Car Park
- On-Street Parking Bays
- CBD Gateway
- Shared Path
- Bridge
- Pedestrian underpass
- Laneway
- Arcade connection
- Pedestrian link
- On-road bicycle lanes

Access & Movement

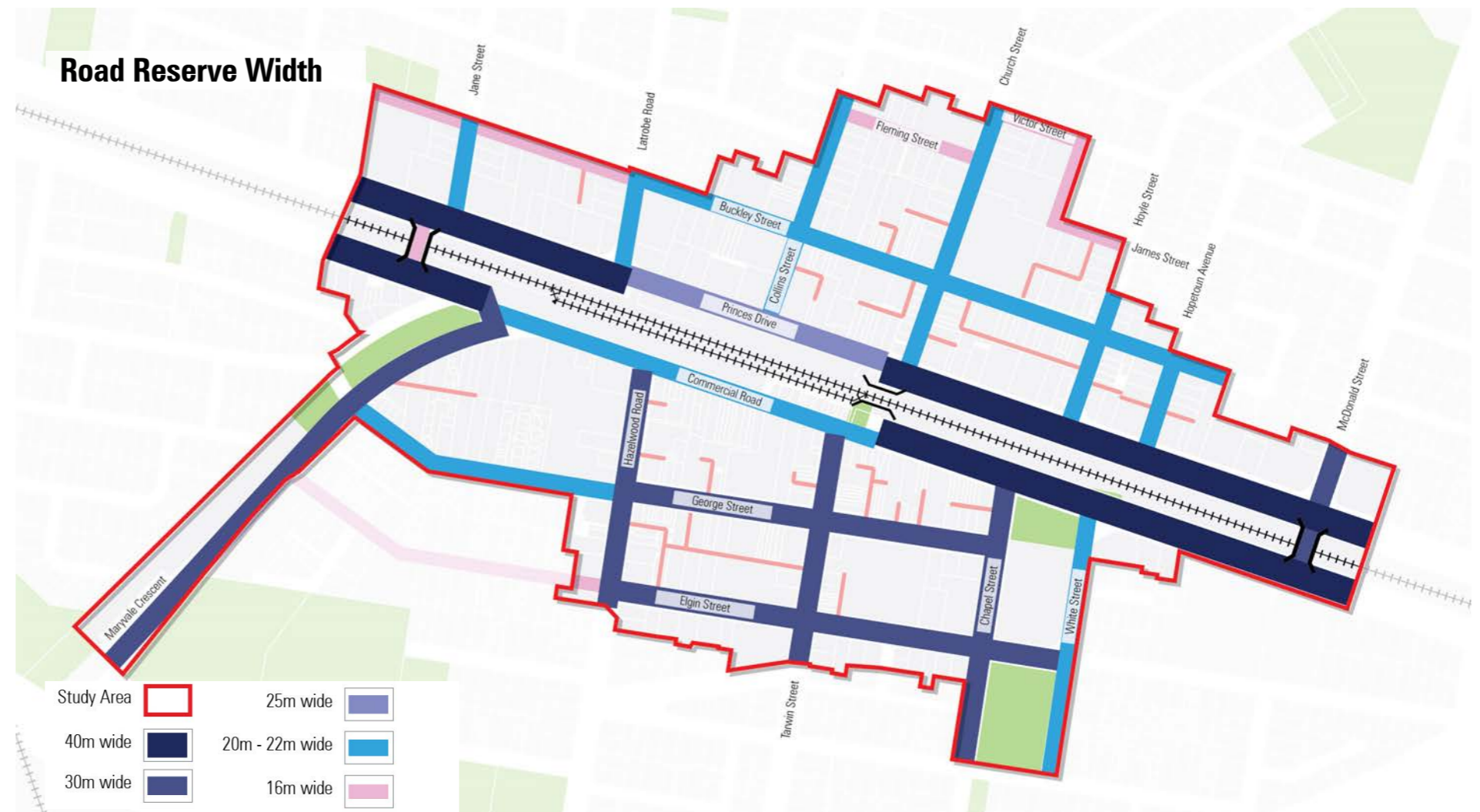




## Access & Movement

### Key Observations & Issues

- While the rail corridor offers regional public transport connectivity into the centre of the CBD, it also functions as a spatial barrier between the northern and southern side of the commercial core. Cross-corridor connectivity is available via the western and eastern signalised intersections (bridge over rail) as well as the centrally located pedestrian underpass.
- Princes Drive accommodates through-traffic (zoned RDZ1 through the CBD extent) while Commercial Road offers a 'slow' experience on the southern side between the main intersections, with greater emphasis on pedestrian movement through wide verges, kerb outstands and pedestrian crossings.
- Princes Drive is a relatively wide road that caters for around 22,000 vehicles per day (total of both directions).
- Regional through movement is catered for on the Princes Freeway, located approximately 800m from Princes Drive to the south. The through movement on Princes Drive is of limited benefit given there are five exits from the Freeway over a 7km distance.
- The commercial core on both sides of the rail corridor is well serviced by laneways, allowing servicing to occur away from primary frontages and providing pedestrian permeability between streets and car parks.
- Commercial urban blocks south of George Street contain a high concentration of at-grade car parks with broad frontages to streets. The urban block bound by Tarwin, George, Chapel Street and Commercial Road is the only commercial block without a large expansive of public at-grade parking.
- While car parking areas are generally located to the 'backs' of the allotments they are servicing, due to their size they also present to the 'fronts' of other streets such as George Street. The Coles site is an exception to this, where car parking areas occupy both the 'front' and 'back' interfaces along both Elgin George and Tarwin Streets.
- Marked parallel parking is available throughout the commercial core on both sides of the rail corridor. Tarwin and George Streets have additional parallel parking down the centre median of the road reserves, which also contain vegetation and tree plantings.
- Tarwin and Church Streets partially accommodate 1-way traffic, creating a traffic calmed environment with higher amenity and safety for pedestrians and creating spaces for people to linger in.
- The carriageway of Church Street between Princes and Drive and Buckley Street is raised (flush with pedestrian footpaths), creating a place-based traffic calmed environment with higher amenity and safety for pedestrians.
- There is generally limited bicycle infrastructure present within road reserves - with a loop of on-road bicycle lanes on the northern side of the rail corridor, along Princes Drive, McDonald Street, Holmes Road and Latrobe Road.



- The pedestrian network around the train station has gaps, with some disjointed segments. This is particularly the case for commuters exiting the station and seeking to walk north of Princes Drive.
- There is only 1 train station platform (on the northern side), with a second platform planned for the southern side, via Amendment GC124 - Gippsland Line Upgrade.
- Additional cycling initiatives are planned in Council strategies such as Future Morwell (2017), Tracks, Trails & Paths (2016) and Latrobe City Bicycle Plan (2007).



# Land Use & Activity

MORWELL CENTRAL PRIMARY SCHOOL



## Morwell Activity Centre Plan

### Land Use and Activity

#### Legend

- Study Area
- Open Space
- Railway Line
- Morwell Station
- Bus interchange
- Commercial (Business/Office/Services)
- Residential Use
- Residential Zone
- Food & Beverage
- Retail stores
- Motel
- Health
- Community
- Cultural
- Civic
- Vacant
- Automotive
- Recreation
- Car parking areas
- Active strips
- Commercial core
- Recreational Sports Hub
- Civic precinct
- Residential areas
- Key development sites



LATROBE LEISURE MORWELL

CETENARY ROSE GARDEN

MORWELL RECREATION RESERVE

KEEGAN STREET RESERVE

MORWELL TOWN COMMON

TO MID VALLEY SHOPPING CENTRE

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hansen partnership pty ltd  
**melbourne** | vietnam  
 level 4 136 exhibition st  
 melbourne vic 3000  
 t 61 3 9654 8844 f 61 3 9654 8088  
 e info@hansenpartnership.com.au  
 w www.hansenpartnership.com.au



## Land Use & Activity

### Key Observations & Issues

- There are established land use precincts within the CBD and at its edges – some with clearly defined roles and others that are more mixed. Clearly defined roles are the civic precinct, commercial core and recreation precinct.
- Land use roles are generally more mixed at the periphery blocks between the commercial core and residential areas, such as between George and Elgin Street in the south, and blocks north of Buckley Street, west of Collins Street and east of Hoyle Street in the north.
- The distinction between residential and commercial uses is legible to the south, with Elgin Street and the rears of properties fronting Hazelwood Road forming a clear boundary. The distinction is less legible to the northern side, where a mix of uses gradually blend into residential areas north of Buckley Street.
- The historical alignment of the Princes Highway is reflected in land use patterns along Princes Drive (and parts of Commercial Road), catering for accommodation in the form of roadside motels, vehicle servicing uses and remnant industrial uses.
- The commercial core generally comprises fine-grain commercial and retail uses. Anchor retail occurs in the form of Coles Shopping Centre along George Street as well as the mall typology of Manny's Market fronting Commercial Road, made up of several smaller tenants.
- The civic precinct comprises the Morwell Law Courts, Historical Society, Latrobe Regional Gallery, Police Station and various social services along Hazelwood Road.
- There is a notable presence of vacant shopfronts throughout the commercial core, particularly within the MUZ area to the north. Construction of the GovHub and CFA development (which will have 28 staff and 80 volunteers) on the northern side of the CBD will contribute to re-energising this mixed-use area.
- While Commercial Road and Tarwin Street presents a 'village' like character in the commercial core, with public realm upgrades and buildings well suited for retail and food and beverage opportunities, there is a higher presence of 'inward facing' commercial oriented business tenants with weaker engagement to the public realm.
- While there are several restaurants and cafés in the CBD area, these are scattered and not within a consolidated dining strip/area. Additionally, there is generally limited 'al-fresco' dining that occurs, although this is encouraged by recent public realm upgrades on the southern side that includes new street furniture (tables and chairs).
- There is generally a lack in night-time activity, with both pubs (one to either side of the rail corridor on Commercial Road and Princes Street) currently closed in 2020.
- Based on site observations, the southern side has a greater concentration of shops. While there is a presence of commercial, retail and food and beverage businesses on the northern side, it generally lacks the intensity present to the south.
- A contributing factor to this trend are MUZ permit-triggers for shops if they do not meet the floor space requirements. This is confirmed by Council who see enquiries for commercial/retail opportunities on the north side, but end up shifting interest to the south side due to the permit triggers.
- Complementing year-round activity are key seasonal events including the Rose Garden Festival held annually during November. Additionally, the recreation precinct skirting the southern boundary of the study area hosts AFLW season matches and AFL preseason matches in Autumn months.
- To the northern periphery are residential areas, as well as the Latrobe Leisure Centre and the Morwell Central Primary School, complementing uses within the study area. The primary school to the north has created new activity possibilities at the old primary school along Commercial Road (between Chapel and White Street).
- Further south are historical and contemporary mining practices which are well separated from the study area. While some mining stacks have been demolished, other mining infrastructural features are visible from vantage points and through corridors.
- Key development sites are identified in the Planning Context Report (July 2020) as follows:
  - the old Morwell Primary School site;
  - the at-grade car park at Mannys Market (north side of George Street);
  - the at-grade car park at Cheap as Chips (south side of George Street).



Fine grain commercial activity along Commercial Road



Larger format retail at Coles along George Street



The Art Gallery demarcating the Hazelwood Road and Commercial Road corner

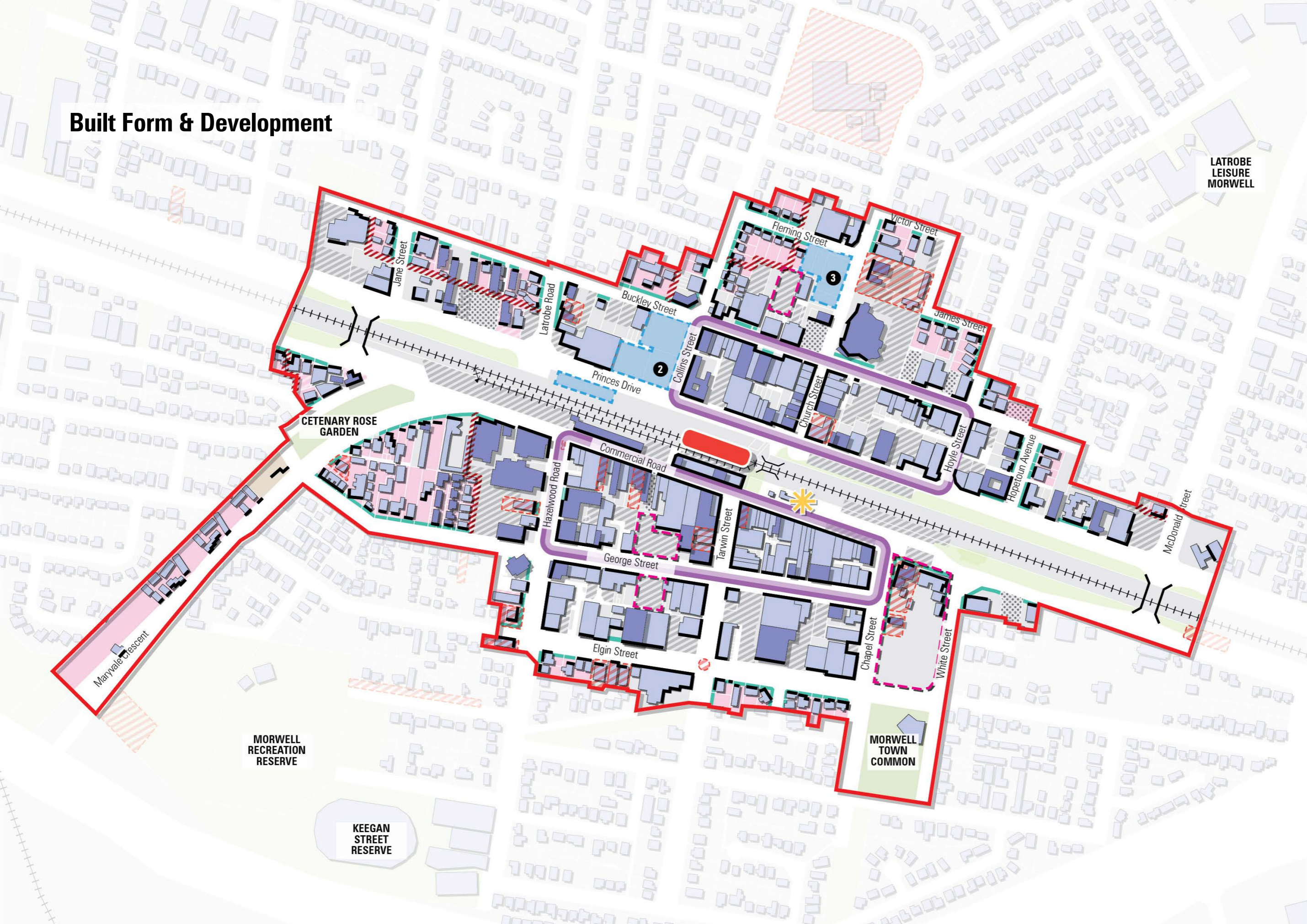


# Built Form & Development

## Built Form & Development

### Legend

- Study Area
- Open Space
- Railway Line
- Morwell Station
- Bus interchange
- 1 storey building
- 2 storey building
- Heritage overlay
- At-grade car park
- Vacant site
- Key development approvals
- Proposed storeys
- Key Development Sites
- Council owned land
- Building street frontage
- Garden setback
- Consistent built form commercial character
- Residential allotment
- Residential zone abuttal





## Built Form & Development

### Key Observations & Issues

- The study area generally comprises 1-2 storey buildings. The new GovHub building at the corner of Church and Fleming Street (under construction) is set to be the tallest form at 3 storeys.
- The built form of Commercial Road, Tarwin Street and Church Street present a 'village' character, with fine grain commercial and retail buildings built to the street edge with generally 'active' ground level uses (during daytime hours) due to wide extents of transparent glazing. Common throughout these 'village' urban blocks is a lack of expansive at-grade car parking presented to street interfaces.
- The street edge condition across the CBD is varied. It is most consistently solid in two commercial blocks to the south and two mixed use blocks to the north (bound by purple highlight). It is otherwise inconsistent and eroded by expansive street frontages to car parking, or building setbacks that accommodate a sleeve of car parking or landscaped garden areas (more common in residential areas in the form of front yards).
- While streets are generally quite open due to the prevailing built form scale of 1-2 storeys and wide road reserves, areas with an inconsistent street edge condition result in a disturbed street 'rhythm' resulting in inconsistent perceptions of street proportions and street intimacy, due to the 'stop-start' nature of the built form edge framing streetscapes.
- As expected, the 'solidity' of the street edge condition is most eroded along residential interfaces toward the edge of the study area, through detached dwellings and front landscaped setbacks.
- Streetscapes with awnings (such as Commercial Road, Tarwin Street and Church Street) help create a greater sense of enclosure.
- Princes Drive through the study area accommodates a more 'service' oriented built form typology including light industrial, warehouse, motel and vehicle servicing buildings. There is a greater presence of front setbacks accommodating vehicle access and car parking.
- A strip of commercial shop buildings on the southern side of the train station are double fronted to car parking areas to their north and to Commercial Road to their south.
- There are generally limited heritage buildings within the study area – none of which are VHR listed. Heritage buildings include the historical society building, Victorian terrace 'shop' buildings along Commercial Road and Tarwin Street, and school buildings.



*Large car parks disturb the rhythm of the built form edge to commercial streets*



*The GovHub building nearing completion*



*Existing sub-division development within the study area*



# Landscape & Public Realm

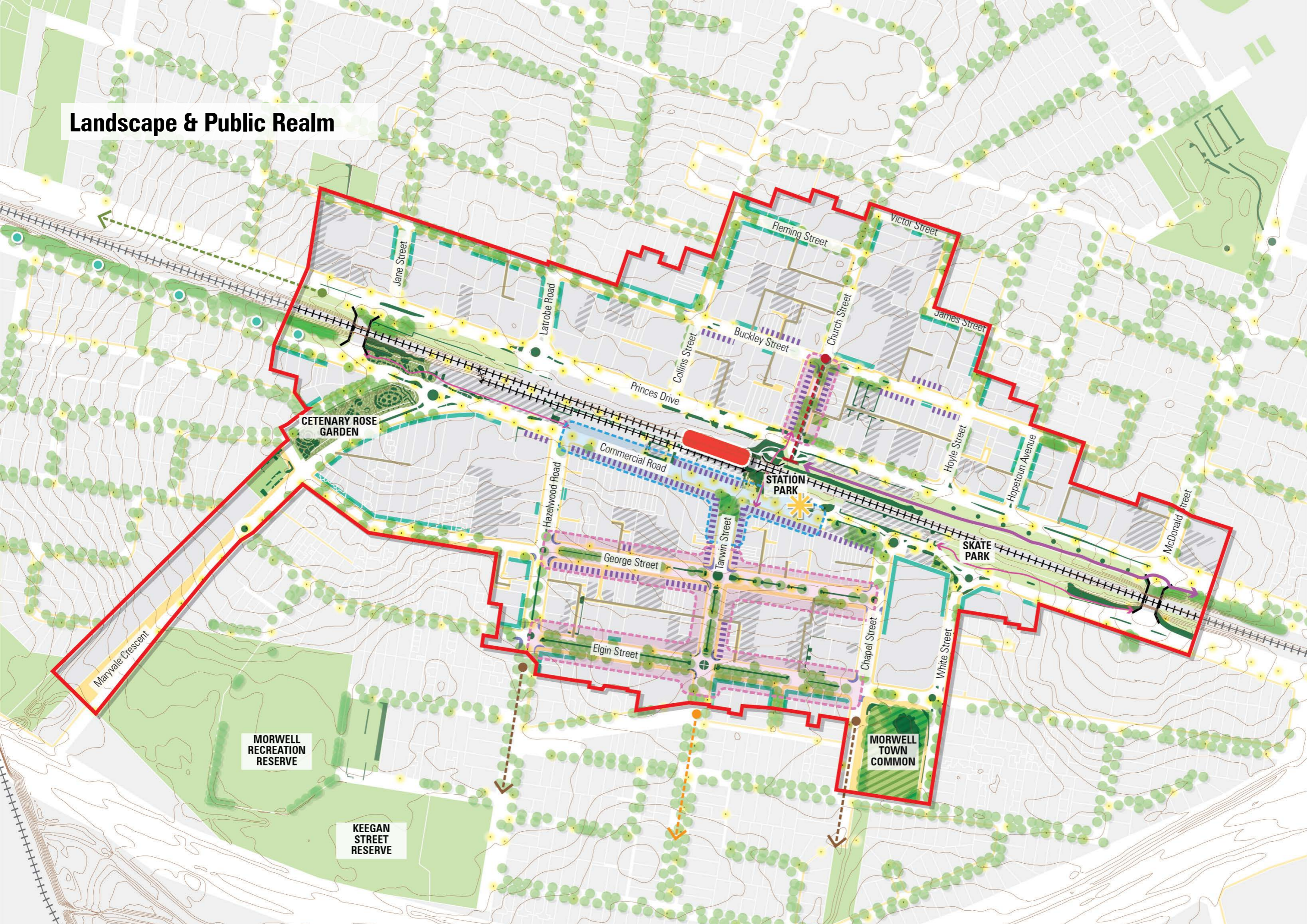


## Morwell Activity Centre Plan

### Landscape and Public realm

#### Legend

- Study Area 
- Railway Line 
- Morwell Station 
- Bus interchange 
- Shared user path 
- Pedestrian link 
- Footpath 
- Laneways 
- Active frontage strips 
- Street lighting 
- Median/roundabout 
- Open space 
- Park/Square 
- Public Garden 
- Garden Setback (Private) 
- Street trees 
- Curb outstand 
- Bridge 
- Recent public realm upgrades 
- Streets with existing 'street greening' 
- Truncated viewline 
- Corridor views to hills/ranges 
- Corridor views to mining features 



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hansen partnership pty ltd  
**melbourne** | vietnam  
 level 4 136 exhibition st  
 melbourne vic 3000  
 t 61 3 9654 8844 f 61 3 9654 8088  
 e info@hansenpartnership.com.au  
 w www.hansenpartnership.com.au



# Landscape & Public Realm

## Key Observations & Issues

- The southern side of the CBD generally contains a clearer presence of street greening through consistent tree plantings, landscaped medians, roundabouts and curb outstands.
- Commercial Road and the northern end of Tarwin Street have recently undergone public realm upgrades through feature paving, street furniture and new street trees and garden beds. Pedestrian areas are wide enough for 'al-fresco' dining, demonstrated by new fixed tables and chairs within the public realm in these upgraded areas.
- All open space within the study area is located on the southern side including Centenary Rose Garden, Morwell Town Common and the recreation reserve skirting the southern edge of the study area. The exception is a privately held 'pocket park' on the northern side on the corner of Church Street and Princes Drive.
- The pocket park and Town Common and Centenary Rose Garden are always publicly accessible. To the south, the Recreation Reserve is at times gated.
- The presentation and identity of the commercial core to the south is stronger than that of the north, which is more mixed in streetscape amenity and building types.
- Linear open space along the northern side of the rail corridor comprises a wide grassed linear reserve with a shared user path, connecting the station precinct to the Mid Valley Shopping Centre further east.
- The pedestrian underpass is more effective on the southern side due to higher visibility from Tarwin Street, alignment with the new pedestrian crossing along Commercial Road and higher amenity public open space adjoining it, creating a more visually appealing setting.
- The underpass generally has a poor relationship to Church Street to the north, with little gesture of 'view termination,' poor visibility to the underpass and a lower amenity condition of the adjoining open space at Station Park. This also results in poor visual connectivity between the two precincts.
- Large at-grade car parks are generally of poor amenity, comprising expansive impervious surfaces of varying condition and minimal landscaping.
- Commercial Road and Tarwin Street on the south, and Church Street and Buckley Street to the north contain the most consolidated strips of 'active edges' offering vibrancy and passive surveillance to adjoining streetscapes.
- Themed signage as part of the 'Morwell Branding' strategy along the western entry of Commercial Road celebrate the image of the town. Outcomes of the strategy are also visible through feature wall art on a building sideage presenting to car parking along Commercial Road.
- There is a gentle fall in topography from north to south, which is noticeable through streetscapes and large at-grade car parks.
- Views to distant hills and ranges frame the surrounds of the township, as well views to historical and contemporary mining functions particularly to the south.
- Studying the streetscapes throughout the study area, streetscape typologies emerge. These are:
  - **Remnant Highway Frontage** applies to the 25m wide Princes Street streetscape, comprising through-traffic movement, a built form character remnant of its history as a highway frontage and limited street greening except for that within the landscaped Traralgon-Morwell shared path corridor straddling the railway.
  - **Primary Commercial** streetscapes are characterised by the 'village' typology of Commercial Road, Tarwin Street (north of George Street) and Church Street (south of Buckley Street), where consistent strips of fine-grain commercial buildings built to the boundary and awnings contribute to more intimate and enclosed street profiles. These streets have undergone recent and previous public realm upgrades for feature paving, street furniture, widened footpaths and street greening.
  - **Periphery Commercial** streetscapes (including George and Buckley Street) are more 'mixed' in character, typically comprising larger footprint commercial buildings and large frontages of at-grade car parking, resulting in more inconsistent streetscape edges. Public realm attributes such as street greening is present, but not as legible or consistent as 'Primary Commercial' streetscapes.
  - **Residential Streets** are typically characterised by 16-20m wide street profiles comprising 2-way traffic movement, marked and unmarked parallel parking and grassed verges and footpaths to both sides. Some streets have consistent tree plantings between vehicle crossovers, while others only have grassed verges. Detached dwellings are set behind front garden setbacks often comprising canopy vegetation that contribute to the 'green' character of the street.



Past public realm upgrades of Church Street



George Street: the northern side of the CBD is generally of a lower public realm quality



Church Street: recent public realm upgrades on the southern side.



# 4.0 Community Views

Meaningful engagement with the community has been a key focus of this project. A series of two consultation events have been held to ensure that the community and key stakeholders have had the opportunity to identify issues that currently affect the Morwell CBD, and to actively participate in the generation of ideas and concepts to guide the future direction for the centre.

Two workshops in September 2020 were facilitated by the Project Manager at Latrobe City Council and the Project Team from Hansen Partnership and Movement & Place Consulting. Attendees included representatives from:

- Youth & Community Development, Latrobe City Council;
- Tourism & Major Events, Latrobe City Council;
- Community Resilience, Latrobe City Council;
- Business Development, Latrobe City Council;
- Strategic Planning, Latrobe City Council;
- Infrastructure Design, Latrobe City Council;
- Development, Latrobe City Council;
- Open Space Maintenance, Latrobe City Council;
- Community Strengthening, Latrobe City Council;
- Two Latrobe City Councillors.
- Mine Land Rehabilitation Authority;
- Strategic Planning for Transport, VicRoads;
- Statutory Planning, VicRoads;
- Regional Planning, DEWLP; and
- Advance Morwell.

The purpose of the consultation sessions was to confirm and seek feedback on our existing conditions analysis and to discuss with the stakeholders what they envision for the CBD regarding the access and movement, land use and activity, built form and development and landscape and public realm. A mix of community, council and agency stakeholders were invited to participate.

Following the presentation of the existing conditions analysis, the larger group was split into 'breakout sessions.' Participants were asked how they felt about our key observations and whether we had missed anything. Following on, the second half of the breakout sessions was dedicated to 'idea generation,' where participants voiced their ideas for the CBD across 4 themes covered in the presentation. The key themes of feedback and discussion are documented in this section.

## Access & Movement

- Leveraging fitness - walking economy. Getting people out and about to increase vibrancy in the centre. Get people moving around to increase visitation time and spending.
- There is an intertown walking track but limited interconnectivity within the township itself. Once you get into the core it is hard to ride your bike through.
- Managing the balance between bicycle lanes and parking out the front of shops is important. It was acknowledged that in the regional town context, not every street needs a bicycle focus.
- Because of the railway line, the underpass is really the only link between the retail and commercial cores which has been a connectivity issue for many years. Can connectivity be boosted without the need to invest significantly?
- The bus system around the town received generally positive comments due to its frequency, reach (including to broader surrounds such as Federation Uni and ability to increase CBD visitation duration).
- Emphasis in the plan is needed on the mix of demographics of Morwell - consideration of mobility scooters, wheelchairs in addition to bicycles.
- The notion of traffic calming along Princes Drive was positively received - particularly in increasing legibility between the train station and the northern side of the street.

## Landscape & Public Realm

- More landscaping including trees in public space is needed to contribute to character and to improve the sense of arrival into the CBD, particularly from key entrances and public transport nodes.
- Hazelwood Road, Buckley Street and George Street present as streetscape upgrade opportunities to complement recent works along Commercial Road and Tarwin Street to help promote walking and time-spending.
- Gardens and freshness in streets create a sense of life. Streetscape upgrades could tap into Rose garden. Idea of connecting between spaces. Tapping into unified themes across the town in future initiatives such as the rose garden.
- Exploring how public art and lighting can play a role in streetscape and place making, doubling as an opportunity to reference Morwell's history, of which is lacking in reference within the CBD.
- Building confidence for people to be within the public realm, with some concerns regarding 'anti-social' behaviour flagged. Emphasis is needed for the community to feel safe within the CBD to visit and linger around.

## Built Form

- Primary school site - ideally the historical buildings would be retained. School is a great development site, still used as an education/training facility while the primary school has been relocated to a new facility.
- There was positive reception regarding the idea of sleeved retail along parking areas to infill gaps in urban edges and increase consistency in commercial streetscapes - enhancing the pedestrian experience.
- There is limited protection from weather because of big exposed areas. Large car parking areas such as Manny's are an example of this. Can added vibrancy and filling some of these exposed areas a way of increasing activity and passive surveillance?
- The challenge of local and 'absentee' landlords in managing building presentation and facade upkeep. Façade improvements schemes could be considered as a way of improving the presentation of the CBD.

## Activity & Land Use

- Emphasis is needed on increasing CBD activity beyond 9am-5pm between Monday to Friday. Night life was perceived as an important consideration for all demographics but particularly younger adults, such as 18-25-year-old groups.
- Tapping into the presence of office workers through encouraging them to stay around the CBD after hours, if there is an increased offering in food and beverage during night hours.
- Notion of 'eat-street' is well supported - perhaps it could be trialled as a temporary night activation to build the demand for more permanent tenants.
- Skate park along Commercial Road has a real heartbeat and is well used - a regional, recreational draw card. It is a marketable asset that adds heartbeat to the CBD on weekends. The Playground in the Town Common could also have a bit more emphasis as a drawcard into the CBD.
- People stop over on their way to their holidays so there is opportunity to capitalise on that with stopping facilities and retail that captures that market. The Rose Garden is a proven performer in the tourism market.
- Impacts of COVID within the CBD. Large open spaces of car parking - could they be more dynamic for flexible uses at times of the week when they are not filled with car parking?
- There is a lack of an information centre. Once Council offices are closed (such as weekend) there is limited opportunity for people to get tourism information probably when tourists or passers-by are most likely to visit.
- Morwell CBD is a different precinct to the Mid Valley Shopping Centre. The CBD has a village type character that can be celebrated.



## 5.0 Opportunities

As a summary of the existing conditions analysis, the below outlines early opportunities that the Activity Plan for the Morwell CBD should consider. They provide a basis for discussion in Key Stakeholder Engagement, as well as in the later project stage of 'Key Directions' that will frame the Urban Design component of the Activity Centre Plan.

A number of these opportunities are identified on the 'Opportunities' map. These include actions from other strategic documents identified in the background review.

### Access, Movement & Parking

- 1 Generally strengthen existing pedestrian and visual connections across the rail corridor to minimise the perception of segregation across the CBD core.
- 2 Explore other opportunities of improving pedestrian connectivity across the rail corridor (eg. underpass/overpass) aligning with the existing pedestrian network, such as to the west aligning with Collins Street.
- 3 Take advantage from flat profile of the CBD and promote cycling as an alternative local travel option. Opportunities for bike lanes, bike storage, or bike rental should be explored for the CBD.
- 4 There is opportunity to promote Morwell as a 'launching pad' for regional bike tourism to the Latrobe Valley.
- 5 Clearly designate 'service' laneways from pedestrian laneways, where activation, outdoor activity and streetscape improvement should be promoted.
- 6 Car parks are the first point of arrival and departure for most visitors in Morwell. They present as potential 'activity nodes' where future development can capture the high volumes of visitation and pedestrian interaction.
- 7 The existing Jane Street and McDonald Street traffic priority bridges could be upgraded to facilitate north-south active travel permeability.
- 8 Implement the 'village circuit' strategy from Future Morwell to increase cycling activity and safety within the CBD area, putting more emphasis on active transport and healthy cities over car dependence.
- 9 Provide destinations for cyclists in the CBD (eg. parking and storage facilities) to encourage cycling as a means of transit and not just recreation.
- 11 Accommodate slower speeds along Princes Drive 40km/h through narrower cross sections and regular median breaks to assist pedestrians crossing the road. These medians already exist (painted in many places) and could be improved with physical infrastructure including an avenue of trees.
- 12 Improve existing crossings to prioritise pedestrian, cyclist, wheelchair users and mobility scoots through greater distances between crossings and vehicle stop lines (ideally 5m).

### Landscape & Public Realm

- 1 The quality of public realm on the northern side could be upgraded commensurately with the southern side, to increase the quality of streets and to create a consistent township image across the whole Activity Centre.
- 2 The visual relationship between north and south could be strengthened through consistent public realm treatments, landscaping and visual cues better directing flows across the rail corridor between Tarwin and Church Streets.
- 3 Improve the public realm condition at both ends of the pedestrian underpass (particularly the north side) to activate them as spaces and encourage the safe and frequent use of the underpass.
- 4 The history of Morwell should be referenced in future public realm attributes to contribute to the character of the Activity Centre.
- 5 There is opportunity to capture views to hinterland landscape features in future upper level development.
- 6 Continue to apply initiatives from Morwell Branding Strategy - particularly to the northern side of the CBD where it is currently less evident than the south side.
- 7 Celebrate key CBD entrances through public realm initiatives that clearly demarcate the entrance into a key place of activity unique to Morwell.
- 8 Capitalise on wide road reserves to enhance pedestrian corridors with wider verges and new medians.



The open space to the north of the pedestrian underpass.



Recent public realm upgrades along Commercial Road.



Branding Morwell initiatives are evident on the south side of the CBD.



## Built Form & Development

- 1 Filling gaps to provide more continuous building frontage in commercial streets (ie. 0m commercial setbacks in new development or sleeved 'micro-retail') would create a greater level of activity and engagement in streetscapes.
- 2 New development in commercial areas should seek to address street frontages - while new infill opportunities could be considered in large at-grade car parks, sleeved in front of car parking areas.
- 3 Future built form guidance should provide appropriate transition mechanisms in areas that abut residential allotments.
- 4 Creating an appropriate blend between the civic and residential setting should be explored, such as through retaining and creating garden setbacks.
- 5 Future built form guidance should consider appropriate areas for additional height and housing typologies in the CBD to cater for diverse housing options that complement 'greenfield' type development at the township edges.
- 6 Commercial Road allotments that back onto the proposed second platform have opportunity to engage with this area that will have an increased degree of pedestrian activity.
- 7 Heritage and historical buildings should be better celebrated to contribute to the 'village' character, unique to the Activity Centre complementing the large format retail typologies at Mid-Valley Shopping Centre.
- 8 Key development sites present where land uses have vacated or changed, such as Morwell Primary School site as well as large at-grade car parks in the CBD.
- 9 Future urban form fronting Princes Drive should respond to its interface to the rail corridor and reinforce its historic role as a freeway corridor.
- 10 Development at key Activity Centre entrances should be of high quality and emphasise their corner locations to clearly define them as key entrances.
- 11 Use existing and future built form to contribute to creating a better pedestrian experience through the CBD - such as passive surveillance and activation to pedestrian corridors and links.
- 12 Existing and future built form can contribute to accommodating higher quality pedestrian environments, such as through providing awnings and vibrant ground levels immediately abutting the pedestrian network.

## Land Use & Activity

- 1 There is opportunity to capture a lack in night-time activity through encouraging food and beverage opportunities in a consolidated area, such as an 'eat-street' concept (eg. Tarwin or Church Streets).
- 2 Future food and beverage initiatives should consider the relationship with accommodation areas to capture both local and visitor economies.
- 3 Vacant buildings prompt opportunities for revitalisation and infill that can help stimulate activity in the MUZ - such as:
  - the old cinema building on Buckley Street which could give a 'boutique' offering, complementing the cinema complex at Mid Valley Shopping Centre.
- 4 Explore how car parks in the CBD area can double as vehicle storage and activity nodes - given their size and proximity to a variety of land uses.
- 5 Changes to the planning scheme (zone schedule/overlay) should consider simplifying the process for commercial and retail opportunities in the MUZ, to accommodate interest on the north side of the CBD to increase activity.
- 6 Explore tourism opportunities through promoting cycling and active travel - consistent with image rebranding as per Future Morwell document.
- 7 Explore opportunity for culture and arts by building on the Morwell Performing Arts Centre and taking advantage of other arts destination within the East Gippsland Region including at Warragul and Traralgon.
- 8 Explore the potential for short-term, 'pop up' events such as markets in large areas of car parking in the CBD to inject short-term activity at various times such as weekends.



Allotments double fronting Commercial Road and station car parking.



The vacant cinema building along Buckley Street



An example of Morwell heritage fabric along Commercial Road



# Morwell Activity Centre Plan

Early Opportunities  
(TBC at UD Key Directions Stage)

## Legend

- Study Area
- Access & Movement Opportunity
- Landscape & Public Realm Opportunity
- Activity & Land Use Opportunity
- Built Form Opportunity
- Movement barrier
- Create greater connection
- Activity core
- Activity core
- Potential 'eat-street'
- Potential activity hotspots
- Building street frontages
- CBD demarcation opportunity
- Village circuit route (Future Morwell)
- Strengthen greening presence
- Train station
- Bus interchange



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hansen partnership pty ltd  
**melbourne** | vietnam  
 level 4 136 exhibition st  
 melbourne vic 3000  
 t 61 3 9654 8844 f 61 3 9654 8088  
 e info@hansenpartnership.com.au  
 w www.hansenpartnership.com.au





hansen

