

COMMUNITY IDENTITY

Melbourne's rapid population growth requires a decisive, clear response from the Government that will:

- Create enough homes to meet the demands of our rapidly growing population;
- Ensure that infrastructure and services are ready to support communities as they grow;
- Support the transport needs of communities and businesses;
- Strengthen Melbourne's affordability and liveability;
- Protect our city's highly-valued open space and biodiversity; and
- Give people a wide choice of housing options.

Delivering Melbourne's newest sustainable communities is part of the Government's response to this growth. It integrates land-use and transport planning in Melbourne's growth areas to ensure that the land and infrastructure needed by new communities is available as they grow.

The *Delivering Melbourne's newest sustainable communities* report identifies the need to have regard to the special character of each growth area in the future detailed planning. This includes the identity of existing townships that will come within the proposed Urban Growth Boundary or be located nearby.

The character of a region, town or neighbourhood is unique. This sense of place reinforces a feeling of belonging. Heritage, landscape and neighbourhood character are some of the components that contribute to a feeling of community identity.

New development in growth areas should respond to the existing sense of place and cultural identity and respond to its context. It is important to identify the special characteristics of an area or place and reinforce these through the planning process.

Community identity emerges from a range of both large and small issues. For instance the overall setting of a growth area is important. In the north the hills on both sides of the proposed Urban Growth Boundary will frame future urban development in this location and give it a sense of place. In Sunbury Jacksons Creek and Emu Creek contribute a special character to this township as do the surrounding hill tops. In Melton and Wyndham it will be features such as the Kororoit Creek or Werribee River.

At a smaller scale, dry stone walls common across the western and northern plains and constructed many years ago form a link with the past and a sense of cultural identity. Similarly windbreak plantings – often of Sugar Gum and Conifers – offer a link with past practices and can form markers in a new community. Even the geometry of 19th Century subdivision patterns is worth preserving in some locations.

The key in many locations is to maintain and safeguard what is there. In other locations it is to add to and enhance the identity of an area.

A case in point is the small towns that will be affected by changes to the Urban Growth Boundary.

At Diggers Rest it is proposed that the town be increased to a more sustainable size, one that is capable of providing an improved range of services to residents. While this will change its character over time Diggers Rest already has the essential elements of community identity including, an existing school, sportsground, rail station and physical separation from Sunbury. Ensuring that new development respects this existing identity through good design will be an important outcome.

To the south of Wallan it is proposed that a landscape break be maintained between future urban development within the proposed Urban Growth Boundary and the township itself. This can be achieved through the retention of an open rural area using existing landscape features to retain Wallan's identity. Further work will need to be undertaken between the Mitchell Shire Council and the Victorian government to ensure this is achieved.

At much smaller settlements such as Beveridge, Clyde and Rockbank it will be necessary to identify the key characteristics of these settlements that make them special and absorb these identifying features into the future character of these locations.

FUTURE PLANNING

At the time that Precinct Structure Plans are prepared for land around existing small towns it will be necessary to identify the range of matters that go to make up the distinctive elements of each town. The goal will be to create diverse, compact and well connected communities that are affordable and rich in local jobs, transport access, services and culture. Protecting valuable natural and historic features and recognising any unique identity will be a key issue for consideration.



Further information about *Delivering Melbourne's newest sustainable communities*, including maps, reports, and details of public information open days and the submissions process is available at www.vic.gov.au/planningmelbourne or by calling **1800 090 789**.