

UNDERSTANDING WEST MELBOURNE

BASELINE REPORT

DECEMBER 2016



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Baseline Report - West Melbourne Structure Plan

December 2016

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1. INTRODUCTION

What is West Melbourne?

West Melbourne is an established inner urban neighbourhood located between stable heritage areas of North Melbourne and the dynamic central city and renewal areas of City North and Arden-Macaulay. West Melbourne features a mixture of uses and building types, and accommodates a diverse population of around 5000 people, over one third of whom were born overseas. It is close to destinations of metropolitan, national and global significance including universities, markets, retail, entertainment and employment centres.

What is a structure plan?

The purpose of a structure plan is to ensure that West Melbourne continues to develop as a great place to live, work and visit into the future; a place that supports the community's growth. A structure plan sets out a vision for the area to guide planning and sustainable growth, translating wider policies and strategies into a precinct-specific framework. It addresses land use, transport integration, open space provision and infrastructure. It includes recommendations for policies, development controls and projects to achieve the vision.

Do we need a new plan?

A structure plan for West Melbourne completed in 2005 informed current planning controls for the area. Subsequent shifts in Melbourne's wider economy are driving change in the neighbourhood and surrounding precincts. Former industrial and commercial sites are being redeveloped for more intensive residential and mixed use. Construction in some areas is failing to achieve current planning objectives. A new plan is needed to update the strategic vision for the area and to guide the formulation of more effective controls.

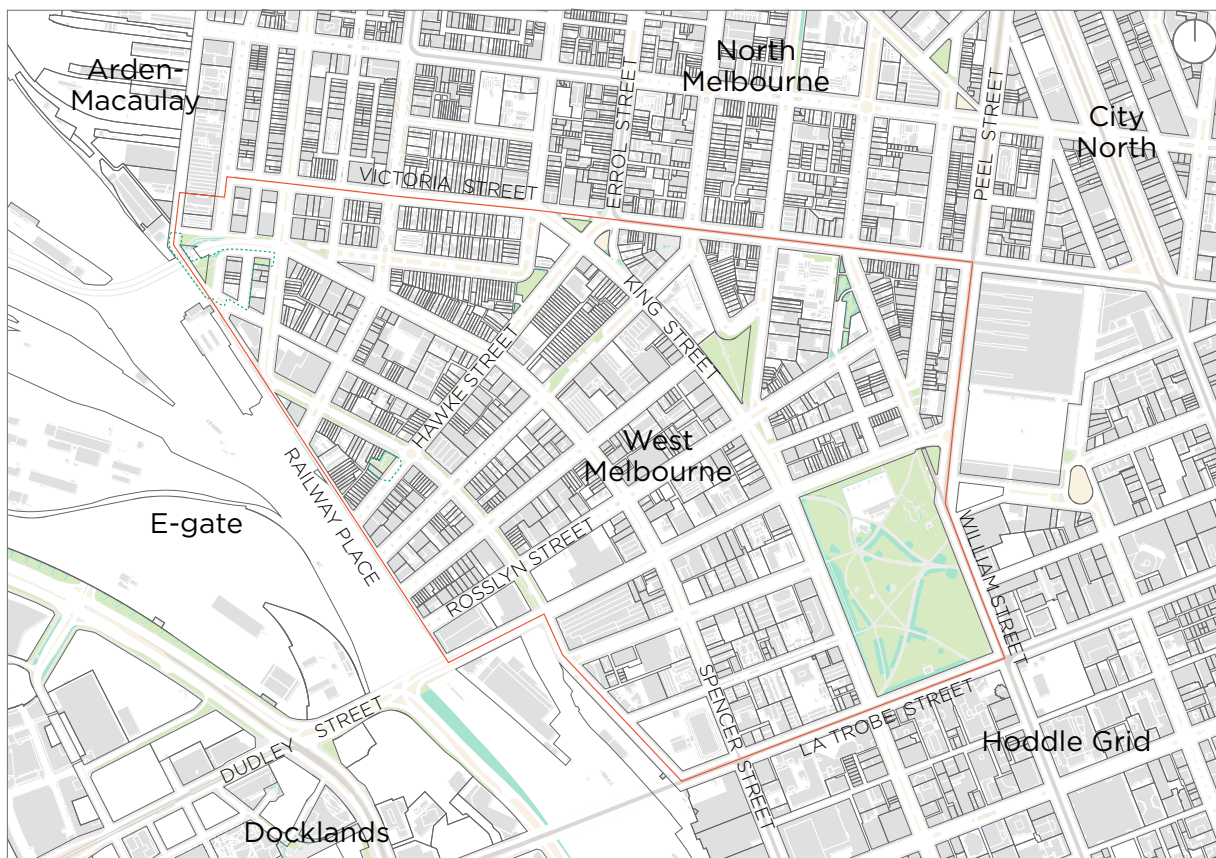


Figure 1.1: West Melbourne Structure Plan study area

The suburb of West Melbourne is split between a mixed industrial, commercial and residential area in the east, and rail yards and heavy industry to the west. The study area for the Structure Plan is confined to the mixed use area east of Railway Place. To the north, West Melbourne flows into North Melbourne across Victoria Street. To the east it is buffered from the CBD by the Flagstaff Gardens and Queen Victoria Market, while the southern area makes a more gradual transition into the Hoddle grid.

What are the plan's objectives?

The objectives for the structure plan are to:

- Reflect the concerns of the community and key stakeholders.
- Establish a shared vision for the future of West Melbourne.
- Ensure that public space and infrastructure provisions meet the growing population's needs.
- Support wider City strategies and policy objectives that apply in West Melbourne.
- Identify actions to deliver the vision for West Melbourne, potentially including a planning scheme amendment and capital works proposals.

How are we preparing the plan?

The City of Melbourne is working with the community to prepare a new structure plan. The Traditional Owners of the land are stakeholders in this process.

The process features three separate phases of engagement.

The first phase (March to May 2015) helped to identify key issues and opportunities for the project and has informed this report.

A second phase will allow a discussion with the community about opportunities to address the identified issues.

This feedback will be used to draft a structure plan. The community will be invited to comment on the draft during a third phase of engagement, in 2017.

What is the role of this report?

This report is intended as a resource to support informed discussion about West Melbourne's future and future preparation of a new structure plan, identifying issues and opportunities to guide change into the future. To do this, it summarises:

- Wider strategies, policies and objectives to be translated into West Melbourne's particular context.
- An analysis of the current conditions in West Melbourne.
- Feedback from community and stakeholder consultation.
- Specialist consultant investigations including a Community Engagement Report, Economic and Employment Study, Transport and Access Study, and Heritage Review.



Figure 1.2: West Melbourne Structure Plan project timeline

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

What has our community said?

The Phase One community engagement in mid 2015 was a chance for people to express their likes, concerns and visions for West Melbourne.

- 130 people attended two afternoon workshops and information sessions.
- There were 168 overall contributions through the City of Melbourne's online engagement forum, Participate Melbourne.
- There were 594 document and information downloads from the Participate Melbourne website.

A series of key messages emerged from this process:

- A sense of community is important to the people of West Melbourne.
- People are concerned about reduced parking, increased traffic and increased building heights.
- People would like more parks, open spaces, trees and street greening.
- People would like more public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure.
- People supported appropriate redevelopment in certain areas but would like more certainty in the planning process.

Key Issues

No centre of activity

- With limited local services and no retail hub, West Melbourne relies on surrounding areas to meet many needs.

Poor connections

- Poor connections and barriers make it difficult to access nearby areas.
- Arterial roads with heavy traffic create barriers and detract from amenity (Spencer, King and Dudley Streets).
- The neighbourhood is cut off from Docklands and Moonee Ponds Creek by railways.
- There are few safe cycle routes to key destinations.
- Most public transport services are located at edges of the study area.

Lack of open space

- There is insufficient recreational open space to cater to the growing population, and the amenity of existing space is compromised by vehicular traffic.
- Streets are wide and closely-spaced, so there is abundant street space, but even streets carrying light traffic are dominated by cars.
- Streets are mostly paved surfaces and the coverage of private land by buildings is high. There is little greenery to ameliorate the urban heat island effect, and there are few permeable surfaces to reduce stormwater runoff rates.

Significant development activity

- There is significant development activity, particularly near the central city and North Melbourne Station.
- New developments often exceed current discretionary height controls in the Planning Scheme, creating uncertainty for the community.
- The diversity in property and building scale across the study area is not well reflected in current built form controls.
- Recent development is mostly one and two bedroom apartments, with little or no affordable housing, and does not cater to the diverse population.
- There are insufficient mechanisms in place to gain community benefit from redevelopment of large sites.

Heritage fabric at risk

- Development has resulted in a loss of heritage buildings.

Reduction in mixed use character

- The current dominance of residential development threatens a loss of the area's mixed-use character, and existing planning controls do little to protect this mix.

Lack of sustainable infrastructure

- There is little in the way of solar panels, water sensitive urban design and poor tree canopy cover.



Figure 1.3: Workshop discussion held during Phase One community engagement.



Figure 1.4: Workshops and panel beaters (Stanley Street - left) are increasingly making way for residential and mixed use development (Roden Street - right)

A HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT

West Melbourne is rich in history. The area's underlying topography and its location in relation to the central city, industrial areas and transport facilities have shaped it over time. It has evolved to include a mix of building types and uses, from cottages and factories to office buildings, warehouse conversions and apartments. Several local landmarks tell important stories from the past, including Melbourne's oldest cathedral, Festival Hall, Flagstaff Gardens, and North Melbourne Station. Many of these places are heritage protected.

Aboriginal Country

The area now known as West Melbourne has been the country of the Wurundjeri (Woiwurrung) and Boon wurrung (Bunurong) people of the Kulin nation for tens of thousands of years. The hill now occupied by the Flagstaff Gardens was a meeting place for local clans with expansive views across the salt lakes and flats to the You Yangs in the west. The hills of West Melbourne were once covered in grasslands and eucalypt woodland leading down to salt marshes, billabongs and floodplains to the west, which teemed with fish and bird life.

The Hoddle Grid

When Robert Hoddle laid out the town grid in March 1837, Spencer Street and Latrobe Street formed its western and northern edges. With population growth fuelled by the gold rush, the city was extended into the area. The development of the railways and North Melbourne Station soon led to flour and wool mills popping up throughout the area as well as cottages to house workers and their families.

The Benevolent Asylum

The first local building, the Benevolent Asylum was opened in 1851 to house immigrants, orphans, the blind and the physically and mentally unwell. Located on the hilltop at the west end of Victoria Street, the site was eventually subdivided and Victoria Street extended through it.

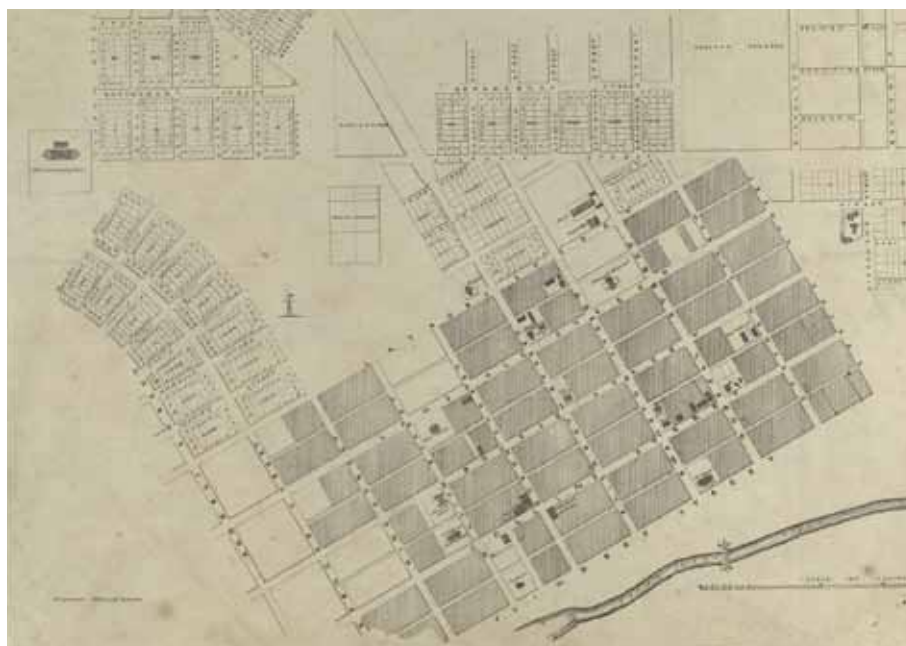


Figure 1.5: Map showing the original Hoddle Grid (darker hatching) with its extension into West Melbourne via Adderley, Spencer and King Streets into West Melbourne. Source: State Library of Victoria



Figure 1.6: The Benevolent Asylum. Source: State Library of Victoria

The Flagstaff Gardens

The Flagstaff Gardens were reserved in 1873. Throughout their history they have served as a cemetery, an observatory, a telegraph station and a quarry.

St James' Old Cathedral

St James Anglican church is Melbourne's oldest cathedral. It was first built at the corner of William and Little Collins Street in 1839. Plans to demolish it in the early 20th century outraged many community members and it was moved in 1914 to its current site on King Street.

Victoria Dock

In the 1880s, the Yarra was realigned and widened and Victoria Dock created. Excavating the dock involved removing 2.3 million cubic metres of earth that was used to fill the former wetland around the dock. Victoria Dock was Melbourne's busiest dock handling a wide range of cargo including coal, steel, animals, wool and wheat. It was used as the main port for navy vessels, with most Victorian troops returning from both wars to this location.

Festival Hall

Festival Hall was built in 1915 as a boxing and wrestling venue and was known as West Melbourne Stadium. It was rebuilt after a fire and hosted boxing, basketball and gymnastics for the 1956 Olympic Games. It was renamed Festival Hall in the 1960s and continued hosting acts like The Beatles in 1964.

Preparing for WWII

In the lead up to WWII West Melbourne became a centre of industry with machine works and military ship, jeep and aircraft parts manufacturers. Its proximity to Victoria Dock, which was the main port for military vessels, made it a prime location for such industries.



Figure 1.7: VF Harris premises at 100 Rosslyn Street in the 1940s.
Source: State Library of Victoria

Cars and traffic

Automobiles became a common sight in local streets during the 1950s, and panel beaters, petrol stations and mechanics' workshops, proliferated. By the 1960s, King, Spencer and Dudley Streets had become busy arterial roads. Construction of CityLink and Wurundjeri Way in the 1990s influenced traffic through the area. Growth in northern and western suburbs has also increased West Melbourne's role as the portal to the central city.

Railways and stations

The City Loop opened in 1981, changing the dynamics of areas near Flagstaff Station. More intense development of the legal precinct along William Street also influenced the area including the 1989 construction of the Melbourne Assessment Prison in Spencer Street.

Redevelopment of Spencer Street Station with large retail outlets has also stimulated development in the area. North Melbourne station was upgraded in 2009 and an express bus service was commenced between the station and Parkville hospitals and Melbourne University to enable commuters to avoid the city loop and reduce congestion.

Docklands

Victoria Dock fell into disuse by the 1990s after large container port facilities were built downstream. Redevelopment of Docklands began with construction of the stadium in 1996 and has transformed the area into a mixed business and residential suburb.

New institutions

The Australian Red Cross Blood Service refurbished the Austin Motor Company building on Batman Street as their testing and distributions laboratory in 2012. This reuse of a heritage building retained much of the original interior.

In 2015 Haileybury College opened an early learning to year 12 city campus on King Street in an existing commercial building. The school has commenced operations for the early learning centre and will phase in the opening of later school years from 2017 onwards.



Figure 1.8: Petrol station on the corner of Errol and Victoria Streets in the 1950s.
Source: State Library of Victoria



Figure 1.9: Australian Red Cross Blood Service, at Batman and Adderley Streets.
Source: Diane Snape, ArchDaily

THE COMMUNITY TODAY

Who lives and works here?

About 5000 people lived in West Melbourne (in 2011), with a similar number employed in the area (in 2014).

The average age is 30 years; the Melbourne municipality average is 28.

37 per cent of residents were born overseas and 30 per cent spoke a language other than English at home.

The median income was \$798 per week compared to \$711 for the municipality.

People in West Melbourne enjoy higher than average levels of socio-economic advantage than other areas of the city.

The most common household type is families of two or more persons (46 per cent), with lone person households accounting for 23 per cent, and group households 17 per cent.

There is a high rate of residential mobility with 48 per cent of the local population living at another address in the previous year, compared to the municipality-wide rate of 42 per cent.

Of people working in West Melbourne, 62 per cent drive to work, 28 per cent catch public transport, two per cent walk and two per cent cycle.

What are the trends?

There has been a rapid transition over the past decade towards higher density residential uses in West Melbourne. Since 2004, dwelling numbers almost doubled from 1251 to 2374, with three quarters of new dwellings being apartments. About 2800 dwellings are currently under construction, approved or awaiting planning approval. Forecasts indicate a further 2700 people are likely to live in the area by 2036 (Geografia, 2016).

The split between housing types in 2014 was 74 per cent apartments to 26 per cent houses and townhouses. The proportion of apartments will increase in the future which will increase demand for things like open space requirements.

Some of this residential growth has converted commercial and industrial spaces into dwellings, resulting in a 20 per cent reduction in employment over ten years, from 7112 jobs in 2004 to 5667 in 2014.

Despite that reduction, over 850,000 people come to the City of Melbourne every day to work, study and visit, and this number is forecast to increase to over one million by 2030. West Melbourne will play a part in supporting this growth.

30 YEARS

Average age of residents

37%

Residents born overseas

\$798

Median personal weekly income

46%

Family households

A CHANGING URBAN CONTEXT

West Melbourne is surrounded by diverse and rapidly changing precincts, which will influence the future of West Melbourne, including:

- Intensified development in the central city, Docklands, key urban growth and renewal areas including Arden-Macaulay and City North, and future development of E-Gate
- New major transport infrastructure including Melbourne Metro Rail and Western Distributor.
- Gentrification of North Melbourne.
- The Queen Victoria Market Precinct Renewal project.
- Future redevelopment of industrial areas along the Dynon corridor.
- West Melbourne Waterfront

Major growth areas

Two existing structure plans overlap the West Melbourne study area: Arden-Macaulay and City North. The MSS promotes these as areas for significant growth and intensification of activity.

Arden-Macaulay is expected to transform from an industrial to a mixed use precinct. City North will become an extension of the central city, as well as supporting growth in the health and education sectors centred around Parkville.

Redevelopment in these areas will create a significantly changed context for West Melbourne, generating land use and development pressures as well as opportunities for synergies between the areas.

West Melbourne and E-Gate

The Dynon Road corridor has been identified as a future mixed use redevelopment opportunity. The transformation of this area will enhance the connection between the city and western suburbs. The Transport Strategy (2012) promotes extension of the Spencer Street tram route through this area, potentially via Spencer Street and Dynon Road.

To the west of the Dynon corridor is the West Melbourne Waterfront. This private development is proposed to include mixed use buildings ranging in height from three to fourteen stories.

E-Gate is an urban renewal project led by the Victorian Government. The 20 hectare site is to the west of the study area, across the railway yards. The timing of this development is uncertain. The site has many challenges to redevelopment including significant road and rail barriers on all sides and flooding issues. One of the key opportunities it presents for West Melbourne is creation of a link or links across the railway to Docklands.

Queen Victoria Market Renewal

The Queen Victoria Market Precinct Renewal Master Plan was approved by Council in 2015. Community benefits that will be delivered by the project include improved public spaces, upgraded market infrastructure, new community infrastructure, and improved accessibility for all. For West Melbourne to gain maximum benefit from this project it is important to improve access between the study area and the market.

Melbourne Metro

The Victorian Government's Melbourne Metro Rail Project is a high capacity rail project, which entails a tunnelled connection between the existing Sunbury and Cranbourne-Pakenham lines with five new stations at Arden, Parkville, CBD North, CBD South and Domain. Arden Station will be to the northwest of the West Melbourne study area, about half a kilometre from North Melbourne Station.

Western Distributor

The Victorian Government announced in 2015 that it will build the Western Distributor in partnership with Transurban. This will provide a crossing of the Maribyrnong River as an alternative to the West Gate Bridge. It links from the Geelong Freeway under Yarraville, across the Maribyrnong and via an elevated freeway to CityLink, Port of Melbourne, Footscray Road, Dynon Road and Wurundjeri Way. It is likely to affect traffic in the West Melbourne study area but details of these impacts are unclear.

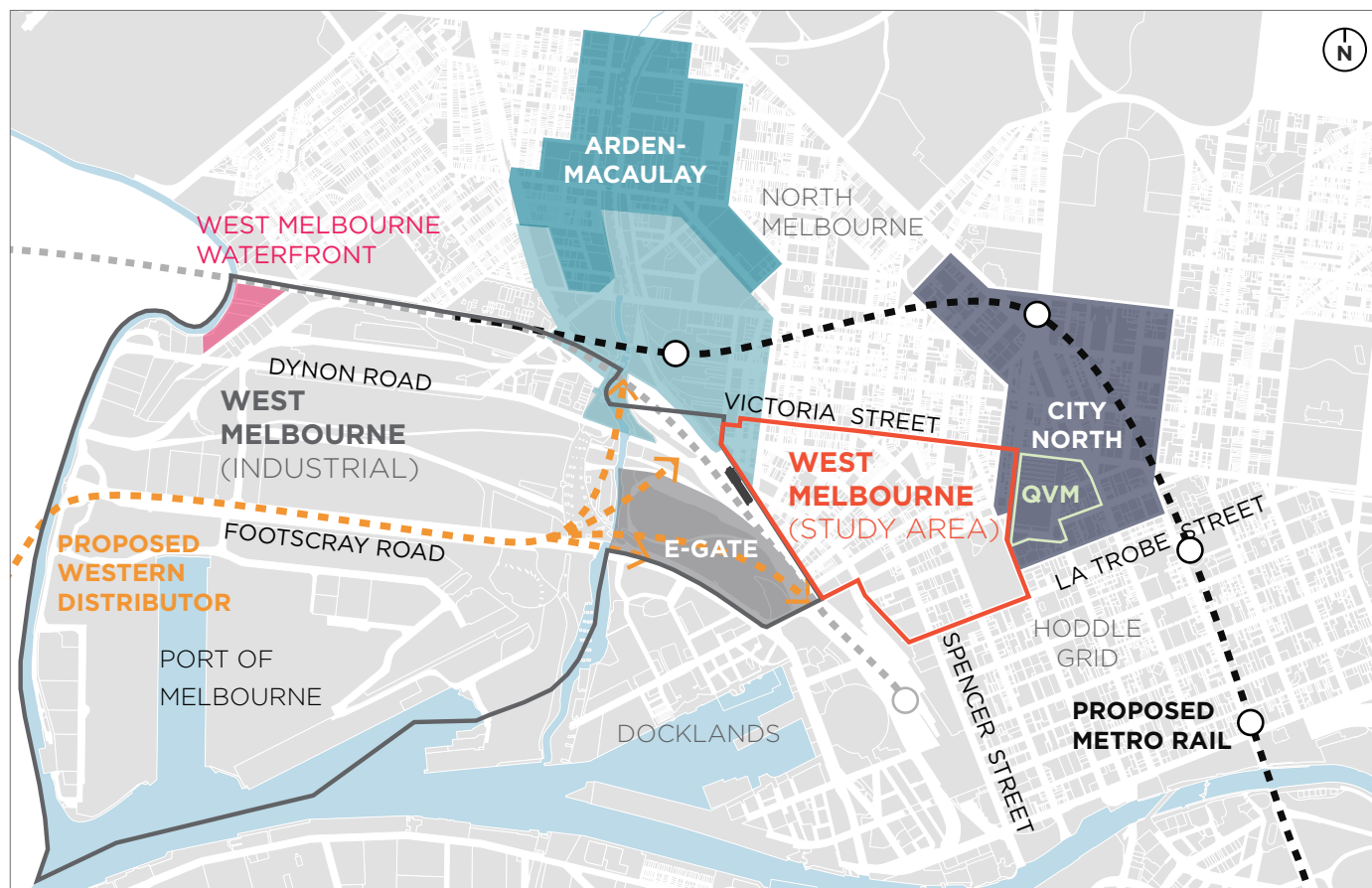


Figure 1.10: West Melbourne study area context

PLANNING AND POLICY CONTEXT

Metropolitan context

Plan Melbourne (2014) is the Victorian Government's metropolitan planning strategy and outlines a forty year vision for the city. It is currently under review. West Melbourne is located in the central metropolitan subregion.

The City of Melbourne plays a significant economic role within the metropolitan context. It attracts knowledge-intensive and high-skilled businesses and is a major area for tourism, retail, residential, entertainment, sporting and cultural activities.

The number of jobs in the City of Melbourne is expected to double in the foreseeable future, largely because the area is positioned to capture the benefits of agglomeration. To support this growth, new space for offices, retail, tourism, education, health, entertainment and cultural activities will be required.

Plan Melbourne identifies the following key challenges for Greater Melbourne:

- Congestion
- Affordability
- Diversity of housing
- Accessibility
- A changing climate
- Rural encroachment

In the first phase of community engagement on the West Melbourne Structure Plan, participants discussed many similar challenges in relation to their neighbourhood.

Municipal Strategic Statement

The 2013 Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) sets out the vision, objectives and strategies for managing land use change and development in the City of Melbourne through the Melbourne Planning Scheme.

In the MSS, West Melbourne is identified as an 'Other Local Area' of incremental growth. It sits alongside the relatively stable area of North Melbourne, but is otherwise surrounded by areas of significant growth in the Hoddle Grid, City North, Arden-Macaulay and E-Gate.

Some key points about West Melbourne in the MSS include:

- North and West Melbourne should provide a balance of residential and commercial uses that maintains an emphasis on local community and liveability.
- There should be a clear distinction in scale from the Central City with higher scales of development expected to be located at the central city fringe and around the North Melbourne railway station.
- In all other areas, a lower scale of development should be maintained.
- Maintain the predominantly low scale of the Mixed Use Zone in West Melbourne, south of Hawke and Roden Streets.
- Ensure the area bounded by Latrobe Street, southwest of the Flagstaff Gardens provides a contrast in scale between the lower built form of West Melbourne and the higher scale of the Hoddle Grid.
- Support higher building forms in West Melbourne in the area adjacent to the Hoddle Grid.
- Improve pedestrian and cycle connections between Docklands and West Melbourne.

Future Melbourne

Future Melbourne 2026 sets out the community's aspirations for the city. The framework of goals and priorities builds on the strengths and attributes that make Melbourne the world's most liveable city now and for future generations.

Future Melbourne is underpinned by nine goals:

A city that cares for its environment
Sustainability requires us to choose how to meet our needs today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

A city for people
A city for people welcomes all, is safe, accessible, affordable, inclusive, and engaging.

A creative city
Melbourne encourages innovation. It fosters and values a creative community.

A prosperous city
Melbourne will excel in its chosen fields. Its entrepreneurs and businesses will thrive and all its people will enjoy its prosperity.

A knowledge city
The collective power of mind and experience drives the city's prosperity, its ability to compete globally and the quality of life its people enjoy.

A connected city
People and goods can move efficiently to, from and within a connected city,

A deliberative city
Melbourne will be a world leader in using participatory democratic approaches to decision-making.

A city managing change
Melbourne will be a leader in managing change driven by growth and technological advancement.

A city with an Aboriginal focus
Aboriginal culture, knowledge and heritage will enrich the city.

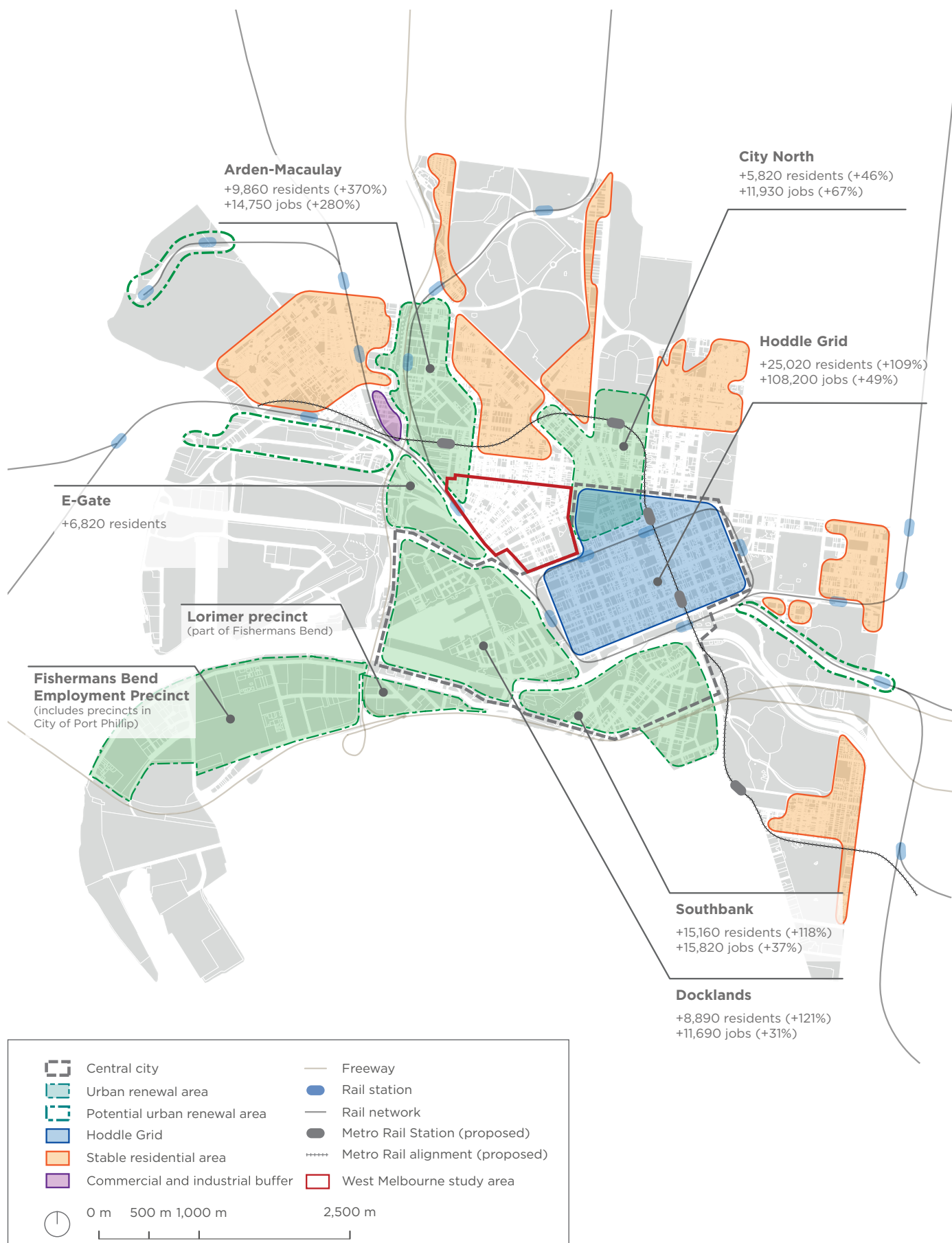


Figure 1.11: Melbourne Planning Scheme Growth Area Framework Plan (Clause 21.04-1)