

22.04 URBAN DESIGN IN ACTIVITY AND NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES

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This policy applies to all retail and commercial activity centres in the City, including the Dandenong MAC, Noble Park, Springvale and Parkmore, as well as neighbourhood centres. The urban design centre policy is used to provide detailed guidance on land use and built form character for activity centres except where local planning policy otherwise applies.

22.04-1 Policy basis

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The metropolitan planning strategy *Plan Melbourne* places emphasis on the need to support a network of activity centres. The development of Metropolitan Activity Centres is to be supported to serve their sub regional catchment, Major Activity Centres are to be recognised for their role in providing services, employment and housing, and Neighbourhood Centres support the concept of '20-minute neighbourhoods' which enable good local access to a range of services and facilities.

Within the City of Greater Dandenong the activity centre hierarchy consists of one Metropolitan Activity Centre, nominated as central Dandenong and three Major Activity Centres of Springvale, Noble Park and Parkmore.

There are over 40 Neighbourhood Centres within the municipality ranging from Large Neighbourhood Centres, Neighbourhood Centres, Large Local Shop Node and Local Shop Nodes. These make an important contribution to local service provision, vibrant local economies and provide employment opportunities for the community.

Each of the City's three activity centres makes a significant contribution to the City's economy and plays a role in meeting the needs of the community.

It is essential that these three activity centres provide for appropriate community services and facilities consistent with their role and scale and become a focus for social interaction. It is important to ensure that any new development assists Council's aim to improve the amenity and visual appearance of each centre.

The quality of urban design in activity and neighbourhood centres is important to the economic viability of the centres and contributes significantly to the overall image and appearance of the municipality.

Improving the economic viability and appearance of activity and neighbourhood centres are objectives of the Municipal Strategic Statement.

This policy provides urban design guidance to achieve these objectives of the Municipal Strategic Statement.

22.04-2 Objectives

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To ensure that the design of buildings and works in each centre:

- Reflect and reinforce the distinctive qualities of Greater Dandenong and the local identity of each centre.
- Improve the appearance and amenity of each centre through high quality contemporary urban design and active street frontage, which promotes a sense of place, community identity and a safe environment.
- Considers the impact on the retail hierarchy and the planned role and function of other activity and neighbourhood centres.
- Provide quality pedestrian access and movement.
- Incorporates landscaping to soften built form.

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It is policy that the following matters be taken into account when considering an application to use or develop land.

Design theme

While reflecting the distinctive qualities of Greater Dandenong, new buildings and works in each centre should provide a focus for the local community and contribute to the character and amenity of the activity centre by:

- Ensuring that land use and development minimises the impact on residential amenity.
- Using materials and colours which reflect and complement the streetscape.
- Reflecting the cultural background of the local community.
- Incorporating local and native trees for the area.

Street context and facade design

New buildings and works should reflect the local street context by:

- Complementing the existing streetscape in scale, colour and form.
- Ensuring that ground level spaces maintain visibility as shop fronts by glazed frontage at ground level.
- Ensuring continuity of adjacent setbacks.
- Incorporating facades on corner sites that address both street frontages.

In certain areas, especially if redevelopment is occurring, a new scale or pattern of development may be appropriate.

Building bulk, height and alignment

The built form of new buildings and works should contribute to the amenity and distinctiveness of each centre by:

- New development assisting Council's aim to improve the amenity and visual appearance of each centre and its streetscape through quality urban design.
- Encouraging built form that respects the character and amenity of existing residential areas where development occurs adjacent to residential areas.
- Responding to and integrating development with the surrounding local built form context.
- Ensuring that new development and renovation of existing buildings identifies as part of the centre rather than an extension of surrounding residential or other built forms to improve the visual amenity and streetscape of these centres.
- Providing adequate public spaces and suitable built form edges to streets and public spaces.
- Avoid limiting core retail uses (especially food premises) at ground floor level through the under-provision of loading, bin storage and room for mechanical ventilation systems in any new multi-storey development.

New buildings and works should reinforce the existing street pattern and promote an "urban feel" by generally:

- Extending to the front and side property boundaries, other than where this would not

match the dominant setback line.

- Matching the dominant facade height on the street frontage.
- Locating higher towers and buildings back from the frontage and aligning these with the adjacent street pattern.

In areas where the dominant setback or building height is not obvious, the applicant should refer to any relevant urban design guidelines for the centre or Clause 55 where applicable.

Gateways, landmarks and corner buildings

Gateways, landmarks and corner buildings provide orientation for visitors to the centre and contribute to its sense of place. New buildings and works should contribute to the reinforcement of landmarks and the sense of place of a centre by:

- Orientating and designing corner buildings that maximise and define key corner sites and gateways to and within the precinct.
- Incorporating distinctive design elements into corner buildings.
- Developing buildings with landmark qualities at activity centre gateways.
- Adhering to the Public Realm and Built Form Guidelines contained within the relevant Gateway Concept Plan (*City of Greater Dandenong Gateways Strategy, 2011*).
- Designing landmark qualities into buildings which terminate vistas.
- Respecting vistas to existing landmarks.

Pedestrian environment

Buildings fronting onto footpaths and other public spaces should create an active, safe and visually attractive pedestrian environment by:

- Encourage pedestrian activity and ground floor uses with active frontages.
- Maximising window area and openings onto the street.
- Minimising car park frontages and entries on key pedestrian routes.
- Providing continuous weather protection along key pedestrian routes.
- Providing elements of architectural, artistic and decorative interest in the facade design at pedestrian level.

Energy efficiency

New development should incorporate environmental sustainable design features by:

- Incorporating Environmentally Sustainable Design principles in the development of the activity and neighbourhood centres, especially in relation to storm water management and water reuse.
- Using passive solar design, energy and water efficiency through building design, materials and fittings.
- Providing orientation of large and useable open spaces and appropriate landscaping to maximise solar access and appropriate shading.

Car parks

Car parking areas should assist in the overall functioning, safety and appearance of the centre by:

- Not intruding onto activities that require footpath frontage.
- Incorporating frontage landscaping and fencing.
- Incorporating larger canopy trees, at a ratio of at least one tree to each 10 car spaces and avoiding large areas of shrubby plants.
- Incorporating adequate security lighting.
- Blending the exterior of multi-deck car parks with adjacent streetscapes.

Landscaping

New development should incorporate soft landscaping which contributes to the amenity and distinctiveness of each centre by:

- Encouraging a high quality landscaped setting for development that contributes to the existing character of the area.
- Using clean trunk canopy trees, rather than smaller shrubs, to maintain a feeling of openness and safety and to provide a more secure environment.
- Using trees with a more open or transparent canopy to avoid obscuring shopfronts and signage.
- Planting in geometric or formal layouts to reinforce the urban character of the centre and the grid layout of the streets.
- Restricting the use of ground cover plantings in favour of gravel or other permeable materials to identify the distinction between existing roads and the built form.

Advertising signs

Signs should add visual interest to the area and contribute to a lively atmosphere as excessive signage can be intrusive and add to visual clutter.

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Reference documents

City of Greater Dandenong Urban Design Strategy (Mike Scott & Associates with John Curtis, Lisa Riddle, Susan Ackroyd and Paul Goodison, 1998)

City of Greater Dandenong Neighbourhood Centre Planning Framework (HillPDA and AECOM, 2016)