

THE FUTURE OF THE BALLARAT CBD

PROJECT UPDATE

Draft Ballarat CBD Urban
Design Framework (UDF)



The City of Ballarat acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land we live and work on, the Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung People, and recognises their continuing connection to the land and waterways.

We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging and extend this to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.





Introduction

The City of Ballarat is currently undertaking strategic work aimed at guiding growth and development over the next 20 years, through the *Urban Renewal Program*. A key focus of this work is the planning of existing urban renewal precincts that have the potential to deliver future housing to accommodate our growing and changing population, as well as encouraging retail and business opportunities.

In response, the City of Ballarat is developing the *Ballarat CBD Urban Design Framework* (UDF) to provide a clear direction for the

Ballarat CBD that balances heritage objectives with aspirations for growth and development and underpins changes to the Ballarat Planning Scheme.

Whilst current zoning allows a range of uses including higher density residential development, the Ballarat Planning Scheme does not provide enough guidance for the form and scale of future buildings in this high value area.



“The Ballarat CBD Urban Design Framework (UDF) will be a strategic planning tool that guides the physical and spatial evolution of Ballarat’s CBD.”



Background

The City of Ballarat previously released the strategic plan, *Making Ballarat Central: the CBD Strategy* in 2010. This plan was further updated with an action plan in 2017 (*Making Ballarat Central: Action Plan 2017-23*).

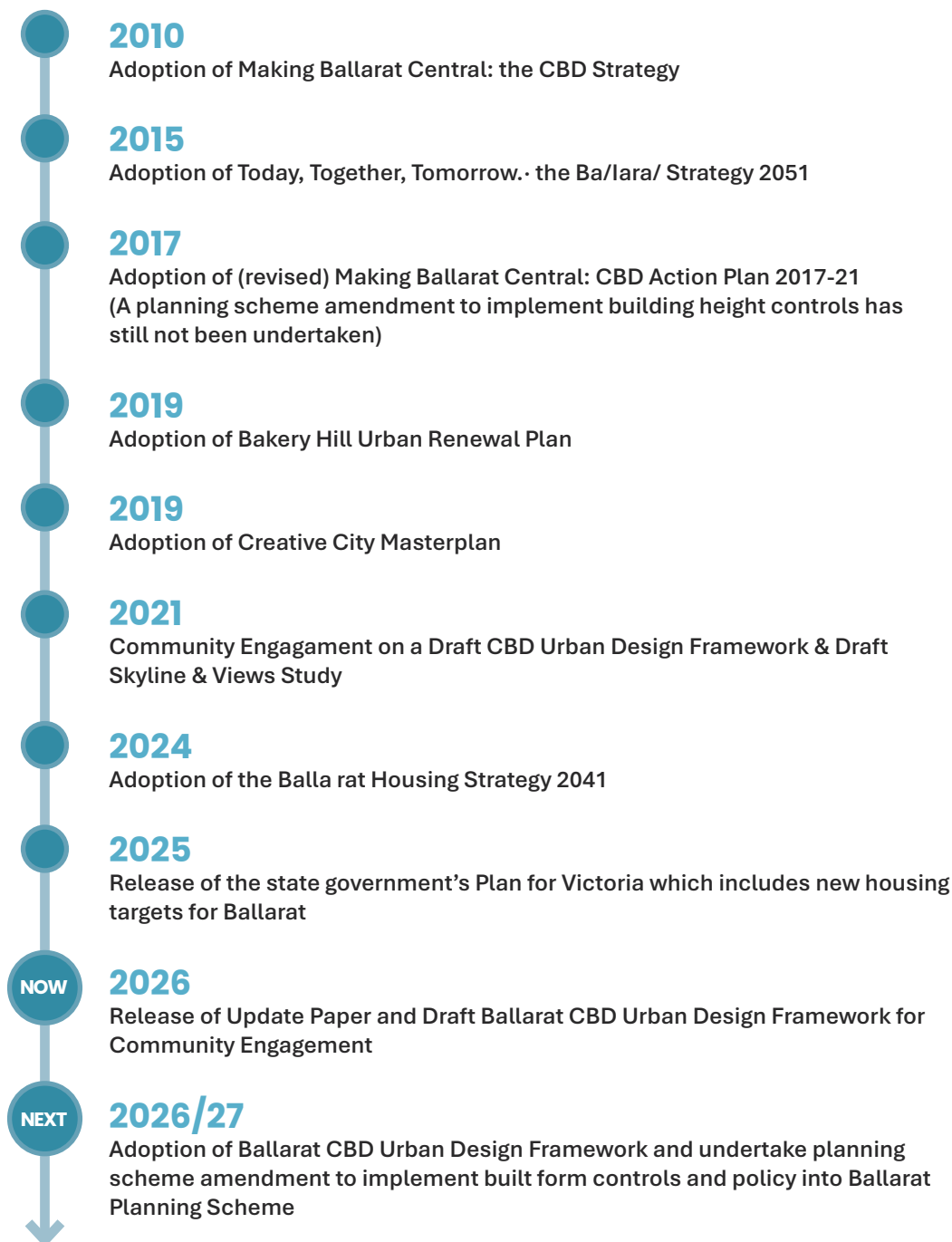
Making Ballarat Central was not given effect through changes to the Ballarat Planning Scheme at the time and as such does not assist in decision making regarding development in the CBD, nor provide guidance for developers, owners or the community.

Since the adoption of *Making Ballarat Central* by Council in 2010, updated demographic forecasts (though more than two rounds of census data) alongside state and local planning policies have changed the settings under which activity centre planning can be undertaken. The adopted UDF will be implemented through a planning scheme amendment into the Ballarat Planning Scheme, providing statutory weight to the built form recommendations.

Many of the opportunities and ideas from past strategic work have been carried forward into this CBD UDF as many of the aspirations for the Ballarat CBD remain current. These include the desire to see more people living and working in the heart of the Ballarat CBD and the identification of a number of public realm projects, some of which are now complete including the Bridge Mall and Grenville Street projects.

Work has commenced on the Ballarat CBD Urban Design Framework (UDF), informed by the earlier strategic work, including the Draft Ballarat Skyline and Views Study.

Timeline of Strategic Projects related to the Ballarat CBD since 2010:



Project Purpose

The Ballarat CBD Urban Design Framework (UDF) will be a strategic planning tool that guides the physical and spatial evolution of Ballarat's CBD. It will support Council, the community, and stakeholders in shaping a shared vision, ensuring that future development and investment is coordinated, place-specific, and responsive to Ballarat's unique heritage, character, infrastructure needs and public realm opportunities.

The UDF will provide analysis and built form guidance for the Ballarat CBD which will inform the future development of the Ballarat CBD, and has been developed in accordance with

Planning Practice Note 17 (PPN17) Urban Design Frameworks, and other Planning Practice Notes that inform the development of height and setback controls in activity centres such as the Ballarat CBD.

The UDF will be implemented through a future planning scheme amendment and be translated into built form controls and design guidance within the Ballarat Planning Scheme.



Ballarat Central Uniting Church, corner Dana and Lydiard Street.

CBD UDF Study Area

The CBD UDF has identified a study area for the purpose of undertaking an urban design analysis and includes an extended area to the north-west (Creswick Road) of the current CBD.

The study area includes approximately 157 hectares of land and is defined as the area that generally takes in the full extent of the Commercial 1 Zone, that covers most of the city centre, and some

peripheral residential areas under the General Residential Zone, Residential Growth Zone, Mixed Use Zone and other zones that are site specific for particular uses. The study area also includes an area of Industrial 1 Zone towards the north-west.



Figure 1. Ballarat CBD Study Area.

What are we doing now?

In response to strategic policy changes and our understanding of previous strategic planning work and community engagement, the City of Ballarat is developing the **Ballarat CBD Urban Design Framework** that provides analysis of the existing conditions within the Ballarat CBD and a vision for its future growth and development. In particular, the CBD UDF will consider:

- Future built form
- Heritage Character
- Urban structure
- Topography
- Public spaces and greenery
- Movement networks and connectivity

The analysis will inform and identify locations where increased density can be considered and respond to the more sensitive and highly valued heritage areas.

The findings and directions of the CBD UDF will be placed in the Ballarat Planning Scheme, the statutory mechanism to manage development in the City of Ballarat. The Ballarat Planning Scheme uses the Design and Development Overlay (DDO) and Heritage Overlay (HO) to guide and control future development across the Ballarat CBD

In developing the Urban Design Framework, we will ensure that we:

- Respond to the significant heritage character of the Ballarat CBD and the heritage significance of places, buildings and precincts.
- Implement key principles which have been expanded and refined to be consistent with planning practice notes and current state planning policy.
- Identify areas that are appropriate for more significant change (the non-heritage areas)
- Plan for any environmental risks including flooding (through the 11 Waterways Flood Study and planning scheme amendment).

What is an Urban Design Framework?

Urban design is essentially about bringing a design approach to how towns and cities are analysed and developed. It provides a useful tool to enable performance-based planning to be implemented. A design approach unlocks creativity and allows physical design outcomes to be given a higher profile in planning. It also allows ideas to be tested through design and reviewed for their possible impacts or potential synergies.

Urban Design Frameworks involve the generation of ideas and the preparation of realistic design concepts based on consultation, research and analysis. Concepts may be drawn or computer modelled, illustrating how a future outcome will look, to enable communication and testing with stakeholders and the local community.

The Urban Design Framework is created by reviewing and analysing current planning policies against the current physical context of the CBD, which includes:

- The spatial layout of the CBD, including the topography and natural landscape
- The presence of important heritage buildings and heritage areas
- The existing width of streets and urban blocks
- Under-utilised areas with large expanses of vacant land and at-grade car parks
- The movement networks (walking, cycling, public transport and vehicles/cars)

This analysis will ensure that a consideration of where future development may occur and at provide direction on scale and design.

Ballarat Context

The Community's Vision for Ballarat

Ballarat, Victoria's heritage city: leading the way as a safe, sustainable, innovative and inclusive community, that is a great place to live. Our city strives towards sustainable living with ecologically-sound neighbourhoods where people can meet their daily needs within a short walk, ride or bus trip.

Council Plan Goals

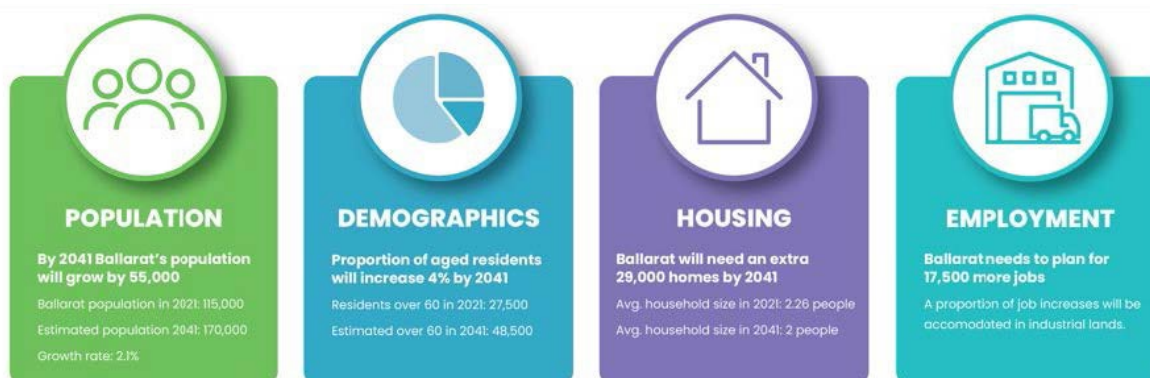
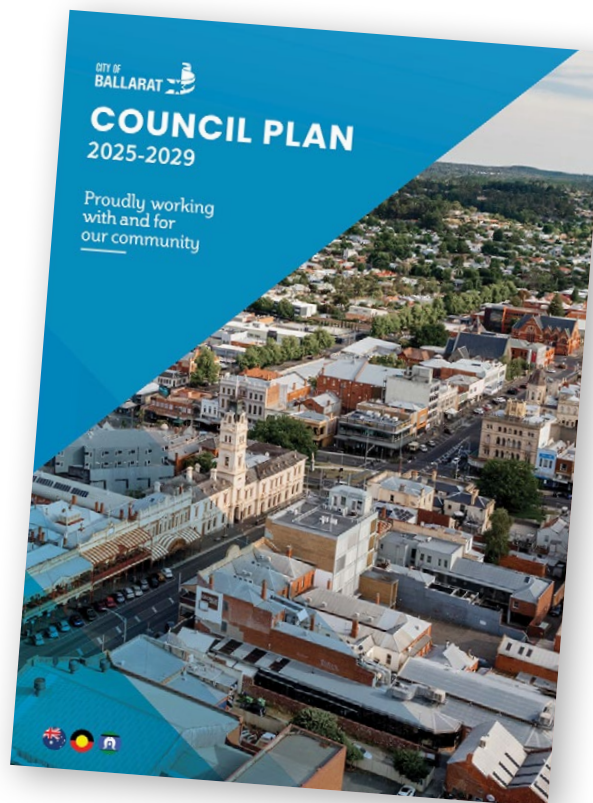
- A city that fosters sustainable growth
- A city that conserves its heritage and enhances our natural, cultural and built assets

Directions

- Respect and conserve our natural, cultural and built heritage to preserve our city's unique character
- Facilitate opportunities for appropriate infill residential development within the CBD and in major redevelopment sites across the municipality

Actions

- Progress the CBD Urban Design framework
- Progress the Heritage Gaps Review



- Approximately 90 per cent of residents in the City of Ballarat live in urban areas. It is these urban areas that are expected to accommodate the greatest growth in population over the coming years. The vast majority of houses in Ballarat are conventional detached dwellings owned outright or with a mortgage.
- The current trend of strong year-on-year population growth in the municipality is expected to continue. While population growth is forecast to occur in all groups, the strongest growth will be in the seniors (55+) cohort.
- Compared to Regional Victoria, Ballarat has a higher median household income; a younger age structure; a higher share of lone person and group households, semi-detached dwellings, households renting, and white-collar professions.
- Recent growth in the resident labour force across the intercensal period (2016-2021) largely occurred in sectors that often locate in activity centres, including health care and social assistance, public administration and safety, and professional, scientific and technical services.

Planning Policy and guidance changes

Since 2019, there have been significant changes to state planning policy that aims to encourage and facilitate increased supply of housing.

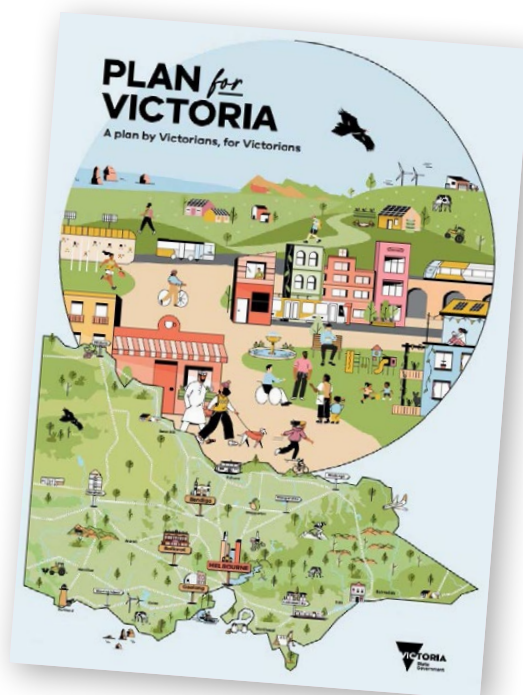
In addition, the City of Ballarat has adopted the Ballarat Housing Strategy 2041 and is currently developing a Draft Industrial Land Strategy.

This work has been critical in supporting other strategic work and we are now in a better position to plan for our urban renewal areas, including the Ballarat CBD.

State Government Planning

State government policy changes include:

- The release of Victoria's Housing Statement which sets out reforms to the planning system to encourage and facilitate increased housing supply across that state.
- The release of the Victorian Government's Plan for Victoria which guides the development of housing, transport infrastructure and employment land for both Melbourne and the regions, replacing Plan Melbourne: 2017 – 2050 and the Central Highlands Regional Growth Plan 2014.
- The review of Victorian Government's Planning Practice Note 90: Planning for Housing in 2025 which guides the preparation of housing strategies to ensure a balanced approach to managing residential development across individual municipalities.
- Updated policy direction that encourages housing and economic growth in and around activity centres and other well-served locations in line with the Victorian Government's Housing Statement: The Decade Ahead 2024-2034 and its vision for 'priority precincts'.



Plan For Victoria

Plan for Victoria sets out five pillars that planning seeks to address across Victoria:

Theme 1: Housing

Responding to the theme of housing for all Victorians, the Ballarat CBD UDF will provide certainty and guidance for the future scale and form of development within the Ballarat CBD, thereby encouraging development in certain areas and managing the heritage character and significance of the CBD.

Theme 2: Accessible jobs and services

By encouraging mixed-use development and an active and vibrant city centre, the UDF will set the scene for new buildings that accommodate new businesses and jobs that are accessible by various modes of transport.

Theme 3: Great neighbourhoods

The CBD will become a vibrant neighbourhood for future residents with all of the services and shops within close proximity, reducing the need to drive longer distances to access the same shops and services.

Theme 4: Sustainable environments

Sustainability will be embedded in the UDF by encouraging increased provision of green spaces and tree canopy, aligning with City of Ballarat's Urban Forest Strategy. Policies already exist and will be reinforced in terms of creating a sustainable urban environment and built form.

Theme 5: Caring for Country

Embed Traditional Owners' knowledge in the built environment through collaboration with traditional owners (the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation) to provide Country-specific guidance to inform the Ballarat CBD UDF.

State Planning Directions

Relevant to the Ballarat CBD study area are the following State Government policies from the Ballarat Planning Scheme that apply to Activity Centres and Precincts:

Settlement Regional Victoria (Clause 11.01-1R)

Focus regional investment and growth in:

- Major regional cities of Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong.

Settlement - Central Highlands (Clause 11.01-1R)

- Support Ballarat as the Major regional city for regional growth, services and employment with major growth focussed to the west.
- Support urban consolidation, particularly in Ballarat's Central Business District.
- Maintain Ballarat's Central Business District as the primary focus for commercial, retail and service activity in the city and region.

Activity centres and precincts (Clause 11.03-1S)

Build up the central activity areas of Major regional cities, Housing Choice and Stations as a focus for high-quality development, activity and living that:

- Are a focus for business, shopping, working, leisure and community facilities.
- Provide different types of housing, including forms of higher density housing.
- Are connected by transport.
- Maximise choices in services, employment and social interaction.

Encourage a diversity of housing types at higher densities in and around Major regional cities,

Reduce the number of private motorised trips by concentrating activities that generate high numbers of (non-freight) trips in highly accessible activity centres.

Improve access by walking, cycling and public transport to services and facilities.

Support the continued growth and diversification of activity centres to give communities access to a wide range of goods and services, provide local employment and support local economies.

Improve the social, economic and environmental performance and amenity of activity centres.

Local Planning Policy

LOCAL PLANNING POLICY (Ballarat Planning Scheme)

Ballarat CBD (Clause 11.03-1L-1)

- Facilitate higher density infill housing within the Ballarat CBD.
- Facilitate significant new mixed-use development in the CBD.

Housing supply (Clause 16.01)

- Increase the proportion of housing in designated locations in established urban areas (including under-utilised urban land) and reduce the share of new dwellings in greenfield, fringe and dispersed development areas.
- Encourage higher density housing development on sites that are well located in relation to jobs, services and public transport.
- Identify opportunities for increased residential densities to help consolidate urban areas.

The Network of Activity Centres within Ballarat

The Ballarat CBD is a Regional Activity Centre and acts as the key retail, entertainment and tourist destination, an employment hub and an inner-city living precinct. It performs a major role at both a regional and local level in terms of business, services, education and healthcare.

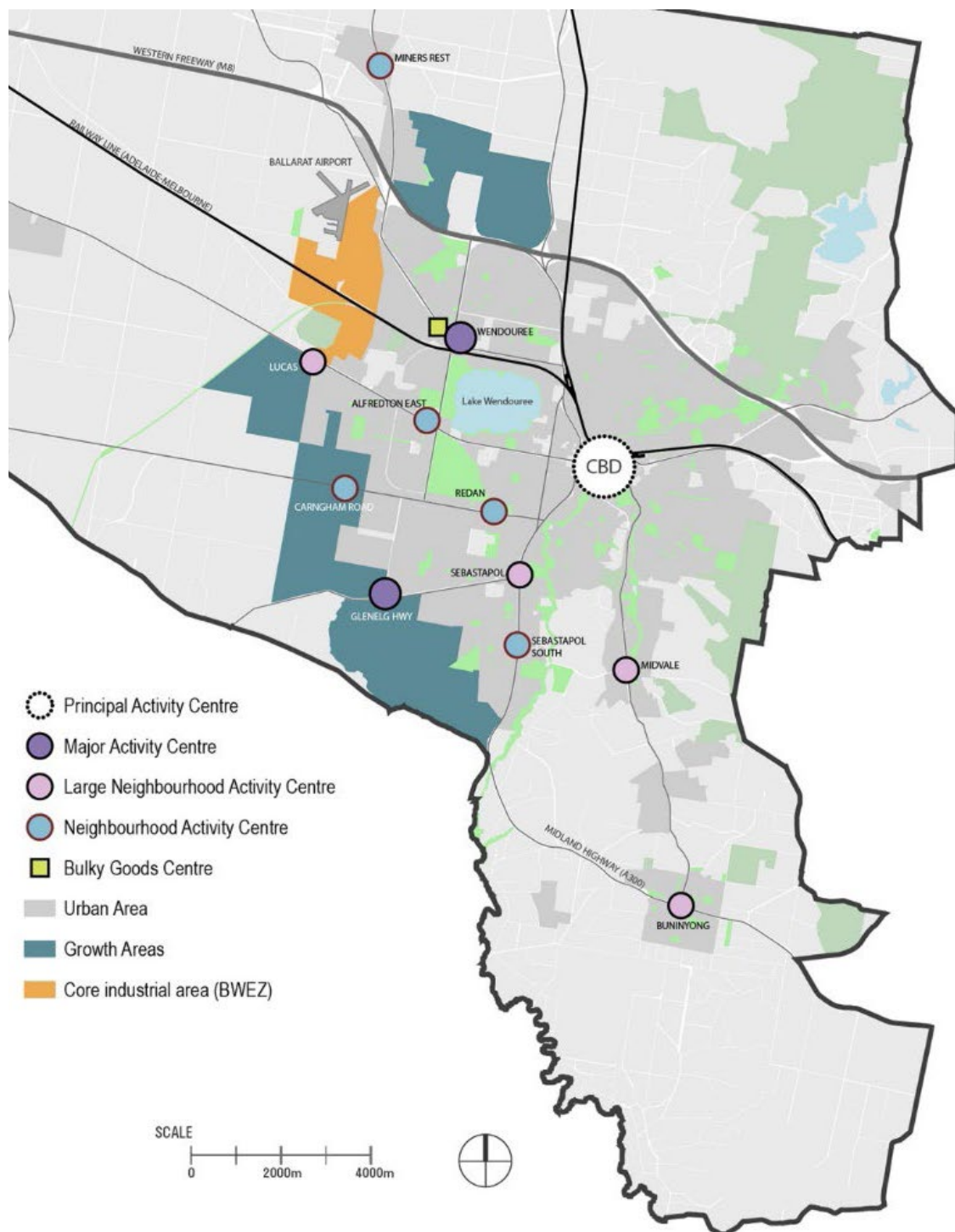


Figure 3. Network of Activity Centres.



State Government Planning Guidance

State Government: Planning Practice Note 60 (PPN60) – Height and setback controls for activity centres

Change in and around activity centres is anticipated and encouraged by state planning policy but needs to be managed carefully. This will ensure that new development maintains an appropriate level of amenity, and integrates with existing and proposed land uses and built forms. State policy seeks to manage change in and around activity centres through structure planning. Structure planning is the process of developing a strategic framework for the integrated development of an activity centre and surrounds. Structure plans provide the foundation for activity centre change by clarifying preferred directions for future growth and articulating how this change will be managed.

Development of height and setback controls

Height and setback controls can be appropriate so long as they are not aimed at restricting the built form, but at facilitating good design outcomes. A council will need to be able to demonstrate that there is sufficient land and capacity available to meet forecast demand and projected population growth over at least a 15-year period, and beyond this to a 30-year horizon, including how an activity centre contributes to this need.

Planning Practice Note 17 (PPN17) Urban Design Frameworks

Urban Design Frameworks are strategic planning tools that set out an integrated design vision for the desired future development of urban places.

City of Ballarat Strategic Direction

The Ballarat Housing Strategy and Role of the CBD

The Ballarat Housing Strategy identifies the CBD as an area of *Substantial Change*. This reflects that there are opportunities in some locations in the Ballarat CBD for new development at increased densities. However, new development must contribute positively to the character of the CBD and not compromise heritage values.

The Draft Urban Design Framework will provide detailed analysis of built form and the urban context in order to identify areas within the CBD that are suitable for more intensive development while also ensuring that heritage values and character are protected.

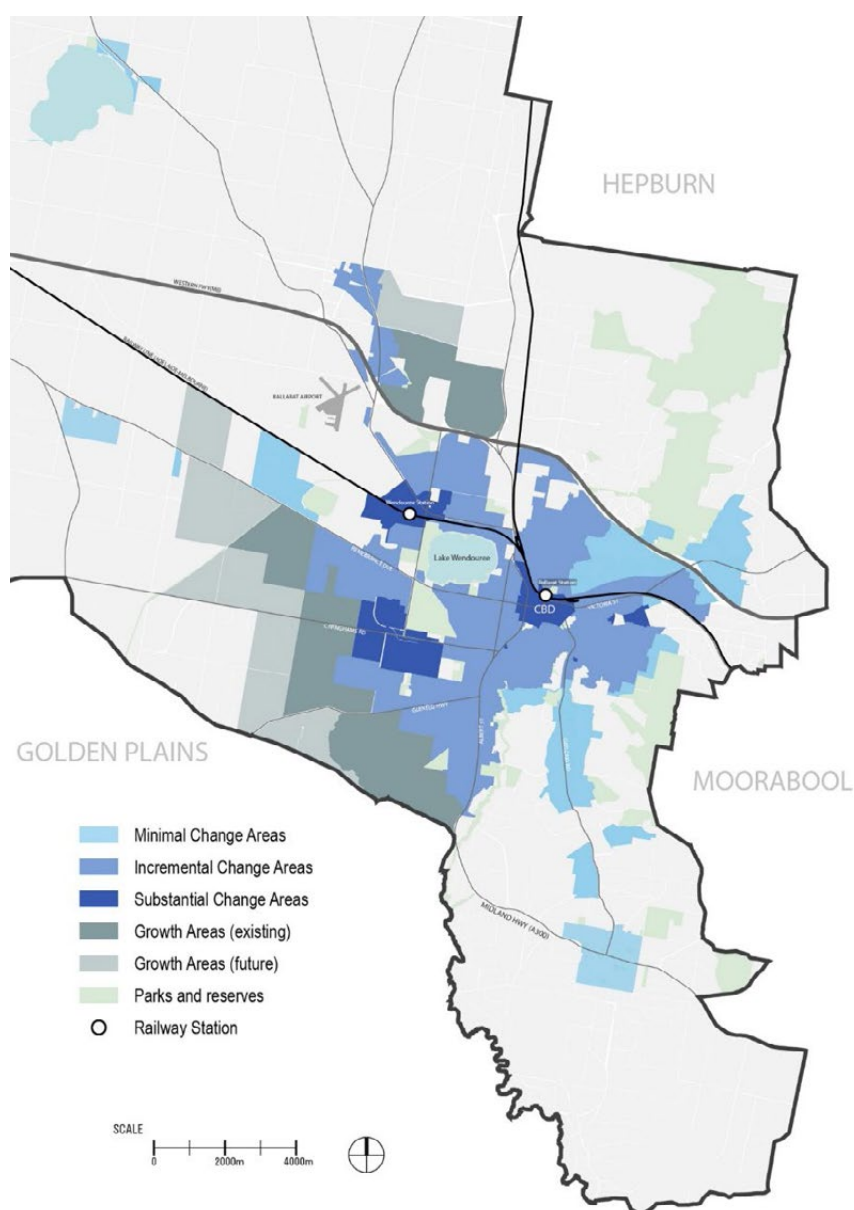


Figure 4. Housing Framework Plan (Ballarat Housing Strategy)

Technical reports that will support the UDF

To support the development of the Urban Design Framework, the following technical reports are being undertaken to support and inform the UDF:

- **Land Use Review and Capacity Analysis**

This report will provide analysis the existing pattern of land use within the CBD which includes shops, businesses, housing, offices. Understanding what is happening from an economic perspective helps us to understand the CBDs strengths and weaknesses, from a local and regional perspective. The Ballarat CBD serves a wide catchment but also competes with other activity centres in Ballarat, which all serve different roles to each other in terms of the business and visitors they attract.

- **Transport and Movement Analysis**

This report will analyse the current transport and movement network to understand how people access and move around the CBD. This include walking, cycling, public transport and vehicle access.

- **Flood Study & Amendment**

The City of Ballarat, in partnership with the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (CCMA), has released the final flood study for 11 key waterways across the municipality. The study provides essential data to develop updated flood modelling that can be used to guide future land use decisions, emergency response planning and infrastructure investment.

The modelling identifies flood-prone areas and recommends non-structural mitigation measures to reduce risks to life and property during major rainfall events around Redan Creek, Canadian Creek, Yarrowee River, Bonshaw Creek, Kensington Creek and others.

- **Heritage Program**

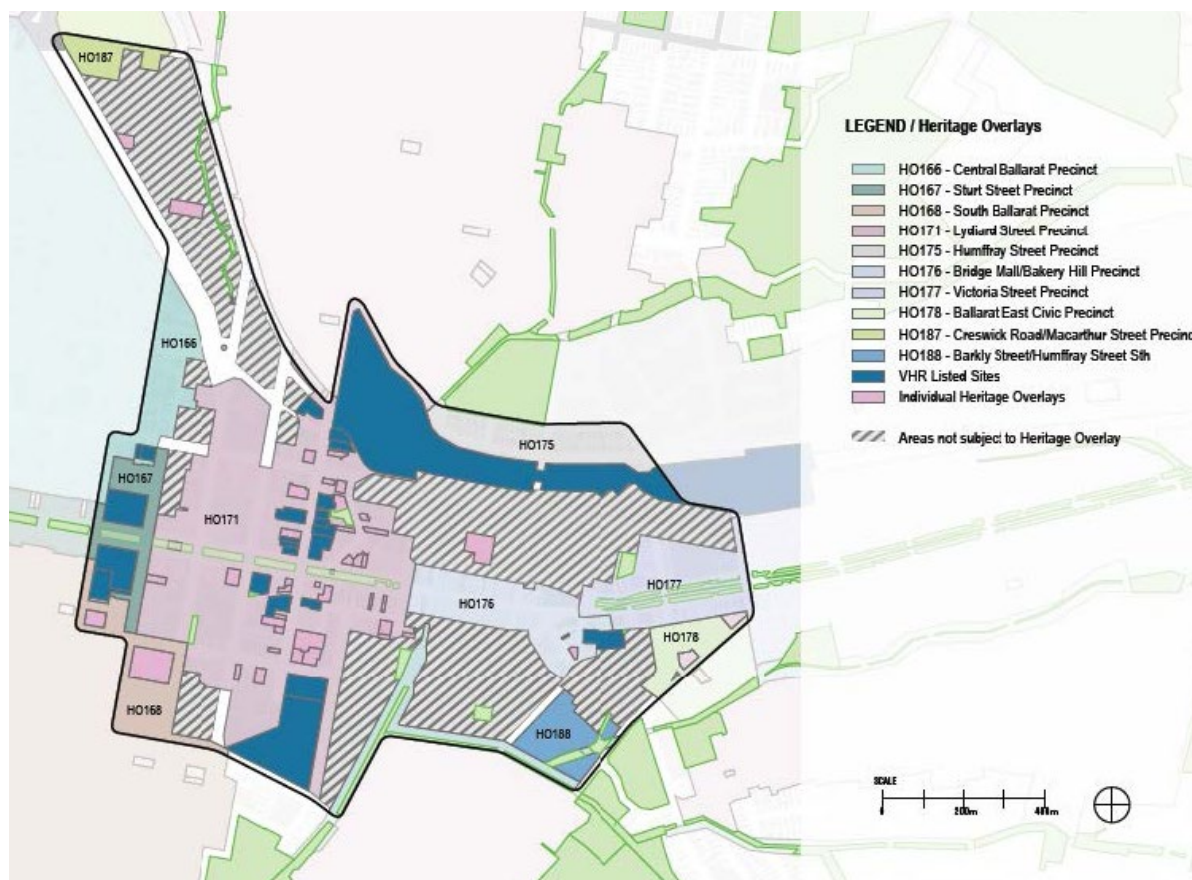
In parallel with the UDF project, City of Ballarat is currently undertaking a Heritage Program of work that seeks to identify and protect buildings that do not have a Heritage Overlay (a planning overlay that sets out guidance how buildings should be responded to when new development occurs, including preventing their demolition).



Shopfronts, Sturt Street.

The Lydiard Street heritage precinct (HO171) is currently under review. The Lydiard Street Heritage Precinct For the CBD project, Lydiard Street is considered to be an area that warrants special attention in terms of managing future development to ensure that

its character, streetscape features and any landmark elements are not compromised by future development that could occur on some sites.



Heritage Overlays: Ballarat CBD Study area

Developing the Draft Urban Design Framework

Having reviewed the feedback from past engagement, and undertaken further work including the testing of view lines to ensure that new buildings would not impact the key views to

important landmark buildings within the streetscape and from locations around the CBD, we are in the process of finalising a DRAFT Urban Design Framework to share with the community and seek feedback.



New higher-density development on Lyons Street North, demonstrating a three storey street wall/frontage with upper levels setbacks.

Next Steps

We are currently undertaking preliminary community engagement through the Ballarat MySay web page and this Discussion Paper. Community feedback received during this phase of the project will be considered and possibly incorporated into the development of the Draft Urban Design Framework.

Following community engagement on the Draft UDF, we will review the feedback, make changes if required, and present the

draft UDF to Council for adoption together with an amendment to the Ballarat Planning Scheme that will include a Design and Development Overlay (or similar planning control) that sets out building heights and design guidance for future development within the CBD.

City of Ballarat will then seek authorisation to prepare and exhibit a planning scheme amendment and formal exhibition will follow.

Expected timeframe for community engagement: from October 2026



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All information correct at time of publication.