

# Glen Eira Neighbourhood Character Assessment

## Landscape Character Review

### Final

Prepared for City of Glen Eira

# Quality Assurance

## Glen Eira Neighbourhood Character Assessment

Landscape Character Review

Final

Project Number

321-0185-RP10

### Revisions

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Issue	Date	Description	Prepared By	Reviewed By	Project Principal
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# 1 BACKGROUND

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## 1.1 Introduction

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The current Neighbourhood Character Assessment Project builds on the Glen Eira Neighbourhood Character Review 2006 (2014 Update) and considers relevant planning policies and strategies, including the City Plan 2020 and Social and Affordable Housing Strategy.

The expectation for the **Neighbourhood Character Assessment** is to:

- Provide an up-to-date review of the character of neighbourhoods throughout the municipality
- Identify preferred character statements to inform new residential zone schedules

The **Residential Area Landscape Character Assessment** will provide a high-level assessment of the landscape character elements and design drivers that contribute to the overall Neighbourhood Character Assessment and preferred character statements.

## 1.2 Objectives

The landscape character assessment will:

- Establish a framework of thinking about landscape character and landscape systems within urban settings and the role that those systems or design qualities potentially play within changing residential settings
- Use the character area boundaries established by the revised Neighbourhood Character Assessment to provide a high-level assessment of existing landscape themes
- Identify new design drivers and landscape character objectives that should apply to the revised Neighbourhood Character Types and Areas
- Provide preferred landscape character statements and design requirements for proposed Residential Character Areas



## 2 POLICY ANALYSIS

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### 2.1 Strategic policy context

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Residential landscape character is one part of a wider network of landscape and environmental assets within the City of Glen Eira. Each residential setting will form part of a resident's or visitor's visual experience of that place, but each setting will not be seen in isolation; they will be seen as part of a wider urban landscape.

The City of Glen Eira has a series of policies that deal with the wider framework of thinking around the design and management of landscape and environment across the municipality.

#### 2.1.1 Glen Eira Draft Urban Forest Strategy (June 2021) (edited extract)

*Glen Eira houses around 50,000 street and 11,000 park trees, which represents a relatively low level of tree canopy cover at only 12.52% which is currently being lost at a rate of 0.2%. The existing low level of tree canopy cover is due to the highly urbanised landscape within Glen Eira that leaves very little room for large canopy trees to grow. Added to this, urban development as well as large State Government infrastructure projects have contributed to tree removal, on public and private land.*

*Currently Glen Eira plants more trees on Council managed land, eg. parks and streets than removing and yet tree canopy cover is still declining. This is likely due to a number of factors such as:*

- 1. Large-canopied trees are removed and replaced with juvenile trees that are yet to reach full canopy.*
- 2. An absence of a robust tree protection policy and framework.*
- 3. The ever-increasing lack of space to plant trees.*
- 4. Changing face of the City through multi-unit dwelling developments.*

*Further to this, the public street and park tree populations show a level of fragility in their diversity, opening them up to risks such as climate change, pest and disease incursions and large-scale loss as trees of the same age all reach the end of their useful lives at the same time.*

*While Council plays a critical role in managing the public urban forest, residents, property owners and other agencies also play an important role in protecting and enhancing vegetation cover on private land. This is especially important because more than 90 per cent of Glen Eira's urban area is privately owned. Part of the Urban Forest Strategy is to engage with the community to protect existing vegetation and increase the tree canopy cover on private allotments.*

*Given the constrained nature of the urban fabric, developers and project managers require more innovative design solutions to allow vegetation to be planted more easily eg. tree pits; green walls and green roofs; structural cells; and soils.*

#### **Vision**

*The City of Glen Eira's urban forest will be green, resilient and healthy creating a liveable and sustainable city for current and future generations where trees and vegetation are a core element.*

#### **Objectives**

*The key objectives to be achieved by this Urban Forest Strategy, in-line with Living Melbourne and based on the key recommendations, are:*

- 1. **Maintain and protect** Glen Eira's urban forest — public and private.*
- 2. **Grow** the future urban forest through designed solutions for trees and innovative green infrastructure on public and private land.*
- 3. **Adapt** the City to climate change and reduce urban heat impacts.*
- 4. **Embed** leading practice urban forest management into Council's decision-making processes.*

5. **Engage and collaborate** across sectors with the community, developers and other agencies.
6. **Monitor and evaluate** the progress of the urban forest, including progress towards targets.

### **Tree Canopy Targets**

By 2040, the following targets will be achieved:

- Tree canopy cover over the whole municipality will be increased from 12.5 per cent to 14 per cent.
- Tree canopy cover over roads and streets will increase from 15.6 per cent to 18 per cent.
- Tree canopy cover in parklands will increase from 14 per cent to 17 per cent.
- No one species will represent more than 10 per cent of the public urban tree population.

### **Species diversity**

Glen Eira's street tree population contains more than 300 different tree species yet almost 60 per cent of the population consists of only 10 species. The 10 most dominant species are:

*Lophostemon confertus*, the Queensland brushbox is Glen Eira's most commonly planted street tree. Industry experts suggest no one species should represent more than 5–10% of the population (City of Melbourne, 2011)

(Richards, 1993) so at nearly 20%, it is overly dominant. This dominance also causes concern as the Brushbox has shown signs of poor performance in periods of extended low rainfall and heat. Council should avoid planting any new *Lophostemons* as part of its annual tree planting program.

Glen Eira's park tree species diversity profile is somewhat different to its streets. There is a much greater diversity of species, with the top 20 species making up only 20% of the park population. The park trees show a clear bias towards Australian native species. This reflects Council's intended character for its parks towards more native themes. This has the added benefit of providing much greater urban biodiversity benefits as well.

### **Life expectancy**

Thirteen per cent of street trees are likely to reach the end of their useful lives within the next decade. However, more alarmingly, 41 per cent of street trees are likely to reach the end of their useful lives in the decade between 2030 and 2040.

37 per cent of Glen Eira's park trees are likely to reach the end of their useful lives within a very short time frame of five years. There are a large variety of species within this category, though *Acacia implexa* make up 10 per cent of this figure. A further eight per cent are likely to require removal and replacement within a 10-year period.

### **Planting opportunities**

There are only approximately 1,900 vacant street tree sites left across Glen Eira meaning that after 2020, there will be very few easy spaces to plant trees. Most tree planting will be renewal planting post-tree removals. That said, there are other opportunities to plant trees, however they are in harder, more space constrained environments, requiring more highly designed and engineered solutions for tree planting. Council has started to install tree pits in footpaths as a response to this, eg. Salisbury Street, Caulfield North.

The effects of climate change and densification can be moderated with appropriate tree and vegetation plantings. New plantings also create the opportunity to address Glen Eira's lack of biodiversity to encourage native fauna to revisit the city. In a developed city such as Glen Eira consideration must be given to the character of existing parklands and streetscapes to preserve the heritage that the existing vegetation portrays. The urban forest should reflect what will deliver the best long-term outcomes in a sustainable and healthy manner and not be so much about the vegetation origins.

### **A Coordinated regional response**

This Strategy has been developed following Council's formal commitment to Living Melbourne:

**Our metropolitan urban forest in 2019.** *Living Melbourne* is a regional collaboration between 32 of Melbourne's metropolitan councils and other agencies to work towards regional cross-jurisdictional urban forest outcomes that create

healthier people, abundant nature and more natural infrastructure. The framework sets a series of key actions for all agencies to follow. These include:

1. *Protect, restore species habitat and enhance connectivity.*
2. *Set targets and track progress.*
3. *Scale up greening in the private realm.*
4. *Collaborate across sectors and regions.*
5. *Build a toolkit of resources to underpin implementation.*
6. *Fund the protection and enhancement of the urban forest.*

Living Melbourne also recommended a series of targets for the inner eastern suburbs collectively including Stonnington, Bayside, Boroondara and Glen Eira as follows:

- *24 per cent tree canopy cover by 2030.*
- *27 per cent tree canopy cover by 2040.*
- *30 per cent tree canopy cover by 2050.*

This Urban Forest Strategy provides the umbrella document for:

- *Biodiversity Implementation Plan*
- *Tree Removal Policy*
- *Tree Management Guidelines*
- *Nature Strip Planting Guidelines*
- *Street Design Guidelines*

### **Key policy recommendations**

- *Set urban forest targets: Council must set key urban forest targets that are aligned with the Living Melbourne Strategy, but suited to local conditions and governance.*
- *Protect the existing urban forest: Glen Eira has a sparsity of tree canopy cover and so it is imperative that Council protects public and private trees from unnecessary removal using consistent approaches through appropriate mechanisms such as the planning scheme and local laws.*
- *Scale up greening in the private realm: utilise the current planning scheme review to explore potential mechanisms that will protect existing private vegetation cover but also mandate the planting of new trees and vegetation in all types of developments.*
- *Maintain and manage public tree health to extend the life and benefits of existing street and park trees.*
- *Seek new opportunities for planting: embed innovative approaches to tree planting and the use of green infrastructure and water sensitive urban design in constrained environments and partner with other landholders to encourage canopy protection and enhancement on their land.*
- *Incentivise the community to protect and plant the future urban forest, including the encouragement of landholders to plant trees and vegetation in their front yards and on nature strips to improve local urban biodiversity.*

### **2.1.2 Glen Eira Planning Scheme**

#### **Tree protection — private trees**

Current planning requirements as per Glen Eira Planning Scheme that relate to trees are as follows:

#### **Section 21.04 Housing and Residential Development:**

To improve and protect the liveability, neighbourhood character and amenity of Glen Eira:

- *ensure that gardens and trees are incorporated into new residential development; and*
- *encourage the retention of existing vegetation, in particular vegetation and trees which contribute to the City's tree canopy.*

### ***Section 22.08 Minimal Change Area Policy***

*The Minimal Change Area Policy applies to all the Neighbourhood Residential Zone land, which is approximately 70% of the municipality. It establishes two main neighbourhood character types, "Garden Suburban" and "Inner Urban". Rather than providing preferred neighbourhood character statements, the policy provides objectives, policies and decision guidelines to cover all minimal change areas and specific character elements of development.*

*The policy seeks to protect existing neighbourhood character types including the planting of street trees and the protection of substantial private trees.*

*It is a policy to ensure:*

- *To protect the low density, vegetated character of minimal change areas.*
- *To promote predominantly single dwellings and two dwelling developments.*
- *To maintain the predominant housing type of single dwellings with some increases in the number of multi dwelling developments over time.*
- *To promote a diversity of dwelling layouts and sizes.*
- *To ensure that the siting and design of new residential development takes account of its interface with existing residential development on adjoining sites.*
- *To ensure that the design of new residential development is sensitive to and respectful of the scale of existing residential development on adjoining sites.*
- *The garden character of Glen Eira is maintained by providing front yard garden space which can support canopy tree planting*
- *That new developments are designed to retain healthy and valued vegetation and street trees*
- *That the design and siting of residential developments do not cause adverse effects on the trees of neighbouring properties*
- *That where significant trees have been removed in the 12 months prior to the application being made, that trees advanced in growth that will mature to a similar size are planted in a similar location; and*
- *The provision of private open space areas that are of a sufficient size and width to enable the retention of existing significant trees and other vegetation and allow for the planting of new canopy trees.*

### ***Section 42.03 Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO)***

*A permit is required to remove, destroy or lop trees if specified in a schedule to this overlay. This does not apply to:*

- *the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation in accordance with a native vegetation precinct plan specified in the schedule to Clause 52.16.*

### ***Section 43.05 Neighbourhood Character Overlay (NCO)***

*A permit is required to remove, destroy or lop trees if specified in a schedule to this overlay. This does not apply:*

- *to a tree that is less than five metres in height or has a trunk circumference of less than 0.5 metre measured one metre above ground level*
- *to any action which is necessary to keep the whole or any part of a tree clear of an electric line provided the action is carried out in accordance with a code of practice prepared under Section 86 of the Electricity Safety Act 1998*
- *if the tree presents an immediate risk of personal injury or damage to property; and*
- *if the removal, destruction or lopping of the tree is necessary for emergency access and emergency works by a public authority or municipal council.*

### ***Schedule 1 to the Vegetation Protection Overlay (VPO1)***

*This VPO covers only Boyd Park and extends from Wilson Avenue to the new Hughesdale Station. A permit is required to remove, destroy or lop any vegetation of the following indigenous plant species:*

- *Eucalyptus camaldulensis (River red gum)*

- *Eucalyptus ovata* (Swamp gum)

*As part of a landscape referral for a building application the existing vegetation is assessed. Generally, only the trees on adjoining land are protected or retained. In particular, where the tree protection zone of the neighbour's tree extends into the building site these trees must be retained and construction can only have minor impact on the rootzone or tree canopy.*

### **Existing planning controls**

#### **Neighbourhood character overlay (NCO)**

*There are 17 Neighbourhood Character Overlays applying across the NRZ and GRZ areas. These precincts have been identified through the 2006 and 2014 neighbourhood character reviews. The review states that for each nominated area of neighbourhood character significance, it was necessary to demonstrate that the area:*

- *Is exemplary, rare or atypical within the context of surrounding residential neighbourhoods*
- *Strongly retains the character of the original or early era(s) of development*
- *Shows particular consistency in terms of building siting and design or landscape quality*
- *Is under threat from future development*

#### **Heritage overlay (HO)**

*A significant number of Heritage Overlays apply to NRZ and GRZ land within Glen Eira. These overlays apply to both individual sites and identified areas.*

*The Heritage Overlay identifies sites which should be given particular consideration for their heritage values when a planning application is being assessed for use and/or development.*

### **2.1.3 Implications for the 2021 Neighbourhood Character Study**

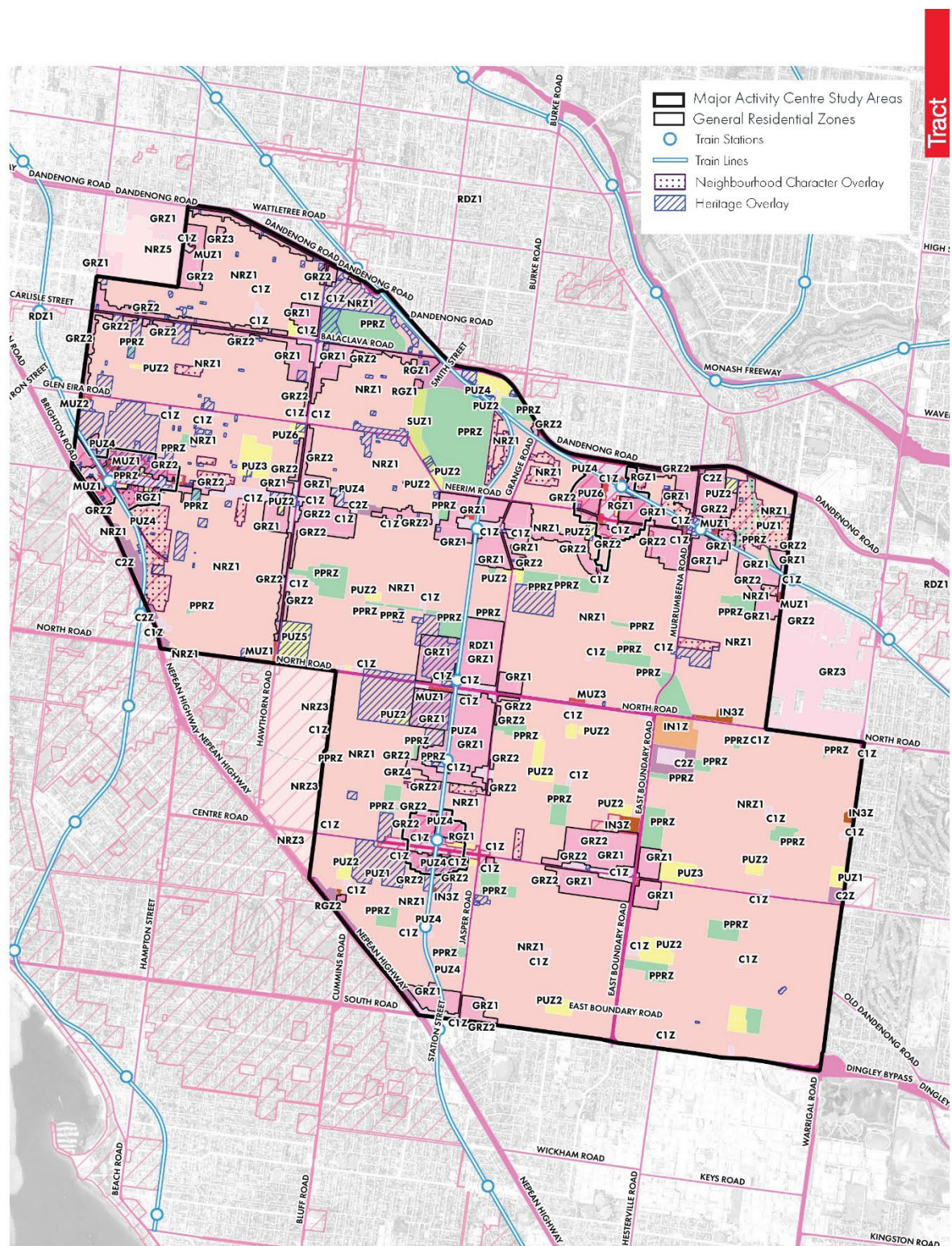
1. Ongoing urban redevelopment is potentially resulting in a loss of tree canopy cover which suggests that current planning policies and development controls do not readily support maintenance of current canopy levels or an increase in tree canopy coverage to meet new policy objectives.
2. Development, under current policy, may maintain a capacity for 'planting' but significantly reduce the potential for large tree planting which results in better canopy cover and higher ecological and amenity values.
3. As more than 90% of the Glen Eira urban area is privately owned, the greatest potential gains to canopy coverage and climate change response are likely to be achieved through changes to the private realm, rather than from existing public space, using existing planting patterns and standards.
4. Urban forestry targets currently relate to public land only.
5. Limited species diversity potentially creates vulnerabilities related to disease, climate change and large-scale tree senescence within short time frames. The general direction of future planting is likely to be based on a more robust system of planting with greater species diversity (no single species representing >10% of the total).
6. Climate change will put existing planting at risk, and this will require an active response involving the selection of new species, and potentially the replacement of a number of existing tree species. This will create a short to medium term impact on the existing landscape character.
7. In terms of life expectancy, not including the replacement of climate inappropriate species, reports indicate that 54% of street trees could require replacement within the next 18 – 20 years and 45% of Glen Eira's park trees are likely to reach the end of their useful lives and require removal and replacement within a 10-year period. This could result in a major shift in the style and appearance of the public landscape. The whole Glen Eira landscape is likely to undergo a noticeable change within the next 20 years. This also means that the existing residential character is potentially less influential than future character.

8. There is a disparity between the tree canopy targets established within the *Living Melbourne* program and the tree canopy targets identified for the Glen Eira public realm. The only way that the Living Melbourne targets can be achieved is by:
  - An increase in the area of public realm available for tree planting (unlikely)
  - A new approach to planting within the public realm, such as in-pavement planting using structural soils or changes to tree planting densities within nature strips
  - New requirements or incentives for tree retention and additional tree planting within the private realm
9. Landscape features such as green walls, balcony gardens and green roofs may be useful decorative landscape features, but they do not substitute for large tree planting or larger scale garden spaces that relate to the development form and help to integrate the private and public realm. These decorative features are not interchangeable landscape outcomes with equal benefits.
10. Using single species avenues in order to achieve a landscape 'character' may still be appropriate, but this approach will need to be considered within the context of a wider range of environmental and climate change objectives. The visual character and amenity provided by large trees may be considered in the future to be a more important factor than visual uniformity / identity resulting from single species avenue planting.
11. Tree protection measures within the Glen Eira Planning Scheme are typical of urban development, but these measures, as the current canopy loss statistics suggest, do not guarantee tree retention. The *Section 22.08 Minimal Change Area Policy* appears to provide the clearest performance-based measure that is based on visual performance criteria and **landscape outcomes**.
12. There is a need for community education and a coordinated design response from both public and private landowners. Guidelines and design objectives should apply to precincts and to public and private landscape settings within the precinct.
13. The concept of 'Neighbourhood Character Type' assumes a relationship between the original development period and the architectural and landscape qualities of the development. This is the basis of the general 'Garden Suburban' or 'Inner Urban' design typologies.









**Figure 2 Planning Scheme Zones & Overlays** (Source: Tract and VicMap)



## 3 THE EXISTING GLEN EIRA LANDSCAPE

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### 3.1 Landscape character

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**Landscape Character** is a descriptive term that is typically derived from an analysis of a combination of physical factors and relationships, typically including the following:

- Landform
- Vegetation type and vegetation form
- Water form
- Land use
- Cultural landscape association

Architectural style and built form may not form a specific component of landscape character, but inevitably these design qualities become an important component of the overall visual character of a place and define spatial qualities and view characteristics that influence landscape character.

The DELWP Planning Practice Note 43: Understanding Neighbourhood Character (2018) defines the key to understanding **character** as 'being able to describe how the features of an area come together to give that area its own particular character. Breaking up character into discrete features and characteristics misses out on the relationships between these features and characteristics. Understanding how these relationships physically appear on the ground is usually the most important aspect in establishing the character of the area'.

Landscape Character contributes to Neighbourhood Character, even to the point of visual dominance, but does not exclusively define Neighbourhood Character.

### 3.2 Landform

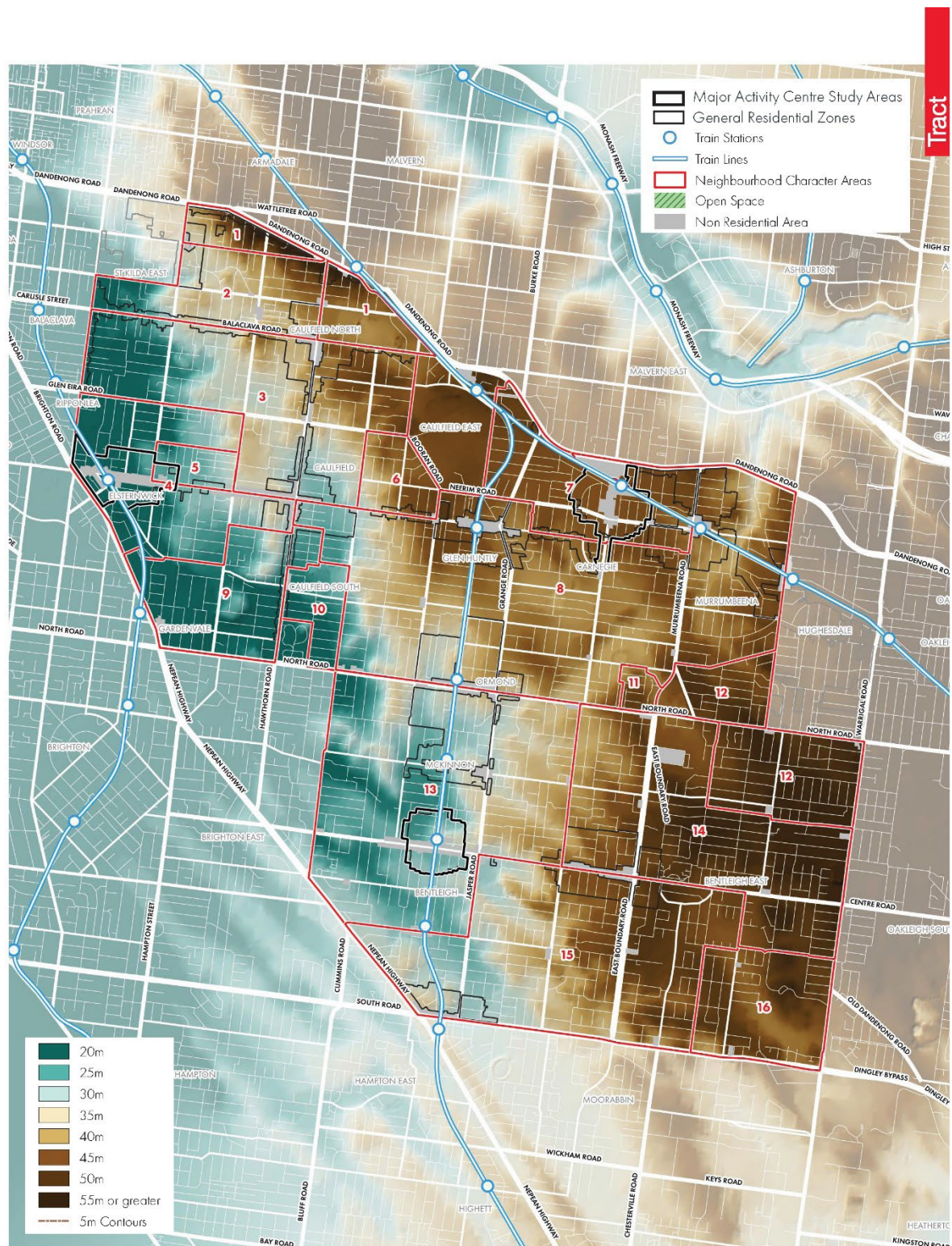
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Topography may influence road alignments, the pattern of subdivision or development and can contribute to the sense of place by providing areas of visual seclusion or by controlling the pattern of viewing across a landscape. Landform can act to visually exaggerate other development or landscape features.

Glen Eira's topography is based on an ancient dune landscape with a north-west to south-east landform orientation. These surface forms combine with a gentle change in elevation from north-east to south-west. Landform variations are more prominent closer to the Bay, but original landform features have been extensively modified over time and elevation changes are subtle and mainly imperceptible.

Caulfield East, Glenhuntly, Carnegie and Murrumbeena are conspicuously flat areas and anecdotal evidence suggests that these areas may have been part of a pre-settlement swamp landscape.

The overall perception of Glen Eira is of a relatively flat landscape where landform is not a dominant or defining feature. With the exception of one small creek tributary in the north east corner of the municipality, there are no defined watercourses within the study area.



Drawing Title

Project Name

## Topographical Elevation

## Glen Eira Neighbourhood Character Assessment

Drawing No.

Revision

Date

Drawn

Checked

Project Principal

Scale

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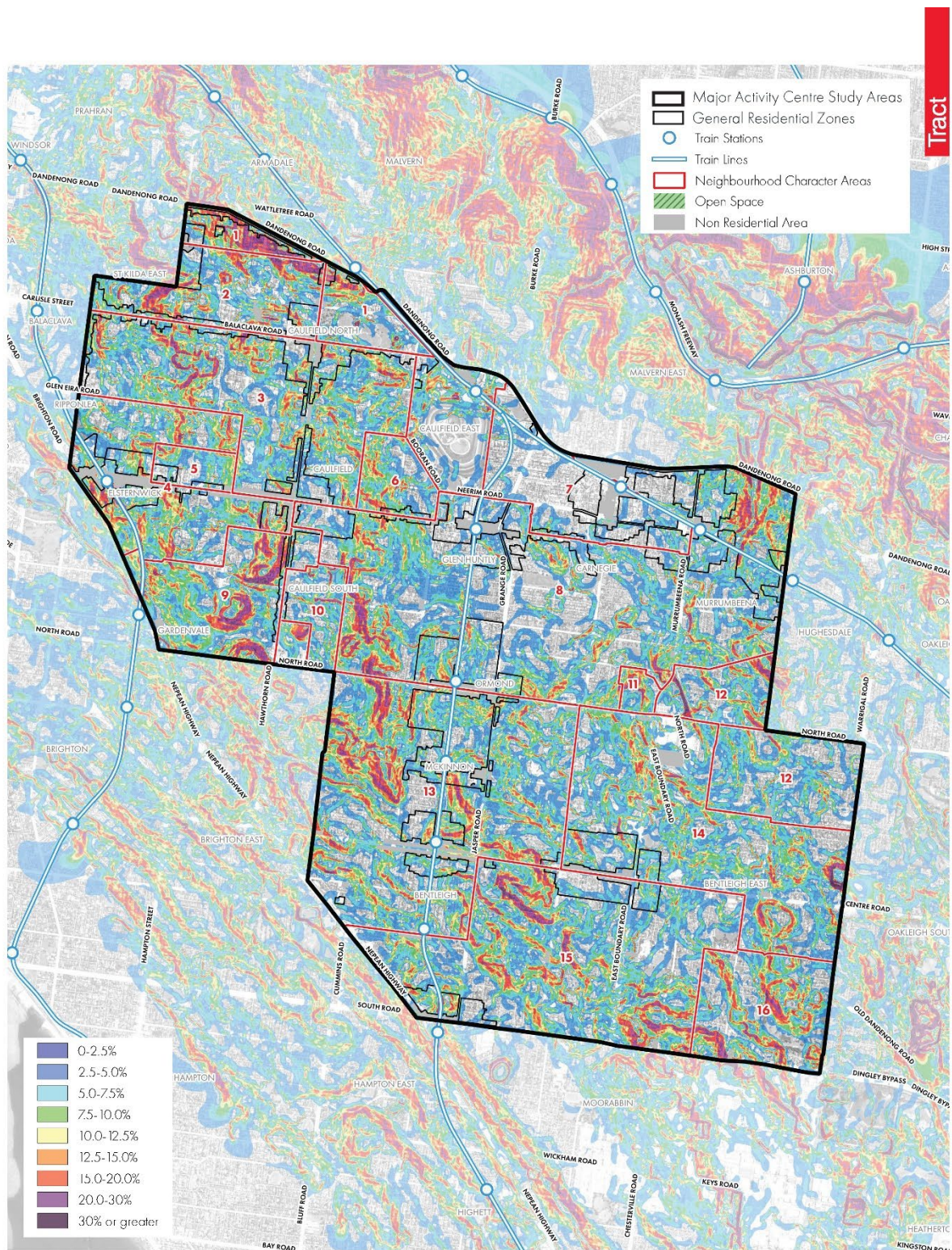
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Figure 3 Topography and Elevation (Source: Tract and VicMap)





Drawing Title

Project Name

## Slope Analysis

## Glen Eira Neighbourhood Character Assessment

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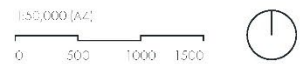


Figure 4 Slope Analysis (Source: Tract and VicMap)



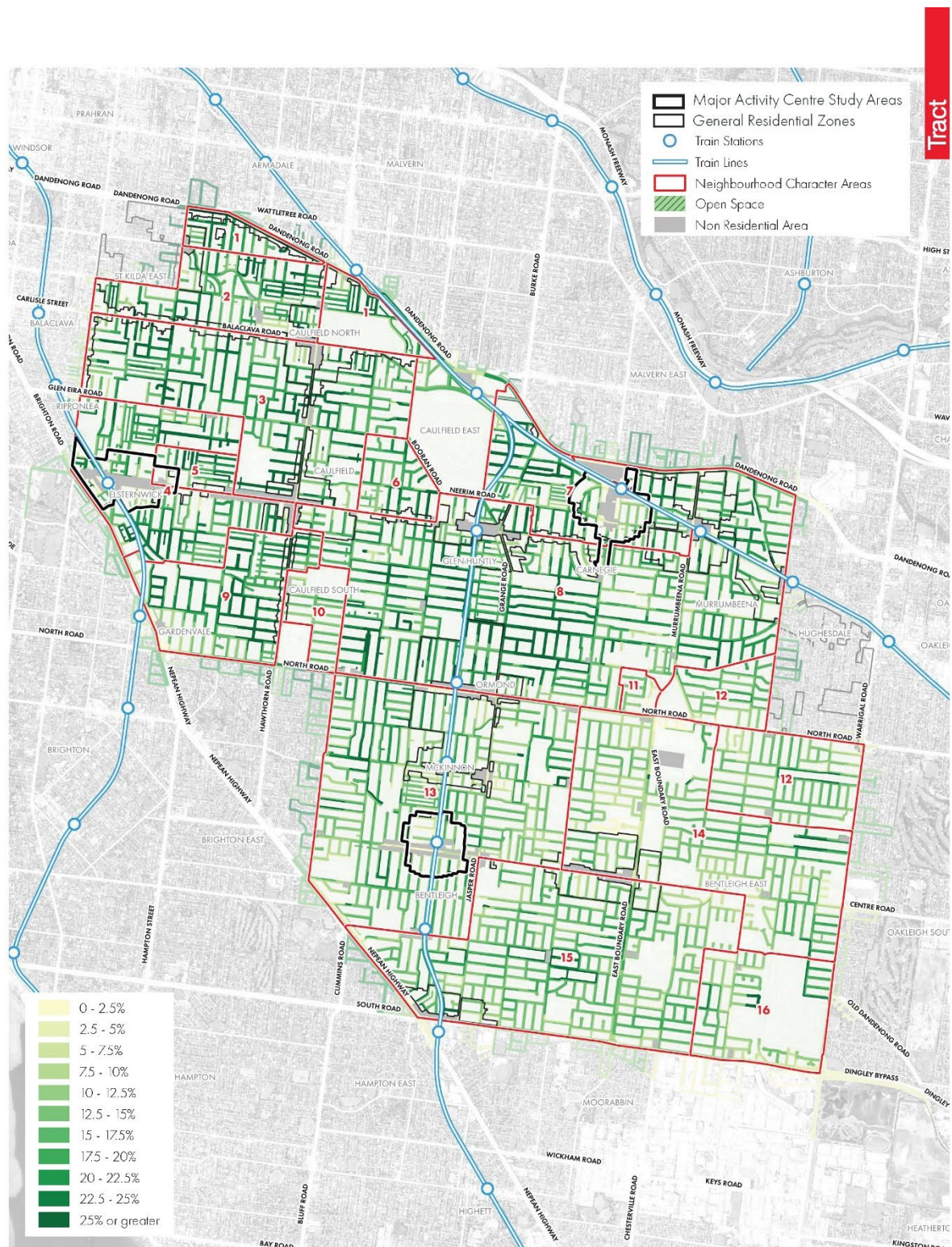
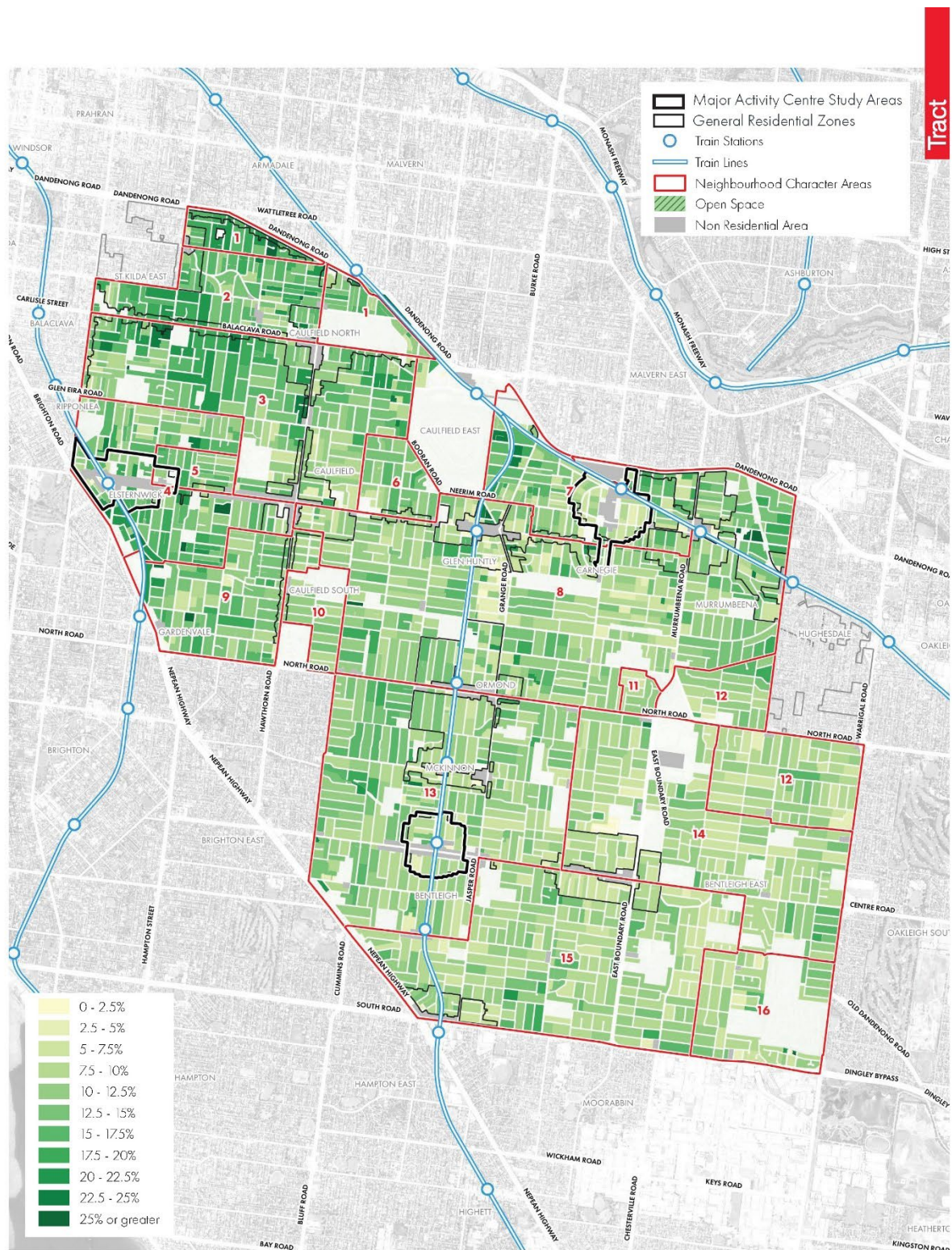


Figure 5 Tree Cover within Road Reserves (Source: Tract and Glen Eira City Council)





Drawing Title

Project Name

### Tree Cover - within Residential Street Blocks

### Glen Eira Neighbourhood Character Assessment

Drawing No.

Revision

Date

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Project Principal

Scale

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**Figure 6** Tree Cover within Residential Street Blocks (Source: Tract and Glen Eira City Council)

### 3.3 Tree cover

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Tree canopy cover (Figures 5 & 6) quantifies benefits such as the amount of shade provision, stormwater interception and carbon storage as well as providing a general indicator of the amenity and neighbourhood character benefits related to tree planting. These analysis diagrams do not evaluate the number of trees, particular species or their physical maturity and lifespan; therefore the actual situation may have a higher or lower long-term potential than is currently indicated by the level of canopy cover.

The Local Government area of Glen Eira has an overall tree canopy cover of 12.52 per cent as of 2018, based on data mapping provided by the Victorian State Government Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP).

#### *Tree cover within road reserves*

This mapping analyses the percentage of tree cover within streetscapes across Glen Eira. Tree cover intensifies in the north-western areas of Glen Eira, particularly in Ormond, Elsternwick, Caulfield South, Caulfield and Caulfield North areas where coverage is between 20% to 25%. This reflects the earlier establishment of these residential areas.

The mapping shows the street tree cover in the south-eastern suburbs of Bentleigh, Bentleigh East and McKinnon are typically lower, at around 10% or below. This figure may however indicate a lack of plant maturity rather than overall tree quantities.

Within the context of this study, tree planting potential is as valuable in the long term as existing tree cover.

#### *Tree cover on residential lots*

Mapping analyses the percentage of tree cover within street blocks. Tree cover on residential properties is an indicator of the presence of gardens that are large enough to support trees which is an indicator of development style (and period) and potentially, of visual amenity within those settings.

Similar to street tree cover, south-eastern suburbs such as Bentleigh and Bentleigh East have a lower tree cover, typically between 5% to 10%. There are multiple influencing factors, including the later establishment of these suburbs and less established trees, as well as extensive hard surfaces and large driveways which are more common in these areas.

Tree cover intensifies in the northern and north-western areas of Glen Eira, particularly in Ormond, Elsternwick, Caulfield South, Caulfield and Caulfield North where coverage is between 15% to 20%. This is likely to reflect earlier periods of development, larger lot sizes and different development styles.

### 3.4 Tree and shrub cover

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The DELWP dataset used by Council for its Urban Forest Strategy (Figure 7) provides spatial distribution of shrub and tree cover combined to provide the level of overall vegetation cover for the municipality. By including both trees and shrubs, the map provides a clearer picture of site permeability – that is the percentage of land not covered by hard surfaces – and the existing visual impact of gardens and established street trees.

Similar to the other tree cover measures, there is a clear shift in planting intensity from the denser north-west to south-east with its significantly lower level of shrub and tree cover.

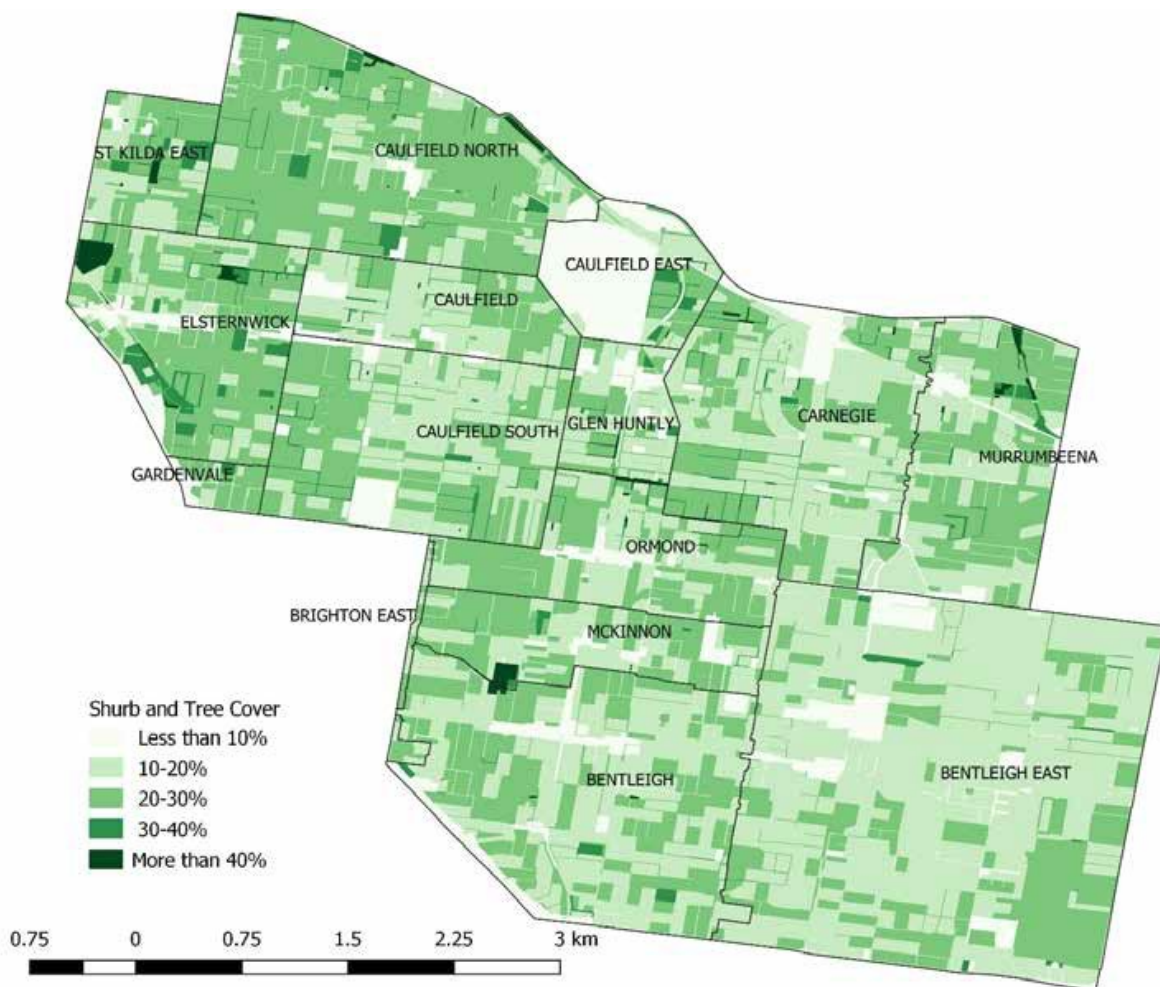
Council data indicates that there are many areas across Glen Eira that record a tree canopy cover of 10 per cent or less. Bentleigh East and Bentleigh have greater proportions of land area that contain 10 per cent tree canopy cover or less than other suburbs. The dark green block in Elsternwick is the well treed Rippon Lea Estate and the linear area of higher tree canopy cover in Murrumbeena is Boyd Park and the Outer Circle Linear Railway Park.

The commercial/retail areas along main transport routes also show very low levels of tree and shrub cover, eg. Glenhuntly Road Elsternwick and Caulfield; Centre Road, Bentleigh; North Road, Ormond and around the Murrumbeena Railway Station. These areas are highly urbanised and there is competition for space amongst utilities and services, leaving very little room for trees and shrubs.

Within shopping centre precincts where there are significant physical constraints created by shop verandas and by underground services. Council plants 'standard' Ficus in these situations. This approach provides a token decorative landscape gesture, but does not contribute to tree canopy cover, shade or amenity values.

Caulfield East contains the Caulfield Racetrack which is predominantly grass with very little shrub and tree cover.





(Source: Shrub and Tree cover per mesh block for the LGA of Glen Eira. Source: Vegetation\_Cover\_2018, Spatial Datamart, DELWP, 2020.)

**Figure 7** Combined Shrub & Tree Cover – From p 13 Glen Eira Draft Urban Forest Strategy

### 3.5 Development form and land use pattern

Development and land use patterns can reflect a range of historical factors including landform, surface drainage constraints, main transport routes and crossing points, major institutional landholdings etc. Some of these factors may influence Landscape Character but all will influence Neighbourhood Character as a result of subdivision patterns.

Mapping reveals a pattern of architectural styles through their construction periods across the municipality. These are represented by the six Neighbourhood Character Types described in Figure 11 as a combination of 'Inner Urban' and 'Garden Suburban' character types.

There is a clear development shift from earlier Victorian, Federation and Edwardian era developments in the north-west to more recent interwar and post-war development in the south-east. Each of these development periods is associated with a subdivision and dominant architectural styles, along with a specific relationship to garden development. The relationship between development form and landscape form is important and provides a foundation for any understanding of current or future landscape character and place specific quality.

Across the entire municipality, there has been significant redevelopment from the Post-war period through to recent. This has come in many forms including single dwellings, duplex dwellings, walk-up apartments and more recent four storey apartment developments.

In terms of overall development form, Glen Eira has a range of characteristic features:

- The city has some small place specific variations in subdivision pattern and road alignment, but overwhelmingly the city is defined by a grid-based development pattern with similar road widths. This has resulted in large areas of similar development styles and design responses. Differences between specific areas (such as Neighbourhood Character Areas) can be visually subtle and depend more on development type. Landscape character is not necessarily clearly defined or linked to single Neighbourhood Character Areas.
- The constant grid and flat landform tend to obscure place differences. Large tree canopies and tree groups can have a significant visual effect in flat landscapes with potentially repetitive development forms.
- There are no remnant environmental features and no obvious link between park and street landscapes or the natural environment. The landscape of the city is primarily a designed landscape that must convey all environmental, place and community meanings.
- Public open spaces are relatively small and shaped by development patterns rather than site specific environmental factors or remnant features. These open space landscapes are 'contained' within development settings, rather than development appearing to be shaped by landscape. There are few linear parks or open spaces that link places. Residential development is visually dominant.
- Glen Eira doesn't have a dominant development focus or 'town centre'. It has grown as a series of suburbs along major travel routes and intersections. Arterial roads that link to other suburbs (beyond Glen Eira) generally take on a more dominant civic and commercial role and become the major corridors through which Glen Eira is seen by residents and visitors.

### 3.6 Pattern of viewing

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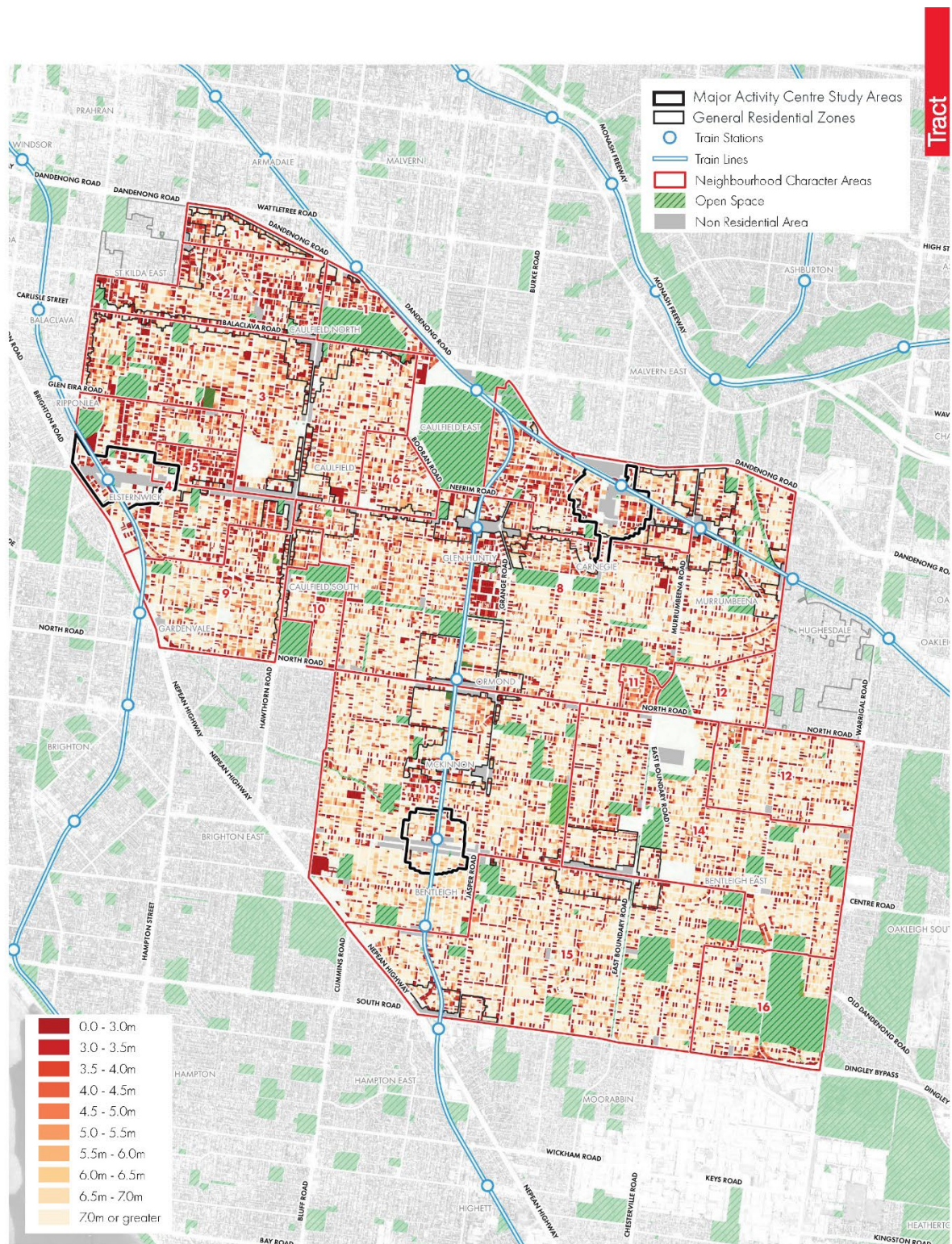
The relatively flat landscape and lack of natural environmental features generally limit the nature of the viewing experience to car or pedestrian based views, although the recent Skyrail corridor development has changed the pattern of viewing in those areas.

This is a landscape with no real 'iconic' views, but rather a pattern of viewing based on main road travel routes.

In terms of landscape character and quality:

- The lack of natural features and irregularities in the development pattern results in a more even distribution of key viewing corridors – road and rail.
- Viewing corridors tend to be established as a result of main roads and rail crossing points. These particularly apply to arterial roads that link to other places. These roads become the major entry points and the ways that most people see Glen Eira. Two dominant viewing corridors are Nepean Highway and the Dandenong Rail Line, but these sit at the edges of the city. This is a city that is likely to have a more even distribution of major viewing corridors than most municipalities.
- There is no independent off-road bike and pedestrian path system, with the exception of the new Skyrail path system between Noble Park and Caulfield. Viewing is almost entirely road and footpath based. Roads are a dominant visual structure. Perceptions of adjoining residential development is often limited by main road commercial development.
- The dominance of major road corridors and the lack of natural features or dominant / connected park features means that landscape scale, visual legibility, place identity and place-based meaning – the foundations of landscape character and neighbourhood character – must primarily be created or supported within road corridor environments, in association with private gardens and small parks. This is a significant challenge for what are largely standard road reserves with minimal landscape provision and significant constraints in the form of intensive commercial development and utility services.





Drawing Title

Project Name

## Median Street Setback by Property

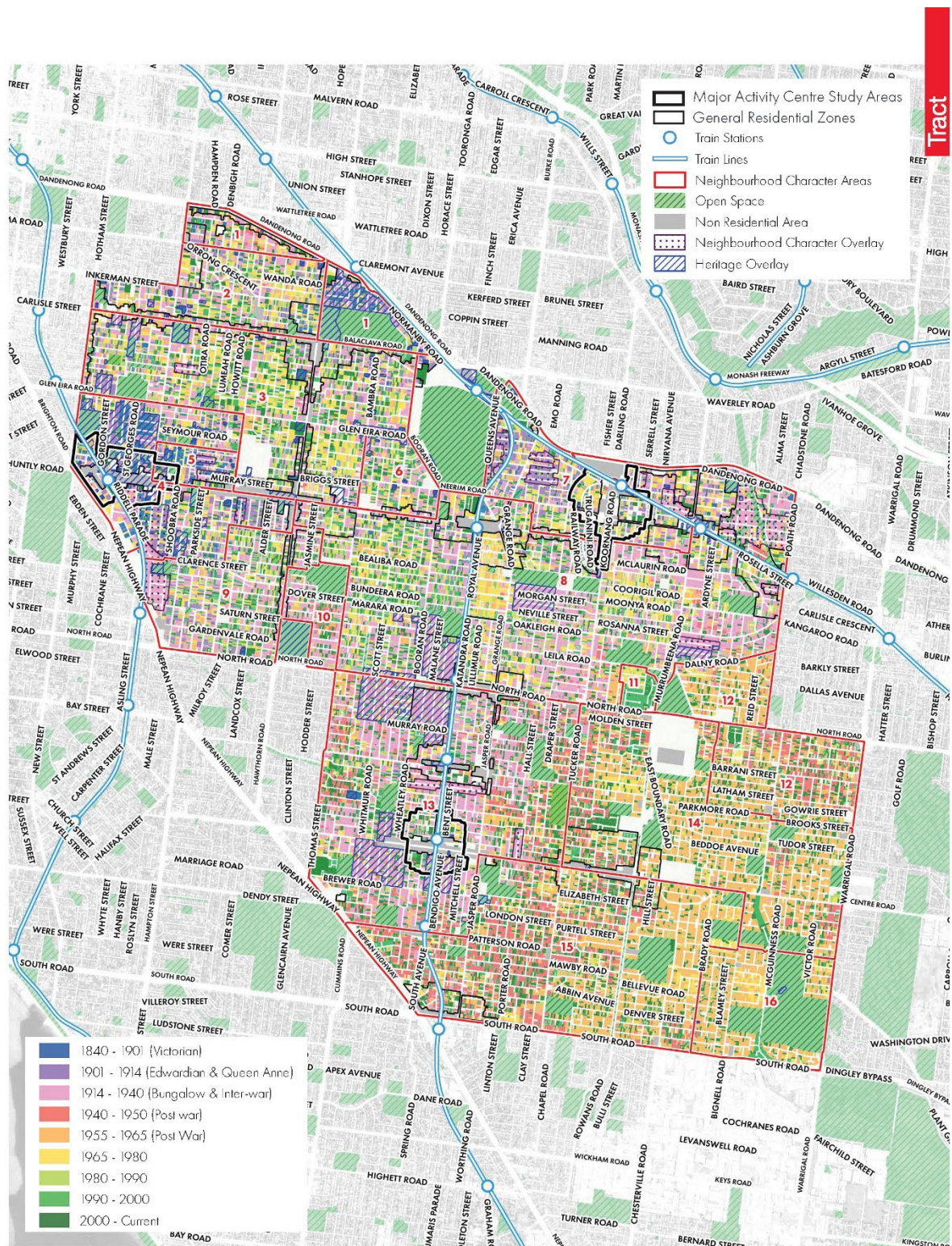
## Glen Eira Neighbourhood Character Assessment

Drawing No.	Revision	Date	Drawn	Checked	Project Principal	Scale
321.0185.U.01.DR01	00	11.06.2021	KXS	MN	MN	1:50,000 (A4)



**Figure 8** Median Street Setback by Property (Source: Tract and Glen Eira City Council)





Drawing Title

Project Name

## Dwelling Year by Property

## Glen Eira Neighbourhood Character Assessment

Drawing No.

Revision

Date

Drawn

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Project Principal

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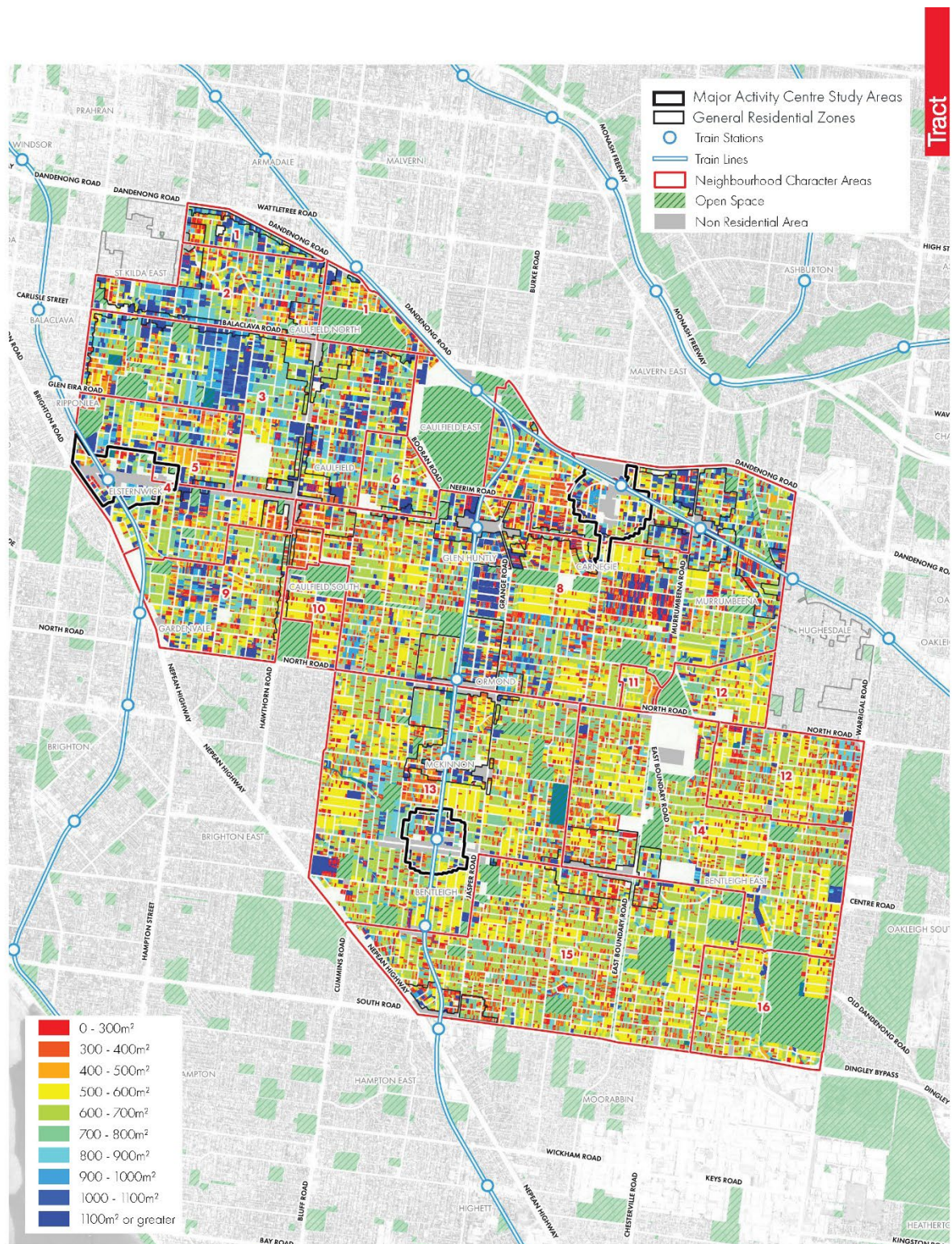
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Figure 9 Dwelling Year by Property (Source: Tract and Glen Eira City Council)





Drawing Title

Project Name

## Lot Size by Property

## Glen Eira Neighbourhood Character Assessment

Drawing No.

Revision

Date

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Project Principal

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321.0185.U.01.DR01

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Figure 10 Lot Size by Property (Source: Tract and Glen Eira City Council)

## 4 NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER / LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

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### 4.1 Definition of Neighbourhood Character

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The Glen Eira Neighbourhood Character Review – 2014 update (Planisphere) defines ‘neighbourhood character’ in the following terms:

*Neighbourhood character is the qualitative interplay of built form, vegetation and topographic characteristics, in both the private and public domains, that make one place different from another. (P7)*

Neighbourhood character is essentially the combination of the public and private realms. Every property, public place or piece of infrastructure will make a contribution, although that individual contribution may vary. It is the cumulative impact of all these contributions that establishes neighbourhood character.

**Landscape Character** in this context is a contributing element that could include any combination or expression of vegetation and topography. The specific design form is less important than:

- The overall visual presence of landscape within the neighbourhood, either as public landscape (streets and parks), or as a combination of public and private landscapes
- The specific ‘qualitative interplay’ between landscape and built form and the way in which both elements collectively represent a development ‘character’.

### 4.2 Key landscape character design drivers

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The following section identifies key factors that are likely to influence landscape character and the perception of landscape quality over the long term.

#### The existing landscape relies heavily on the ‘designed’ landscape

- The Glen Eira landscape is predominately a simple road based public landscape with a relatively small number of parks and remnant natural features. Street landscapes are typically based on regular avenue planting. Subdivision patterns tend to be grid based and repetitive within suburbs.

This is a heavily designed and controlled landscape. Private landscapes are a part of the structured street landscape. Development changes, including lot amalgamation and higher density development forms, can be visually obvious. Street landscapes in isolation, typically have only a limited capacity to absorb visual changes in the private realm before the existing landscape character is changed.

#### The effects of climate change and landscape change

- Climate change and environmental sustainability initiatives that Council already support will generate new landscape requirements from both private and public landscapes, to support biodiversity, climate appropriate species selection and higher amenity standards (shade). Existing public and private design systems (street tree planting etc) will need to adapt to meet these new requirements. Future design measures may need to consider:
  - Utilising different parts of the public realm for planting that potentially use different approaches to planting. This will change the visual character of the city and particular precincts and change the landscape design agenda in both public and private landscapes.
  - Mandate tree planting outcomes within private development.
- The City has a relatively low level of tree species diversity and a species range which may not be suited to the predicted climate change scenarios. This will make the system of street and park planting vulnerable to rapid change, disease, pests or climate effects. A more species diverse and climate suitable planting solution will change the look of the city, including the landscape character of existing Neighbourhood Character Areas.



- Tree senescence among common tree species is likely to lead to widespread losses within a relatively short space of time (20 – 30 years). This will create opportunities for new planting but also change the visual character of the city and particular precincts.
- The underlying assumption that new development should 'build on' existing landscape character may need to be re-assessed. New environmental and climate change agendas are likely to fundamentally change landscape needs and aesthetic expectations. Landscape Character will potentially be an even more important component of Neighbourhood Character, but the way in which it is achieved may change.
- Landscape is a dynamic system that changes over time. Trees mature and die. Change is constant. It is as important to retain the potential for landscape development as it is the existing landscape features. In this context, existing canopy cover should not be seen as a template for future landscape works. Landscape potential must be maximised in all settings.

#### **Existing policies & controls may not support future landscape character and environmental performance**

- Existing design systems, development controls or policy settings may not have the potential to meet future landscape and environmental objectives or targets. Existing development controls may establish baseline private open space standards but may not be capable of meeting replacement levels of landscape or future tree planting objectives.
- Landscape policies and development controls must relate to place specific design outcomes related to landscape character, amenity and environmental performance. Landscape space must be designed to achieve specific landscape and visual outcomes and those landscape spaces must be unencumbered by factors such as vehicle access, services, utility compounds, private courtyards, pedestrian paths etc.

#### **Landscape character as a driver of neighbourhood character**

- The terms 'neighbourhood character' and 'landscape character' refer to a specific relationship between a range of design elements and site features. Minimal / generic design standards are unlikely to fully represent place specific design qualities – combinations of design features which represent an historical development style or a specific relationship between building and landscape.
- Landscape character is the collective result of public landscapes (parks, informal open space and street tree planting), along with private landscapes (building settings). The perception of landscape character will be established across a network of places and as a collective result of public and private landscapes. A weak public landscape places more visual focus on built form and the private landscape.
- Neighbourhood Character is typically derived from styles of development related to a period of development. The terms 'Inner Urban' and Garden Suburban' suggest a particular relationship between built form and garden form. Landscape character derives from a combination of design elements and visual factors. For new landscape design to be effective, that is, to establish an appropriate character, it must be capable of establishing:
  - A visual scale that integrates built form with the public realm. Residential development must maintain a 'human scale'. A human scale often relates to the height of large trees and effect of tree canopies.
  - A specific relationship between the design of the landscape and the design of the building.
  - Some capacity for flexibility within the landscape design – a capacity for growth and change over time. Landscape spaces cannot be so small, and the design so tightly prescribed that the landscape cannot change and grow and adapt to the needs of the people who live there.

### **4.3 Future landscape objectives**

Glen Eira is a suburban environment. Its development styles are based on various combinations of building and garden elements and on separated development forms. While the nature of the built form may change, there is an underlying expectation that despite development changes and a level of densification, the city will still be seen as a mainly low-scale Garden Suburban setting with visually prominent private landscapes.

Climate change and other new environmental benchmarks such as biodiversity and canopy cover are driving new and potentially different approaches to landscape design. These changes will potentially make existing landscape design standards and strategies obsolete. As a result of these changes, as well as increasing urban density, neighbourhood character will inevitably change.

The objective of a 'character' based design system is still valid but the means of achieving that outcome is likely to change, and as a result, existing descriptions of neighbourhood character may not be as relevant over the long term.

On that basis, the landscape character and related development control system must enable the following outcomes:

- Residential settings must retain a human (neighbourhood) scale where people feel comfortable and connected to the life of the street and their neighbours. In design terms, that development scale is likely to relate to the height of a large tree (<15m).
- The 'Garden Suburban' development form requires some visual separation of building forms. If that articulated development form is lost, the setting must be seen as a form of 'Inner Urban'. A generous front setback with a substantial garden and provision for large trees would substantially mitigate the loss of side setbacks.
- There must be a specific relationship between the design of buildings and the design of connected landscapes. There must be some visual balance between the two elements, and both must have a specific functional and aesthetic role. External space must not be treated as 'residual' space.
- The existing landscape character is achieved through a designed landscape. Development of landscape character at the neighbourhood level requires a joint public and private landscape response and the two systems must work together to establish the required landscape character and environmental outcomes. Existing landscape strategies (standard street tree layouts etc) are not likely to provide a suitable template for achieving new environmental objectives or more complex design outcomes related to new development forms.

## 5 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

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### 5.1 Existing Neighbourhood Character Types & Character Area Classifications

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#### Neighbourhood Character Types

The Neighbourhood Character Review 2006 – 2014 (Planisphere) established broad neighbourhood character types based on the general eras of the City's development. These Neighbourhood Character Types were refined as part of the 2021 Neighbourhood Character Assessment undertaken by Tract. This study identified the following character types:

1. Garden Suburban - Victorian / Edwardian Base with modern and contemporary overbuilding
2. Inner Urban - Victorian / Edwardian base with modern and contemporary overbuilding
3. Garden Suburban - Edwardian/Inter-war Base with modern and contemporary overbuilding
4. Garden suburban - Inter-war Base with modern and contemporary overbuilding
5. Garden Suburban - 1970s-1990s Base
6. Garden Suburban - Late 1930s-1960s Base with modern and contemporary overbuilding

Neighbourhood Character Type appears to be the most meaningful classification in terms of landscape character in that each Character Type represents:

- A general change in geographic location and period of development
- A clear change in development form and with dominant architectural styles
- A specific relationship between site planning, building form and garden form
- A likely change in the style of plant species

Within the context of this study, Neighbourhood Character Type represents the most stable and meaningful expression of Landscape Character across the broader Glen Eira area because each type is based on the fundamental relationship and visual balance between building form and garden form. Landscape has a clearly defined role and status.

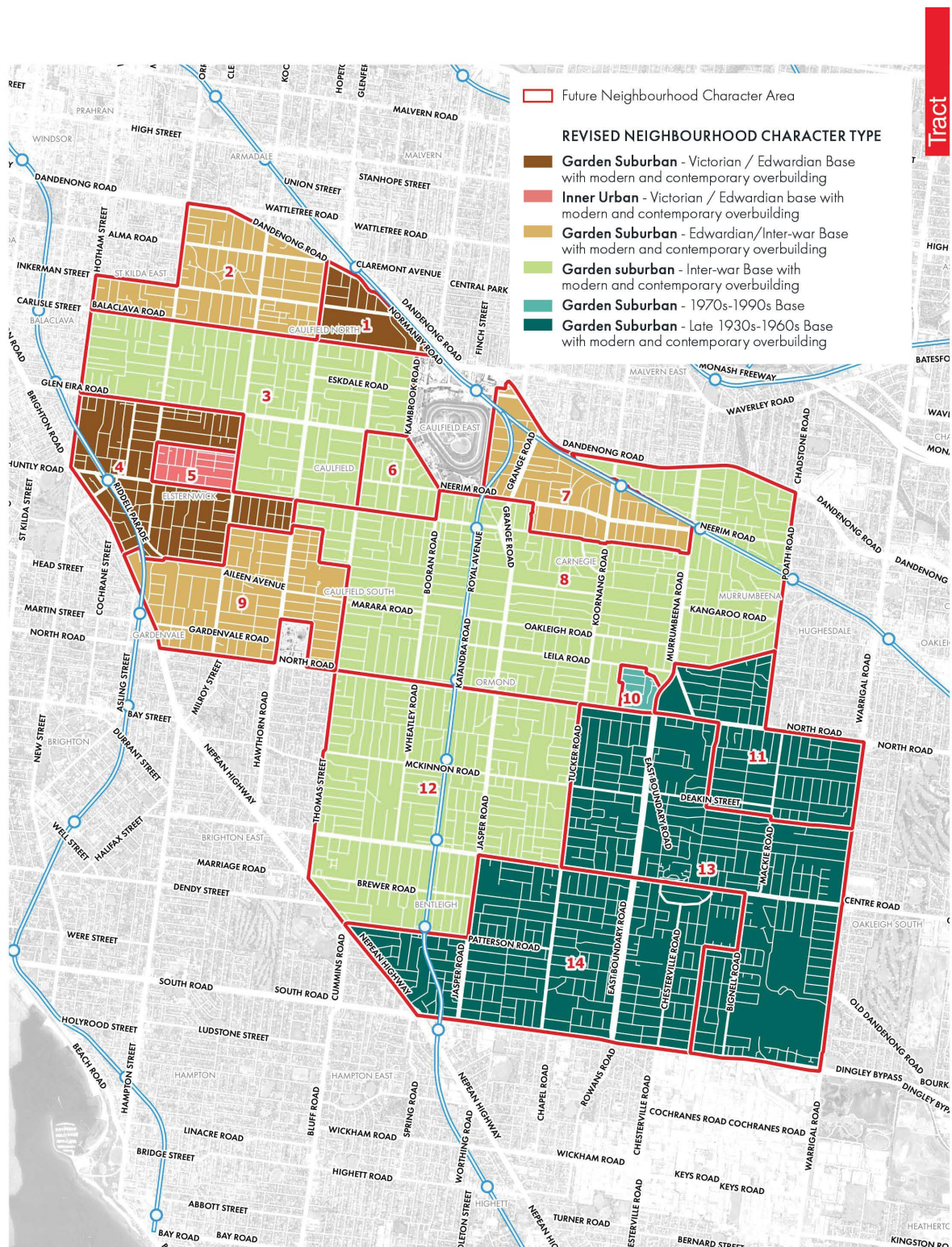
Existing Neighbourhood Character Type classifications do not however accommodate new more intensive development forms such as 3 and 4 storey apartment developments that frequently amalgamate lots to provide continuous building forms and substantially change the height and visual scale of new development. These developments change the visual relationship between building form and landscape form that those development styles represent.

#### Neighbourhood Character Areas

Within the six neighbourhood character types, the 2021 Study identified 14 character areas. These areas were found to have particular features that defined their neighbourhood character, in addition to the general features that were common to the relevant residential character types. These differentiation factors could relate to subdivision pattern, development form, architectural character or landscape character.

Within the context of this landscape character review, Neighbourhood Character Areas are considered to be more representative of 'point in time' development features and are therefore likely to be more unstable and changeable.

On that basis, and particularly in terms of landscape character, the broader **Neighbourhood Character Type** classification is considered a more robust classification system than the Neighbourhood Character Area boundaries.



Drawing Title

Project Name

## Neighbourhood Character Types

## Glen Eira Neighbourhood Character Assessment

Drawing No.	Revision	Date	Drawn	Checked	Project Principal	Scale
321.0185.U.01.DR01	00	15.12.2021	KXS	MN	MN	1:50,000 (A4)

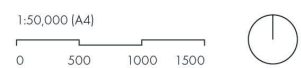


Figure 11 Neighbourhood Character Types & Character Areas (Source: Tract)



### 5.2.1 Inner Urban Neighbourhood Character Type – landscape characteristics

There are several small parts of Glen Eira developed during the C19th that are classified as inner urban character type. Many older areas of the municipality have experienced extensive overbuilding and have a mixed character as a result. The exception to this are streets included in the Heritage Overlay or those identified as having significant neighbourhood character, where the original built form and character of the neighbourhood remains strongly evident.

The broad description and main elements of this character type include:

- Dense, low rise residential and mixed-use areas serviced by strip shopping centres and transport routes.
- There is a fine-grain and connected street and laneway pattern
- Narrow building frontages.
- Highly urban character with buildings dominating the street scene.
- Small front setbacks with zero or small side setbacks that create unbroken 'walls' along the street. Private landscapes are minimal or absent and visually recessive.
- Front property boundary is typically defined by a fence.
- Street tree planting, where it exists, is the dominant landscape feature.
- There are no nature strips.

#### Inner Urban - Victorian / Edwardian base with modern and contemporary overbuilding

##### Description

- Victorian / Edwardian inner urban base with modern overbuilding
- This area has a Victorian and Edwardian base with a limited amount of modern infill.
- Front setbacks are typically <5m and side setbacks 1-3m with limited vegetation in private gardens or street planting. The buildings form the edge of the street and define its character.
- Front gardens are typically compact and are mixed. Some contain small trees and shrubs and others have limited vegetation.
- Front fences are typically medium height and timber picket.
- Street planting is regular, consisting of medium sized trees with small canopies. The absence of nature strips creates a more urban character across many streets.

##### Potential threats

- Over scale and/or visually repetitive development forms that do not match the visual rhythm of the traditional building patterns.
- An absence of private or public landscape elements.

### 5.2.2 The Garden Suburban Neighbourhood Character Types – general landscape characteristics

This Neighbourhood Character Type forms the majority of the City of Glen Eira. These design characteristics generally define the 'suburban' development form, as it has evolved through the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The key design qualities related to landscape character are:

- Many areas have a green and leafy appearance. Neighbourhoods towards the north of the municipality are often characterized by gardens with established trees. Towards the southeast of the municipality, the vegetation character often has an open feel, with low to medium scale planting more common. The character of some streets is also defined by avenues of street trees.
- There is often an open and spacious feel created by the space around buildings, and the large front setbacks that result in an open rather than enclosed street space.

- Front setbacks are often consistent and usually generous, allowing for planting of substantial vegetation. That setback vegetation often visually links with the street landscape to form an overall landscape character.
- Dwellings are usually clearly visible from the street but there is some visual separation between neighbouring dwellings which results in an articulated form and a visual rhythm within the street. Large scale tree planting is a visually unifying element within the streetscape.
- Dwellings are usually set back from at least one side boundary and frequently from both, providing glimpses of vegetation between dwellings.
- Traditional residential building is typically less than the height of a large tree (1.5m - 20m).
- The front property boundary is usually defined by a low, solid fence or moderate height 'transparent' fence.
- Rear setbacks are sufficient to allow for the planting of substantial vegetation, usually including at least one tree. Often views to the planting in rear gardens can be obtained from the street through side setbacks.
- The low levels of site coverage allow for substantial planting.
- Dwellings provide private and useable open space (eg front, side and rear gardens). Gardens are a specific design feature within the development and there is a specific relationship between the design of the house and the design of garden spaces. This design is typically related to the development era and architectural style.
- The majority of dwellings are single or double storey, but with a level of modern redevelopment.
- Overall, there is a low scale of development with a strong horizontal emphasis and dominant roof forms.

#### **Potential threats to the Garden Suburban landscape character**

- Loss of original buildings, particularly if replaced with new buildings and building forms that do not respond to the key visual characteristics of the street.
- Development that breaks the general rhythm of built form along the street.
- Boundary to boundary development or multi lot amalgamations with extended building forms that do not match the scale and visual rhythm of the traditional building and garden forms.
- Reduced frontage setbacks that do not allow a scale and form of planting, particularly large tree planting, that matches built forms.
- Loss of side and rear setback areas that allow for large-scale planting and 'skyline silhouette' tree planting that integrates building forms.
- Carports or large-scale garaging, particularly if constructed forward of the building line, or dominating the width of the frontage.
- Change to the location of driveways that limits tree planting or large-scale gardens.
- Change to front fencing style, particularly the introduction of high solid fencing that has a dominant visual presence within the street and that visually separates private landscapes from the street.
- Extensive areas of hard paving or services within the front setback that limit garden development or large tree planting.

### **5.2.3 Garden Suburban Neighbourhood Character Types descriptions**

#### **Garden Suburban - Victorian / Edwardian Base with modern and contemporary overbuilding**

##### **Description**

- The streetscapes in these areas have a more compact feel with narrower streets, smaller lots of between 300 and 500sq.m and smaller front setbacks of 3m - 6m.
- It includes several Heritage Overlay areas that are intact representations of the area's original development.

- The area generally has a leafy quality with well-established gardens (despite small areas for planting in some) and regular planting of street trees. Some private gardens include substantial trees and several streets are defined by their avenue planting.
- Many dwellings have 3m side setbacks on one side for vehicle access and 1m on the other. Narrow fronted Victorian and Edwardian dwellings have smaller side setbacks of 1-1.5m to each boundary. Walk-up apartments generally have larger side setbacks with at-grade parking.
- The area has a leafy feel despite the mix of front garden sizes.
- Canopy cover varies widely across the character type.
- Front fencing is a mixture of materials and heights.
- Street tree planting is mixed and uneven in form. Where larger trees exist, they contribute to the overall leafy character of the area.

#### Potential threats

- Over scale and/or visually repetitive development forms that do not match the visual rhythm of the traditional building patterns.
- Development based on lot amalgamations that eliminates side setback visual separations introduces a scale of development that is foreign to the character area.
- A reduced scale of private gardens and / or a lack of tree planting in new development.
- Street tree planting systems that are under-developed and do not visually integrate new and existing development forms.

### Garden Suburban - Edwardian/Inter-war Base with modern and contemporary overbuilding

#### Description

- The area between the racecourse and the railway line is characterised by a range of development, however its Victorian and Edwardian era base is strongly evident.
- Front setbacks are mixed throughout however the majority are greater than 5m. Reduced front setbacks (less than 4m) are typically found close to North Road, Hawthorn Road and Clarence Street.
- Original dwellings typically have a 3m side setback on one side of the property and 1m to the other boundary. More recent development includes garages built to one side boundary.
- The area generally has well established gardens with low to medium scale vegetation and regular planting of street trees. Occasionally private gardens include substantial trees and several streets are defined by their avenue planting.
- It includes the areas of significant neighbourhood character around St James and Riddell Parades, which is valued for its intact Victorian, Edwardian and inter-war streetscapes and the strong vegetation quality.
- Front gardens contain a mix of shrubs, garden beds and lawn with some canopy trees. There is some visibility of trees within rear gardens from the streets.
- Garden styles and size of front gardens vary. Some sections have established trees while others have extensive lawn or hardscape.
- Front fences are typically low to medium height comprising a mix of timber picket and brick materials.
- Canopy tree planting in streets is generally greater than 10%.

#### Potential threats

- Over scale and/or visually repetitive development forms that do not match the visual rhythm of the traditional building patterns.
- Development based on lot amalgamations that eliminates side setback visual separations introduces a scale of development that is foreign to the character area.
- A reduced scale of private gardens and / or a lack of tree planting in new development.

- Street tree planting systems that are under-developed and do not visually integrate new and existing development forms.

### Garden suburban - Inter-war Base with modern and contemporary overbuilding

#### Description

- A range of development eras are represented. It has a predominantly inter-war base with a variety of subsequent development types creating a mixed character. There is a mixture of allotment sizes and widths.
- Inter-war development includes Californian bungalows and other inter-war styles such as Spanish Mission or Arts and Crafts. There are also isolated buildings from the Victorian and Edwardian era.
- Pockets of original timber or brick Californian bungalow and other inter-war dwellings survive, of which a number are included within Heritage Overlay areas or nominated as potential NCO areas. These are highly intact and indicative of the original development pattern of the area.
- There is a range of dwelling forms and types – from single storey detached dwellings to 3 storey walk up flats.
- Front fences (not main roads) are generally low, allowing views to buildings and gardens from the street.
- The area generally has well established gardens with low to medium scale vegetation and regular planting of street trees. Occasionally private gardens include substantial trees and street trees add to the garden character of the area
- In Murrumbidgee, the area around the Rosstown Railway linear reserves (Boyd Park) have a distinct landscape quality. The streets are also distinct for their undulating topography.

#### Potential threats

- Over scale and/or visually repetitive development forms that do not match the visual rhythm of the traditional building patterns.
- Development based on lot amalgamations that eliminates side setback visual separations introduces a scale of development that is foreign to the character area.
- A reduced scale of private gardens and / or a lack of tree planting in new development.
- Street tree planting systems that are under-developed and do not visually integrate new and existing development forms.

### Garden Suburban - Late 1930s-1960s Base with modern and contemporary overbuilding

#### Description

- This area has a late 1930s-1960s base with a range of contemporary overbuilding that creates a mixed character. Many original dwellings remain.
- Buildings are generally single storey.
- Front and side setbacks are consistent, leaving regular spacing around dwellings in each street.
- Gardens are well established with low to medium scale planting. There is a limited presence of canopy trees in front and rear gardens which leads to the area not having a distinct leafy character.
- Front fences are generally low, allowing views to buildings and gardens from the street.
- The grid layout and flat topography is quite distinct in this area due to wide, open streets and lack of heavy vegetation cover.
- Streets have small street trees which are regularly planted. Tree cover is generally less than 15%.

### Potential threats

- Over scale and/or visually repetitive development forms that do not match the visual rhythm of the traditional building patterns.
- Development based on lot amalgamations that eliminates side setback visual separations introduces a scale of development that is foreign to the character area.
- A reduced scale of private gardens and / or a lack of tree planting in new development.
- Street tree planting systems that are under-developed and do not visually integrate new and existing development forms.

### Garden Suburban - 1970s-1990s Base

#### Description

- This area has a 1970s base with most buildings of this era remaining.
- Buildings are single and double storey and constructed of pink or brown brick with pitched tiled roofs.
- Gardens are generally well vegetated.
- Front setbacks are generally less than 5.0m, with some larger setbacks provide to the north, closer to Packer Park.
- Dwellings typically have a 1m setback to one side boundary with the garage built to the other side boundary.
- Front gardens vary in size due to the front setbacks and contain shrubs, garden beds, lawn and occasional trees. There is limited presence of trees in rear gardens across the area. Tree cover is generally less than 12.5%, with areas of higher tree coverage to the east of Yarra Yarra Golf Club (up to 15%).
- Front fences vary with a mix of no front fencing and other locations with medium height brick pillar and iron fencing.
- Street trees are regularly planted with exotic species that are small to medium in height. Street tree cover is mixed throughout with some areas up to 25% and other areas less than 5%. This is a noticeable feature.

### Potential threats

- Over scale and/or visually repetitive development forms that do not match the visual rhythm of the traditional building patterns.
- Development based on lot amalgamations that eliminates side setback visual separations introduces a scale of development that is foreign to the character area.
- A reduced scale of private gardens and / or a lack of tree planting in new development.
- Street tree planting systems that are under-developed and do not visually integrate new and existing development forms.

This section identifies general landscape design principles and objectives that will support landscape character development with Glen Eira. It provides additional support **Volume 2: Future Character and Built Form Precincts** of the 2021 Neighbourhood Character Assessment in terms of landscape design guidance.

While the focus of this **Landscape Character Assessment** is on planning controls and changes related to the private realm, it is essential that landscape character is seen as a collective and shared value that includes both private and public assets and natural features.

### 6.1 Quality Design Guidelines for Residential Areas

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General residential design standards within the City of Glen Eira are addressed within the report *Quality Design Guidelines Residential Areas (Feb 2018)*. The following is an edited excerpt from that report.

#### 6.1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to:

- Respond to the aspirations of the Glen Eira community and deliver on the vision for our neighbourhoods.
- Encourage a high level of architectural design in new developments.
- Provide clarity and certainty about Council's expectations for new developments.
- Support and supplement existing design guidance provided by the Glen Eira Planning Scheme and relevant State Government initiatives.

#### 6.1.2 Guidelines

The *Guidelines* are comprised of four main parts.

##### Quality Design Principles

Nine Quality Design Principles underpin the *Guidelines*. These principles were developed to provide the strategic context for all design guidance in this document.

##### Building types and key outcomes

The **Guidelines** propose a range of building types that are preferred in our neighbourhoods. This section provides an overview of each building type, where they should be located, and how best to design them (including the landscape design response).

##### General building design details

This section outlines the detailed design elements that contribute to quality and functional buildings.

##### Designing for the community

Buildings can be designed to support a diverse and vibrant local community. This section addresses other matters that should be addressed such as dwelling diversity and universal design.

##### Quality design principles – landscape

The **Quality Design Principles** section includes the following landscape principles:

##### Residential garden setting

Maintaining large front and rear garden areas that provide continuous green streetscapes and continuity of rear yards with street blocks.

This principle is achieved through the following guidelines and requirements:

- setbacks
- private open space
- landscaping/canopy trees
- fencing
- green corridors.

### Canopy trees and greenery

The objective is to maximise the retention and planting of canopy trees and large areas of soft landscaping.

This principle is achieved through the following guidelines and requirements:

- landscaping/canopy trees
- private open space
- setbacks
- basement footprint

## 6.2 Public area landscape design

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Integrated design outcomes involving both public and private landscape features are particularly important in Glen Eira where there are relatively few remnant natural environmental features and where 'designed' landscapes form the basis of landscape character.

Street landscapes, along with formal parks and informal landscapes such as schools, sports facilities and transport corridors, working in combination, have the potential to provide an interconnected landscape framework that links with private landscapes to create an integrated landscape system with a stronger visual character.

### 6.2.1 The Glen Eira open space system

These landscapes will include formal parks and sports reserves, along with informal landscapes such as schools, drainage reserves, main road corridors and rail reservations.

Open space systems potentially provide a larger **landscape framework** within which neighbourhoods exist. These landscape features can define a location and have the potential to support larger scale environmental systems such as biodiversity. On that basis, the open space network where possible, should achieve the following:

- An open space system with a scale that allows for the largest range of landscape systems and user activities. Improved connections can potentially offset limitations in the size of individual parks or reserves.
- An increase in connectivity, including direct open space links or the special design of roads to act as open space connections, increases diversity and access. Open space character may shape the site-specific design response to street tree planting and private open space design.
- A more integrated design approach to open space that considers a broader range of design objectives such as place character, biodiversity and canopy cover objectives along with sustainable environmental systems such as drainage infiltration, water treatment and re-use.

### 6.2.2 Street trees

Trees provide visual scale, visual separation between built form and environmental amenity within the street. They also provide shade and form part of a more considered biodiversity system that is emerging within Glen Eira.

Traditionally, street tree planting has been based on formal single species avenue planting or a version of that design approach. Mixed species plantings and more complex tree / shrub / groundcover landscapes have the potential to provide a more place specific visual character and support higher biodiversity values than single species avenues.

In addition to contributing to neighbourhood character, street tree planting will need to meet new canopy cover, climate suitability and biodiversity requirements. The existing avenue planting approach is unlikely to have the capacity to achieve those new design objectives and private landscapes are unlikely to provide the capacity to offset the shortfalls in the existing system. On that basis, a more diverse street tree planting approach may be considered which provides a combination of **non-standard public realm design solutions**, including.

- More intensive nature-strip tree planting, potentially involving more closely grouped trees within the Naturestrip
- Tree planting within kerb outstands and/or road edge (parking lanes) cut-outs.
- The use of multi-species tree groups, with or without groundcover understoreys.
- Planting within centre road parklets developed through mid-block road terminations or narrowed road sections).
- Integrated drainage solutions that promote drainage infiltration and street tree watering (this may require changes to standard road design).

### 6.3 Private area landscape design

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Traditional development styles within Glen Eira are based on a mix of 'Garden Suburban' and 'Inner Urban' design models where building and garden elements, along with public landscapes, collectively represent the Neighbourhood Character.

The way in which private development presents itself as a combination of landscape and built form is important. While the landscape design response for new development will generally conform to the Glen Eira *Quality Design Guidelines Residential Areas (2018)*, landscape design and related landscape character outcomes should also be considered in terms of the following:

**Framework landscapes** – these are the key landscape design spaces within private developments that visually link the built form to its setting and the wider public realm. These areas will typically include front, rear and side setbacks. These private landscape areas are fundamental to the establishment or preservation of neighbourhood landscape character and they must be allowed to function as landscape spaces and not be limited by other service functions.

**Decorative landscapes** – these are additional landscape design features that may provide style and visual amenity to the specific development, but do not necessarily contribute to the relationship with the public landscape or the perception of a neighbourhood landscape character. Examples of decorative landscapes include green roof or balcony landscapes.

#### 6.3.1 Framework landscapes

Framework landscapes are the landscape spaces and design features that effectively link the built form to its setting and establish the overall **Garden Suburban** landscape character. These garden spaces visually ameliorate the effect of new built form, visually separate developments and potentially contribute to a more place specific Neighbourhood Landscape Character Area. Framework landscapes perform a specific functional role and must not be considered as 'undeveloped space'.

Framework landscape space integrates the development with its surroundings through large scale planting; principally trees; and must be unencumbered so it can achieve its designated functions. Vehicle movement and parking spaces, service compounds, fencing, pedestrian paving, private courtyards, balcony overhangs etc cannot reduce the effective landscape area or impact its designated functions.

#### Requirements

- There must be a specific design relationship between building and landscape in order to establish the Garden Suburban aesthetic. A big building form requires a big visual landscape response.
- Framework landscape spaces must be considered a functional and visual entity within the development that has specific performance-based objectives. These design objectives require unencumbered space. Framework landscape spaces cannot be seen as 'undeveloped' or residual space that can be used for locating services or other sundry uses.



- The scale of planting is important. Each component of a planting system will have a specific functional role, but they are not interchangeable eg, the number of plants is not in and of itself a landscape 'outcome', it is a means to an end. The landscape design response must be evaluated on the basis of performance-based outcomes, not on plant numbers or setback distances alone.
- Developments must retain some level of visual separation from their neighbours as it prevents a cumulative visual impact caused by apparently continuous building alignments. On that basis, trees are an essential component of a structural landscape.
- The sides of building are potentially as important as the front facade as most street-based viewing is oblique, not perpendicular. Designing for how the development is actually seen from the public realm is important.
- Avoid design conflicts which lead to tree removal over the longer term. Design must accommodate the width of a tree canopy as well as its height.

#### **Lot amalgamation response.**

- Lot amalgamation changes the fundamental visual and spatial structure on which neighbourhood character is based – the lot structure, separation of building forms and the views between buildings. It potentially creates building forms with an overwhelming visual scale that is out of character with its neighbours and the setting in general.
- Lot amalgamation requires a 'design offset' response. Nominally, this would take the form of a stepped front setback, an increased side setback or some other spatial arrangement that allows an increased framework landscape design response (large trees in key visual locations) to offset the visual bulk resulting from the lot consolidation.
- Solid and high boundary fencing further exaggerates the visual effects of lot amalgamation. Fencing must be designed to achieve both a security and a landscape outcome.

#### **Building setbacks**

- Front setbacks should ideally be proportional to the existing building context, but never less than the neighbourhood character standard. Setback areas must be unencumbered by services or features that limit its capacity to function as a landscape.
- The framework landscape is not so concerned with particular landscape styles, it is about creating the potential for substantial landscape outcomes that add to the landscape character provided by the public realm landscape.
- Front setbacks will always form the basis of the framework landscape because that relates to the primary vehicle and pedestrian access point, and therefore to the visual perception of the development. Side and rear setbacks are a component of the structural landscape, but their specific design role may be interchangeable in terms of tree planting, depending on the configuration of the development.
- Structural landscapes must be encumbered by underground or overhead services, private spaces, fences, balconies, pedestrian paving, service compounds etc. Setbacks must create effective structural landscape space.

#### **Garden setting and landscaping**

- Provide an open and landscaped garden setting with substantial front and rear setbacks, deep planted canopy trees and permeable surfaces. High quality landscaping that prioritises greenery and softens the built form is strongly encouraged.
- If basements are provided, minimise basement footprints within the front and rear setbacks to allow deep planting in these areas. Prioritising front and rear setbacks may mean that side setbacks will be limited on small sites.
- In general, provide one tree per dwelling in the front and rear setback, including one advanced canopy tree per 8m of front and rear boundary.

#### **Streetscape integration**

- The street landscape should be considered as a component of the overall landscape design. The two should work together to provide the most coordinated design response.
- Private development should consider (with Council approval) additional street trees.

#### **Front fence height and design**

- Fencing should balance the need for privacy and with passive surveillance and activation of the public realm.

- Local streets — Maximum fence height of 1.2m. Fencing should contribute to the low-scale, open character of local residential streets.
- Main roads — Maximum fence height of 2m. Tall fencing should be designed to incorporate landscaping and permeability to contribute greenery and provide a level of passive surveillance. Any fencing above 1.2m in height should provide some visual transparency to allow for landscape interaction with the street.
- In streets with many original buildings, it is important that the fences reflect the era and style of development.

#### Avoid

- Removal of large, established trees or lack of space for new canopy trees.
- Removal of all vegetation on site, without adequate consideration of its value – botanical, ecological or aesthetic.
- Removal of other contributory elements that are an essential part of the garden layout, such as pathways, retaining walls or edging.
- Landscaping plans that are an ‘afterthought’ to the building design.
- Private gardens that do not contribute to the landscape theme of adjacent reserves, where this is an important characteristic of the neighbourhood.
- High fences or solid boundary walls that sever the landscape connection between the planting in public reserves and the private gardens of adjacent properties.

### 6.3.2 Decorative landscape features

Landscape in Neighbourhood Character terms is concerned with functional and performance-based outcomes, as well as about appearance. Decorative landscape elements can include green walls, balcony landscapes, private courtyards and green roof garden features. These elements may contribute to the visual appearance, design style and residential amenity of the development, but they cannot substitute for the structural landscape areas and scale elements which fit the development into its wider neighbourhood setting. Decorative design features must be considered additional landscape elements, not as a replacement for the fundamental structural landscape design elements.

## 6.4 Substantial Change Areas

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The key design qualities that typically relate to these built forms are:

- 3 and 4 storey residential apartment blocks often with a setback upper floor, that is typically based on a site formed by amalgamating two or more traditional residential lots. The extended lot shape results in a long, rectangular and visually bulky building form that is visually different from traditional detached housing.
- An overall building layout that typically matches the minimum boundary setbacks
- A visually dominant and repetitive building form and architectural details, material and colour combinations. Roof lines are not a feature.
- Side setbacks are minimal in comparison to the overall building form. The side elevations of buildings potentially become a component of front elevation views. On that basis, multiple developments can appear to align and form a continuous built elevation.

The key design qualities related to landscape character are:

- Built form is the dominant visual element. Front gardens are present, but the landscape forms a minor design component.
- The ground level front setback is typically dominated by private courtyards, pathways, service enclosures and high boundary fences. This has the effect of visually fragmenting the landscape and minimising its visual impact from the street.
- Planting selection is tailored to the available planting spaces rather than to an overall development theme, to the scale of the building or its relationship to the street or its neighbours. This typically results in the dominant use of groundcovers and small-scale planting
- There is typically no specific relationship between the street landscape and the private landscape, or improvements to the street landscapes (such as extra tree planting) to offset the effects of the development.

- Side landscapes are typically minimal and limited by available setbacks. There is generally no effective visual separation between adjoining new developments.
- The public landscape (road configuration and street trees) are a critical visual mitigation factor within settings with a high proportion of new development of this type.

### 6.4.1 Landscape Guidelines

The height and visual bulk of the development style (particularly with extended lot amalgamation) places this development style out of character with both the Inner Urban and Garden Suburban Character Types.

Garden areas are present but often visually ineffective and their function is further compromised by services, paving and other constraints. The use of front setbacks for private open space significantly limits the use of that space for landscape. High, solid fencing is a visually dominant feature from the street that further reduces the visual effects of front landscapes. Suggested development controls related to landscape.

- Development sites formed through lot amalgamation that exceed two lots in width should include a building setback of at least 3m. The setback area will be developed as a public garden area that supports medium tree planting.
- At least 40% of the overall building frontage must have a fully planted garden 3m wide or greater that is directly connected to the street. This area cannot be fenced.
- Continuous high fencing along footpaths should be avoided. Fencing solutions must be designed as a part of the landscape design solution, not independently.
- Medium must be planted in the front setback. The effectiveness of the tree planting will be measured by the visual presence of the mature canopy which must represent at least 50% of the width of the building frontage.
- Landscape development within setback areas should not be constrained by services or other design features. Designated landscape areas must have the capacity to be fully developed for large-scale planting.
- Service enclosure openings such as electrical or water utilities will not directly face the footpath where possible.
- Private development should consider the street landscape as a specific component of the site landscape design response. Where approved by Council, street landscape enhancements may consider additional street trees, or a more intensive planting style that potentially includes multiple tree species and groundcover planting in nature strips and / or road plantations.



**Photo 1** Bent Street, Bentleigh (Source: Google Street View)

A relatively sparse street landscape increases views of new development which visually aligns to form a continuous development form. Garden beds that directly link to the footpath provide an opportunity for tree planting and visual integration with the street.





Photo 2 Hamilton Street, Bentleigh (Source: Google Street View)

Front fences visually function as a part of the built form and reduce the effectiveness of private landscapes.







**Photo 3 28 Jersey Parade** (Source: Google Street View)

4.5 – 5m front setback

Lot amalgamation can result in a visually bulky and repetitious building design, high front walls and visible service compounds results in a an ineffective landscape with no visual presence from the street. The existing tree on the left shows the potential visual effect of medium / large tree planting.







**Photo 4 28 Lorraine Street Bentleigh** (Source: Google Street View)

This development shows the potential benefits of building setback, wall height variation and larger scale garden inclusions with a direct visual relationship to the street. One or two large canopy trees at key locations would further integrate the development with neighbouring developments and the street.

## 7 RECOMMENDATIONS

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The Residential Area Landscape Character Assessment provides a high-level assessment of the landscape character of Glen Eira to inform the Preferred Character Statements of the 2021 Neighbourhood Character Assessment.

Whilst the preferred character statements set the general vision for the future appearance of neighbourhoods, it is recognised that additional guidance is required around more detailed landscape design, particularly within the private realm to achieve the desired character. Within the public realm there are significant opportunities to strengthen landscape character through innovative responses to tree planting and landscaping.

This report recommends the following work to be undertaken by Council:

- **Prepare landscape design guidelines** to complement the Preferred Character Statements outlined in the Neighbourhood Character Assessment and relate directly to the identified Future Character and Built Form Precincts. The guidelines should build on Section 6 of this report and provide detailed guidance for applicants, the community and Council in preparing and assessing development applications.
- **Develop a suite of non-standard public realm design solutions** that can be applied across the municipality to strengthen landscape character and biodiversity within the public realm. This should build on the recommendations of Section 6 of this report.