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# ***(re)Visioning Footscray Executive Summary***

*June 2005*

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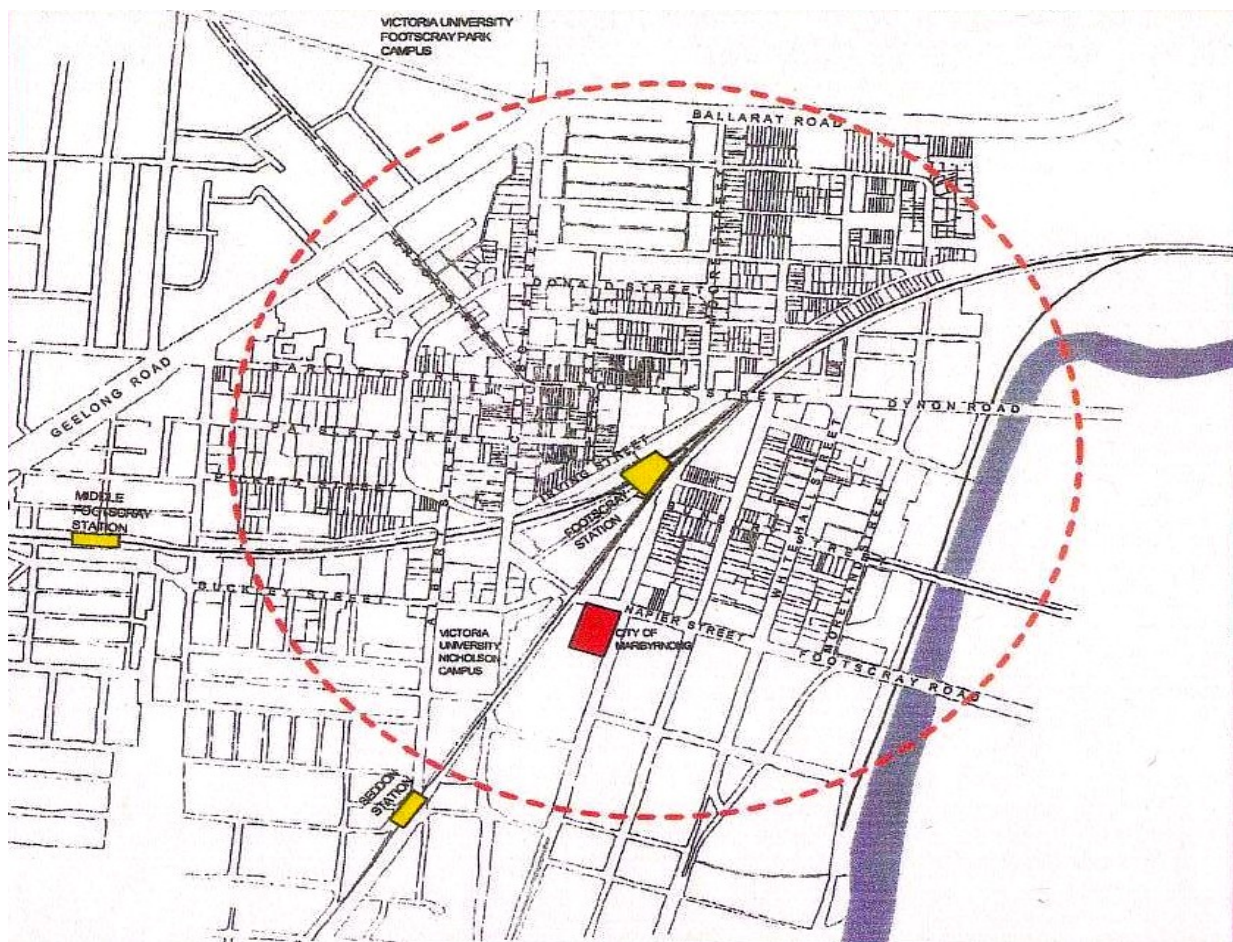
## What is (re)visioning Footscray?

(re)Visioning Footscray is a document that consolidates and clarifies the vision for the Footscray Principal Activity Centre (PAC) (area below). Development pressures within Footscray, together with Footscray's identification as a Transit City in the State Government's planning blueprint *Melbourne 2030* are challenging the established vision for Footscray. As a result, Council recognises the need to revisit the vision through an inclusive and collaborative process. This process is called (re)Visioning Footscray, which aims to:

- Distill the vision from existing documentation;
- Clarify the Vision with internal and external stakeholders;
- Engage with the local communities about the future of Footscray;
- Understand local context and desires; and
- Restate Vision.

The project is being funded by a \$40,000 grant from the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) and contributions from Maribyrnong City Council (\$10,000) and VicUrban (\$10,000). Council appointed Sarkissan Associates Planners Pty. Ltd with Red Road Consulting in July 2004 to administer public consultation sessions and oversee a review of Council's existing vision, strengths and weaknesses for the Footscray Principal Activity Centre.

### Study Area for the (re)Visioning Footscray Project



The final report, dated February 2005, also completes some key pieces of work necessary for preparing a structure plan for Footscray, as outlined in the Department of Sustainability and Environment's Practice Note: *Structure Planning for Activity Centres December 2003*. The report finalises some of the work specified in Steps 1 (Preparing to Plan) and 2 (Analysing the Centre and its Context) of the Department's structure planning model by:

- Identifying the key stakeholders associated with the Footscray PAC
- Scopes the issues facing the Footscray PAC and the processes for addressing them
- Identifying community values and issues
- Establishing what Melbourne 2030 means for the growth of the Footscray PAC
- Identifying the role and function of the Footscray PAC, including a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis of the Centre.

## Project Overview

The (re)Visioning Footscray report outlines the activities and findings of the (re)Visioning Footscray Project, and consolidates and clarifies the Footscray Transit Cities Vision.

The (re)Visioning Footscray project has been a five-phase process which focused on in-depth stakeholder/professional and community consultation with a local community that exemplifies enormous diversity; culturally and linguistically and with respect to lifestage and lifestyle. The process included:

***Stage 1: Project Scoping and Management***

***Stage 2: Literature and Stakeholder Review and Consolidation***

***Stage 3: Targeted Community Visioning***

***Stage 4: Wider Community Visioning***

***Stage 5: Final Reporting***

## Consultation overview

In this Executive Summary, we will not detail all the specific approaches used in the consultations for the (re)Visioning Footscray project. Details of the processes are provided in the body of the report and full transcripts of each activity are reported in the *Addendum: Consultation Transcripts*.

In total, approximately 500 people participated directly in the community and professional stakeholder consultations for (re)Visioning Footscray, including:

- 72 Search Conference participants
- 13 Footscray Reference Group members involved in defining consultation processes
- 33 Focus Group participants
- 80 respondents to the Clipboard Queries survey
- 40 Guided Tour participants
- 250 participants SpeakOut participants (approximately -- 161 registered)
- 14 contributors to the Interactive Display

The participants have represented more than 24 countries of origin across all age groups over 15 and with generally equal participation of men and women. The number of children under 15 involved was low (less than 10) and represents the lone gap in consultation material.

## Findings

The findings of all the (re)Visioning activities have been organised, in the Final Report, according to the themes emerging throughout the process. The themes provide a means of organising the large

amount of information collected and analysed and represent, across the range of (re)Visioning Footscray activities, the priorities that have emerged regarding the future of Footscray.

The following are the core theme and the important principles, as articulated by Footscray residents, businesses, visitors and professional stakeholders, emerging from the (re)Visioning Footscray process:

**Access and transport** in the future Footscray involved **connection of bicycle networks**, seen as vital to making bicycling a serious alternative to car use, and promoting the concept of a **'walkable'** city. A key concern regarding access and transport is to maintain current public transport provision and the **varied public transport** options available in Footscray while improving, where noted, the **local public transport facilities**. Special care should be afforded **Footscray Train Station**, seen as 'heritage' but needing 'upgrade'. Traffic and parking management appear to be an on-going issue of concern to participants who urge that **priority traffic and parking 'hot spots'** be repaired over time.

**Arts and Culture** were seen as a critical feature of the community and there was interest by participants in all stages of the consultation in **protecting and enhancing the arts**. In particular, addressing opportunities regarding the **'business of art'** was a key theme. Promoting a community-friendly arts scene that actively made **introduction to the arts/different cultures** for new community members, children and young people was seen as vital to arts survival in Footscray.

**Built and natural environment** in the future Footscray hinged on **protecting 'sacred' and improving 'hated' spaces** and working to a strategic set of **precincts** that could develop as organically as possible around existing land-use patterns. Recommendations by participants often included agency and planning facilitation and encouragement of increased mixed-use development.

**Housing** in the future Footscray was seen as including medium and higher density housing options. This was acceptable to participants **with certain disclaimers**, including **sensitive location and design**. Higher density housing which allows for public access to nearby 'sacred' spaces (such as the riverfront), which 'recycles' buildings where possible (e.g., existing industrial buildings) and which includes mixed-use and mixed affordability is favoured by participants. The (re)Visioning Footscray process may also provide some lessons for housing designers regarding **general preferences**.

**Learning** in the future Footscray concerns how to **better integrate the university campuses** and their students into daily life in Footscray as well as responding to the learning needs of the community, particularly newly-arrived community members. Opportunities and services to continue one's learning were seen to be varied and interesting but suffering from **poor coordination and publicity**. Exciting opportunities for **whole of community learning and community-level teaching and mentoring** were being overlooked, according to participants.

**Recreation and entertainment** emerged as a key focus of change in imagining a future Footscray. The current **lack of entertainment activities** was seen as a problem beyond the relaxation/enjoyment factor; lack of activity leads to a distinct 'ghost town' environment in Footscray at night and this in turn leads to community safety/perception of safety concerns. **Enhancing the green space opportunities** in Footscray was also a common issue arising as was the importance of **meeting/hanging out spaces** to many people in the community. **Informal and/or passive recreation activities** were of more interest to people consulted than formalised and/or active (e.g., sport-related) activities.

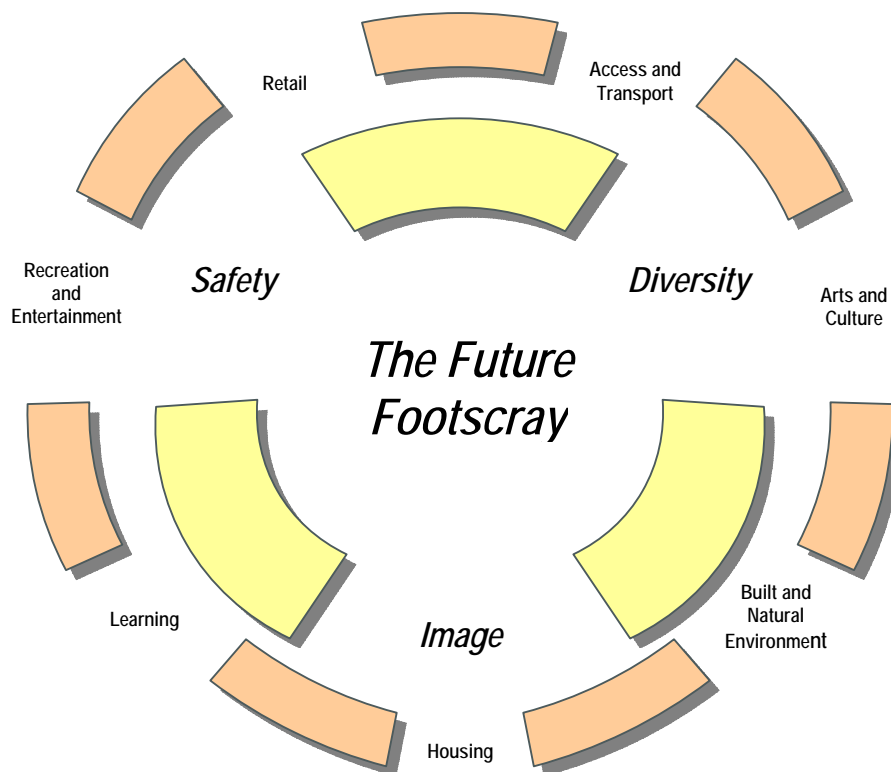
**Retail** opportunities to be available in a future Footscray reflected an extension of what currently exists, **enhanced rather than changed**, according to participants. The **diversity of shopping experience** emerged as the most important feature of Footscray and one that participants wanted to see remain. Fledgling 'precincts' (such as the African shops and restaurants off Irving Street) were seen as a positive change and participants talked about wanting Footscray to remain a retail environment in which new businesses could establish and flourish. Some thought needs to be given to, in future, the **shopping environments** which were not always seen as a positive feature of the retail areas in Footscray; low levels of cleanliness and 'hard' features like roller doors were disliked but so to were the impersonal and generic environments of shopping centres.

In addition, there have emerged three over-arching themes which impact on all of the core themes. Our analysis by three over-arching themes stresses the following:

**Image** emerged in the consultations as both a problem and an opportunity. The future Footscray's 'image' is imagined as being "the same but a bit better". In particular, participants have stressed that Footscray should be **artsy, edgy, affordable, regional and multicultural**. These, in people's estimation, are qualities of Footscray now and this image should not be changed. It could, however, be polished and promoted more effectively.

**Diversity** emerged as a key over-arching theme in the consultations and there was participant investment and interest in retaining **ethnic diversity** (a 'sacred' feature of Footscray), **socio-economic diversity** (particularly managing the risks that can arise from gentrification) and **land-use diversity** (mixed retail/housing/entertainment uses were specifically mentioned in reference to future re/developments in Footscray).

**Safety** has been of particular concern as Footscray has suffered from the (overstated in many instances) problems of very negative **perceptions of community safety**. These negative perceptions are of greater concern to participants that actual community safety concerns (e.g., crime rates), though both were raised during consultations. The pragmatic suggestions for improving perceptions of community safety centred primarily on **improving lighting** and **generating more activity**.



## Footscray Vision Statement

The people of Footscray, through their professional and community involvement in the (re)Visioning Footscray processes in 2004, have expressed a preferred future for Footscray which is described as follows:

*The Footscray of 2030 will be accessible via varied transport methods including walking, public transportation, car and bicycle. Special care will have been taken in upgrading Footscray Train Station while preserving heritage and in addressing parking and traffic 'hotspots' and all transport modes will be well connected.*

*The Footscray of 2030 will be creative and a home for artists. Footscray will encourage artistic talent, professional and amateur alike, and the 'business' of arts and culture.*

*The Footscray of 2030 will be developing according to a strategic set of precincts that have developed organically around existing land-use patterns and an interest in increased mixed-use development. There will be more medium and higher density housing options which will have been established in a manner sensitive to location and design. New housing will have 'recycled' buildings where possible (e.g., existing industrial buildings) and will include mixed-use and mixed affordability.*

*The Footscray of 2030 will have better integrated the university campuses and their students into daily life in Footscray and will be responding to the learning needs of the community, particularly newly-arrived community members. There will be more entertainment activities, particularly at night and these in turn will have improved community safety/perception of safety.*

*The Footscray of 2030 will have varied retail opportunities and a diversity of shopping experiences. Footscray will have remained a retail environment in which new businesses can establish and flourish. Retail areas will be clean and inviting.*

*Overall, the Footscray of 2030 is safe, artsy, edgy, affordable, regional, diverse/mixed and multicultural. These qualities of Footscray will have been polished and promoted more effectively.*

## Recommendations

Recommendations for the progressing the (re)Visioning Footscray project findings – in other words, methods for implementing the (re)Vision over the short, medium and longer term – are built into the

Action Plan proposed in Section 5 of the final report. In summary, the Action Plan framework sets objectives as follows and highlights existing policy areas which can drive changes in Footscray:

Emerging Theme	Objective
Access and Transport	To facilitate and advocate for a well connected Footscray, in terms of car, public transport, private transport, cycling and pedestrian movement
	To promote the concept of and provide infrastructure for a 'walkable' Footscray.
	To protect and enhance Footscray Station
Arts and Culture	To protect and enhance the arts in Footscray
Built and Natural Environment	To promote mixed land-use that is sustainable and sensitive to local heritage
	To communicate clear strategic planning goals and processes to the community
Housing	To manage increasing heights and densities in a way that involves community opinion and preference
	To maintain affordability and reduce risks associated with gentrification
Learning	To better integrate the university campuses and their students into daily life in Footscray
	To respond to and advocate for the learning needs of the community
Recreation and Entertainment	To enhance safety and enjoyment of Footscray, day and night
	To enhance the green space opportunities in Footscray for informal and/or passive recreation activities.
Image	To promote an image of Footscray that is artsy, edgy, affordable, regional and multicultural
Diversity	To retain ethnic diversity, socio-economic diversity and land-use diversity.
Safety	To address negative perceptions of community safety and stigma
Retail	To enhance, rather than change the diversity of shopping experiences in Footscray.

In addition, the report also includes action plans to ensure that the recommendations of the (re)Visioning Footscray project are implemented over the short to long term. Allocating adequate resources to project manage the ongoing implementation of the project would need to be allocated. Again, such resource allocations would be subject to Council's annual budget procedures or alternate funding sources.

The (re)Visioning Footscray project has enabled Council to refine and consolidate its existing vision for Footscray with the community. Placing the report on exhibition provides the community with another opportunity to comment on their preferred vision and policy directions prior to preparing a structure plan for Footscray Transit City.