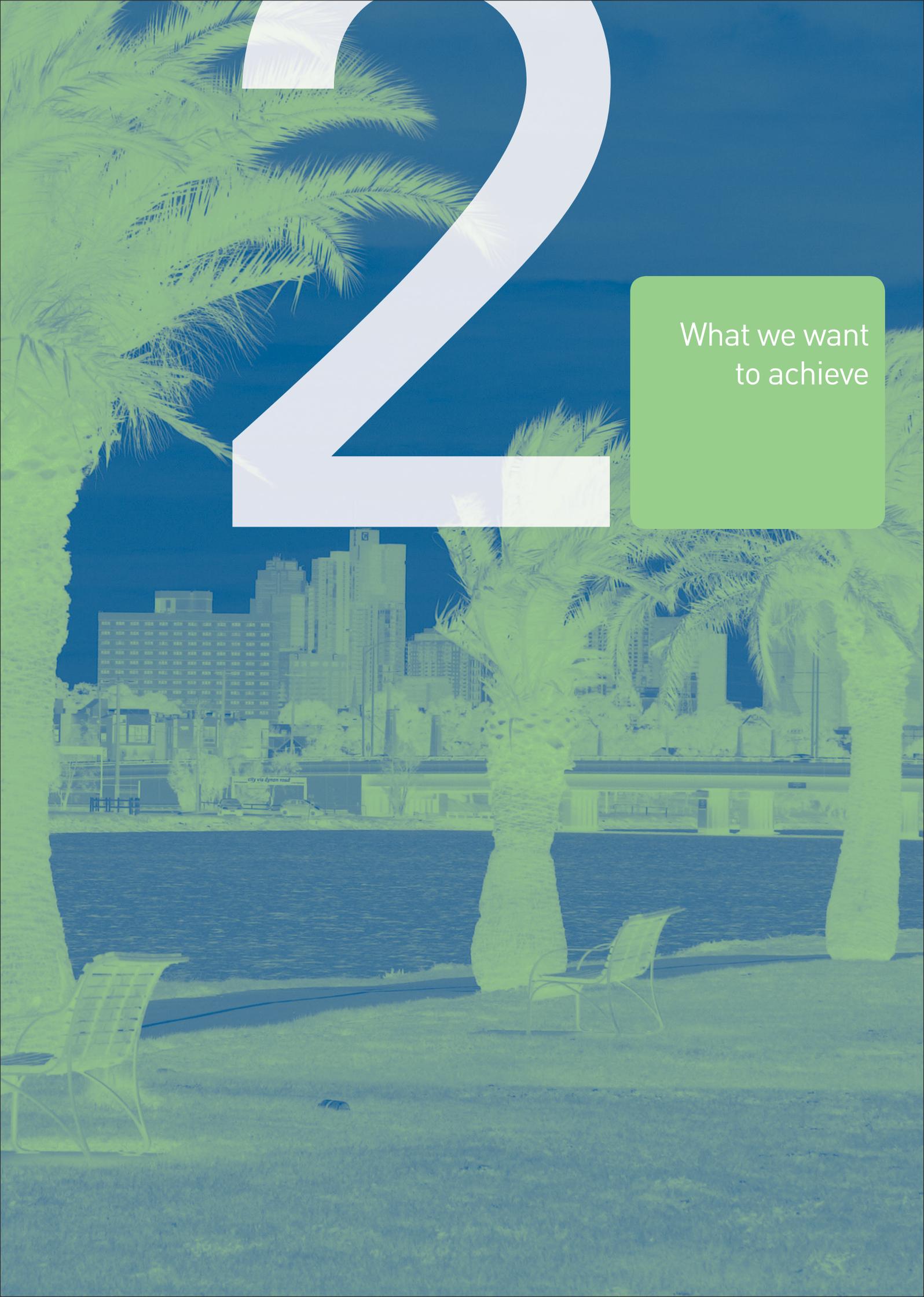


2

What we want
to achieve



2.1 VISION

“A healthy river flowing through a continuous network of open spaces and cultural landscapes that reflect its journey from a natural river to a working river. A river that provides a range of recreation experiences that value local landform and landscape character, and preserve cultural heritage, including significant plantings. A river that supports indigenous vegetation and fauna.”

This vision was informed by a review of past strategies and current government policy relating to the Maribyrnong River, an analysis of the river valley and extensive consultation (see Appendix B). It is supported by a set of broad objectives under the following themes:

River health

Improve aquatic habitat and water quality, reduce pollution, establish appropriate flows, maintain flood storage capacity and reduce the risk of contaminated sites.

Valley and river use

Continue to provide diverse recreational opportunities, protect significant areas, consolidate intensive recreational or tourism use in activity nodes, support sustainable water-based activities, and ensure the river can support future growth in Port of Melbourne activity downstream of Footscray Road.

Valley landscape

Protect indigenous vegetation and biodiversity, control weeds, protect and enhance the landscape character of the river valley, conserve plantings with heritage significance.

Valley development

Ensure river structures and new development is sympathetic to the river valley, protect and enhance the character of each river length.

River access

Optimise public access to the river for people of all abilities (where possible), provide continuous public open space along both sides of the river (where practical), create an integrated trail network with appropriate support facilities.

Valley heritage

Identify and maintain records of heritage assets, conserve sites with Aboriginal heritage value and sites of significant industrial and post-contact heritage value.

Valley governance

Improve existing cooperation between relevant planning agencies, involve the community in river valley management, ensure planning provisions reflect agreed policy, objectives and guidelines.

For more information about the principles and strategies that underpin these objectives see Appendix C.



2.2 PREFERRED RIVER CHARACTER

The Maribyrnong River Valley changes dramatically in character as it flows from the Organ Pipes National Park to its meeting with the Yarra River.

These Guidelines focus on what characteristics of the river should be reinforced or conserved, what aspects should be repaired, and what new characteristics should be created or enhanced. Determining the preferred character of the Maribyrnong River is based on community values and planning objectives.

To help manage its character, the river has been divided into seven river 'lengths'. These lengths provide a starting point for identifying the preferred character of the river and developing design guidelines around river health, landscape, development, access, use and heritage.

Brimbank length: a natural river

Existing condition

The river flows between complex rolling slopes and rural parkland. Bounded at the valley rim by urban settlement, the Calder Freeway to the north and the railway trestle bridge to the south, there is an absence of urban settlement in the river valley.

Preferred character

The naturalistic and remote character of this length of the river is its most valued characteristic. Extensive pest control and revegetation has restored much of the natural feel of this length of the river valley.

Brimbank Park is a major attraction in the area. The park caters for a vast array of users and plays an important role in the recreation opportunities for the people of Melbourne's west and north-west. There is a need to continue to strike a balance between recreation and conservation/revegetation outcomes. There is also a need to control urban intrusions in order to maintain the uninhabited and remote feel of this length.



Steele Creek length: a secluded river

Existing condition

The river flows through a generally steep and relatively straight valley, with a few narrow river flats. There are areas of significant vegetation along the river banks including river red gums and grasses. Significant residential development has been approved and is under construction.

The river flows around a large horseshoe bend at the confluence of Steele Creek, creating a natural amphitheatre with the Defence Site Maribyrnong at its centre.

Landscape values predominate. Building development is generally set back from the river to create a secluded landscape corridor. Buildings are mostly contained to the top of the escarpment.

Preferred character

There is potential to preserve the character of this part of the river by ensuring new development is landscaped to preserve its relatively 'natural' condition. There is also a need to limit urban development to maintain the uninhabited, remote feel of this length.

With the proposed redevelopment of the Defence Site Maribyrnong and development in and around the Highpoint Activity Centre, there are opportunities to enhance the urban river setting, including conservation measures, secluded riverbank settings and significant areas of public open space.

Maribyrnong length: a suburban river

Existing condition

There is a long history of recreation and leisure on this part of the river including competitive rowing, a popular pub, cafés, promenades, boulevards, picnic areas, children's playgrounds and sports fields.

Preferred character

All public open space is in the form of urban parkland with minor 'natural bush' areas. There are numerous sporting and tourist facilities. Riverside boulevards and formal shared paths along both banks have a promenade function in the areas with more pedestrian activity.



Racecourse length: river flats

Existing condition

Here the river opens out to a large, open floodplain, with sparse urban parkland, sports fields, a golf course and mixed urban settlement at the valley edges. In addition, it contains some major facilities including Flemington Racecourse and Victoria University. These valley escarpments include conventional suburban housing from a range of eras and more recent medium-high density housing.

Preferred character

A broad, open landscape with settlement generally some distance back from the river and discrete nodes of settlement on the river. Development is clearly visible but mostly appears at a distance and is screened by trees at the interface with public spaces.

Footscray length: an urban river

Existing condition

Melbourne's early industrial history is prominent. The old wharves of the working river are visible and there is a mix of land uses adjoining the river ranging from heavy industry on the eastern bank through to warehousing, medium density housing and the Footscray Community Arts Centre on the western bank.

There is an active river edge in some parts of this length, including an access road, goods rail line, wharves and jetties. There are numerous bridge crossings including a freight rail line and a pedestrian bridge over an historic stock crossing.

The working heritage of the river dominates here. The river is a place for activity and urban life. One of the most impressive features of this part of the river is a spectacular view of Swanson Dock in the Port of Melbourne – day and night.

Preferred character

There is potential for mixed use or commercial development in some sections. Industrial and commercial uses could include new advanced manufacturing and service industries, with opportunities for riverside recreational facilities such as cafés and other facilities.



Footscray Wharf length: an urban river

Existing condition

The history of this small area on the western bank of the river has been strongly tied to the Port of Melbourne, industry, rail transport, recreational boating and a working fishery. Recent development has focused on office and light industrial uses with construction of new buildings in the Riverside Industrial Park and reuse of existing heritage buildings. The area also plays a key role in providing access to trail networks.

Preferred character

Due its proximity to Coode Island and the Port of Melbourne, residential development is not supported in this area. Some level of public access to the river will be maintained and a high level of amenity for pedestrians and cyclists will be provided. The old wharf has the potential to be redeveloped as a commercial marina.

Port length: a working river

Existing condition

As the river nears the bay, container ports and commercial and industrial settlement cover most of the valley. Here is a full working river with its dedicated wharves, commercial shipping and goods rail line. Public access to the river is limited for operational and safety reasons.

Preferred character

Shipping and heavy industrial activities define and dominate the river corridor. There is potential for further industrial and commercial development that could include new advanced manufacturing, maritime and service industries that have a strategic need to be near the Port of Melbourne.



Beyond the Urban Growth Boundary

Upstream of the Urban Growth Boundary to the Organ Pipes National Park, the Maribyrnong River is within the Hume and Brimbank Green Wedges. As the Hume and Brimbank Green Wedges are predominantly rural, this section of the river is not covered by the design guidelines component of this report. Land uses in this area include grazing of modified pastures, irrigated seasonal horticulture, quarrying and rural residential development.

Indigenous heritage sites have been identified in this stretch of the river, along with significant native plant species. Pest and weed management and soil erosion are some of the issues affecting this part of the river. This length of the river also abuts Melbourne Airport.

These issues, together with the broad vision and the priorities for action in this report, are being considered as part of the *Green Wedge Management Plans*, which are currently being prepared by Hume and Brimbank City Councils.