

of the desired direction of any future extension are set out in Appendix 1.

The strategic objectives in Amendment 150 provide a context within which proposals for physical extension of a District Centre Zone would be evaluated. They reflect such issues as:

- the ability of a centre to maintain its compactness by redevelopment and the development of vacant land within the zone as opposed to the extension of the zone
- barriers which hinder pedestrian movement within a centre, notably railways and arterial roads
- public utility constraints which would inhibit further development
- the practical limits to multi-level development
- whether a centre can reasonably satisfy the demand for goods and services generated by the people it serves, its industrial, commercial, community facilities and recreational base and its tourist or visitor appeal
- the need to maintain and improve access by private and public transport
- providing opportunities for medium density housing within and near the District Centre Zone.

The Board will consult councils and initiate amendments to the Metropolitan Planning Scheme when proposals comply with these principles. In the case of rezonings to accommodate specific development proposals, the process could be shortened. Permits or endorsed plans (where needed) could be issued at the same time as the amending scheme is gazetted.

8.2 Benefits of the District Centre Approach

The district centre approach seeks to ensure that the people of Melbourne continue to enjoy the benefits of suburban living but at the same time to reduce some of the more negative and costly aspects of dispersal.

It will help reduce the need to travel. In some cases it may lead to longer trips, but it will also lead to fewer trips, because so many needs can be satisfied at one place.

Nearby residential areas will be encouraged to develop at a higher density than the metropolitan average, so that more people can live within easy range of the services and transport available at district centres, and in turn, support these services.

The district centre approach will increase local trade and job opportunities. Smaller firms will be able to 'tap into' the trade generated, for example, by large department stores. Concentrations of people who work in the centres will become each other's customers, in the same way that workers in the central business district become customers of central city shops.

District centres should be encouraged to provide a social focus. By helping people in its area identify with it and develop a district identity, each centre can enrich everyday suburban life. The centres will provide 'somewhere to go, somewhere to meet old friends, to make new ones, or just find somebody to talk to'. Each centre should provide places and conditions where this is more likely to happen.

The approach also recognises that although Melbourne is a highly car conscious city, many of its people do not have ready access to car travel. In 1976, some 17 percent of Melbourne households did not have a car, and in some inner suburbs the figure was over 50 percent. Although some 80 percent of men over 18 had driving licences, only 49 percent of women did, with only 20 percent of women in some inner and western suburbs.

Greater emphasis on district centres with increased housing density nearby will, in the long term, help to create a city less dependent on liquid fuel being both available and economical. As costs rise, some people will be able to absorb them but others will have to rely more and more on public transport. Grouping a wide range of facilities, services and jobs at selected centres will provide better support for public transport services. People without cars will be able to have convenient and ready access to the services they require.

8.3 Identifying District Centres

In selecting centres designated as district centres, the Board took into account:

- population levels in the surrounding area
- accessibility, both by private and public transport
- the range of retailing services
- the range of commercial services, such as building societies, insurance offices, travel agents, health insurance offices, banks and professional services
- the range of community services such as libraries, Commonwealth Employment Service offices, community centres, infant welfare centres and elderly citizens centres

- the range of administrative services such as council offices, police stations, electricity and gas offices and court houses
- the capacity of the utility services.

Selection started from a retail floor space survey made in June 1979. This covered all centres of five or more shops and major free-standing stores, but excluded the central business district.

From the survey data, the largest 35 centres in terms of retail floor area were identified. These 35 centres were scored in terms of the various criteria. This was done several times, with varied weights to each of the criteria to test relevance and importance. Of the 35 centres tested, 18 appeared with consistently high scores.

The list was then modified to ensure that there was one centre for every 120 000 to 150 000 people, so there would be a relatively clear relationship of district centres to population locations.

The centres selected were surveyed to establish current patterns of land use and opportunities for and constraints on further development. Discussions with investment institutions confirmed that some centres are already clearly attractive. Others appear to have good future prospects. The potential for future development of others is less certain, but they qualify on the basis of location and range of services.

8.4 Future District Centres

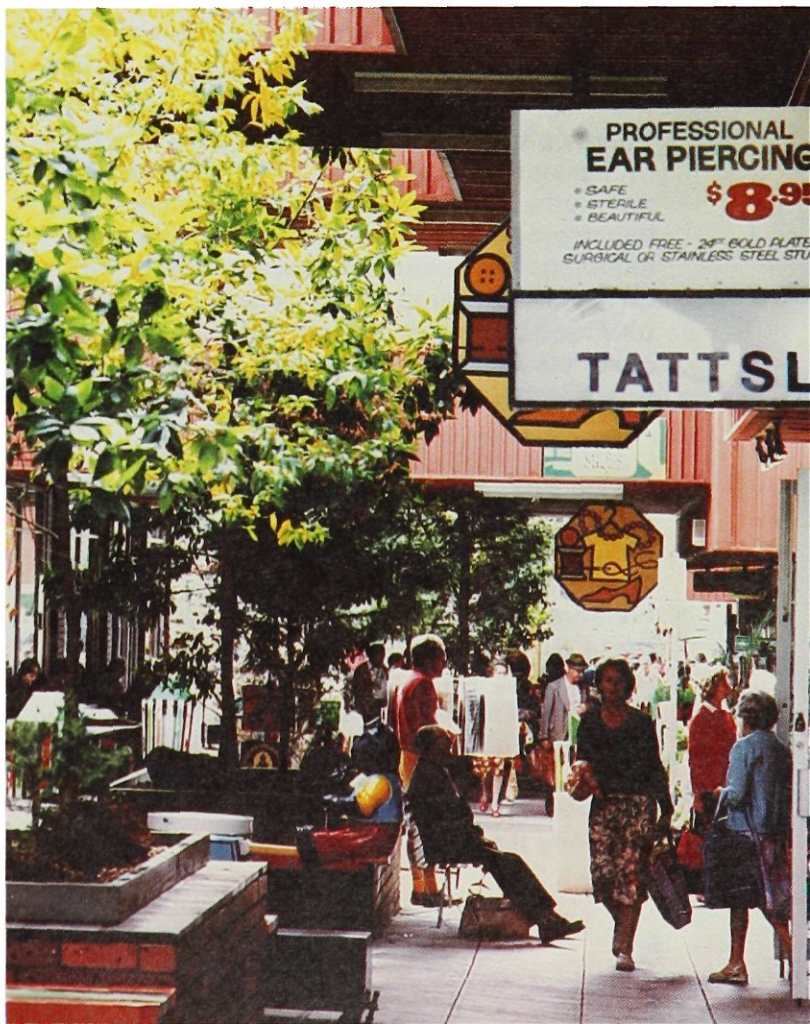
The Board will continue to monitor development at the designated centres. This will establish which centres are functioning in accord with the strategy and those where further steps are needed to attract suitable development.

Of the centres suggested for possible future designation, Berwick, Sydenham, Mill Park and Broadmeadows are within Special Use Zones 9 or 9A.

The objectives of these zones reflect the Board's intention that these areas develop as a civic focus for their surrounding area. Knox City contains the initial elements of a civic and commercial focus and Werribee builds on the commercial core of the original settlement.

At present, these centres are within developing suburbs and do not have the levels of surrounding population to support the full range of district centre commercial and community facilities. In many cases they do not have high public transport accessibility.

By indicating its intentions at this stage, the Board anticipates that these centres will form a focus for the growth of new commercial and community facilities. Once an appropriate population base and an adequate range of facilities have been provided, designation as a district centre can occur.



8.5

Continuity of Approach

The district centre approach formalises and reinforces policy that has been in Melbourne planning since the first scheme was set out in 1954.

Melbourne's older commercial centres, represented mainly by strip centres, evolved at a time when its people had less personal mobility than the motor car has given them in more recent decades. Unlike many later retail developments, these centres were usually on tram and train routes.

The Board's 1954 planning report proposed five District Business Centres: Footscray, Preston, Box Hill, Moorabbin and Dandenong. As well as retail facilities, these would provide people with a range of community facilities, personal services and amenities, including access to frequent train and bus services, facilities for entertainment and cultural pursuits, and improved pedestrian and traffic separation.

Subsequent suburban growth, people's rising consumption expenditure, and their greater use of the motor car, led to development of a new network of centres which emphasised shopping. Shopping centres and discount department stores were able to locate and operate independently of established centres and public transport. They were designed to give greater convenience and better access to the increasing number of Melbourne people who travelled by car.

In the late 1970s there was a trend back to the strip centres of the inner and middle suburbs, with development and redevelopment of retail and commercial services in or near them. Recent development in Chapel Street, Prahran, is an example. The Technical Advisory Committee on Retailing, set up by the Board in response to a request from the Victorian Government to review retail planning policy, reported that this trend is likely to continue.

Despite current economic problems, many Melbourne people spend more of their income on leisure, travel and recreation. They are becoming more quality and service conscious, more likely to go to shops that sell fashion, recreation or hobby products, and to those that provide good service and shopper amenity. The Technical Advisory Committee's view was that these factors, together with higher petrol prices, would lead people to patronise district centres that offer a wide range of products, services and activities from one trip.

Designating district centres into which development will be encouraged is broadly in keeping with established trends and long established planning policy. It recognises market forces and people's attraction to suburban living.