

## OPEN SPACE IN THE CENTRAL AREA

Compared with most comparable cities, Melbourne is very inadequately provided with open spaces in the central area, within which there are only the surround of St. Paul's Cathedral and the lawns in front of the Public Library where shoppers can rest, or workers can relax at lunch time. The extent to which these small areas are used is evidence of the need. Unfortunately, there are now few opportunities to obtain open space at reasonable cost, and such as there are should be zealously preserved. The area opposite Spencer Street Station between Collins Street and Little Collins Street, just referred to, being partly publicly owned and partly occupied by poor buildings is one such place, and this area is reserved in the planning scheme as open space.

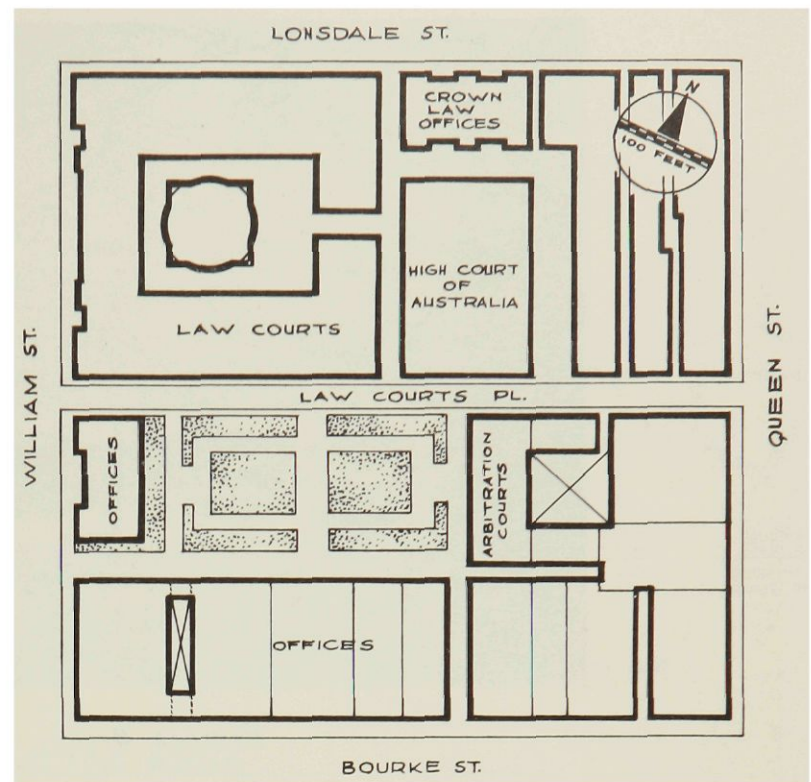
Another opportunity will present itself when the Western Market is rebuilt. This area is already publicly owned and under the control of the Melbourne City Council and no special reservation is necessary. Although plans for rebuilding on this site provide for the whole area to be covered by buildings, the Council should reconsider its proposals and provide some open space for public use.

If a city like New York can afford to provide quite large areas of open space right in the heart of downtown Manhattan surely Melbourne can do so. New York has found that the open space has increased the value of surrounding property, and because of the resulting increase in revenue has proved a good investment not only aesthetically, but also financially.

Many people have to wait in the vicinity of the Law Courts, and here a small area of open space would be welcome. At first sight there appears to be little opportunity of acquiring this, but study of the area shows that there are possibilities here to add to the attractiveness and amenities of the city. Much of the area between the Law Courts and Bourke Street is owned by one large commercial organisation and is now occupied mostly as a wool store, which some day will be moved to West Footscray to land which has been acquired for that purpose. When this transfer takes place and rebuilding is under consideration, co-operation between the property owners and the civic authorities could result in development such as is illustrated in diagram 36. The central court area could then provide not only a delightful and attractive amenity, but would add to the usefulness and value of the adjoining property, which could be developed to provide office and parking accommodation for legal and other people using the courts. It has not been considered advisable to make any specific reservation in this instance for it is essentially one where co-operation rather than direction is necessary to achieve the best results.

## ZONING IN THE CENTRAL AREA

A study of present development in the central area shows a tendency for a grouping of the four main uses — offices, retail establishments, wholesale trade, and industry. This is



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natural because it facilitates business. Retail stores in particular must be close enough together to make competitive shopping easy for customers. It is therefore in the interest of efficiency that this grouping should be encouraged.

The amount and character of traffic are determined by the way the land along the streets is developed. As is seen from Table 9 warehousing, storage and industry generate most traffic in proportion to employment. Their location near the City Ring Road is therefore desirable.

With these points in mind, the central area has been zoned as follows:

*Central Business Zone A:* The main commercial area, with its principal uses retail trade and offices.

*Central Business Zone B* providing chiefly for offices to cater for the banks and insurance companies, legal and other professional interests, and for business administration.

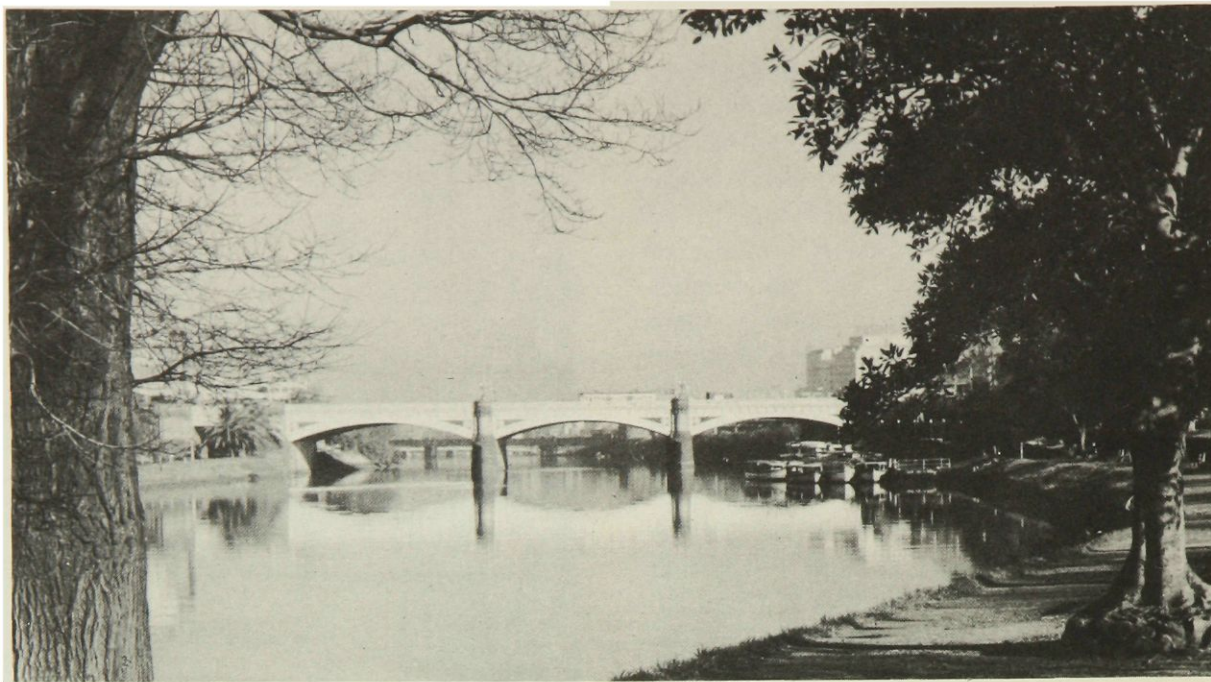
*Central Business Zone C* providing principally for wholesale business and such industry as must be located in the central area but permitting also offices and retail activities.

*Special Use Zone No. 13* providing mainly for Federal and State Government offices, for the offices of public authorities and for a civic centre.

Any undue concentration of activities in a limited area can bring about very undesirable congestion. For this reason, zoning provisions are sometimes extended to limit the total amount of usable floor space which may be constructed on individual sites. This is done by fixing for specified areas an upper limit for either the *floor area ratio*<sup>(1)</sup>

(1) Floor ratio is the ratio of the total floor area to the site area.





*Princes Bridge — a southern outlet*

or the *floor space index*.<sup>(1)</sup> This type of zoning is referred to as *bulk zoning*.

The more intense the use of the site the higher the floor space index. By comparing the floor space index for the various blocks in the central area, as shown in map 37(a), it will be noted that the greatest site development has occurred in the area bounded by Flinders, William, Bourke and Swanston Streets and the block immediately north of Bourke Street between Swanston and Elizabeth Streets where the largest department store is situated. All of this area, totalling seven blocks, is within about ten minutes' walking time of Flinders Street Station (see map 33), thus showing the influence of the railway terminal on central area development.

Map 37(a) shows the concentration of employment in this area. These seven blocks account for about 38% of all central area employment, which is due not only to the more intense development but also to the class of employment. From map 37(b) it will be seen that in this particular section of the central area the predominant employment east of Elizabeth Street is retail trade and west of Elizabeth Street office employment, both of which, as seen from Table 10, result in relatively high employment in relation to floor area.

The question arises whether the present trend of central area development is likely to result in such concentration of activities and consequential undesirable congestion as would justify a limit being placed on the extent of site development. If so, bulk zoning provisions would be desirable. In considering this question a number of factors must be taken into account.

(1) Floor space index is the ratio of the total floor area to the site area plus half the width of abutting streets.

Although at the present time in the central area of Melbourne any property owner may develop a site abutting on any of the main streets to the full height limit of 132 feet subject to the provisions of the Uniform Building Regulations regarding the angle of light and other matters, a detailed study of the most intensively developed blocks shows that unless there is substantial amalgamation of the smaller sites now in individual ownership, a block could not, under existing regulations, be developed to give a floor space index exceeding about 6.5 for office and similar uses, which is not an excessively high figure.

This question will be affected by the proposed city underground railway which among other things will encourage:

- (a) Development in the vicinity of the underground stations along Lonsdale Street.
- (b) Expansion of retail trade northwards beyond Lonsdale Street.
- (c) Provision of more office accommodation north of Bourke Street between Queen and King Streets.

*Table 10*  
FLOOR USE IN CENTRAL BUSINESS AREA

<i>Class of Employment</i>	<i>Employees per 1,000 square feet of gross floor area</i>
Office and Professional	5.8
Retail trade	3.4
Warehousing, Storage, etc.	2.5
Industry	5.2
Other uses	1.3
<b>Average</b>	<b>4.0</b>