

Overview

Community Reference Groups (CRGs) were established for each Activity Centre to provide advice to the Department of Transport and Planning in developing its Activity Centre Plans. The advice was developed over 3 sessions in June 2025.

All Statements of Advice will be released publicly alongside other engagement outcomes during Phase 2 engagement planned for September 2025.

Statement of Advice – Tooronga Station

What we value about the Activity Centre:

A summary of what CRG members believe makes the place unique and worth protecting.

The Tooronga Activity Centre holds a special place in our community due to its unique blend of natural features, welcoming character, and accessible amenities. It is a place where modern conveniences meet a strong sense of local identity. Below, we outline the qualities that make it worthy of protection and thoughtful planning.

Character and Atmosphere

- A well-connected residential area that blends historic and contemporary architecture.
- The area feels open, light-filled, and welcoming, with good access to sky views and natural light.
- Offers a relaxed yet vibrant vibe with nearby food options, coffee spots, and health and fitness facilities.
- Maintains a balance between residential calm and the presence of commercial and light industrial activity.

Landmarks and Public Spaces

- Distinctive old-style shopfronts give the area a unique and recognisable identity.
- Public spaces such as the Gardiner Trail parks and community greens offer places to gather, relax, and connect.
- The abundance of open space fosters a sense of community and supports a wide range of everyday activities.

Connection with Nature

- The nearby creek and expansive green spaces shape the community's relationship with the area, offering beauty, peace, and recreational opportunities.
- The presence of three bike trails and extensive walking paths brings nature into daily life, promoting health and wellbeing.
- These natural features are a central reason why people choose to spend time in and around the centre.

Access and Movement

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- Strong transport connections, particularly through the train network, make the centre easy to reach and navigate.
 - Walking and biking are common, especially along the scenic trails, reflecting the community's active lifestyle.
 - While cars are currently a major form of travel—especially when leaving the area—there is strong potential for public transport improvements.
 - The congested railway crossing presents a challenge, but also an opportunity for targeted infrastructure planning.

Community Appeal

- Tooronga offers the best of both worlds: it's leafy and residential, yet close to city links, freeways, schools, and diverse services.
- The area's landscaped nature strips and green frontages enhance its visual appeal and create a pleasant pedestrian experience.
- Its character lies in the harmony between tranquil residential living and lively commercial access, making it a desirable and functional neighbourhood.

Our Advice

Part A: General Advice

How do we plan for more homes in and around Tooronga while strengthening the things that make it unique?

- Preserve the existing garden-suburb character by maintaining generous, landscaped front setbacks and mature trees.
- Ensure new homes respect solar access, privacy, and sightlines for existing residents.
- Prioritise growth in areas that can support higher density (primarily along Tooronga Road, Malvern Road and High Street) whilst ensuring transition to lower density on side streets. Limit development elsewhere to 2-3 storeys, as per the marked-up map provided.
- Integrate new development with enhanced infrastructure—especially green space, transport, and drainage—to maintain amenity as population grows.
- Public space should not only be improved but increased in size, directly proportional with the expected population rise.
- Create new communal hubs such as an open public piazza on Malvern Road to support social connection, local business, and civic identity.
- Carefully manage building design and use to limit noise and privacy impacts on neighbouring homes.
- Retain and enhance local features that define Tooronga's uniqueness: leafy outlooks, walkable trails, and proximity to rail and tram corridors.

Areas of Agreement:

- General support for new housing if done sensitively and with upgraded infrastructure.
- Strong agreement that green space must grow in tandem with new development.

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- Consensus that the area's charm lies in its mix of urban access and leafy suburban character characterised by public parks, and side streets with landscaped private frontages and tree filled nature strips.
 - Agreement regarding density in certain areas (as shown in the map) and the need to balance housing growth with traffic and infrastructure pressures.

Part B: Thematic advice across four key areas:

Public and Green Space

- Larger parks such as Gardiner Park, Tooronga Park, and MacArthur Street Playground are highly valued for their role in family life, recreation, and access to nature.
- Linear parks like the Gardiner's Creek Trail support active lifestyles and commuter cycling and are integral to the area's identity.
- Smaller green buffers, such as nature strips and trees along the rail reserve or Milton Parade, contribute to a cohesive green network and are seen as vital elements to protect.
- The community strongly supports increasing tree planting both in open spaces and along streets to sustain tree canopy and biodiversity.
- A clear request was made to correct mapping of MacArthur Street Park—currently showing a private tennis court as a public space—and expand this park to serve more local residents.
- Tooronga Park is identified as underused and could be greatly improved with additional planting and better pedestrian access from Milton Parade and Tooronga Road.
- Public space should enable community gathering, functions, exercise, and connections to the broader area, especially as private yards become smaller.
- Central Tooronga could benefit from a new public plaza on Malvern Road, ideally surrounded by retail, cafes, and high-density residential.

Areas of Agreement:

- Agreement that public green space is critical and must expand with population growth.
- Strong support for park improvements and new public spaces, including the proposed piazza.
- Shared view that underutilised or poorly connected parks should be better integrated.

Moving Around

- Public transport is a key strength—train and tram services are well-regarded, though tram stop accessibility and service frequency can be improved.
- Accessible tram stops are welcomed but should not reduce existing car lanes or car parking spaces, unless they are offset with off-street public parking.
- Traffic congestion is a persistent concern, particularly:
 - Northbound on Tooronga Road and Burke Road from Malvern Road.
 - At the intersections of Tooronga/Malvern and Burke/Malvern.
- Community supports the creation of public off-street parking to replace on-street spaces lost to road improvements or tram stop upgrades.
- Walking is generally easy, though some pinch points—like the northeast corner of Tooronga and Malvern Roads—feel unsafe due to narrow footpaths.
- There is strong support for secure, on-street bike parking (e.g., hoops near shops).
- Increased train frequency, particularly on weekends and in the evenings, would benefit non-peak users.

Areas of Agreement:

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- Broad consensus that Tooronga is a public transport-friendly area but needs investment to keep up with growth.
 - Agreement on the importance of pedestrian and cycling safety and accessibility.
 - Shared concerns about traffic bottlenecks and interest in removing level crossings to improve flow.

Areas of Disagreement:

- Some divergence on the extent to which road capacity should be maintained versus prioritising active and public transport modes.
- Some felt that cycling could be improved with protected bike lanes on main and feeder roads into the Gardiners Creek trail bike path.

Safety

- Lighting is critical for safety in parks, underpasses, and less trafficked public areas—improving this is a high community priority.
- Areas of concern include:
 - Tooronga Park in the evening (feels poorly lit and isolated).
 - The pedestrian underpass at Tooronga Road and Burke Road near the rail line feels dark, unsafe and visually enclosed. The area would benefit from additional lighting.
 - Specific corners like Tooronga and Malvern Roads (especially outside the bagel shop) where sightlines are poor.
- Presence of other people—via activation of public space—makes areas feel safer, especially at night or early morning.
- PSOs at train stations and good public visibility contribute positively to the feeling of safety.
- Safe pedestrian crossings are essential; some currently feel inadequate due to narrow paths, poor visibility, or awkward alignment.
- Suggestions include more lighting, open sightlines, better footpaths, and passive surveillance through design.

Areas of Agreement:

- Clear consensus that improved lighting and visibility are key to making Tooronga feel safer.
- Agreement that park and path design should support both day and night-time use.

Local Infrastructure

- Priority areas for improvement include:
 - Resurfacing Tooronga Road between Malvern Road and the rail line (noted as old concrete and degraded).
 - Removal of the Tooronga Road level crossing and related train station upgrades to reduce delays and unlock urban improvements.
 - Improved stormwater drainage and updated water mains, especially in laneways that have a legal point of stormwater discharge in them.
- Waste management infrastructure should be upgraded to support higher-density living, especially around hard rubbish collection and storage.
- Maintain solar access for existing homes—design and siting of new buildings should protect this vital resource.
- Ensure new non-residential development includes noise buffering and good interface design to avoid impacts on residential neighbours.
- Pedestrian crossings near Toorak Road and freeway entrances need attention to enhance safety and accessibility.
- Support for trail lighting and bike parking to increase cycling mode share, mixed support for protected bike lanes.

Areas of Agreement:

- Agreement that infrastructure must keep pace with new housing—roads, drainage, lighting, and crossings all require upgrades.
- Shared support for level crossing removals to improve safety and traffic flow.
- Common view that new development should integrate cleanly with its surrounds, especially through good design and infrastructure separation.

Considerations

Areas where the community was open to acceptable compromises, and areas where compromise was not supported.

Where the Community is Open to Acceptable Compromises

Higher Buildings on Key Roads and Sites

- Support for 4–6 storeys along main roads such as Tooronga Road, Malvern Road, High Street, and the rail corridor, provided the sites are appropriate and impacts are managed.
- Community accepts taller buildings (up to 20 storeys) on large development sites such as the former Masters site, former Coles site, and the St Kevin’s playing fields, if these developments provide community benefit, step down to nearby homes, and enhance the surrounding environment.

Commercial Ground Floors in Designated Areas

- Ground-level commercial and retail activity is encouraged in designated shopping areas and along parts of Tooronga Road (between Malvern Road and the rail line) to maintain vibrancy and convenience.

Moderate Increases Near Rail

- 3–4 storey developments along Milton Parade are seen as acceptable with appropriate setbacks to existing homes and limited impact toward the rail line.

Design Contributions

- Community supports the inclusion of architectural greening, landscaped setbacks, and improved streetscapes as part of higher-density development.

Where the Community Does Not Support Compromise

Protecting Low-Density Side Streets

- Strong opposition to buildings over 2–3 storeys in side streets, particularly north–south streets such as Creswick, Edgar, and Parslow Streets.
- Mandatory upper-level setbacks are required to reduce visual bulk and protect privacy, solar access, and garden outlooks.
- Side setbacks are essential to prevent the “boxing in” of existing houses.

Preserving Sunlight and Amenity

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- No compromise on maintaining access to sunlight and solar energy for existing homes, public spaces, and pedestrian footpaths.
 - Sunlight to Gardiner's Creek Trail and parks is a particular priority for preservation.

Character and Heritage Protection

- Strong support for retaining historic shopfronts and facades, especially along Malvern Road and High Street. These features are seen as essential to the local identity.
- Green, open setbacks and landscaped front gardens in side streets must be preserved to maintain Tooronga's distinctive character.

Infrastructure and Liveability

- On-street parking must be retained to support residents and businesses.
- The community rejects developments that add pressure to already congested roads or that lack the infrastructure to support them.
- There is a firm call for transparency in planning: plans should be published in advance, with opportunities for community input when proposals don't meet guidelines.

Key Messages for Planners – Tooronga Station

Final key messages the group would like to leave with decision-makers.

1. Protect Local Character While Accommodating Growth

- The community supports new homes where they respect Tooronga's leafy, garden-suburb feel.
- Growth is welcomed along main roads and major sites if it includes green setbacks, high-quality design, and transitions sensitively into surrounding neighbourhoods.
- Historic shopfronts and streetscapes along Malvern Road and High Street are vital to local identity and should be preserved.

2. Public and Green Space Must Grow with the Population

- Parks and green areas like Gardiner's Creek Trail, MacArthur Street Playground, and Tooronga Park are central to daily life and must be expanded and improved.
- Public space is more important than ever as block sizes shrink—community plazas, tree-lined streets, and new green buffers should be prioritised.
- Enhancing access and connection to green corridors is key to supporting health and social wellbeing.

3. Transport, Safety and Infrastructure Need to Keep Pace

- Strong transport links are a key strength—but improved tram stop design (considering traffic and parking implications), more frequent trains, and reduced congestion are needed.
- Infrastructure upgrades, including drainage, roads, and crossings, must accompany housing growth to maintain liveability.
- Lighting, better footpaths, and safer intersections are essential to improving everyday safety and walkability.

4. Support Higher Density in the Right Places

- The community is open to taller buildings (4–6 storeys or more) along major roads and larger sites, where they provide public benefit and respect nearby homes.

- Ground-floor retail is supported in designated precincts to create vibrant, walkable centres.
- Moderate development (3–4 storeys) is acceptable near the rail line, with setbacks to reduce impact on adjacent housing. For specifics, please refer to the map.

5. Preserve Side Streets and Existing Amenity

- There is strong opposition to buildings over 2–3 storeys in side streets—these areas must maintain solar access, privacy, and visual separation.
- On-street parking, solar access, and garden views are essential to preserving community character and function.
- Any new planning controls must be transparent, with clear opportunities for residents to respond to proposals that depart from agreed goals.



Figure 1. Map of Tooronga with suggested considerations.