

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 – Brunswick Station

What we value about the Activity Centre:

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

Brunswick is a vibrant, community-led place shaped by diversity, creativity, and strong social connection. Residents value its green spaces, walkability, cultural depth, inclusive spirit, and human-scale environment. These qualities are essential to preserve as the area evolves.

Landmarks and Public Spaces

- Sydney Road is the cultural and commercial heart — busy, multicultural, and full of life, with everything from Lebanese bakeries and Ethiopian restaurants to music stores, op-shops, gym and sport facilities and tailoring shops.
- Key landmarks like Barkly Square, Brunswick Baths, Brunswick Library, and the Town Hall are central for shopping, wellbeing, and civic life.
- All green spaces but for example, Merri Creek (noted for its walking trails and community revegetation), Bulleke-Bek Park (popular with families), Gilpin Park, and Gillon Oval support community sports, play, dog walking and off-leash areas and relaxation
- The Upfield shared path, running alongside the rail line, is a key north–south corridor for walking and cycling, though its narrow width leads to conflicts between users.
- Developments like Nightingale Housing and Anstey Village are examples of sustainable urban living that reflect local values (there are other examples along this corridor as well).
- Community hubs offer places to gather, connect and celebrate local culture such as Balam Balam Place, Oven Street bakery, Sparta Place and venues like the Retreat Hotel and the Brunswick Mechanics Institute.
- Heritage shopfronts like Franco Cozzo, Mediterranean Wholesalers, and Laikon Deli reflect the area’s migrant, working-class roots and cultural diversity.
- Civic areas near Dawson Street serve as key informal gathering spaces for events and daily use.
- Residents strongly value mature street trees which provide shade, beauty, and a sense of continuity.

Community Character and Vibe

- Known for its gritty charm and artistic energy, Brunswick is welcoming to all walks of life.

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- The local music and arts scene is anchored by spaces like Jazzlab, Howler, and Tempo Rubato, and supported by a network of independent galleries and rehearsal rooms.
 - Streets such as Hope Street and Weston Street host many small, family-run businesses, cafés, and artists' studios.
 - Rising rents and redevelopment are pushing out longstanding businesses and making it harder for artists and young families to stay.

Natural Environment and Open Space

- Spaces like Merri Creek and connected green spaces between Dawson Street and Hope Street support active lifestyles and local biodiversity, including native birds like galahs and rainbow lorikeets.
- Residents call for more greenery, especially in high-density zones and along streets
- The absence of green space in Breese Street and between Sydney Road and Lygon Street is felt acutely; residents must walk to Princes Park or Fleming Park in Carlton North for larger open areas.
- Pocket parks foster neighbourly connections and they should be models for future investment. Participants emphasised the need for developers to contribute to the streetscape.

Our Advice

Part A: General Advice

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

- Prioritise community wellbeing and require development to enhance public life, green space, and local infrastructure.
- Improve accessibility of public transport
- New developments should be architecturally designed and high quality housing
- Visible support in this area for First Nations and Treaty - this work provides an opportunity to address this area of community concern and indigenous people should be consulted
- Increase supply of well-designed, affordable housing — including 3–4 bedroom apartments — suitable for families and ageing residents and 1 bedroom apartments suitable for individuals and downsizers.
- Require meaningful contributions to the public realm: canopy trees, shaded seating, drinking fountains, public toilets, BBQ areas and safe lighting.
- Invest in infrastructure like Brunswick Secondary College, community health centres, youth hubs, community sport grounds and libraries and community recreational facilities like pools, which will serve a growing and diverse population.
- Preserve and build on the area's creative identity through public art, low cost multipurpose studio spaces, and locally relevant architecture using local materials such as local bricks.
- Ensure new commercial ground-floor uses are accessible to community groups, small traders, and social enterprises.
- Ensure planning and new developments implement sustainable and green standards, including the use of rainwater, solar energy
- Consult and involve local government for direction on infrastructure needs and similar

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- Embed regular, accessible feedback processes — such as online project dashboards and local info pop-ups — to keep the community engaged and informed.

Part B: Thematic advice across four key areas:

Public and Green Space

- Every resident should live within a 5-minute walk of a green space — this is not yet the case in areas west of Sydney Road.
- Existing parks like Gilpin Park lacks shelter, and lighting — upgrades are needed to serve all users.
- East–west green connections are limited
- Open space should support a range of activities and users including dog walkers, families and children, older adults, singles, and people with disabilities and be designed with Melbourne weather in mind.
- Community gardens demonstrate how small spaces can build connection and food security.

Moving Around

- Brunswick’s walkability is a strength — however uneven paving and poor lighting pose barriers.
- The Upfield path is crowded and uncomfortable. Cyclists often clash with pedestrians, especially near Anstey Station and Victoria Street.
- East–west streets like Hope Street and Weston Street need safe crossings, bike lanes, or reliable buses.
- Tram stops in Brunswick are not accessible to people with mobility issues and should be accessible.
- Bike parking near Jewell Station, Barkly Square, and local supermarkets is scarce and insecure.
- Residents support removing some parking in favour of wider footpaths and better protected cycling infrastructure, especially around schools and shopping streets.
- Buses along Albion and Blyth Street are infrequent and unreliable.
- Developers need to be encouraged to disconnect apartment ownership from car parking.
- Sydney road and Lygon Street not so good for cycling
- Accessible pavements for people in wheelchairs

Safety

- Well-used areas feel safer thanks to clear sightlines, good lighting, and active street frontage.
- Dark laneways and industrial pockets are avoided after dark due to poor lighting and low visibility.
- Uneven footpaths and underlit parks contribute to trips, falls and discomfort for vulnerable users.
- Community outreach services around Barkly Square are valued but need investment to keep up with population growth and shifting demographics.
- Improve safety on the Upfield bike path, without compromising the areas “gritty” charm
- East -west corridor needs safer modes of transport
- Better safety outcomes could come from:
 - Smarter lighting (e.g. dimmable and directional)
 - Traffic-calming on residential rat runs
 - Active frontages in new developments, especially near station forecourts

Local Infrastructure

- Brunswick’s infrastructure is stretched. Growth must be matched with clear, funded upgrades:
- Tram stops on Sydney, Grantham, and Lygon must be accessible, prioritised early in planning.
- Public toilets are needed near Sydney Rd/Glenlyon Road and Brunswick Library (which are currently limited or closed after hours).
- Flooding near Albert Street and Ewing Street shows the urgent need for stormwater upgrades.

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- Key community assets like Brunswick Baths, Don Bosco Youth Centre, and Brunswick Library require expansion or redevelopment.
 - Investments are needed in EV charging and community hubs for intergenerational and multicultural use
 - Developers should be required to fund adjacent streetscape and public realm upgrades — not just internal amenities.
 - Moreland Road is used as a major drive through road which contributes to the local traffic, there will be increased pressure on this with population increase.
 - There was a suggestion that the multiple stakeholders that own the local infrastructure should meet to create a 50 year co-ordinated plan to ensure that impacts are co-ordinated.
 - Please do not turn Bulleke-Bek park into a station forecourt.

Key Areas of Agreement and Disagreement

Agreement

- Everyone values green space and tree canopy — and wants more of it
- There is strong support for safer, separated bike infrastructure
- Accessible tram stops are essential
- Infrastructure must grow with housing
- New housing should be affordable, high quality, architecturally interesting, stimulating and enable people of all ages to stay in Brunswick
- There is a general agreement that all new development must meet sustainable standards, and ideally set an example for the country
- Live music, local businesses, and cultural venues are vital and must be protected

Disagreement / Mixed Views

- Car parking on Sydney Road: some want it removed for bike lanes; others want it retained for accessibility
- Lighting: more is needed, but some worry about impacts on wildlife and sleep
- Density: many support medium-rise (5–8 storeys); fewer support high-rise unless design quality and benefits are clear
- Some call for tighter regulation (e.g. parking enforcement), others favour community-led or design-first solutions
- Community trust in government and developers is mixed — consistent transparency is needed

Considerations

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

- Growth is supported if it respects local identity, strengthens community life, and is backed by infrastructure.

Where Compromise is Supported

- Height & Density: Up to 10 storeys near transport hubs (e.g. Anstey Station, Jewell Station) if design is high-quality and solar access maintained
- Parking & Access: Reduced on-street parking is accepted where offset by better active/public transport; multi storey car parks near stations may be acceptable if convertible in future
- Land Use: Redevelopment of sites like Union Square and above Woolworths is supported — provided amenity is protected
- Design Quality: New buildings must offer green infrastructure, active frontages, and showcase local character — not generic high-rises

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- Planning: Involve First Nations people, protect local venues, include more low cost multi-modal community spaces and make planning materials clear and multilingual
 - Ensure accessible tram stops amidst level crossing removal works.

Key Messages for Planners – Brunswick Station

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

- Brunswick wants more homes. We want to welcome more people to contribute to our creative, progressive, diverse community. Population growth supports existing industries and new employment in key sectors. We want this.
- We want homes that are sustainable, well thought out, architecturally ambitious and available to all types of households. We should be proud of our built environment.
- We want to be an example for Australia.
- To achieve this we need to master plan for greenery, safety and good transport for all.
- This vision can only be realised with genuine ongoing community engagement. We look forward to continuing to work with the Victorian Government on this.