

## 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 – Middle Footscray Station

### What we value about the Activity Centre:

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

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***CRG members describe Middle Footscray as a family-friendly, well-connected neighbourhood with a strong community feel, cultural diversity, and a mix of old and new housing. The area is known for its small businesses, parks, and walkability, with valued landmarks including the West Footscray Neighbourhood House, Whitten Oval, and Barkly Village.***

***While the community is active and engaged, concerns were raised about overdevelopment, traffic congestion, limited green space, and poor bike and pedestrian infrastructure. Railway lines and major roads create divisions, but residents see opportunities to improve connectivity and protect the area's character as it grows.***

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### Character and Community Vibe

- Friendly, village-like feel with strong neighbourhood ties.
- Distinct identities between areas (e.g., Seddon vs Middle Footscray).
- Family-friendly, diverse, and inclusive communities.
- Presence of independent shops, cafes, and small businesses.
- Consistent streetscapes with modest, low-rise buildings.
- Active and informed community that values character and cohesion.

### Public Spaces and Landmarks

- Local parks, reserves, and nature strips (e.g., Hansen Reserve, Charles Street).
- Key landmarks: Victoria Street, Barkly Village, Whitten Oval, West Footscray Neighbourhood House.
- Heritage buildings and industrial sites (e.g., Drill Hall, Uncle Toby site, Federation precincts).
- Limited but valued open space and green infrastructure.

### Natural Environment

- Tree-lined streets contribute to a green, liveable feel.

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- Urban heat and lack of shade are growing concerns.
  - Railway lines divide communities and limit connectivity.
  - Opportunity to increase and protect green cover and biodiversity.

### **Movement and Accessibility**

- High walkability and cycling culture, but poor infrastructure and connectivity
- High car use due to limited public transport integration and pedestrian access
- Congestion and bottlenecks (e.g., Ashley Street) impede local travel
- Calls for improved crossings, traffic calming, and safer routes for all users

### **What Makes It Special**

- Vibrant mix of old and new buildings with cultural diversity
- Unique character defined by people, small businesses, and built form
- Absence of chain stores and overdevelopment maintains local charm
- Strong sense of place, pride, and desire to retain what makes each centre distinctive

## **Our Advice**

### **Part A: General Advice**

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

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- Respect existing character and community identity
- Preserve the suburb's human scale and walkable nature.
- Value Middle Footscray's established street layout, older homes, and community familiarity.
- Avoid overdevelopment that removes greenery or erodes the existing feel.
- Grow in a balanced and inclusive way
- Ensure new housing supports social diversity and provides for different household types, including young people, families, older residents, and people with disabilities.
- Develop affordable and age-appropriate housing so locals can stay in the area as their needs change.
- Protect and expand greenery alongside housing
- Any loss of private green space (such as backyards) must be offset with more public green space.
- Integrate trees, gardens, and plantings in new developments—not just artificial landscaping.
- Support community life with strong public infrastructure
- Link population growth to improved transport, services, and public spaces.
- Strengthen local gathering places such as parks, community hubs, and cultural sites.
- Keep change people-centred
- Prioritise walking, cycling, safety, and access to nature in all planning.
- Engage locals early and often, as they bring lived experience and practical insight into what the area needs.

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## Part B: Thematic advice across four key areas:

### Public and Green Space

#### Community values:

- Parkland is highly valued, especially accessible, tree-filled, and multi-use spaces.
- Even tiny parks are heavily used, showing the demand for open space in a dense urban area
- Green buffers, such as strips of mature trees, provide a visual and environmental break between roads, train lines, and buildings.
- Nature strips, green rooftops, and balconies can support urban greenery at different scales.

#### Concerns about limited space:

- The area has very little green space overall, and what exists is often overcrowded.
- Development that removes private yards (front or back) has a major impact on the neighbourhood's overall greenery.
- Whitten Oval is seen as underutilised; it doesn't feel like a public space, even though it takes up a large area

#### Ideas for improvement:

- Convert dead-end streets into pocket parks with real greenery grass, trees, and shade not just cosmetic treatments.
- Expand access to underused green space on school and church grounds by encouraging community use outside school hours.
- Encourage design that includes decent-sized balconies and rooftop gardens to compensate for reduced backyard space.
- Protect and build on existing areas with high tree coverage.

### Moving Around

#### Challenges with movement:

- Train lines and Geelong Road act as major barriers, cutting the area into disconnected parts.
- Walking and cycling routes are fragmented and unsafe in many areas.
- Poor lighting, high vehicle speeds, and the presence of trucks reduce comfort and accessibility.
- The activity centre is difficult to access for people not using cars.

#### Key issues:

- Many locals own bikes but don't use them regularly due to unsafe cycling conditions.
- Routes to the Maribyrnong River, especially for cyclists, are poorly connected.
- Footpaths near the station and on major streets are not well maintained.
- Buckley Street is particularly dangerous due to speeding vehicles—residents suggest calming measures like speed bumps

#### Community priorities for improvement:

- Better lighting around station areas and along key routes would support safer movement at night.
- Expand and upgrade bike paths to be physically separated from traffic.
- Create pedestrian-priority crossings at key intersections and across wide streets such as Geelong Road.
- Trial "barnyard crossings" that allow people to cross from any angle, prioritising walking over car flow.
- Slow traffic speeds through design, not just signage—especially in residential or pedestrian-heavy zones.

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## **Safety**

### **What promotes safety:**

- Good lighting, slower traffic, and more people out at all hours increase feelings of safety.
- Familiar faces, community activity, and knowing neighbours contribute to a secure and welcoming environment.
- Group cycling or walking is perceived as safer than being alone.

### **What creates concern:**

- Fast electric bikes can surprise pedestrians, particularly older or hearing-impaired people.
- Major roads like Geelong are wide and difficult to cross, especially without pedestrian infrastructure.
- Narrow streets like Victoria Street are difficult for cyclists but pleasant to walk.
- There is concern about rising antisocial behaviour, especially near public housing and transport hubs.
- A visible increase in crime and drug-related incidents is making some people feel unsafe and unheard

### **Suggested responses:**

- Increase the presence and visibility of community policing to deter crime and antisocial behaviour.
- Invest in support services for mental health and substance use to address root causes of safety issues.
- Improve the design of public spaces, prioritising pedestrian visibility and safety through lighting, crossings, and passive surveillance.
- Educate road users about shared space and cyclist/pedestrian rights to foster a culture of mutual respect.

## **Local Infrastructure**

### **Infrastructure priorities:**

- Social services and community support infrastructure are seen as critical.
- People want to age in place, but suitable housing for seniors is lacking.
- Public amenities such as toilets, bins, seating, and covered bus stops are needed to support everyday life.
- Better drainage, particularly at trouble spots like the Victoria Street underpass, is required to prevent flooding.

### **Key issues raised:**

- Infrastructure hasn't kept pace with population growth, and further development risks compounding this.
- The local senior citizens centre needs replacement or revitalisation to serve a broader demographic.
- Streets don't reflect the level of pedestrian activity—wider footpaths, setbacks, and seating are needed.
- Connectivity across barriers like train lines and Geelong Road must be improved for both people walking and biking.

### **Opportunities for enhancement:**

- Introduce more not-for-profit childcare services to meet demand and support working families.
- Include public art to enrich the identity of the activity centre and encourage visitation.

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- Improve lighting and safety on pedestrian routes near the station and between key community nodes.
  - Install right-turning traffic lights at key intersections such as Albert Street for safer driving.

#### **Areas of Strong Community Agreement**

- More green space is urgently needed as density increases—especially high-quality, usable parkland with trees and shade.
- Safety improvements are essential across the board: lighting, visibility, policing, and social support.
- Active transport needs real investment—safe bike lanes, pedestrian-friendly crossings, and shaded footpaths.
- Infrastructure must improve alongside housing growth, not after it.
- Protecting the suburb's character while allowing some development is a shared value.
- School and church grounds present an opportunity for more community green space.

#### **Areas of diverse views and open questions:**

- While there is support for more homes, residents are wary of developments that don't bring tangible community benefits.
- Some see Whitten Oval as an asset, others feel it doesn't serve the public well and could be better utilised.
- There are concerns about whether traffic and truck bans will be enforced meaningfully or remain ineffective in practice.
- Opinions vary on cycling safety measures—some favour group rides and off-road lanes, others feel solo commuting will always carry risk.

This summary reflects the thoughtful contributions of Middle Footscray residents and offers government and planners a clear roadmap to support growth while preserving the area's liveability and unique identity. Future planning should continue to prioritise community involvement, walkability, green space, and social infrastructure to ensure Middle Footscray remains a vibrant, inclusive, and safe place for all.

#### **Key Areas of Agreement and Disagreement**

##### **Strong Areas of Agreement**

- More green space is essential: There's a consistent call for expanding and improving public parks, especially in underserved areas.
- Infrastructure must scale with population: Roads, schools, services, and public transport need upgrades concurrently with density increases.
- Walkability and active transport are valued: Residents want to walk and cycle safely; better lighting and pathways will support this.
- Community interaction is a priority: Public spaces that bring people together—like seating, plazas, and community centres—are seen as vital. And parks.
- Architectural standards matter: High-density living is acceptable if it reflects good design and community character and build quality.
- Safety needs to be inclusive: While generally safe, lighting and design improvements can help everyone feel secure.

##### **Divergent Views or Open Questions**

- Extent of lighting in parks: Some residents desire more lighting for safety; others worry about disrupting the natural environment or ambience.
- Permit parking vs. visitor access: Calls for more permit zones exist, but there's also concern about ensuring enough visitor parking and not over-regulating street use.

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- Dog access in parks: While some appreciate dog-friendly areas, others find off-leash dogs in the way. Clearer designations or separated areas in parks may help through more parks.
  - How best to activate underused spaces: Ideas like pop-up shops and multifunctional community centres were suggested, but more work is needed to decide location, funding, and programming.

## Considerations

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

### **Support for More Housing with Clear Conditions**

- The community accepts the need for additional housing but insists it must not come at the cost of local character and liveability.
- There is openness to modest height increases (up to four storeys) along certain streets like Victoria Street (Seddon portion), provided developments are sensitively designed
- Higher-density housing is considered more appropriate along Buckley Street, Geelong Road, and near the station, especially on larger sites (over 1000 sqm)
- Support exists for smaller-scale apartment complexes that include on-site green spaces.

### **Protection of Local Character is Non-Negotiable**

- The community strongly values the “village feel” of Seddon and wants to protect low-rise streetscapes, heritage buildings, and independent retailers.
- Building form should include setbacks, nature strips, and small fences to preserve walkability and neighbourly interaction.
- The unique tone and scale of the Seddon and Victoria Street area are seen as defining features that should be protected through strict planning controls

### **Green and Public Space is Critical**

- Green space must not be lost under any development scenario; in fact, more green and public spaces are needed within a short walking distance.
- Green buffers, street trees, and habitat planting are valued elements that enhance the quality of life and must be integrated into all future planning.

### **Mandatory Design and Planning Standards**

- Environmentally responsible design is seen as essential and should be mandated.
- Developments should accommodate a mix of apartment types, including those suitable for families.
- Car parking must be included in all new builds, with more support for car share facilities.

### **Restoring Trust in the Planning Process**

- Many residents feel that recent developments (e.g., Joseph’s Road towers) have undermined trust in both local and state planning bodies.
- There is strong demand for transparent, accountable processes with mechanisms for community review, appeal rights, and independent oversight
- Residents want clearer roles for council, a state architect, and even an ombudsman to ensure fair and high-quality outcomes.
- Engagement must be ongoing and inclusive—many residents feel unaware or left out of the current process.

### **Key Areas of Agreement and Disagreement**

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### **Areas of Strong Community Agreement**

- Sensible growth is acceptable when it respects the character of the neighbourhood.
- High-rise towers are not appropriate in Seddon or Victoria Street—medium-rise development in targeted locations is preferred.
- Green and public space should increase, not decrease, alongside housing growth.
- Independent shops, walkable streets, and heritage features are critical to retain.
- Trust, transparency, and local voice are essential to the success of any planning process.

### **Areas with Limited support for compromise**

- Strong opposition to tall buildings that overshadow or dominate existing single-level dwellings.
- Firm stance against losing heritage elements, independent retailers, or the village atmosphere.
- No tolerance for poor design, overdevelopment, or “grey, sunless wind tunnels.”
- Speed of the current planning process is seen as too fast and lacking proper consultation—this is not viewed as an acceptable trade-off

## Key Messages for Planners – Middle Footscray Station

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

### **Protect What Makes Middle Footscray Unique**

- The area is valued for its village feel, heritage homes, green streets, and independent shops.
- Seddon, Kingsville, and Middle Footscray each have distinct local identities that should be respected in all planning decisions.
- High-rise buildings are viewed as out of character and should be avoided—modest, well-designed developments are more appropriate.

### **Support Housing Growth That Maintains Liveability**

- The community is open to more housing, especially near the station and on major roads like Buckley Street and Geelong Road.
- Developments must be thoughtfully scaled (generally up to four storeys) and should include family-friendly apartments and green space.
- Design quality, environmental sustainability, and inclusion of car parking are considered essential.

### **Green Space Is Essential, Not Optional**

- Green space is already limited—any new development must preserve existing greenery and deliver more usable public open space.
- Small parks, tree-lined streets, rooftop gardens, and reimagined school/church grounds all play a role in greening the suburb.
- Mature trees and green buffers are vital for shade, aesthetics, and wellbeing.

### **Movement and Safety Must Be Improved**

- Train lines, major roads, and narrow footpaths make it hard for people to move safely around the area on foot or by bike.
- Prioritise pedestrian safety with more crossings, better lighting, and slower traffic.
- Create connected, separated bike routes and ensure key routes (e.g. to the river or station) are safe and accessible for all ages.

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### **Restore Community Trust Through Genuine Engagement**

- Residents want a say in shaping growth and feel current processes are rushed and opaque.
- Planning must be transparent, inclusive, and backed by enforceable rules that ensure quality development.
- Ongoing engagement, independent oversight, and accountability are critical to rebuilding trust and delivering positive outcomes.