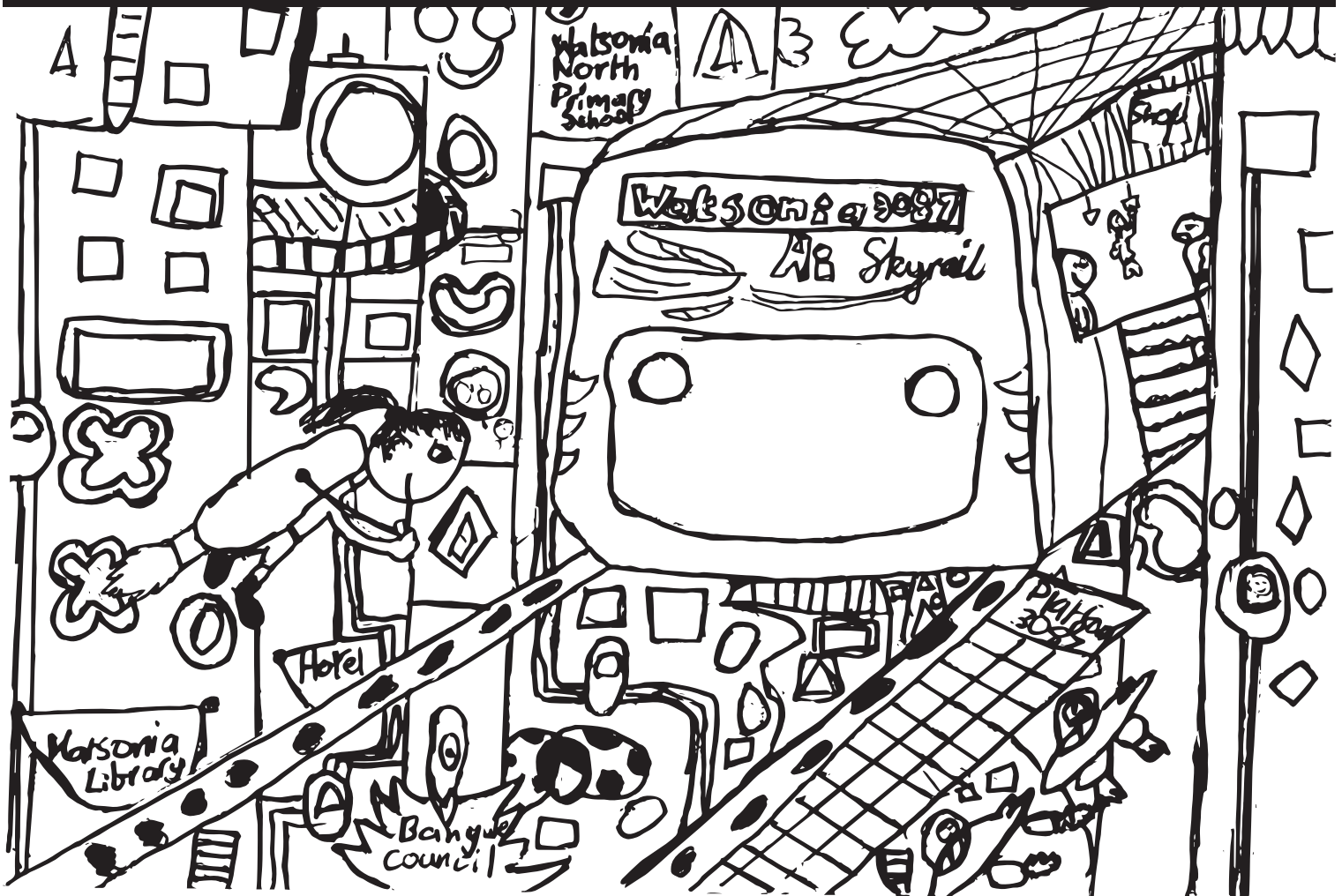


picture watsonia

A VISION FOR WATSONIA VILLAGE





Prepared by Hello City
for Banyule City Council

Hello City
www.hellocity.com.au



Cover image by Grace Kumar
of Watsonia North Primary School,
winner of the Postcard from 2050 Competition



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Foreword

Melbourne is continuing to experience strong population growth as more people want to live in one of the world's most liveable cities. Banyule is experiencing change as well and Watsonia is no exception to this.

Picture Watsonia is a vision for Watsonia's main shopping street, the railway station and its large car park. This plan is Council's attempt to put local people in the driver's seat to consider how Watsonia should look, feel and function in the future. This vision has been created through extensive consultation with local residents, traders, community groups and our State and Federal Parliamentary representatives.

Picture Watsonia:

- Considers the current strengths, challenges and opportunities for Watsonia.
- Articulates the aspirations of the community and describes what is possible to achieve in the future.
- Identifies a range of actions to help the vision become a reality. Many of these call for buy-in from key stakeholders, including local residents, traders and community groups.

The vision for Watsonia has always been aspirational. This is why the Hurstbridge train line was put under the Greensborough Highway all those years ago to give us easier traffic flow in our local area. However, in recent years there has been a sense of inaction from Governments in Watsonia. Local people feel that change is overdue in comparison to other parts of Banyule, where there has been more investment and higher priority from Governments.

Picture Watsonia helps to put central Watsonia back on the agenda. It has been prepared to reflect the hopes and aspirations of local people. In our view this vision is relighting the old idea of Watsonia being an important centre in the northeast of Melbourne.

We commend this vision to the community.

Yours sincerely,



Cr Rick Garotti
Grimshaw Ward
Banyule City Council



Cr Mark Di Pasquale
Bakewell Ward
Banyule City Council



Cr Craig Langdon
Mayor
Banyule City Council



Picture Watsonia Vision & Objectives Diagram

Introduction

In 2013 Banyule Councillors identified a need for a vision for the central area of Watsonia that creates a clear picture of the future. A picture that reflects the values, hopes and aspirations of the people of Watsonia and is broadly supported by all those who are important in bringing it to life.

Early in 2014 Council formed a project team to develop this vision which includes Council staff selected for the knowledge and insights they bring from across different Council activities and disciplines. City strategists Hello City were commissioned to join the team to facilitate and pilot the Picture Watsonia project.

The project invited all the people of Watsonia to take part including local residents, Councillors, local businesses, Council officers, cultural and community organisations as well as key Victorian Government and Federal Government stakeholders. Through this process, an understanding was gained of what is important to the Watsonia community, and the core values and aspirations that should guide change and growth. This understanding informs the vision and objectives in this document. An image of Watsonia's future has emerged from this work; one that is big picture and long term, as well as having immediate relevance to the community.

In creating the Picture Watsonia Vision and the accompanying objectives and ideas, underlying issues have been sought rather than just considering face-value symptoms. For example, one group might ask for more parking while another wants less, while sharing an underlying wish for a bustling main street that is easily accessible. The Watsonia Vision is well-informed and intended to be meaningful, inspiring and truly useful to the present and future Watsonia.

Along with the vision seven objectives have been described that each mark out a direction for a specific aspect of Watsonia's future. Each objective is supported with a series of ideas and possibilities that will be explored, tested, developed and pared back as part of the next steps of this project. The strongest ideas will be forged into an implementation plan to deliver the Watsonia Vision over the coming years.

The vision, objectives and ideas defined during this process are specific and grounded. This is not a generic vision but something that is completely of Watsonia and will serve as a touchstone to guide future plans and decisions.

“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”

How to Put the Picture Watsonia Vision to work

A vision is more than a pretty story about the future - it is the result of a rigorous and meaningful process to articulate the shared aspirations of a broad community, define what is possible to achieve those aspirations and take accountability for the steps to make it happen.

The Picture Watsonia Vision is intended to be a resource for those involved in both big picture planning for Watsonia's centre and for those involved in day-to-day decision making and delivery. It should be ambitious and it should inspire and at the same time it should be robust and realistic. The Picture Watsonia Vision should guide actions in the central area over the next three decades, starting today.

Key Terms

Vision

The purpose of the vision statement is to evoke in words, diagrams and/or images the way a place will look, feel and function in the future. It should help the reader imagine how they would experience the place – what they would see, hear and taste. How they would move around and what kinds of activities would be on offer to them. How they would feel about the place and how they would describe it to others. It should come directly out of engagement and represent the distillation of many voices and hopes.

Objectives

The objectives crystallise elements of the vision. They should act as a touchstone for those making decisions big and small. One way to think of them is as a filter through which day-to-day activities can be fed to determine whether they fit with the vision.

Ideas

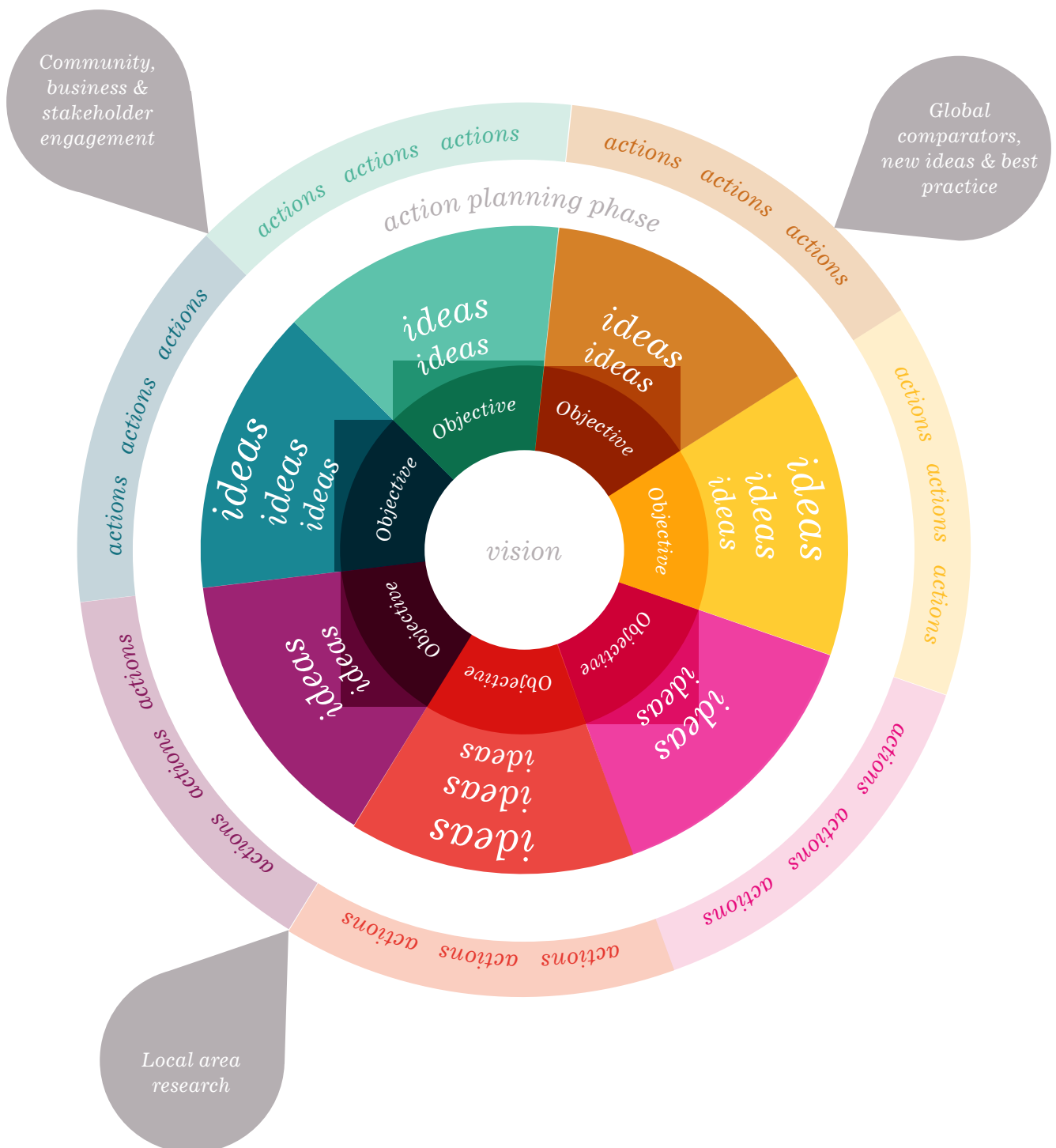
Ideas identified as part of a visioning process should be in line with the vision and objectives and promise the possibility of delivering the objective. They should strike enough of a balance between ambition and deliverability to make them worthy of further exploration and testing in the implementation process that will follow this project. In the phase following this project each idea should be examined in the context of existing or planned strategies, programs, partnerships and resources. Wherever possible ideas and actions should be the result of engagement with those who will make them happen.

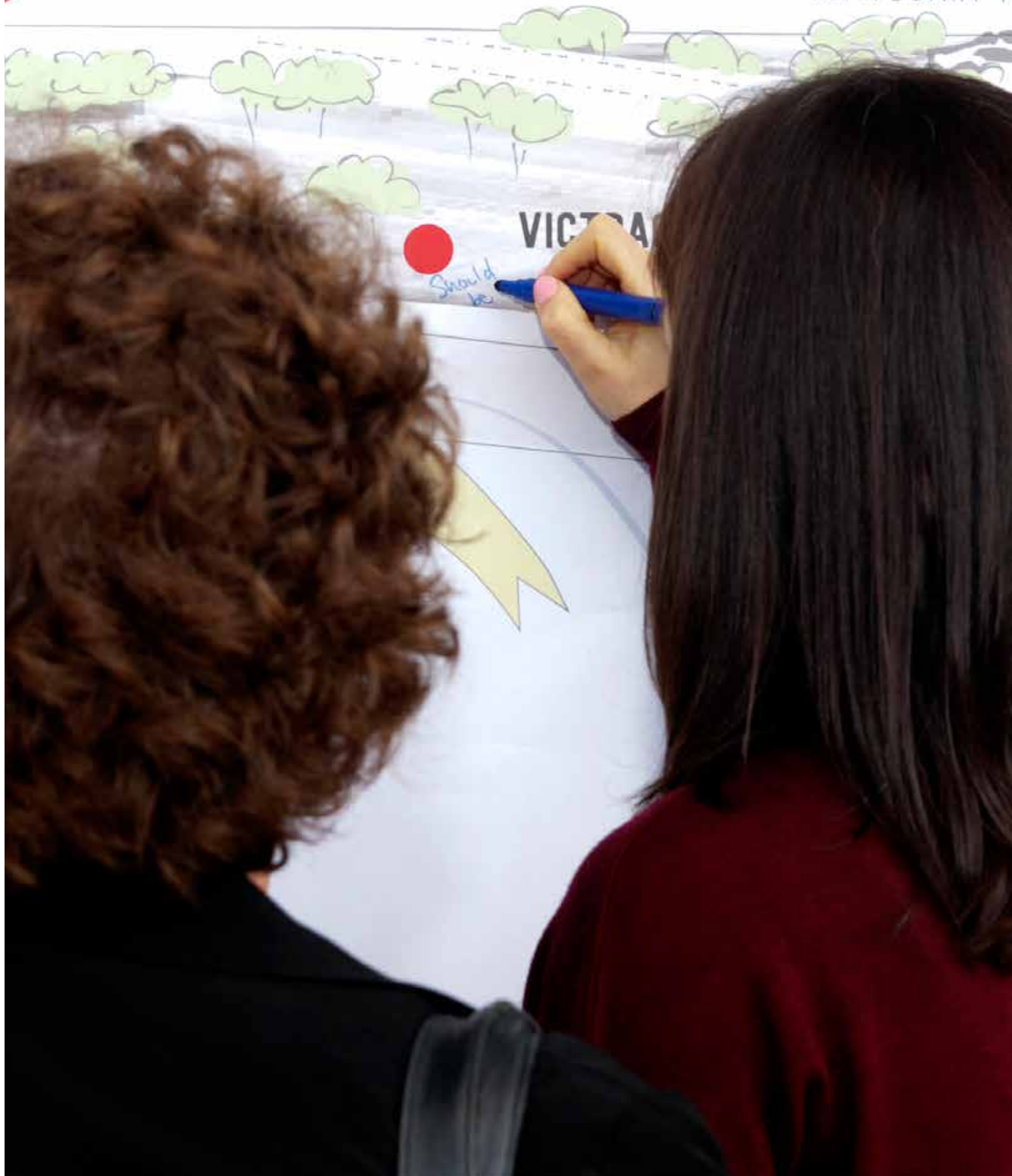
Kickstarters

A program of kickstarter projects can be invaluable to carry out small-scale, low cost and easy activities that can begin to set the tone for the Vision and bring it to life. Kickstarters should respond directly to the Vision and objectives and seed longer term activities. Kickstarter projects should be carried out in a way that allows for testing and developing the more complex or high-impact ideas and be tangible to the person on the street.

Ingredients of a Successful Vision

- It describes a future that is realistic, possible, achievable but also exciting
- It captures and evokes the uniqueness of the place and is not the same as other places' visions
- It is clear and easily understood
- It captures what people really value
- It instantly resonate with local residents, business owners and strategic stakeholders, especially those who have taken part in engagement activities







Developing the Picture Watsonia Vision

Between March and July 2014 Hello City and the project team carried out a broad all-of-place conversation called **Watsonia 2050** that invited the people interested in Watsonia to share what they value today along with their aspirations and ideas for the future.

The project focused on the central area of Watsonia referred to in this document as Watsonia Village. The focus area includes all the shops, the library and RSL along with the highway intersection, train station and the commuter car park.

The Watsonia 2050 conversation was framed as a discussion about the next 35 years in order to challenge everyone who took part to think about the short and medium term as well as the long term future of the centre. The process had 4 key phases.

The first phase of the engagement process began with in-depth local research into the issues, history, retail environment, character, icons and assets of Watsonia. This process involved reviewing strategic documents, studies and consultation results. Resources such as ABS, Street Advisor, Google, local papers, social media pages and local blogs were also considered.

Next came a workshop in which the Council project team identified the strengths and weaknesses of Watsonia today, and the opportunities and threats over the coming years (SWOT). This was followed by a Design Charrette with representatives from across Council that included a collective place audit of Watsonia. The first phase of the project was concluded by meetings with Banyule Councillors including Cr Rick Garotti and Cr Mark Di Pasquale and with a clear agreement across Council about the scope, ambition and possibilities of the vision.

The second phase of the project was a conversation open to all of Watsonia. People from a myriad of backgrounds and perspectives took part in this phase and shared what matters the most to the people who know Watsonia the best.



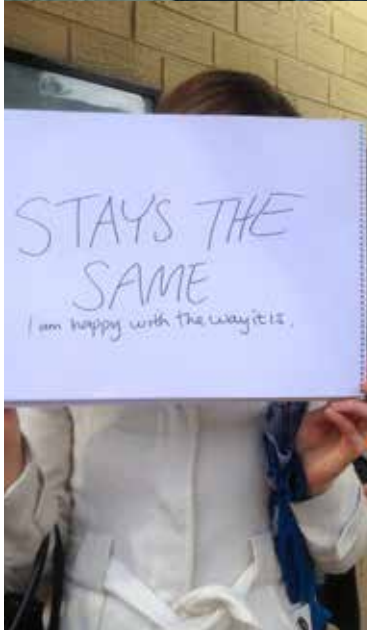
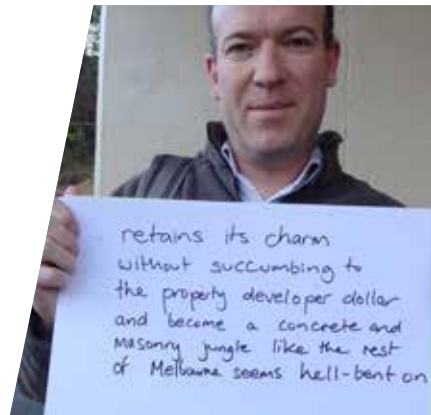
An oversized illustrated map of Watsonia Village which captured many of the current assets and issues of the centre was displayed on the main street. Participants were invited to use stickers to show what they thought works and doesn't work and to share their ideas for the future.

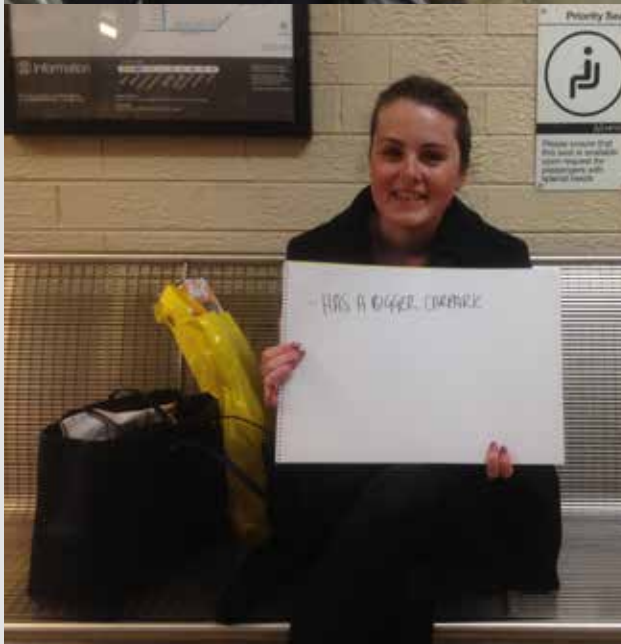




A photo survey was also carried out, which asked participants to capture what they want for the future by completing the phrase “I hope Watsonia...”

A community survey was circulated which could be filled out online or on paper. It was distributed through the library, Council offices, websites and social media platforms. The survey and public activities were advertised in the local paper and promoted in Councillors’ newsletters.





POSTCARDS from 2050 COMPETITION

WIN AN IPAD MINI!

WHAT DO YOU THINK WOULD MAKE WATSON'S ACHIEVEMENT IN 2050?

CREATE A POSTCARD THAT CAPTURES YOUR IDEAS FOR WATSON IN THE FUTURE & COMPETE FOR GREAT PRIZES FOR YOU & YOUR SCHOOL.

1ST PRIZE - IPAD MINI
2ND PRIZE - BOOK VOUCHER (200)
3RD PRIZE - VOUCHER FOR LIBRARY BOOKS (200)

Dear Ruby,
 I want to Watson this building. The giggle...
 I want to Watson this building. The giggle...
 I want to Watson this building. The giggle...

Dear Lily,
 In 306 more years I think that the beady bears play and I have long hats.

Dear Lucy,
 You are are 306 and from Ruby and a Robot Pony I think I am a Robot Pony.

Dear Ruby,
 In 36 years the houses will be on top of each other and magic is real.

Dear Ruby,
 A relaxing place where someone find you.

- *Wicker Park*



In Watsonia's future the library is in the shape of a book, houses are on top of each other and teddy bears can fly. There's a lake for swimming and trees everywhere, no one judges you, everyone is nice, there are robot horses...and magic is real!



In the third phase the project team engaged with both local and strategic stakeholders. Hello City and the project team met with local stakeholders including business operators, landowners, community organisations and service providers. These included the police, Anglican Church, RSL, the Neighbourhood House and Watsonia Library. Victorian Government and Federal representatives were interviewed such as The Hon. Jenny Macklin MP, Colin Brooks, Member for Bundoora, and Craig Ondarchie, Member for Northern Metropolitan Region. Strategic stakeholders included the Metropolitan Planning Authority (MPA), VicTrack, AusNet Services (previously SP Ausnet), VicRoads and Public Transport Victoria (PTV).

A workshop with the local business community was conducted to map out the issues and opportunities and spark conversation about future possibilities. After the workshop Hello City walked around the centre with representatives from the business community to experience what is working and not working in the main street precinct and explore ideas for the future.



Around 200 people took part in total, representing voices from many walks of life and across age groups. There were responses from people who just visit the area or work locally, people who grew up in Watsonia and have since moved away, and both new and long term residents.

The analysis of the engagement and research data was designed to uncover the values and strengths of Watsonia, what works and doesn't work about Watsonia today and what the community of Watsonia thought was most important for the future. The insights and ideas generated during this process have led to the development of a vision for Watsonia Village, along with seven objectives and a mass of ideas and possibilities to further explore.

The Picture Watsonia Vision and supporting objectives in this report have been tested and developed by Council in a follow up Watsonia Vision feedback session, and then tested again with a collaborative session with the MPA, VicTrack and VicRoads.

The fourth stage sought feedback on the draft version of this document from the community, the Watsonia Traders Association and key stakeholders including land holders and occupiers within the study area and State Government agencies.

The result is a clear vision and set of objectives that is well understood and well supported by those who have a pivotal role in seeing the vision come to pass.

Gathering Ideas for the Future

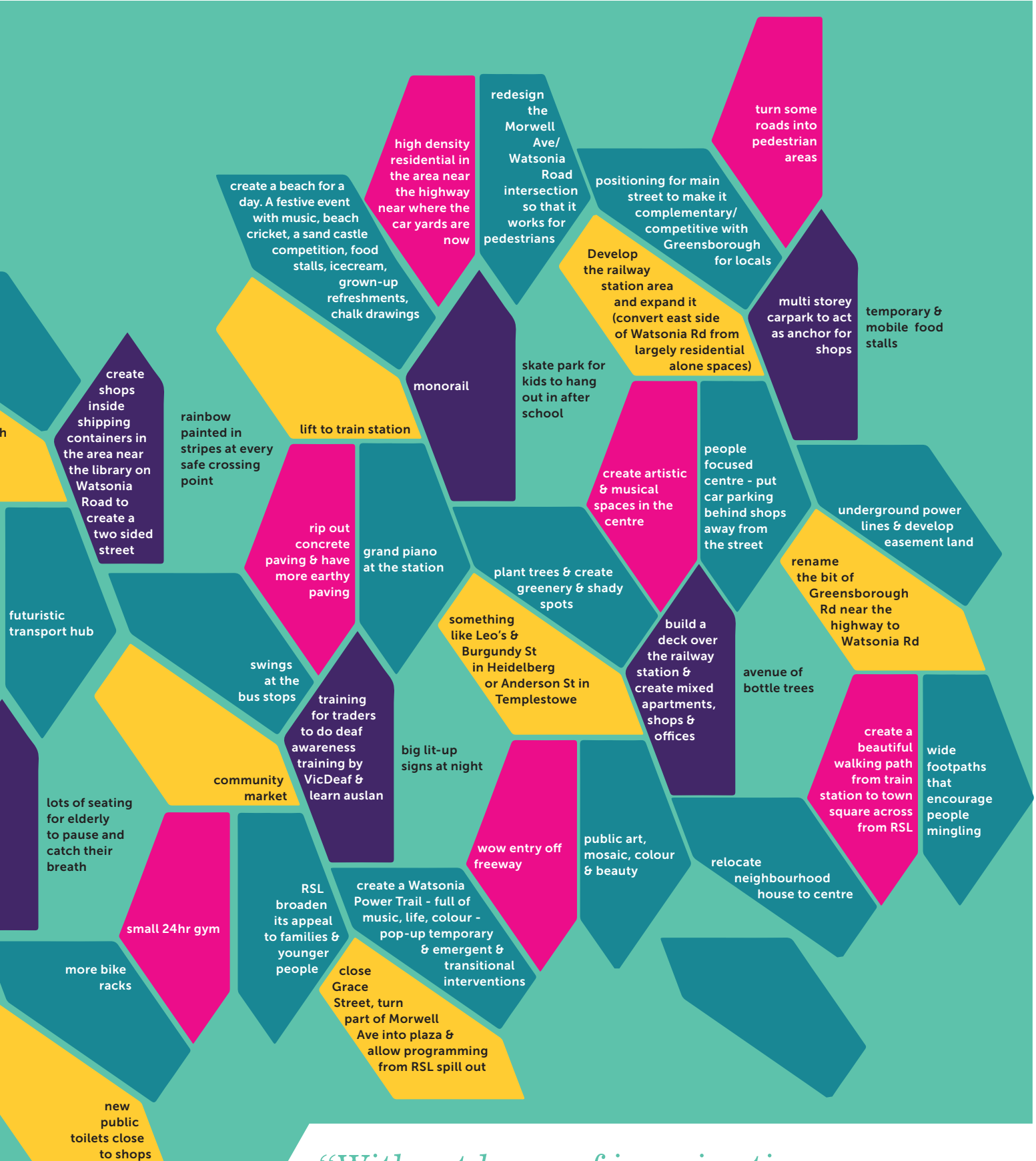
A multitude of ideas were shared by people from across the community which covered a broad range of themes. There were ideas to bring more life, culture, colour, art and beauty to Watsonia. Ideas to create a better experience of walking or cycling in the centre and to the centre.

Many people want to create a gathering place or town square with a program of activities along with a bustling active footpath culture. People shared ideas for fairer or more efficient parking, traffic calming, more diversity in retail, and services and activities for young people and children. There were many ideas for the space under the electricity pylons including festivals, pop up parks and playgrounds, Sunday markets, food trucks and kiosk-style cafes.

The existing programs run by Watsonia Library were also a focus and inspiration for ideas, including suggestions for expanding the existing youth programs and building on existing partnerships with the Neighbourhood House and the RSL or working with VicTrack to deliver new programs or facilities.

A **tiny snapshot of these ideas** has been captured here. These ideas along with many more that were generated during the visioning process have been tested, pared back and developed into a shortlist of ideas and schematic concept plans which together have the power to deliver the Picture Watsonia Vision and Objectives. The developed ideas can be found on pages 36 through to 63 in this document.





“Without leaps of imagination or dreaming, we lose the excitement of possibilities. Dreaming, after all is a form of planning.”

- Gloria Steinem

What People Said

What is and isn't working in Watsonia

There are many aspects of Watsonia that work beautifully. There are great local community activities, a convenient cluster of shops and services centered around the library and the RSL. These shops and services are owned and run by enthusiastic community-oriented business operators rather than big franchises. Homes in Watsonia are large and spacious and boast leafy backyards with room to move.

At the same time there is a sense that the centre is tired and needs an overall upgrade, including its range of retail. The shopping precinct in Watsonia was considered by many locals to be uncompetitive. The area was described as boring and not interesting enough to attract shoppers. Many considered it unattractive, bland, tired and run down.

Some parts of the community such as young people, people in their thirties and families feel like their needs are neglected in the centre in terms the retail offer, services and amenities.

Many people feel that the main street is too car dominated and difficult to get around. Some community members want more parking while others say it feels like there are parked cars everywhere you look. People from both groups would like to see the parking designed for more optimal use. Some retail operators are concerned that the current parking configuration encourages people to visit individual shops rather than the centre overall.

Residents thought that the location of the BP service station was too dominant and that it breaks up the main retail strip. The retail area near the Greensborough Highway was considered underused with high vacancy rates.

The Watsonia Library is well loved and well used, as are the services provided by the RSL and Watsonia Neighbourhood House. Teenagers and young people would like more things to do in the centre. They would like more shops like milkbars that open late and more places to hang out with friends.

Watsonians see the train station as an important asset but it is not well connected to the main street, which means that few commuters make the journey up to the centre from the station. Access to the train station can feel unsafe and difficult for people with mobility issues.

It is widely felt that the pylons make the centre seem industrial, grey and uninviting and the space underneath them is underused. This expanse, which is chiefly used for parking and green median strips, makes the heart of Watsonia seem disjointed and unloved.

Other concerns about centre of Watsonia included the lack of:

- variety in cafes and restaurants
- healthy food options, too many takeaway places
- seating
- outdoor eating, footpath cafes and restaurants
- safe, clean public toilets
- shops that cater for young people
- places open after 10pm
- variety in grocery shopping
- green parks
- cultural and spiritual uses on the main street
- lighting around the station and surrounding streets
- medical rooms and GPs

What Watsonians Think is Working Well in Watsonia



What people want for the future

Most locals want to see Watsonia change and improve for the better, although there are some who strongly believe that Watsonia will find ways to remain much the same as it is today. People appreciate the range of convenience shopping and services but want to see more life, more colour, more retail diversity, more activity and more things to do.

The pylons are seen as a blight on the landscape. At the same time the community was largely pragmatic about what can be done about them in the short and medium term, with a call for creative solutions especially in the short term. Undergrounding the pylons was seen as a key step towards improving the area and attracting increased investment, while the possibility that the cost and investment required to undertake undergrounding works might make it difficult to undertake in short or medium term is widely understood. The underused land beneath the pylons and even the pylons themselves are viewed by many as an opportunity for creative expression, for a local take on pop-up retail, festivals and for bike paths and recreation space.

“the area needs some atmosphere”

“I think it should be left as is”

“protect the plurality of existing activities”

- quotes from local residents

Locals often talk about the way Watsonia feels like a big country town. The village has a wide open expansive feeling with big skies and views all the way to the Dandenongs to the east. There is a sense that these qualities should be preserved while at the same time there is a strong desire to see change and positive development happen in the centre. The centre of Watsonia was seen to have a friendly, laid-back village feeling and a general agreement that this is a key aspect of the identity of Watsonia which should be preserved.

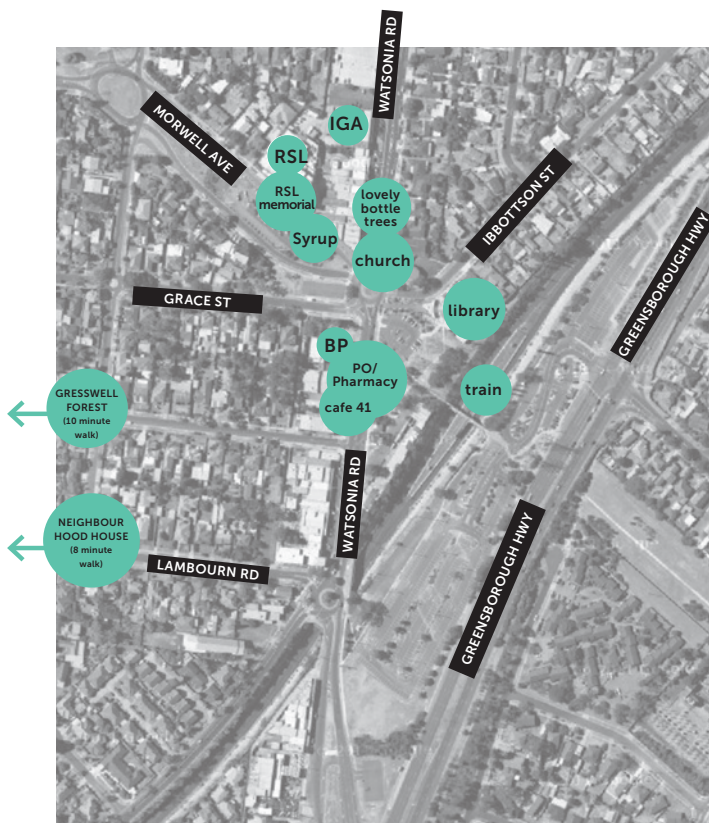
The community has a range of views about new development. At one end of the spectrum there were many who would like to see new development with a significant increase in density and population. While others, at the other end of the spectrum, who would like to preserve the status quo with very little development and minimal increase in density. Those who supported an increase in density did not see this as a threat to the village character, but rather see it as a way to bring jobs, life and investment to the centre.

The underused land around the railway station is seen as a key opportunity for the future and there is a strong desire to ensure that this land is used to provide a second side to the main street and public spaces where people can gather together.

There was general agreement that Watsonia was bland and without a strong self identity in the centre. There was a sense the centre is missing a soul. That it was unappealing and average. There is a desire to find uniquely Watsonian solutions to problems and responses to opportunities.

People wanted to see improvements in a number of areas including:

- more services and amenities that appeal to teenagers
- more play spaces for children of all ages
- more places open at night on the main street
- more greenery and beauty
- more bustle and activity
- more art
- more WOW
- more community events and cultural programs that build on the successful existing services
- new development in the centre that responds to the local character and contributes to the activity and economic success of the main street



Locations described as assets by locals during engagement

What we want to be

What we hope for Watsonia's future

*colourful
vibrant
active
diverse
fresh
choice*

*spiritual moments
cultural spaces*

*healthy
greenery all over
balanced
connected
generous
accessible to all
something for
everyone*

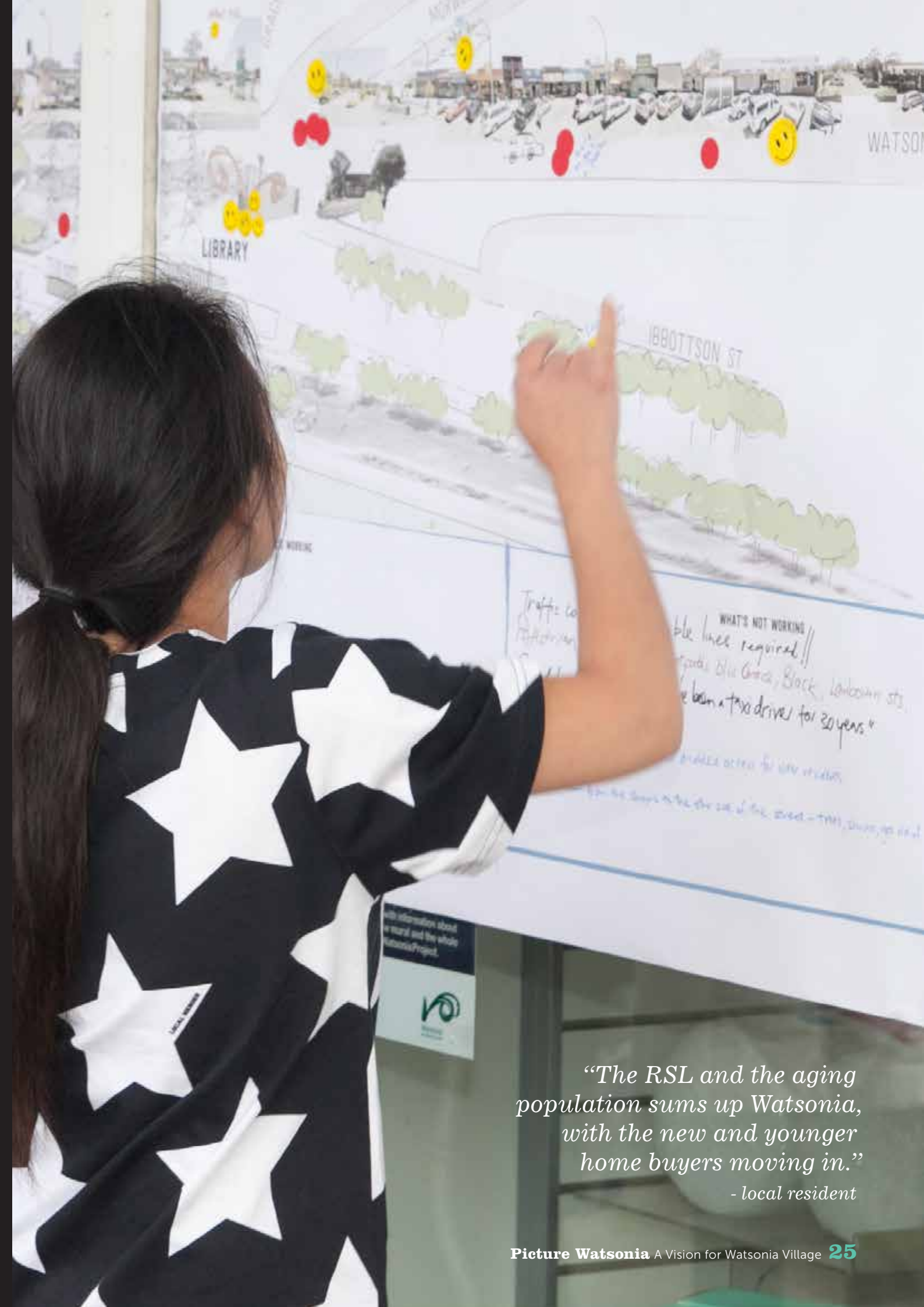
*“Watsonia is like
a small country
town's shopping
area, as well
as shops it is a
meeting place.”*

– local resident

Where we are now

*How Watsonia is
currently perceived*

local
boring & bland
grey and dominated by pylons & concrete
uninviting
friendly
complacent
disjointed
leafy surroundings
inaccessible
frustrating
unkempt
convenient shops & services
dominated by cars
aging
unexpressive
stuck in a rut
community oriented



“The RSL and the aging population sums up Watsonia, with the new and younger home buyers moving in.”
- local resident



Kickstarting the Picture Watsonia Vision

Council's commitment to achieving the Vision has started with various initiatives. These include Council's past and current year funding to the Traders Association, for their ongoing coordination and marketing of Watsonia's shopping street. Council's funding commitment to local shopping street trader reflects a long held desire to support local trading and create more vibrant shopping streets. This support helps local traders create their shared business plan, beautify the centre, do marketing and run important events like the Watsonia Motor Show.

Other 14/15 Council commitments to help kickstart the Watsonia Vision are for:

- A more attractive shopping street. In recent years the first stage of streetscape upgrades has been done and in the months ahead a further stage will begin.
- A future shared trail along the power line easement to better connect local neighbourhoods to their shops, railway station and to other places, is being designed.
- After improving the library in recent years, more improvements to refurbish inside will be done in the months ahead.
- Doing more of the 'Graffiti Everyone's Business' program, will help to improve the area's visual amenity with better graffiti management and public art installations.
- Continuing traffic and engineering analysis and to more clearly understand traffic and car parking issues for nearby residential streets. Doing this will help setup Council for resolving some priority concerns that local people have raised.
- Working with VicRoads where required to improve the experience of the activity centre, including working to change the speed limit of the Watsonia Road strip to 40 km/hr

- Working with the Government's Metropolitan Planning Authority, VicTrack and VicRoads to discover how future changes at the Watsonia railway station and large commuter car park can give benefit to Watsonia and Banyule.

On top of these commitments Council is also giving additional funding to the Watsonia Traders Association for the 2014 Watsonia Motor Show.

Watsonia Community Hub

Council is exploring the benefits of collocating a number of community services within a community hub model. Council has worked with a range of community stakeholders to develop a concept design for the council-owned site and adjacent land on Knight Street adjoining A.K.Lines Reserve in Watsonia.

Council will conduct detailed feasibility studies and seek out funding opportunities for the Watsonia Community Hub in tandem with the implementation of the Picture Watsonia Vision. More information about this project has been included on pages 66-67 of this document.

*“Adapt what is useful, reject
what is useless, and add
what is specifically your own.”*

– Bruce Lee

Key Challenges



Managing Growth

Population projections for Melbourne predict that the city will continue to grow at a substantial rate. Areas like Watsonia that have excellent transport access, have been identified by the Victorian Government as places that can accommodate further homes over time.

This kind of growth can bring benefits as well as challenges.

Potential benefits of growth include:

- more local jobs
- more people living locally to support local shopping strips, amenities and services, leading to a greater range of shops, schools, employment opportunities, amenities and services such as health, culture or leisure
- a greater choice of homes for a greater range of household types across different stages of life
- a more diverse, dynamic community

Potential challenges include:

- pressure on existing infrastructure such as open space, parking and public transport
- maintaining the community character of Watsonia
- integrating older and newer members of the community

The engagement process sought to put the local residents and the local community in the driver's seat in determining the future of development in the local area. The Vision for Watsonia Village in this document has been developed to respond to these drivers to position Watsonia to manage its growth in a planned, appropriate and sustainable way that realises the opportunities and mitigates potential risks.

Deciding the Future Use of Land

One of the key challenges to managing change and achieving a shared vision in any town or city is the fact that land is generally owned and managed by myriad private and public entities. Watsonia is no exception. Most of the land around the railway station is owned by the Victorian Government while some is owned by Council. The easement land is owned by a number of parties including the Anglican Church. Future use of the railway station land and power easement is decided between various Victorian Government agencies including the Metropolitan Planning Authority (MPA), AusNet Services, VicRoads, Public Transport Victoria (PTV) and VicTrack.

A key objective of this project is to define a shared vision for the future of Watsonia Village that articulates the values and aspirations of the people of Watsonia and can also be supported by the various landowners.

Creating Connections

A number of barriers in Watsonia, and the surrounding areas pose a challenge to moving around the centre. These barriers also make it difficult to get in and out of the village and Watsonia itself. Barriers to movement include;

- Greensborough Highway: the bypass divides the suburb in half and makes it difficult for people on the eastern side to access the station and Watsonia Village. The intersection with Greensborough Road and the main street is also a barrier because the large turning circles required to enter and exit the highway at speed take up a large area and are dangerous for pedestrians to cross.

With its 'High Street' feel, Watsonia is like a small community. The shopping street gives the locals the opportunity to get to know each other in a safe and friendly environment

– local resident

- Power Easement: this is both a barrier and a connector. The location of the easement and pylons make it impossible to build a continuous facade of shops or buildings along the main street, at the same time the easement provides the potential for creating walking and cycling paths to link to the surrounding areas.
- Cutting: the grade change to the railway station from Watsonia Road poses a significant barrier for people with mobility issues. The stairs and the steeply sloping path that lie between the station platform, the commuter car park and Watsonia Road also discourage commuters from visiting businesses on the main street.
- inefficient design of intersections with roundabouts that are difficult to navigate
- intersection between the main street and the highway is located close to local shops, the on-ramp to highway is designed to allow cars to enter and exit the highway at high speeds which does not create a pedestrian-friendly environment
- large regional car park designed to service commuters that has little connection to the main street
- broken cycling networks and inadequate provision for cyclists
- narrow footpaths
- dominant angled parking which makes it difficult to see people on the footpath from the other side of the street

Bikes, Cars & Pedestrians

Every successful place struggles to strike a balance between the needs of motorists and the needs of cyclists and pedestrians. The conditions required to make a place safe and convenient for cars are directly opposed the conditions that make streets work for people. Finding a sweet spot that works for everyone can be a challenge. The easier it is to drive around a place and find a park, the more difficult, unsafe and unpleasant it becomes to cross the road, walk along the footpath or enjoy a coffee in a footpath cafe.

There are a number of issues in the central area of Watsonia that currently tilt this balance in the favour of car use and directly impact on how pleasant it is to walk or ride around the village.

These challenges include:

- large areas of parking located in the power easement which break up the retail area
- more public space given over to roads than is necessary

The Pylons

The pylons and the overhead cables play a massive role in how people experience the centre and in how it is valued by locals.

The power easement was described by one local as a scar through the heart of Watsonia, and by another as a blight.

“The huge electricity towers are inescapable and ugly”

– local resident

It is possible to underground the power lines and this is the long term goal for Watsonia. However this would be an very expensive process that would require significant Victorian Government investment of both time and money and is unlikely to happen in the short or medium term.

The possibility of developing the easement land to offset the cost of undergrounding the cables has also been explored. This preliminary investigation suggests that the value of the land is not currently high enough and is unlikely to be high enough in the foreseeable future to make this course of action viable.

In the meantime the space underneath the electricity pylons can be viewed as an asset and an opportunity to be fully exploited and ideas can be explored that make the presence of the pylons in the centre less dominant or more positive.

Commuter Car Park

The large commuter car park draws many people to the area, however, because of the issues described above this does not translate into significant flow-on local economic or social benefits for Watsonia Village.

The large amount of unattended vehicles and poor surveillance of the car park also attracts people to the area who are intent on property crime. The police are currently carrying out operations to target car thefts near the station.

The land is currently owned and managed by VicRoads and VicTrack respectively and is currently dedicated to servicing the rail and road systems. These uses may pose a barrier to future development of the land.

“And the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.” – Anaïs Nin

Positioning Watsonia

How Watsonia is Viewed by Others

Watsonia currently has a very low profile in Melbourne. It isn't a suburb that instantly springs to mind when people are deciding where to live, where to open a new business or where to spend an afternoon of leisure.

Whilst other similar suburbs have changed with the times, Watsonia has evolved more slowly and has struggled to respond to shifting tastes, aspirations and expectations. The key challenge for Watsonia - as it is for countless other suburban areas in big cities - is finding a way to balance the rapid pace of urban change with protecting the qualities that evoke village life.

A number of suburbs provide inspiration to Watsonia on how to negotiate the competing forces of the modern world. Some of the drivers these suburbs are balancing are:

- Population growth and demographic change including smaller households and more mobility between cities and between areas within cities
- Changes in the way development is carried out with growing demand for smaller, smarter homes
- Shifts in the retail environment with traditional bricks-and-mortar shops having to reinvent their offer to compete with internet shopping

- Changes in technology impacting on the way people experience places, work and personal relationships
- A greater exchange of ideas, resources and discussions enabled by online platforms
- Changes in the economy towards more knowledge-based and creative businesses as well as small businesses, sole traders and collaborations between them
- The rapid rise of collaborative consumption: economies around sharing, lending or accessing rather than owning, such as car-share schemes
- An explosion of informal and pop-up activities such as food trucks, pop up parks, markets, festivals and small bars
- A greater focus on managing resources responsibly

Suburbs that are successfully balancing some these forces include Templestowe, Eltham and Ripponlea. City of Banyule's good track record of supporting suburbs to transform can be seen in places like Greensborough, Macleod, Rosanna and Montmorency.



How Watsonia is Viewed by Locals

For the longer-term residents of Watsonia, their neighbourhood centre is convenient and friendly and meets their needs. For newer residents, there is a sense that - although core services are used - the centre does not provide enough activity, variety and vibrancy to prevent them from making other nearby centres such as Greensborough their go-to places for shopping, character and entertainment. Many of the visitors to Watsonia's centre are there for a specific purpose such as visiting the RSL, library or the Neighbourhood House, convenience shopping or accessing services. An important opportunity for Watsonia centre will be providing a much broader range of possible reasons to spend time here.

Watsonia also needs to consider its ongoing relationship to key surrounding experiences and opportunities and how it can act as a connector of these places. In the surrounding areas of Watsonia centre, people are drawn to places of natural beauty such as Greswell Forest and Montmorency Park, employment opportunities such as those as the LaTrobe Cluster, multiple places of study and learning, sports and leisure activities in Greensborough at WaterMarc and the vibrant neighbourhood shopping at Rosanna.

There are a number of ways that Watsonia can connect itself to these surrounding experiences and reposition itself as part of a larger story, including;

- spatial connectors such as roads, bike tracks, walking trails and the train line
- signage and promotional material
- events and activities that correspond to wider goings-on

Instead of trying to compete with larger centres, places that have a mix of large regional attractors like department stores or large aquatic centres, Watsonia should focus on offering something distinct and unique - a set of smaller experiences that are uniquely Watsonia and can't be had anywhere else.

These experiences can make Watsonia a place that locals love to be in and others love to visit.

Watsonia should be the first destination that locals choose. It should be a place meets their needs on many levels. A place that;

- has basic services and convenience retail as well as more unique and characterful elements
- has a welcoming and active community that embraces difference and provides support and care to all
- provides a range of opportunities for cultural, leisure and social activities
- keeps pace with changing tastes and expectations and is lively, individual and vibrant
- meets the needs and expectations of a broad range of the community

Once Watsonia has a strong and captivating sense of place that locals are strongly connected to, it will become a place that attracts new residents, new businesses and new visitors.

Case Studies:

Suburban Renewal in Melbourne

Other Melbourne suburban centres have dealt with some of Watsonia's challenges and capitalised on similar assets, accommodating increasing populations while maintaining village character. Yarraville has seen medium density development work in harmony with heritage streetscapes and a greater central population leading to more cafes, shops and restaurants. Local and state government have supported Yarraville's growth by creating new public open space, allowing food truck licenses and increasing train services. Reservoir's centre has benefited from a rebranding which created sense of identity in the main streets. Moorabbin Junction's renewal program included street art, co-working spaces, streetscape improvements, public open space upgrades and planting programs.

Some beautiful heritage buildings, a prominent Jewish community, proximity to other interesting suburbs and a spot on the train line have allowed Ripponlea to reinvent itself as a foodie haven.

Characterful shops and cafes, tree lined streets, leisure activities, artistic expression, play equipment, outdoor spaces and beautiful new and old architecture provide multiple reasons to linger in Rosanna, Greensborough, Macleod and Montmorency.

Moorabbin Junction

The area around Moorabbin's train station has been transformed through partnership between the City of Kingston and VicTrack.

Alongside physical changes to layout and streetscapes, imaginative interventions such as the creation of a new bar for traders to meet up after work on a Friday, have reinvigorated the area. The bar is located in the Kingston City Hall and has been fully decked out by design firm, Nest Architects. It is now the home of a program of local live music acts with plans for more live events such as cabaret and touring artists.





Picture Watsonia

Objectives

The following objectives have been developed to support the Picture Watsonia Vision and to guide day-to-day decision making.



The Picture

Watsonia Vision

In the future Watsonia's village centre is a thriving, bustling and friendly one. A number of the shops have been there for many years and there is a sense of long and trusted relationships between traders and customers. Long-standing shops have been joined by new shops on both sides of the street that have broadened-out the variety of products, services and experiences throughout both the day and evening. There are places to have a celebratory meal, hear live music, enjoy a slice of homemade cake and a coffee, buy gifts and browse as well as places to do the weekly shop, fix your bike puncture or pick up a prescription.

In the centre big artworks and gestures bring a sense of wow alongside countless small, playful touches that catch your eye and make you smile. Everything looks and feels safe and well cared for. Personality-filled shop signs, locally made goods, playful street furniture, imaginative window displays and programmed activities of all kinds create a sense of colour and movement. Even the pylons have become a thing of delight.

Distinct precincts make up Watsonia centre, but the ease of movement, strong sense of place and interesting glimpses inspire you to take the time to explore them. It is also an outward-looking place that promotes exploration to surrounding suburbs, parks, amenities and centres of learning and employment.

It's the kind of place where the easiest way to get to the shops is to hop on a bike or go for a stroll. Where an efficient network of regional bike trails allows you to pedal along green paths or natural waterways to Greensborough, LaTrobe University or to surrounding suburbs. It's easy to be green when you live here and people opt into all kinds of sustainable ways to power their homes, do business, shop and get around.

It's a place that welcomes everyone. You can see that care has been taken to design roads, footpaths, parking and buildings to make it easy for people with bikes, prams, wheelchairs, walkers and scooters to get around whether young or old.

Lush planting in the main streets reminds you that you are steps away from Greswell Forest walks and stunning views over the mountains to the east bring a piece of the bush to the streets.

You meet faces and hear voices of all kinds. Many different kinds of people live here and of all ages. The sense of easy coexistence is underpinned by the many cultural and community services, facilities and programs that bring people together. There are abundant opportunities for people to learn, to create and to share.

Watsonia is an optimistic place. It openly looks to fresh ideas, new people, new technologies and new ways of looking at things to continually evolve. It understands and responds to the specific needs and wants of its locals and makes those from further away feel like honorary locals too.



*“Sometimes your only
available transportation
is a leap of faith”*

— Margaret Shepard



Picture Watsonia

Schematic Concepts

Hundreds of ideas for the future of Watsonia have been generated during the visioning process which are explored in the following two sections of this document.

Those ideas and opportunities which have a significant spatial component have been explored in this section, focussing in particular on the possibilities around the development of the railway station site and adjacent underused land which offer a very real opportunity for improving the centre.

Some preliminary concepts have been captured in the following sketch maps which show how these ideas might be realised in the short, medium and long term.

These schematic concepts are the first step in a longer process of urban design and planning and will serve as a starting point. From here the ideas can be ideas developed in detail when issues such as building masses, costs, traffic management, economic feasibility, facade treatment and engineering issues are explored and tested.

Try before you buy

A number of these ideas could be tested in affordable and temporary ways before they are built permanently. For example, areas of road could be painted and provided with movable seating and leafy potted plants to create an instant public space. After a couple of months the area could either be returned to the original use, another idea could be tested, or if the pilot was successful the land could be developed into a permanent public park.

When applied appropriately this approach has a number of advantages:

- Changes happen quickly and benefits can be experienced in the short term
- Money that would otherwise be spent on aspects of detailed planning, design and consultation can be spent on things that can be directly experienced by locals
- Designs and proposals can be tested in real life and in real time. This makes it very clear what works and doesn't work, and what is either embraced or rejected by the users of the space
- Risks of change are minimised. This makes it easier to experiment with bigger or more experimental initiatives which may have more significant benefits to the community

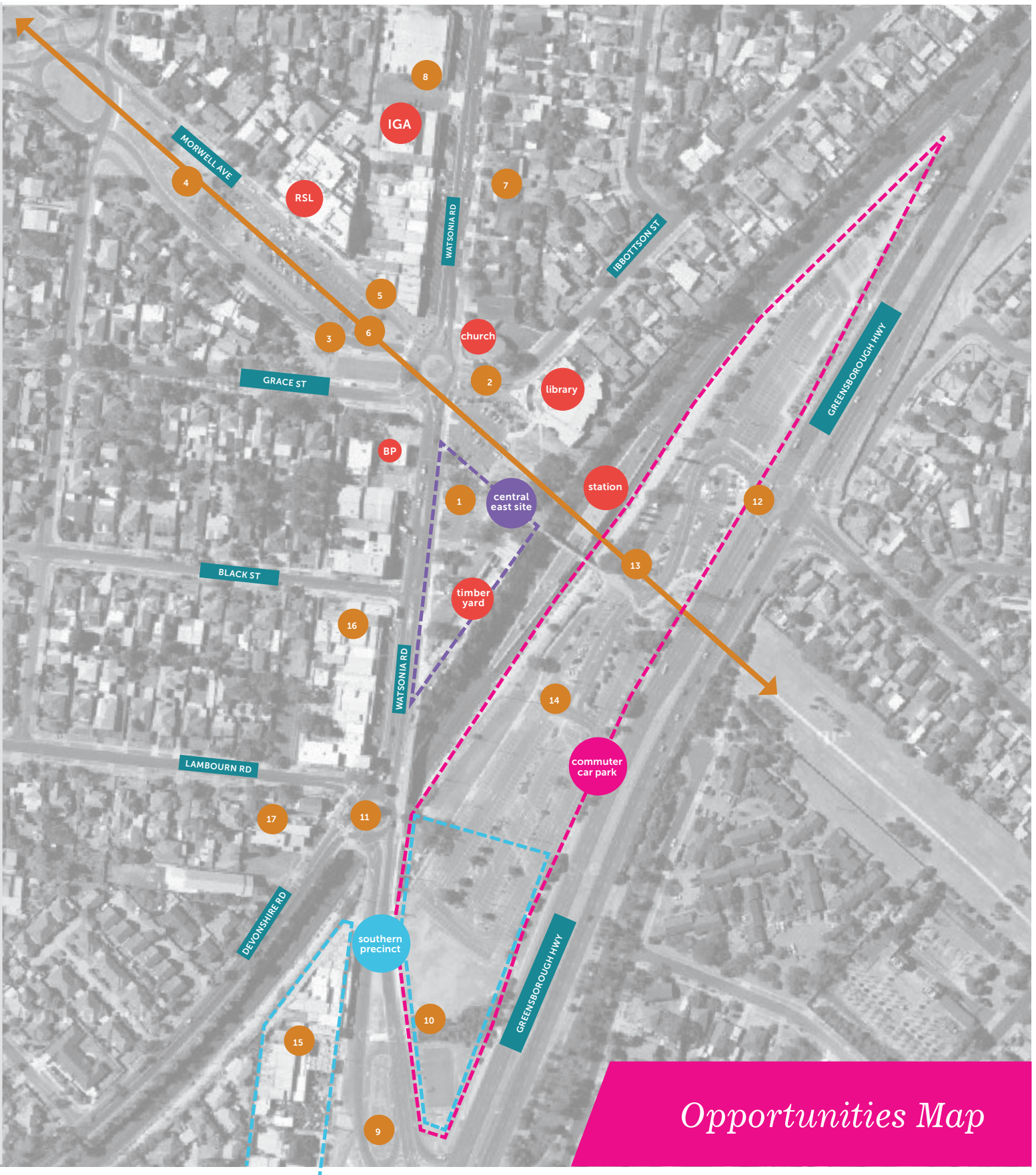
Opportunities Map

Key opportunities have been identified and have been sketched out in more detail on the following pages. These options will then be fully explored when developing strategies for implementing the Vision.

1. find new uses for the under used space near the library that could improve the overall experience of the main street. Work with Victorian Government Agencies to investigate future opportunities for the development of this land (shown with purple dotted line).
2. create a pedestrian-only access area between the church and the library to make some road area available for civic uses.
3. simplify duplicated roads to make land available for different uses, and to make Watsonia Road more pedestrian & bus-friendly.
4. extend car parking area to the west to make some of the eastern end available for other uses.
5. co-locate food operators to create a cluster.
6. use land under the pylons for a range of possible permissible uses including small trees, pathways, small mobile structures like kiosks, markets, food trucks or shipping containers, park benches and play equipment.
7. investigate opportunities to transition area to mainly non-residential uses to create two sided commercial or retail.
8. promote parking located on the edge of the centre to act as anchor parking and encourage people to walk and browse down the main street.
9. simplify intersection to Greensborough Highway to make the area more pedestrian-friendly & slow traffic.
10. relocate some large-format uses from the centre of the shopping street to the area near the intersection with the highway. This would make the central land available for uses that are better suited the shopping street. Possibilities for land swaps might exist.
11. simplify intersection with Lambourn Road to make the area more pedestrian-friendly and reduce congestion on Devonshire Road.
12. strengthen connection between the western side of Watsonia to the village & train station.
13. make use of the power easement land to form connections within Watsonia and to the surrounding areas.
14. find additional uses for the commuter car park land in the longer term by building over car parking, link to main street with multiple walkways. Explore uses that would create job opportunities locally such as office space (shown with pink dotted line).
15. investigate opportunities to transition area to an office precinct (shown with blue dotted line).
16. support for homes above shops, it helps the shopping street gradually become a street for residents as well.
17. explore the idea of the area between Lambourn Avenue and the railway line acting as a lynchpin that connects the retail main street and the southern precinct.

“The art of life is not controlling what happens to us, but using what happens to us”

- Gloria Steinem



“There are a lot of young families moving into Watsonia, but the shopping street lacks a heart – a place for people to meet and gather.”

- local stakeholder

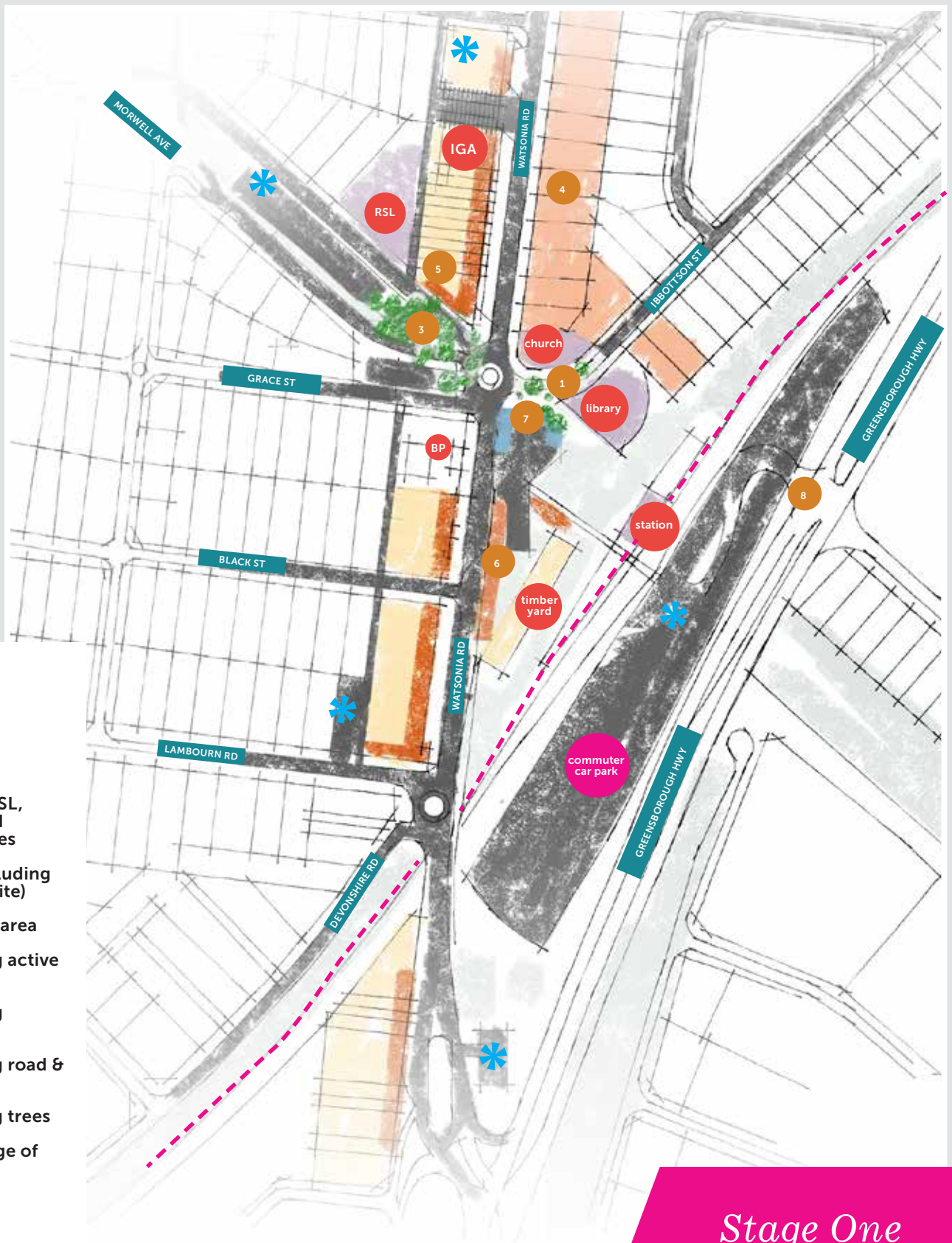
Short Term Opportunities

Picture this. There's a temporary town square that's been created in part of Ibbottson Street that's been closed off to traffic. It's lush and welcoming with potted plants and places to sit in the sun and read a book. Temporary shops housed in shipping containers have appeared near the library and on weekends kids dart through clusters of people browsing through market stalls and local shops, having picnics or the occasional brightly coloured wedding party posing for photos outside the church.

At night the centre is transformed with lights that make the pylons suddenly a little magical and with groups of locals and commuters enjoying an alfresco meal from one of the food trucks parked outside the library.

1. Create a provisional town square between the church and the library:
 - temporarily close part of Ibbottson Street to traffic
 - provide temporary planting, art, seating and play areas
 - work with the church to create a retail or active use on all their properties that face the main street
 - encourage library and church activities to spill out onto the main street
2. Encourage parking on the edge of the main street so people are more likely to walk down the main street and browse in shops, while still maintaining some parking behind shops and on the street:
 - suitable areas for edge parking are shown on plan with a blue asterisk
3. Create a leafy green open space area adjacent to the intersection with Watsonia Road. Plant low-growing trees and provide a shady place to sit:
 - in order to create this open space, relocate part of the existing car parks located in the Morwell Avenue power easement, and between Grace Street and Morwell Avenue further north east away from the main road
4. Support the evolution of a two sided retail street over time in the northern end of Watsonia Road:
 - consider rezoning properties opposite existing retail to allow for broader uses
 - include area north of the Morwell Ave intersection and adjacent to the library (as shown on plan)
5. Encourage other food retailers to open adjacent to the existing cafe
6. Create short-term two sided retail on Watsonia Road by installing temporary retail units such as shipping containers in underused land:
 - work with VicTrack to use the land adjacent to the library
 - encourage retailers who may seed longer-term retail uses in later permanent retail development
 - partner with existing traders to ensure new and temporary retailers complement the overall retail mix
7. Boost evening economy and short-term activity by encouraging food trucks to use the car park area outside the library after 5pm:
 - work with VicTrack to provide lighting, amenities and provide temporary seating for customers
 - design facilities and program to cater for commuters as well as locals
 - work in partnership with existing business owners
8. Improve pedestrian access to the station and main street from the eastern side of the highway:
 - work with VicRoads to reduce the number of lanes of traffic that pedestrians need to cross by reconfiguring the vehicular entrance to the commuter car park
9. Encourage the evolution of a more active main street by supporting proposals for new development in Watsonia Village that have commercial ground floor uses with active facades and residences upstairs
10. Program of temporary art installations on or around the pylons using lighting or prefab elements like visibility spheres





LEGEND

- existing church, RSL, library & proposed community services
- existing retail (including disused old GPO site)
- possible rezoning area
- possible & existing active edges
- possible & existing vegetation
- possible & existing road & car park
- possible & existing trees
- parking on the edge of retail area

Short to Medium Term Opportunities

Imagine that a colourful collection of shops housed in shipping containers has created a second side to the street that complements the established shops.

The library has an outdoor sitting area with free wifi where you can enjoy a coffee while taking part in a writers workshop or Chinese language storytime. Kiosks provide drinks and ice cream in summer. Cyclists and runners zip by on the Watsonia Power trail that follows the electricity easement all the way to the Plenty River, and passers-by stroll through on their way to the station or car parking below.

The shipping container shops have expanded to provide more everyday convenience shopping along with a couple of tiny restaurants. There's a new temporary adventure play space next door which has made the area a favourite after-school destination for kids and families.

Buses drive down the main street, with stops outside the RSL and the library. Commuters rely on the efficient network of cycling tracks to get from the centre to Greensborough, the LaTrobe Cluster and further afield.

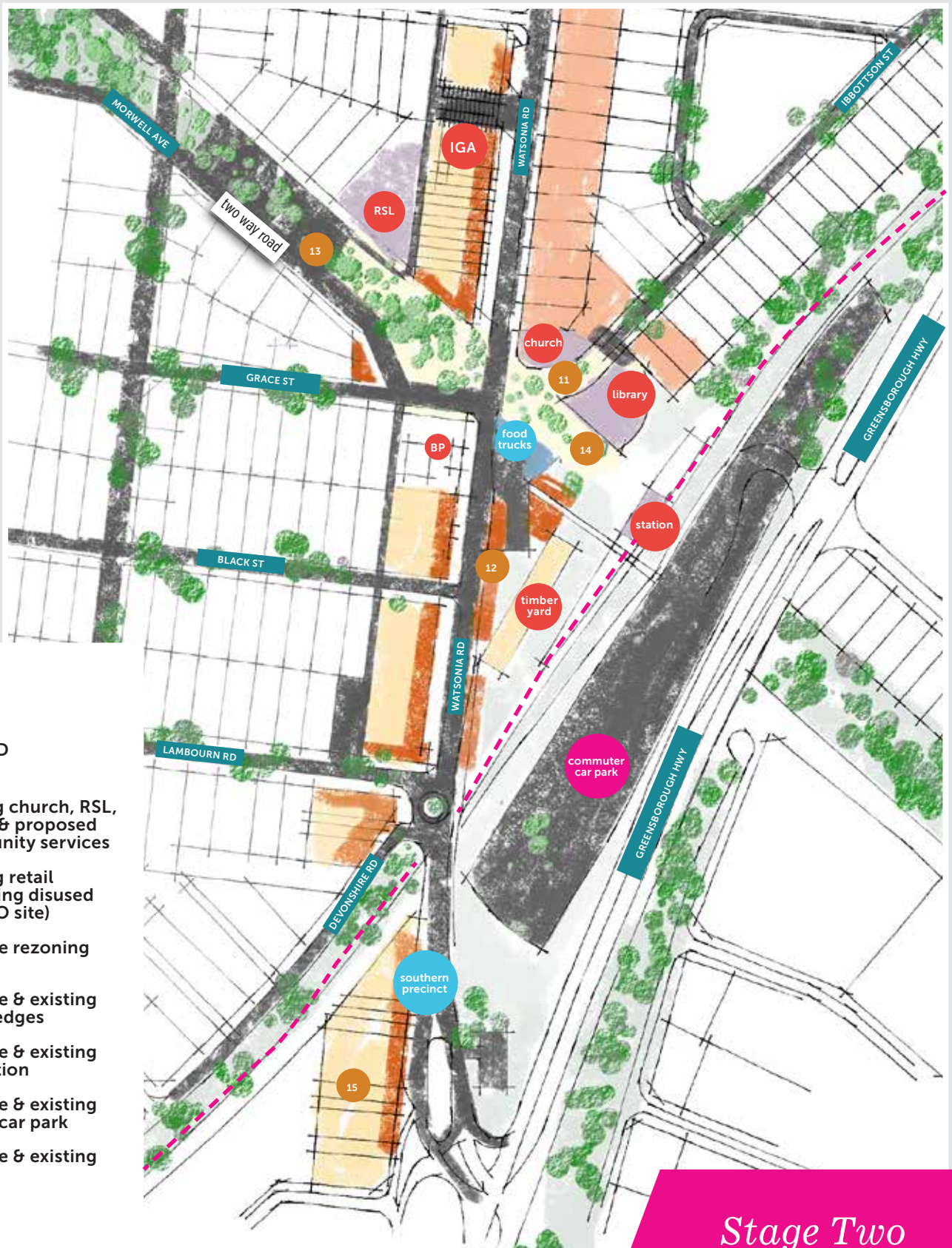
The southern precinct in a combination of interesting emergent uses like co-working spaces that are taking advantage of some of the cheaper rents and new eco-smart office buildings.

The forest of trees down Morwell Avenue becomes an overhead canopy of street trees and leafy arbours in the main street and the easement passing through the village works as a habitat corridor linking Gresswell Forest to the Plenty River.

11. Convert the temporary town square in the Ibbottson Street road reserve between the library and the church into a permanent public space:
 - create local access lane or turning circle if possible for properties south west of Crellin Crescent
12. Expand the temporary retail on Watsonia Road and install temporary active play areas:
 - ensure spaces provide play opportunities suitable for older children and youth as well as young children, adventure play opportunities should be explored such as flying foxes, climbing walls and skate-able landscapes
13. Create a public open space with a forest of trees to obscure the view of the pylons and overhead cables and make it easier to drive down Watsonia Road:
 - reconfigure Morwell Avenue and intersection with Watsonia Road
 - make the southern side of Morwell Avenue a two-way street and provide access to properties via car park or access lane
 - remove the roundabout and create an open space area at intersection
 - plant a forest of low-growing trees with overhead canopies
 - create a retail or commercial property on corner of Morwell Avenue and Grace Street to face open space

- ensure reconfigured Watsonia Road layout allows buses to drive down the main street and provide a bus stop outside the library and new town square
- link paths with surrounding destinations and natural assets

14. Create a temporary public space on the southern side of the library that serves as a larger forecourt to the library:
 - provide temporary planting, art, seating and play areas in the provisional town square
 - include a walkway linking the railway station to the northern end of Watsonia Road
 - encourage library activities to spill out onto this public space
 - allow food truck or kiosk operators to use the space in partnership with existing business owners
15. Encourage the development of an office precinct south of Lambourn Avenue:
 - treat the land between Lambourn Avenue and the railway line as a gateway area that links the retail main street to the office precinct
 - encourage retail land uses on the Lambourn Avenue site that will service offices and workers
 - discourage main street retail uses in the southern precinct to ensure retail activity is not diluted by extending the existing retail areas
16. Upgrade existing public toilet facilities on both sides of Watsonia Road
17. Replace the pylons near library with functional sculptures



LEGEND

-  existing church, RSL, library & proposed community services
-  existing retail (including disused old GPO site)
-  possible rezoning area
-  possible & existing active edges
-  possible & existing vegetation
-  possible & existing road & car park
-  possible & existing trees

Stage Two

Medium to Long Term Opportunities

The bustling heart of the centre is a leafy village green, a civic space enclosed by public buildings and shops. Individual doorways and shop windows open out onto the green and cafe tables and chairs spill out into the space.

The shipping container shopping strip near the library has been developed into a mixed use development wrapped around the village green that ties together the established shops, the RSL, library, church and railway station into a vibrant whole. Many of the retailers have left their shipping container shops and moved to be part of the permanent row of shops that line the footpath and the village green.

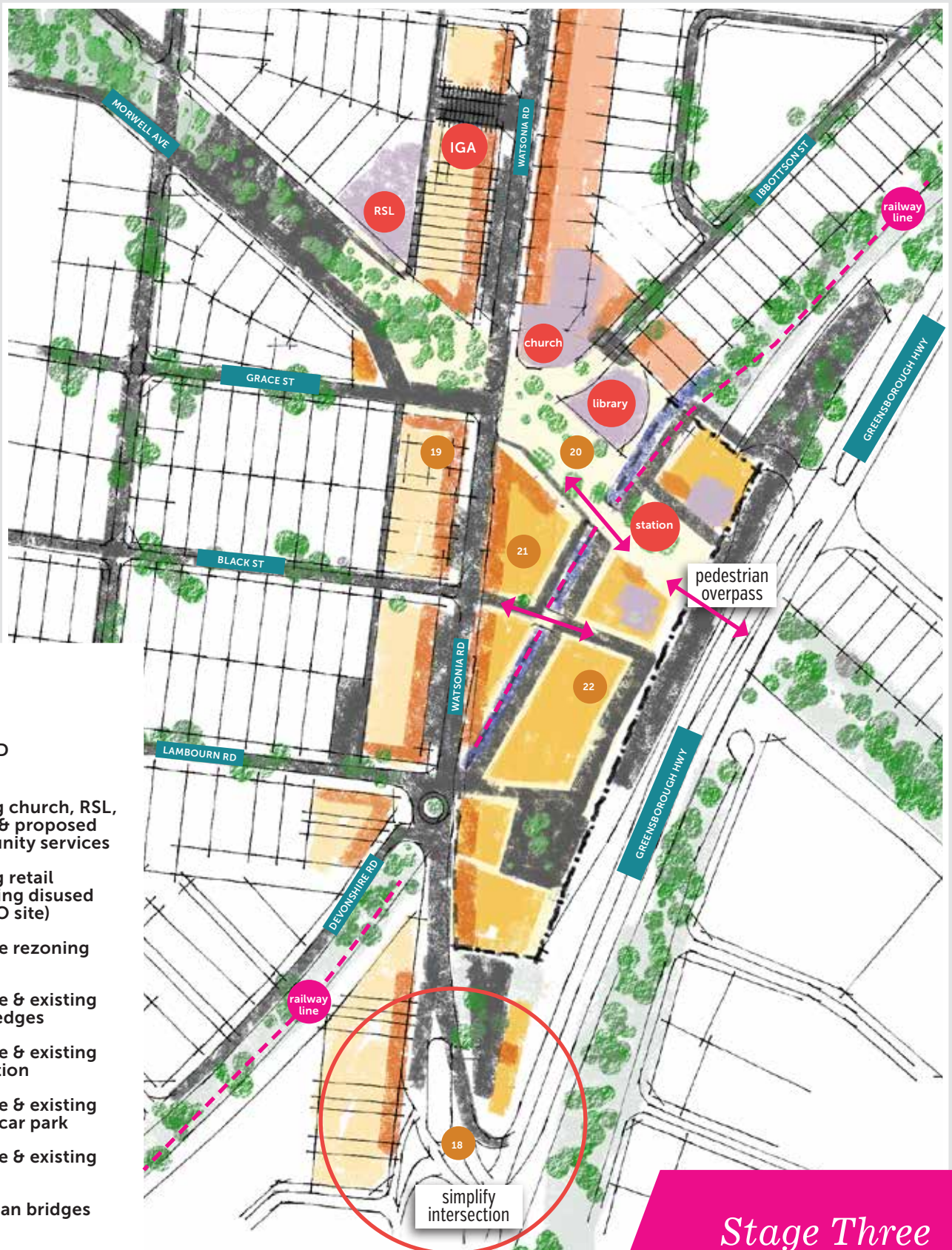
The railway station and village green has become the centre of a network of well used bike paths and walking trails that stretch from Plenty Road to the Plenty Valley.

Watsonia Village feels like a true village now instead of a strip. The three precincts are woven together around a strong central heart. Works of art, large and small are peppered along the main street and childrens spaces create moments of surprise and delight. There's always something to see or do with the program of activities shared between the RSL, the church and the library that often spill out onto the main street and into the public spaces. The new development above the railway station has forged a bridge between the east and western sides of Watsonia and it's now easy to cross the highway and walk to the shops.

The plentiful parking is tucked away underground, behind buildings and on the edges of the main street so that the busy centre feels full of people, not of full of cars. The contemporary development on the edge of Watsonia Road perfectly complements the style, proportions and offer of the existing shops and cafes. Walking into the village from the east and down the main street, you get the long views to the mountains that are part of what make Watsonia feel like a big open country town.

18. Simplify the intersection to Greensborough Highway to make more pedestrian friendly and slow traffic:
 - include the areas where Greensborough Road, Wungan Street/Devonshire Road, Richards Avenue, Lambourn Road intersect with Watsonia Road and the roundabout on Lambourn and Watsonia Roads.
19. If the service station moves, replace with active retail on both Grace Street /Morwell Avenue and Watsonia Road
20. Create a permanent Village Green outside the library
21. Develop the land on the eastern side of Watsonia Road and west of the railway line:
 - ensure that buildings on the edge of Watsonia Road maintain the human scale of the existing main street, and are a similar size in terms of overall building mass and individual retail floor plate to the existing shops

- ensure views to the east are maintained along street axes
 - ensure continuous retail edge along Watsonia Road
 - maintain strong linkages along the power easement to the surrounding area including the bike track
 - as much as possible design the permanent retail so that it can provide long-term premises for the retailers who have been trading from the temporary shop fronts
22. Develop the land on the eastern side of the railway line:
 - use area that is away from the Watsonia Road shops and under the level of the main street near the highway for larger format uses if required, such as parking
 - take advantage of the cutting and to build high density multi-storey development that is largely hidden from view from the main street
 - build high quality pedestrian bridges over the railway line to link the new development to the main street
 - provide a high quality pedestrian overpass with lifts over the highway to provide access to Watsonia Village to residents of the eastern side of Watsonia
 - secure better disabled access to the station
 - upgrade train station facilities
 - ensure any new uses contribute rather than detract from the activity and economy of the existing main street
 - maintain eastern views from the village, retail frontage on Watsonia Road, appropriate building heights and floor areas and pedestrian/ cycling links



LEGEND

-  existing church, RSL, library & proposed community services
-  existing retail (including disused old GPO site)
-  possible rezoning area
-  possible & existing active edges
-  possible & existing vegetation
-  possible & existing road & car park
-  possible & existing trees
-  pedestrian bridges

Stage Three

Long Term Opportunities

The pylons have disappeared from Watsonia and a deck over the railway line has created a new public piazza that joins the two sides of the railway line into a single railway precinct with the station itself hidden underground.

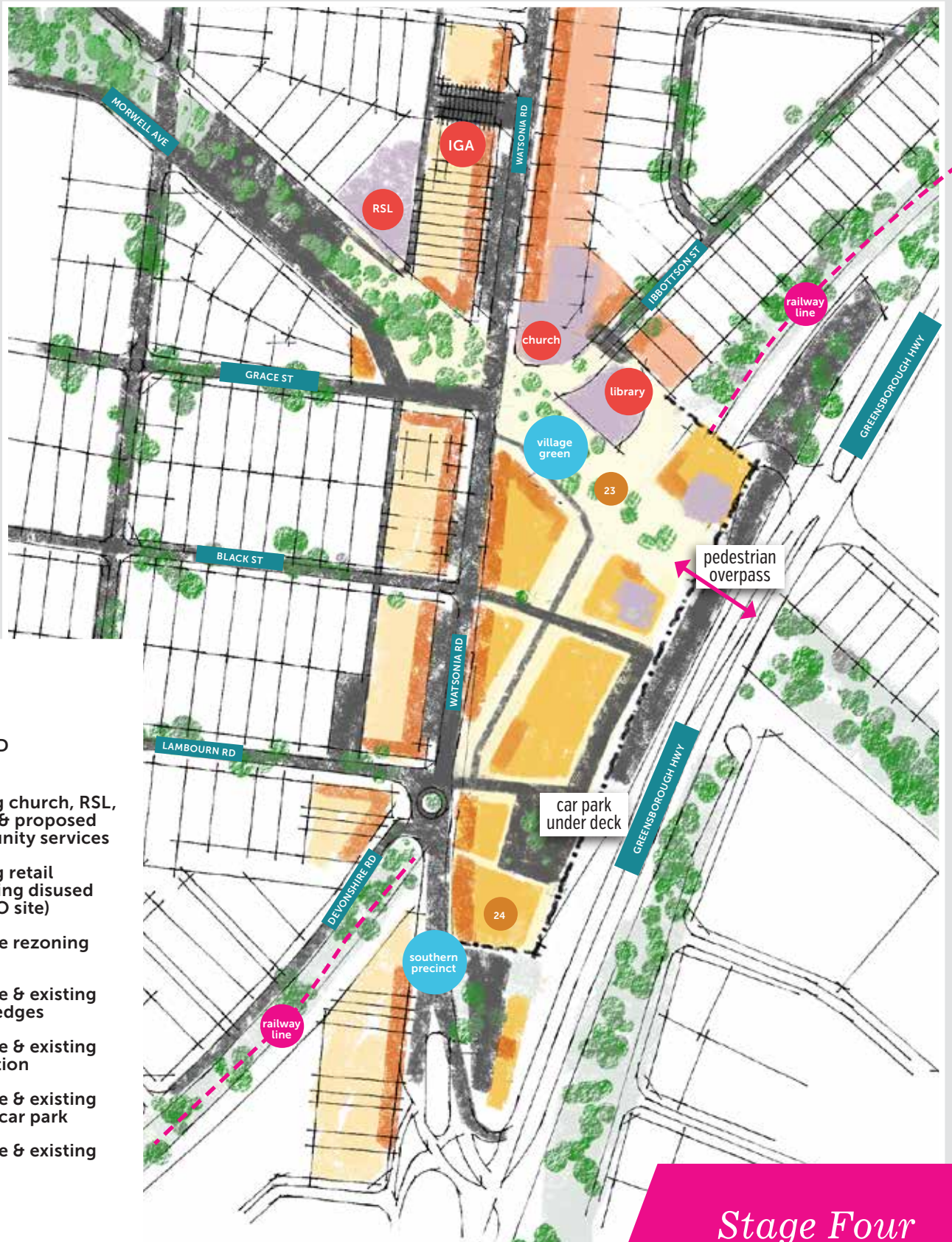
The southern office precinct is well established. A number of people of who used to catch the train from Watsonia from the city to work now stay in the village and work from the new office spaces and the cutting edge co-working space.

Entrepreneurs and small business operators who work from home often make use of the meeting rooms and facilities in the centre or just take a break to enjoy a coffee in the village green or take advantage of the free wifi to work outside for an hour. New buildings define the highest standards of sustainable development and provide facilities for cyclists and car share services.

Integrated childcare services located near the station and the shops enable working parents to combine shopping for groceries with a visit to the library, a stop at the play equipment and a quick caramel slice with cup of tea before embarking on the evening rush.

The increase of people working in the area and lead to a broader mix of retail, with more specialty shops along with cafes and restaurants. The program of events and artworks has matured and expanded in line with the new developments.

- 23. Build a deck over the rail line to link the development on the eastern side of the railway line to the main street
 - underground the power lines from Greensborough Highway to the intersection of High Street and Morwell Avenue and develop key sites
 - maintain eastern views from the village, retail frontage on Watsonia Road, appropriate building heights and floor areas and pedestrian/cycling links
- 24. Develop an office precinct in the land south of Lambourn St and east of Watsonia Road



LEGEND

-  existing church, RSL, library & proposed community services
-  existing retail (including disused old GPO site)
-  possible rezoning area
-  possible & existing active edges
-  possible & existing vegetation
-  possible & existing road & car park
-  possible & existing trees

Stage Four



Picture Watsonia Ideas

The project team has worked to pare back and develop the hundreds of ideas that have been developed so far into a shortlist. This shortlist captures possibilities that have the power to affect real change in Watsonia Village and to protect those aspects of the centre that are most valued by locals.

Some of these ideas are long term and strategic, others can start today. Some ideas would be carried out by Council or by the Victorian Government, while others are best delivered by individuals or groups within the local residential and business community.



01.

Magnetic Ideas

Watsonia is vibrant and attractive to lots of people, giving many different reasons to visit and linger in the centre



Possible kickstarter:

Pop-up food & drink, live music, late trade & fireworks on Friday evenings in partnership with the Watsonia Traders Association.

A program of facade spruce ups to improve first impressions. Options include a Facade Improvement scheme, incentives program and a volunteer-led Watsonia Block Blitz.

“provide needed experiences and services locally that residents are currently travelling elsewhere for”

- local trader

A program of temporary retail in partnership with local business operators with a focus on food and beverage. Locate in the area around the library, railway station and Morwell Avenue carparks.

Design that allows unbroken access to people with mobility issues with frequent places to pause & rest. Specifically considering the needs of people with mobility issues in planned pedestrian upgrades.

“Happiness is a state of activity.”

- Aristotle

“a destination area where people stay around”

- local trader





A cross promotion card or local discount card like Washington DC's disloyalty card.

Offer services & products for people leaving for & arriving home from work, such as pre-cooked meals and recipe & ingredient bundles.

Deliver the planned streetscape upgrades in the central precinct to incorporate ideas captured in this Picture Watsonia Vision document.

A buskers program in partnership with local business operators to complement food trucks & other events..

A partnership between Watsonia business operators and Council to develop a marketing campaign that pitches the benefits of operating a business in Watsonia to leasing professionals in order to attract potential tenants. The campaign could provide information about properties available in Watsonia and local economic research including current market gaps.

"a viable thriving individual community"

- local trader

A trial of pockets of all-day parking west of the main street to encourage commuters to park away from the station and walk down the hill via the centre of Watsonia. This should be developed in close consultation with business operators. Different locations would be trialed & observed by Council & traders to discover which which parking spots have the most significant positive impact on trade. This work should be carried out in tandem with a study & strategy to understand & address parking issues in residential streets.

Expansion and development and promotion of the Windows in Watsonia program

An 'Explore Watsonia' campaign targeted at specific local groups to increase their patronage of the centre. Delivered as a partnership between Council and local business operators this campaign would match up Council initiatives & trader offers. One example is targeting commuters with morning coffee & after work dinner or haircut deals at the same time as Council trials new all-day parking provision west of the main street. Another might be to attract school kids with specials on blue heaven milkshakes & colouring books at the same time as Council trials a pop-up play area and new library programs.

A program of events including night markets, festivals, farm days for kids each month, fundraisers sausage sizzles and coffee competitions.

A footpath activation strategy that includes pop-up parklets, footpath display tips and loose furniture for public use that are managed by a local resources e.g specific trader or library.

A program of business development workshops for traders to make their shops lovely places to be both in terms of service, atmosphere & appearance. This might include colour palettes, free style guides and tips for shop interiors and windows.



02.

Big Village Ideas

*Watsonia successfully
balances urban vitality
with country town
openness*



*“family
friendly
spaces”*

Possible kickstarter:

Temporary
park outside
library
including
adjustments
to landscaping
to allow pop-
up activities in
adjacent car
parking spaces to
spill out onto
the library
forecourt

A permanent village
green that ties the RSL,
library, church and church
properties & main street
together. This area would be
created by reconfiguring the
road layout and by creative
use of the easement land
near the library.



*“we are a
very friendly
mixable lot”*

- local resident

*“One day in the
country is worth a
month in town”*

– Christina Rossetti

*“I like the village feel.
It would be a shame to
encourage Watsonia Road
to be a thoroughfare between
Greensborough Highway and
Grimshaw Street*

- local resident



An outdoor play area that is linked to children's reading room in the library and is visible from the main street.

“a pleasant sleepy village feel”

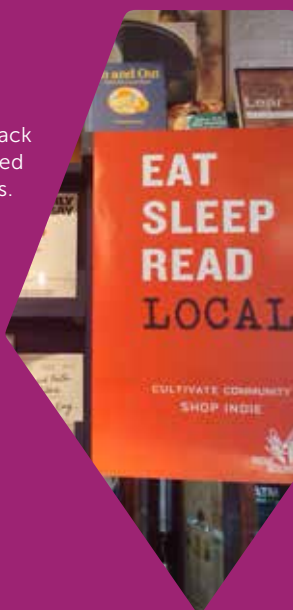
- local resident

“generous of spirit”- local trader

“more people friendly areas for people to meet, like a piazza”

- local trader

A welcome pack for newly arrived residents.



A newly configured road & parking layout that makes walking & cycling the easiest way to get around the centre.

A training program for business operators to make Watsonia a deaf & dementia friendly centre.



New urban design guidelines to shape the design of built form, define building envelopes and maintain view lines in line with Watsonia's Big Village character.

A volunteer-led **Big Watsonia Weekend Spring Clean** which brings community groups and local business operators together to clean up and refresh the central precinct including adjacent neighbourhood streets and parks. Council & business operators could provide materials & food and host a community event in the centre to celebrate the hard work on Sunday evening.

“create a soul - a town square”

- local trader

03.

Knitted Together Ideas

the different areas and experiences of Watsonia are distinct yet connected in a unified whole

“the large land of Watsonia train station is a unique opportunity to create something special”

- local trader

A vision and masterplan to guide development of the railway station site. New retail development builds on and strengthens the existing retail main street while drawing commuters up from the railway station to shop on the main street.

Car parks relocated behind buildings so that the main street is dominated by pedestrians instead of cars.

Wide footpaths that encourage lingering, socialising, footpath cafes and displays.

Possible kickstarter:

Reclaim the area of road between the church and Ibbottson St, using paint and large potted plants, creating a temporary outdoor reading room.

An aged care residential facility in Railway Station development that provides easy access to village green, library, main street and railway station.

“create a unified strip of benefit to all”

- local trader

“When we build our landscape around places to go, we lose places to be.”

- Rick Cole





Wayfinding & landscape works to reroute path from the train station to the main street so that it takes pedestrian to the heart of the main street rather than to the doors of the BP shop.

A set of clearly defined development objectives that include a precinct, movement hierarchy and development parameters.

A program of work to underground the power cables and develop key easement sites. Development would fully fund these undergrounding works. New development would enhance the centre overall. Key open space areas and links along the easement are maintained.

A movement hierarchy that places pedestrians first, bicycles and public transport second, and puts cars last.

Three distinct and interrelated precincts. Where all development, design, streetscape works, infrastructure, branding, promotion, activation, programming and cultural infrastructure supports the individual character and experience of each precinct:

1. South village precinct In the retail area in Greensborough Road where emergent and short-term users can take advantage of cheaper rents e.g. co-working spaces

2. Central village precinct with the new village green, library, railway development and main street shops including the bakery, pharmacies and banks

3. North village precinct with fresh food, IGA, medical services.

Council land holdings and services consolidated onto the main street including properties on Crellin Crescent (Maternal Health centre).

“Watsonia ‘village’ is on the east side of Watsonia Road, draped across a ridge crowned by the high voltage transmission lines”

- local resident

“developing a 4th precinct could be disastrous - needs to hug, complement and add value, not be separate”

- local trader

04.

Forward Looking Ideas

Watsonia embraces the future, seeks new ideas, responds creatively to changing needs, new technology, new ways of working, playing and trading



A facility such as a Tech Shop, tool library or men's shed that brings the community together, provides tools and space to work and develops skills.

"interactivity"
local trader

A small business innovation grant program for operators in Watsonia who are exploring new ways of working, new technology, innovative ways to use existing systems and resources and deliver local benefits.

Possible kickstarter:

short-term co-working space in vacant shop with program for local entrepreneurs.

A skills swap that brings members of the community together to share their different skills and experience. For example Watsonia's younger and older community members might come together around social media, cooking, ipad tips and gardening.

Dedicated spaces in the centre of Watsonia for shared car service such as Flexi Car/ Car Next Door/ Go Get.

"Somewhere, something incredible is waiting to be known."

"better mix of traders and shops and services"

- local trader

- Carl Sagan



A full-day childcare centre and occasional care facility on or near the main street.

Online Watsonia strategy that looks at how existing resources that be further enabled by technology.

A program for retail operators that supports them to think through the opportunities & risks and key drivers around retail. This program would help retailers to develop strategies such as a shared online shopping resource, or a shop local strategy that rewards people for shopping in the main street rather than online.

A wifi enabled area in the heart of Watsonia. Provide charging points near seats in the sunshine.

A co-working facility on the main street near the railway station that provides flexible working space & programs to support entrepreneurs & small business operators.

A Local Wonder program to promote and support home businesses and craftspeople. This might include an annual fair or expo, to celebrate the productive shed & kitchen table, along with the fact that Sardis Wonder Soap was invented locally and produced in a residential bathtub.

“keeping families wanting to stay in the area”

- local trader



“The retail mix talks about where it has come from since the 1950s and its current demographic mix which has been aging and shrinking since the 1980s. Chemists, fish and chip shops and pizza shops predominate.”

- local resident

05.

Known & Loved Ideas

Watsonia knows its story and tells it well, the personality and character of Watsonia plays out in the centre wherever you look

An annual festival that celebrates the character of Watsonia, and showcases the local assets and it's suburban charm such as the RSL, Neighbourhood house, op shops, home made preserves & handcrafts etc.

"improve entry to Watsonia"

- local trader

A fresh place-based brand with a logo and branding strategy for Watsonia village. The brand should capture the unique qualities of Watsonia, define the existing strengths of the place & the community and outline ways to build on these and embed them into everyday experiences. This brand can then be used as a touchstone for design decisions around masterplanning, streetscape works, engineering & infrastructure changes and programming & public arts.



"Stories can conquer fear, you know. They can make the heart bigger."

- Ben Okri



An online Brand Watsonia strategy to develop a stronger online presence that better promotes the delights of Watsonia.



**Possible
kickstarter:**

Carry out a photo study of Watsonia by a photographic artist

Poetry competition around the idea of home.



Commission a poet, artist, historian or writer to collaborate with the local community to name new public spaces and laneways inspired by local facts and stories e.g the old army signal tower on Gresswell Hill

“the area needs some atmosphere”
- local resident

“develop a new identity”
- local trader

06.

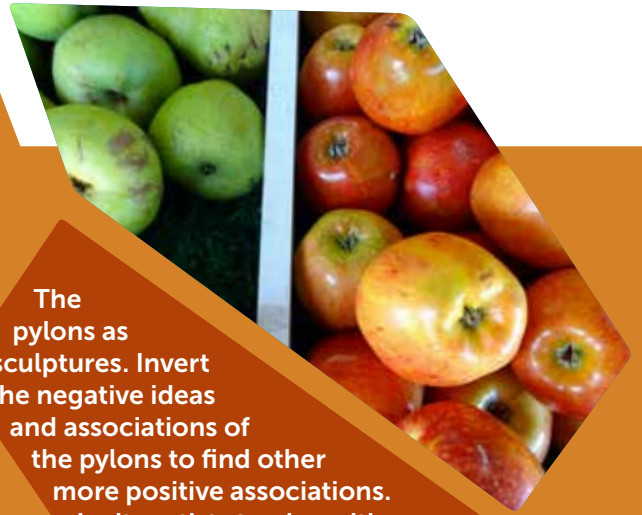
Colourful

Ideas

Watsonia is full of colour, texture, movement & playfulness

Oversized picnic rugs that can be borrowed from the library or local business operator.

The pylons as sculptures. Invert the negative ideas and associations of the pylons to find other more positive associations. Invite artists to play with the possibilities of the pylons as dominant forms in the landscape with their own sculptural properties.



“full of colour”

- local trader

A van or kiosk-style cafe outside the library entrance and adjacent to the walkway to the railway station to provide interest and activity near the station, attract commuters up the hill to the library and the main street. This could be run by an existing local cafe operator.



“beautify the centre”

- local trader

Lighting elements to make the main street inviting in the evenings such as catenary systems or big lit up signs.

“wow factor” - local trader

The Argentinian creative collective DOMA turned an electricity pylon into a giant robot called Colosso. It's 45 metres tall and animated with flashing neon tubes to express the electric monster's mood.

“Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life.”

— Pablo Picasso



A Beach for a Day. Create a beach for a one weekend a year that completely transforms a different part of Watsonia each year. A festive event with music, beach cricket, a sand castle competition, food stalls, ice cream, grown-up refreshments, chalk drawings and people are encouraged to bring their pets & banana lounges and imagine their centre differently. Instead of a beach it could be a farm, a garden, a giant backyard etc - as long as it blurs boundaries & explores possibilities.

A skate park & challenging play area that is designed for high-school-aged kids.

A program of arts and culture activities that builds on and supports the existing mural program & Graffiti Everyone's Business project.

Outdoor chess tables and/or giant chess board.

A quiet reflective space such as a grotto in open public space which can be booked for ceremonies or community gatherings.



Free space or spaces for a program of contemporary art managed by artists, this could be as small as a shoe-box-sized display unit.

An elevated rotunda or bandstand that provides expansive views to the east.

Artist-made creative shopfront signage, street furniture & wayfinding signs that are eye-catching & interesting.

Pop-up parklets & playgrounds to occupy parking spaces and surplus areas of road. The elements of this parks could form a kit or reusable resource that can be moved to different locations as required.



"the drab greyness of so many parking spaces and the power lines make it look very industrial and without heart! We need to build a whimsical, colourful 'heart', something you would happily put on a postcard" - local resident

Possible kickstarter:
Block off the railway car park and hold musical events over summer.

"cultural and unique"
- local trader

07.

All Kinds of Green Ideas

Watsonia is profoundly connected to nature, leafy, green, blooming, generous with shade & careful with its use of natural resources



A habitat link along the power easement. Use a combination of endemic planting with suitable habitat value and partnering with organisations like ParksVic or The Australian Research Centre for Urban Ecology (ARCUE) to develop and maintain the area.

Possible kickstarter:

Seasonal gardeners swap meet in the centre, a place to barter, trade & show off the rewards of your labours.

Promote, develop & expand the program of rambling and walking groups. Support the work of local groups & clubs who currently provide tours, events & programs.

A small fitness station with outdoor exercise equipment located in the area outside the library to cater people walking and cycling along the power easement and the proposed Plenty Road to Plenty Valley bike trail.

An open forest of small trees with overhead canopies in the power easement with granitic sand or grass underfoot & little or low growing undergrowth. These trees will form multiple shady spots with open view lines at eye level while effectively obscuring the view of pylons and overhead cables.

Maximise the greenery in all the streets and carparking areas in the centre using a combination of street trees, potted plants and pop-up parklets.

“The best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago. The second best time is now.”

– Proverb



A network of green walking and cycling tracks that make use of power easement, streets, waterways and reserves to link the main street of Watsonia with the library and railway station with Gresswell Forest, the habitat link, Bundoora Park, Plenty Road, Darebin Creek, Plenty Valley and the Plenty River.

Sustainable programs with local business operators such as ban on plastic bags or bottled water or joint recycling and shared green power supplier.

Planting in the streetscape that can support the urban ecology in suburban streets & extend or define the habitat of nearby conservation areas

A Ride to Work & Ride to School program to celebrate & support the launch of new bike paths.

Gardening clubs to bring people together, share produce & make affordable plants available.

Bicycle care stops outside Watsonia Cycles and in each precinct.

A Watsonia Power Trail that runs through the power easement that tells the story of power transmission with interpretive elements and artworks.

An efficient bike path for students and workers travelling from Watsonia to the LaTrobe cluster.

Extend water sensitive urban design (WSUD) over the entire centre.

A sensory garden to stimulate the senses that is designed to intrigue children & people with disabilities.

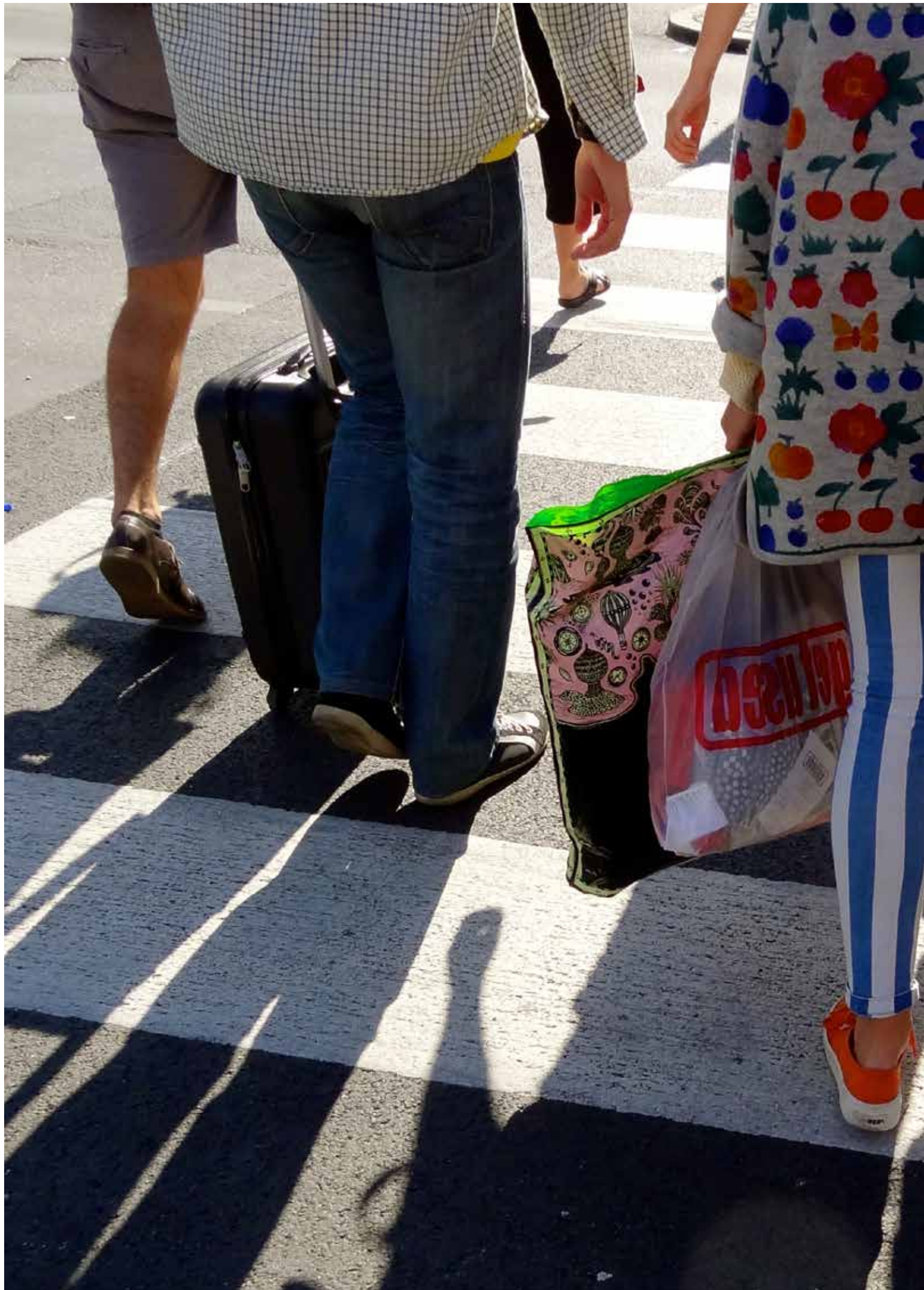
An edible garden in underused space in the village that is programmed to connect children with food production.

A program to support rainwater gardens and frog habitat in private front yards.

“parks or parklets”

- local trader

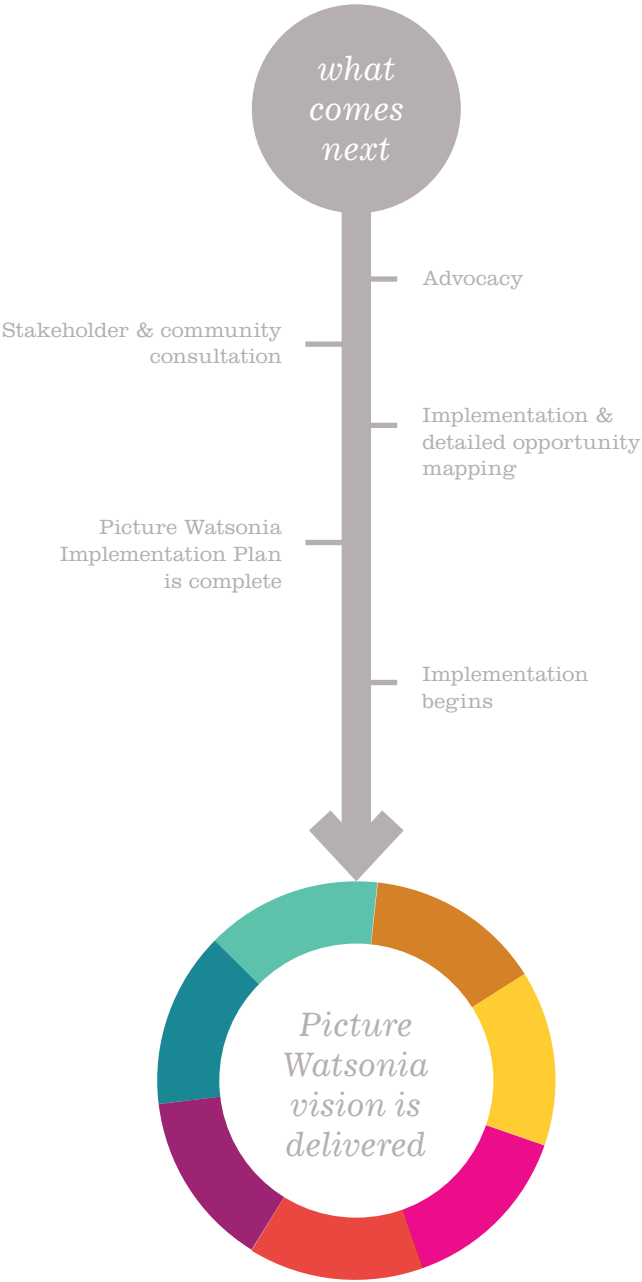






Next Steps

Council will begin to act on this final vision by developing strategies for implementing the Picture Watsonia Objectives.



Watsonia Community Hub

Since 2010 Council has been exploring the benefits of collocating a number of community services within a community hub model.

In this period Council has conducted stakeholder and community consultation and a feasibility study of a community hub in Watsonia.

In 2013 Council developed concept designs for a community hub on Council-owned land located on Knight St, adjacent to A.K.Lines Reserve, Watsonia.

Council will continue to investigate the funding, access, feasibility and design of the community hub in tandem with the implementation of the Picture Watsonia Vision for Watsonia Village.

proposed location:

21-27 Knight St, adjacent to A.K.Lines Reserve about a 10 minute walk (800m) from Watsonia village centre

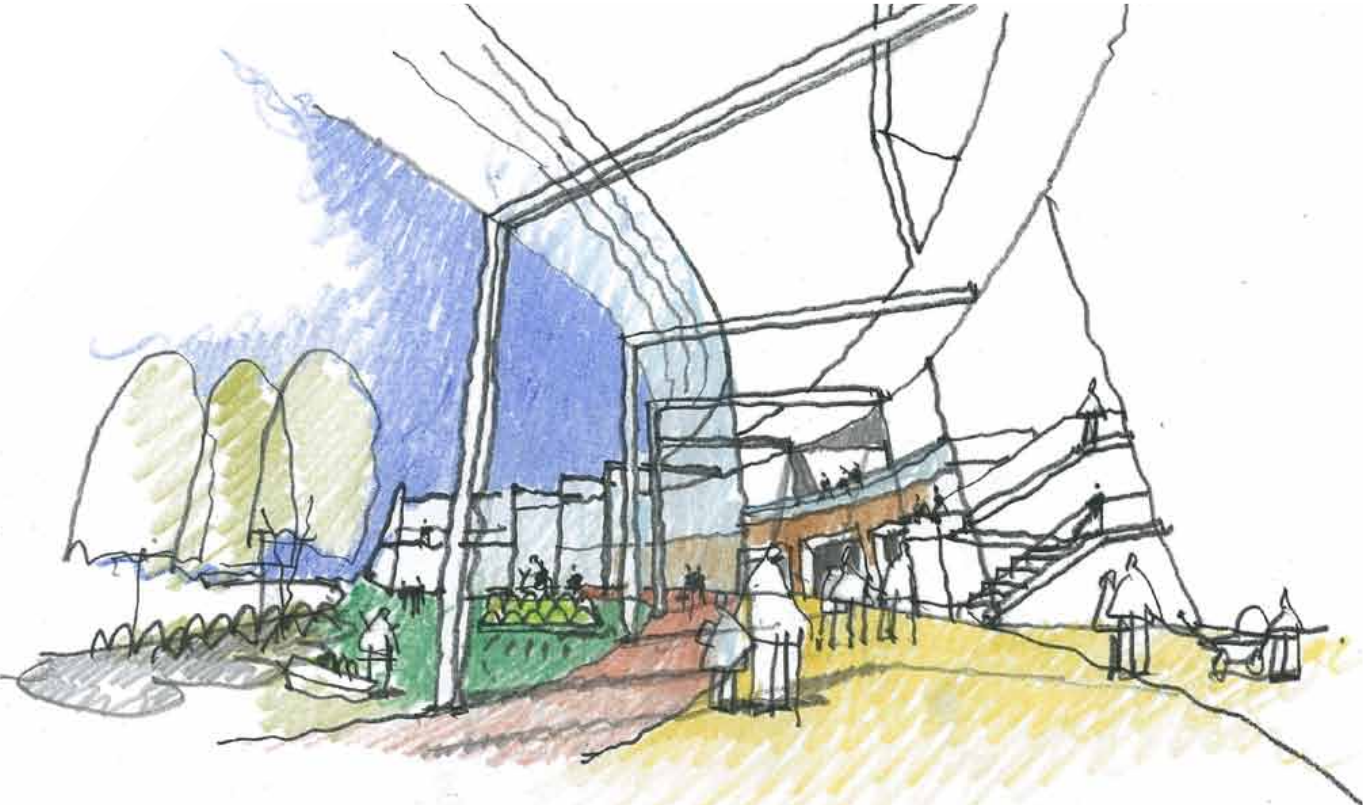
proposed services include:

- Neighbourhood House
- Maternal and Child Health
- Immunisation services
- Community health
- Early intervention services
- Housing support
- Long day care

proposed facilities:

- Shared clinical / consulting / office areas
- Shared early learning facilities
- Shared meeting rooms and breakout spaces
- outdoor preschool /long-day care play areas
- central garden courtyard with a walkway linking shared spaces
- community kitchen with large multipurpose space
- cafe
- off street parking area





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On Main Street



There are all kinds of shops and stores on Busytown's Main Street.



You can get your shoes fixed.



wash your clothes.
The washing machine

Water is coming out of
the laundromat.



You can buy candy and books.

On Main Street,
apples, and



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