

Edgars Rd / Main Street Hub, Melbourne

Thomastown 3074

The site is in Thomastown; a 'middle ring' suburb approximately 15km north of the Melbourne CBD. Significant cultural diversity in the area reflects the suburb's post-war manufacturing origins as does the predominantly low-rise, low-density housing. Locally, there are pockets of social and economic deprivation. The Edgars Road shopping centre is the economic base of the Hub. It is 1.3km from Thomastown station. Extensive community services (schools, recreation facilities, open space) are located along Main Street. The 357 bus runs along Main Street and Edgars Road, connecting the shopping centre to the train station. The Edgars Creek Trail provides an important active transport connection. The Hub has been chosen as a site for this competition due to its potential to become a 20-minute neighbourhood. The aim for the site is to; Create a welcoming, sustainable and resilient, 'Hub' precinct with safe and easy

access, to serve as a destination of choice in the local area via;

- *Reinvigorating the local shopping centre and surrounding public spaces through sustainable design, built form and destination mix; creating a distinct 'place' identity that caters to all ages, cultural backgrounds and abilities and acts as a drawcard for locals.*
- *Building safe and accessible active transport connections to the broader area including Thomastown Station.*
- *Exploring opportunities to sustainably diversify the housing stock to support the viability of the precinct while protecting the preferred neighbourhood character.*
- *Incorporating local Aboriginal cultural values into the environmental planning for the Edgars Creek area.*



Approx. site area:
20 ha.

Key Information:

Thomastown is split evenly between residential and industrial areas. Most of the housing was built post-war (1950-70s) for immigrant manufacturing workers relocating from the inner city and is nearing end of life.

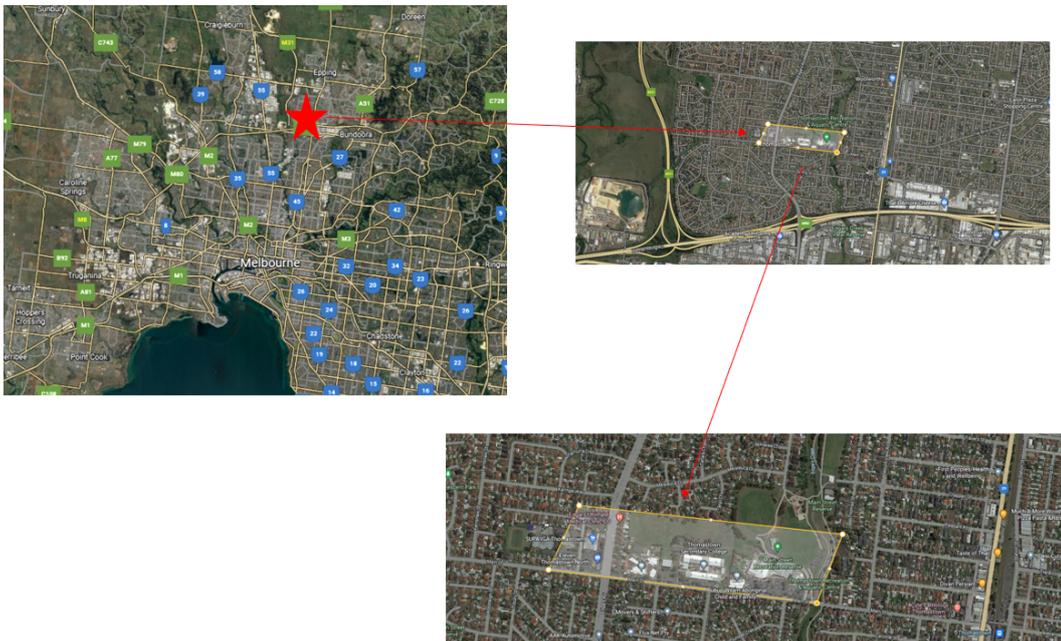
Priority areas & main expectations:

- **Precinct planning:** to meet current and future community needs and support a thriving 20-minute neighbourhood.

- **Connections:** to provide safe access for all facilities with sustainable transport options.
- **Design:** to create a distinctive, inclusive, safe, and vibrant public realm.
- **Housing diversity:** in and around the Hub supporting precinct viability, meeting community needs.
- **Ecological and cultural values:** to enhance Edgars Creek corridor via suitable ecological/built form interventions such as urban greening, biodiversity management, design, and interpretation signage.

Presentation of the site and development expectations

Thomastown contains significant industrial areas and was established in the 1950s-70s in the later stages of the post war manufacturing boom. The major cultural ancestry groups are Italian, Australian English, Macedonian and Greek, reflecting this post-war manufacturing heritage and the relocation of heavy industry out of the inner areas of Melbourne. The immediate area is mainly open space and community facilities surrounded by low-rise/ low-density garden suburban style housing. The edge of the significant industrial area is approximately within 1km of the site. The site area extends from west of the Edgars Road shopping centre to the east side of Edgars Creek bike path.



Melbourne site location, Edgars Creek/ Main Street Hub

Source: Google Maps

In 2021, the population of Thomastown was 20,234 people, covering 14.7km², a population density of 14 people / hectare or 5 dwellings/ hectare. Due to the extensive manufacturing areas in the suburb, this density does not accurately reflect the net housing density. Densities of the immediate area around the Hub range between 24-37 people / hectare or 9-14 dwellings / hectare.

The median age in Thomastown is 39. Average number of people/ household is 2.6. 62% of households are family with children households (av, 1.8 children). 84.5% of the dwellings are detached dwellings, 9.5% townhouse and 6% apartments. 83% of dwellings have 3 or more beds. 2% are 1 bed dwellings. The housing stock surrounding the Hub is predominantly low-density detached housing on post war lot sizes, reaching the end of its functional life. There is a small amount of recent infill development of townhouses reflecting the larger lots.

The Mernda Railway line runs through Thomastown. It is within 800m of the site. The 357 bus line travels along Edgars Road and Main Street to and from Thomastown station. The Edgars Creek Trail runs along the eastern edge of the site. This is a high-priority regional cycling trail along Edgars Creek that will eventually extend almost 10km connecting the northern edge of the city with the south.

The following community assets can be found within the competition site area:

- 2 primary schools (1 Catholic, 1 state)
- 1 secondary school
- 1 specialist school
- 1 kindergarten
- 1 Community Hub Centre
- 1 Catholic church
- 1 recreation centre with aquatic facilities and sports fields
- 1 Football / Netball / Cricket sports club based at Main St. Pavilion
- 1 library
- 1 neighbourhood house (co-located at library building)
- 1 maternal and child health centre (co-located at library building)

In addition, beyond the competition site but within the immediate neighbourhood catchment (800m) there are:

- 2 primary schools (state)
- 3 playgrounds
- 1 community hall
- 1 community centre with sports courts
- 3 kindergartens
- 1 historic Lutheran church
- 1 child-care centre
- 1 sporting club – Bowls, Boules
- 1 men's shed



Community assets surrounding the competition site

Source: Author

Aim for the competition site

To create a precinct that is connected, accessible, sustainable and supports a resilient community through innovative design solutions. The hub currently provides the neighbourhood with an excellent range of community assets and has strong potential to become a thriving 20-minute neighbourhood. Providing potential within the precinct's walkable catchment for increased housing diversity and utilising sustainable design principles to meet current and future community needs will be a key element of achieving this goal.

Priority Focus Areas

1. Edgars Creek Trail



Edgars Creek
Source: Author

A greener and well-connected place. Edgar's Creek is envisaged as a green spine that contributes to a cooler, greener and bio-diverse area. The creek has potential to be an active regional trail improving connectivity to nearby suburbs and provides easy access to key destinations through active modes of transport. Incorporating Aboriginal cultural heritage into environmental planning represents a significant opportunity to reimagine the area.

2. Edgars Road Neighbourhood Shopping Centre



Edgars Road Shopping Centre
Source: Author

Improved neighbourhood shopping centre that can support the local living needs of the community and future population. As the centre is privately owned, working to bring the property owners into the process will be critical.

Considerations include:

- Public realm improvements
- Range of services
- Potential Transport connections/improvements
- Appropriate built form including potential additional development
- Character and scale of the neighbourhood centre and if fit for purpose
- Incorporation of council-owned land

3. Interfaces/ Civic Land Uses



Connection of Open Space to rear of Thomastown High School demonstrating interface with surrounding housing - Source: Author

Improved integration of the site with the surrounding area. The site has many physical barriers between the multiple land uses and is generally accessed from Main Street only. Much of the access is blocked by high fencing.

Opportunities include:

- Improving interfaces and accessibility to the site to foster diversified uses and extend times and days of use.
- Addressing connections into, and exploring potential connections through, the site.
- Addressing the many blank walls with housing that turns its back to the school's open space. Current urban design trends have roads on all sides of schools in new developments to improve passive surveillance and accessibility. Currently the only access to the open space is via one road.
- Opportunities to explore other design ideas such as building orientation/ private and public space interrelations and other opportunities for passive surveillance.

4. Residential housing diversity and planning for change



Typical residential style within and surrounding the competition site

Source: Author

Improved Housing Diversity in the immediate area. Consider whether the current housing stock meets the needs of the current and future population. There is largely a single typology of low-rise, low-density development. As it ages and needs upgrading and replacement, it provides opportunities for re-thinking around whether it offers opportunities to accommodate a more diverse range of residents. Does it offer whole-of-life housing enabling children to live close to their parents and/or providing opportunities for older residents to age-in-place where they have a lifetime of connections? What is the potential for future change? What typologies could be used effectively to meet the identified needs?

Opportunities include:

- [Greening the Greyfields](#) style interventions to foster better utilisation of the potential of the residential area.
- Diverse forms of housing to encourage a more diverse population with affordable housing options.
- Planning for anticipated future housing growth and the need to fully utilise existing community assets and support a viable neighbourhood shopping centre.

Other city land use and built form priorities include:

- Innovative design solutions to breaking down barriers and improving safety, accessibly and inclusivity.
- Fostering relationships between land uses to ensure spaces are shared, safe and protected for all types of users i.e., gender, sexual orientation, age, culture etc.
- A great place for youth to meet within existing land uses.
- Challenges of involvement with private land-owners surrounding the Hub and how best to motivate them to be part of the solution.

Students should choose one or more priority focus areas to address from the 4 detailed above using the two themes of Strong, Thriving, Liveable Communities and City Climate Priorities and environmental challenges.

Strong, Thriving, Liveable Communities: 20-minute neighbourhoods

A key expectation of this project is to embed the concept of a 20-minute neighbourhood in the design proposals to increase the liveability of the local area and to develop a strong and thriving local community.

The [20-minute neighbourhood](#) principle is a key policy of Plan Melbourne 2017-2050. This is the city's metro strategy for guiding growth until 2050 by supporting jobs, housing and transport and building on Melbourne's legacy of distinctiveness, liveability, and sustainability. Plan Melbourne sets the aspiration for Melbourne to become a city of 20-minute neighbourhoods, where people can meet most of their daily needs within a 20-minute return walk from home, with access to safe cycling and public transport options.

[Plan Melbourne](#) defines the following 'Hallmarks' of a 20-minute neighbourhood:

- Be safe, accessible, and well connected for pedestrians and cyclists to optimise active transport.
- Offer high-quality public realm and open spaces.
- Provide services and destinations that support local living.
- Facilitate access to quality public transport that connects people to jobs and higher-order services.
- Deliver housing/population at densities that make local services and transport viable.
- Facilitate thriving local economies.

Liveable communities which deliver these hallmarks will have access to the following features:



Features of a 20-minute neighbourhood

Source: Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

Another benefit of delivering the 20-minute neighbourhood 'hallmarks' is that they enhance the city's ability to build resilience and respond to climate change through enhancing the features related to green and open space provision, walkability, providing safe streets and spaces and access to local shops.

City climate priorities and specific environmental challenges

The City of Melbourne has both a Climate Change Mitigation Strategy and a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy to address the challenges faced through climate change. Their Climate Change Mitigation Strategy was part of the C40 Climate Action Planning Pilot Program to lead the way for other cities to develop their own strategy. The city has identified four priorities for action in achieving emissions reduction targets:

- 100 per cent renewable energy
- Zero emissions buildings and precincts
- Zero emissions transport
- Reducing the impact of waste.

The strategy focuses on reducing emissions including waste by reducing the largest sources of emissions to achieve science-based targets and align the strategy to the Paris Climate Change Agreement and C40 Climate Action Plan Framework. The strategy demonstrates support for social inclusion and contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

A priority for the Victorian Government is [Cooling and Greening Melbourne](#) by increasing green infrastructure. In addition, the [Victorian Climate Change Act \(2017\)](#) provides Victoria with a world-leading legislative foundation to manage climate change risks and maximise the opportunities that arise from decisive action. It is a key piece of legislation that is driving our transition to a climate resilient community and economy, with net zero emissions by 2050. It encourages local councils to build on the work they are currently doing with a targeted program support.

The City of Whittlesea has recently completed community engagement on their draft Climate Change Plan which aims to guide the transition of the city to a low carbon, climate resilient future via a transition which is collaborative, inclusive and equitable. The Final plan is expected to be released in early 2023. The draft plan can be found [here](#). The Climate Change Plan is one of several plans that form the council's [Sustainable Environment Strategy](#).

There are seven priority areas in the city strategy;

7 priority areas



1. Renewable energy and energy efficiency



2. Sustainable and active transport



3. Sustainable farming practice and carbon sequestration



4. Low waste and circular economy



5. Climate resilient communities and businesses



6. Climate resilient built environment and infrastructure



7. Climate resilient natural environment and biodiversity

City of Whittlesea Environmental strategy priority areas

Source: City of Whittlesea Sustainable Environment Strategy

Generally, for the competition site, the relevant specific climate priority focus areas and opportunities are;

Priority 1: Renewable energy and energy efficiency

- Increase community and business implementation of zero emissions and climate resilient developments through the planning scheme.

Priority 2: Sustainable and Active Transport

- Seek opportunities for planning and delivery of active transport infrastructure to enable greater use of sustainable and active transport by the community, including through early incorporation of blue-green infrastructure.

Priority 5: Climate resilient communities and businesses

- Continue to support and improve community access to sustainable green open spaces.
- Assist the community to reduce heat risk through prioritisation of equitable tree planting and green cover enhancement.

Priority 6: Climate resilient built environment and infrastructure

- Partner with relevant bodies to establish and showcase climate resilient neighbourhoods.
- Retrofit existing buildings and infrastructure to increase climate resilience.
- Ensure our built environment is designed, built, and/or retrofitted to support blue-green infrastructure in the long term.
- Continue to embed sustainable and zero emission design into Council open spaces and leisure facilities.

Priority 7: Climate resilient natural environment and biodiversity

- Increase climate resilience, usability, and adaptability of open space network.

- Better understand impacts of climate change on local species, including identifying the role of complementary ecological land uses in biodiversity and climate resilience of local species.

Delivery of these priorities *should*; involve all levels of leadership, utilise a fairness and equity lens and, empower Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to create self-determination actions to support the natural and built environment.

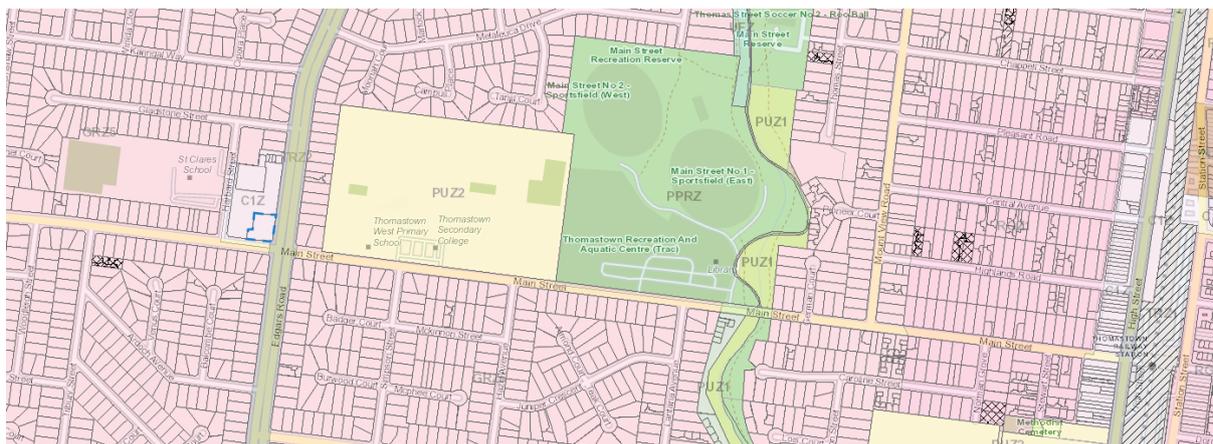
In conjunction with the priorities listed above, students are invited to address the 10 Principles defined by the competition focusing on the ones most relevant for the site. Teams are not expected to cover every environmental priority area but can choose one or more to focus on for their submission.

The Edgars Road/ Main Street Hub competition site has significant open space assets that will need to be addressed through the sustainability lens. Currently, there is a small Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect occurring locally which is being mitigated by the presence of green space. However, there are likely to be climate change effects that increase average temperatures in the broader area by 5-10 degrees by 2100 which is due to the current surrounding built form. The greatest risk to the area is urban flooding in and around Edgars Creek. Any housing solutions proposed will need to address the [Sustainable Subdivisions Framework](#) to which the city is a signatory.

Specific planning rules and regulations

For specific planning zones and overlay information, please refer to the [Whittlesea Planning Scheme](#) within the Victorian Planning Provisions. The figure below is a snapshot of the area taken from VicPlan which details the [Victorian Planning Provisions - Whittlesea Planning Scheme Maps](#). It relates to the area of investigation for the competition, centred on the Edgars Rd/ Main St Hub.

A sample planning report relevant to the general area can be found [here](#).



Map indicating existing zoning and land-use applicable. 7.10.22

Source: VicPlan

Current Victorian Planning Provision planning zones applicable to the area are;

- GRZ5
- C1Z
- PUZ1 &2 and,
- PPRZ.
- There is also a Development Contributions Plan Overlay (DCPO) in place.

The relevant details can be found [here](#).

The planning zones and overlays detailed here are provided for information purposes only. Students should not be limited to working within the existing zones and overlays for their generation of ideas but should acknowledge where amendments to existing regulations would be required to facilitate realisation and the associated potential limitations involved. Blue sky thinking around implementing the principles of the 20-minute neighbourhood hallmarks is encouraged subject to identification of planning scheme changes necessary, and their justification, before the changes could be implemented.

As the competition progresses, further strategic documentation will be provided once the information is publicly released via the *dataroom*.

Language requirements

Proposals must be submitted in English.

City-specific awards

Further detail around Melbourne specific competition awards will be provided in the Information Webinar to be held in February 2023, date will be released shortly.