Part 2: Visual Diary

2.0 Visual Diary

Landscape Character Study

2.1 *Visual Diary of Landscape Character by Local Areas*

The purpose of the Visual Diary exercise is to establish the current condition of local character and to identify where desirable and undesirable character elements exist within areas that are already recognised for having a particular character or stigma. The City has been assessed as neighbourhoods within a network of Local Area Plans. (See Figure 4.2 Local Area Plans) Observations have been recorded in each Local Area by a process of creating photographic records of the streets and individual character units. The Local Areas of Picton and Davenport to the south east of the City, which are predominantly industrial, have not been included in this exercise.

There are 10 distinct local areas at the suburban scale, which provide an appropriate scale for sound local area planning. The boundaries of each Local Area Plan are not absolute but reflect natural and human made barriers in the landscape (e.g. rivers and main roads), historical development patterns, building and streetscape character, etc.

The local area planning approach attempts to coordinate and integrate development control with that of transport, land use, community facilities and environmental conservation in order to achieve ecological, social and economic objectives for more sustainable land use and infrastructure planning outcomes. This requires an understanding of the nature of local areas and the complex interrelationships between its character, identity, land use and resources. As such, Local Area Plans represent living documents that evolve and change over time as needed.

Over time it is expected that each local areas will have their own local area plan or LAP, which will eventually simplify and rationalise the many different and overlapping local planning policies, structure plans, detailed area plans and guidelines that address disparate ranges issues. In the mean time city-wide strategic planning use the LAP boundaries as framework that enables place specific solutions to be applied.

The Local Areas that have been assessed as part of this Study and their sub-precincts or neighbourhoods (if any) are as follows;

Central Business District:
CBD Core
Marlston Hill
Marlston Waterfront
Central Coast
Koombana Bay

Outer Business District:
Commercial Primacy
Outer Business District - West
Outer Business District - East
Tuart Street Special Use zone

Ocean Beach:
Ocean Beach General
Tree Street Area
Mindalong Heights

East Bunbury:
East Bunbury Heritage Area
Rathmines

South Bunbury - Mangles

Parks:
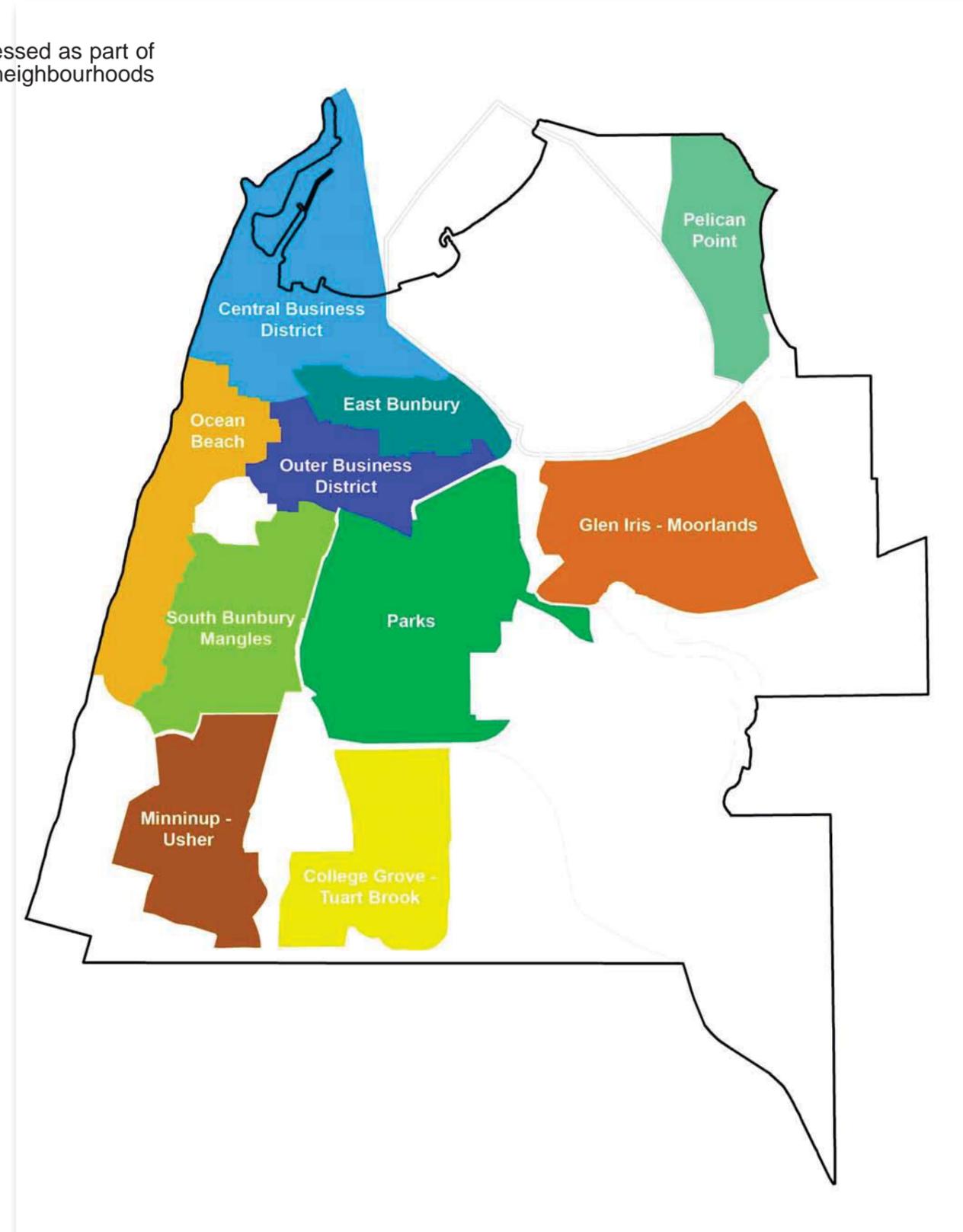Carey Park
Sandridge Park

Minninup - Usher:
Withers
Usher
Glen Padden

Glen Iris - Moorlands

Pelican Point

College Grove - Tuart Brook

Figure 2.1: City of Bunbury Local Area Plan Boundaries

2.2 Design Elements that contribute to Landscape Character in Local Areas and Neighbourhoods

The analysis of each area's landscape character was carried out as a visual assessment that took place over a period of two years. A photographic record was collated by exploring all of the City's local areas and neighbourhoods to determine the character and amenity that exists at present.

This exploration commenced through a process of structured observations; starting from a board vantage point taking in the whole of a place and then zooming in to look at its defining elements of landscape character. That are recognised as contributing to its sense of place.

Topography

Topography can dictate land value, aesthetic quality and viewing experience to and from a locality. Typically the more varied the landform of a neighbourhood the greater the hierarchy of status in the neighbourhood; the highest lots in the street have the greatest views and therefore; the higher the land value.

Views & Vistas

Views & vistas affect the quality of experience from a location. The distance and angle of those views contribute to how the place is experienced. A view that includes water or vegetation, or that is seen from a significant height or distance is considered to be of greater value. Immediate views can decrease the quality of the experience if the immediate vicinity does not offer any natural or built aesthetic quality.

Designing Out Crime

Designing Out Crime or Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a community safety design process that includes the effective design and implementation of surveillance, access, security, maintenance and landscaping techniques for designing out crime.

Road Layout

The road network is an integral part of the City. The WAPC's Liveable Neighbourhoods sets out the method for determining movement networks with an emphasis on connectivity, amenity and integration to achieve safe, efficient and attractive street networks. (Liveable Neighbourhoods) Each road in the hierarchy from primary distributors to local roads has an important role to play in the function and sustainability of the city.

Street Trees & Landscaping

The occurrence of street trees varies greatly from suburb to suburb and species, age and condition depend on how old the streets are, and any form of redevelopment that has occurred since establishment. Infrastructure such as transmission lines, underground services, road widening and verge redevelopment are all factors that can interrupt the life cycle of retaining well established trees. Disease is also a major factor in the loss of character that is established in a locality by the presence of mature trees.

Advertising & Signage

Whilst advertising is a necessary part of running a business, the appearance of signage can be an obtrusive element in the streetscape if it is exaggerated beyond necessary standards. Advertising hoards sometimes include flashing lights, animated displays, loud colours or large freestanding structures that use attention grabbing techniques to promote their business. Signage should only be used for the purpose of directional or informative displays and should be limited in areas that are not commercial or industrial, particular care should be given to minimise signage in residential neighbourhoods.

Street Lighting

As well as being necessary roadside for vehicle and pedestrian vision, street lights are important in any instance where there is public use after dark. Land uses that involve car parking or outdoor uses at night time need to provide safe and ample lighting for the users to navigate safely to and from the building and in car parking areas. Choice of lighting is extensive and should be appropriate to the surroundings. For example, it should not be obstructed by trees or other structures, it may be freestanding or wall mounted, high or low, and be of differing intensities and colours depending on its function.

Car parking

Car parking is critical to the success of any land use. Factors of design include layout, landscaping, surfacing, drainage, dimensions and angles, traffic flow and number of spaces. The older a development is, the less likely it is to have adequate parking, particularly in the instance of a change of use where the prior use is residential and the proposed use is commercial.

Public Open Space

The city has a number of regional and local open space reserves. Public open space is allocated to every suburb, and provides a place to go for recreation, and passive activities, sometimes bbq areas and playgrounds or more formal community uses. A well designed public reserve can form the heart of a neighbourhood, and can be a draw card for living in that community.

Street Furniture

Street furniture consists of; benches, bins, bollards, park tables, light posts, tree guards and other forms of shelters provided for bus stops etc. Consistently themed street furniture can identify a place, and be used to carry a theme throughout the streetscape.

Pedestrian & Bicycle Pathways

Pedestrian and bicycle access can be provided as a dual access path or as two separate paths. Grade separation is sometimes necessary between different forms of traffic; pedestrian, cyclists and motor vehicle, depending on the traffic volumes expected and the purpose of the accessway. Typically along foreshores cyclists and pedestrians have dual access away from the road, and in some instances a dedicated bicycle lane is included in the road width depending on existing circumstances.

Alleyways

Alleyways are synonymous with anti social behaviour, vandalism and crime. Alleyways are essential for some commercial uses where loading zones require rear access, or the lots are built out boundary to boundary as with many main street developments. Elements of CPTED can be applied to alleyways to make them as safe as possible for public use, however, access to rear laneways, and alleyways should be restricted when not in use.

Street Activation

The way in which buildings interact with the street can create an open and inviting atmosphere or a segregation of private and public property. Active street frontages open onto the street in a transformation of interior to exterior that invites people in off of the street. Land uses such as cafes, restaurants, retail outlets etc draw people off of the street by allowing ample views inside, by spilling over into the public domain in the case of alfresco areas and providing awnings that shelter passers by. Closed frontages are uninviting and contain elements such as privacy screening, fencing, solid walls, no windows or openings and no public access.

Access & Crossovers

The number of driveways present on a street can lower the number of on street car parking bays and lower the aesthetic value of the streetscape. Multiple driveways dominate the street particularly if they are double crossovers. Where possible shared access is a preferred method of minimising the effect of driveways on the street, and by having evenly spaced single crossovers, it is possible to maintain parking spaces on the roadside.

Boundaries & Retaining Walls

Fencing is a dominant feature in the streetscape and requires some level of governance. Open frontages are the foremost effective method of maintaining passive street surveillance. Whilst some people are drawn towards enclosing themselves in for security with solid fencing, the overall effect is negative in the streetscape and also removes the passive surveillance element to and from the home by creating hiding spots. Most local governments apply design guidelines for the design of fencing in residential areas for two main reasons; to maintain harmony and regularity in the streetscape and to practice CPTED in the community.

Setbacks & Orientation

In a residential setting the setbacks of dwellings is critical in establishing the character of the street. Irregular patterns of setbacks can make an in cohesive streetscape, and overtime it encourages the development of minor structures in the front setback where people extend their building forward to be in line with someone else's setback; gradually bringing the street overall setback closer to the lot boundary. Dwellings should be designed and orientated to maximise solar access to the north, and passive light and ventilation to habitable areas of the home, also orientating private open space so that sunlight and outlook are achievable.

Style & Character

Whilst style is a subjective element of design in which everybody has a differing opinion, it is possible to categorise the style and character of areas generally and more specifically, by looking for design features that are synonymous with certain eras, character styles and phases of modern Australian architectural vernacular. Good character may be achieved by coordinating elements of design in a single style that are suitable to the year that the building was built, the local surroundings, and the appropriate use of colour schemes and building lines that area used.

Materials & Construction

Building materials and techniques differ around the country and locally. Many building companies source local materials for the construction of residential dwellings that can be manufactured and supplied in the region. Construction methods such as double brick are common in new dwellings in the region as are steel framed brick veneer homes, as opposed to timber framing, due to construction costs. Similarly local lime stone products are readily available for the use of retaining walls and fencing around the exterior of new homes and estate developments.

2.3 Describing the Visual Landscape Character

The Visual Character statement(s) should be broad written descriptions of the study area, detailed descriptions of the visual landscape character of each unit and graphics to illustrate the landscape character descriptions and units.

Table 2.3:Terminology for Describing Visual Aspects of Landscape Character.

Scale	Intimate	Small	Large	Vast
Enclosure	Tight	Enclosed	Open	Expansive
Diversity	Uniform	Simple	Diverse	Complex
Texture	Smooth	Textured	Rough	Very rough
Form	Vertical	Sloping	Rolling	Horizontal
Line	Straight	Angular	Curved	Sinuous
Colour	Monochrome	Muted	Colourful	Garish
Balance	Harmonious	Balanced	Discordant	Chaotic
Movement	Dead	Still	Calm	Busy
Pattern	Random	Organised	Regular	Formal

(Table adopted from '*Visual Landscape Planning in Western Australia: A manual for evaluation, assessment, siting and design',* 2007.)