

WAITAKERE CITY: LINCOLN ROAD **FINAL REPORT**

INTRODUCTION

The Waitakere City Council (WCC) has retained G.B. Arrington of PB PlaceMaking in Portland, Oregon USA to evaluate the relationship between the development of Lincoln Rd and Henderson Town Centre as part of an integrated transport and land use strategy. Site tours and briefings with Waitakere Council staff were conducted as part of the evaluation during the week of March 10, 2008.

This report recommends planning Lincoln Rd and Henderson as part of an integrated transport and land use strategy. As such the planning framework for Lincoln Rd should envision the corridor as a series of complementary pieces. Expanding bulky retail uses along Lincoln Rd is expected to have negative consequences on WCC's stated objectives of establishing Henderson as the 'new CBD for Waitakere' and developing Lincoln Rd as a high-quality diverse environment.

AN INTEGRATED STRATEGY FOR LINCOLN RD & HENDERSON

Past performance is an important indicator in assessing the capability of WCC to successfully undertake an integrated transport and land use strategy for Lincoln Rd and Henderson Town Centre. Waitakere City Council has distinguished itself in the past with achieving a number of key successes in linking transport and urban form. Among those the Government Centre and new rail station in Henderson, helping secure advancement of Western Corridor Rail, under grounding the New Lynn Station and the complementary TOD plan are notable examples. While past successes are no guarantee of future performance, they are an indication that the council has demonstrated experience executing complex projects. The corollary question to monitor is whether council staff is pulled in too many directions to apply the necessary attention required for a project of this sort.

Planning for Lincoln Rd can be framed in a couple of different ways, depending on how you view them different policy options emerge:

A. **Maximize Henderson Accessibility:** In a narrow sense Lincoln Rd can be seen primarily as a transport corridor which should be managed to facilitate the safe and convenient movement between the North-Western Motorway & Henderson, Waitakere's designated central business district. Under this view emphasis would be given to maximizing accessibility to Henderson from the North-Western Motorway.

B. **Balance the needs of Lincoln Rd and Henderson:** Another perspective would be to cast a broader view to understand how Lincoln Rd also plays a land use function which has implications for both its movement function and on the future of Henderson as the CBD for Waitakere. Under this view Lincoln Rd might be thought of as an extension of Henderson in terms of both transport and land use. With that perspective in mind it is possible to argue that Lincoln Rd is of secondary importance to Henderson from a land use and economic development perspective.

C. **Let the market decide the fate of Lincoln Rd and Henderson:** Rather than choosing what to favor in terms of future land use and transport the council could chose to defer to the market. Under this view the council would step back and let market forces determine what the best balance is between the transport function of Lincoln Rd and the future development of Henderson and the Lincoln Rd corridor.

Defining success for Lincoln Rd

International best practice provides one window into understanding the choices and implications for Lincoln Rd and its relationship to Henderson. That experience suggests giving the market free reign to decide is apt to favor automobile-oriented uses along Lincoln Rd at the expense of other strategies. That may work in the short term, but is likely to compound problems in the intermediate and longer term.

Building on best practice points to the WCC thinking of the transport / land use function(s) of Lincoln Rd together as an integrated strategy. Increasingly smart growth communities are evolving from “corridors and centres” as guiding strategies to understanding the two are more closely linked. In other words, communities are rethinking the function of corridors from a uniform function to a series of interconnected places. Places which can’t be fully understood without considering part of the corridor as a logical extension of / integral part of the centres they radiate from. The flipside of a corridor strategy is understanding the relationship of the corridor to the centre it it serves.

In the case of Lincoln Rd and Henderson it is clear the success of the corridor and the centre are closely linked. To further the development of Henderson as Waitakere’s CBD it will be appropriate to balance maintaining high quality accessibility to Henderson along Lincoln Rd and encouraging land use patterns along Lincoln Rd which complement Henderson and the economic vitality of Waitakere.

In this construct the success of Lincoln Rd gets measured on a number of levels:

- How does it perform as an extension of and integral part of Waitakere’s CBD Henderson
- How does it attract quality jobs without competing with Henderson?
- How can it provide convenient transit and automobile access to Henderson?

More bulky retail a potential threat to realizing the potential of Lincoln Rd

The development of bulky retail on Lincoln Rd is central to the corridors relationship to Henderson. Market pressure appears to be in place to expand bulky retail on Lincoln Rd feeding off the corridors proximity to the North-Western Motorway. At the same time Waitakere envisions a different future for Lincoln Rd. City promotional materials describe the corridor as a high quality business environment with high land values derived primarily from its access to the North-Western Motorway. Without intervention by the WCC the likely trend condition of more bulky retail along Lincoln Rd is likely to result in an outcome in conflict with the current planning framework for both Henderson as a CBD and Lincoln Rd as high value jobs areas.

More specifically expanding bulky retail along Lincoln Rd seems to pose at least two distinct challenges for the WCC:

1. *The function of Lincoln Rd.* Today Lincoln Rd plays at least two key functions. It is an economic development asset for Waitakere City with a number of strategically located development parcels. And it is envisioned as a key traffic and transit thoroughfare connecting Henderson to the North-Western Motorway.

Expanding bulky retail on Lincoln Rd is likely to be a threat to both of these objectives in two ways. First, bulky retail use may command higher land values and consume land designated for high value jobs. Second, highly automobile-oriented uses such as bulky retail can be expected to add significantly to the trips on Lincoln Rd adding to congestion and increasing travel time to Henderson from the motorway.

From a policy perspective what is the best use of the strategically located sites along Lincoln Rd? Are they better utilized as "high value industrial land" and "a home for high-tech knowledge industries" as Waitakere City fliers describe the opportunity? Or given the difficulty in attracting new opportunities should the Council seize the 'bird in hand' and allow the land be consumed in bulky retail.

2. *Establishing Henderson as a CBD for Waitakere.* To what extent does more bulky retail on Lincoln compete with the objective of supporting Henderson as Waitakere's CBD? At the simplest level there are two dimensions of the question to be analyzed - the impact on accessibility and the market for retail in the Henderson CBD? For the purposes of this analysis not enough retail market information is available to venture an opinion on the challenge retail along Lincoln Rd may pose for expanding retail in Henderson. That is a topic deserving of attention by others.

Looking at the experience in North America it is reasonable to expect allowing an expansion of bulky retail along Lincoln Rd will lead to some negative consequences on Henderson. As was discussed above, bulky retail requires a high degree of automobile accessibility to survive. Another way to think about that is expanding bulky retail is likely to result in an increase of automobile trips along Lincoln Rd, trips which will likely consume a significant amount of road capacity on Lincoln Rd which might otherwise be used to provide accessibility to Henderson. Therefore one consequence of more bulky retail on Lincoln Rd could be that travel times from Henderson to the North-Western Motorway are likely to increase.

Henderson is already access challenged in comparison to other centres in the Auckland region. To put it another way the result of allowing more bulky retail on Lincoln Rd is to make Henderson "further" from North-Western Motorway and the rest of the Auckland region in terms of increased travel time (retail trips along Lincoln Rd consume available capacity, add to congestion and increased travel time)

REDEFINING LINCOLN RD WITH HENDERSON IN MIND

International best practice has moved beyond thinking of corridors and centers as separate pieces. There is now increasing recognition that the two are inextricably linked and need to be planned in concert with each other. For both a transport and a land use perspective Henderson and Lincoln Rd are interconnected pieces.

The implications of that relationship certainly will require more attention than this international review. In anticipation of those next steps it is possible to start thinking about some possible outcomes:

- First and foremost future plans need to recognize and accept the primacy of Henderson as Waitakere's CBD. By implication Lincoln Rd's transportation and land use should be planned to complement and reinforce the role of Henderson as a CBD.
- Planning Lincoln Rd and Henderson in concert with each other will have some important implications for the form and mix of transport and land use along Lincoln Rd. In the simplest terms, the policy choices will revolve around what land use/ transport function (if any) should be given preference in thinking about Lincoln Rd and Henderson? Lincoln Rd? Henderson? Equally to both?

The WCC is encouraged to go beyond centres and corridors in how they think of Lincoln Rd. Rather than thinking of it as a corridor it is more helpful to consider Lincoln Rd as a series of distinct places with different land use and transport functions, personalities, designs, relationships and

performance. While each of those places serve important functions, under an integrated approach it will be important to plan for Lincoln Rd as a place secondary to Henderson in importance.

As a conceptual starting point you could think of Lincoln Rd as four different yet complementary places:

- I. *North Lincoln*: the area in the closest proximity to the interchange would maintain its industrial character while preserving easy access to the motorway for areas to the east, south and west.
- II. *Central Lincoln*: the current strip along Lincoln evolves to become a series of transit friendly nodes / walkable places. The nodes would emphasize connections between uses, joint parking and walkability while allowing the current mix of land uses together with future intensification. The road design seeks to balance through movements and at the same time enhancing walkability along and across Lincoln.
- III. *East Lincoln*: the employment and recreational zone along Central Park Drive would be maintained and enhanced. These uses aren't part of the CBD but complement and gain value from their adjacency to the CBD. Central Park Drive would be analyzed as a part of an integrated movement function with Lincoln Rd.
- IV. *South Lincoln*: the Waitakere Hospital employment district. Hospitals can be great 18-hour mixed-use anchors for a downtown district. The Council is encouraged to plan for the evolution of this area into an extension of the CBD.

DEVELOP A HENDERSON TOWN CENTRE PLAN

Henderson has been identified by Council as the "new CBD" of Waitakere City. The new Henderson rail station integrated with the Waitakere Central Civic Centre development provides a positive step in realizing the objective transforming Henderson into a thriving CBD. Making the aspirations for Henderson real will require taking a number of additional steps. The next critical step in the transformation of Henderson into a CBD will be the development of a town centre plan to guide public and private actions for the town centre and the industrial area adjoining the town centre.

Part of developing a plan for Henderson will be the development of some alternative futures. For example:

- What will the current trend result in for both Henderson and Lincoln Rd? What parts of that represent an opportunity or a threat toward the vision for Henderson?
- What are the implications for Henderson developing with an emphasis on the rail station / TOD as a major driver for the CBD? Is TOD a core part of the town centre strategy?
- Building off of Henderson's key assets what urban form and land use mixes would be implied? How do those move Henderson closer to being a CBD?

Successful town centres are active 18-hour places with a mix of uses. That implies attracting additional residential to Henderson and providing the amenities necessary to support it. As a starting point the centre plan should explore ways to celebrate Oratia and Opanuku streams as high quality amenities to support residential in the centre.

CBD PERFORMANCE METRICS

A core part of developing a town centre plan will be developing a set of metrics to defining what you mean by being a CBD to guide the plan and to monitor progress toward realizing the plan. The metric then add some definition and measures what it means for Henderson to be a CBD.

Among other things those metrics should address:

- What does it mean to be a CBD? What is missing today and what needs to be added to Henderson? For example does Henderson have the key characteristics of a CBD such as:
 - An 18-hr place for living, working, playing and shopping
 - The government centre for Waitakere
 - A major business address
 - A cultural and educational centre
- A reoccurring problem for many town centres is under development, not achieving the intensity of development necessary to create the critical mass necessary to become a vital walkable active centre. To help measure progress and to serve as a guide to planning and investment decisions it will be helpful to develop some qualitative measures to track progress toward becoming a CBD.

Without defining a clear guide for where you want to go it is impossible to measure whether you are actually making progress. As part of a city centre plan Henderson could define population and employment for its 20-year planning horizon and then translate those into 5-year benchmarks to help measure progress. The benchmarks might include performance measures that will help track whether activity in the town centre is progress toward where you are trying to go.

The CBD performance metrics might include time and performance based measures:

- FAR (Floor Area Ratio) of new development
- The # of new jobs and residents
- Share of non-automobile trips
- Capture rate of office employment

Can Henderson be an office centre?

One of the key conversations in developing a town centre plan for Henderson will be to revisit the role of office in making Henderson a CBD. The existing strategy for Henderson aspires to 'set the scene for medium to high-rise office.' There is some question whether this is a realistic expectation given current national and international trends for office locational decisions.

Part of having a realistic town centre plan will be aligning policy expectations and market signals. One of the early issues in the development of the plan will be to conduct a reality check and re-examine whether Henderson can be expected to compete in the Auckland regional market as an office location.

Without more information in hand the stated desire to attract office development to Henderson in support of its designation as the CBD for Waitakere appears to be out of alignment with many market realities. Class A office historically is attracted to prestigious locations with high amenity (such as water views), high automobile accessibility (such as adjacent to motorway interchanges) or sites with existing concentrations of office (like attracts like). A quick review of Henderson suggests that none of those factors are in place.

Strategies such as locating government offices and educational facilities in Henderson are beneficial to creating a vibrant centre, but developing Henderson into a class A office employment centre seems like a major reach for the city. The impact of peak-oil and the importance of locating office along transit lines might pose a different outcome, but that trend would seem to strengthen the role of central Auckland as a business centre rather than sub-regional centres on rail like Henderson.

HENDERSON AS A TOD

Whatever the prospects for peak oil and climate change, Henderson's location on the Western rail line is an important asset worth capitalizing on. The improvements to the Western rail line slated for 2010 provide an important strategic opportunity to advance Henderson's aspirations to develop as town centre. The Civic Centre investment is a bold move to help anchor Henderson as the "new CBD" for Waitakere. The question now is what happens next? How will the city leverage that investment and the

western corridor double tracking to grow the importance of Henderson as a centre within the Auckland region?

In an era of peak-oil what can Henderson do to position itself and its presence on the Western Corridor as a competitive advantage to create a larger precinct of investment around the Civic Centre? Relative to other sub-centres in the Auckland region Henderson's key location on the Western Corridor appears to position it well for future success.

Successful TOD strategies start with understanding the context of the TOD within the region, the corridor and then the scale of the TOD within its local setting. With this in mind the town centre strategy for Henderson will need to carefully consider Henderson's market position on the rail network relative to other centres. With that in mind, one dimension of pursuing a TOD strategy will be to understand and leverage the synergy/relationship of Henderson to other stations such as New Lynn, Morningside and the Auckland CBD.

For the precinct within the 600 meter walkshed of the station the Henderson Town Centre should give special attention to taking advantage of the Henderson station as an important dimension of the plan. Appendix I provides a short summary of the international best practice for planning a TOD and can help guide TOD planning in Henderson.

NEXT STEPS

This report recommends planning Lincoln Rd and Henderson as part of an integrated transport and land use strategy. As such the planning framework for Lincoln Rd should envision the corridor as a series of complementary pieces. Expanding bulky retail uses along Lincoln Rd is expected to have negative consequences on WCC's stated objectives of establishing Henderson as the 'new CBD for Waitakere' and developing Lincoln Rd as a high-quality diverse environment.

In order to achieve an integrated transport and land use strategy for Lincoln Rd and Henderson the two should be planned in concert with each other with an eye toward Henderson growing into the 'new CBD' for Henderson. An action agenda should include the following three elements:

1. LIMIT NEW BULKY RETAIL ON LINCOLN RD

The report makes the case that additional bulky retail on Lincoln Rd is likely to create a number of negative consequences for the development of Lincoln Rd and of Henderson as Waitakere's new CBD. The WCC is encouraged to limit new bulky retail along Lincoln Rd.

2. CREATE AN INTEGRATED PLAN FOR LINCOLN RD.

An early action agenda should be to develop a work program and secure funding to develop an integrated transport and land use plan for Lincoln Rd. The planning context for how Waitakere looks at Lincoln Rd ought to

recognize Lincoln Rd's role in supporting Henderson as a CBD. Rather than thinking of Lincoln Rd as a single corridor it will be important to plan for four different yet complementary segments of Lincoln Rd:

- I. *North Lincoln*: the area in the closest proximity to the interchange would maintain its industrial character while preserving easy access to the motorway for areas to the east, south and west.
- II. *Central Lincoln*: the current strip along Lincoln evolves to become a series of transit friendly nodes / walkable places. The nodes would emphasize connections between uses, joint parking and walkability while allowing the current mix of land uses together with future intensification. The road design seeks to balance through movements and at the same time enhancing walkability along and across Lincoln.
- III. *East Lincoln*: the employment and recreational zone along Central Park Drive would be maintained and enhanced. These uses aren't part of the CBD but complement and gain value from their adjacency to the CBD. Central Park Drive would be analyzed as a part of an integrated movement function with Lincoln Rd.
- IV. *South Lincoln*: the Waitakere Hospital employment district. Hospitals can be great 18-hour mixed-use anchors for a downtown district. The Council is encouraged to plan for the evolution of this area into an extension of the CBD.

The plan for Lincoln Rd will need to address land use, transit and roadway improvements including taking advantage of the new regional investment in frequent bus service on Lincoln Rd.

3. DEVELOP A HENDERSON TOWN CENTRE PLAN

Waitakere has taken some bold steps to establish Henderson as its 'new CBD'. Realizing the opportunity will require the same level of effort on a broader scale. An important mechanism will be the development of town centre plan to set priorities, define a vision and a clear path to get there. An early action item would be to develop a work program and secure funding to complete a town centre plan for Henderson.

An early decision in the development of the plan will be to what extent Henderson develops by leveraging the opportunities afforded by the improvements to the Western rail corridor. To put it another way, will the development of Henderson follow the principals of transit-oriented development (TOD)?

A town centre plan in the North American context would typically include:

- A vision

- land use plan,
- transportation plan,
- parks/open space plan,
- infrastructure plan,
- urban design plan and guidelines,
- housing plan, and
- a finance and implementation plan.

To help monitor progress toward the transformation of Henderson as a CBD it will be important to include some benchmarks and metrics to what it means to be a CBD. In other words what would a successful Henderson CBD look like/ be like? The benchmarks would include reasonable progress toward success on a number of levels such as:

- developing the key characteristics of a CBD,
- the number of new jobs and residents
- achievement of minimum FAR (Floor Area Ratio) for new development
- the share of non-automobile trips (walking, bikes, transit)
- the capture rate of office employment
- achieving key projects identified in the implementation plan.

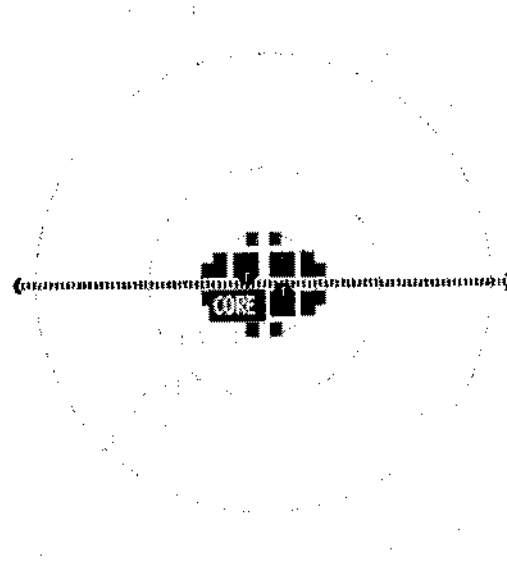
APPENDIX I: APPLYING TOD PRINCIPLES TO HENDERSON

Transit-oriented development (TOD) can be an important part of creating an active vital CBD in Henderson. TOD is part of a strategy for accommodating growth and realizing economic development without diminishing livability. TOD focuses compact growth around transit stops, thereby capitalizing on the locational advantage of the transit investment by bringing potential riders closer to the facility and increasing ridership. The result can be more riders on the system and higher real estate values near the stations.

TOD works best when stations are planned as part of a broader network of transit served destinations. Consequently to be successful a TOD strategy for Henderson should be defined, planned and executed by taking the other stations along the Auckland regional rail network into context.

CORE-CENTER-EDGE CONCEPT

The specific application of TOD varies depends on the location of development in relation to the transit stop. Transit stations are surrounded by a core, a center, and an edge, which influence the proper location of higher densities, mixed uses, and the design of the circulation system.



- The **core** is the area within approximately 185 meters of a transit station. It should have the highest density and degree of mixed use compared to the surrounding area. It should be the most walkable with arcades, wide footpaths, smaller block sizes, building frontages located along the footpath, and pedestrian amenities.
- The **center** extends from approximately 185 to 460 meters (.4 km). The density and mix of uses continues to remain higher than the surrounding area, but generally less so compared to the core. High priority continues to be given to pedestrian convenience, comfort, and safety. The .4 kilometer distance is approximately a five minute walk, which corresponds with the walking distance and time to get to transit that makes people more instinctively likely to choose transit.
- The **edge** represents the outer limit of a transit station area, covering a distance between .4 and .8 kilometers (915 meters) from the transit station. This area is a transition zone between the

higher density and mixed use pattern in the TOD and the lower density residential uses beyond. The .8 kilometer distance, or a 10 minute walk, is based upon the maximum distance and time people typically are willing to walk to transit.

ALIGNING TRANSIT AND LAND USE

Planning and implementing a successful TOD involves many small decisions to assure development is consistent with TOD principles - It is not enough that it is *adjacent* to transit. TOD draws on many of the same planning and development principles embraced by New Urbanism, Smart Growth and the Livable Communities movement:

- Moderate to higher density development in relation to the existing pattern of development;
- A mix of land uses, horizontally or vertically;
- Compact pedestrian-oriented design and streetscapes;
- Building design and orientation to the street to allow easy pedestrian and transit access;
- A fine-grained connected street pattern without cul-de-sac;
- A system of parks and open spaces

TOD LAND USE AND DESIGN PRINCIPLES

TOD allows you to treat land use differently than conventional development because TODs behave differently. People living and working in TODs walk more, use transit more and own fewer cars the rest of the region. TOD households are twice as likely to not own a car and own roughly half as many cars as the "average" household.¹ At an individual station, TOD can increase ridership by 20 to 40 percent and up to five percent overall at the regional level. People who live in a TOD are five times more likely to commute by transit than other residents. Locations next to transit can enjoy increases in land values over 50 percent in comparison to locations away from transit stops.²

TOD seeks to align transit investments with a community's vision for how it wants to grow. A successful TOD will reinforce both the community and the transit system.

Transit-oriented development may be described by four basic principles, which define the essential characteristics of all successful TODs:

- Greater density than community average.
- A mix of uses.

¹ Parsons Brinckerhoff. 2005. *Unpublished Literature Review: Project H-27A Ensuring Full Potential Ridership from Transit-Oriented Development*. Transit Cooperative Research Program Report. Washington, D.C.

² Cervero, Robert. 2004. *Transit-Oriented Development In The United States: Experiences, Challenges, And Prospects*. Transit Cooperative Research Program Report 102. Washington, D.C.

- Quality pedestrian environment.
- A defined center.

Principle 1: Greater Density than the Community Average

A key ingredient for walkable communities and support for transit is having sufficient residential densities to reduce walking distances between residences and other destinations, including commercial services, schools, parks, and transit.

- Densities higher than the community norm are located within 92 to 185 meters of transit.
- Approximately 25 to 60+ dwelling units per hectare are necessary to support any type of rail transit.
- Structured parking is used rather than surface lots in higher density areas.
- Site design for major projects allows for the intensification of densities over time.

Principle 2: A Mix of Uses

A transit supportive environment includes a mixture of residential, commercial, service, employment, and public uses making many trips between destinations shorter and more walkable:

- First floor uses are “active” and oriented to serve pedestrians.
- Multiple compatible uses are permitted within buildings near the transit station.
- A mix of uses generating pedestrian traffic is concentrated within walking distance (185 to 460 meters) of transit.
- Auto-oriented uses, such as service stations and drive through facilities, are limited or prohibited near transit.

Principle 3: Quality Pedestrian Environment

Vibrant communities are convenient and comfortable places for pedestrians. There are a number of components that contribute to a quality pedestrian environment:

- Buildings and primary entrances sited and oriented to be easily accessible from the street.
- Buildings incorporate architectural features that convey a sense of place and relate to the street and pedestrian environment.
- Amenities, such as storefront windows, awnings, architectural features, lighting, and landscaping, help create a comfortable pedestrian environment along and between buildings.
- Site layout and building design allow direct pedestrian movements between transit, mixed land uses, and surrounding areas.

- Most of the parking located to the side or rear of the buildings.
- Footpaths present along site frontages, which connect to footpaths and streets on adjacent and nearby properties.
- Street patterns form an interconnected grid that simplifies access for all modes.
- Pedestrian routes buffered from fast-moving traffic and expanses of parking.
- Trees sheltering streets and footpaths with pedestrian-scale lighting.
- Buildings and parks anchor key areas or intersections.
- Secure and convenient bicycle parking.

Principle 4: A Defined Center

Transit is particularly successful in communities and neighborhoods that have defined centers, offering multiple attractions and reasons for pedestrians to frequent the area.

- The density and buildings are highest near transit, moderating somewhat along the corridor, and ultimately transitioning in the edge to match the character of surrounding development approximately 460 meters or greater from the station.
- Parking is less predominant, located to the rear and in parking structures.
- Buildings are oriented close to the street with window displays and main entrances.
- Buildings are typically taller than the surrounding area.
- Parking requirements are reduced in close proximity to transit, compared to the norm.
- Footpaths are wider than in lower density areas, and offer pedestrian amenities, such as street trees, benches, kiosks, and plazas.