

AFGHAN BAZAAR

CULTURAL PRECINCT

DANDENONG

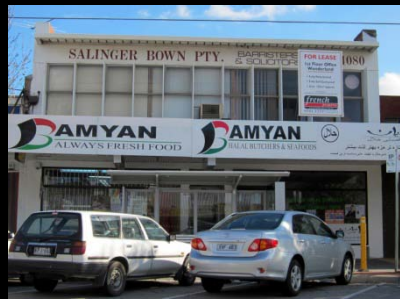
‘To develop a design framework to reinforce Thomas Street
as a significant cultural precinct’



sinatra murphy pty ltd
ART + LANDSCAPE



AFGHAN BAZAAR CULTURAL PRECINCT



WHY ?

- Victoria is home to 32% of Australia's Afghan population
- City of Greater Dandenong is home to 42% of Victoria's Afghan population
- City of Greater Dandenong has a higher Afghan population than any other Local Government Area nationally
- Afghans have been a part of Australia for 150 years

(Source: South East Region Migrant Resource Centre March 2009)

AFGHAN BAZAAR CULTURAL PRECINCT

WHY ?

- Afghan Cultural Precinct has evolved since 2001
- Since 2007 Council has worked to raise the precinct's profile:

Monthly cultural tours

Branding

Afghan Tea Cycle

TV publicity

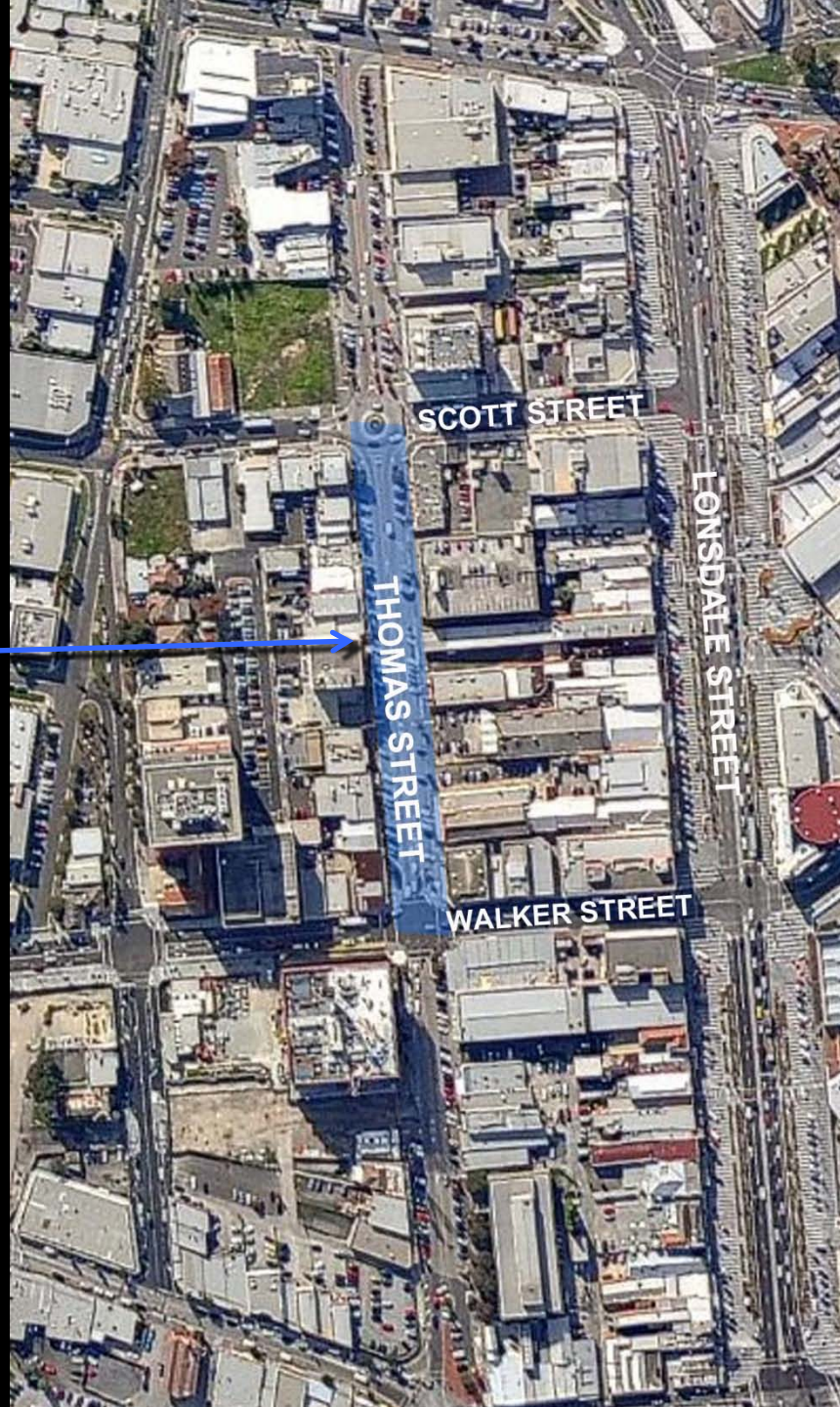
Postcards

Melbourne Food & Wine Festival



Cultural Precincts & Community Infrastructure Fund

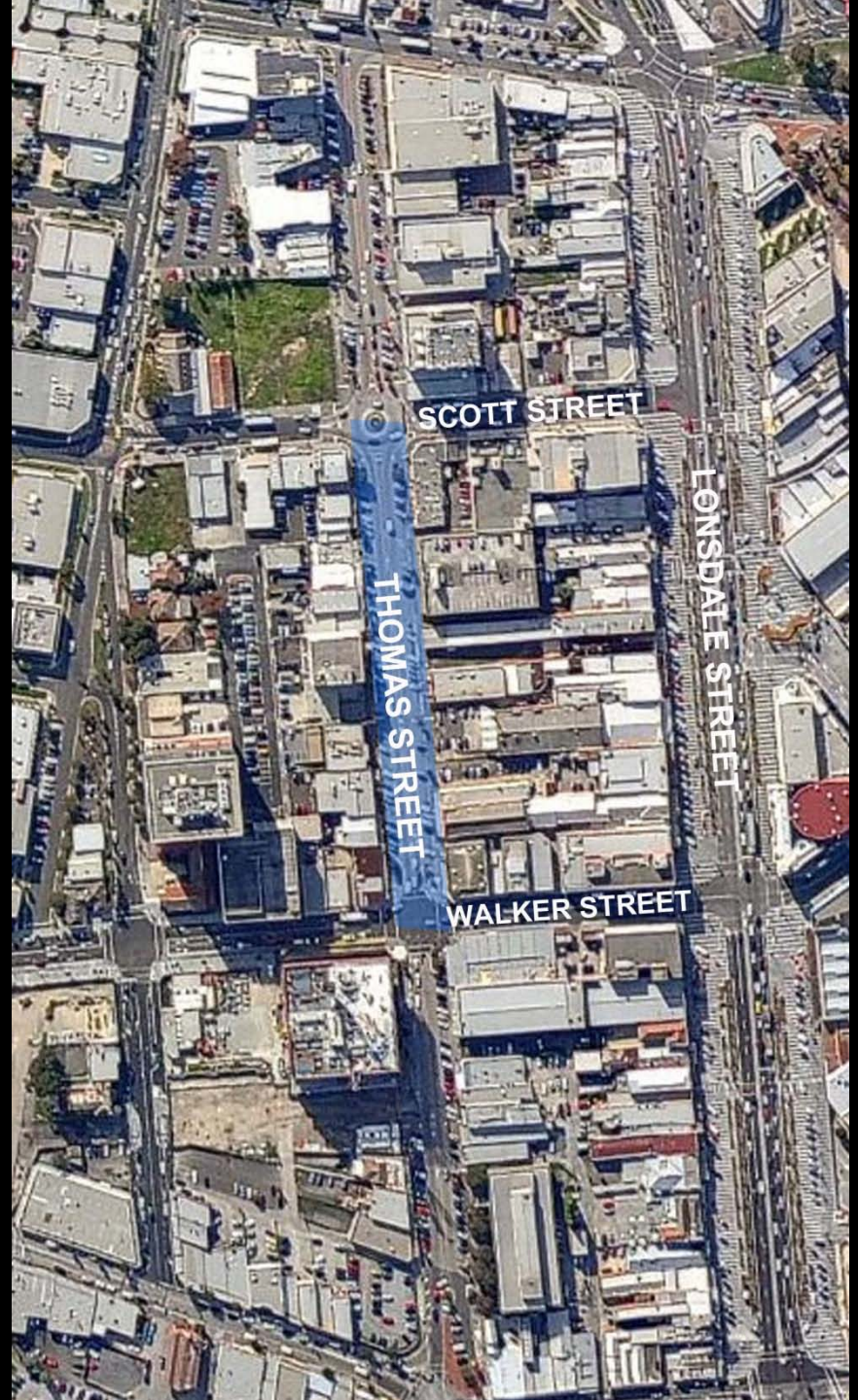
STAGE 1



Cultural Precincts & Community Infrastructure Fund

Community Consultation Brief:

“The consultative process will be undertaken with a range of identified stakeholders with the aim of revealing an understanding of the Afghan traders and communities, and how streetscape enhancements can facilitate greater sharing and celebration of cultural experiences.”



Key discussion groups:

Thomas Street traders

Community leaders & representatives

Women at Oasis swim group

Traders, shoppers, community members in
Thomas Street

AMES students

Community Engagement: Input from discussion forum

WORKSHOP 1: TRADERS



SUMMARY

Cultural patterns for decoration

Street & laneway wall decoration

Colour important: Blue and Red in carpets

Outdoor dining favorable in good weather

Traffic congestion an issue

Lighting important

New Year celebration on 21 March, Nowruz very important

Customers come from all over the state, not just local

Opportunity for Thomas St to attract visitors from all over

Centerpiece that can support street closure for celebrations

WORKSHOP 2: LEADERS & REPRESENTATIVES



SUMMARY

Centerpiece can express Afghan history; promote street closure for celebrations centered around New Years on the 21 March

Explore cultural materials such as stone

Access to services during events

A precinct that can support a variety of cultural activities / live entertainment

Project needs to encourage visitation from general community

Traffic is an issue after Lonsdale Street changes

Project needs to support traders

Traders need to complement project by improving street presentation of their businesses

Outdoor dining not part of Afghan culture

Street tree planting is favorable / Trees with colour

(WORKSHOP 2: Cont.)



Parking is a problem and becoming more difficult /Don't reduce parking / Lost business in Lonsdale Street due to reduced parking / Additional parking is more important than widening the footpath

Banners depicting Afghan themes

Tea House

Safety, security, and lighting

Local Afghan artists to be involved in decorative elements

Represent ethnic groups, their cultural identity and story of coming to Australia

Differences in opinions about precinct branding and name

WORKSHOP 3: WOMEN AT OASIS



No place for gathering

More shopping including Afghan clothing and fashion, jewellery, antique wares

Visit during holidays, on long weekends and special days

Need for areas specifically for women (only) such as baths, tea house, women's crafts, gym, hairdressers, spa and sauna, gender specific reception facilities

Islamic signage and wall decoration

WORKSHOP 4: THOMAS STREET "DROP-IN"



SUMMARY

Sensitivities regarding name and branding / logos

Need to reflect all ethnic groups

Need for a unified Australian Afghan community / Don't represent individual ethnic groups and cultures

One united Afghan, leave past behind

Something to unite Afghan community

Security

Importance of New Year celebration on 21 March / All Afghans come together for *Nowruz*

Services to support outdoor activities, entertainment, festivals and events

Gathering areas and furnishing to support socialisation

Encourage food (outdoor dining and vendors) on the street

Day and night experience

(WORKSHOP 4: Cont.)



Parking an issue / Need additional parking and variety in time limits

More shops

More trees, flowers and greenery

Decoration , symbolic doorways, mosaic flooring, patterns

Colours: blue and white / Red, green, black colours of the Afghan flag

Blue Mosque in Mazar-e-Sharif important for all Afghan people



WORKSHOP 5: AMES STUDENTS



SUMMARY

Use of symbols and pictures in decoration

Cultural statues

Lighting inspired by older style lighting
Afghan lamps / lighting over the street

Carpet design for inspiration as well as tiles

Sensitivities about precinct branding and name raised

Need for places of prayer

Patterning / design to be generic of other
'Arab' cultures not just Afghan

Water fountain

Cultural markers

Trees / fruit trees, greenery and flowers

Brighten up shop fronts

Idea of a centerpiece favorable / Like
the image of the Quran Gate in Shiraz



(WORKSHOP 5: Cont.)



Decorate the bus shelter

Pedestrian crossing needed

Upgrade public toilets

Additional parking, and varied time limits

Outdoor dining opportunities important, *Freedom*

Australian Afghan history important

New Year festivals

Eid festivals

Use of the color blue to reference the Blue Mosque (Mazar-e-Sharif)



FOUNDATIONS FOR A DESIGN FRAMEWORK



The idea of a CENTERPIECE or focal-point was consistently endorsed as a strong identity for the precinct.

The Quran Gate known as Darvazeh at the entrance Shiraz in Iran is identified as a fine example.

Symbolism is contentious and a potentially volatile issue between Afghan ethnic groups.

The project needs to focus on what brings the community together.





Nowruz or “Persian New Year”, a celebration when Afghan ethnic groups come together as one.

Nowruz occurs on the Spring Equinox (21 March), a calendar celebration.

An Afghan Precinct that supports people uniting in a festive street life is a positive step for strengthening Australian Afghan unity.



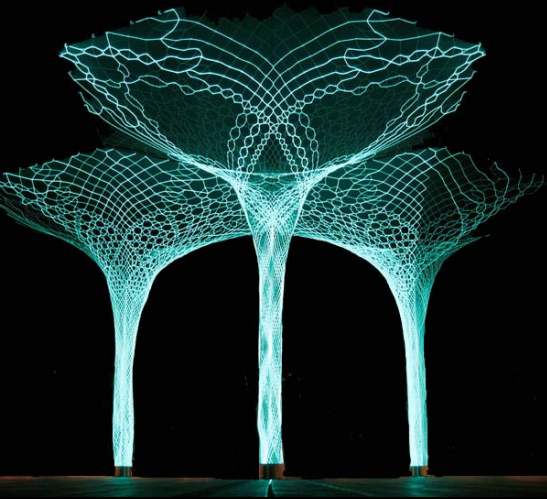
The Blue Mosque of Mazar-e-Sharif :

An architectural and generic celebration of Afghan Cultures attributed to both Sunni and Shi`a artisans.



A dominance of BLUE references architecture and lapis lazuli, a semi-precious stone mined in Afghanistan for over 6,000 years.

RECOMMENDATIONS— *Building social unity*



1. CENTERPIECE

A focal-point provides an opportunity for cultural expression that resonates with the whole community.

A centerpiece will establish a physical heart to the precinct as following stages are designed and delivered.

A centerpiece can be explored in a variety of ways to establish a focal point and back drop to daily street activity and programmed events.

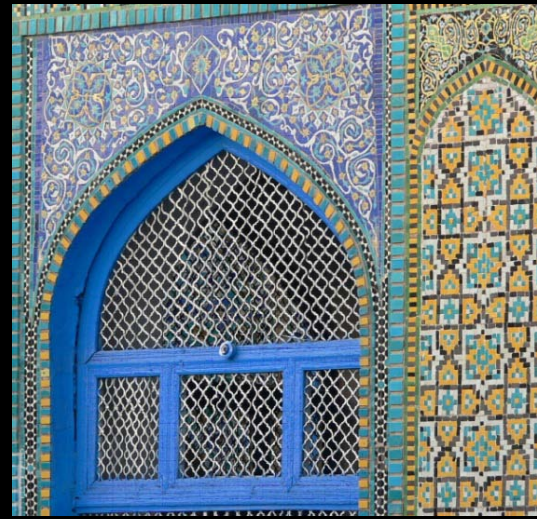


2. BLUE

Vivid blue provides an exciting and highly visual addition to Thomas Street.

Vivid blue will reinforce the relationship between streetscape treatments and the focal point, drawing attention away from building scale.

Blue resonates with the Afghan community, and supports a cultural signature for the broader community.



3. ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

The tiling artistry of Mazar-e-Sharif is a pallet of inspiration for the streetscape enhancements.

It is an endorsed expression of Afghan culture and provides an opportunity for a contemporary interpretation related to Greater Dandenong.

It also provides an opportunity for including local Afghan artists.



4. CELEBRATION

A vibrant and meaningful design approach can be a community-building opportunity.

A vibrant streetscape can establish a backdrop for supporting public celebrations and cultural festivities such as *Nowruz*.

This can contribute to stronger cultural unity, and stronger participation from the broader community.

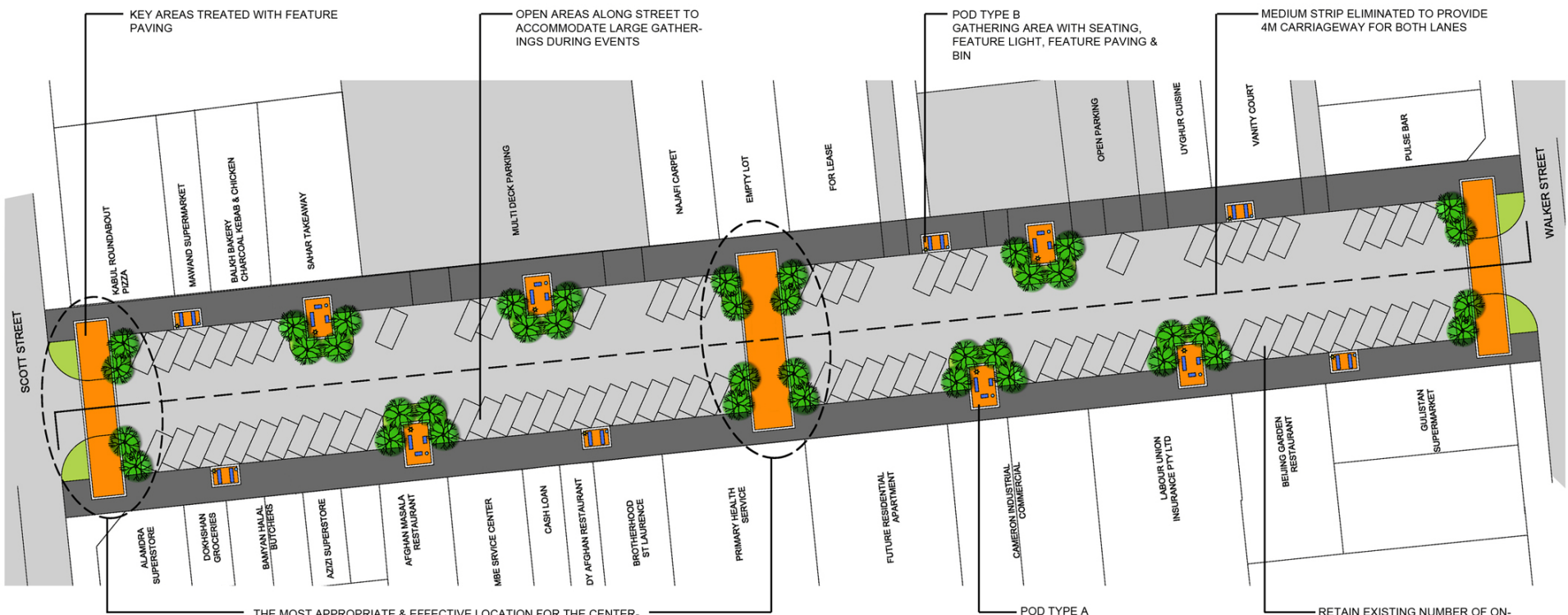
RECOMMENDATIONS – *On the street*

- Retain, and if possible increase, on-street car parking.
- Pedestrian lighting on the street for increased security and cultural expression.
- Support an expected gradual uptake of outdoor dining.
- Seating and gathering locations to provide places for social connectedness. Encouraging different scales of gathering will promote a sense of inclusion, support, community participation, and community well-being.
- Use of patterns is encouraged as a means of cultural expression.
- Unique paving elements in the spirit of the Precinct in areas of design accent, and gathering and seating locations.
- Street trees and garden bed planting displaying tree species occurring in Afghanistan, and a way to brighten up the street.
- Banners may be considered as one way to add visual amenity where tree planting is restricted.
- Overall street design and location of design elements to consider broader urban design opportunities such as pedestrian links to Lonsdale Street.



“We are all very much immensely grateful for this rare opportunity that you and the council have provided us. It is a rare moment for the national pride of the Afghan Australian community to really blossom and after having spoken to many proud Afghans who now call this amazing country home, I see that it has indeed drawn the attention of the broader Afghan community throughout Victoria.”

(Personal Communication to City of Greater Dandenong, 15 August 2011)



THE MOST APPROPRIATE & EFFECTIVE LOCATION FOR THE CENTERPIECE / FOCAL POINT NEEDS TO BE INVESTIGATED DURING THE DESIGN PROCESS.

- A CENTRAL LOCATION PROVIDES A FUTURE DESIGN 'ANCHOR' FOR THE ENTIRE LENGTH OF THOMAS STREET.
- THOMAS STREET AT SCOTT STREET RECOGNISES AN AGGREGATION OF AFGHAN TRADERS AT THAT LOCATION.
- THE CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT & DESIGN OF THE CENTERPIECE / FOCAL POINT MAY INFORM OTHER LOCATIONS FOR EXPLORATION.

POD TYPE A GATHERING AREA WITH SEATING, TREES & PLANTING, FEATURE LIGHT, FEATURE PAVING & BIN

RETAIN EXISTING NUMBER OF ON-STREET PARKING BAYS AS A MINIMUM & EXPLORE ADDITIONAL (76 SHOWN)