

## **Eco suburb plan unveiled for city**

- **Jason Dowling and Natalie Craig**
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A VISION for a suburb of the future with no cars, an 80 per cent reduction in carbon emissions and the ability to grow its own food has been unveiled by a State Government-funded thinktank. And it could happen on a site just two kilometres from the centre of Melbourne.

A 20-hectare site for the new green suburb has even been identified on land owned by VicTrack, the government body that owns the state's rail assets. The lease on the site known as E-Gate, just off Footscray Road, expires in 2014 and Major Projects Victoria has been working with VicTrack on possibilities for the land.

Now, the Victorian Eco-Innovation Lab, a university-based thinktank funded by the Government, has come up with ideas for a new environmentally friendly suburb at the site.

An exhibition of the proposals from 200 university students, known as Eco-City Melbourne, will go on show from tomorrow.

The lab's director Professor Chris Ryan said a new sustainable suburb could be created at E-Gate, including a ban on cars.

"No cars on the site — the site is made for walking, cycling and we are going to provide on the site free, small, electric vehicles that can be picked up by any resident on the site and roamed around on the site," he said.

He said it was only a 25-minute walk to the central business district and there would be cars available on the suburb's fringe for residents to book. "If this was a standard development, you would have 4000-5000 cars."

Professor Ryan said the medium-density suburb would have buildings of up to eight storeys and a centralised heating and cooling system.

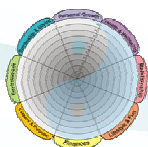
He said the site would also treat all its own sewage and use some of the resultant methane for power production. There would also be urban wind towers and solar panels to produce electricity.

Another innovative feature would be the suburb's ability to produce food, with mini urban-farms spread across the development and a "multi-storey farm".

"Shifting the production of fresh vegetables into a multi-storey farm — a car park with lots of glazing to let the light in and then growing instead of cars — it's been widely explored in the US and China and Japan," Professor Ryan said.

He said it was impossible to estimate housing costs in the new suburb as it was at least five years away.

Major Projects Minister Tim Pallas will launch the Eco-City Melbourne exhibition tonight.



## The Wheel of Life's 8 Keys to Success

The Government yesterday stressed it had no firm plans for the site and the ideas were part of a range of views being canvassed.

In a copy of Mr Pallas' speech for tonight, he says the E-Gate site is "ripe with possibility ... it is one of the last remaining, large, brown-field areas in inner Melbourne that is currently without a long-term strategic plan in place.

"The potential of the site for redevelopment, so close to Melbourne's central activity district and well served by public transport, is obvious.

"This is where projects such Eco-City have great value. All good strategic planning begins with a discussion and I, for one, believe that this dialogue is always improved by the number of intelligent voices involved."

Mr Pallas will tell the audience that ecologically sustainable development "is no longer considered an optional extra but a necessity".

The first step in redeveloping the former industrial site would be to remove heavy metal residue, which could be achieved partly with plants. Landscape architects proposed starting a bio-mediation process now in time for the suburb in six years' time.

The public can visit the exhibition from Thursday to Saturday, 12-6pm at Shed 4, North Wharf Road, Victoria Harbour, Docklands.

