

Springvale Activity Centre Historic Narrative



Introduction

- > The area in which Greater Dandenong is now located is the territory of the Wurundjeri and Boonwurrung (or Bunurong) tribes of the Kulin Nation and has been for tens of thousands of years. The availability and occurrence of water most influenced living patterns in prehistory and concentrations of Indigenous people occurred around the former Carrum Swamp, the floodplain, wetlands and elevated areas along Dandenong Creek. Cultural, ceremonial and spiritual life was dictated by the seasons through the availability of sustainable natural resources and closely observed changes in plant growth and animal behaviour.

Aboriginal living patterns were severely disrupted when European settlers arrived in the Port Phillip region. The Aboriginal population declined by 80 per cent in the period from 1834 to 1850. When compounded by the loss of land and the disappearance of traditional ways of life, the adverse effects for local indigenous people were dramatic.

Cultural heritage sites remaining within the City representing these early periods include the remains of important meeting and ceremonial sites for Aboriginal tribes, many of which still have deep significance and meaning for contemporary Aboriginal residents.

There are important groups of highly valued scarred trees on public and private land. Many of the trees exhibit scars representing the harvesting of bark for manufacture of items for daily use. Some scars are foot and hand holds which provided access to the upper reaches of trees for food sources such as honey.

Greater Dandenong's three activity centres; Dandenong, Springvale and Noble Park, have evolved since 1852. Upon the township of Dandenong being laid it soon became a trading centre for farmers and graziers establishing it as 'The Market Town' with a livestock produce and goods market started in 1866. By 1873 the Shire of Dandenong was a large region that covered the areas of Springvale and Noble Park as well as Dandenong.

The rapid growth of the region and the pressure to provide urban services, particularly after World War II, resulted in the formation of two cities; when in 1955 Springvale and Noble Park Shire was created by severance from Dandenong Shire. Dandenong was proclaimed a City in 1959 and Springvale (including Noble Park) followed in 1961. Each city developed a unique character in response to local conditions.

Council amalgamations triggered by the State Government of Victoria led to the formation of the City of Greater Dandenong on 15 December 1994. Most of the former City of Dandenong, City of Springvale, as well as small parts of the former City of Berwick and City of Cranbourne were proclaimed the 'City of Greater Dandenong' by Order of the Governor in Council.

The City of Greater Dandenong today is a culturally diverse place to live, work and visit. Located approximately 35km from Melbourne CBD and encompassing an area of 129 square kilometres, Greater Dandenong has a population of approximately 159,000, with residents from over 150 different birthplaces; making it the most multicultural municipality in Victoria.



*No.6 Bore Springvale Station c1880
Image courtesy Australian Stockmans Hall of Fame
and Outback Heritage Centre (5870)*

Spring Vale
remnant
landscape
c1910

Image courtesy Australian Stockmans Hall of Fame and Outback Heritage Centre (20375)

Springvale

The area of Springvale was formerly laden with grassy woodlands lying between the swampy riparian woodlands of Mile Creek to the north and mosaic of damp sands herb-rich woodlands to the south.

Springvale contained natural springs which were a permanent water source for stock and travellers moving between Melbourne and Dandenong, giving rise to the suburb's name.

In the 1850s, a Spring Vale Hotel was built near a newly surveyed route between Oakleigh and Dandenong at what is now the intersection of Princes Highway and Springvale Road. However, it did not evolve into a settlement and development was slow with a tiny grouping of six dwellings and a population of 27 people 12 males and 15 females in 1871.

By 1879, the Gippsland railway had a "Spring Vale Road" stopping place. Spring Vale Station was built during the economic 'boom' of the 1880s, when railways expanded rapidly across Victoria. The first subdivision was laid out on a scrubby paddock in 1886 beside the line and near the station.

Even in these early days there was controversy whether the name should be two words or one. Residents insisted it should be Spring Vale and the railway station sign reflected that point of view, but others such as newspaper editors of the South Bourke and Mornington Journal, referred to it as Springvale. It would be 70 years before confusion over the name would be eliminated. The first general store in Springvale opened by Thomas Cuddleford Woods in 1887 on the corner of Balmoral Avenue and Springvale Road. About 20 years later, George Burden bought Woods' store and was delivering supplies and picking up eggs from the local farms.

Despite the impact of the 1890s depression, a store, a church and a racecourse established with settlement continuing in two locations, initially separated by 2km. In 1901 The Necropolis Springvale was established on Dandenong Road

Springvale contained natural springs which were a permanent water source for stock and travellers moving between Melbourne and Dandenong

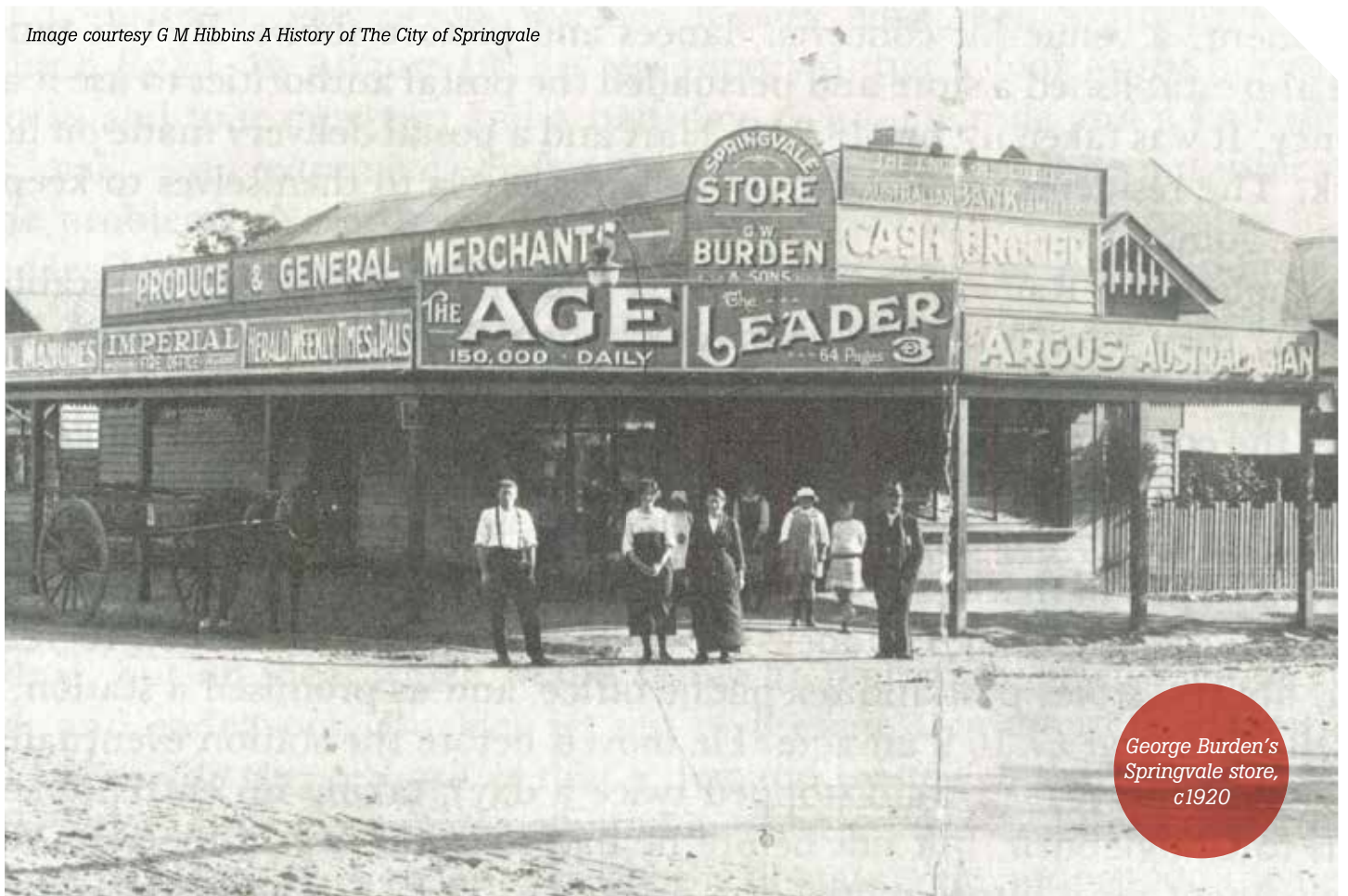
Springvale
Primary
School



(Princes Highway) with the first burial occurring in 1902. The original plan was uniquely formal and based on the Union Jack. The cemetery had the only dedicated railway line, which operated between 1904 and 1951, within a cemetery in Victoria. The railway line to the cemetery branched from Springvale Station providing access for special hearse trucks, carrying coffins and funeral processions to the cemetery. Although the line was dismantled by June 1952, a short section branching off from the Springvale line still survives today.

In 1905 the Spring Vale School (number 3507) opened in the existing Methodist Church Hall until community agitation led to a new school being constructed in the Arts & Crafts style, with Marseilles pattern terracotta tile roof in 1912. Many of the trees you can see today were planted when the school opened.

Image courtesy G M Hibbins A History of The City of Springvale



George Burden's
Springvale store,
c1920

In 1915, Springvale residents opened the Mechanics' Institute on the corner of Balmoral and Buckingham avenues (demolished in 1998). This included a small library and reading room, with some books donated by local people.

During the 1920s the Springvale community had a lodge, brass band, a recreation reserve, a few shops and some houses in the township. In 1924 a billiard hall was established along with a picture theatre opened by Major Tharle. It was the first time electric lights were seen in Springvale and the theatre soon became a regular attraction, opening on Wednesday and Saturday nights, and providing an alternative social event to the dances.

In 1924 Dr Andrew Mawson arrived in Springvale to become one of the first resident doctors; his sisters ran a small private hospital on Buckingham Avenue next door to his home. Two years later Sister Coleman and Sister Paton took over the hospital and it became known as St. Williams Hospital. When Sister Coleman retired after 24 years; local community action and vigorous fundraising led to the continuance and extension from a five-bed hospital to 26 beds. It became the Springvale and District Community Hospital supported by local and state government funding and fundraising by community groups. Today it has a new role as the Springvale Community Health Centre.

In 1924 a billiard hall was established along with a picture theatre opened by Major Tharle. It was the first time electric lights were seen in Springvale

Springvale
Picture Theatre
1924

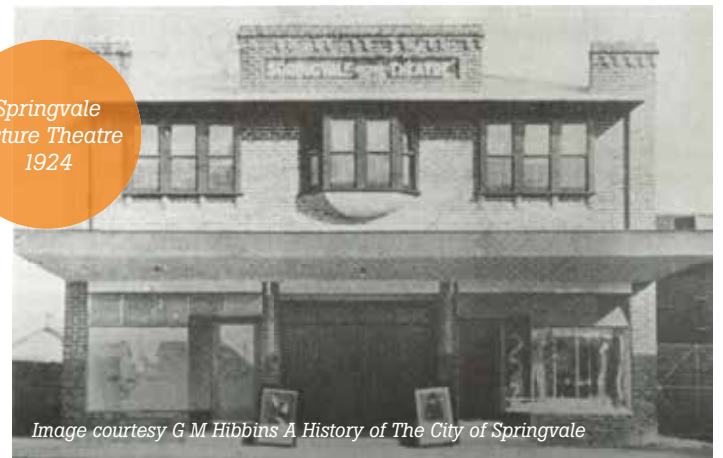
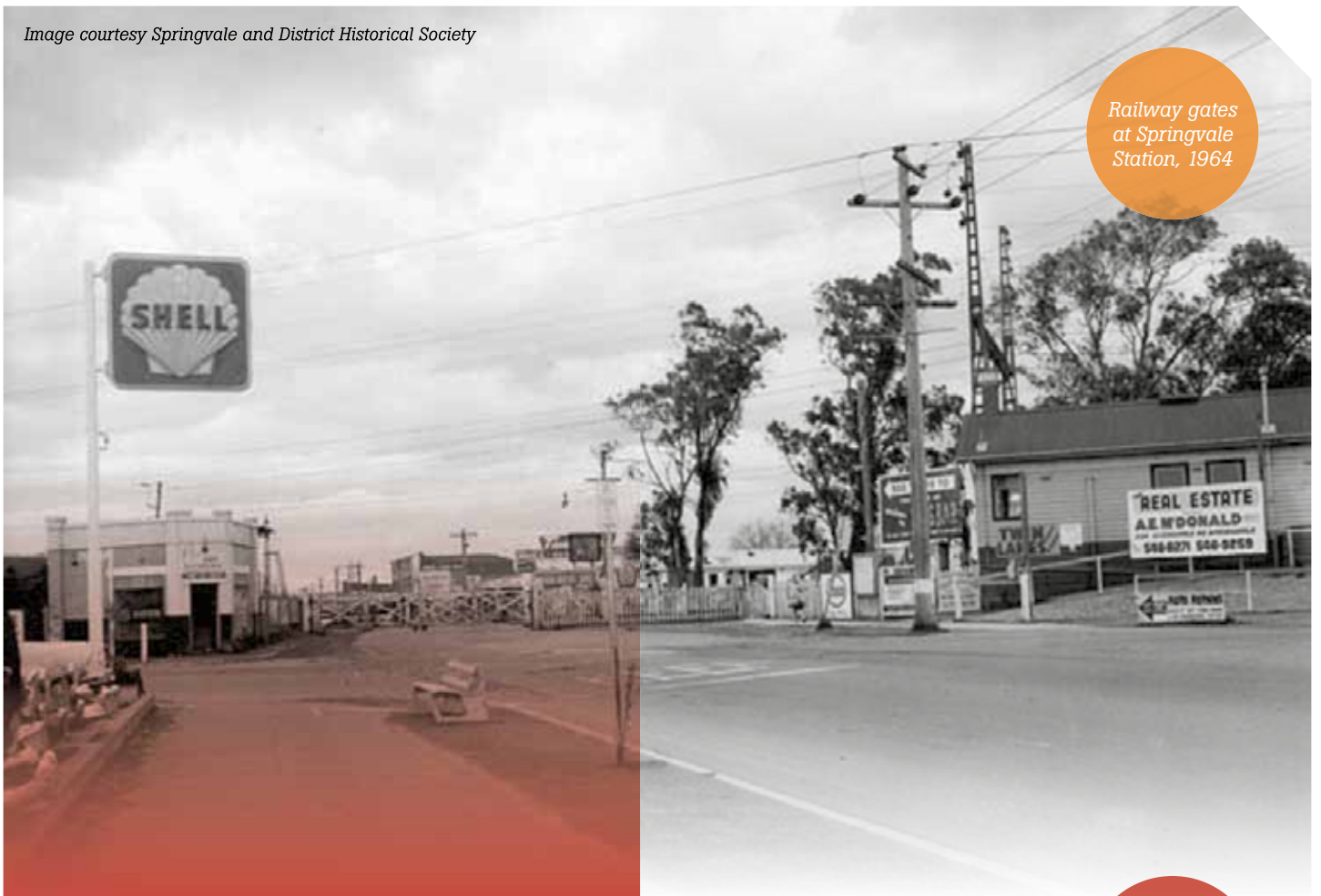


Image courtesy G M Hibbins A History of The City of Springvale

Springvale Road
crossing looking
north with Emptor
Distillation Plant
visible c1950



Image courtesy Springvale and District Historical Society



Railway gates at Springvale Station, 1964

In the 1930s a new theory of child care exerted a powerful influence from New Zealand to Australia and across the world. Dr Truby King advocated his ideas on strict routines for babies and the need for mothers to be supervised and guided by infant care experts. Committees were set up during this time and Truby King Infant Welfare Centres established. At Springvale a local committee met in 1933 to discuss setting up an infant welfare centre. They secured a room and distributed notices to local shops promoting the Truby King Centre and within six years had a new building in Lightwood Road. The centre remains a community facility that is still in use today.

There was a brief surge in industrial development during the 1920s and 1930s near Springvale Road on sites close to the railway line. Kelly and Lewis Engineers purchased a large block of land and opened an engineering plant in 1922 and became one of Australia's largest pump manufacturers. In 1924 Rocla Concrete moved their works to the eastern side of Springvale Road and produced concrete pipes, channels and slabs. The industrial legacy continues today as Springvale remains the only activity centre that includes industrial zoned land. Also in the 1920's flower growing and poultry farming flourished. This provided local farmers with a degree of self-sufficiency, even during the 1930s depression when development stopped and unemployment was rife.

At the outbreak of WWII Springvale was a pastoral, residential and industrial township with market gardens in the surrounding areas. Sand extraction industries were active, to meet the demand for concrete sand, lasting until the 1990s. After the war, industry sought to expand, and the large population influx was fed by immigration and returned armed forces personnel.



Springvale City Hall

A landmark building constructed by Emptor Ltd in 1943 was part of the drive to develop Australia's self-sufficiency at a time when the importation of chemicals to Australia was restricted. The Emptor Distillation Plant that towers over the railway line is a relic of WWII. This facility at 29 metres high was built to produce resins, turpentine, acetates, oil and tars locally from waste timber products. Today the tower is vacant and continues to be a visual landmark in Springvale.

Springvale and Noble Park separated from the Shire of Dandenong in 1955 to form the Shire of Springvale and Noble Park covering an area of 40 square miles. At the same time the spelling of Spring Vale was consolidated into 'Springvale'. The Shire of Springvale and Noble Park purchased the Gracedale Racing Track adjoining the View Road council depot in 1957 and commissioned plans for new municipal offices which were completed and opened two years later. In 1961 reference in the city's name to Noble Park was removed and the City of Springvale was proclaimed. Premier Henry Bolte came for the proclamation and to open the massive new civic hall.

The former Woolworths was completely stripped out to become the Springvale Central shopping centre that stands today. The high sign survived as billboard advertising...

City Hall dwarfed any public building in the area and comprised a main auditorium with capacity for 1400 dancers, or a seated audience of 1200, or 700 for a sit down meal. Saturday night dances at 'Springy' attracted over a thousand young people from all around. The halls central role in the township was confirmed by the decision to move the cenotaph from the grounds of the primary school to a site opposite the halls main doors. Today it continues its role as one of the areas largest civic venues accommodating in excess of 1 million visitors per year. The Springvale City Hall is home to concerts, citizenship ceremonies, performances, annual festivals, trade shows and dinner dances.

By 1946, it was estimated that Springvale had 55 shops. This was to increase further during the next period of development in the 1950s when some of the former shops and buildings in the centre were demolished. In 1951 the Country Roads Board planned to widen Springvale Road where the shops on the east side had to be taken back to allow for the widening, but the promised works did not begin until 1964 followed by an underpass for pedestrians four years later.

In 1956, in the back streets of the shopping centre; a new police station was established, followed by a new fire station in 1958 and a courthouse in 1960. Two years later a double storey post office replaced the former little red brick one. At this time the clearest indication of post-war residential growth was evident particularly when Rockman's Shopwell Drive-In Department store, tiled and glass fronted, was built. Rockman's Shopwell featured a tall sign that originally read Rockmans and towered above all other buildings in Springvale. Shoppers could now buy almost everything from a five piece chrome kitchen setting to a petal cuvette in the millinery section.

In the 1970s the Rockmans building became a Woolworths store and supermarket. The variety store faced Springvale Road and the supermarket was accessed from Windsor Avenue. The tall sign at the front was changed to read 'Woolworths'. After the 1985 conversion of Victorian Woolworths supermarkets to Safeway, the store was rebranded 'Safeway' but the unique store arrangement meant it retained a variety store after most others had closed.

With Woolworths having acquired Safeway there were two Safeway supermarkets in Springvale – the other just down the road was a dedicated Safeway built in the 1970s (and renovated in the 1990s). The former Woolworths was completely stripped out to become the Springvale Central shopping centre that stands today. The high sign survived as billboard advertising, as did the old roof trusses inside, retained as an architectural feature.

In 1970, the Commonwealth Government opened the Enterprise Migrant Hostel to cater for the short-term housing needs of the flood of migrants who arrived in the area during the 1970s and 1980s. The hostel provided temporary accommodation and comprehensive settlement services for migrants and refugees. Except for a three year closure in the 80s it was open from 1970–1992 and home to more than 30,000 migrants and refugees from all over the world. An estimated three-quarters of the population, moved out to live nearby and the unique positive response from the community which followed had a significant impact on the way in which Springvale and surrounding areas developed.

In 1970 the Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau was established after much community consultation, to provide information and to address issues of isolation and a lack of community services. One of its key priorities was to establish comprehensive settlement services for residents at the recently opened Enterprise Migrant Hostel. The Bureau responded to the needs of the Enterprise residents with one of Australia's first interpreter services, the ethnic teacher's aid program, the migrant host scheme, family day care, and emergency relief – all provided by volunteers. Today the Bureau, now known as South East Community Links continues its focus on settlement services.

Springvale
Road c1970





In 1984 the Springvale Neighbourhood House was built through an unemployed youth project initiated by The Bureau. Participants constructed the bricks for the building with clay from a local quarry.

The Dandenong Valley Regional Library Service scheme was established in 1971 providing the impetus for the City of Springvale to invest in the greatest single item of expense ever constructing a library and regional headquarters in 1973. Within 6 months nearly 20,000 local residents signed up as borrowers. It was boasted as the first public library in Australia to use bar code labels and light pens for automatic recording of loans. The library added to the hall, municipal offices and council chambers forming a cluster of civic and community assets that book ended the activity centre.

In 1979 within a few months of arriving in Australia on a boat from Vietnam Chi Yao and her husband opened Nan Yang, a Vietnamese equivalent of a general store. Offering Asian groceries below supermarket prices; Nan Yang has been a long standing institution in Springvale for everyday ingredients and food delicacies associated with South East Asian festivities.

In 1984 the Springvale Neighbourhood House was built through an unemployed youth project initiated by The Bureau. Participants constructed the bricks for the building with clay from a local quarry. The House provided a meeting place for self-help groups and empowerment of the culturally-diverse community. Between 1984 and 1992 many cultural groups who arrived at the Enterprise Migrant Hostel made contact with the House and were assisted to establish support groups for their emerging communities to help them settle successfully. Many of these people are still involved with the House. Today the Springvale Neighbourhood House is part of an extensive and unique network of settlement and support services in Springvale.

The first Springvale Lunar New Year festival was held on Sunday 17 January 1993, in Buckingham and Balmoral avenues, from 12pm-7pm. The delay in the starting time was to overcome any inconvenience with church congregations in the area, Sunday was the preferred day as it allowed local food outlets to be involved. This was to be a trial festival and, if successful, it was suggested that it could become a Springvale festival with greater council involvement. It continues today and now attracts more than 50,000 people. The street is closed for one day and populated with a range of stall holders, ticketed rides, staged events, music, crackers and entertainment.



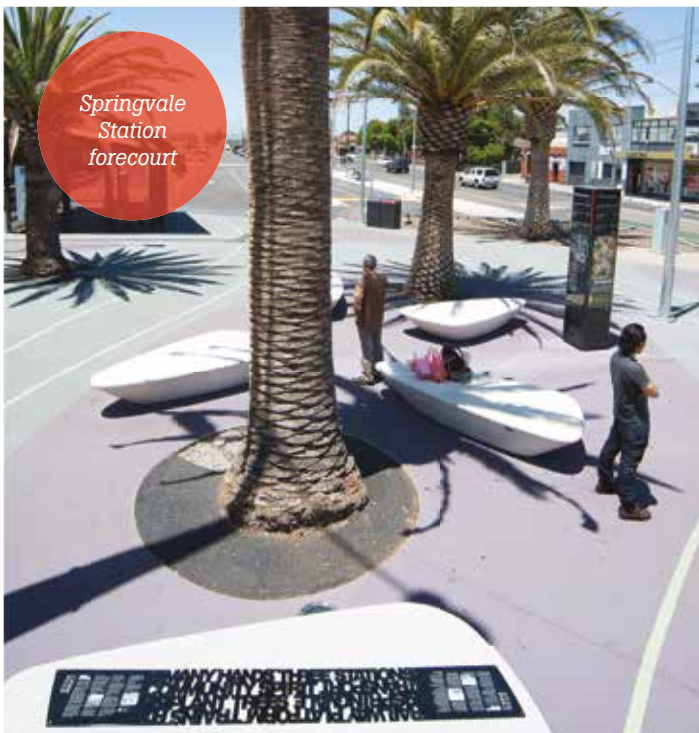
Multicultural Place

Springvale Shopping Centre in Buckingham Avenue was opened in 1998, offering a unique Asian shopping experience adding some 35 businesses into the activity centre.

A series of small scale urban design and public art projects between 2000–2003 created visual markers on Springvale Road at the primary school, underpass and community health service. These were followed by a larger streetscape upgrade in Buckingham Avenue in 2004 which included construction of two large contemporary Asian influenced gateways at the corner of Queens Avenue.

In 2010, Number 8 Balmoral Avenue – a mixed use development comprising apartments, a seven level carpark and ground level retail tenancies was completed in the heart of the bustling retail precinct of Buckingham and Balmoral avenues. The \$20 million development included the creation of a public square named Multicultural Place.

The long awaited road and rail separation project on Springvale Road was completed in 2014 removing the boom gates, delivering a new station and a new southern public space with signature palm trees; announcing a contemporary gateway to Springvale’s retail shopping strip. In 2015, a second Asian Gateway was realised through a partnership between the Springvale Asian Business Association, the state government and the council, spanning Buckingham Avenue at the corner of Windsor Avenue and providing a significant visual and cultural landmark.



Springvale Station forecourt



Asian Gateway, Buckingham Avenue



Lunar New Year Festival, Buckingham Avenue

Today the heart of Springvale activity centre is located in Buckingham Avenue running parallel to Springvale Road west of the centre. To reflect the Asian influence street furniture and public infrastructure are culturally themed. It is home to the city’s largest annual festivals – the Lunar New Year as well as the winter themed event – Snow Fest, which was established in 2014 for families to experience the joy of real snow without having to travel to the mountains. The event has grown in number of visitors each year and attracts more than 20,000 people to the street festival where snow machines, snow play areas, rides, food offerings and stalls occupy the space.

The absence of national brand retailers in Springvale has meant that the two primary shopping centres in the retail core have adapted a street-market character, providing respite for people of diverse ages and social activities including traditional Asian board games.

Phone 8571 1000 Fax 8571 5196 council@cgd.vic.gov.au	NATIONAL RELAY SERVICE TTY: 133 677 Speak and listen: 1300 555 727 Online: relayservice.gov.au TIS: 13 14 50	Find us online greaterdandenong.com
--	--	--