

## 02.03

21/11/2024  
C234whse

## STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

## 02.03-1

## Settlement

24/11/2024 - / - / - -  
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## Activity centres network

Whitehorse has a network of activity centres that fulfil a range of roles and functions. Box Hill MAC plays a significant service delivery role for a regional catchment. Major activity centres at Burwood East-Tally Ho, Burwood Heights, Forest Hill Chase and Nunawading serve a variety of attributes and functions. Neighbourhood activity centres (NAC) of varying sizes and contexts form a more localised focus for commercial and retail activities.

Plan Melbourne directs new development to activity centres, noting they are essential in achieving policy objectives regarding sustainability, reducing the dominance of car travel, and building a sense of community and place. Together, all of these activity centres will contribute to the creation of '20 minute neighbourhoods' across Melbourne.

The structure planning process, including involvement from the community and other stakeholders, will be the means to identify and realise the opportunities available in centres.

**Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre**

Box Hill MAC provides retail, commercial, educational, health, community, civic, entertainment and recreational facilities for the regional population, as well as a hub for local community activities and public transport. Plan Melbourne also designates a Health and Education Precinct within the MAC. Box Hill provides significant opportunities for investment in retail, public transport, health, justice, education, entertainment, higher density residential development and public realm improvements to support growth. Box Hill MAC is part of the Box Hill Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) East Structure Plan Area.

**Burwood East-Tally Ho Major Activity Centre**

The vision for the Centre is to maintain and enhance its primary role as a key eastern suburban office and technology hub and meet the needs of the local resident and worker population. It has good transport linkages and provides a large-scale office environment with high quality built form set in extensive landscaped gardens. There is an opportunity to support and complement the office precincts with convenience retail, housing, hospitality and associated infrastructure.

**Burwood Heights Major Activity Centre**

Burwood Heights Major Activity Centre includes the Burwood Heights Shopping Centre, a 20-hectare former brickworks site, the RSPCA, commercial uses, a Melbourne Water retarding basin and surrounding residential areas.

The former brickworks site is a new mixed use development, providing residential, retail, entertainment, commercial, community services and leisure opportunities.

**Forest Hill Chase Major Activity Centre**

Forest Hill Chase Major Activity Centre is a preferred location for convenience and comparison retail, commercial, cinema and entertainment activities.

**Nunawading Major Activity Centre**

Nunawading Major Activity Centre (which encompasses MegaMile) is one of Melbourne's largest shopping districts with a focus for restricted retail and motor vehicle sales. The centre is identified as one of Whitehorse's main retail strengths, as a regional restricted retail destination.

The centre comprises MegaMile (East and West precincts) and the Nunawading station precinct. In addition to restricted retail, MegaMile West will accommodate a broader range of uses, including commercial activities and a consolidated residential area along the north side of Whitehorse Road in Blackburn. The centre also has strong links with the adjoining Blackburn and Mitcham NACs which provide a supporting role.

### **Neighbourhood Activity Centres**

There are 60 NACs within the municipality. They fulfil an important social and community role, contribute to local service provision and vibrant local economies, and provide opportunities for a greater diversity of housing choices.

Council has placed each NAC into one of five categories as follows:

- Category 1A: small-medium local service centres, on a standard road width.
- Category 1B: large sized centres on a standard road width.
- Category 2A: small-medium local service centres on a wide main road.
- Category 2B: large sized centres on a wide main road.
- Category 3: large, car based centres on a wide main road.

Large NACs, such as Burwood One (Kmart Plaza), play an important economic role in the municipality that should be further enhanced.

Some small centres contain several vacant shops or non-retail uses that fail to provide for the daily needs of the surrounding community or are run down and become targets for vandalism. Following further assessment, and if appropriate, these activity centres could provide the opportunity to be redeveloped as mixed use centres with improved amenity that could include meeting places such as cafes, community facilities, small scale residential development in the form of shop-top housing and public realm improvements.

### **Blackburn Neighbourhood Activity Centre**

Blackburn Neighbourhood Activity Centre will strengthen its role as an urban village focused around the Blackburn Railway Station and Blackburn Station Shopping Centre, having a strong identity as a local shopping village and community meeting place. A suitable mix of retail, office, community and higher density residential uses will add to its vibrancy and activity, as will the provision of adequate parking along with improved connections between the north and south sides of the railway line and surrounding areas. Residential and commercial growth is directed to the northern part of the activity centre in order to preserve the village feel of areas to the south.

The Queen and Albert Streets Area within the centre has been identified as an appropriate location for office development, being surrounded by commercial uses and in proximity to the railway station. However, it is important that this area integrates with the shopping centre to the south and is of a scale that is compatible with the role of the activity centre.

Council's strategic directions are to:

- Ensure activity centres are safe, attractive and developed in accordance with their role in the network.
- Provide community services and facilities consistent with their role and scale and become a focus for social interaction.
- Ensure that any new development assists Council to improve the amenity and visual appearance of an activity centre.
- Ensure activity centre development encourages a more effective use of public transport and cycling.
- Ensure that each centre contributes to the City's economy and responds to the needs of the community.

### **Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) East – Box Hill and Burwood Precinct**

The SRL is an integrated transport and precincts program. It is focused on leveraging the improved access and convenience delivered by the new SRL stations to catalyse opportunities for residents, workers, communities and businesses, in the immediate areas around the new stations (SRL East Structure Plan Areas) and within the area declared to be an SRL planning area, which is approximately 1.6km around the stations (SRL Precincts).

The Box Hill and Burwood SRL East Precincts, two of the six state significant precincts located within the SRL East rail corridor, are located either fully or partially within Whitehorse (Burwood also sits within the neighbouring City of Monash). Land within these precincts will capitalise on its proximity to the new SRL stations to accommodate substantial growth and change into the 2050s.

Strategic directions for the SRL East Precincts in Whitehorse are to:

- Plan the SRL Precincts in a coordinated manner through staged structure planning, guided by the Precinct Vision.
- Direct substantial growth and change into the Box Hill and Burwood SRL East Structure Plan Areas to focus new housing and jobs within proximity of the SRL stations.
- Avoid underdevelopment of SRL Precincts, consistent with their role as places for substantial future change, aligned with the program objectives of the SRL set out in Section 5 of the *Suburban Rail Loop Act 2021*.

**02.03-2**21/11/2024  
C234whse**Environmental and landscape values**

Significant natural environmental assets are evident in the City, including areas of remnant vegetation at Bellbird Dell, Cootamundra Walk, Wandinong Sanctuary, Wurundjeri Walk, Yarran Dheran, Antonio Park and the Blackburn Lake area. In these areas, the tree canopy cover is extensive and large mature trees dominate. The waterways of Gardiners, Mullum Mullum, Dandenong and Koonung Creeks are significant environmental, landscape and recreational locations. These creeks form part of an advanced open space network that is highly valued by the community.

Trees are a key determinant of the character of the residential areas of the City. Parts of the municipality are dominated by an upper tree canopy that ranges from the exotic tree-lined streets of Mont Albert to native trees in areas of Blackburn, Blackburn North, Vermont and Mitcham. There is a bushland appearance in parts of the City that is uncommon in middle ring suburbs.

Council's strategic directions are to:

- Protect and enhance areas with special natural, environmental, cultural or historic significance for the future enjoyment of the community.
- Ensure new development does not adversely impact the natural environment and ecological systems.

Facilitate environmental protection of, and improvements to, the City's water, flora, fauna and biodiversity assets.

**02.03-3**21/11/2024  
C234whse**Environmental risks and amenity****Non-residential uses in residential areas**

While non-residential uses in residential areas are legitimately required to serve the needs of the local community, they have the potential to adversely affect these areas if they are poorly designed or located. It is important that such uses provide a net community benefit and are integrated into the residential environment with minimal impact on residential amenity. They should be highly accessible and compatible with the role and function of the street and surrounding area.

Council's strategic directions are to:

- Direct non-residential uses to locations that are able to service the needs of the local community.
- Ensure buildings for non-residential uses are designed to integrate with and respect the surrounding neighbourhood character.
- Ensure non-residential uses do not cause detriment to the community, or the amenity of the surrounding residential area.

**02.03-4**21/11/2024  
C234whse**Natural resource management****Water quality**

The municipality includes a range of waterways including the Gardiners, Koonung, Dandenong, Mullum Mullum, and Bushy Creeks, wetlands, swamps and a range of man-made lakes. Ensuring development does not adversely impact water quality and improves flora, fauna and biodiversity outcomes is important to the community.

Council's strategic direction is to:

- Manage development along the City's waterways to ensure there is no detrimental impact on water quality.
- Ensure development along Terrara Road, Vermont that is subject to wastewater management constraints remains low density.

## 02.03-5

## Built environment and heritage

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## Visual amenity

The City contains many thoroughfares of metropolitan significance, the visual amenity of which contributes to the character and overall sense of identity. The City's gateways require special treatment in recognition of the first impressions they project. Major thoroughfares and gateways are prime locations for advertising signs. If not appropriately managed, the proliferation of signs can create visual clutter and drastically reduce the amenity of an area.

Many of the City's industrial areas are of poor amenity and their streetscapes are dominated by built form with little or no landscaping which may be less attractive for investors. This can be addressed through public realm improvements and by ensuring that development provides landscaping and high-quality design that reinforces the renewal process.

Trees are integral to the neighbourhood character of Whitehorse and they have been identified as an important contributor to the Bush Environment, Bush Suburban and Garden Suburban character areas. The Municipal Wide Tree Study identified that "trees are the most significant determinant of the character of various areas within the City of Whitehorse, with upper tree canopy covering a significant proportion of the city" (Municipal Wide Tree Study Discussion Paper, March 2016)

Telecommunications infrastructure can have a substantial impact on the City's streetscapes if not sensitively managed. In particular, telecommunications cabling can detrimentally affect street trees that can, in turn, have a profound impact on the character of an area.

## Neighbourhood character

There is concern within the community that poorly designed residential development is eroding the character and quality of some residential areas. As the basis for addressing this concern, the Whitehorse Neighbourhood Character Study, 2014 has categorised the City's residential areas into the following neighbourhood character types:

- Garden Suburban Area.
- Bush Suburban Area.
- Bush Environment.

Council will use the identified character types and the three categories of housing change identified in Clause 02.03-6 to encourage high-quality development that is responsive to site constraints and opportunities, and contributes to the preferred neighbourhood character of the area.

These character types do not apply to land within the SRL East Structure Plan Areas.

## Tree conservation

Council has identified trees as being an integral and valued aspect of the character of Whitehorse, particularly within many of its residential areas.

Vegetation has been identified as one of the most significant determinants of neighbourhood character in the municipality, with trees playing a crucial role. Council is concerned that the removal of canopy trees and vegetation will erode the neighbourhood character of Whitehorse. Of particular concern is the clearing of all trees from sites prior to development. Council's interim Urban Forest Strategy published in 2018, outlines the vision, policies and actions relating to Whitehorse's tree population and has set a target for canopy cover of at least 30% by 2030.

Retaining trees, and providing sufficient space for the regeneration of trees, is therefore vital to preserve and enhance the amenity and character of the City. It strengthens neighbourhood character, landscape and amenity, reduces the urban heat island effect, provides habitat for wildlife, improves air quality and the local climate and has positive effects on community health and wellbeing.

## Environmentally sustainable development

Council is striving for Whitehorse to be an environmentally sustainable city. Environmentally sustainable development (ESD) will improve amenity and liveability, reduce long term cost to consumers and the community and improve affordability. Council promotes ESD principles in order to achieve best practice design, construction and operation of new development and including ESD early in the planning and design process ensures that these principles are integrated into the lifecycle of development.

## Heritage conservation

Buildings, areas, structures and natural features of heritage significance are an integral part of the City's social and cultural identity, and need to be protected, conserved and enhanced. There are over two hundred individual heritage places throughout the municipality, all of which add interest, character and a sense of identity to the neighbourhoods in which they are located.

Heritage precincts are vital in portraying how the City developed and what life was like at that time. Each precinct has a different character relative to the period it was developed, collectively they make a substantial contribution to the history of the City. Within some precincts, there are opportunities to improve their cohesiveness and aesthetic quality through refurbishment and limited redevelopment.

Over the last few decades, a significant number of heritage places have been lost through demolition and unsympathetic redevelopment and extensions. It is imperative that existing heritage places are retained, as well as retaining the intactness of heritage precincts.

Council's strategic directions are to:

- Develop major thoroughfares as attractive boulevards with improved advertising signs, landscaping and building design.
- Preserve the amenity of the City by avoiding disorder, clutter and excessive advertising signs on buildings and structures.
- Improve the amenity of industrial areas through sensitive building design and landscaping to soften the visual impact on the public realm.
- Manage the visual amenity impacts of telecommunications facilities on the urban environment.
- Preserve and maintain a range of buildings, features and precincts of historical and cultural significance as examples of the City's origins and how it has developed over time.
- Conserve the architectural diversity, integrity, cohesiveness and aesthetic value of individual heritage buildings and precincts.
- Ensure that development contributes to the preferred neighbourhood character.
- Support the evolution of character in SRL East Structure Plan Areas in line with their role as locations for substantial growth and change.
- Enhance the design quality and character of residential development.
- Protect and enhance the preferred neighbourhood character and the liveability of residential areas within the municipality.
- Protect and improve tree canopy cover by retaining significant trees and providing adequate open space areas and landscaping for additional large trees in new development.
- Encourage planting of indigenous species.
- Achieve best practice by applying environmentally sustainable design principles to the design, construction and operation of new development.
- Encourage innovative technology, design and construction and operational processes in all development that positively influence the sustainability of buildings.

**Housing growth**

The City is under increased pressure to accommodate more people who are attracted to the area due to its strategic location, high amenity residential areas and quality services and facilities. It is predicted that Whitehorse will need to accommodate an additional 19,694 dwellings to house the projected population growth to 2041 (these figures exclude the growth envisaged by SRL East Structure Plans). The community is concerned about maintaining the high-quality residential environment and ensuring that areas of environmental, heritage or special character are protected as the population grows.

Council has identified areas of substantial, natural and limited housing change that are aligned with the neighbourhood character precinct statements. These statements, and subsequent planning controls, aim to direct housing growth across the municipality in a way that reflects the community's neighbourhood character aspirations, while balancing the future housing needs of the City. The housing change areas are shown on the Housing Framework Plan at Clause 02.04 and defined in Clause 16.01-1L (Housing change), with the vision as follows:

Residential area	Vision
Substantial change	Provide for housing growth with increased densities as shown in structure plans, around most train stations, adjoining tram routes and larger activity centres.
Natural change	Allow for modest housing growth and a variety of housing types provided they achieve the preferred neighbourhood character.
Limited change	Enable specific characteristics of the neighbourhood, environment or landscape to be protected through greater control over new housing development. These areas represent the lowest degree of intended residential growth in Whitehorse.

These housing change areas are not applied to land within the SRL East Structure Plan Areas. These Structure Plan Areas will accommodate housing change in line with their role as locations for substantial growth and change.

In addition, there are a number of identified "strategic redevelopment sites" in the City, ~~plus opportunities within the Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre and in other Activity Centres for residential growth~~ strategic sites within the SRL East Structure Plan Areas, as well as opportunities for residential growth in other Precincts and also Activity Centres.

**Housing diversity**

There is a need to improve access to the housing market for the City's large proportion of residents from non-English-speaking backgrounds, many of whom currently experience barriers inhibiting their entry to the market, along with residents at different stages of the life cycle.

With a dramatic increase in international student enrolment at Whitehorse's two major tertiary education institutions, Deakin University and Box Hill Institute, there has been a consequent demand for different types of student accommodation in the City. It is important that this accommodation provides convenient access to these institutions, public transport and a wide range of local services and facilities, while serving the unique needs of students in terms of design, layout and amenity.

The SRL East Structure Plan Areas in particular will offer increased housing choice across a variety of dwelling sizes and types.



## Housing affordability

Housing affordability is a key challenge facing the City. Higher property prices and the type of dwellings constructed are impacted by Whitehorse's attractive leafy character, dominance of detached dwellings and locational attributes. There is a high demand for private rental housing, a proportion of which will need to be affordable to low-income tenants. Increasing lone-person households require smaller housing types, including town houses, units and apartments, which can be more costly to buy or rent than older housing stock. Affordable and well located student housing near Deakin University and Box Hill Institute is necessary to support the success of these institutions.

Council's strategic directions are to:

- Ensure activity centres- and SRL East Structure Plan Areas can accommodate substantial additional housing growth and density based on its capacity, other land use requirements, public transport and infrastructure provision.
- Ensure housing in substantial change areas is designed to achieve and enhance a sense of place and identity, and facilitate neighbourhood participation.
- Direct new housing in natural change areas to locations with good access to public transport and local services, and where it can positively contribute to the preferred neighbourhood character of the area.
- Limit housing growth in limited change areas of valued landscape or built form character and/or with infrastructure limitations.
- Encourage a broader range of housing types to meet the differing needs of the existing and future population.
- Support student accommodation that provides convenient access to Deakin University, Box Hill Institute and local facilities, including public transport.
- Support use and development that increases supply and distribution of affordable housing across the municipality.

## 02.03-7

### Economic development

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Proposed C255whse Council seeks to maintain Whitehorse's position as a regionally significant economy. The economy supports approximately 77,921 jobs across 18,959 registered businesses supported by a large proportion of the local workforce. Gross regional product at 2022 was estimated at \$11 billion.

The SRL East Structure Plan Areas support the creation of employment that will provide a substantial boost to the economy. The SRL East Box Hill Structure Plan Area's role as a key education, health and office hub will be strengthened.

The major employment sector in the municipality is health care accounting for 22 per cent of jobs in the City, while other industries such as professional, scientific and technical services, accommodation and food services, and construction are growing and need support in the medium to long term.

The City has one of the biggest concentrations of office space in Melbourne outside of the Melbourne Central Business District (CBD) and St Kilda Road, with major office centres at Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre, Burwood East-Tally Ho Major Activity Centre and Greenwood Office Park. Demand for office space remains high.

Industrial activity in the City is an important part of the regional economy, providing significant employment opportunities for the local area and the eastern region. Major industrial precincts include Rooks Road, Middleborough Road, Redland Drive Estate, Joseph Street and Lexton Road, some of which are constrained by adjoining residential areas.



By implementing the Whitehorse Development Contributions Plan Council will ensure that physical and community infrastructure will keep pace with and promote economic development.

Council's strategic directions are to:

- Maintain the City's position as the second largest provider of office space outside St.Kilda Road and the Melbourne CBD.
- Facilitate the continued investment in high quality office space in attractive settings with landscaping and car parking in the Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre and Burwood East-Tally Ho Major Activity Centre.
- Ensure activity centres are the focus of increased employment densities.
- Protect industrial land for industrial uses and compatible commercial uses.
- Support redevelopment of industrial areas that maintains their industrial focus in high amenity and attractive locations while respecting and enhancing the amenity of abutting residential properties.
- Facilitate the reuse and redevelopment of designated Strategic Redevelopment Sites in association with the community.

## 02.03-8

## Transport

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### Road network and traffic

Several arterial roads serve the City, including the Eastern Freeway and EastLink. Completion of the freeway network has reduced traffic on main arterial roads in the municipality. In the long term it is hoped that there will be a further reduction in both freight and private vehicle traffic that will enable the network, including local streets, to operate more efficiently. Traffic congestion is a significant issue for the community.

There is a need to ensure new roads are designed and developed in a manner that is environmentally sensitive, while minimising impacts on abutting sensitive land uses.

### Public and personal transport

Council acknowledges the important role played by public transport and promotes public transport usage and efficiency to reduce reliance on the car. The extension of the Burwood Highway tram line through the municipality to Knox City Shopping Centre is strongly supported.

The SRL project will significantly enhance the City's public transport accessibility, with two new stations to be delivered at Box Hill and Burwood. The SRL will connect Whitehorse to a wide range of education, retail, entertainment and employment opportunities located along the SRL network, as well as to the broader rail network.

In addition to the future SRL network, the City is also served by the Belgrave/Lilydale railway lines, and several Smart Bus routes, ~~the City benefits from~~ tram routes that service major institutions such as Deakin University and Greenwood Office Park, along with Burwood Heights and Burwood East-Tally Ho Major Activity Centres. This infrastructure has been the catalyst for a significant amount of industrial, commercial and residential development, and are important elements of the Principal Public Transport Network. However, public transport needs to be better integrated and coordinated.

Providing improved facilities and safety for cyclists, pedestrians and public transport users, and maximising accessibility for all users, particularly the elderly, disabled and people with children, are important objectives for Council.

An increasing number of bicycle trails provide linkages to major open space and recreational facilities, as well as an alternative form of transport.

Council's strategic directions are to:

- Encourage sustainable transport use to reduce car dependency.
- Ensure that adequate road capacity is provided to meet the future needs of the City.
- Minimise the intrusion of non-residential traffic into local streets.
- Support the extension and augmentation of existing public transport facilities, including the extension of the tram line along Burwood Highway to Knox City Shopping Centre.
- Ensure that the community is provided with safe, efficient and accessible walking, cycling and public transport options.
- Facilitate the integration of land use and transport planning with development around public transport facilities to encourage maximum utilisation.

## 02.03-9

### Infrastructure

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### Institutional uses

The City contains several large educational and health institutions that employ a significant number of people and generate a substantial amount of economic activity within the City. These institutions include Deakin University (a designated Education Precinct in Plan Melbourne), Box Hill Institute, Box Hill Hospital (a designated Education and Health Precinct in Plan Melbourne), Epworth Eastern Private Hospital and Mitcham Private Hospital, all of which have experienced considerable growth over recent years. There are several other private educational as well as specialised institutions, particularly in the west of the municipality, that serve regional catchments. All of these facilities are important in ensuring that the City is a prime residential location for families and students, and are important to the City's economy.

Council understands the need to retain opportunities to expand and consolidate the facilities provided on-site. Expansion of these facilities, if not comprehensively planned, can lead to conflicts between the needs of the institutions and those living nearby.

The Whitehorse Development Contributions Plan ensures contributions are made towards funding physical and community infrastructure.

Council's strategic directions is to:

- Obtain developer contributions for the provision of necessary physical and community infrastructure.
- Encourage the development of new health and education floorspace immediately surrounding the key anchor institutions within the SRL East Structure Plan Areas, to support agglomeration benefits.

### Open space

Public open space is highly valued within the City, with a diversity of open space reserves, ranging from formal gardens and high quality sporting reserves to bushland reserves with high conservation values. Council has assessed open space provision in the municipality. While regional and municipal open space is well provided for, the western part of the municipality has more areas where some residents have to walk further to access local open space due to historical development patterns.

Council has the responsibility to utilise public open space contributions to help meet the community's future open space needs. Land contributions will be taken in certain areas where there is an opportunity to improve the provision of open space and existing open space linkages.

Council's strategic directions are to:

- Plan for the expansion of institutional uses in a manner that mitigates any conflicts with neighbouring residential areas.
- Improve the provision of, and linkages between, public open space to meet the community's needs.

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- Ensure new open space is provided in areas identified as requiring additional open space in the municipality.
- Encourage the provision and enhancement of open space to support the future population within the SRL East Structure Plan Areas.