

# Whitehorse Housing Strategy: State of Play Background Report

Prepared for the City of Whitehorse

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# Executive summary

Whitehorse City Council (WCC) has engaged SGS to prepare a 'State of Play' report to inform an update to the Whitehorse Housing Strategy.

The report includes:

- A review of the existing local planning context (chapter 2)
- A discussion of the evolution of state government policy (chapter 3)
- A demographic analysis of Whitehorse (chapter 4)
- Analysis of the locations of new housing over time (chapter 5)
- Analysis of the types of new housing over time (chapter 6)
- Analysis of design (chapter 7) and affordability (chapter 8)

This approach taken by Council in the 2014 Strategy – directing growth to activity centres and a managing change in suburban locations based on character – reflects the directions of State policy at the time and was broadly consistent with the planning approaches of other councils. The analyses find that the location and diversity of dwellings supplied in Whitehorse have shifted over time, generally in alignment with the Housing Strategy's intended outcomes.

While the period from 2014 to 2023 was characterised by gradual changes in the broad policy landscape in Victoria, the period since 2023 can be characterised as a period of more dramatic change with initiatives aimed at boosting housing supply across the state. The

reforms to date can be summarised as generally making the provisions more permissive, and constraining both the decision-making powers of local government and the opportunities for input by the local community.

In practice, the focus placed on increasing housing supply has meant other priorities such as neighbourhood character, urban tree canopy cover, 20-minute neighbourhoods, and public participation have been seen as of reduced importance. The ability to apply local customisation of residential zones – central to the implementation of the Strategy – has been removed and the increased codification and permissiveness in the standard statewide planning provisions may lead to conflict between the expectations raised by the State provisions compared to those of Whitehorse.

Developing a new housing strategy in this new context presents clear challenges for Council. Chapter 9 of this report describes ways Council can respond under four themes:

- Monitoring and analysis of past and current housing outcomes
- Maximising the use of the existing tools that remain within the planning system
- Opportunities to influence housing outcomes through non-regulatory responses, and
- Advocating for change.

# 1. Introduction

Whitehorse City Council (WCC) has engaged SGS to prepare a 'State of Play' report to inform an update to the Whitehorse Housing Strategy (2014). This paper examines, in detail, how the community and housing profile of Whitehorse has changed over time and considers the extent to which these changes align with the objectives outlined in the Whitehorse Housing Strategy.

The report begins with a discussion of the local and state planning context that inform the upcoming review of the Whitehorse Housing Strategy, with an emphasis on the intersections and tensions between state and local policy.

It examines the existing state of play with regards to planning for housing at state and local government levels. This allows understanding of:

- The key constraints regarding housing supply in Whitehorse.
- Significant changes of policy or circumstance that have occurred since previous planning policy (such as the Suburban Rail Loop and the state government's various housing initiatives).
- Points of strategic tension that have emerged since the last major round of Whitehorse strategic planning for housing.
- Changing assumptions and directions regarding planning for housing that will need to be accounted for in future work related to housing strategy.

Having established the evolving policy context since the Housing Strategy, this report then provides detail around the changes in the Whitehorse community and housing development over the same time period. The purpose of this section is:

- To identify key population and demographic trends across the municipality since the implementation of the Housing Strategy.
- To analyse the composition of housing stock within the municipality and how this has changed over time with a focus on trends before and after the implementation of the Housing Strategy.
- To assess the performance of the Housing Strategy based on the findings of the above tasks.
- To identify potential challenges and opportunities to inform updates to the Housing Strategy.

Having established the evolving policy, community and housing context, the paper then offers a reflection on where Council can go from here as they turn their attention to revising the Housing Strategy in the rapidly evolving planning environment while keeping in mind Council's existing aims for housing and their existing and future community.

## 1.1 Whitehorse Housing Strategy 2014

The Whitehorse Housing Strategy was adopted by Council in April 2014 and subsequently implemented into the planning scheme via Amendment C160 in October of the same year, followed by Amendment C174, which was considered and approved by the Residential Zones Standing Advisory Committee (RZSAC) and offered further protections to the Neighbourhood Residential Zones via new schedules.

The Housing Strategy is generally consistent with State Government guidance on planning for housing at the time: Planning Practice Note 90 - Planning for Housing.

The overarching direction of the strategy is established through a vision statement and 8 principles, informed by community and stakeholder engagement.

### Vision:

To ensure that housing in the City of Whitehorse meets residents' needs in terms of location, diversity, sustainability, accessibility, affordability and good design.

### Principles:

Develop housing in Whitehorse that **shapes the City's urban structure** to support environmental and social sustainability, resilience and the health and well-being of residents.

Encourage housing that supports **preferred neighbourhood character** objectives and urban design aspirations for the City.

Promote **housing growth and diversity** in locations within walking distance of public transport and local services such as shops, parks and education.

Limit residential growth in areas of **valued landscape or built form character**, and/or with infrastructure limitations.

Support the housing directions of existing and future adopted Structure Plans and Urban Design Frameworks for **activity centres**.

Provide a **mix of housing** that meets the life stage and cultural needs of residents.

Ensure housing in substantial change areas is designed to achieve and enhance **sense of place** and identity and facilitate neighbourhood participation.

Support **environmentally sustainable** building, design and innovation in new housing development.

Advocate for increases in **affordable and social housing** stock.

The detailed content within the Housing Strategy is subsequently structured across four key themes: location, diversity, affordability, and design. It includes 49 detailed implementation actions under each theme spanning regulatory changes, advocacy, partnership, education and investment by council with the most consequential policies of the strategies relating to:

- Residential **change areas** within the municipality have been categorised according to their expected level of change reflecting their capacity to accommodate future population and housing growth:
  - **Substantial Change Areas:** Areas which have been designated for increased residential development at higher densities. They may include areas within or close to major activity areas, abutting tram routes or within walking distance of train stations, and designated structure plan

boundaries and opportunity areas, in accordance with the relevant adopted plans.

- **Natural Change Areas:** Areas designated for modest housing growth and a variety of housing types, including medium density housing (no apartments) provided they achieve the preferred future neighbourhood character.
- **Limited Change Areas:** Areas with specific valued characteristics which are to be protected through greater control over new housing development. These areas represent the lowest scale of intended residential growth in Whitehorse.
- Three distinct **character areas** (Garden Suburban, Bush Suburban and Bush Environment) have been identified to capture the key landscape and built form elements valued across the municipality. These were implemented into the planning scheme through a suite of schedules to relevant residential zones.
- The promotion of **activity centres** as key locations for housing diversity, leveraging their high accessibility, broad range of services, and strong amenity to meet the needs of current and future residents.

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<sup>1</sup> Boundaries for the Metropolitan (Box Hill) and major activity centres are drawn from the relevant structure or precinct plans. For neighbourhood activity centres without existing plans, the activity centre is defined by the extent of the Design and Development Overlay Schedule 4. These are the current activity centre designations in the

Of the 49 actions in the Housing Strategy, 16 actions are complete, 27 are ongoing or in progress, and 6 are not commenced. A summary of actions and their status is provided in Appendix A.

## 1.2 Notes on geographies and data sources

### Geographies

The study area for this report is the City of Whitehorse LGA. Analysis is based on various intra-municipal geographies, depending on data availability. Key geographic units include:

- Residential lots
- Suburbs
- Activity Centres (Metropolitan, Major, and Neighbourhood) <sup>1</sup>
- Change areas (Limited, Natural, and Substantial)
- Character areas
- Land use planning zones (refer Figure 1 and Figure 2)

Data has been reported at the geography that provides the most meaningful insights into population and housing trends in Whitehorse, and for assessment the Housing Strategy's performance.

Whitehorse Planning Scheme - this policy has been in place over the life of the Housing Strategy and does not reflect the state planning policy changes introduced on 2 September 2025 in Plan for Victoria and Amendment VC283.

## Data sources

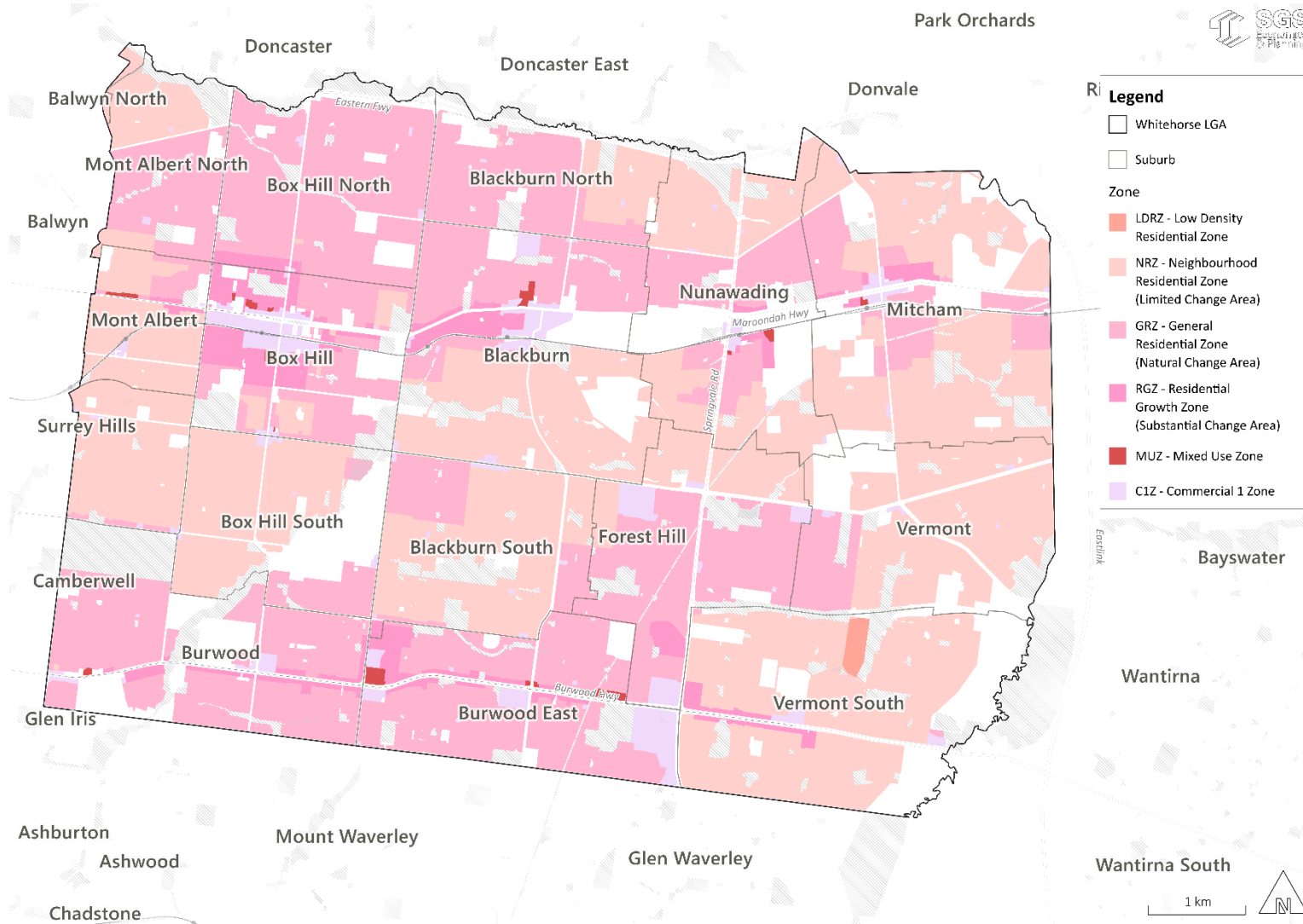
The primary data sources used in this report are the ABS Census 2011, 2016 and 2021, and Planning permit approvals data 2009 to 2024 provided by WCC.

To assess the impact of the Housing Strategy, comparisons are made between periods before and after its implementation into the Whitehorse Planning Scheme in October 2014.

- For Census data, 2011 and 2016 represent the 'before' period, while 2016 and 2021 represent the 'after' period.
- For planning permit data, the years 2009 to 2014 are used as the baseline (pre-strategy), and 2015 to 2024 as the post-strategy period.

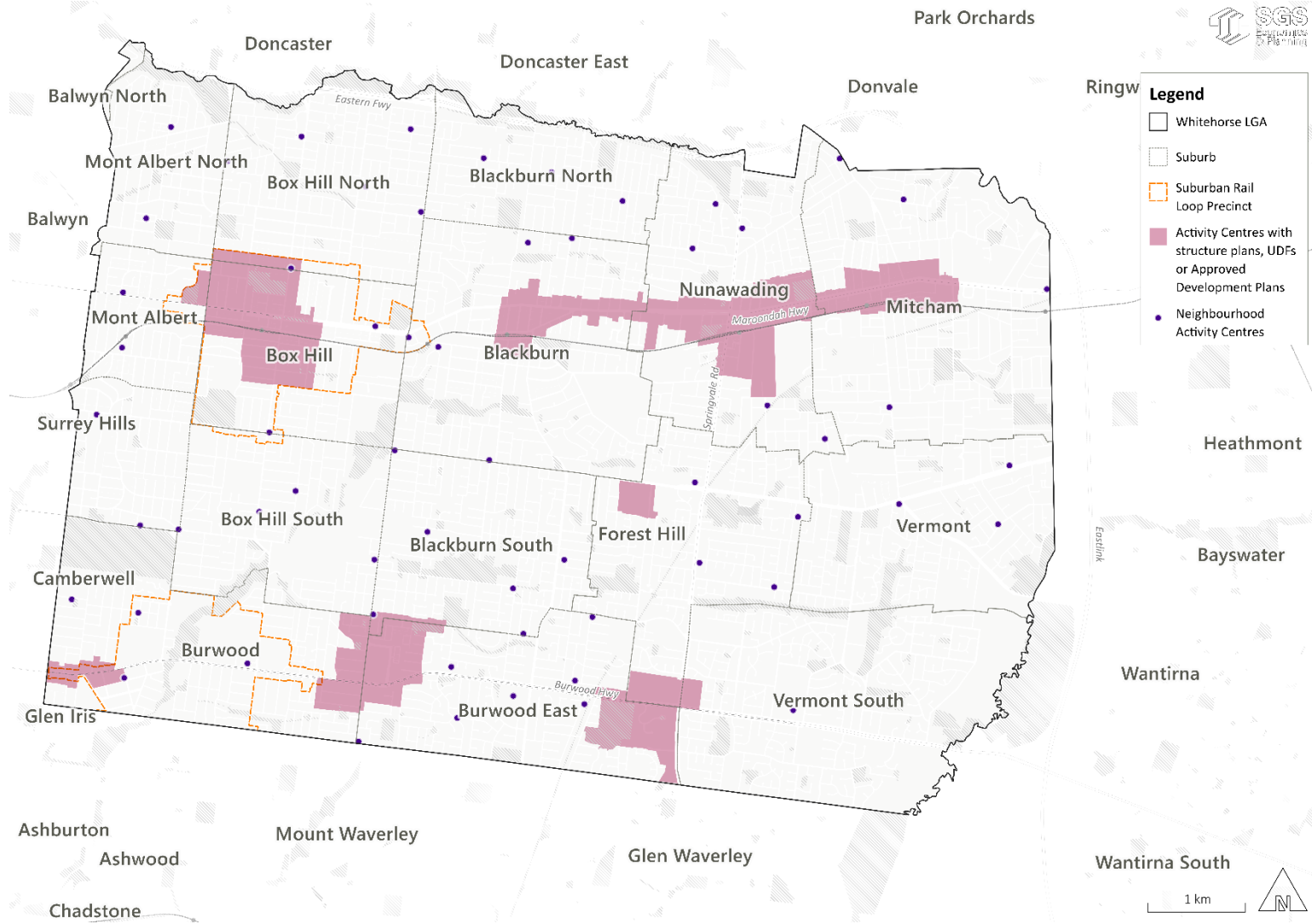
Data sources are referenced throughout the report.

Figure 1: Suburbs and zones, City of Whitehorse, 2025



Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2025)

Figure 2: Activity centres, City of Whitehorse, 2025



Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2025)

## 2. Whitehorse Housing Strategy and implementation

### 2.1 Local Planning Constraints and Considerations

#### Neighbourhood Character

Whitehorse undertook a detailed Neighbourhood Character Study in 2014, and this is reflected in policy at cl 15.01-5I. The objective of this policy is to ensure that development:

- Is consistent with the built form envisaged for the three categories of housing change, those being limited, natural and substantial change areas as defined in Clause 16.01-1L (Housing change) and shown on Plan 2: Housing Framework Plan at Clause 02.04.
- Contributes to the preferred neighbourhood character of the area.
- Minimises the loss of trees and vegetation.
- Does not detract from the natural environment and ecological systems.
- Provides adequate vegetation and gardens consistent with the preferred neighbourhood character

These points highlight the importance that trees, vegetation and environmental values play in Whitehorse's character.

Council also has two limited areas of Neighbourhood Character Overlay, one in Box Hill and one in Blackburn.

The Neighbourhood Character Study, and its implementation through the planning scheme, is discussed in more detail at Section 1.1.

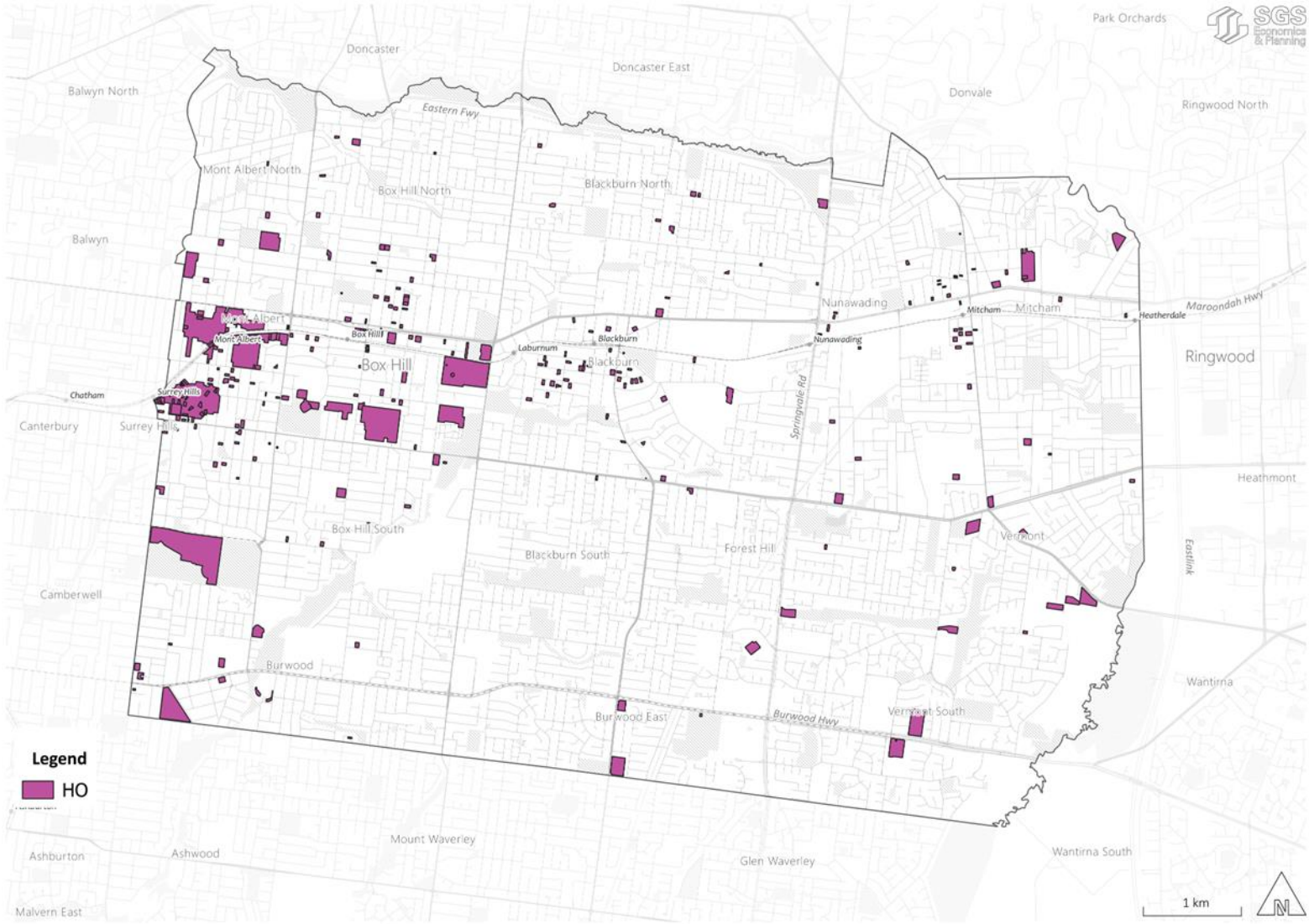
#### Heritage

There are more than 200 individual heritage places recognised under the Heritage Overlay (HO). The overwhelming majority of heritage overlays relate to individual places, but there are several precincts in residential areas:

- HO 100 – Churchill Street Precinct, Mont Albert
- HO 101 – Combarton Street Precinct, Box Hill
- HO 102 – Mont Albert Residential Precinct, Mont Albert
- HO 178 – Blacks Estate, Precinct, Mont Albert
- HO 179 – Thomas Street Precinct, Mitcham
- HO 180 – Mount View Court Precinct, Burwood
- HO 242 – Alexander Street Precinct, Box Hill
- HO 243 – Windsor Park Estate, Surrey Hills

These precincts, and heritage overlays more generally, are more prevalent in the west of the municipality, notably around Box Hill and Mont Albert (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Heritage Overlay



Source: SGS Economics and Planning

Local policy at CI 15.03-1L directs that buildings in the HO not be demolished, and that development on “sites adjacent to a heritage place” should be “sympathetic to the place in terms of their bulk, boundary setbacks, materials, colour scheme and form.” In addition to constraint of development opportunity on heritage sites, this implies some constraint to residential development adjacent to heritage places (although this may be difficult to enforce outside of a heritage precinct, especially under the deemed to comply residential development controls discussed in Section 3.8, as consideration of such policy will be tightly constrained).

Council has an adopted heritage framework (Whitehorse Heritage Framework 2020) which outlines an approach to identifying and protecting further heritage places.<sup>2</sup>

### **Bushfire**

Whitehorse is generally at low risk from bushfire. However, the Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO) covers a small area at the northeast corner of Mitcham, near Mullum Mullum Creek. This area is currently within the Neighbourhood Residential Zone.

The planning scheme also identifies Bushfire Prone Areas (BPA). Land identified as within a Bushfire Prone Area includes parks located within residential areas (Wattle Park, Blackburn Lake Sanctuary, Bellbird Dell Reserve and Antonio Park) and along the Dandenong Creek and Mullum Mullum Creek. The Bushfire Prone

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<sup>2</sup>

<https://www.whitehorse.vic.gov.au/sites/whitehorse.vic.gov.au/files/assets/documents/Heritage%20Framework%20Plan%202020.PDF>

<sup>3</sup> Melbourne Water, Greater Melbourne Flood Information Program. Accessed on 20 October 2025.

Area overlaps on to residential property surrounding the sites listed above. Bushfire Prone Area construction requirements will apply to residential development within these areas.

### **Flooding and stormwater**

The Whitehorse Planning Scheme currently illustrates that there is a low risk of flooding in Whitehorse. There is a very small portion of land within the Urban Floodway Zone along the Dandenong Creek. The Land Subject to Inundation Overlay is more widely applied along creek corridors but does not include residential or commercial land. There is some use of the Special Building Overlay (SBO), which follows drainage easements but also covers some residential and commercial areas. The constraints to residential development posed by current flooding and stormwater provisions are therefore currently low.

However, Melbourne Water are in the process of updating the flood maps of municipalities throughout Melbourne, and due to the characteristics of the newer models (which also account for climate change impacts), it is likely there will be an increase in Whitehorse’s flood extents.<sup>3</sup>

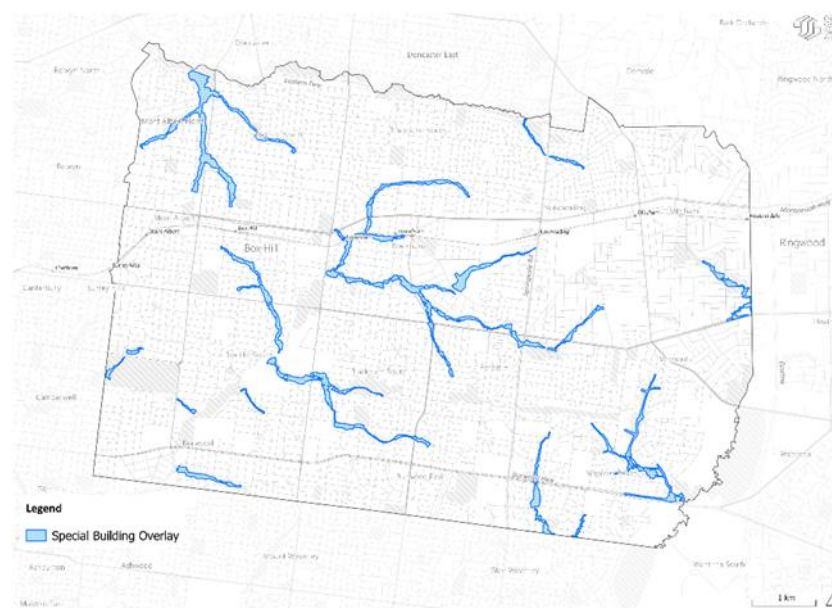
Melbourne Water states that the flood maps will be updated over the next few years, and once they have been implemented into the Whitehorse Planning Scheme, they will start to trigger planning

<https://www.melbournewater.com.au/water-and-environment/flooding-and-drainage/greater-melbourne-flood-information-program>

permits for residential land. For developers of residential buildings, responding to requirements of the SBO (

Figure 4) or Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO) may increase their costs due to raising floor levels, contracting additional assessments and paying for drainage infrastructure for development within their extents.

**Figure 4: Special Building Overlay**



Source: SGS Economics and Planning

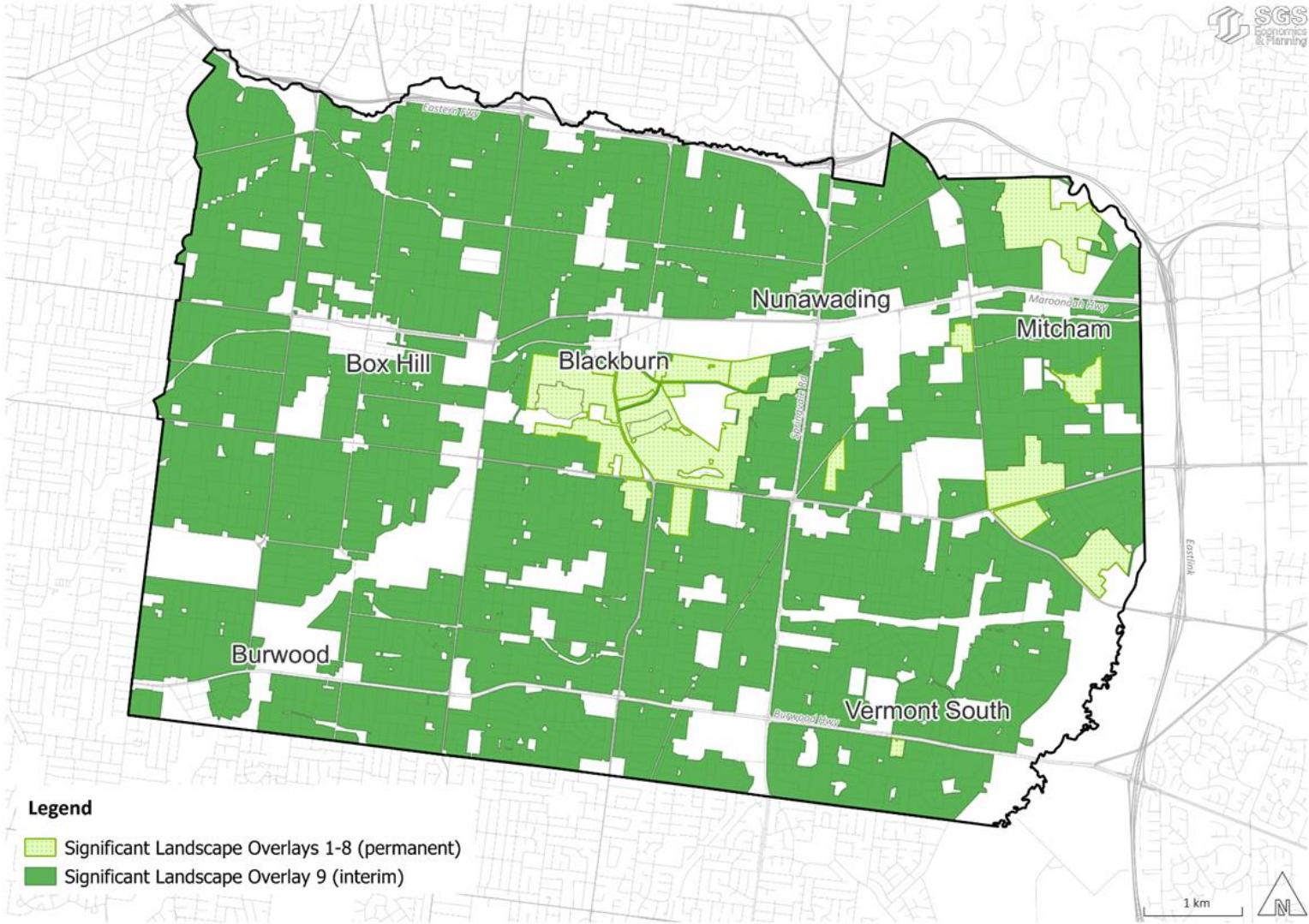
## Tree canopy

The Whitehorse Urban Forest Strategy 2021-2031 outlines the benefits to liveability and the environment of tracking and managing tree canopy cover across the urban municipality. Section 2 of the Strategy describes that in 2014 tree canopy cover was 20.28% and by 2018 it was 18%, a loss of 10% of the existing canopy over four years. Referencing policy advice from the Nature Conservancy and Resilient Melbourne, the Strategy sets a target of 30% tree canopy cover by 2050.

Numerous challenges for increasing canopy cover posed by denser living are noted in the strategy, including increased underground services (e.g. sewerage under nature strips) and soil compaction from heavy buildings, which can impact upon tree root systems if appropriate separation between buildings and trees is not maintained. Residential areas account for the highest portion of canopy cover, particularly those of lower density, including Blackburn, Surrey Hills, Mont Albert, Mont Albert North and Vermont, where canopy cover is already above 30%. High density areas are pointed out for having little to no canopy cover, yet also for being where urban heat island impacts can be greatest.

In terms of actions, the Strategy emphasises the role of increasing tree canopy cover by increasing planting within private property. The Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO), which covers almost all residential land in Whitehorse, is the main tool that the Strategy proposes to use to achieve this (Figure 5). Schedule 9 to the SLO is the most extensively applied throughout the municipality and triggers a planning permit for the removal of a tree (unless exempt), and requirements to include a report from an arborist. The permit process triggered by this control also allows for council to require new replacement planting through permit conditions.

Figure 5: Significant Landscape Overlays in Whitehorse



Source: SGS Economics and Planning

This SLO was introduced via Amendment C191 on 8 February 2018 and applied interim protection to residential areas not already within an SLO. This was based on the value of tree canopy identified in the Neighbourhood Character Study in 2014, as well as subsequent community consultation in 2016 for the Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan. The SLO9 has been extended as an interim control annually since that time.

Council has undertaken Lidar analysis in recent years that suggests an increase in canopy cover for vegetation over 3 metres from 21.6% to 25.8% between 2018 to 2023.<sup>4</sup> While these canopy numbers use different methodology to those cited in the Urban Forest Strategy and are likely not directly comparable, the documented increase suggests tools such as SLO9 may have had some benefit in arresting the previously documented canopy decline.

The remaining SLOs are not considered to be under the same immediate threat, as these are not interim controls.

The current tree controls likely apply higher obligations upon redevelopment than the recently introduced standard statewide tree canopy provisions at clause 52.37 and in the residential development provisions. Council can use the decision guidelines in its SLOs to refuse a planning permit for dwellings if the impact on trees is considered too great or a tree is assessed as being of a health and structure that warrants its retention. Third parties can

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<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.whitehorse.vic.gov.au/urban-forest-canopy-cover>.

object to residential development on the grounds of perceived impacts to trees.

Tree retention would, however, likely have an impact upon development yields, although this is difficult to quantify.

### **Activity centres**

The Whitehorse Housing Strategy 2014 identifies 60 neighbourhood activity centres, 4 activity centres with structure plans or urban design frameworks and the Whitehorse Megamile (now called the Nunawading Megamile). The planning scheme reflects these centres in its strategic framework plan at clause 02.04.<sup>5</sup>

Currently existing activity centre plans are as follows:

- Box Hill Structure Plan
- Burwood Heights Activity Centre Structure Plan
- Burwood Village Neighbourhood Activity Centre Framework Plan
- Megamile West and Blackburn Village Activity Centres Urban Design Framework
- Nunawading Megamile Major Activity Centre and Mitcham Neighbourhood Activity Centre Structure plan
- Tally Ho Major Activity Centre (primarily an office park and tech hub)
- Forest Hill Activity Centre (implemented through Development Plan Overlay Schedule 6)
- Burwood Village Urban Design Framework

<sup>5</sup> There are minor differences in mapping between the strategy and the strategic framework plan, notably the latter adding a neighbourhood activity centre in Blackburn.

The current Box Hill Structure Plan was adopted in 2007, and while an updated structure plan has been produced by Whitehorse City Council, in 2022 the Minister for Planning did not authorise the amendment to implement it on account of the anticipated strategic planning associated with the Suburban Rail Loop.<sup>6</sup>

Draft structure plans for the Box Hill and Burwood Suburban Rail Loop precincts were released by the state government for consultation in March 2025. These are discussed in more detail in Section 3.6.

The State Government is leading planning for Blackburn, Nunawading and Mitcham through its Activity Centres Program as part of Plan for Victoria and its Housing Statement (*Victoria's Housing Statement, The Decade Ahead – 2024-2034*). This is discussed further at Section 3.7. Residential growth corridors.

In response to concern over height and form of some buildings developed along main road corridors within the Residential Growth Zone, Whitehorse developed a set of design principles for these areas. In 2019, Council adopted the document and in 2024 it was implemented into the planning scheme through Amendment C220whse.

The amendment introduced Schedule 11 to the Design and Development Overlay, which increases setbacks and provides additional directions on heights within residential corridors along Whitehorse Road and the Burwood Highway. This will have some impact on housing capacity along these envelopes, notably through

the 9m discretionary rear setback from adjoining land within Neighbourhood Residential or General Residential zones.

### **Open space strategy**

On 28 July 2025 Whitehorse City Council adopted the new Whitehorse Open Space Strategy. This replaced the previous Whitehorse Open Space Strategy adopted by Council in 2007 that set the minimum 4% open space contribution rate for new subdivisions. The new Strategy outlines that 11% of the municipality is currently open space (722 ha), and that while there is an overall good distribution of open space, there are gaps within western side suburbs of the municipality of Mont Albert, Box Hill, Box Hill South, Surrey Hills and Burwood.

The Strategy emphasises that more open space and improvements to existing open space are needed. The demand is linked to a growing population (notably the very significant growth associated with the Suburban Rail Loop precincts), a growing number of jobs located in the municipality and changing land uses (e.g. industrial precincts changing to mixed use). Additionally, the construction of the Suburban Rail Loop – East up until approximately 2035 will impact existing open space, and once operational, drive a higher demand for open space. This Strategy is the strategic basis for an amendment to the open space contributions policy, stating the

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<sup>6</sup> Whitehorse City Council. The Vision for Box Hill. Accessed on 21 October 2025. <https://www.whitehorse.vic.gov.au/planning->

[building/planning-strategies/planning-studies-and-policies/vision-box-hill](#)

intent to implement an averaged municipal rate in the order of 7.2% and a high-density precinct rate in Box Hill in the order of 10.7%.<sup>7</sup>

The Strategy includes a diagram of “Proposed areas for additional open space and expansion of existing open space”, which may convert some areas of residentially zoned land to the Public Park and Recreation Zone. While this may cause a slight reduction in residentially zoned land, increased provision of open space will support higher density living.

### **Social and affordable housing**

Whitehorse adopted an Affordable Housing Policy in 2023. This breaks down Council’s varied avenues for action through advocacy, facilitation, planning, and regulation. The policy is closely aligned with discussion at Chapter 7 of the Housing Strategy.

Many of the key actions are advocacy items, reflecting the importance of the State Government’s role and the limited scope for direct action within the planning system. This includes a commitment to advocating for:

- Increased direct investment by state and federal governments in social and affordable housing.
- Introduction of a statewide mandatory inclusionary zoning tool.
- Reform of residential property taxes to encourage conversion of vacant private housing into affordable rentals.

- Advocacy regarding state and federal governments including social and affordable housing within significant government-led projects.

Actions related to Council’s role as a facilitator focus on information-sharing and collaboration with other councils.

Importantly, the actions listed under Council’s role as a planner are focused on encouraging and negotiating social and affordable housing contributions. The separation of planning actions from regulatory actions is telling and reflects the restrictions placed around council actions regarding affordable housing within the Victorian planning system, which largely prevent councils requiring housing contributions.

This limitation is reflected in the planning actions which state that Council will seek affordable housing contributions on a voluntary basis. Those contributions are of at least six per cent within “defined development settings” or where there is considerable uplift in value through rezoning. The identified development settings are:

- Residential development in the Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre.
- Residential development on Strategic Development Sites.
- Rezoning of land to the Residential Growth Zone, General Residential Zone (sites 0.5ha or greater), Neighbourhood Residential Zone (sites 0.5ha or greater), Mixed Use Zone, Commercial 1 Zone, Commercial 3 Zone (where residential

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<sup>7</sup> Attachment 1. Whitehorse Open Space Strategy Summary Report, City of Whitehorse Council Meeting Agendas and Minutes – 28 July 2025. Accessed on 20 October 2025 at:

[https://whitehorse.infocouncil.biz/Open/2025/07/CO\\_20250728\\_ATT\\_1618.PDF](https://whitehorse.infocouncil.biz/Open/2025/07/CO_20250728_ATT_1618.PDF)

development is provided for), Activity Centre Zone (where residential development is provided for), Special Use Zone (where residential development is provided for), and Comprehensive Development Zone (where residential development is provided for).

- Residential development within the future sale or redevelopment of land owned by government
- Land within 800m of future Suburban Rail Loop Project stations.

Regulatory actions are limited to encouraging housing diversity through the planning scheme; enforcing built to rent requirements through S 173 agreements; and enforcing appropriate regulation of rooming houses.

Notably council does not have a local policy regarding Housing Affordability in the planning scheme that reflects the planning actions above (if present this would be at clause 16.01-2L). The emphasis on voluntary and negotiated contributions, and the very limited regulatory actions listed in the strategy, reflects the tight constraints placed by State Government around council actions through the planning system.

### **Student accommodation**

Council has policy regarding student housing at cl 16.01-1L-01 – Student Accommodation. This indicates preferred locations for student accommodation, being sites:

- Within the Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre or a major activity centre.
- That provide convenient access to a tertiary institution.
- That about the Principal Public Transport Network.

A separate guideline suggests locating accommodation within 500m of a tertiary institution. The policy indicates that such accommodation should be avoided in the designated limited change areas.

In addition to locational guidance, the policy also includes design strategies.

### **Environmentally Sustainable Development**

Whitehorse is a member of the Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment and was one of the initial councils – along with Merri-bek (then Moreland), Port Phillip, Yarra, Stonnington and Banyule – that sought in 2014 to introduce local policy regarding environmentally sustainable design (ESD). This policy was initially gazetted in November 2015 (Amendment c130).

The ESD policy remains at cl 15.01-2L and includes additional application requirements for Sustainable Design Assessments and / or Sustainability Management Plans to lift the environmental performance of dwellings.

This policy is set to expire “when it is superseded by a comparable provision of the Victoria Planning Provisions.” While the State Government has committed to increased ESD provisions in schemes and has included some standards in the reformed residential development provisions discussed in Section 3.8, there has yet to be equivalent provisions for ESD in statewide provisions.

### **Non-residential uses in residential areas**

The scheme has local policy regarding non-residential uses in residential areas at clause 13.07-1L – Non-residential Uses in Residential Areas. This indicates that preferred locations for such

uses are on corner sites abutting main roads (those in a Transport Zone), close to centres, and where there is a demonstrated local need. Non-residential uses are discouraged where there are suitable sites in nearby commercial centres.

Officers advised of emerging challenges with such uses in that:

- The scale of new child-care centres means that they compete for prime residential sites (such as multi-lot holdings).
- The increased permissiveness of the state residential zones has led to proliferation of medical centres in situations that might not be favoured under local policy.

This presents policy challenges in that such uses are competing with residential use of these sites.

### **Cultural heritage and Traditional Owners**

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage areas are identified along the northern and eastern municipal boundaries and along one corridor in the southwest of the municipality. These areas align with the creek corridors of Gardiners Creek, Koonung Creek, Mullum Mullum Creek and Dandenong Creek, as well as an area surrounding Wurundjeri Wetlands and Fulton Road Drain. Residential properties, mainly in the GRZ and NRZ within approximately 200m-300m of the creeks are also included in the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage area.

This area creates a requirement for an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management plan for high impact activities, which include a residential building or a residential village (up to two dwellings on a lot are exempt and up to 3 dwellings on a lot are exempt if ground disturbance is not significant). Activities which will cause ground disturbance, such as the construction of an underground car park or deep excavation for the construction of a high apartment building are also high impact activities.

## 2.2 Whitehorse Housing Strategy

### Whitehorse Housing Strategy 2014

The Whitehorse Housing Strategy was adopted by Council in 2014.

It is generally consistent with the standard methodology endorsed under State Government guidance (which in its current form is contained within Planning Practice Note 90 – Planning for Housing, last updated in July 2023 – see Section 1.1).

It divides the municipality into three key change categories:

- *Substantial change areas*, which are described as accommodating “townhouses, units, apartments and shop-top dwellings.”
- *Natural change areas*, which are expected to “comprise low and medium density housing in the form of detached dwellings, semi-detached dwellings, townhouses and units.”
- *Limited change areas* which will “comprise detached dwellings and where appropriate, units and semi-detached dwellings.”

These terms are slightly different to, but generally consistent with, the State Government’s guidance that uses the terms substantial, incremental and minimal to describe change area categories.

The strategy explicitly contemplates that each of these change areas corresponds directly to one of the three main residential zones: Residential Growth Zone for substantial change areas; General Residential Zone for natural change areas; and Neighbourhood Residential Zone for limited change areas. This approach – which was implemented – was the expected approach at the time.

However, as discussed in Section 1.1, the clear alignment of change categories with the zones has been weakened by subsequent State Government guidance.

The strategy incorporates the findings of the neighbourhood character review (see below) that divides the municipality into garden suburban, bush suburban, and bush environment character types.

Table 1 summarises the status of the planning scheme-related actions in the Housing Strategy.

### Whitehorse Neighbourhood Character Study 2014

This character study was an input into the Housing Strategy, which again is consistent with State Government guidance about preparation of housing strategies. It characterises Whitehorse’s residential neighbourhoods into the three broad character types of garden suburban, bush suburban, and bush environment. There are then detailed guidelines for 18 individual character precincts (16 garden suburban, 9 bush suburban, and a single non-contiguous bush suburban precinct). Permanent SLOs have been applied to Bush Environment character types.

### Neighbourhood Activity Centre Urban Design Guidelines 2014

These urban design guidelines complement the Neighbourhood Character Study, focusing on Whitehorse’s commercially-zoned land that is not subject to a structure plan or urban design framework. The key focus in these areas is their shopping, commercial and service role.

However, the guidelines do encourage residential use of buildings at their upper levels. Built form is contemplated in some of these neighbourhoods at up to 6 storeys, allowing scope for some mid-rise apartments over shops. The urban design guidelines are complementary to the Housing Strategy and envisaged housing opportunities in the commercial areas of the municipality.

### **Planning scheme implementation**

The change areas in the Housing Strategy were implemented through zones to reflect the change areas, as discussed above.

Figure 6, shows the distribution of zones in Whitehorse. This shows concentrations of Residential Growth Zone around Box Hill and along the Burwood Highway and Whitehorse Road corridors. Other residential areas include an approximately even mix of General Residential and Neighbourhood Residential zones.

Schedule 9 to the Significant Landscape Overlay is currently set to expire on 16 June 2026. That expiry date was set by the Department of Transport and Planning to reflect their intention to implement statewide tree protection measures to support Action 12 of Plan for Victoria: Protect and Enhance Canopy Trees.<sup>8</sup> The Department applied statewide tree controls for residential areas in September 2025 through Amendment VC289, which introduced clause 52.37 – Canopy Trees. This raises uncertainty about the future of Whitehorse’s own tree controls.

The neighbourhood character areas were implemented through a combination of local policy and schedules to the zones. Those schedules varied many standards to reflect character expectations, including changes to standard site coverages, landscaping and open space requirements.

The local policy reflecting neighbourhood character requirements remains in the scheme at cl 15.01-5L, and outlines strategies for different precincts. However, many of the customisations to schedules were removed by Amendment VC282 on 11 August 2025, which removed elements of local schedules that were more restrictive than the revised quantitative standards of the standard residential development provisions. While some elements such as decision guidelines have been retained, most customised standards have been removed.

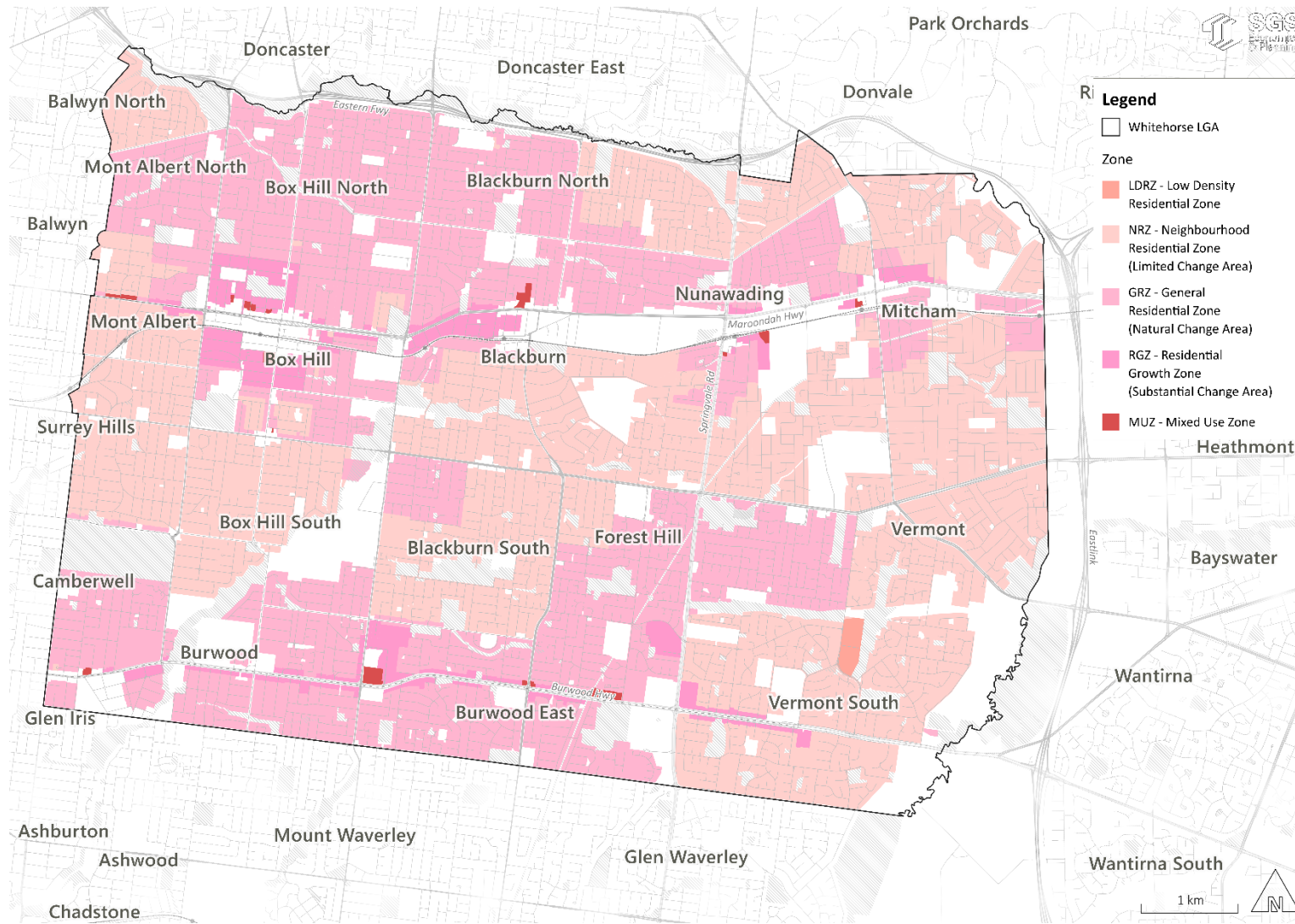
Figure 7 illustrates the effect of these changes on one schedule, showing Neighbourhood Residential Zone Schedule 1 – Bush Environment before and after the changes.

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<sup>8</sup> Whitehorse City Council, Amendment C219 – Significant Landscape Overlay – Schedule 9. Accessed on 20 October 2025.

<https://www.whitehorse.vic.gov.au/planning-building/whitehorse-planning-scheme/schedule-9-landscape-overlay-amendment-c219>

Figure 6: Distribution of residential zones in Whitehorse



Source: SGS Economics and Planning

Figure 7: Comparison of Neighbourhood Residential Zone Schedule 1 – Bush Environment Areas

**WHITEHORSE PLANNING SCHEME**

**SCHEDULE 1 TO CLAUSE 32.09 NEIGHBOURHOOD RESIDENTIAL ZONE**

Shown on the planning scheme map as NRZ1.

**BUSH ENVIRONMENT AREAS**

**Neighbourhood character objectives**

None specified.

**Minimum subdivision area**

None specified.

**Permit requirement for the construction or extension of one dwelling or a fence associated with a dwelling on a lot**

	Requirement
Permit requirement for the construction or extension of one dwelling on a lot	None specified
Permit requirement to construct or extend a front fence within 3 metres of a street associated with a dwelling on a lot	None specified

**Requirements of Clause 54 and Clause 55**

	Standard	Requirement
Minimum street setback	A3 and B6	None specified
Site coverage	A5 and B8	Maximum 40%
Permeability	A8 and B9	Minimum 40%
Landscaping	B13	Provision of at least two canopy trees per dwelling that have the potential of reaching a minimum mature height of 12 metres. At least one of those trees should be in the secluded private open space of the dwelling. The species of canopy trees should be native, preferably indigenous.
Side and rear setbacks	A10 and B17	A new building not within 200mm of a boundary should be set back from side and rear boundaries 1.2 metres, plus 0.3 metres for every height over 3.6 metres up to 6.9 metres, plus 1 metre for every metre over 6.9 metres.
Walls on boundaries	A11 and B18	No walls to be constructed on boundaries.
Private open space	A17	A dwelling should have private open space consisting of an area of 80 square metres or 20 per cent of the area of the lot, whichever is the lesser, but not less than 40 square metres. At least one part of the private open space should consist of secluded private open space with a minimum area of 35 square metres and a minimum dimension of 5 metres and convenient access from a living room. It cannot include a balcony or roof top terrace.

Generated from Planning Scheme Histories Page 1 of 2

**WHITEHORSE PLANNING SCHEME**

	Standard	Requirement
	B28	A dwelling or residential building should have private open space consisting of and area of 40 square metres, with one part of the private open space at the side or rear of the dwelling or residential building within a minimum area of 35 square metres, a minimum dimension of 5 metres and convenient access from a living room. It cannot include a balcony or roof top terrace.
Front fence height	A20 and B32	A front fence within 3 metres of a street should not exceed 1 metre in 'other streets'. None specified for streets in Road Zone Categories 1 and 2.

**Maximum building height requirement for a dwelling or residential building**

None specified.

**Application requirements**

The following application requirements apply to an application for a permit under Clause 32.09, in addition to those specified in Clause 32.09 and elsewhere in the scheme and must accompany an application, as appropriate, to the satisfaction of the responsible authority:

- Plans showing existing vegetation and any trees proposed to be removed.
- Plans showing proposed landscaping works and planting including tree species with a mature height of at least 12 metres.

**Decision guidelines**

The following decision guidelines apply to an application for a permit under Clause 32.09, in addition to those specified in Clause 32.09 and elsewhere in the scheme which must be considered, as appropriate, by the responsible authority:

- Whether the vegetation in the street setback will contribute to the preferred neighbourhood character and the public realm.
- The potential for trees and vegetation to be provided between dwellings on the same site.
- Whether there is sufficient permeable space that is not encumbered by an easement to enable the planting of canopy trees.
- Development should provide for the retention and/or planting of trees, where these are part of the character of the neighbourhood.

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**WHITEHORSE PLANNING SCHEME**

**SCHEDULE 1 TO CLAUSE 32.09 NEIGHBOURHOOD RESIDENTIAL ZONE**

Shown on the planning scheme map as NRZ1.

**BUSH ENVIRONMENT AREAS**

**Neighbourhood character objectives**

None specified.

**Minimum subdivision area**

None specified.

**Requirements of Clause 54 and Clause 55**

	Standard	Requirement
Minimum street setback	A2-1	None specified
	B2-1	None specified
Site coverage	A2-5	None specified
	B2-5	None specified
Private open space	A3-2	None specified
	B3-5	None specified
Front fence height	A2-7 and B2-8	A front fence within 3 metres of a street should not exceed 1 metre in 'other streets'. None specified for streets in Road Zone Categories 1 and 2.

**Maximum building height requirement for a dwelling, small second dwelling or residential building**

None specified.

**Application requirements**

The following application requirements apply to an application for a permit under Clause 32.09, in addition to those specified in Clause 32.09 and elsewhere in the scheme and must accompany an application, as appropriate, to the satisfaction of the responsible authority:

- Plans showing existing vegetation and any trees proposed to be removed.
- Plans showing proposed landscaping works and planting including tree species with a mature height of at least 12 metres.

**Decision guidelines**

The following decision guidelines apply to an application for a permit under Clause 32.09, in addition to those specified in Clause 32.09 and elsewhere in the scheme which must be considered, as appropriate, by the responsible authority:

- Whether the vegetation in the street setback will contribute to the preferred neighbourhood character and the public realm.

Generated from Planning Scheme Histories Page 1 of 2

NRZ Schedule 1 preceding immediately prior to amendment VC255 (gazetted 3 May 2024)

Current NRZ Schedule 1 (page 1 only)

**Table 1: Implementation of scheme-related Housing Strategy actions**

Action	Summary of Action	Status and Comment
1	Limited change areas rezoned to NRZ, with schedules to reflect character types.	Implemented; partially undone by subsequent State Government changes to zone schedules and residential development provisions.
2	Investigate areas for NCO, HO, and SLO.	Partially implemented through application of SLO9.
3	Natural change areas rezoned to GRZ, with schedules to reflect character types.	Implemented; partially undone by subsequent State Government changes to zone schedules and residential development provisions.
4	Investigate encouraging adaptable housing, good quality housing, and landscaping guidelines encouraging retention of vegetation.	Ongoing action. Landscaping requirements will be difficult to pursue following recent State Government changes.
5	Limited change areas rezoned to RGZ, with schedules to reflect character types.	Implemented; partially undone by subsequent State Government changes to zone schedules and residential development provisions.
7	Reflect Housing Strategy in policy.	Implemented.
8	Reflect change areas in scheme policy.	Implemented.
9	Promote activity centres.	Ongoing action, but scheme policy reflects this status, for example through inclusion of activity centres within the Strategic Framework Plan (cl 02.04).
10	Reflect change areas in zones.	Implemented.
11	Support redevelopment of single homes in limited change areas to accommodate larger households and housing choice.	Ongoing action. Difficult to reflect in scheme policy, although policy supports diversity of housing.
20	Investigate stronger statutory mechanisms to encourage affordable housing.	Ongoing action. Affordable housing policy completed in 2022; sector-wide advocacy from local government to State Government is ongoing.

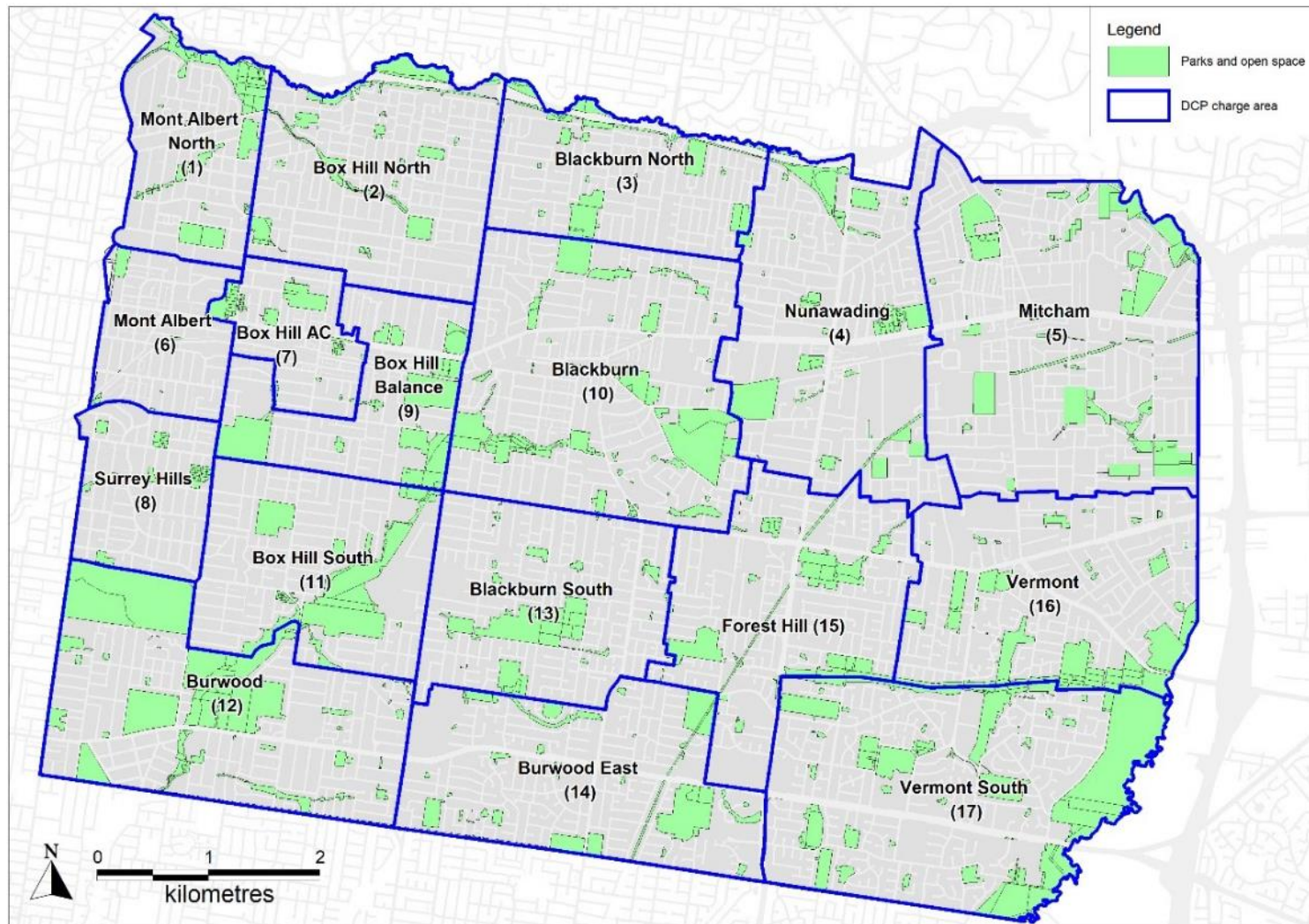
21	Identify opportunities for affordable housing in structure plans.	Ongoing action. Council recently adopted the Tally Ho Structure Plan which includes consideration for affordable housing. Structure planning for several activity centres has now been assumed by State Government.
22	Advocate to State Government to provide local government more control over local planning to encourage more affordable housing provision.	Ongoing action. As with Action 20, this has been the subject of ongoing sector-wide advocacy from local government to State Government.
33	Amend the MSS to support improved design quality.	Implemented through character controls.
34	Provide guidance and support for development and assessment in neighbourhood character areas.	Implemented primarily through neighbourhood character guidelines, but scheme policy also contributes to this guidance.
35	Investigate additional controls in two precincts (Garden Suburban 16 and Bush Suburban 9).	Ongoing. Preliminary investigations undertaken in Garden Suburban 16, and Bush Suburban 9 have been deferred until the future of SLO9 is resolved and there is more clarity regarding the role of neighbourhood character in the management of housing with the planning reforms.
41	Include Water Sensitive Urban Design Guidelines in pre-application assessments.	Implemented through ESD policy – local provisions have since been partially supplanted by State Government provisions at cl 53.18.

### 2.3 Development Contributions

Whitehorse has a municipality-wide Development Contributions Overlay that establishes 17 different charge areas as shown in **Error! Reference source not found.** This establishes levies for residential development. For 2025/26, the lowest is \$987 for Nunawading, and the highest is \$2476 for Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre, per dwelling.

The draft amendment material provided by the State Government for the Box Hill and Burwood Suburban Rail Loop precincts does not propose change to, or removal of, the Development Contributions Plan Overlay. Nor does the SRLA documentation include an infrastructure contributions mechanism to implement the draft structure plan.

Figure 8: Development Contributions Overlay charge areas



Source: Whitehorse Planning Scheme, cl 45.06 – Schedule 6

# 3. State Government strategy and implementation

## 3.1 Planning Practice Notes

The standard approach to planning for housing in Victoria is outlined in Planning Practice Note 90 – Planning for Housing (PPN90) and Planning Practice Note 91 – Using the Residential Zones (PPN91). These are the latest in a succession of planning practice notes guiding the application of zones.

The latest version of these practice notes is discussed below. However, in the current context, it is worth noting that the Housing Strategy was finalised when the applicable practice note guiding application of residential zones was Planning Practice Note 78 (PPN78), from December 2013. This included the diagram at Figure 9 indicating the role of the zones. This is useful for understanding the state of play when the Whitehorse Housing Strategy was prepared.

The current PPN90 outlines the State Government endorsed approach to preparation of a housing strategy. Notably, this includes the preparation of a residential development framework informed by parallel work addressing housing, neighbourhood character, and land constraints such as heritage, landscape and environmental factors (

Figure 11). This work then informs the identification of change areas in the residential development framework. This approach was followed in the preparation of Whitehorse’s Housing Strategy.

PPN91 includes guidance regarding the application of zones, including the diagram reproduced at Figure 10. These show only a loose alignment between zones and change area categories under current guidance, especially for incremental change areas (approximately equivalent to Whitehorse’s “natural change areas”).

Partially as a result of this loosening of alignment between zones and change areas, PPN91 does not include statements regarding expected outcomes in residential zones that are directly comparable to those in the former PPN78. However, Table 2 gives some sense of the shift in guidance that has occurred since the Housing Strategy.

Both PPN90 and PPN91 remain in force. However subsequent reforms raise questions about the applicability of this approach in the future. In particular:

- The neighbourhood character elements may have limited applicability given the codification of residential development standards (discussed at Section 3.8).
- There may be less use for the identification of change areas given the change areas identified through the Department of Transport and Planning’s (DTP) activity centre program (discussed at Section 3.7).

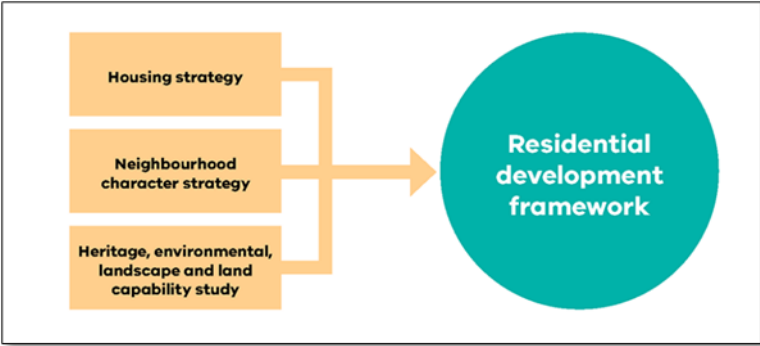
Figure 9: Guidance regarding residential zones, Planning Practice Note 78 (December 2013)

	MUZ	RGZ	GRZ	NRZ	TZ	LDRZ
	MIXED USE ZONE	RESIDENTIAL GROWTH ZONE	GENERAL RESIDENTIAL ZONE	NEIGHBOURHOOD RESIDENTIAL ZONE	TOWNSHIP ZONE	LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL ZONE
WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE ZONE?	Enables new housing and jobs growth in mixed use areas.	Enables new housing growth and diversity.	Respect and preserve urban character while enabling moderate housing growth and housing diversity.	Restricts housing growth in areas identified for urban preservation.	Provides for residential and other uses in small towns. Enables moderate housing growth.	Enables low density housing.
WHERE WILL IT BE USED?	In areas with a mix of residential and non-residential development. In local neighbourhood centres undergoing renewal and around train stations, where appropriate.	In appropriate locations near activity areas, train stations and other areas suitable for increased housing activity.	In most residential areas where moderate growth and diversity of housing is provided, it is consistent with existing neighbourhood character.	In areas where single dwellings prevail and change is not identified, such as areas of recognised neighbourhood character or environmental or landscape significance.	In townships.	On the fringe of urban areas and townships where sewerage may not be available.
DOES RESCODE APPLY?	<b>Yes</b> (up to and including 4 storeys)	<b>Yes</b> (up to and including 4 storeys)	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
WHAT SORT OF HOUSING CAN BE EXPECTED?	<b>High and medium density housing</b> A mixture of townhouses and apartment style housing up to three storeys, and higher where appropriate.	<b>Medium density housing</b> A mixture of townhouses and apartments with underground car parking.	<b>Single dwellings and some medium density housing</b> A mixture of single dwellings, dual occupancies with some villa units and in limited circumstances town houses, where appropriate.	<b>Single dwellings and dual occupancies under some circumstances</b>	<b>Single dwellings and some medium density housing</b> A mixture of single dwellings, dual occupancies, villa units and town houses.	<b>Single dwellings</b>
DOES THE ZONE SET A MAXIMUM BUILDING HEIGHT FOR HOUSING?	<b>No</b> But a maximum building height can be specified.	<b>Yes, 13.5 metres</b> But a higher or lower maximum building height can be set by a council.	<b>Yes, 9 metres</b> But a higher or lower maximum building height can be set by a council.	<b>Yes, 8 metres mandatory</b> Can be varied by council with approval from the Minister for Planning.	<b>Yes, 9 metres</b> But a higher or lower maximum building height can be set by a council.	<b>No</b>
CAN A PERMIT BE GRANTED TO EXCEED THE MAXIMUM BUILDING HEIGHT?	<b>Yes</b> When approved by a council.	<b>Yes</b> Except when a higher or lower maximum building height has been set which cannot be exceeded.	<b>Yes</b> Except when a higher or lower maximum building height has been set which cannot be exceeded.	<b>No</b> Except when a higher or lower maximum building height has been set which cannot be exceeded.	<b>Yes</b> Except when a higher or lower maximum building height has been set which cannot be exceeded.	<b>No</b>
IS A STRUCTURE PLAN OR DESIGN FRAMEWORK REQUIRED FOR THE ZONE TO BE APPLIED?	<b>No</b> The preferred future use of land and built form may be specified if necessary.	<b>No</b> The preferred future built form may be specified if necessary.	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>

Figure 10: Guidance regarding aligning housing change areas and residential zones, Planning Practice Note 91 (July 2023)

Zone	Minimal	Incremental	Substantial
Low Density Residential Zone	✓		
Mixed Use Zone		✓	✓
Township Zone	✓	✓	
Residential Growth Zone		✓	✓
General Residential Zone		✓	✓
Neighbourhood Residential Zone	✓	✓	

Figure 11: Direction regarding preparation of a housing strategy, Planning Practice Note 90



**Table 2: Guidance regarding role of zones**

Zone	Planning Practice Note 72 (December 2013) “What sort of housing can be expected?”	Planning Practice Note 91 (July 2023, current) “Role and application”
Neighbourhood Residential	Single dwellings and dual occupancies under some circumstances.	Applied to areas where there is no anticipated change to the predominantly single and double storey character. Also, to areas that have been identified as having specific neighbourhood, heritage, environmental or landscape character values, that distinguish the land from other parts of the municipality or surrounding area.
General Residential	Single dwellings and some medium density housing.  A mixture of single dwellings, dual occupancies with some villa units and in limited circumstances town houses, where appropriate.	Applied to areas where housing development of three storeys exists or is planned for in locations offering good access to services and transport.  Principle 4 is: “The General Residential Zone should be applied to areas where housing development of three storeys exists or is planned for. It is inappropriate to apply the General Residential Zone to areas where a planning authority seeks to respect the existing single and double storey character of an area.”
Residential Growth	Medium density housing.  A mixture of townhouses and apartments with underground car parking.	Applied to areas suitable for housing diversity and housing at increased densities in locations offering good access to services, jobs and public transport, and to provide a transition between areas of more intensive use and development such as activity centres and other residential areas.

### 3.2 Victoria's Housing Statement

Victoria's Housing Statement (*Victoria's Housing Statement, The Decade Ahead – 2024 -2034*) was released in September 2023. In addition to housing initiatives beyond the planning system, it foreshadowed various reforms to the planning system intended to boost housing supply.

These included:

- New facilitated streams for significant residential development provided through the Development Facilitation Program.
- New planning controls around activity centres.
- New provisions for second dwellings.
- Increased use of deemed to comply provisions.
- Legislative reform to implement the Red Tape Commissioner's recommendations regarding the planning system.

The statement also foreshadowed the establishment of housing targets for local councils through the new Victorian planning strategy.

### 3.3 Plan for Victoria

*Plan for Victoria* was released in February 2023 and is the new planning strategy for Victoria, replacing both *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050* and the regional growth plans. Housing is addressed at the first of the strategy's five "pillars."

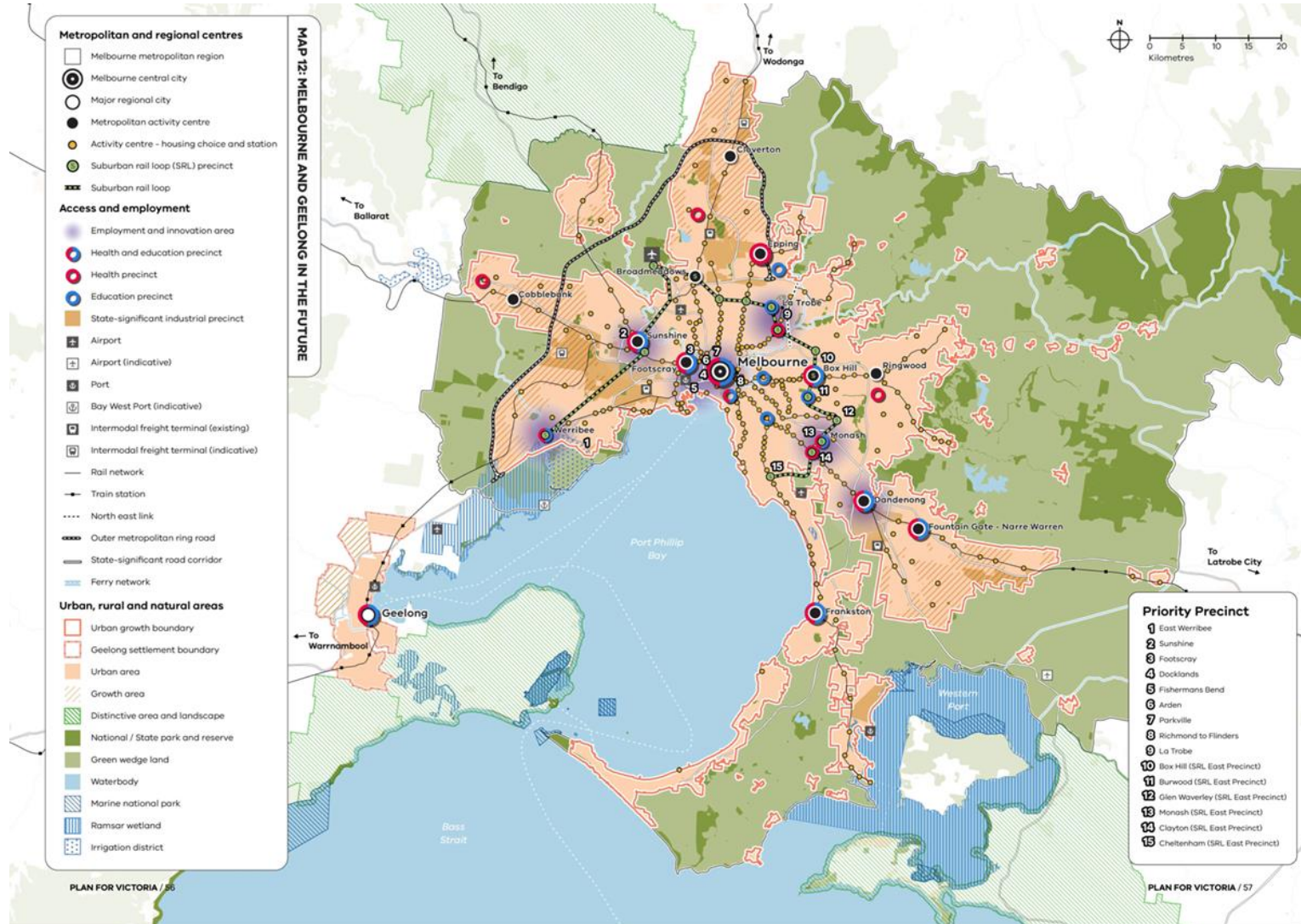
The strategy's maps identify an activity centre hierarchy that includes 10 priority precincts, some of which are also suburban rail loop (SRL) precincts (Figure 12). Whitehorse contains two of these priority / SRL precincts, Box Hill and Burwood. The priority precincts are described (at page 62 of the strategy) as locations for "transformational change to deliver new jobs and homes."

Box Hill is then additionally identified as a metropolitan activity centre, described as follows:

A higher-order centre providing a diverse range of jobs, activities and housing for catchments well-served by public transport. It is a major location for service delivery, including of government, health, justice and education services. It also provides many retail and commercial opportunities.

Planning for the SRL precincts is described further at Section 3.6.

Figure 12: Plan for Victoria mapping of activity centres



Source: Department of Transport and Planning (2025)

The strategy also identifies further activity centres as “Activity Centre – Housing Choice and Station”, which we understand to include Blackburn Station, Nunawading Station, Mitcham Station, Tally Ho, Forest Hill Chase and Burwood Heights within Whitehorse. Heatherdale Station (located just outside the border with Maroondah City Council) is also identified as an “Activity Centre – Housing Choice and Station”. “Activity Centre – Housing Choice and Station” centres are described as activity centres “with sufficient public transport, facilities and services to be the location for large numbers of new homes.” Of these, the State Government is leading planning for Blackburn Station, Nunawading Station, and Mitcham Station. Council has recently completed and adopted a structure plan for Tally Ho.

Plan for Victoria also introduced the housing targets foreshadowed in the Housing Statement, with a “realisable development capacity” target of 76,500 homes identified for Whitehorse.

New planning tools are foreshadowed as arising from the planning for activity centres (page 26):

There is an important role for local government to play in planning for the future of our places and neighbourhoods. This program will introduce new planning controls to streamline the process for planning applications, making it faster and easier to build more quality homes in activity centres which can be applied in other locations outside the Activity Centre Program.

Implementation to achieve housing targets is discussed at a high level as follows (page 28):

At the state level, we’ll amend all planning schemes so planning authorities – councils and other bodies writing planning rules – and responsible authorities – councils and other bodies deciding on planning applications – must implement the local government area housing targets and all other relevant actions in all future decisions.

The Victorian Government and other planners will also ensure consistency with this plan when they consider options and develop business cases for new infrastructure and services.

We acknowledge that councils work hard to plan for their municipalities and update their planning schemes within reasonable timeframes. But we’ll hold councils accountable with explicit directions to change planning schemes if they are not providing enough housing capacity, and, if required, we’ll step in to update schemes and work with councils to ensure they’re on track to achieve their target.

Implementation measures are summarised in Appendix 1. Key implementation measures in the strategy relating to housing, and which are relevant to Whitehorse, are:

- Action 1: Implement housing targets for every local government area
- Action 2: Implement new planning controls to streamline planning in activity centres
- Action 4: Increase the number of social and affordable homes
- Action 6: Update the Better Apartments Design Standards and the Apartment Design Guidelines for Victoria

### 3.4 Housing targets and state and regional supply policy

As discussed in the preceding sections, housing targets were foreshadowed in the Housing Statement and released in Plan for Victoria. These were implemented into planning schemes through Amendment VC283 on 2 September 2025. This amended cl 16.01-1S - Housing Supply to include the housing targets.

As mentioned in the preceding Section, that target for Whitehorse is 76,500 houses.

The other key change made to cl 16.01-1S is the addition of a new strategy related to the housing targets:

Plan to accommodate housing targets specified in this clause by ensuring zones and overlays deliver sufficient realisable development capacity.

This suggests the target should be interpreted as realisable development capacity.

Clause 16.01-1S is otherwise largely unchanged, although a reference to increasing the proportion of housing in “designated locations in urban areas” has been adjusted to refer more generally to “urban areas with good access to opportunities and services.”<sup>9</sup> However more major changes were made to the corresponding regional strategy as part of the same amendment, as illustrated in the tracked changes in Figure 13.

<sup>9</sup> As of writing this reference includes a typographical error and actually refers to opportunities and “servi.”

It can be seen that this language was adjusted to reflect the new activity centre hierarchy established in Plan for Victoria. It also removed the reference to 20-minute neighbourhoods.

Figure 13: September 2025 changes to cl 16.01-1R – Housing Supply

**16.01-1R** Housing supply - Metropolitan Melbourne  
02/09/16/2025  
VC169VC283

**Strategies**

~~Manage the supply of new housing to meet~~ Create development opportunities to meet housing targets population growth and create a sustainable city by developing housing and mixed use development opportunities in locations that are:

- In and around the Central City.
- Metropolitan activity centres and their residential catchments.
- Priority Precincts, including Suburban Rail Loop East Precincts.
- ~~Urban-renewal precincts and sites~~ Activity centres - Housing Choice and Stations.
- Areas for residential growth.
- Areas for greyfield renewal, particularly through opportunities for land consolidation.
- ~~Areas designated as National Employment and Innovation Clusters~~ Established areas close to existing services, jobs and public transport.
- Metropolitan activity centres and major activity centres:
- Neighbourhood activity centres - especially those with good public transport connections.
- Areas near existing and proposed railway stations that can support transit-oriented development.

Identify areas that offer opportunities for more medium and high density housing near employment and transport in Metropolitan Melbourne.

~~Facilitate increased housing in established areas to create a city of 20-minute neighbourhoods close to existing services, jobs and public transport:~~

Provide certainty about the scale of growth by prescribing appropriate height and site coverage provisions for different areas.

Allow for a range of minimal, incremental and high change residential areas that balance the need to protect valued areas with the need to ensure choice and growth in housing.

Create mixed-use neighbourhoods at varying densities that offer more choice in housing.

Interestingly, despite the changes that have occurred to the residential development framework (discussed at 3.8 below) to reduce the effective role for neighbourhood character assessment in planning assessment, clause 15.01-5S – Neighbourhood Character has not been changed as part of these changes. That clause was last changed in October 2020, when language was inserted to make the tone of the clause more facilitative of housing change. That included adding the following strategy:

Ensure the preferred neighbourhood character is consistent with medium and higher density housing outcomes in areas identified for increased housing.

This strategy's references to aligning character expectations with medium and higher density housing in "areas identified for increased housing" is interesting in the context to the removal of references to "designated locations in urban areas" in cl 16.01-1S.

### **3.5 DTP Housing Capacity Assessment Platform**

The State Government has foreshadowed release of a tool to provide a standardised approach to assessment of housing capacity. According to the Municipal Association of Victoria, the State Government wrote to councils on 2 September 2025 advising that this will be available later in 2025. However, as of writing limited information is available about this tool.

### **3.6 Planning for SRL precincts**

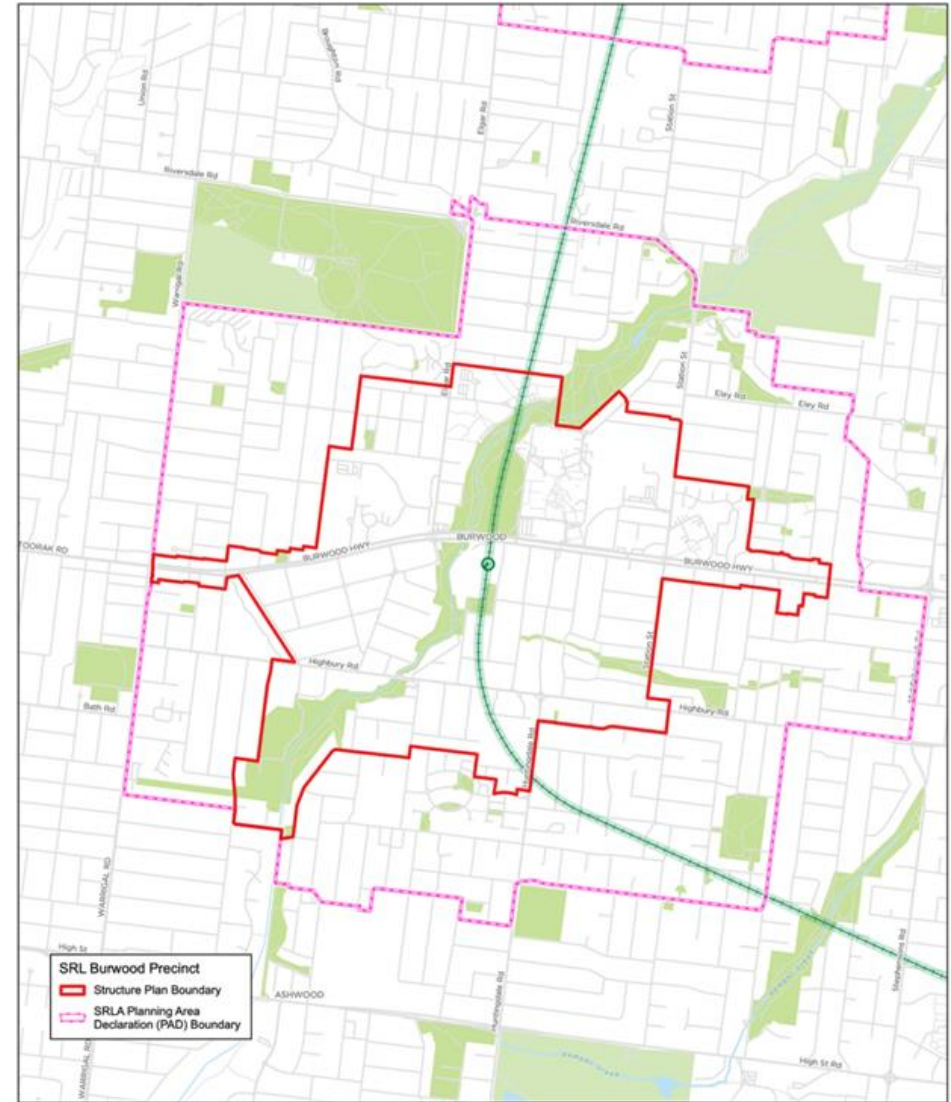
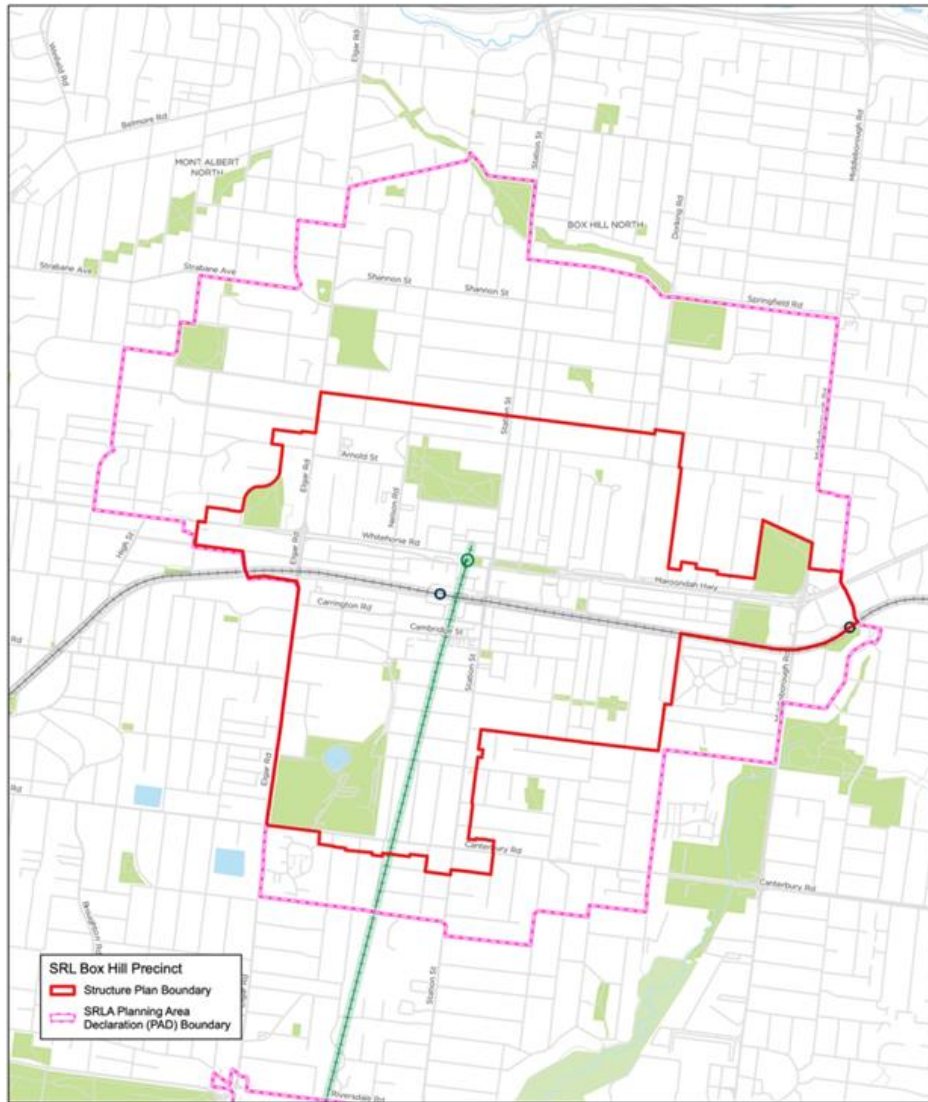
Whitehorse has two SRL precincts, Box Hill and Burwood. The Suburban Rail Loop Authority (SRLA) is leading planning for these precincts. Figure 14 shows the borders of the declared area within which the SRLA is a planning authority, and then the structure plan area within those boundaries. (The southern parts of the Burwood precinct are within the City of Monash).

Draft structure plans were exhibited in March 2025 and advisory committee hearings are currently underway.

Both draft structure plans envisage housing growth across the structure plan areas, ranging from medium to significant. This is reflected in the built form guidance which indicates preferred maximum heights from 4 storeys to 40 storeys in Box Hill (Figure 15) and from 4 storeys to 20 storeys in Burwood (Figure 16).

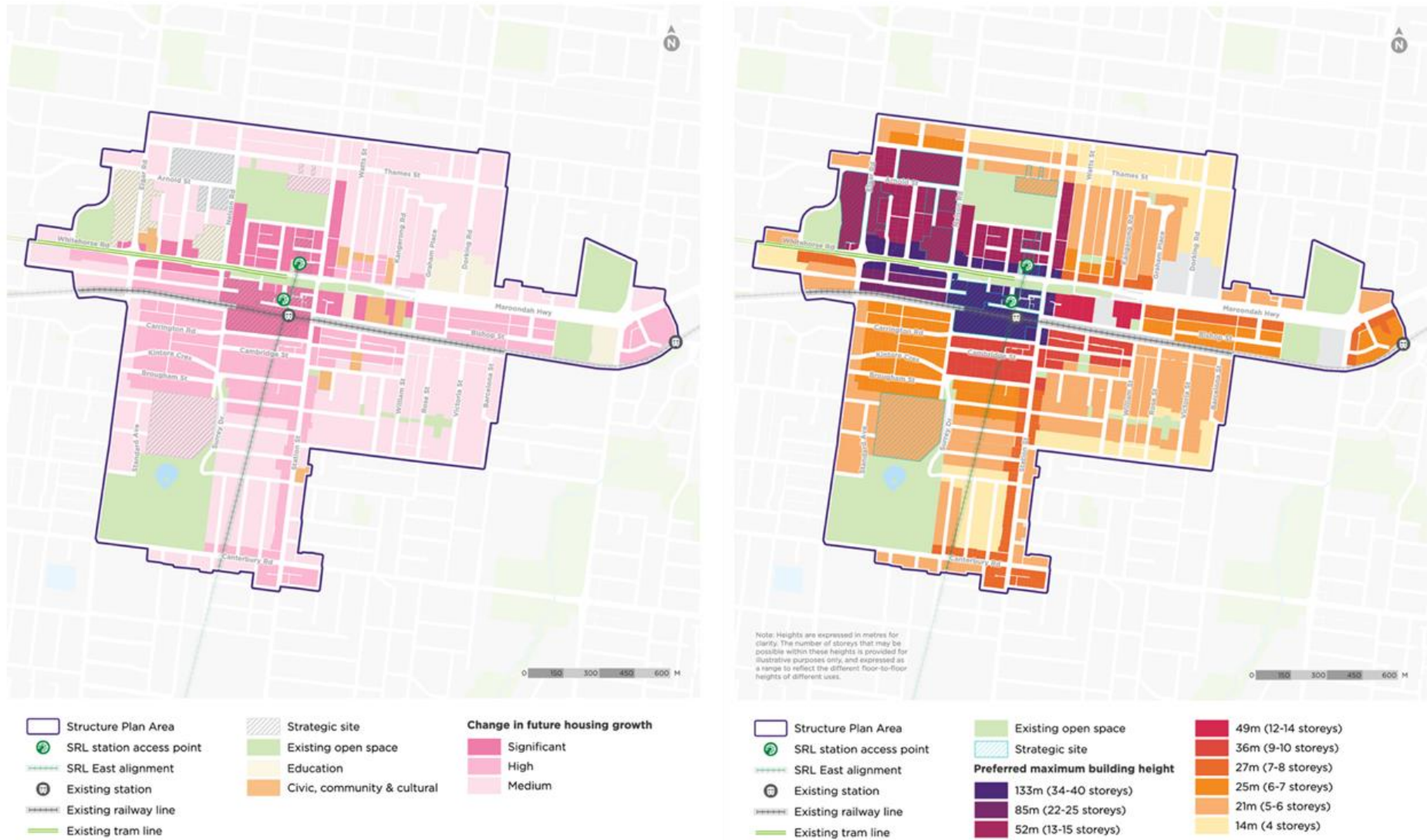
The proposed amendment documentation show these built form controls being implemented largely through the use of the Precinct Zone and Built Form Overlay.

Figure 14: Suburban Rail Loop boundaries



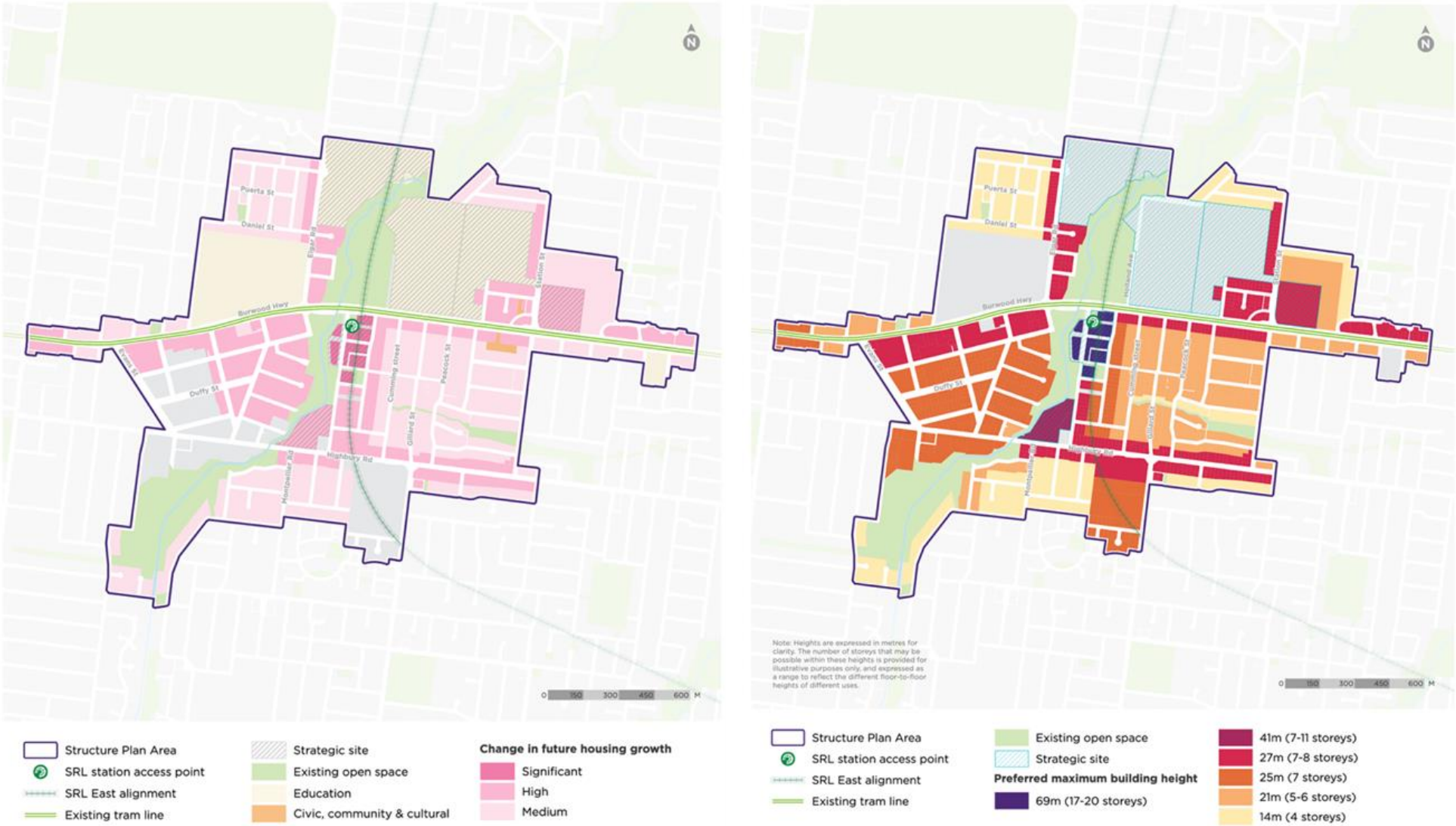
Source: Victorian government Big Build website

Figure 15: Box Hill Draft SRLA Structure Plan housing change (left) and preferred maximum building height (right) maps



Source: Draft SRL Box Hill Structure Plan

Figure 16: Burwood Draft SRLA Structure Plan housing change (left) and preferred maximum building height (right) maps



Source: Draft SRL Burwood Structure Plan

### 3.7 DTP Activity Centre Program

While Whitehorse’s two most significant change precincts are the SRL precincts discussed above, as already noted three other precincts are on the broader list of activity centres: Blackburn station, Nunawading Station, and Mitcham Station. DTP have already introduced planning controls for the first 10 of these activity centres, and initial consultation on the second group of 25 centres closed on 19 October 2025. Whitehorse’s centres were not included in these initial 35 centres.

Consultation for these three activity centres is currently in Phase 1, described as “Understanding Place.” In early 2026, DTP intend to share draft maps for Phase 2 of community consultation, ahead of presenting the maps to the Minister for Planning in mid-2026. The investigation areas declared for each centre, released as part of the current consultation, are shown in Figures 17, 18, and 19.

Given the early stage of planning for Whitehorse’s centres, the exact approach to planning in these centres is not clear. The Precinct Zone and Built Form Overlay have been introduced into planning schemes to facilitate planning for change in such centres (as well as the SRL precincts), and these are expected to be used in some combination for the core area. (For example, it may be that existing zones are left undisturbed but a Built Form Overlay is applied to drive built form change).

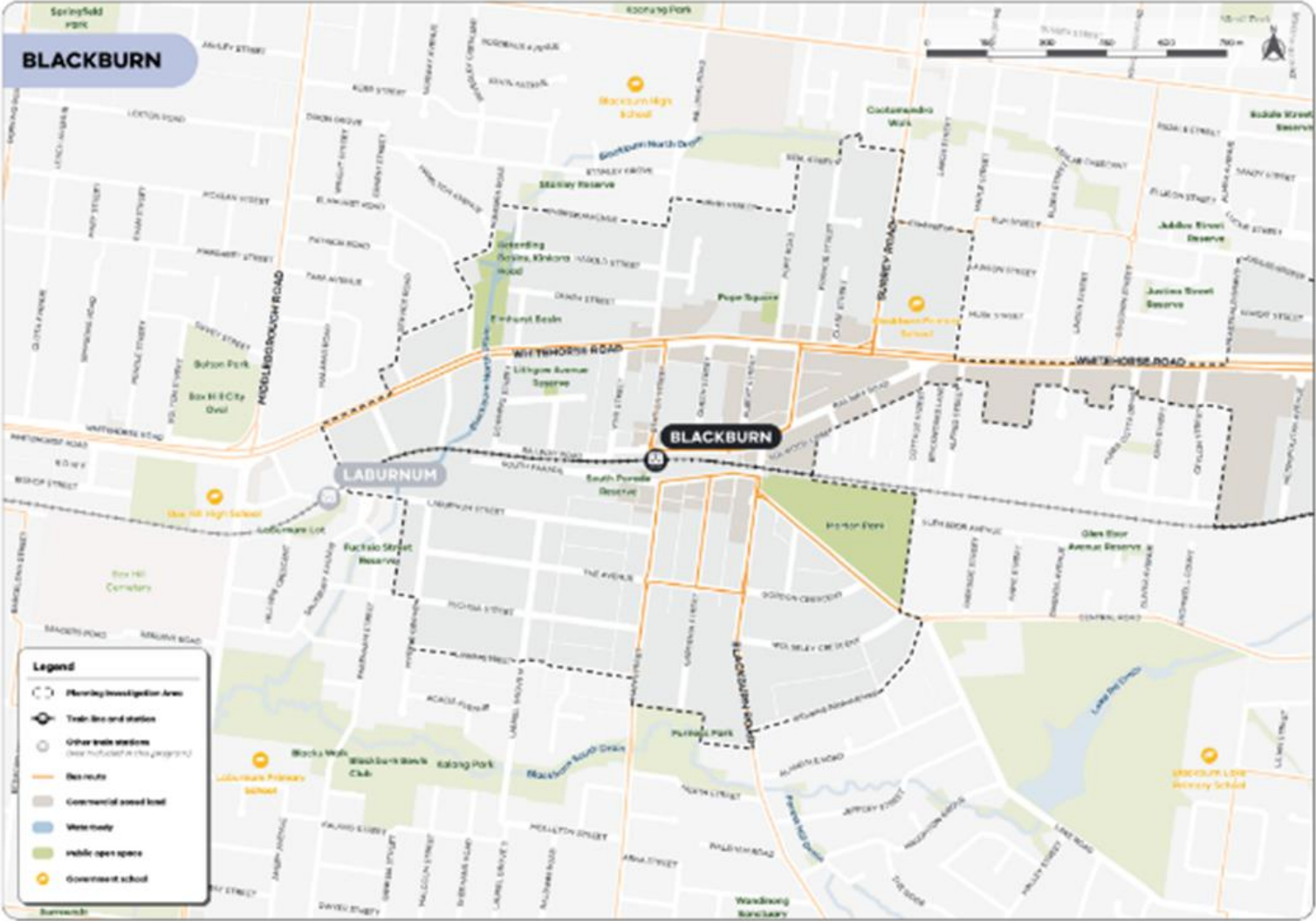
A key feature of the planning for these centres is the identification of a catchment area around centres, with the Housing Choice and Transport Zone. This zone is designed to encourage a greater level of change, especially on larger sites. It indicates an inner catchment around centres (designated HCTZ1) and an outer catchment (HCTZ2), and then indicates varying maximum heights as shown in Table 3.

The Housing Choice and Transport Zone has not yet been applied in Whitehorse but can be expected to be applied around the centres that are part of the DTP Activity Centre Program. (It is unclear if the zone will be used around the Suburban Rail Loop precincts).

**Table 3: Housing Choice and Transport Zone heights**

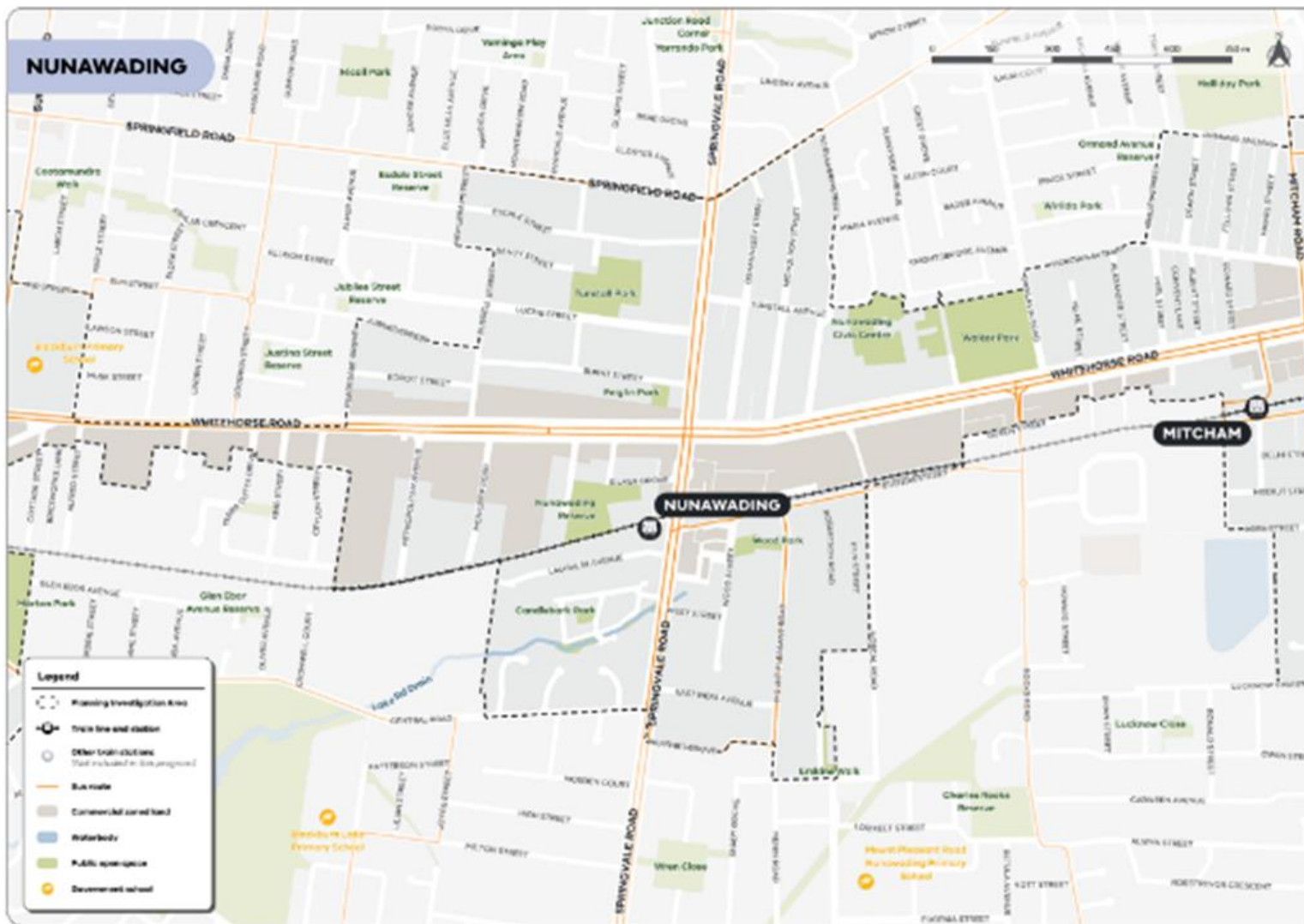
Zone	Small lot (<1,000 sqm)	Large lot (>1,000 sqm and over 20 metre frontage)
HCTZ1	13.5m or 4 storeys	21.5m or 6 storeys
HCTZ2	11m or 3 storeys	13.5m or 4 storeys

Figure 17: Blackburn activity centre investigation area



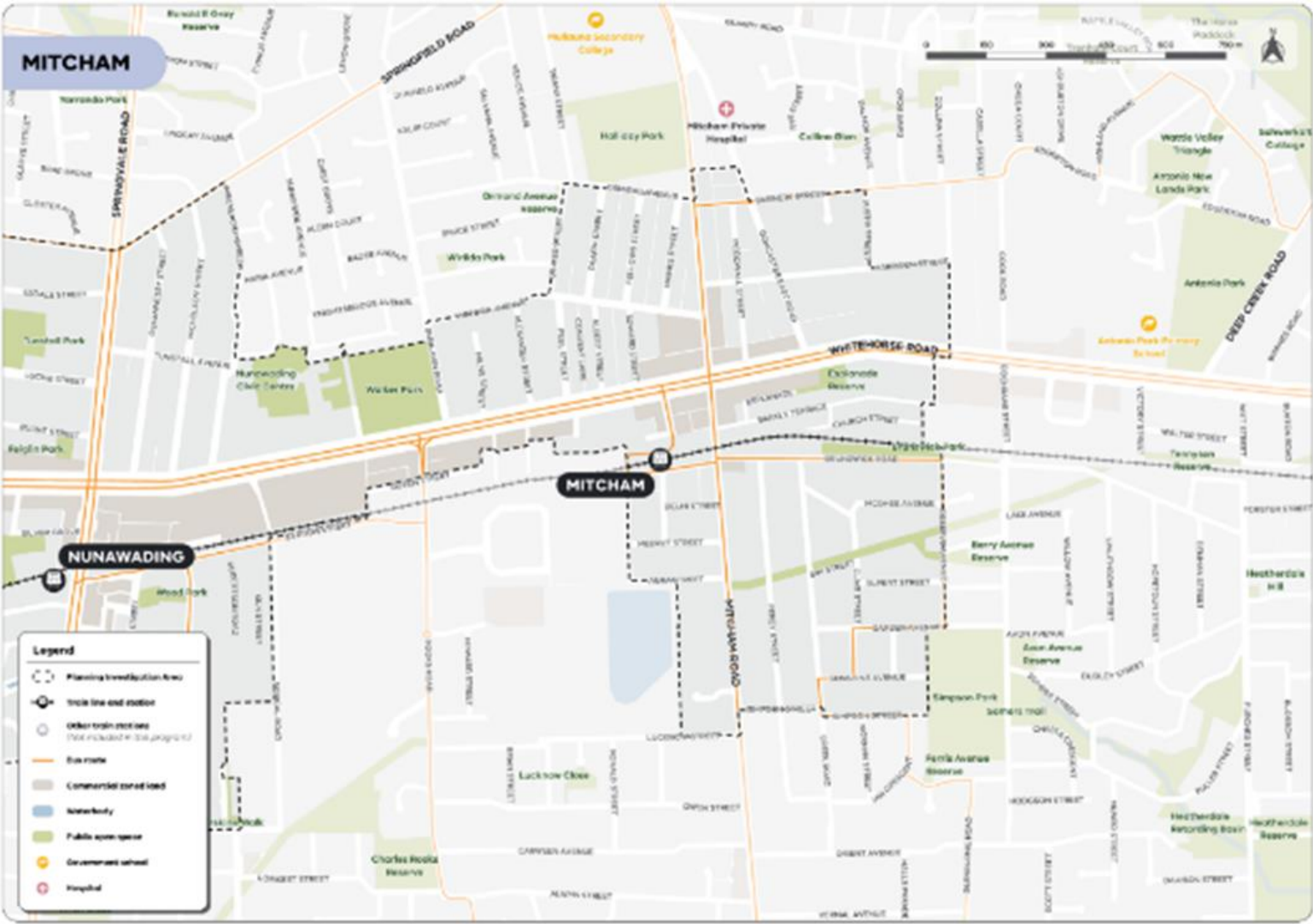
Source: <https://engage.vic.gov.au/project/activity-centres-program-stage-two/page/blackburn-mitcham>

Figure 18: Nunawading activity centre investigation area



Source: <https://engage.vic.gov.au/project/activity-centres-program-stage-two/page/blackburn-mitcham>

Figure 19: Mitcham activity centre investigation area



Source: <https://engage.vic.gov.au/project/activity-centres-program-stage-two/page/blackburn-mitcham>

### 3.8 Residential development reforms

The suite of planning tools had remained largely stable, subject to only minor iterative changes, between the introduction of the new residential zones in 2013 and the Housing Statement in 2023. However, since the Housing Statement changes to the residential framework have been more frequent and consequential.

Notable changes are listed in Table 4 below.

These changes, taken together, can be summarised as making several changes to the approach to residential development at once:

- **They considerably narrow the scope of relevant considerations when assessing housing.** The changes to clauses 54, 55 and 57, for example, drastically narrow the regard that can be had to local policy, site context, and neighbourhood character when making decisions.
- **They reduce local customisation.** This is partly a result of the abovementioned narrowing of discretion, but the removal of localised schedules to zones also reduces the extent to which quantitative development standards can be altered to reflect local circumstances.
- **They reduce objector notice and review rights.** The increased use of deemed to comply provisions, and broadening of notice and review provisions more generally, considerably reduced the scope for third party involvement in the system, especially at the appeal stage.
- **They make development standards more permissive.** The revised residential standards include envelopes allowing higher buildings close to boundaries, for example, and the Housing

Choice and Transport Zone, when applied in Whitehorse, will allow higher built forms than previously permissible.

- **They shift decision-making power to the Minister.** While the overwhelming majority of residential development proposals are still made by local government – albeit within constrained parameters as noted above – some of the pathways for significant development have been made by the Minister for Planning as the responsible authority.

**Table 4: Key changes to residential development provisions since the Victoria’s Housing Statement**

Amendment and operational date	Details
New Ministerial approval pathways VC242 – 20 September 2023	Added two new pathways for Significant Economic Development and Significant Residential Development (at cl 53.22 – Significant Economic Development and cl 53.23 – Significant Residential Development). These establish priority pathways, with the Minister as responsible authority, for qualifying development.
Partial Residential development standards codification VC243 – 22 September 2023	This partially codified the provisions relating to single dwellings and multi-dwelling development at cl 54 and cl 55 of the scheme. The ability to require a planning permit for single houses on lots between 300sq and 500sq was removed. Single dwellings that were compliant with quantitative standards became subject to the VicSmart process, which are exempt from notice and review and have reduced statutory processing timeframes.
Small second dwellings VC253 – 14 December 2023	Introduced a new definition of small second dwelling for granny flat-style dwellings of less than 60sqm, and amended scheme controls so that these usually do not need a permit.
Housing Choice and Transport Zone and Built Form Overlay VC257 – 25 February 2025	Introduced these two new tools to accommodate increased levels of change in and around activity centres (these have not yet been applied in Whitehorse).
Townhouse and Low Rise Code VC267 – 31 March 2025	This amended cl 55 and cl 57 (which apply to medium density housing) to complete the codification process that had been partially implemented by amendment VC243. The standards of cl 55 were made fully quantitative, and development that complies with the standards is exempt from policy considerations, including a qualitative neighbourhood character assessment.
Single Home Code VC282 – 8 September 2025	This amended cl 54, which applies to single dwellings, in a manner similar to Amendment VC267 above. This made the standards fully quantitative, and development that complies with the standards is exempt from policy considerations, including a qualitative neighbourhood character assessment.
Canopy tree controls VC289 – 11 September 2025	This added a new provision (cl 52.37) requiring a planning permit to remove some trees within residential areas.
VicSmart for 2 dwellings VC288 – 16 October 2025	This makes applications for two dwellings and vacant two lot subdivisions that are fully compliant with applicable standards into VicSmart applications, which are exempt from notice and review and have reduced statutory processing timeframes.
Mid-rise code Foreshadowed	The government has foreshadowed further codification of residential standards for mid-rise development (4-6 storeys), with some consultation having occurred with local government in September / October 2025.

# 4. People in Whitehorse

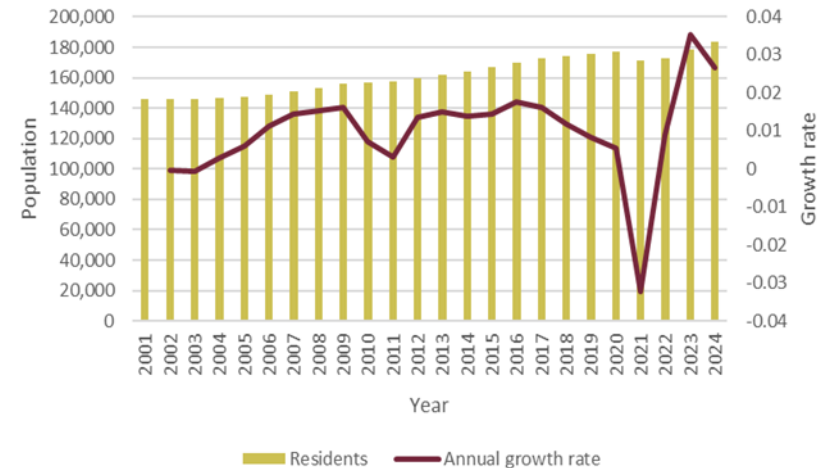
## 4.1 Population overview

The population of Whitehorse has grown steadily over the last 24 years, with an annual average growth rate of 0.95%. Between 2001 to 2024, Whitehorse added 37,284 residents, or an increase of 26%. Comparatively, Metropolitan Melbourne’s population grew by 60% over this period. Whitehorse’s 2024 estimated resident population of 183,462 people places it as the eighth largest of Metropolitan Melbourne’s 31 LGAs, and between 2023-2024 it was the equal 10th fastest growing.

Figure 21 shows population growth rates at the SA1 level. It shows that the rate of population growth has varied within and between suburbs in the LGA. Though most of the municipality has seen its population growing at between 0 and 3% per year (Figure 20), pockets of high (>3% per year) population growth have occurred surrounding Box Hill and Burwood Heights Activity Centre. The SA1 areas that show no population growth or a decrease in population over this time period, such as the southeast corner of Blackburn and approximately half of the SA1 areas in Burwood, likely reflect that decreasing household size has outpaced the number of new households moving into the area. Some areas, such as Blackburn, experienced population decreases during the intervening COVID-19 period that have since recovered post-2021 Census.

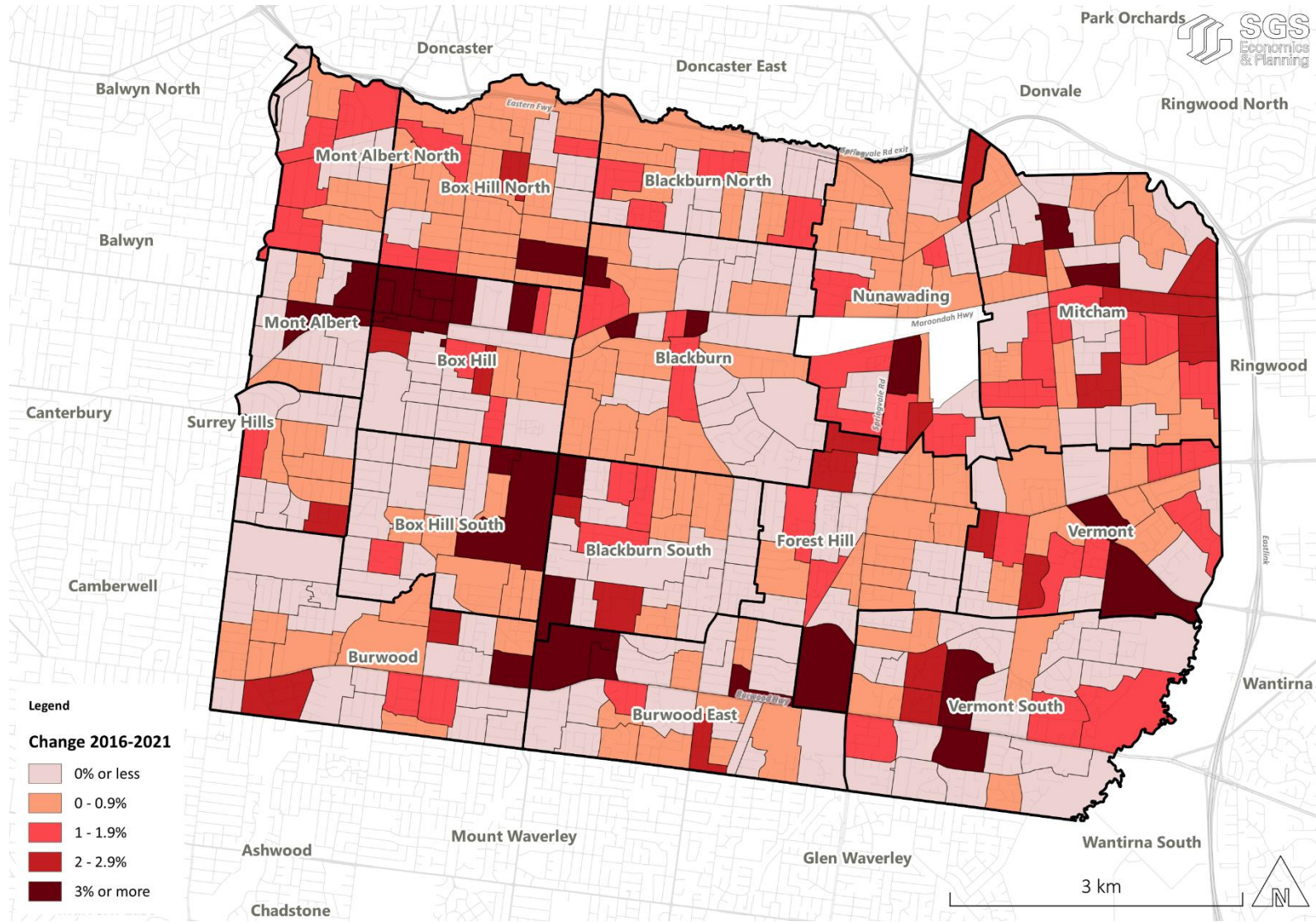
Suburb level data (provided in Appendix C) shows that the suburbs which added the greatest number of new residents between 2016 and 2021 were Box Hill (+2,585), Mitcham (+615) and Vermont (+526). Burwood (-295) and Box Hill South (-47) were the only two suburbs to record a decrease in population between 2016-2021.

**Figure 20: Total population and annual growth rate, City of Whitehorse, 2001 to 2024**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2025) Regional Population. Accessed on 28 October 2025. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/regional-population/latest-release#data-downloads>

Figure 21: Population change, City of Whitehorse, 2016 to 2021



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022) Census SA1 counts. Accessed on 29 October 2025. <https://www.abs.gov.au/Census/find-Census-data/datapacks>

## 4.2 Age distribution

The median age in Whitehorse at the 2021 Census was 39 (no change from 2011), though increased from 38 in 2016. This compares with the median for Metropolitan Melbourne of 37.

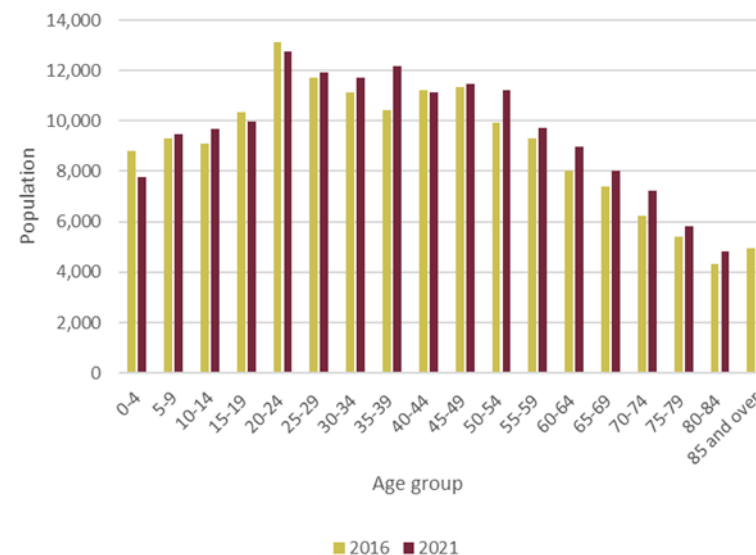
Although Whitehorse has a greater proportion of people over the age of 60 compared to the Greater Melbourne average (23.8% vs 20.1% in 2021), since 2006 this age group has been growing at twice the rate across Greater Melbourne compared to Whitehorse (increasing by 2.8% of the population compared to 1.4%).

Between the suburbs, the median age ranges from 33 in Box Hill, where 58% of the population are within the working age bracket (25-64 years) and 33 in Burwood, where a third of the population are children and youth (0-24 years), to a high of 46 in Vermont South, where 27% of the population are seniors (65 years and over).

As shown in Figure 22 the share of children and youth (0 to 24 years) declined between 2016 and 2021, while the proportion of seniors increased. Vermont was the only suburb where the share of children and youth rose (by less than 1%). In 13 of 16 suburbs, their total number fell; in the other three, small increases were due to overall population growth (see in Appendix C).

Overall, suburbs with less diverse housing, such as Mont Albert, Mont Albert North, and Vermont South, had a higher share of seniors. In contrast, suburbs with more diverse housing, including Blackburn North, Box Hill, Box Hill North, Box Hill South, and Burwood, had a lower share.

Figure 22: Age distribution, City of Whitehorse, 2016 and 2021



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021, 2021 Whitehorse All Persons QuickStats. Accessed on 3 November 2025. <https://www.abs.gov.au/Census/find-Census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA26980>

### 4.3 Household size and composition

#### Household size

The average household size in Whitehorse is 2.6 (and has been since the mid-1990s), which is the same as Metropolitan Melbourne. Household size in Whitehorse overall slightly decreased between 2016 and 2021, from 2.66 in 2016 to 2.59 in 2021. The decreasing household size observed is related to the increase in lone person households and the aging population, which means a lower portion of family households. This same trend is observed at the Metropolitan Melbourne scale.

Comparing the average household size of the different suburbs within Whitehorse, we see a relatively confined range of 2.4 in Box Hill to 2.9 in Vermont. Between the 2016 and 2021 Census, the average household size decreased in 12 of 16 suburbs, while in Nunawading, Mont Albert North, Mitcham and Blackburn North, there was no change. The average household size by suburb is shown in Figure 23 below.

#### Household composition

Couple families with children are the most predominant household type in Whitehorse, making up 32% of households (Figure 24). This is a slight decrease from 2016, when these households made up 33.6%. Lone person households were the second most common household type in 2021 and had the largest rate of growth since 2016 (Average Annual Growth Rate (AAGR) of 2.66%). Household types that decreased in absolute number and as a proportion were group households and other (visitor and non-classifiable) households.

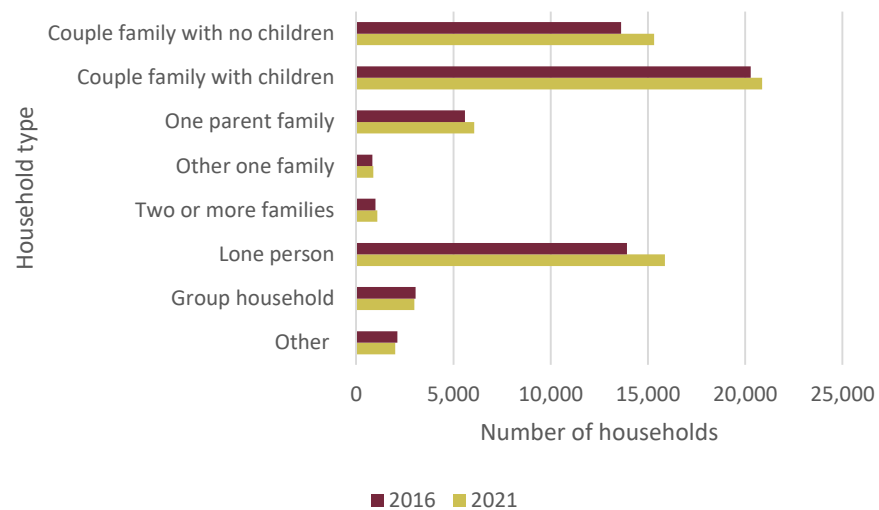
As shown in Appendix C, household composition differs between suburbs. In the suburbs of Vermont and Blackburn North, 41% of households are comprised of couples with children, while in Box Hill, only 16.3% of households have this composition. Box Hill has a higher portion of lone person households (30.6%) than the Whitehorse average (24.4%).

**Figure 23: Average household size, by suburb, City of Whitehorse, 2016 and 2021**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021, 2021 All Persons QuickStats. Accessed for each suburb on 3 November 2025.

**Figure 24: Household composition, City of Whitehorse, 2016 and 2021**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021, Table Builder – Family Household Composition (Dwelling). Accessed on 3 November 2025, <https://tablebuilder.abs.gov.au/webapi/jsf/dataCatalogueExplorer.xhtml>

### Household motor vehicle ownership

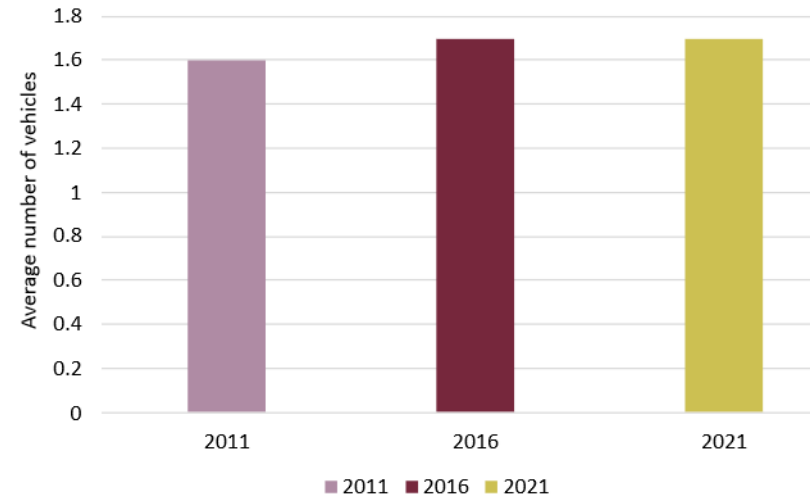
The average number of motor vehicles owned per household in Whitehorse grew from 1.6 in 2011 to 1.7 in 2016 and remained at 1.7 per dwelling in 2021 (Figure 25). Throughout this decade, 8-8.6% of households have owned no motor vehicles, 36-38.5% of households have owned 1, 36.3-37.3% of households have owned 2, and 13.2-13.6% of households have owned 3 or more.

While on the surface, rates of vehicle ownership have been relatively consistent in Whitehorse over the decade, a closer look illustrates that there was a slight uptick between 2011-2016, but that 2016-2021 saw the beginning of a downward trend. In 2021, households with 1 vehicle (38.5% of all households) surpassed households with 2 vehicles (36.3% of all households) as the most common.

While the total number of households in Whitehorse grew by 7.7% between 2016-2021, the number of households with 1 vehicle grew twice as fast, by 15.3%, and the number of 0 vehicle households also grew faster, by 8.4%. Meanwhile, the number of households with 2 vehicles grew by a lesser 5.3% and those with 3 or more vehicles grew by 6.6%. This illustrates that in 2021 compared to 2016, more households had 0 or 1 vehicles, and fewer households had 2 or more vehicles. This may be related to decreasing household size, the greater accessibility of car share services, the aging population and changes in travel behaviour (e.g. work from home).

Although vehicle ownership per household trended downwards between the most recent two census, the overall number of vehicles in Whitehorse still increased. This brings an increase in the demand for road space (including parking), increased congestion, a negative impact on the public realm, and increased emissions.

**Figure 25: Average number of vehicles per household, City of Whitehorse, 2011, 2016 and 2021**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021, Community Profile – vehicle ownership. Accessed on 3 November 2025. <https://www.abs.gov.au/Census/find-Census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA26980>

### **Socio-economic advantage and disadvantage**

SEIFA is a summary measure that combines Census data attributes key to social disadvantage and advantage, such as income, education level, employment, occupation, housing and family structure. There are four different SEIFA indexes, each of which summarise a different aspect of socio-economic conditions.

The SEIFA index used for this analysis is the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD). As shown below, all suburbs of Whitehorse are within the top four deciles, with 14 of the 16 suburbs being in decile 9 or 10. This shows Whitehorse has overall low levels of disadvantage.

### **Specific needs groups**

Among the population of Whitehorse, people use housing differently and have varying needs and preferences for housing location, type, accessibility and size.

### *People with a disability*

The number of people who need assistance with a core activity increased between 2016 and 2021 by 1,746 people, or 23%. Many people with disabilities rely heavily on public and active transport for daily trips, such as employment and healthcare, and therefore have a need to live close by to reliable public transport and services. Furthermore, people with disabilities may require housing that is more accessible to enter and move around within. Certain types of housing can more easily support accessible design, such as housing without stairs and with space for wider corridors and doorways.

### *Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander*

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people make up 0.3% of Whitehorse's population, approximately half the proportion of Metropolitan Melbourne at 0.7%. Unlike some other LGAs, such as Yarra, Darebin and Melbourne, Whitehorse does not host a range of Aboriginal organisations and services.<sup>10</sup>

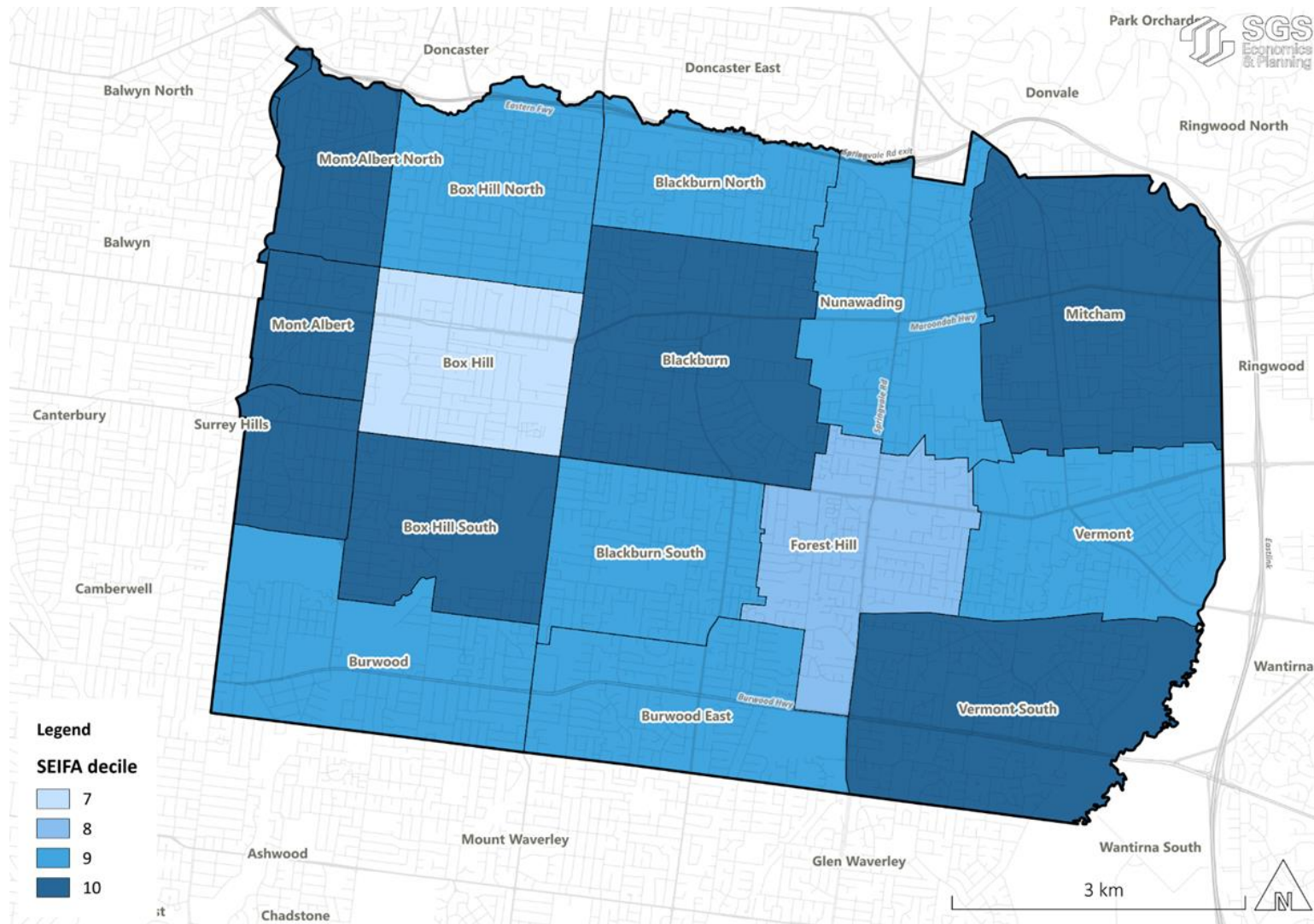
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<sup>10</sup> Bilang Straight Talk. 2021. Victorian Aboriginal organisations and services, accessed on 7 November 2025.

<https://bilang.nh.org.au/victorian-aboriginal-organisations-and->

[services/#:~:text=Secretariat%20of%20National%20Aboriginal%20and,http://www.vacca.org](http://www.vacca.org)

Figure 26: Index of relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage (IRSAD) quintiles



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2023. Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) Australia. Accessed on 5 November 2025. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/socio-economic-indexes-areas-seifa-australia/latest-release#data-down>

### Culturally and linguistically diverse

The number of culturally and linguistically diverse households increased by 4,048 in Whitehorse between 2016 and 2021, as measured from households who speak a language other than English at home. As of 2021, Mandarin (16.2%), Cantonese (5.5%), Greek (2.3%), Vietnamese (1.4%) and Hindi (1.3%) are the most widely spoken languages (other than English) in Whitehorse, where in total 44.3% of households speak a language other than English. This is higher than Greater Melbourne, which is 37.7% of households (see Table 5).

### Tertiary and higher education students

Tertiary and higher education students make up approximately 10% of Whitehorse's population, with a slight decrease from 2016 and 2021. This share is slightly higher than the Metropolitan Melbourne average of 8.2%. The prevalence of tertiary students in Whitehorse is likely due to the presence of Deakin University Burwood Campus, the transport options for students to travel to Monash University or the city, and the ability of local students to live with parents while commuting to tertiary institutions.

Furthermore, the high affluence (high SEIFA scores, large number of local private schools) of the population may be a reason why people are able to attend further education and choose to study longer.

<sup>11</sup> Profile ID. 2021. Community Profile City of Whitehorse. Accessed on 31 October 2025. <https://profile.id.com.au/whitehorse/assistance#:~:text=In%202021%2>

Table 5: Specific cohorts, City of Whitehorse, 2016 and 2021

Group	2016		2021		2016-2021 Change
	Total	Share of pop.	Total	Share of pop.	
People with Disability (people requiring care)	7,628	4.7%	9,374 <sup>11</sup>	5.5%	1,746
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples	358	0.2%	523	0.3%	165
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Communities*	23,934	39.6%	27,982	44.3%	4,048
Tertiary and higher education students	17,329	10.7%	17,053	10.1%	-276

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021, Whitehorse 2021 Census All Persons QuickStats, Accessed on 3 November 2025. <https://www.abs.gov.au/Census/find-Census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA26980>

\*This is a measure of total households rather than population

C%209%2C374%20people%20(or,information%20and%20support%20t o%20carers.

#### 4.4 Summary of key findings

Whitehorse is a desirable LGA to live in due to multiple characteristics, including proximity to Melbourne’s central business district, transport options and the attractiveness of the neighbourhoods and parks. While some areas of Whitehorse have seen a lot of change over the last two decades, with more compact housing developments allowing more residents to move in, other areas have seen minimal change and even population decreases at the SA1 scale.

The population has relatively low levels of disadvantage when measured at the suburb level, however noting that disadvantage can vary between households within suburbs (e.g. home owners and renters) or within the one household (e.g. personal factors such as disability, wealth gaps between age groups).

Changes in Whitehorse population between 2011 and 2021 reflect broader changes in Metropolitan Melbourne and Australia’s population. Key to these changes is the aging population. In all suburbs, except for Burwood, seniors (65 years +) were the fastest growing age cohort between 2016 and 2021, and this change is accompanied by decreasing household sizes across the LGA and changing household compositions, including family with children households making up a decreasing share of total households.

#### 4.5 What has the community been saying about housing development in Whitehorse?

Council has heard from the community multiple times in recent years on matters related to housing development. This has included feedback in 2020 on the Review of Strategic Direction for the Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre, and more recently through consultation for the Shaping Whitehorse engagement (2024), community feedback on Plan for Victoria (2024), on the Burwood and Box Hill Structure Plan areas for SRLA (2025), and on the Tally Ho Activity Centre Structure Plan (2025).

At a high level, feedback across all forums reflected more concern about the challenges associated with increased development than strong support for the opportunities it can offer. Consistent themes emerged across all these events. These included housing location, housing diversity / choice, housing affordability, and a significant amount of concern about housing density and the impacts of development. These are summarised below.

##### Housing Location

- While there was general resistance to higher density housing, community feedback included a desire to locate higher density housing within existing public housing areas. Some community members felt that it was appropriate at public transport hubs. A preference was voiced for limiting townhouses to certain areas.
- Residential transition neighbourhoods were supported but with caution. Participants suggested a need to better define boundaries between high-density areas and traditional residential zones. There was a concern about the encroachment of higher density residential development into more established residential areas.

### **Housing affordability**

- Though some engagement events revealed general agreement that housing is unaffordable and out of reach (especially for young people) with broad support for increasing the supply of affordable and social housing. Other engagement revealed opposition to social housing.

### **Housing diversity / choice**

- Despite strong concerns about the scale of development, there was support for a diversity of housing options including “family homes that are affordable...apartments, student housing, key worker housing and retirement and aged care”.
- There was broad support for a range of housing types with a need for diverse housing options, including low-rise developments and affordable apartments.
- Three-quarters of participants during consultation for the Burwood and Box Hill Structure Plans (2025) wanted more family homes in Box Hill, and nearly 9 in 10 wanted more family homes in Burwood.

### **Housing density and impacts of development**

- Feelings about density were somewhat mixed. There has been some support for apartments, higher densities, and height limits in residential areas. There has also been support for more residential uses in the retail core and business precinct in the Tally Ho Activity Centre. However, across all engagement events there was consistent support for exercising caution and restraint regarding any increase in residential densities.

- This appears to be top of mind for many: when asked for feedback on the Vision for Box Hill, reasons given by those who did not support the Vision included “overdevelopment and impact on existing infrastructure” and “building heights” despite the proposed Vision making no reference to the scale or intensity of residential development.
- Across engagement events the stated concerns have included:
  - the loss of neighbourhood quality, and “too many apartments which created a feeling of congestion” and overcrowding
  - impacts on amenity including overshadowing and a loss of views of the sky, wind impacts, the quality of building interfaces at ground level
  - impacts on public parking and traffic congestion
  - the ability to ensure sufficient provision of open space and community services to support the growing population
  - inadequate protection of large trees and heritage values
- These concerns are linked to a perception of weakening planning controls.
- Despite the above, there was some support for higher densities in the right context, though with mixed outcomes as some feedback was to put high-density developments in existing public housing areas.

# 5. Housing location

## 5.1 Housing Strategy overview

A key principle of the 2014 Housing Strategy was the classification of areas based on their suitability to accommodate future growth. This approach led to the identification of three categories of change area: limited, natural, and substantial (as outlined in the introduction).

These designations were established acknowledging the influence that the location of dwelling growth has on residential amenity, housing diversity, transport options, affordability, and access to employment, retail, community services, and open space. They also reflect considerations around the cost of providing supporting infrastructure, as well as the social and physical sustainability of the city.

The strategy implemented the change areas through the application of residential zones: limited change areas were designated as Neighbourhood Residential Zone (NRZ), natural change areas as General Residential Zone (GRZ), and substantial change areas as Residential Growth Zone (RGZ). Zone schedules, together with heritage, significant landscape and neighbourhood character overlays, were applied to reinforce the intended outcomes for each location.

## 5.2 Housing distribution

In 2021 there were 71,521 dwellings in the City of Whitehorse, which accounts for approximately 3.5% of the total housing stock across metropolitan Melbourne.

As illustrated in Figure 27, the distribution of housing as recorded in the 2021 Census shows notable concentrations in the suburbs of Box Hill and Mitcham, and areas that are close to major activity centres. Notably, 19% of all dwellings in Whitehorse are situated within defined activity centres, while 16% are located within Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) precincts.

Figure 27: Distribution of housing stock, by ABS mesh block, City of Whitehorse, 2021



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021, City of Whitehorse

Table 6 shows the distribution of housing in the City of Whitehorse by planning zone, based on 2021 data. The proportion of dwellings within each zone is generally in line with the proportion of land that each zone covers, with large zones containing a large proportion of houses and small zones a small proportion.

The General Residential Zone (GRZ) contains the largest share of dwellings, with 32,020 dwellings, accounting for 44.7% of the total. This is followed closely by the Neighbourhood Residential Zone (NRZ), which includes 31,089 dwellings or 43.4% of the total.

The Residential Growth Zone (RGZ) comprises 6,610 dwellings (9.2%), while the Commercial 1 Zone (C1Z) contains 1,650 dwellings (2.3%). The Mixed Use Zone (MUZ) accounts for 278 dwellings (0.4%), and the Low Density Residential Zone (LDRZ) includes 23 dwellings, representing 0.03% of the total.

The distribution of dwellings across activity centres shows that, despite occupying only 2.7% of the total land area, the Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre contains 8.6% of all dwellings. Conversely, areas outside activity centres have a lower share of dwellings relative to their land area. This pattern of development points to long running trends of concentrated residential development in areas close to transport networks and services.

**Table 6: Distribution of housing, by zone and activity centres, City of Whitehorse, 2021**

Zone	Change area	Land area (%)	Dwellings	% of Dwellings
GRZ	Natural	42.5%	32,020	44.7%
NRZ	Limited	49.8%	31,089	43.4%
RGZ	Substantial	3.4%	6,610	9.2%
C1Z	Not defined	3.8%	1,650	2.3%
MUZ	Not defined	0.3%	278	0.4%
LDRZ	Not defined	0.2%	23	0.03%
<b>Total</b>	-	<b>100%</b>	<b>71,670</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Metropolitan Activity Centre		2.7%	6,178	8.6%
Major Activity Centre		9.9%	7,306	10.2%
Neighbourhood Activity Centre		2.4%	510	0.7%
Outside of activity centre		85%	57,676	80.5%
<b>Total</b>	-	<b>100%</b>	<b>71,670</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021)

### **5.3 Trends in planning approvals and new housing supply**

The discussion below draws on both planning permit data and ABS Census data to provide an understanding of spatial trends in planning approvals and new housing supply across the City of Whitehorse.

#### **Annual trends in dwelling approvals**

Figure 28 shows the total number of annual planning permits issued and the corresponding number of dwellings approved in the City of Whitehorse between 2009 and 2024. Over this period, the number of planning permits approved each year ranged from a low of 145 in 2022 to a peak of 408 in 2015.

The number of dwellings approved has fluctuated year-on-year. The lowest number of dwellings approved was 371 in 2024, a significant reduction from a high of 3,592 in 2018. This peak followed two consecutive years of high activity, with 2017 and 2016 recording the second and third highest numbers of dwelling approvals, respectively.

These trends in permit activity appear consistent with broader policy and economic trends including historically low interest rates, strong property market conditions, and incentives like Victorian stamp duty concessions for first-home buyers, as well as the onset of anticipated lending restrictions and tax reforms.

#### **Dwelling approvals by activity centres and change areas**

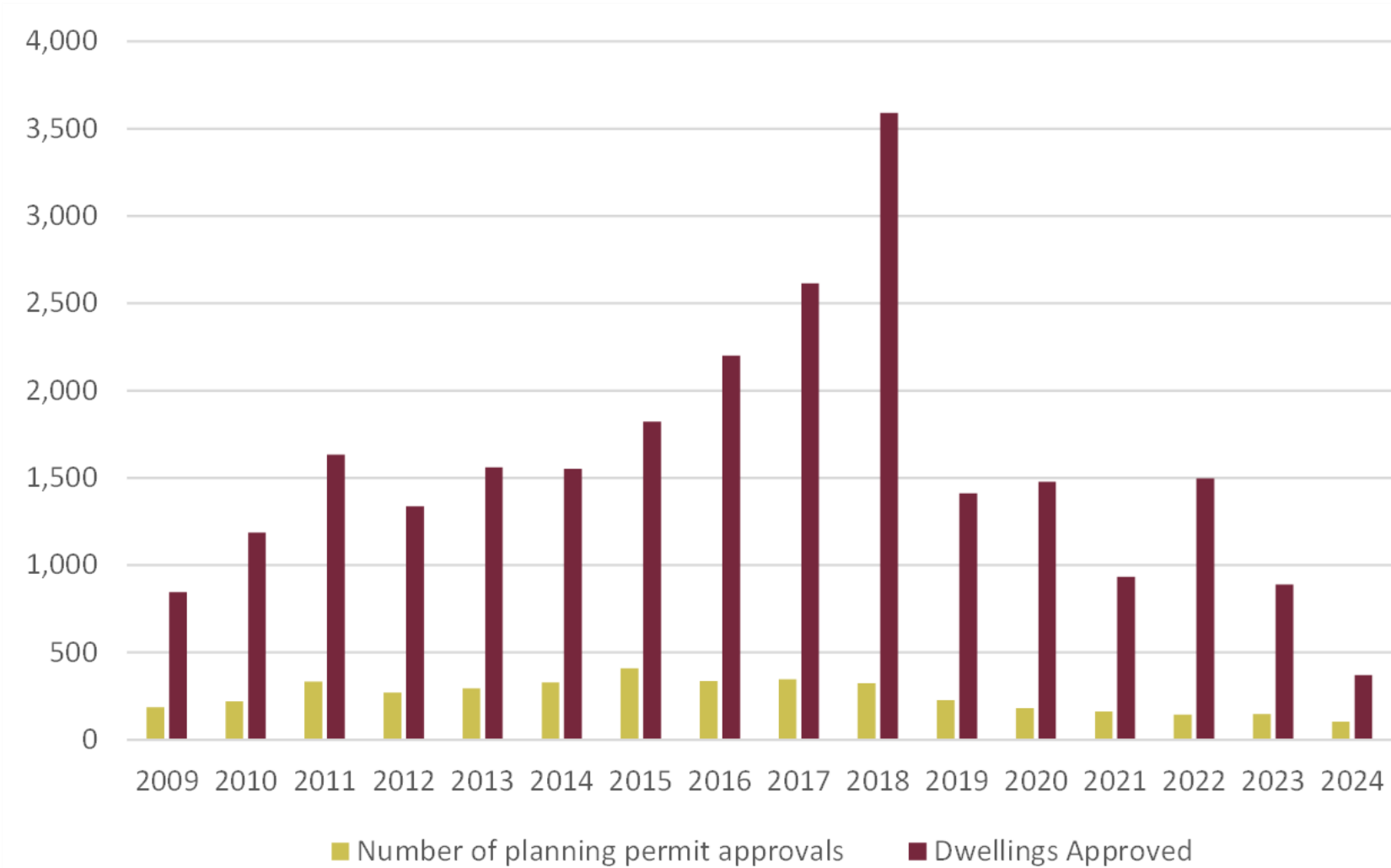
Dwelling approvals within and outside of activity centres (by type) are shown in Table 7 and Figure 12. The data covers the five-year period prior to the release of the Housing Strategy (2009 to 2014) and the ten-year period following its implementation (2015 to 2024). Appendix C includes a further breakdown of data by individual activity centres.

Between 2009 and 2014, 7,557 dwellings were approved in the municipality, or 813 per year. Of these, 35.4% were within activity centres, and 64.5% outside of activity centres. The largest share of approvals over this period was in the Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre.

Between 2015 and 2024, dwelling approvals in the City increased to an average of 868 per annum, reflecting peak activity occurring between 2016 and 2018. Of these approvals, 45.5% were within activity centres (29.3% in the Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre, 13.1% in major activity centres, and 3.1% in neighbourhood activity centres). While the increase in applications within activity centres is notable at about 10%, the nearly twofold increase in the Metropolitan Activity Centre is significant.

Table 7 illustrates that while permits were issued across the City, there was a clear shift in development from broader residential areas toward activity centres following the introduction of the Housing Strategy, most notably into the Metropolitan Activity Centre where approvals increased from 17% to 29% between the two periods.

Figure 28: Dwelling approvals, by year, City of Whitehorse 2009 to 2024



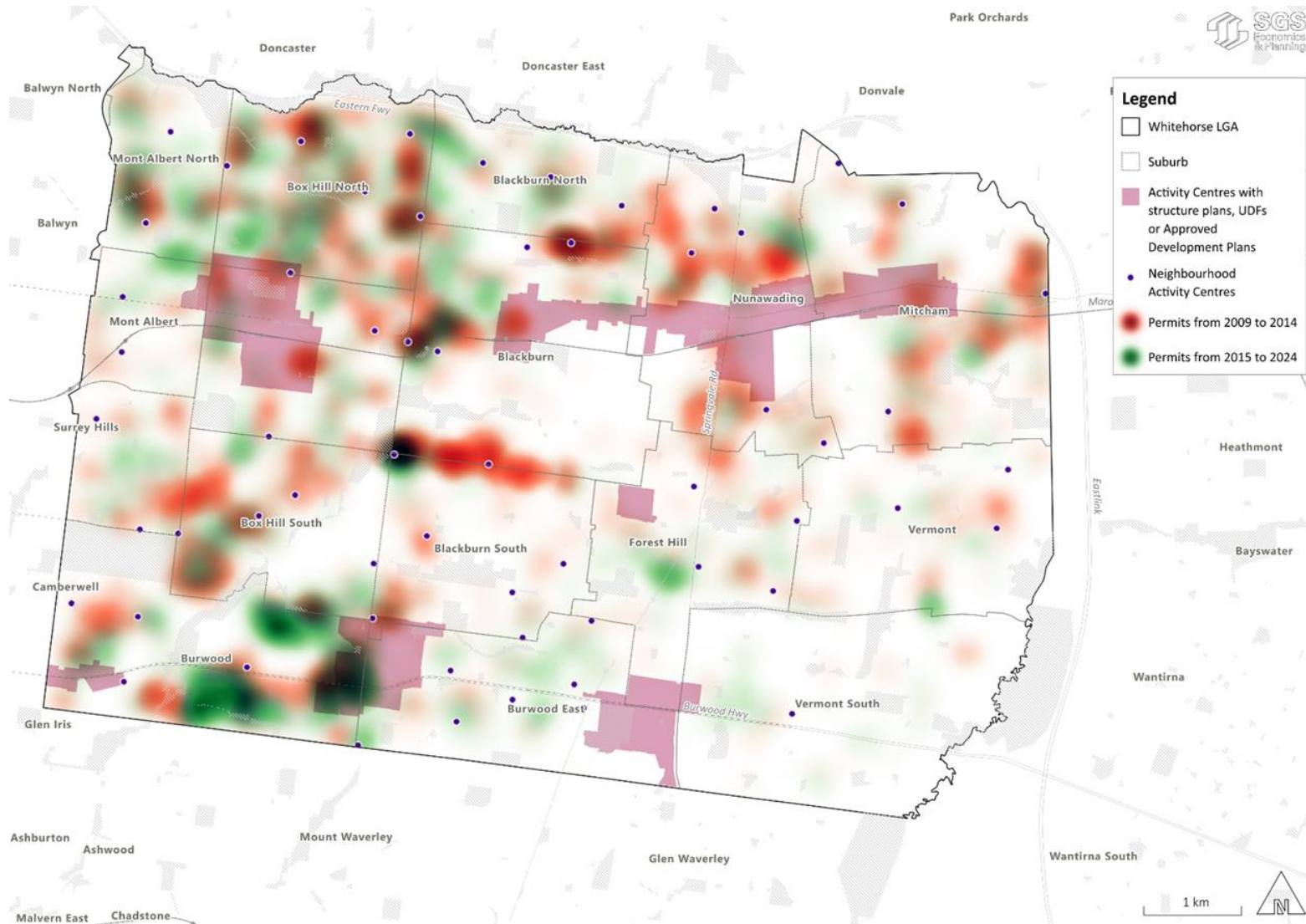
Source: Whitehorse City Council (2025), Planning permit data 2009 to 2024 (includes only permits for dwellings)

**Table 7: Dwelling approvals, by activity centres, City of Whitehorse, 2009 to 2014 and 2015 to 2024**

Planning area	Dwellings approved 2009 to 2014 (pre-strategy implementation)			Dwellings approved 2015 to 2024 (post-strategy implementation)		
	Total	Per annum	Share of Total	Total	Per annum	Share of Total
Metropolitan Activity Centre	1,291	215	17.1%	4,647	465	29.3%
Major Activity Centres	932	155	12.3%	2,074	207	13.1%
Neighbourhood Activity Centres	456	76	6%	486	49	3.1%
Outside of activity centres	4,878	813	64.5%	8,650	865	54.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,557</b>	<b>1,260</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>15,857</b>	<b>1,586</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Whitehorse City Council (2025), Planning permit data 2009 to 2024. Note: Totals may not equal the sum of individual columns due to rounding.

Figure 29: Planning permit approvals, City of Whitehorse, 2009 to 2024



Source: Whitehorse City Council (2025), Planning permit data 2009 to 2024 (darker colours = higher numbers of permits)

### **Approvals by zone/change area**

Table 8 shows dwelling approvals in the City of Whitehorse by planning zone and associated change area category, comparing the pre- and post- Housing Strategy implementation.

Between 2009 and 2014, most approvals (33.7%) occurred in the RGZ and GRZ (33.6%), followed by NRZ (25%). Smaller shares were in the C1Z and MUZ, contributing 5% and 2.6% respectively.

From 2015 to 2024, the GRZ and RGZ accounted for 27.7% and 30.7% of total approvals, respectively. While this represents a decline in the share of approvals compared to the previous period, total approvals per annum increased in both zones.

Approvals in the NRZ declined as both a share of all approvals, and in total per annum terms, indicating a slowing pace of growth in areas identified for limited change - in line with the intent of the zone.

In contrast, the C1Z recorded a significant increase in approvals – as both a share and in total terms. The share of approvals in the C1Z quadrupled from 5% of total approvals in the five-year period prior to 19.9% across the ten years after.

Per annum, total approvals increased from 36 to 316. This rapid growth reflects the strategic application of the C1Z to the core of activity centres, the zone’s more flexible building height controls, and the concentration of apartment development within the Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre.

Approvals also increased in the MUZ, from 2.6% to 7.1%. This increase in permit activity reflects the application of the MUZ in the Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre and Burwood East–Tally Ho Major Activity Centre. The impact of this increase is likely slightly inflated due to significant residential developments such as the China Bar site in Tally Ho which has not been constructed.

**Table 8: Dwelling approvals, by zone/change area, City of Whitehorse, 2009 to 2014 and 2015 to 2024**

Zone	Change Area category	Dwellings approved 2009 to 2014 (pre-strategy implementation)			Dwellings approved 2015 to 2024 (post-strategy implementation)		
		Total	Per annum	Share of Total	Total	Per annum	Share of Total
RGZ	Substantial	2,546	424	33.7%	4,399	440	27.7%
GRZ	Natural	2,541	424	33.6%	4,869	487	30.7%
NRZ	Limited	1,892	315	25.0%	2,293	229	14.5%
C1Z	Not defined	378	63	5.0%	3,163	316	19.9%
MUZ	Not defined	200	33	2.6%	1,133	113	7.1%
<b>Total</b>		<b>7,557</b>	<b>1,260</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>15,857</b>	<b>1,586</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Whitehorse City Council (2025), Planning permit data 2009 to 2024. Note: Totals may not equal the sum of individual columns due to rounding.

### Trends in dwelling growth

Permit activity provides an understanding of potential development activity; however not all permits result in constructed dwellings. This section looks at the net change in dwellings between 2011 and 2021 using ABS data to understand the realisation of new dwellings on the ground.

Table 9 summarises the growth in dwellings by zone. As the Census periods do not align with the pre- and post- strategy implementation timeframes, it is assumed 2011 to 2016 represents the pre-strategy period, and 2016 to 2021 represents the post-strategy period.

The data shows that the distribution of dwelling growth broadly mirror permit approval activity. The NRZ and MUZ recorded a decline in development activity, both in relative and absolute terms. In the case of the MUZ, this outcome supports the earlier observation that approvals for several large-scale developments in this zone were not ultimately realised.

The pace of growth was strongest in the C1Z areas, rising from 42 to 266 net new dwellings per annum, and representing an increase in the share of total growth of 18%.

While the total number of dwellings increased at a steady rate across the two periods in the GRZ, this zone maintained a relatively stable share of overall growth.

### 5.4 Housing Strategy performance

The Housing Strategy was concerned with encouraging the right kind of housing in the right locations to support access to transport and services, efficient use of infrastructure, and improved amenity and affordability.

The findings above suggest that trends in the distribution of both dwelling approvals and constructed dwellings since 2014 demonstrate alignment with the intended outcomes of the Housing Strategy. It is apparent that post-2014 a larger share of residential growth has occurred in activity centres while more limited development occurred in areas with valued landscape and built form character.

Areas designated for limited change appear to have been protected effectively from significant increases in growth, with the NRZ recording an 11.3% decline in its share of growth across the two analysis periods and a reduction in annual permit activity.

The RGZ, while designated for substantial change, experienced a decline in its share of growth over time (noting annual permit approvals in these areas increased overall).

Growth predominantly occurred in C1Z. This zone recorded the largest increase in development activity (an increase of 16%) and a significant rise in annual permit approvals, from 63 to 355 per year.

While not formally identified in the Housing Strategy for Substantial Change, the Commercial 1 Zone is typically applied to the core commercial areas of Activity Centres and are often surrounded by Residential Growth Zones (associated with Substantial Change Areas). This growth in the Commercial 1 Zone is likely attributable to the absence of a prescribed maximum building height in this zone, except where an overlay applies. By contrast, the RGZ includes a default height limit of four storeys unless otherwise varied by an overlay – such as areas covered by DDO11 (for example) where a modified height limit of 6 stories (or 19 metres applies).

**Table 9: Dwelling counts, by zone / activity centre, City of Whitehorse, 2011 to 2016 and 2016 to 2021**

Zone / Activity Centre	Change area	Dwellings growth 2011 Census to 2016 Census (pre-strategy implementation)			Dwellings growth 2016 Census to 2021 Census (post-strategy implementation)		
		Total	Per annum	Share of total	Total	Per annum	Share of total
RGZ	Substantial	1,680	336	40%	1,963	393	33%
GRZ	Natural	1,007	201	24%	1,654	331	28%
NRZ	Limited	1,068	214	26%	873	175	15%
LDRZ	Not defined	1	0.2	0.02%	2	0.4	0.03%
C1Z	Not defined	210	42	5%	1,330	266	23%
MUZ	Not defined	197	39	5%	45	9	0.8%
<b>Total</b>		<b>4,163</b>	<b>833</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>5,867</b>	<b>1,173</b>	<b>100%</b>
Metropolitan activity centre		1,043	209	25%	2,691	538	46%
Major Activity Centres		887	177	21%	1,035	207	18%
Neighbourhood Activity Centres		426	85	10%	102	20	1.7%
Outside activity centres		2,087	417	50%	2,100	420	36%
<b>Total</b>		<b>4,163</b>	<b>833</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>5,867</b>	<b>1,173</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: ABS Census 2011, 2016 and 2021. Note: Totals may not equal the sum of individual columns due to rounding.

# 6. Housing diversity

## 6.1 Housing Strategy overview

The 2014 Housing Strategy introduced several principles aimed at increasing housing diversity in the City of Whitehorse to meet the needs of a growing population with increasingly varied housing needs. The focus was on delivering more smaller dwellings (such as semi-detached homes, terraces, townhouses, flats, units, and apartments) in areas with good access to transport and services (activity centres) and to cater for the needs of smaller households, and in particular, lone-person households, while limiting further growth of large detached dwellings. The housing needs of specific groups including students, the elderly, people with a disability and newly arrived migrants were also considered.

The primary action to achieve greater diversity in dwelling stock was the implementation of change areas and the application of associated zoning categories:

- **Substantial Change Areas (RGZ):** Intended to support higher-density development, including townhouses, units, apartments, and shop-top dwellings.
- **Natural Change Areas (GRZ):** Expected to accommodate low- to medium-density housing such as detached dwellings, semi-detached dwellings, townhouses, and units.
- **Limited Change Areas (NRZ):** Primarily designated for detached dwellings, with some potential for units and semi-detached dwellings where appropriate.

The application of the Development Plan Overlay (DPO) on substantial change sites was also used to support dwelling diversity on larger sites by specifying the height and density of housing. In addition, the strategy included actions relating to advocacy and partnership with relevant institutions to achieve improved outcomes for specific needs groups.

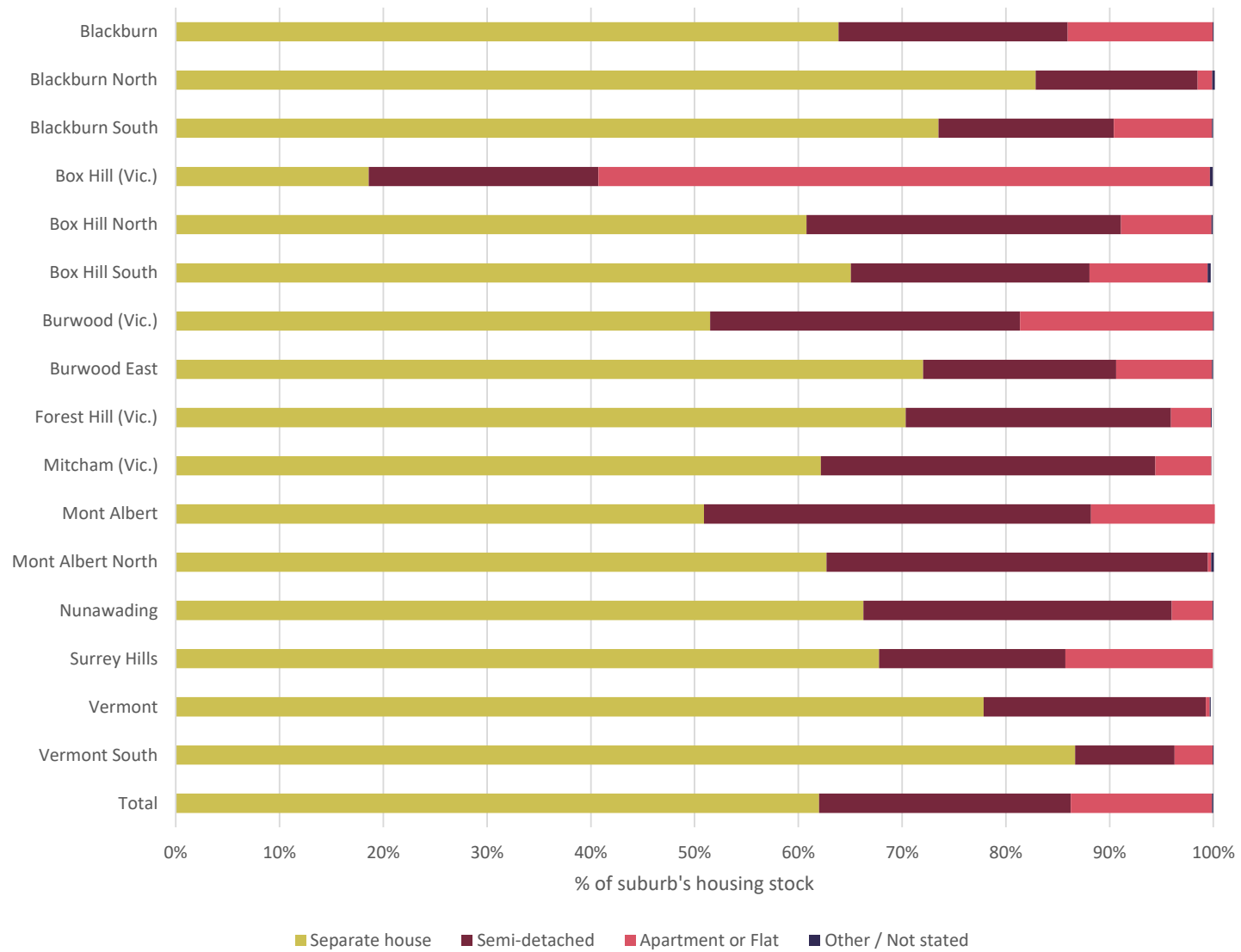
## 6.2 Housing diversity

Census data at the suburb level for 2021 provides insight into the diversity of housing stock in Whitehorse. Dwelling structure type and number of bedrooms have been used as proxy indicators of housing diversity.

### Dwelling type

As shown in Figure 30 separate houses predominate in Whitehorse (62% of all dwellings) and are the majority dwelling type in 15 out of 16 suburbs. Box Hill stands out for its dwelling mix with far fewer separate houses (just 19% of all dwellings) and far more apartments (59% of all dwellings).

Figure 30: Dwelling structure, by suburb, City of Whitehorse, 2021



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021

### **Dwelling size/count of bedrooms**

Figure 31 shows that Box Hill is also the outlier suburb in terms of number of bedrooms, with a majority of dwellings having two bedrooms, rather than three or four bedrooms, which is the most prevalent number in all other suburbs of the LGA.

### **Dwelling suitability**

Dwelling suitability refers to the extent of over- or under-utilisation of housing. It provides insight into a potential mismatch between housing stock and housing needs.

Dwellings with three or more spare bedrooms are considered under-utilised, recognising that some households may retain one or two spare bedrooms for guests, home offices, or anticipated changes in household size (e.g., additional children). Households requiring one or more additional bedrooms have been considered over-utilised, potentially reflecting instances of overcrowding.<sup>12</sup>

Table 10 shows that there is misalignment between dwelling size and needs of residents in 13.4% of households in Whitehorse, with 10.5% of dwellings classified as under-utilised and 2.9% as over-utilised. This misalignment is a little higher than the Greater Melbourne average of 11.6%, however looking at eastern Melbourne more generally the City of Whitehorse is closer to the average: Melbourne Inner East is 12.9%, North East 12.7%, Outer East 14.4%, and South East 15.2%.

All suburbs except for Box Hill had a greater share of dwellings with an excess of spare bedrooms than those with a need for more bedrooms. In Box Hill, 7.3% of households require one or more additional bedrooms, while only 3.4% of households had an excess of bedrooms. This finding aligns with Box Hill having the greatest number of smaller dwellings (two or less bedrooms), and the predominance of apartments in this location.

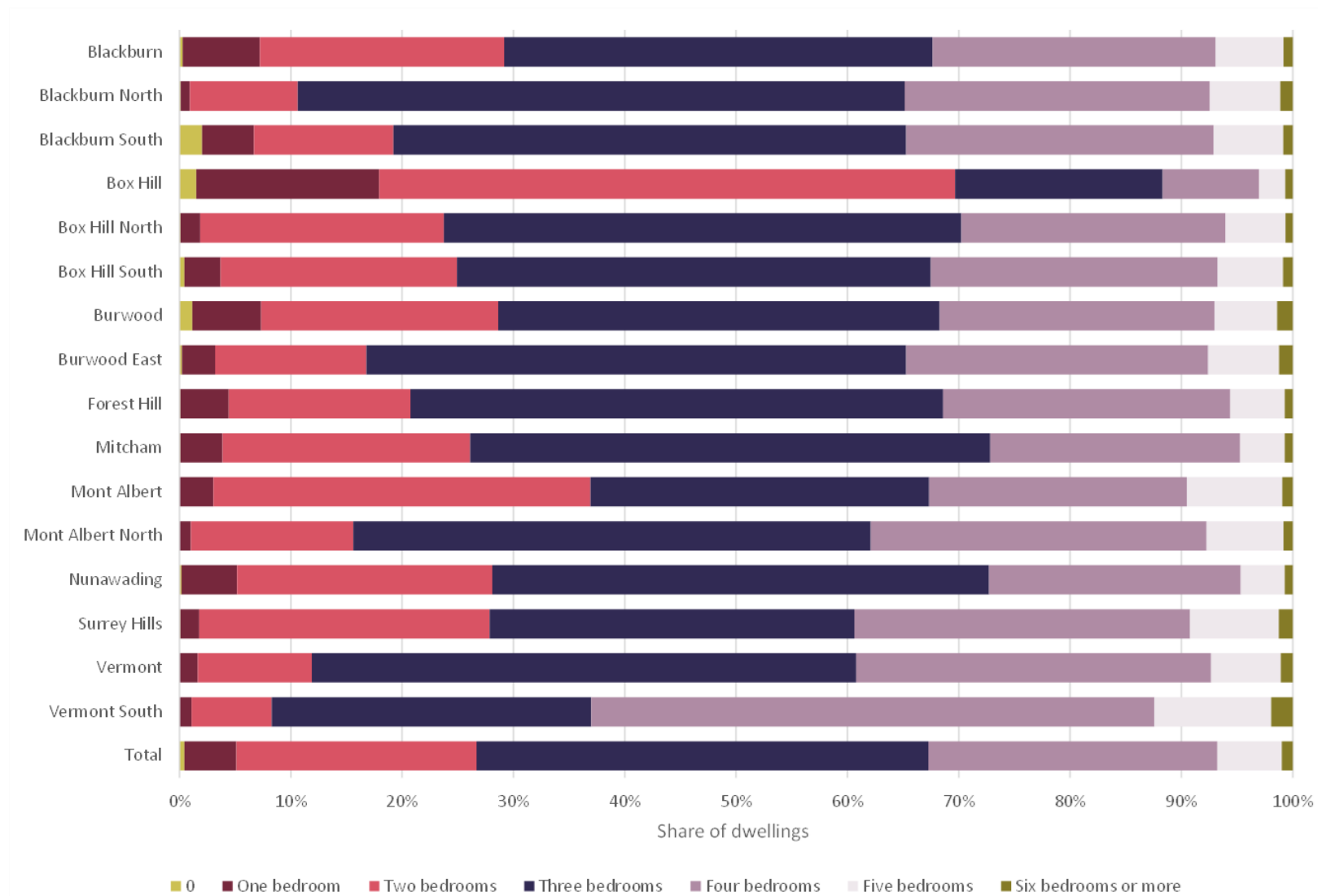
Vermont South has the highest share of under-utilised dwellings at 24.9%. Vermont South has the highest share of separate houses (86.7%) and has no activity centres and as such local options to downsize within the suburb are limited.

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<sup>12</sup> Note: In Australia, the accepted benchmark for assessing household dwelling size requirements is the Canadian National Occupancy Standard (CNOS). Under CNOS, “overcrowding” is defined as requiring one or more additional bedrooms, while “underutilisation” refers to

having two or more spare bedrooms. To avoid overestimating underutilisation and better reflect the likely characteristics of Whitehorse households, SGS has applied an adjusted definition.

Figure 31: Number of bedrooms, by suburb, City of Whitehorse, 2021



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021

**Table 10: Dwelling suitability, City of Whitehorse, 2021**

Suburb	Total dwellings (inc. not stated)	Share of dwellings with 3+ beds spare	Share of dwellings with bedrooms needed
Blackburn	5,561	10.7%	2.3%
Blackburn North	2,701	9.9%	2.7%
Blackburn South	4,024	10.8%	2.1%
Box Hill	5,965	3.4%	7.3%
Box Hill North	4,536	8.1%	3.4%
Box Hill South	3,132	8.2%	2.8%
Burwood	4,481	9.1%	3.0%
Burwood East	4,021	12.6%	2.5%
Forest Hill	4,083	10.9%	2.5%
Mitcham	6,468	8.9%	2.2%
Mont Albert	1,853	11.6%	2.1%
Mont Albert North	2,068	12.7%	1.5%
Nunawading	4,456	7.4%	3.4%
Surrey Hills	1,938	12.5%	1.5%
Vermont	3,653	12.2%	2.2%
Vermont South	4,085	24.9%	1.6%
<b>Total / Average</b>	63,028	10.5%	2.9%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 Changes in diversity of new dwellings. Note: Totals may not equal the sum of individual columns due to rounding.

## Planning approvals

Table 11 and Figure 32 summarises planning permit approvals by housing density, comparing activity centres and zones across the periods before and after the Housing Strategy's implementation.

### Density classification method for planning permit approval data

Microsoft Copilot was used to read permit descriptions and classify them into three categories based on the following definitions:

- Low density refers to separate, detached dwellings.
- Medium density refers to semi-detached and attached dwellings (units and townhouses, including 3-storeys row townhouses), as well as apartments to two storeys.
- High density refers to apartments of three or more storeys.

All other contextual data, such as addresses, was removed before uploading it into Microsoft Copilot. The resulting density classification was then merged back to the permit data spreadsheet for the verification.

Key word searches on the number of storeys and dwelling typology in the permit descriptions were done to verify consistency with instructions to Microsoft Copilot.

Additionally, permit data was grouped by density, by zone, and by activity centres to search for outliers in the number of dwellings associated with the permit, which were then manually verified by comparing to aerial imagery or Google Street maps, and lot size information. Any misclassifications found from this verification process were corrected.

The data shows a significant shift in the share of dwelling approvals by density between the two analysis periods. From 2009 to 2014, medium-density housing accounted for the largest share (59%), followed by high density (24%) and low density (16%). From 2015 onwards, high-density approvals rose to 44% of dwellings approved (an increase of over 80%) while medium density declined by nearly 20% (to 48%) and low-density by over half of its previous share (to 7%).

In terms of total dwellings approved per annum, there was a decline in low-density dwellings approved (from 207 to 116), a slight increase in medium-density dwellings approved (from 749 to 766), and a significant rise in high-density dwellings approved (from 303 to 704).

This suggests a shift in the overall profile of approvals for new housing by type in the municipality.

The most notable changes occurred in the Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre, which saw a substantial rise in the share and total per annum of approvals for high-density dwellings, and a decline in approvals for medium density housing.

In Major and Neighbourhood Activity Centres the share and per annum total of dwellings approved for low and medium density housing remained relatively stable, while outside activity centres the number of low-density dwellings approved declined by 9% (or from 205 to 113 dwellings approved each year on average).

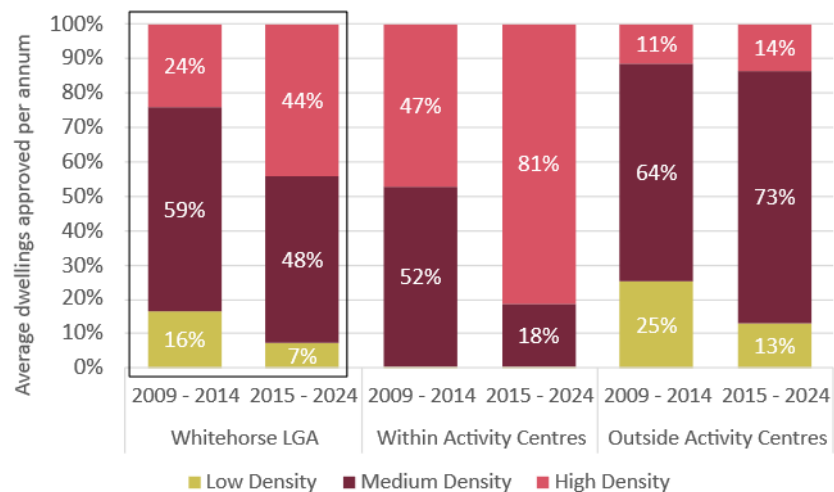
Table 12 shows dwelling approvals by zone and dwelling density. The RGZ saw a decrease in medium density housing and an increase in high density dwellings approved in both absolute and relative terms, consistent with its designation as a substantial change area. There was also a significant increase in the share and total of high-density dwellings approved in the C1Z and MUZ (with annual approvals

quadrupling and tripling in these zones). These shifts reflect the role of commercial and mixed-use areas in accommodating apartments.

Medium density housing represented the largest share of approvals in GRZ across both periods, with total approvals increasing by 100 dwellings per annum after 2014. The share of medium density approvals decreased from 15% to 10% in NRZ (while continuing to increase in total terms).

The total number per annum and the share of approvals for low density dwellings dropped across all zones, demonstrating an overall trend away from detached housing.

**Figure 32: Dwelling approvals, by activity centres, by type, City of Whitehorse**



Source: City of Whitehorse (2025) Dwelling approvals 2009 to 2024

**Table 11: Dwelling approvals, by activity centres, by type, City of Whitehorse, 2009 to 2014 and 2015 to 2024**

Planning area		Dwellings approved: 2009 to 2014 (pre-strategy implementation)			Dwellings approved: 2015 to 2024 (post-strategy implementation)		
		Total	Per annum	Share of Total	Total	Per annum	Share of Total
Metropolitan Activity Centre	Low density	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Medium density	744	124	10%	470	47	3%
	High density	547	91	7%	4,177	418	26%
Major Activity Centres	Low density	6	1	0.1%	25	3	0.2%
	Medium density	508	85	7%	764	76	5%
	High density	418	70	6%	1,285	129	8%
Neighbourhood Activity Centres	Low density	8	1	0.1%	8	1	0.1%
	Medium density	143	24	2%	75	8	0.5%
	High density	305	51	4%	371	37	2%
Outside Activity Centres	Low density	1,227	205	16%	1,129	113	7%
	Medium density	3,101	517	41%	6,349	635	40%
	High density	550	92	7%	1,204	120	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>Low density</b>	<b>1,241</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>1,162</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>7%</b>
	<b>Medium density</b>	<b>4,496</b>	<b>749</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>7,658</b>	<b>766</b>	<b>48%</b>
	<b>High density</b>	<b>1,820</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>7,037</b>	<b>704</b>	<b>44%</b>

Source: Whitehorse City Council (2025), Planning permit data 2009 to 2024. Note: Totals may not equal the sum of individual columns due to rounding.

**Table 12: Dwelling approvals by density/type, by zone, City of Whitehorse, 2009 to 2014 and 2015 to 2024**

Zone		Dwellings approved: 2009 to 2014 (pre-strategy implementation)			Dwellings approved: 2015 to 2024 (post-strategy implementation)		
		Total	Per annum	Share of Total	Total	Per annum	Share of Total
RGZ (substantial change)	Low density	15	3	0.2%	2	0.2	0.01%
	Medium density	1,507	251	20%	1,990	199	13%
	High density	1,024	171	14%	2,407	241	15%
GRZ (natural change)	Low density	632	105	8%	666	67	4%
	Medium density	1,842	307	24%	4,072	407	26%
	High density	67	11	1%	131	13	1%
NRZ (limited change)	Low density	594	99	8%	494	49	3%
	Medium density	1,143	191	15%	1,589	159	10%
	High density	155	26	2%	210	21	1%
MUZ	Low density	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Medium density	-	-	-	-	-	-
	High density	200	33	3%	1,133	113	7%
C1Z	Low density	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Medium density	4	0.7	0.1%	7	0.7	0.04%
	High density	374	62	5%	3,156	316	20%
<b>Total</b>		<b>7,557</b>	<b>1,260</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>15,857</b>	<b>1,586</b>	<b>100%</b>

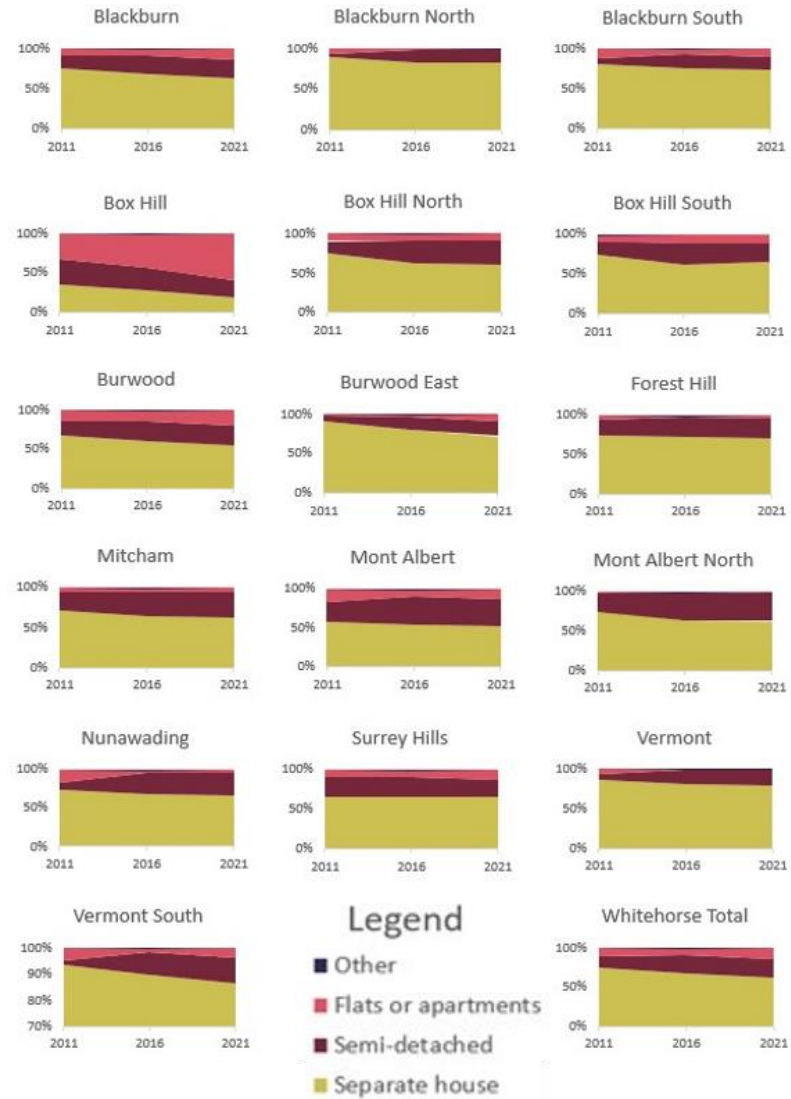
Source: Whitehorse City Council (2025), Planning permit data 2009 to 2024. Note: Totals may not equal the sum of individual columns due to rounding

### Census counts of dwelling by type

Figure 33 shows the shift in dwellings by type recorded through the 2011, 2016 and 2021 Census. It confirms the trends implied by the planning permit data, with a decline in the number of separate dwellings and concurrent increase in semi-detached dwellings, flats and apartments.

The change in dwellings by type shows variation across suburbs, with the share of semi-detached dwellings increasing most rapidly in Blackburn North, Box Hill North, Box Hill South, Mont Albert and Nunawading. Box Hill is again an outlier in terms of dwelling type change, showing a rapid increase in the share of flats and apartments and decline in the share of separate dwellings.

Figure 33: Dwelling structure, by suburb, City of Whitehorse, 2011 to 2021



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021. STRD Dwelling Structure – Table Builder.

## Constructed dwellings

Although shifts in planning approvals are evidence of a positive market response to Council’s policy aspiration, approvals take some time to translate into completed dwellings, and some permits may never be constructed. Analysis of ABS census data provides insight into the number of dwellings that have been built.

At the municipal level, the Census data shows that in the period following the adoption of the Housing Strategy and associated planning scheme changes, the pace of housing growth exceeded the official State Government Victoria in Future (VIF) projections from 2012 (Figure 34).

At the most recent Census in 2021, the total number of dwellings in the City of Whitehorse exceeded those projections by 6,124 with a total of 72,310 dwellings.

Between 2014 and 2023, the VIF projections have been updated 3 times – in 2016, 2019 and 2023. Each update has resulted in an upward revision of the expected number of dwellings in the City of Whitehorse, with the VIF 2023 forecasting a continuation of the 2016 to 2021 growth trajectory. However, analysis of building permit data since 2021 (blue dotted line) points to a slight shift in the growth trajectory, hinting at a possible slowdown in growth in more recent years.

The market conditions for housing delivery have deteriorated considerably in the years following the COVID pandemic. The feasibility of housing projects has been impacted by a combination of factors: significant increases in building costs, higher interest rates, fewer foreign investors and changes to taxes and charges.<sup>13</sup> As a result of these changes projects that might have been feasible pre-COVID may no longer ‘stack up’.

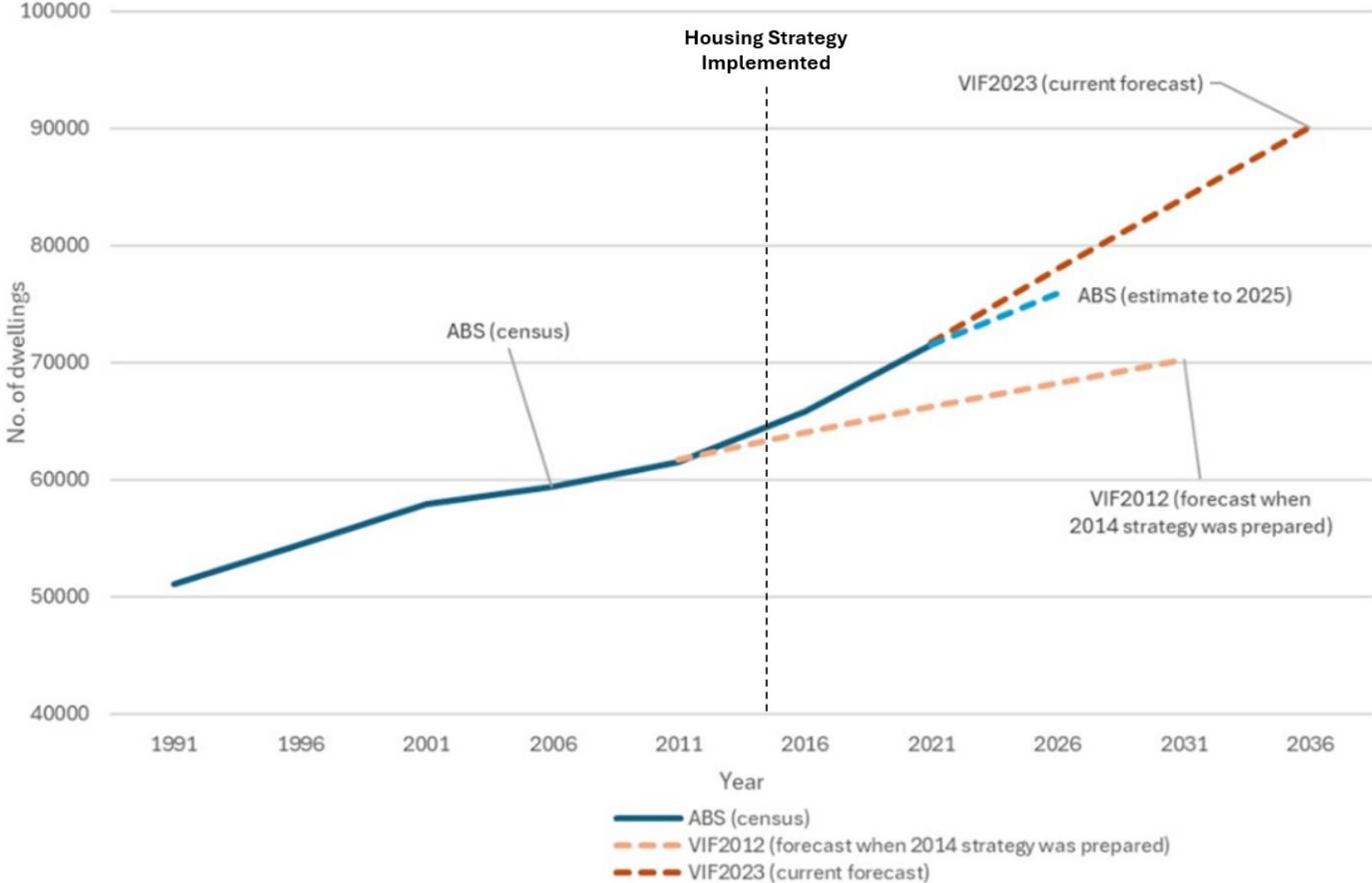
While current market conditions are challenging, they also reflect the ‘normal’ progress of housing market cycles where conditions oscillate over the medium to longer term. Some commentators have suggested a there could be an improvement in the market conditions for apartments in 2026.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> These matters are explored in CKC (2025) *Housing Supply Market Advice* (prepared for Whitehorse City Council).

<sup>14</sup> CKC (2025) *Melbourne apartment market to ‘accelerate from next year’* (<https://charterkc.com.au/melbourne-apartment-market-to-accelerate-from-next-year/>)

Figure 34: Total dwellings, City of Whitehorse, 1991 to 2036



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (multiple years), Total dwellings

### **6.3 Housing Strategy performance**

In broad terms, the Housing Strategy aimed to increase housing diversity in areas with good access to shops and services and to provide housing that meets community needs across all stages of life. The primary action to achieve greater diversity in dwelling stock was the implementation of change areas (with Substantial, Natural, and Limited change areas) and the application of associated zoning categories.

Planning approvals data suggests a considerable shift in the profile of housing across the municipality over time. It shows that approvals for medium density dwellings continue to represent the largest share of all permits, and that the share of semi-detached dwellings has increased most across the municipality. However, there has been rapid growth in the number of approvals of high-density housing, concentrated in the Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre and major activity centres in particular.

Approvals for medium density housing continue to dominate in areas outside of activity centres, particularly areas zoned GRZ.

Increases in medium and high-density housing across most of the municipality, except in Surrey Hills and Forest Hill where the share of separate dwellings has remained stable, align with the objectives of the Housing Strategy. However, dwelling suitability data indicates a potential need for a greater mix of housing types in established residential areas, particularly in Vermont South and locations zoned NRZ.

Students, older people and CALD communities occupy various housing types, so it is not possible to determine precisely whether their needs have been met by increased housing diversity. However, for students and older people in particular, growth in smaller homes (especially one- and two-bedroom units and apartments) is likely to align with their needs.

# 7. Housing design

## 7.1 Housing Strategy overview

Directions relating to design in the Housing Strategy were focused on retaining and protecting both neighbourhood and environmental character. The Strategy is clear that design of residential development needs to consider aesthetics, internal amenity, robustness, flexibility of design, and environmental performance.

The Housing Strategy specified that development should be designed to fit comfortably within the context of the relevant neighbourhood character precinct it occurs within.

Covering most of the LGA, the largest neighbourhood character type is Garden Suburban, consisting of a more formal, urbanised setting with leafy streets and buildings of simple forms visible behind formal gardens. Bush Suburban character areas consist of less formal streetscapes dominated by vegetation, with buildings less visible behind more informal gardens, established trees, and less obvious property boundaries. Bush Environment character areas will have informal streetscapes, few boundary definitions, and buildings partially or completely hidden behind established planting and/or generous setbacks.

The Strategy seeks to encourage residential development that

- supports neighbourhood character through quality and appropriate design
- supports residents through adaptable and accessible design, and
- considers environmental impacts of dwellings on the environment (e.g., WSUD, energy efficiency) and residents (e.g., dwellings that are resilient to the impact of climate change).

Character areas largely mirror the residential zone. Figure 35 illustrates the comparison of character areas and zones, where the non-coloured areas in both maps are outside of character areas / non-residential. Where there is residential zoning in areas outside of character areas, this is usually MUZ (red zones) or RGZ (dark pink zones).

## 7.2 Performance across character areas

Consultation with Council has noted that development application refusals are meaningfully informed by character design that is incompatible with the relevant neighbourhood character area. This is used as a proxy for the evaluation of the effect of the Housing Strategy on housing design.

The leafier Bush Environment and Bush Suburban character areas have seen annual dwelling approvals remain similar (Bush Suburban) or drop (Bush Environment) since 2014, both in terms of the absolute number and share of dwelling approvals and refusals (Figure 36 and Table 13).

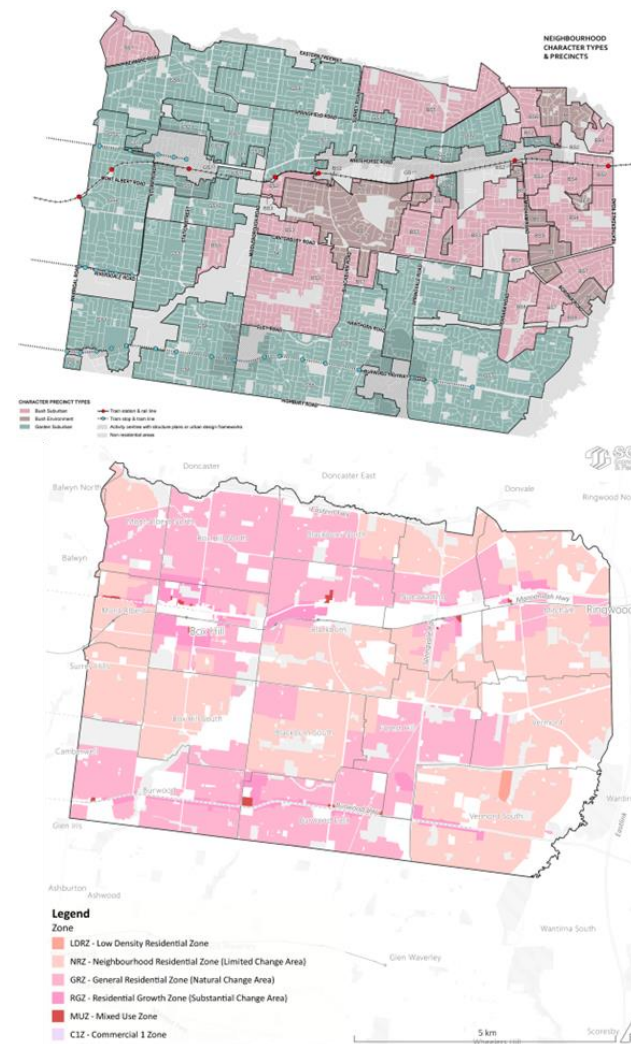
The drop in annual approvals in the Bush Suburban area is significant, with total applications dropping by half since the Strategy was introduced, suggesting that there was less appetite for development in this area.

Conversely, in the more formal Garden Suburban character area the number of total applications increased by approximately 25%. Since 2014 the *proportion* of dwellings that have been refused has increased in this area, which may indicate that more applications are not meeting the character requirements here.

In residential areas outside of character areas there has been a substantial shift in applications. While the number of refused dwellings here increased significantly from a low base (going from 2 to 100 each year), the number of dwellings approved has nearly quadrupled, with total dwellings more than double the pre-2015 average. This may indicate that developers have more interest in developing in less restrictive areas, where fewer character requirements may allow for more standardised designs.

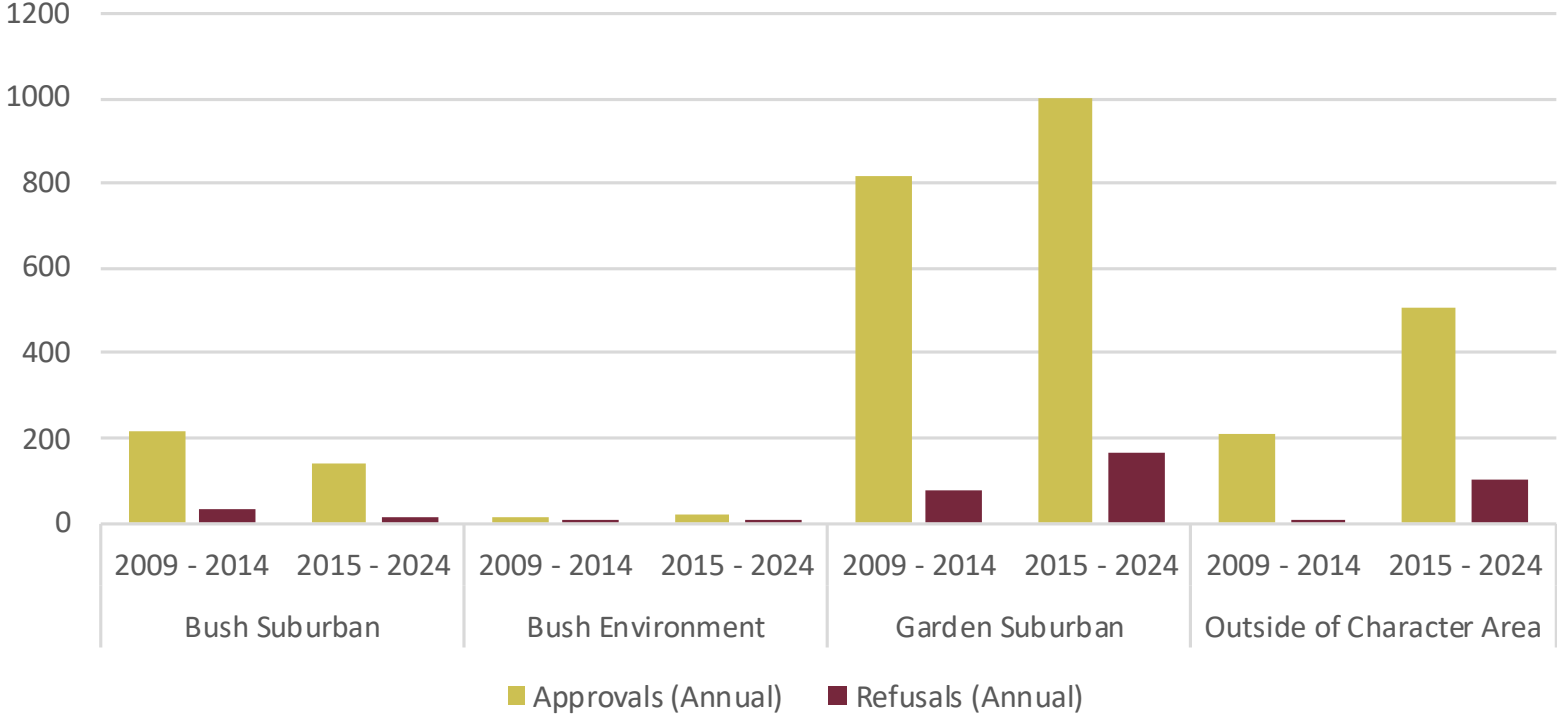
With the proportion of total applications decreasing in character areas and increasing outside of character areas, this suggests that the interest in developing within character areas (the Bush Suburban area in particular) was less attractive to developers and development outside of character areas more attractive.

**Figure 35: Character areas and land use zones**



Source: Whitehorse City Council (2014 Housing Strategy – top map), SGS Economics and Planning (2025 – bottom map)

Figure 36: Annual dwelling approvals/ refusals, by neighbourhood character areas, City of Whitehorse, 2009-14 and 2015-24



Source: Whitehorse City Council (2025), Planning permit data 2009 to 2024

**Table 13: Dwelling approvals and refusals by character area, 2009 to 2014 and 2015 to 2024**

Character area	Permit type	Dwellings approved / refused: 2009 to 2014 (pre-strategy implementation)				Dwellings approved / refused: 2015 to 2024 (post-strategy implementation)			
		Total	Per annum	Share of total	Sub total	Total	Per annum	Share of total	Sub total
Bush Suburban	Approvals	1,300	217	16%	18%	1,384	138	7%	8%
	Refusals	182	30	2%		157	16	1%	
Bush Environment	Approvals	99	17	1%	2%	181	18	1%	1%
	Refusals	35	6	0.4%		59	6	0.3%	
Garden Suburban	Approvals	4,890	815	59%	65%	10,036	1,004	51%	60%
	Refusals	460	77	6%		1,647	165	8%	
Outside of a Character Area	Approvals	1,251	209	15%	15%	5,044	504	26%	31%
	Refusals	12	2	0.1%		1,012	101	5%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>Approvals</b>	<b>7,540</b>	<b>1,257</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>16,645</b>	<b>1,665</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>100%</b>
	<b>Refusals</b>	<b>689</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>8%</b>		<b>2,875</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>15%</b>	

Source: Whitehorse City Council (2025), Planning permit data 2009 to 2024. Note: Totals may not equal the sum of individual columns due to rounding

### **7.3 Case studies for good quality housing outcomes**

Council provided five examples of residential development that showcase a variety of good design outcomes with a focus on medium and higher density developments.

Where information is available commentary has been provided in relation to the 2014 Housing Strategy's desired outcomes for design relating to: response to neighbourhood character, adaptable and accessible design, and environmental impact and performance.

**Development type:** multiple dwellings on a lot

**Address:** 2-4 Panel St, Mitcham

**Zone:** Neighbourhood Residential Zone 3 (NRZ3), in Bush Suburban Character Area

**Dwelling yield:** 4 dwellings

**Development context:**

Residential area with a variety of active and passive open space within walking distance, across the street from a bus stop and a primary school, 1km from the Belgrave train line.

**Description of development:**

This development makes good use of the site, not overcrowding the lot or dominating the streetscape.

It retained a significant tree and achieved good ESD outcomes with generous landscaping and secluded private open space areas.

*Appropriate for Neighbourhood Character:* The Bush Suburban characteristics include less formal streetscapes dominated by vegetation, with buildings less visible behind more informal gardens, established trees, and less obvious property boundaries. Retaining established trees and a subtle building presence on the street with a setback design and additional greening at ground level.

*Adaptable and accessible design:* Unknown

*Environmental impact:* This development was reported in the planning permit application as having achieved good ESD outcomes.



Source: Google Maps (2025)



Source: Google Maps (2025)

## Development type: Townhouses

**Address:** 1-6/29 Salisbury Ave, Blackburn

**Zone:** General Residential Zone 2 (GRZ2), in Bush Suburban Character Area

**Dwelling yield:** 6 dwellings

**Development context:** In a Special Building Overlay (inundation).

### Description of development:

These townhouses are an adaptive re-use project transforming a set of 1960s single storey 1-bedroom units into contemporary 2-bedroom, 2-bath townhouses.

The original footprint is retained and these units sit comfortably within the existing leafy and residential neighbourhood character.

#### *Appropriate for Neighbourhood Character:*

The Bush Suburban characteristics include less formal streetscapes dominated by vegetation, with buildings less visible behind more informal gardens, established trees, and less obvious property boundaries. This development retains medium sized trees at the street frontage which will become more established over time, though, property boundaries are fairly formal.

*Adaptable and accessible design:* Unknown

*Environmental impact:* Makes use of existing structure, uses a light-coloured roof to absorb and reflect less heat. The design uses sustainably sourced and natural materials, high thermal insulation, and maximises natural/cross ventilation.



Source: Whitehorse City Council



Source: Google Maps (2025)

**Development type: Mult-dwelling development**

**Address:** 99-101 Carrington Rd, Box Hill

**Zone:** Residential Growth Zone 1 (RGZ1), in Garden Suburban Character Area

**Dwelling yield:** 18 dwellings

**Development context:** sits within the Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre.

It is also within Heritage Overlay 267 'Wattle House'. The Whitehorse Planning Scheme states that an application for subdivision in a Heritage Overlay should "outline how any subdivision conserves and enhances the significance of the heritage place or precinct."

**Description of development:**

This multi-dwelling development consists of 18 townhouses including 11 four-storey and 7 three-storey town houses, a communal ground floor garden area, and integration of heritage building.

Includes ESD measures 36,000 litre rainwater tank and 5m2 of rain garden.

*Appropriate for Neighbourhood Character:* This development fits within the Garden Suburban characteristics of a more formal, urbanised setting with leafy streets and simple building forms. It is also located within walking distance of the higher density urban core of Box Hill.

*Adaptable and accessible design:* Unknown

*Environmental impact:* The Design integrates a rainwater tank, rain gardens, light coloured roof, and greening at ground level.



Source: Google Maps (2025)



Source: Google Maps (2025)

**Development type:** Mid-rise apartments

**Address:** 408-410 Burwood Hwy, Vermont South

**Zone:** Residential Growth Zone 1 (RGZ1), in Garden Suburban Character Area

**Dwelling yield:** 34 dwellings

**Development context:** Located in the Burwood Highway Residential Corridor. Subsequent approval under Big Build CI 52.20 (Government Funded Housing Development)

**Description of development:**

Original permit for a four storey apartment building issued by Council in October 2012, and a five storey development approved by the State Government.

Received grant funding to deliver 34 social housing units designed for women and children escaping family violence, with proposal consent given by Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change on 17 December 2021.

The development has good street presentation within Burwood Highway corridor.

*Appropriate for Neighbourhood Character:* This development fits within the Garden Suburban characteristics of a more formal, urbanised setting with leafy streets and simple building forms, with its location on a main road being more appropriate for its size.

*Adaptable and accessible design:* As these units are social housing units, they were required to meet the Liveable Housing Design Guidelines, Silver Level, as per the National Building Code 2022. They also provide affordable housing for at risk residents.

*Environmental impact:* Unknown



Source: Whitehorse City Council



Source: Google Maps (2025)

**Development type:** High density apartments

**Address:** Burwood Brickworks Apartment Buildings Nos. 5&6, 78 Middleborough Rd, Burwood East

**Zone:** Residential Growth Zone 3, in an Activity Centre

**Dwelling yield:** 229 dwellings

**Development context:** in Burwood Heights Activity Centre. Permit issued for two attached six storey (plus basement) apartment buildings comprising 229 dwellings.

**Description of development:**

This development is a good example of building presentation and design being of a high quality, all Planning Scheme requirements being met, and apartments being of good sizes and well laid out.

There is provision of a resident car wash bay, motorcycle parking, loading bay and short term drop off bay positioned at the entrance to the car park and publicly accessible for deliveries.

The quality of the public realm is of a high standard with landscaping, plazas, shared paths, and an adjacent public open space.

*Appropriate for Neighbourhood Character:* This development sits outside of a defined character area in an Activity Centre, where higher density developments are encouraged.

*Adaptable and accessible design:* Unknown

*Environmental impact:* The design integrates solar roof panels, white surfaces to absorb and reflect less heat, and makes good use of planting at ground level.



Source: Whitehorse City Council



Source: Google Maps (2025)

## 7.4 Housing Strategy performance

The Housing Strategy aimed to support neighbourhood character through quality and appropriate design, support adaptable and accessible design, and achieve design that considers the environmental impacts of dwellings on the environment and residents.

Environmental performance of dwellings in Whitehorse is not available. It is also not possible to draw any definitive conclusion on whether the Housing Strategy has driven built outcomes of a higher design standard as encouraged in the Housing Strategy from the small number of case studies reviewed.

However, with the shift towards development in areas outside of character areas post-2014 Housing Strategy, this helps take the pressure off of development in established leafy character areas, with the proportion and ultimate number of applications shifting across character areas.

There has been a notable decrease in total applications in the Bush Suburban and Garden Suburban areas. Total applications more than doubled in areas outside of character areas, with approvals increasing from 15% to 26% of all applications.

As suggested above, this could suggest that the interest in developing within character areas was less attractive to developers and development outside of character areas more attractive, with the indirect effect of preserving more of the established character in these areas.

However, the 2019 Municipal Wide Tree Study (Part 2) <sup>15</sup> noted the challenges that residential development poses for retaining tree canopy and its incremental loss over time. It calculated the average tree canopy coverage for Whitehorse as being 20.9%. The limited change areas specified in the Housing Strategy will have had a positive effect on the retention of tree canopy, however this remains a challenge as development continues, and monitoring canopy will be important in a planning environment where more permissive deemed to comply approvals become common.

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<sup>15</sup> Ethos Urban (2019), Municipal Wide Tree Study, Part 2: Additional Analysis in Garden Suburban and Bush Suburban Character Precincts

# 8. Housing affordability

## 8.1 Housing Strategy overview

The 2014 Housing Strategy saw one of the key challenges of the next 20 years as “how to meet an increasing demand for more affordable housing across the municipality” but notes that Council has limited ability to affect the affordability of housing across the City.

Nevertheless, two overarching objectives are stated to support housing affordability:

- Increase the supply and distribution of affordable housing in the City of Whitehorse
- Reduce housing stress in the City of Whitehorse

There are 13 recommended actions under these objectives that fall into 4 general themes:

1. **Statutory and regulatory reform** – this includes the investigation of stronger statutory mechanisms to encourage more provision of affordable housing, which may include developer concessions.
2. **Strategic/land use planning** – this includes identifying suitable locations for affordable housing and affordable housing incentives (e.g., developer concessions), and a mix of housing outcomes in designated structure plans and linking substantial change areas as opportunity sites for future affordable housing projects.
3. **Council as advocates and partners** – this includes advocating to State Government to give local government a greater ability to encourage greater provision, for State to continue investing in public housing near services, and for greater access to public transport.
4. **Monitoring and implementation** – this includes monitoring ongoing need for affordable housing, performance of existing policy, and meeting with the community housing sector.

Of the 13 actions, 3 have been completed and 3 are in progress. Six recommendations are ongoing and 1 has not commenced (initiate a Council Food Security program (refer Appendix A)).

## 8.2 Trends in housing affordability

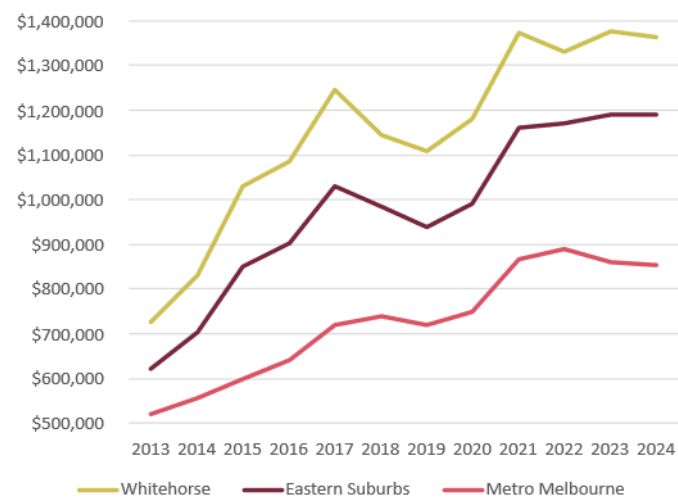
### Trends in house and rental prices

The cost of housing in Whitehorse has been increasing in line with trends across Metropolitan Melbourne, though both increases and decreases in Whitehorse have been more extreme (Figure 37). Between 2013 and 2017, median house prices increased in Whitehorse by 72% compared to 38% across Metro Melbourne. From 2017 to 2019 prices declined by 11% in Whitehorse (with prices remaining flat across Metro Melbourne) before increasing again by 24% from 2019 to 2023 (compared to 19% across Metro Melbourne).

Since COVID-19, house prices in Whitehorse saw a modest increase to 2023 compared to a small decrease across Metro Melbourne.

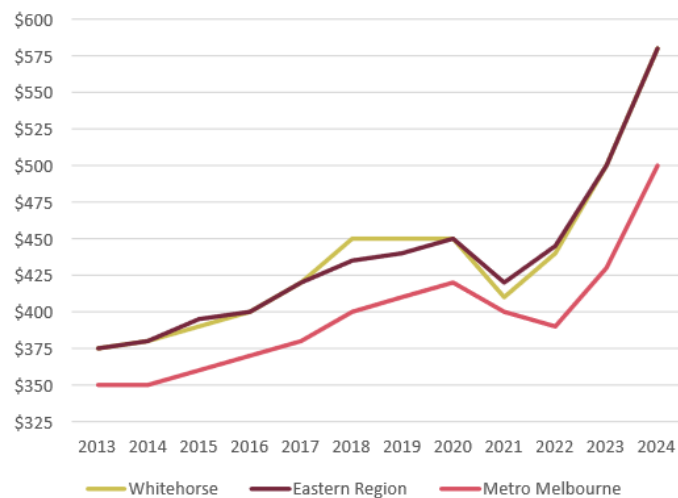
Median rental prices (houses and apartments) in Whitehorse are also higher than the Metro average and have similarly increased over time (Figure 38). Rents have seen a steadier increase compared to house prices, and a much more dramatic increase since COVID-19. The increase in housing costs, most notably the dramatic increase in rent since 2022, has resulted in declining rates of rental affordability.

Figure 37: Median house prices, 2004 to 2024



Source: Department of Transport and Planning (2025)

Figure 38: Median rents, 2013-2024



Source: Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (2025)

SGS has tracked rental affordability across Australia since 2011 looking at housing costs as a proportion of household income. Affordability scores below 100 represent an increasingly more severe unaffordability (increasingly more than 30% of household income on housing costs), and as they increase above 100 they become more affordable (increasingly less than 30% of household income on housing costs) (Table 14).

Figure 39 shows long-term trend for rental affordability across Whitehorse suburbs since 2011.<sup>16</sup> These have remained fairly steady until 2018 when all suburbs saw an increase in affordability followed by a corresponding decrease from 2021.

Compared to the median rental price across Metropolitan Melbourne, average rental affordability for Whitehorse post codes in 2025 is moderately unaffordable for most suburbs, and unaffordable (30-38% of household income on housing costs) in Surrey Hills / Mont Albert, and Vermont / Vermont South.

Unaffordability has increased in places like Burwood, Box Hill and Mitcham where rents used to be acceptable relative to income 10 years ago (Table 15). In the last 12 months Vermont/Vermont South and Surrey Hills / Mont Albert have gone from moderately unaffordable to unaffordable.

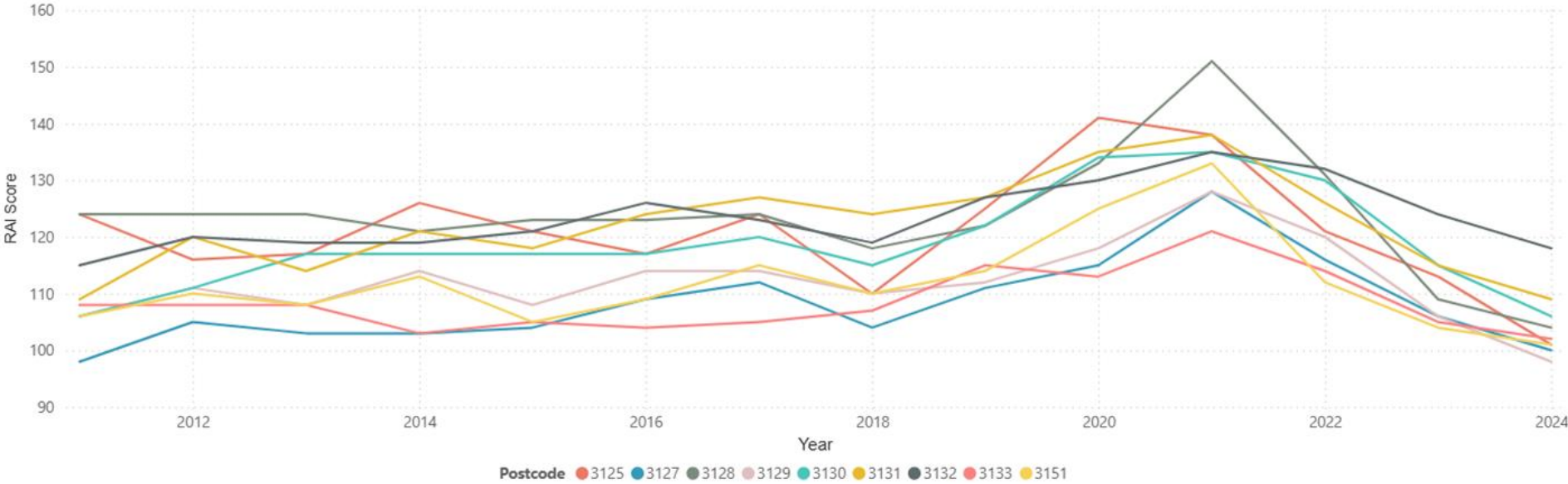
**Table 14: Rental Affordability Index (RAI) scoring**

Relative unaffordability	Share of income spent on rent	RAI score
>60% of household income	Extremely and Critically unaffordable rents	<50
38-60% of household income	Severely unaffordable rents	51-80
30-38% of household income	Unaffordable rents	81-100
25-30% of household income	Moderately unaffordable rents	101-120
20-25% of household income	Acceptable rents	121-150
15% or less of household income	Affordable rents	151-200
NA	Very Affordable rents	>200

Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2025)

<sup>16</sup> RAI data is collected at the post code level and as such some Whitehorse postcodes also extend beyond Whitehorse (e.g. Burwood and Surrey Hills).

Figure 39: Rental Affordability Index (average), Whitehorse postal codes, 2011 to 2024



Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2025)

**Table 15: Average rental affordability by Whitehorse postal code, 2015 and 2025**

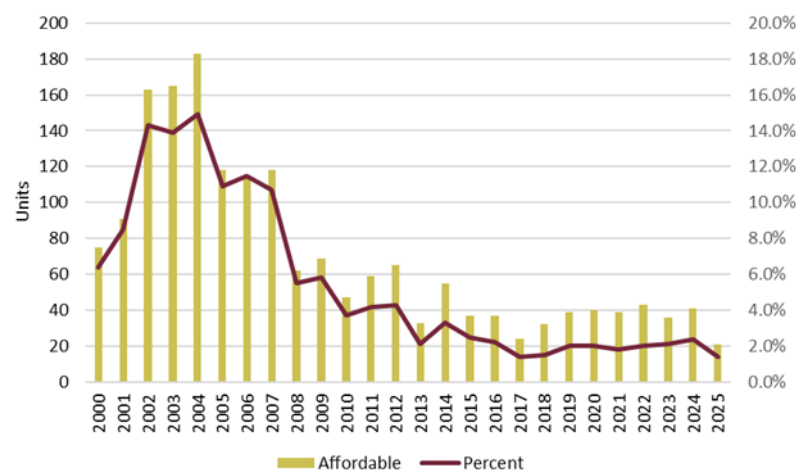
Postcode	Suburb	RAI score 2015	2015 Affordability	RAI score 2025	2025 Affordability
3125	Burwood	121	Acceptable rents	102	Moderately unaffordable rents
3127	Surrey Hills / Mont Albert	107	Moderately unaffordable rents	98	Unaffordable rents
3128	Box Hill / Box Hill South	123	Acceptable rents	111	Moderately unaffordable rents
3129	Mont Albert North / Box Hill North	115	Moderately unaffordable rents	102	Moderately unaffordable rents
3130	Blackburn / Blackburn North / Blackburn South	118	Moderately unaffordable rents	111	Moderately unaffordable rents
3131	Forest Hill / Nunawading	118	Moderately unaffordable rents	114	Moderately unaffordable rents
3132	Mitcham	128	Acceptable rents	108	Moderately unaffordable rents
3233	Vermont / Vermont South	110	Moderately unaffordable rents	95	Unaffordable rents
3151	Burwood East	114	Moderately unaffordable rents	101	Moderately unaffordable rents

Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2025)

## Need for housing assistance

Both the total number and proportion of private affordable units<sup>17</sup> in Whitehorse have decreased significantly since 2004. Figure 40 shows that total numbers have fallen from 183 units in March 2004 to 21 units in March 2025, going from 15% of the total rental stock to 1.4%.

**Figure 40: Affordable private units in Whitehorse, 2000-2025**



Source: Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (2025)

Social housing plays a crucial role in the provision of affordable housing. Despite declines in affordability the stock of social housing has declined, with the stock of public housing declining the most across Whitehorse both in raw numbers and as a proportion of total housing (Table 16).

<sup>17</sup> Defined by Homes Victoria as “affordable weekly rent is calculated as being 30 per cent of that household’s gross income plus Rent Assistance, rounded up to the nearest \$5 increment”, and includes the following household types: A single

This decline has occurred as demand for social housing across Victoria has increased. As of June 2025 there was an unmet demand of 56,234 applications across Victoria for social housing on the Victorian Housing Register. This has increased by 4,362 applications from just a year prior with over two-thirds (nearly 3,000) of new applicants qualifying for priority applications. It is important to understand that the waitlist does not represent total demand.

Estimates of demand based on income and median rents are provided using SGS’s Housing Assistance Demand (HAD) Model (see Appendix B for an explanation of this model).

**Table 16: Total public and community housing, City of Whitehorse, 2011, 2016 and 2021**

Social housing types	2011	2016	2021	Change 2011-21	% Change 2011-21
Public housing	1,128	1,082	1,062	-66	-6%
Community housing	358	385	348	-10	-3%
<b>Total*</b>	<b>1,488</b>	<b>1,466</b>	<b>1,415</b>	<b>-73</b>	<b>-5%</b>

Source: ABS Census (2011, 2016, 2021) \* Noting ABS totals do not add up. Affordable housing projects, such as 2-4 Bruce St in Box Hill, have been completed since this data.

In 2021 there was an estimated need for 8,500 affordable housing dwellings in Whitehorse, representing 12.5% of all households (Table

person receiving JobSeeker; A single person on the Parenting Payment with one child aged under five; A couple, both on JobSeeker, with two children; A couple, both on JobSeeker with four children.

17). Nearly two-thirds of this need is for households on very low incomes, including those that are homeless.

As Whitehorse City’s population continues to grow so too will the need for housing assistance. Between 2021 and 2036, the need for housing assistance is forecast to increase by 2,900 households, to a total of 11,400 (Table 17). Significantly, this growth in need is more rapid than Whitehorse City’s overall forecast growth of over 16,000 households between 2021 and 2036, driven by the deteriorating affordability of the rental market post-2021.

### Rooming houses

Declining rental affordability contributes to increased demand for smaller, shared, and short-term accommodation options, including rooming houses. This demand is due to a constrained rental market characterised by low vacancy rates.

Rooming houses play a role in supporting housing diversity and affordability through the provision of, generally, low cost and flexible accommodation. However, their development and operation within the municipality can present challenges. These include concerns regarding appropriate location, design standards, impacts on neighbourhood amenity, and whether they genuinely provide a more affordable housing option.

The 2014 Housing Strategy has 3 actions relating to rooming houses which should be carried forward for exploration in the Housing Strategy review to improve approval processes and achieve better quality outcomes for these types of accommodation.

**Table 17: Affordable housing demand by very low, low and moderate income groups, City of Whitehorse, 2021 to 2036**

	Total affordable housing demand (2021)	Total affordable housing demand (2036)	Total change
Very low income	5,300	6,500	1,200
Low income	2,100	3,100	1,000
Moderate income	1,100	1,800	700
<b>Total SAH* needs households</b>	8,500	11,400	2,900
<b>Total households</b>	67,800	83,800	16,000
<b>%age of total households</b>	<b>12.5%</b>	<b>13.6%</b>	<b>1.1%</b>

Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2024); Victoria in Future (2023), Population and household forecasts to 2036. \*SAH refers to social and affordable housing

### Council-led initiatives

Since 2014, Council has advocated for affordable housing in documents including the 2018 Student Accommodation Strategy, which called for Council to develop a definition of affordable housing, investigate value uplift in land rezoning, and investigate the granting of additional development rights in selected locations to increase supply

of affordable housing.<sup>18</sup> From 2009 through to 2025 Council has also been a member of the Eastern Affordable Housing Alliance, advocating to State Government and other providers for increased investment in affordable housing.

In 2020 Whitehorse was one of the 13 Councils that authored the Homelessness and Social Housing Charter to cooperate regionally and take local action to “address the urgent need for increased social housing and a more effective, integrated and supported homelessness service system”.<sup>19</sup>

In 2022 Council published a Minimum Supply of Social Housing Analysis that calculated the estimated need for, and undersupply of affordable housing for Whitehorse residents, with an estimated social housing shortfall of 2,570 in Whitehorse in 2021; increasing to 3,740 by 2041 if action is not taken.<sup>20</sup> This was followed by Council’s Affordable Housing Policy (2023), in which Council lays out its role as an advocate to the community, government and developers; as a facilitator and collaborator across government; and as a planner and regulator of housing development.

This policy includes a key directive to encourage and negotiate an affordable housing contribution from residential developers in certain contexts. Though this includes numerous specific objectives to be achieved, it is not a mandatory condition given the lack of support from State Government policy.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Whitehorse City Council (2018), Investigate the granting of additional development rights in selected locations to increase supply of affordable housing

<sup>19</sup> Whitehorse City Council (2020), <https://www.whitehorse.vic.gov.au/media/5041>

Most recently, in late 2024 after the Victorian Government announced its housing targets, Council made a public statement on its commitment to support adequate housing development.

### **8.3 Housing Strategy performance**

The Housing Strategy’s key objectives for housing affordability are to increase the supply and distribution of affordable housing in the City of Whitehorse, and reduce housing stress in the City of Whitehorse

Council has been active in advocacy, consultation, monitoring progress, and initiating partnerships to encourage more affordable housing outcomes. All but one of the 13 actions from the Housing Strategy are in progress, ongoing, or complete.

However, despite council’s ambitions and efforts since implementing the Housing Strategy, housing affordability in the City of Whitehorse has worsened. House prices and rents have continued to rise, particularly in the period following the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to an increase in households experiencing rental stress. The demand for housing assistance is growing at a rate that exceeds population growth. At the same time, the stock of public and social housing has declined in both absolute and relative terms, further compounding affordability challenges.

<sup>20</sup> Whitehorse City Council (2022), Minimum Supply of Social Housing Analysis - Whitehorse City Council

<sup>21</sup> The policy states that Council will encourage an affordable housing contribution through the implementation of an affordable housing local planning policy, however as this approach was not progressed, implementation has relied on voluntary negotiation rather than a formal policy mechanism.

The affordability challenges reflect similar trends across metropolitan Melbourne and beyond. Many of the factors influencing housing affordability and the supply of social and affordable housing are largely outside of the control of local government.

This does not imply the Housing Strategy has been ineffective. There has been a shift in housing supply towards smaller and more diverse dwellings. Without this shift affordability in Whitehorse may have worsened even further.

# 9. Conclusion

What should Council be considering as it develops its next Housing Strategy?

## 9.1 The context for the next generation of strategy

While the period from 2014 to 2023 was characterised by gradual changes in the broad policy landscape in Victoria, the period since 2023 can be characterised as a period of more dramatic change. The release of Victoria’s Housing Statement in September 2023 foreshadowed initiatives aimed at “reforming Victoria’s planning system to boost housing supply in every corner of the state.” These included:

- New facilitated approval streams for significant residential development provided through the Development Facilitation Program.
- New planning controls around activity centres.
- New and more permissive provisions for second dwellings.
- Increased use of deemed to comply provisions.
- Legislative reform to implement the Red Tape Commissioner’s recommendations regarding the planning system.

The subsequent Plan for Victoria, released in February 2025, has “Housing for all Victorians” as one of its five pillars. Its key action under this pillar was to identify new housing targets for “realisable development capacity,” with Whitehorse’s target being 76,500 houses by 2051; representing capacity of 100% of the existing number of dwellings (at 76,000 in 2025).

The Plan’s discussion of activity centres is consistent with those previously identified in Whitehorse, but it considers these centres primarily in the

context of their role as centres for housing supply. It identifies ten priority precincts, which include Whitehorse’s two Suburban Rail Loop Precincts. The plan also includes a list of activity centres for which the State Government will take the lead for planning, which in Whitehorse includes “Blackburn station, Nunawading Station, and Mitcham Station.”

These documents appear to reflect a broader view that planning is a significant barrier to housing supply. From this perspective, more permissive planning controls are seen as a key response to improving housing affordability. This is controversial, and there are risks associated with this approach. In practice, however, the focus placed on increasing housing supply has meant other priorities – neighbourhood character, urban tree canopy cover, 20-minute neighbourhoods, and public participation – have been seen as of reduced importance.

Although the guidance from the State Government on the preparation housing strategies has not yet formally changed, the official Practice Notes on planning for housing will almost certainly be updated to reduce or remove the role of neighbourhood character assessment in the development of local government housing strategies.

These changes are already apparent in the introduction of the new higher-growth Housing Choice and Transport Zone, the increased standardisation of planning provisions relating to housing, and the introduction of various special fast-tracked assessment pathways for particular types of planning permit applications.

The State Government's reforms have been complex and have rolled out in multiple successive waves. They can be summarised as generally making the provisions more permissive, and constraining both the decision-making powers of local government, and the opportunities for input by the local community. These changes have included the removal of much of the local customisation of residential zones that was central to the implementation of the Housing Strategy.

Other special tools used by Whitehorse, such as the Significant Landscape Overlays, remain in place. The future of Significant Landscape Overlay 9 (SLO9) is currently uncertain given its interim status, although other overlays are permanent. However, the increased codification and permissiveness in the standard statewide planning provisions may lead to conflict between the expectations raised by the State provisions compared to those of Whitehorse.

At the same time, outcomes that previously featured strongly as a shared priority for both local and state government – including protection of character and urban forest – are now subordinate to housing supply.

Against this background it is notable that the State Government's recent focus on increasing housing supply via liberalised and streamlined planning settings represents a very different approach to that of the Housing Strategy. The State policy agenda is seeking to increase development capacity throughout much of Melbourne's established areas through new zones and revised development provisions. The potential risks or disbenefits of this approach – more dispersed housing growth, impacts on character, and on canopy tree cover – are increasingly viewed as secondary considerations by the State Government.

Since its Housing Statement in 2023, the State Government has gazetted a series of changes to housing provisions. These have dramatically altered the approach to planning for housing, in that:

- **They considerably narrow the scope of relevant considerations when assessing housing.** The changes to residential development provisions, for example, drastically narrow the regard that can be had to local policy, site context, and neighbourhood character when making decisions.
- **They reduce local customisation.** This is partly a result of the abovementioned narrowing of discretion, but the removal of localised schedules to zones also reduces the extent to which quantitative development standards can be altered to reflect local circumstances.
- **They reduce objector notice and review rights.** The increased use of deemed to comply provisions, and narrowing of notice and review provisions more generally, considerably reduced the scope for third party involvement in the system, especially at the appeal stage.
- **They make development standards more permissive.** The revised residential standards include envelopes allowing higher buildings close to boundaries, for example, and the Housing Choice and Transport Zone, when applied in Whitehorse, will allow higher built forms than previously permissible.
- **They shift decision-making power to the Minister.** While the overwhelming majority of decision on residential development proposals are still made by local government – albeit within constrained parameters as noted above – some of the pathways for significant development have been made by the Minister for Planning as the responsible authority.

## 9.2 What's next

### Challenges for Whitehorse's new housing strategy

Developing a new housing strategy in this new context presents clear challenges for Council.

Housing affordability remains a pressing issue, consistent with trends across the state. The State Government's focus on increasing supply is one response to this issue, and many of the State Government's reforms will flow through to Whitehorse's planning framework through the standard statewide provisions. Assuming the resulting increases in housing capacity do not significantly reduce housing costs, Whitehorse will be left with a similar challenge to that it faced in 2014: how to make inroads into housing affordability at a local level when this is a national and even international challenge.

At the same time, this new environment will constrain Council's ability to act upon the other local priorities with regards to housing. There have already been changes that reduce the level of protection for tree canopy and landscape outcomes under the standard statewide residential development provisions. Whitehorse's Significant Landscape Overlays provide some measure of protection from the impacts of these changes, but it is unclear how they will operate alongside more permissive codified residential development provisions. The future of SLO9, in particular, is unknown given its temporary status. This could challenge Council's ability to maintain and increase urban tree canopy to meet canopy targets even as the risks to human health of extreme weather events make these protections even more important.

More generally, the new housing strategy will need to be developed with an awareness of the State Government's narrowing focus on capacity and supply at the expense of other outcomes including character, contextual

response, heritage, landscape and environmental outcomes (such as environmentally sustainable design (ESD), habitat and urban cooling). Implementation actions that involve new character-based controls, whether through policy or provisions such as the Neighbourhood Character Overlay, are likely to face high barriers in terms of their strategic justification.

The State Government's more permissive approach is likely to encourage more growth away from the centres identified in the current Housing Strategy and by State Government. If this does occur it will increase the challenge of providing infrastructure and community facilities in a cost effective and efficient/equitable way for both Council and residents.

In preparing the new strategy, Council needs to be cognisant of the State Government's current priorities and work within their directions regarding the operation of planning provisions.

### How can Council respond?

Despite these challenges, there are options available to Council to advocate for its vision for housing. These include:

- Monitoring and analysis of past and current housing outcomes;
- Maximising the use of the existing tools that remain within the planning system;
- Opportunities to influence housing outcomes through non-regulatory responses; and
- Advocacy for change.

The remainder of this chapter discusses various actions.

### Monitoring and analysis of current and future housing outcomes

One of the key challenges in shaping housing policy at the local level is the lack of consolidated, readily available data to track housing outcomes.

Between 2005 and 2016 the Victorian Government collected detailed housing supply data (the Housing Development Dataset or HDD) but has not done so for the past 10 years.

A future housing strategy should consider how the intended outcomes might be measured, and recommend appropriate monitoring protocols, such as:

- Collecting key development data, including dwelling approvals and completions by location, typology and size.
- Although likely to be more difficult, data on housing design quality and neighbourhood / landscape character outcomes would be useful.
- Review the alignment of the specified purpose of Change Areas, expected housing outcomes by type, and spatial application to ensure that desired outcomes align with revised planning guidance for residential zones.
- Monitoring of tree canopy outcomes.
- Monitoring housing development in locations with poor access to public transport. The Whitehorse Transport Background Study (2025) indicates that vehicle traffic will continue to increase under a business as usual or even moderate change approach. Conversely, a sustainable change scenario, as per the Housing Strategy, which encourages development in existing and well-serviced areas, can deliver a reduction.

#### *Monitoring of amended proposals under codified controls*

Anecdotally, since the codification of residential provisions Whitehorse and other councils have reported instances of new applications being relodged on sites where permits have already been granted, seeking to utilise favourable aspects of the new controls. Council should closely monitor these outcomes in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

In quantitative terms, it would be useful to understand:

- How many applications are essentially relodged applications for previously approved dwellings.
- The impact upon dwelling yield – for example, have re-lodgements under codified controls resulted in extra dwellings?

From a qualitative point of view, it would be useful for Council to gather case studies showing the outcomes of these kinds of re-lodgements.

Being able to document these outcomes will be beneficial in understanding the costs versus benefits of the recent reforms. If these new applications result in significant extra yield, then it could be argued the reforms are achieving the desired effect. However, if the dwelling yields are unchanged, the detrimental impacts on character and landscape outcomes are, arguably, more difficult to justify.

## **Harnessing existing opportunities in the Victoria Planning Provisions**

### *Developing a planning narrative in the Municipal Planning Strategy*

Council can outline a clear vision for Whitehorse in its Municipal Planning Strategy. This allows Council to develop and embed a narrative about the strategic planning challenges for Whitehorse. This is, by design, at a higher-level than other local content in the scheme and therefore does not need to be as tightly constrained by the technicalities of implementation. It should also be more enduring and not as influenced by short-term planning trends.

A strong vision of desired outcomes can serve to anchor subsequent planning changes, and will not be as constrained by the specific challenges of previous work. While there is less opportunity for community input in the new planning context (e.g., objector notice and review rights), this is a key area where community input is needed.

### *Ensure the Housing Strategy presents a robust long-term vision*

Just as the Municipal Planning Strategy should not be overly constrained by short-term planning trends, the new Housing Strategy needs to present a robust long-term vision.

There is a balance to be struck here. A successful strategy needs to be developed with attention to the available implementation tools. At the same time, however, the strategy will have a long life: the 2014 Housing Strategy has a 20-year time horizon and has lasted more than a decade before an update. By contrast, the dramatic changes of direction at State Government level since 2023 show how quickly the prevailing approach to planning can change.

In developing a new housing strategy Council should not become fixated on the limitation of the current policy environment, which may be subject to further shifts and changes. Rather, it should continue to identify a clear

vision for the preferred housing outcomes in the municipality, and collect evidence to demonstrate the benefits of this approach.

### *Maximise use of available overlays*

Council can still use additional overlays to identify and protect areas with special qualities, including matters such as character and landscape attributes. While it is likely that there will be challenges in applying new controls of this type in the immediate future, they remain a vital planning tool.

Indeed, there is a strong argument that the codification of residential development standards have increased the role of such controls. The removal of much of the generalised discretion from residential development provisions makes it more important to respond to local circumstances through other controls.

New strategic work – including but not limited to the housing strategy – should continue to identify areas where specialised responses are needed but cannot be achieved under the default standard planning provisions. These should be maintained as potential action items even if not immediately supported by the State Government.

## **Non-regulatory responses**

The 2014 Housing Strategy contained a number of non-regulatory actions, some of which have been completed, and many of which are in-progress or ongoing. The constrained range of planning responses available to Council has increased the importance of policy responses that sit outside the regulatory planning system. These actions are outlined in Appendix A, with added recommendations for the incomplete actions as to whether they should be retained or rescoped.

## Advocacy

Councils and the community can continue to advocate for a more expansive and nuanced approach to planning for population growth. The idea that other planning objectives as a barrier to housing supply should be challenged. The performance of the Housing Strategy over the last decade suggests increases in capacity, and directing growth to preferred locations, can be achieved without sacrificing key objectives, such as liveability, quality and environmental performance. The Housing Strategy has also been successful at guiding growth into activity centres, maximising access to services and transport.

The information-gathering suggested above will be important to support future advocacy. For example, Council's ability to argue for maintaining a broader conception of planning objectives (e.g., character, contextual response, heritage, landscape and environmental outcomes) will be greatly enhanced if supply outcomes are healthy.

Possible areas for advocacy include:

- Asking the State Government to provide details of modelling of new codified development standards, especially with regard to tree canopy outcomes.
- The introduction of standard planning tools to require development contributions and/or affordable housing contributions from all forms of infill development.
- Highlighting the need for state funding to support social and community infrastructure, transport upgrades, and open space required to support desired levels of housing growth.
- Winding back of deemed to comply reforms where it can be demonstrated that these are resulting in poor or perverse outcomes (e.g. larger and more expensive dwellings rather than smaller and more affordable dwellings, or downgrading of design that does not improve yields).
- Many councils will share similar challenges. There is therefore opportunity for coordinated messaging by the local government sector, such as through the Municipal Association of Victoria.

# Appendix A: Whitehorse Housing Strategy 2014: Actions Status, November 2025

Action No.	Action	Council Department	Priority (as specified in Housing Strategy)	Status (November 2025)	Incomplete action to be retained or rescoped?
Housing location					
1	<p>The areas identified for Limited Change to be zoned 'Neighbourhood Residential' in the Whitehorse Planning Scheme. Separate Schedules varying ResCode standards may be applied to different character area types. The following variations are proposed to be included in the Schedule to the Zone:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minimum subdivision area</li> <li>▪ Permit requirement for one dwelling on a lot</li> <li>▪ The number of dwellings on a lot</li> <li>▪ Maximum building height</li> <li>▪ Setbacks (front, rear, side)</li> <li>▪ Site coverage</li> <li>▪ Permeable surfaces</li> <li>▪ Landscaping</li> <li>▪ Walls on boundaries</li> <li>▪ Private open space</li> <li>▪ Front fence height</li> <li>▪ Application requirements</li> </ul>	Planning & Building	High	Complete	NA

Action No.	Action	Council Department	Priority (as specified in Housing Strategy)	Status (November 2025)	Incomplete action to be retained or rescoped?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Decision guidelines.</li> </ul>				
2	<p>Investigate areas for further controls via the following overlays, where appropriate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Neighbourhood Character Overlay</li> <li>▪ Heritage Overlay</li> <li>▪ Significant Landscape Overlay</li> </ul>	Planning & Building	Medium	In progress	Rescope in light of new guidance from State Government (including likely Practice Note review)
3	<p>The areas identified for Natural Change to be zoned 'General Residential' in the Whitehorse Planning Scheme. Separate Schedules may be applied to different character area types.</p> <p>The following variations are included in the Schedule to the Zone:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Permit requirement for one dwelling on a lot</li> <li>▪ Maximum building height for dwelling or residential building</li> <li>▪ Site coverage</li> <li>▪ Permeability</li> <li>▪ Landscaping</li> <li>▪ Setbacks (Front, side and rear)</li> <li>▪ Walls on boundaries</li> <li>▪ Private open space</li> <li>▪ Front fence height</li> <li>▪ Application requirements</li> <li>▪ Decision guidelines</li> </ul>	Planning & Building	High	Complete	NA

Action No.	Action	Council Department	Priority (as specified in Housing Strategy)	Status (November 2025)	Incomplete action to be retained or rescoped?
4	<p>Investigate the following measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Investigate the options for internal modifications to existing dwellings to create additional or adaptable dwellings.</li> <li>▪ Promote good quality housing outcomes - i.e. continue the City of Whitehorse Built Environment Awards, prepare information to demonstrate good design outcomes, and work with universities and other associations to develop potential ideas and solutions.</li> <li>▪ Encourage new development applications to include landscape guidelines that show how the retention of existing vegetation where possible will be achieved, at the outset of the design process.</li> </ul>	Planning & Building	Ongoing	Ongoing	Retain – continue to encourage sustainable, adaptable, and of high design quality.
5	<p>The areas identified for Substantial Change are recommended to be zoned as Residential Growth in the Whitehorse Planning Scheme. Separate Schedules to the Zone may be applied to different parts of the Substantial Change Areas with varying provisions to achieve specific preferred character outcomes where it is considered necessary.</p> <p>In some instances, particularly in areas with adopted structure plans or urban design frameworks, it may be appropriate to review the residential zoning to ensure that future zoning is tailored to deliver the objectives sought by the relevant document.</p> <p>The following variations may be included in the Schedule to the Residential Growth Zone:</p>	Planning & Building	High	Complete	NA

Action No.	Action	Council Department	Priority (as specified in Housing Strategy)	Status (November 2025)	Incomplete action to be retained or rescoped?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Maximum building height requirement for a dwelling or residential building               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Setbacks (front, side and rear)</li> <li>▪ Site coverage</li> <li>▪ Permeability</li> <li>▪ Landscaping</li> <li>▪ Walls on boundaries</li> <li>▪ Private open space</li> <li>▪ Front fence heights</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Application requirements</li> <li>▪ Decision guidelines</li> </ul>				
6	<p>Implement as appropriate in Substantial Change areas</p> <p>Place making strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A monitoring and delivery program regarding the adequacy and performance / service levels of community and public infrastructure</li> </ul>	Planning & Building Community Development City Works	Medium	In progress	Retain
<b>Housing Diversity</b>					
7	Update Clause 21.06 'Housing' in the Municipal Strategic Statement to ensure consistency with this Housing Strategy 2014	Planning & Building	High	Complete	NA

Action No.	Action	Council Department	Priority (as specified in Housing Strategy)	Status (November 2025)	Incomplete action to be retained or rescoped?
8	Update the local policy at Clause 22.03 'Residential Development' to ensure consistency with the policy objectives and directions for substantial, limited and natural change areas.	Planning & Building	High	Complete	NA
9	Promote activity centres with high accessibility, offering a range of services and providing a high level of amenity to residents as key locations for housing diversity.	Planning & Building	Ongoing	Ongoing	Retain – becomes all the more important as these areas continue to host more residents.
10	Translate the three housing change areas into the new residential zones, introducing Schedules to reflect neighbourhood character and development objectives, in the following way: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 'Neighbourhood Residential Zone' to be applied to Limited Change Areas</li> <li>▪ 'General Residential Zone' to be applied to Natural Change Areas</li> <li>▪ 'Residential Growth Zone' to be applied to Substantial Change Areas.</li> </ul>	Planning & Building	High	Complete	NA
11	Support the renovation and redevelopment of single houses in Limited Change Areas as a means of providing accommodation for larger household types and choice for other households	Planning & Building	Ongoing	Ongoing	Retain
12	In negotiations with developers of student housing, advocate for better housing outcomes drawing on approaches used by other municipalities	Community Development	Ongoing	Ongoing	Consider removal to streamline – this is a

Action No.	Action	Council Department	Priority (as specified in Housing Strategy)	Status (November 2025)	Incomplete action to be retained or rescoped?
	(i.e. City of Melbourne) and the objectives of the Student Accommodation Policy in Clause 22.14 of the Whitehorse Planning Scheme.	Planning & Building Environmental Health			valid ongoing action but is also regular activity for council statutory planning team.
13	Maintain relationships with Deakin University Burwood Campus and Box Hill Institute of TAFE regarding the housing needs of current and future students.	Planning & Building Community Development	Ongoing	Ongoing	Retain
14	In line with the Student Accommodation Policy encourage appropriate student housing close to the university campuses in a form that respects the existing or preferred character of the area.	Planning & Building	Ongoing	Ongoing	Retain
15	Continue to liaise with the community housing sector and service providers on an as needed basis to exchange information and research regarding the housing needs and trends of special needs groups.	Planning & Building Community Development	Ongoing	Ongoing	Retain
16	Monitor development and housing and demographic trends every five years to understand housing supply and uptake. This should include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Dwelling characteristics (ABS Census Data)</li> <li>▪ Tenure type – occupied private dwellings (ABS Census Data)</li> </ul>	Planning & Building Community Development	Ongoing	Ongoing	Retain

Action No.	Action	Council Department	Priority (as specified in Housing Strategy)	Status (November 2025)	Incomplete action to be retained or rescoped?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Dwelling structure by household composition and family composition (ABS Census Data)</li> <li>▪ Gross household income by household composition (ABS Census Data)</li> <li>▪ Median property price for houses, units and apartments (A Guide to Property Values)</li> <li>▪ Median weekly rental price by housing type (Rental Report, Department of Housing Victoria)</li> <li>▪ UDP Data (Department of Planning and Community Development)</li> <li>▪ .id Forecast (City of Whitehorse)</li> </ul>				
17	Implement a co-ordinated development data collection system in order to track development outcomes and trends.	Planning & Building	Medium	In progress	Retain – See work undertaken by Boroondara in this area.
18	<p>Prepare a Housing Strategy Update / Implementation Report every five years and circulate to relevant Council departments. This report should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Updated population and demographic profile and projections</li> <li>▪ Assessment of dwelling mix: dwelling type and tenure</li> <li>▪ Analysis of building and planning permit data: location and type of housing development</li> </ul>	Planning & Building	Ongoing	Not commenced	Retain

Action No.	Action	Council Department	Priority (as specified in Housing Strategy)	Status (November 2025)	Incomplete action to be retained or rescoped?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Site and locational characteristics of development applications and constructed dwellings.</li> </ul>				
19	Prepare a summary sheet of the key findings and directions in the Whitehorse Housing Strategy 2014 and circulate to Council Officers, local developers, industry representatives and the community.	Planning & Building	High	Complete	NA
<b>Housing Affordability</b>					
20	Investigate stronger, effective statutory mechanisms to encourage more affordable housing provision, including reviewing the success of processes implemented by other local governments.	Planning & Building	Medium	Complete	NA
21	<p>Continue to identify opportunities for affordable housing in designated structure plans including specific location, localised need and design, and incentives for developers, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying specific housing needs and suitable locations for sub-categories of affordable housing such as student accommodation, key worker housing, aged care facilities, etc.;</li> <li>Identifying suitable land/airspace for affordable housing, including Council land, State Government land and major development sites;</li> <li>Identifying specific locations where developer concessions could be provided where affordable housing is included as part of the development (e.g. in locations adjacent to employment or transport);</li> </ul>	Planning & Building Community Development	Ongoing	In progress	Retain – also work with/advocate to State Government for opportunities within the SRL precincts.

Action No.	Action	Council Department	Priority (as specified in Housing Strategy)	Status (November 2025)	Incomplete action to be retained or rescoped?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Encourage a mix of low cost rental accommodation (through registered housing associations) as well as areas of greater diversity/density.</li> <li>▪ Liaise with State Government, Places Victoria, Metropolitan Planning Authority, housing associations/ providers and other relevant parties to highlight substantial change housing areas and Structure Plan opportunity sites as appropriate locations for future affordable housing projects.</li> </ul>				
22	Advocate to State Government to provide local government more control over local planning to encourage more affordable housing provision.	Planning & Building	Ongoing	In progress	Retain
23	Advocate to the Office of Housing for the continued renewal of public housing in the municipality, including strategies to reduce concentration except where support services are easily accessible, and incorporate public housing in other areas, particularly near activity centres.	Community Development	Ongoing	In progress	Retain
24	Meet with the community housing sector on an as needs basis and provide information regarding updated housing data and research, and seek their feedback. This information should feed into a regular review of the effectiveness of the housing policy, and the affordable housing policy.	Community Development	Ongoing	Ongoing	Retain
25	Continue to implement the coordinated approach to Council's regulation of rooming houses between the Environmental Health, Planning and	Planning & Building	Ongoing	Ongoing	Retain

Action No.	Action	Council Department	Priority (as specified in Housing Strategy)	Status (November 2025)	Incomplete action to be retained or rescoped?
	Building Departments and extend this approach to other specialised housing types where required.	Environmental Health			
26	Advocate to State Government for consistent regulations for the assessment of rooming houses, requiring all statutory and safety assessments to be assessed through the Building Regulations as opposed to the Department of Justice.	Planning & Building Environmental Health	Ongoing	Complete	NA
27	Provide adequate resources to monitor and engage with rooming house owners and managers of other specialised housing types to ensure stock is registered, well maintained and complies with regulations.	Planning & Building Environmental Health	Ongoing	Ongoing	Retain
28	Monitor and evaluate the use and effectiveness of the Housing Affordability Policy, particularly in inclusion of affordable housing in new developments.	Planning & Building Community Development	Ongoing	Complete	NA
29	Monitor housing stress for example, through community surveys. Surveys should include identifying access, adequacy and transport to employment, service costs. Review Council's role in this area as appropriate.	Community Development	Ongoing	Ongoing	Review – consider whether efforts so far have yielded significant actionable insight.

Action No.	Action	Council Department	Priority (as specified in Housing Strategy)	Status (November 2025)	Incomplete action to be retained or rescoped?
30	Collate and analyse ABS and specialist housing data every 5 years to monitor the supply of specialist accommodation and changing trends.	Planning & Building Community Development	Ongoing	Ongoing	Retain
31	Initiate a Council Food Security program, including examining the extension of community gardens, including associated training and assistance.	Planning & Building Community Development Arts & Recreation Development Engineering & Environmental Services	Ongoing	Not commenced	Rescope – investigate partnering with community/NFP organisations that already work in this space and seek to enhance their impact.
32	Continue to advocate for improved public transport across the City.	Planning & Building Engineering & Environmental Services	Ongoing	Ongoing	Retain – also seek to continually improve active transport links starting with areas of higher residential and job densities.
Housing Design					

Action No.	Action	Council Department	Priority (as specified in Housing Strategy)	Status (November 2025)	Incomplete action to be retained or rescoped?
33	Amend the Municipal Strategic Statement to provide policy support for improving the design quality of residential development in the municipality.	Planning & Building	High	Complete	NA
34	Implement the Neighbourhood Character Precinct Brochures with Preferred Character Statements and Design Guidelines to provide guidance and support for future residential development and assessments.	Planning & Building	Ongoing	Complete	NA
35	Investigate two identified precincts for potential additional controls: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Precinct Garden Suburban 16 (GS16), which requires detailed survey and analysis to determine its suitability for further Neighbourhood Character controls; and</li> <li>▪ Precinct Bush Suburban 9 (BS9), which includes several areas that may be suitable for further Significant Landscape Overlay controls.</li> </ul>	Planning & Building	Medium	In progress	Retain
36	Provide targeted training to staff and Councillors to enhance skills in, and awareness of, design principles and practice.	Planning & Building	Ongoing	Not commenced	Retain, but rescope to reflect role design outcomes may have with recent State policy changes.
37	Prepare and adopt design guidelines for identified opportunity sites to ensure their redevelopment positively contributes to their surrounding context, provides high quality and innovative building design and	Planning & Building	Ongoing	Ongoing	Retain

Action No.	Action	Council Department	Priority (as specified in Housing Strategy)	Status (November 2025)	Incomplete action to be retained or rescoped?
	facilitates high levels of residential amenity for new and adjoining residents.				
38	Engage Council’s Urban Designers to provide advice on developments in substantial change areas.	Planning & Building	Ongoing	Ongoing	Retain
39	Promote these actions through a community awareness program.	Planning & Building	Ongoing	In progress	Retain
40	Work with the State Government to plan for the potential impacts of climate change within the City of Whitehorse.	Planning & Building Engineering & Environmental Services	Ongoing	Ongoing	Retain
41	Continue to include Water Sensitive Urban Design in the pre-application and planning permit assessment stages of the planning process for housing developments.	Planning & Building	Ongoing	Ongoing	Retain – although note that this is core business through standard statewide planning provisions.
42	Investigate programs and initiatives to broker the retrofitting of older less efficient housing to reduce energy and water consumption and improve thermal performance.	Planning & Building Engineering & Environmental	Low	Not commenced	Retain

Action No.	Action	Council Department	Priority (as specified in Housing Strategy)	Status (November 2025)	Incomplete action to be retained or rescoped?
		Services Capital Works			
43	Continue to advocate to the State Government and the Australian Building Code Board to strengthen environmental performance requirements for all new developments.	Planning & Building	Ongoing	Ongoing	Retain
44	Develop a program of initiatives to educate and inform the community about ESD initiatives that they may incorporate into new and existing dwellings.	Planning & Building Engineering & Environmental Services City Works	Low	Complete	NA
45	Provide information to local residents and local development industry representatives regarding the content and requirements of the municipality regarding environmental and landscape overlays.	Planning & Building	Medium	Complete	NA
46	Prepare educational material regarding native vegetation protection for property owners and developers.	Planning & Building	Medium	Complete	NA
47	Promote the use of the Liveable Housing Design Guidelines to new home owners and developers (noting that other regulations, such as the building regulations, must also be complied with).	Planning & Building	Ongoing	Not commenced	Retain

Action No.	Action	Council Department	Priority (as specified in Housing Strategy)	Status (November 2025)	Incomplete action to be retained or rescoped?
48	Encourage and promote examples of housing design that enable future adaptation or modify existing dwellings to meet changing needs with limited current and future expense.	Planning & Building	Ongoing	Not commenced	Consider removal – may require disproportionate effort for minimal influence
49	Promote, through the Built Environment Awards and the Building Environment Education Program, examples of well designed housing.	Planning & Building	Ongoing	Complete	NA

# Appendix B: Housing Assistance Demand (HAD) model

The HAD model estimates the number of households experiencing rental stress, the number of people experiencing homelessness, and the number of households in social housing. It does not include mortgage stress.

The results are interpreted as the need for housing assistance, i.e. the demand for social and affordable housing (SAH).

In analysing future demand for SAH, this type of housing is viewed as a form of essential infrastructure.

## Defining levels of housing stress

The impact of rising housing costs on households can be measured in different ways. One of these is through housing stress, specifically rental stress, where lower income households experiencing housing stress are counted based on the proportion of their income that is spent on rental housing. Households are said to be in rental stress if they have moderate, low or very low

incomes, and spend 30% or more of their income on housing. The prevalence of rental stress is likely to increase as the population grows.

The **number of households in rental stress** is measured to provide an estimate of how much social and affordable housing is needed. Most households in housing stress would require housing assistance to access housing at an affordable rate. Only some people at moderate incomes that are in housing stress may require housing assistance, while lower income households are more likely to require housing assistance.

**Homeless** people (as defined by the ABS), who are considered in acute need of housing assistance, are accounted for separate to the measure for rental stress. People who are experiencing homeless all require housing assistance. The ABS defines homelessness as including people in highly overcrowded dwellings, staying temporarily with others without a fixed address, and those living in boarding houses as well as people

sleeping rough. It is noted that the ABS typically undercount the prevalence of homelessness.

**Social housing** is also counted separately and comprises households in public and community housing provided by community housing organisations. Households in social housing pay lower than 30% of their income on rent and so are not technically in housing stress. However, they do need housing assistance and would most likely be in housing stress without social housing services, and so are included as contributing to social and affordable housing demand.

#### **What is rental stress?**

Rental stress is where a moderate (or lower) income household's rental payments are so high that they must compromise life's necessities such as food, health care, or education.

**Moderate housing stress** is when a household must spend more than 30% of their income on rent.

**Severe housing stress** is when a household must spend more than 50% of their income on rent.

Social and affordable housing is appropriate for **very low, low and moderate-income households** in rental stress. It is not appropriate for high-income households because higher housing costs are unlikely to impact their ability to pay for necessities.

#### **Measuring demand for social and affordable housing**

SGS's HAD model estimates the number of households that are:

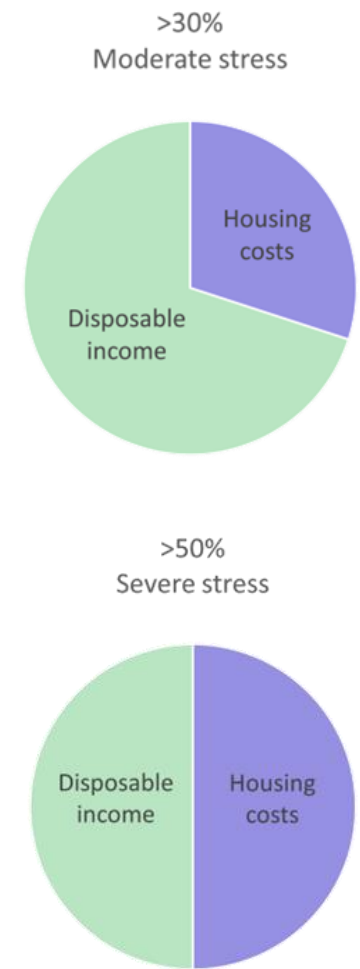
- Experiencing rental stress (moderate or severe stress),
- Experiencing homelessness (acute need of housing assistance), and
- Living in social housing (who would be in rental stress if they did not receive housing assistance).

These households are used as a base to measure the level of need for housing assistance with some adjustments for the likely movements of incomes and rents, which is interpreted as the demand for social and affordable housing units.

The HAD model estimates the number of households experiencing rental stress due to financial constraints only, and only focuses on low-income households who cannot comfortably afford rents in the private market (paying more than 30% of their income on rent).

The model does not account for mortgage stress (households paying more than 30% of their income on mortgages for properties in which they live). While high mortgages may impact on the funds households have available for discretionary as well as essential purchases, households in mortgage stress generally have more economic assets and have the options of selling their home, and so are regarded as less in need of housing assistance.

Affordable housing is housing, including social housing, that is appropriate for the needs of low-income households. These households are differentiated under three income bands: very low, low or moderate incomes. These income bands are defined by the Governor in Council Order made under S3AB of the Planning and Environment Act 1987. For modelling purposes, these incomes are deflated to be consistent with reported incomes in the 2021 Census.



# Appendix C: Suburb level demographic data

## Population by suburb

**Table 18: Total population, by suburb, City of Whitehorse, 2016 and 2021**

Suburb	2016	2021	Total change	Average annual growth rate	Median age 2021
Blackburn	13,887	14,383	496	0.70%	40
Blackburn North	7,427	7,559	132	0.35%	39
Blackburn South	10,760	10,881	121	0.22%	42
Box Hill	12,303	14,888	2585	3.89%	33
Box Hill North	11,981	12,309	328	0.54%	39
Box Hill South	8,486	8,439	-47	-0.11%	39
Burwood	15,438	15,143	-295	-0.39%	33
Burwood East	10,348	10,712	364	0.69%	41
Forest Hill	10,833	10,838	5	0.01%	42
Mitcham	16,089	16,704	615	0.75%	39
Mont Albert	4,908	4,917	9	0.04%	42
Mont Albert North	5,487	5,586	99	0.36%	43

Suburb	2016	2021	Total change	Average annual growth rate	Median age 2021
Nunawading	11,826	12,305	479	0.80%	39
Surrey Hills	13,440	13,448	8	0.01%	42
Vermont	10,370	10,896	526	0.99%	40
Vermont South	11,721	11,917	196	0.33%	46
<b>LGA total</b>	<b>175,293</b>	<b>180,938</b>	<b>5645</b>	<b>0.64%</b>	<b>39</b>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021, Table Builder – Counting Persons, Place of Enumeration.

Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016, Table Builder – Counting Persons, Place of Enumeration.

Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021, Quick Stats – accessed for each suburb 13 November 2025.

**Table 19: Age groups by suburb, City of Whitehorse, 2016 and 2021**

Suburb	Age groups	2016	2021	Total change	2021 share of total pop.	AAGR
Blackburn	Children and youth (0-24 yrs)	4,223	4,292	-69	29.4%	-0.3%
	Working age (25-64 yrs)	7,552	7,158	394	52.5%	1.1%
	Seniors (65+)	2,620	2,438	182	18.2%	1.5%
Blackburn North	Children and youth (0-24 yrs)	2,419	2,426	-7	32.0%	-0.1%
	Working age (25-64 yrs)	3,952	3,857	95	52.3%	0.5%
	Seniors (65+)	1,183	1,146	37	15.7%	0.6%
Blackburn South	Children and youth (0-24 yrs)	3,200	3,249	-49	29.4%	-0.3%
	Working age (25-64 yrs)	5,376	5,273	103	49.4%	0.4%
	Seniors (65+)	2,306	2,251	55	21.2%	0.5%
Box Hill	Children and youth (0-24 yrs)	4,031	3,802	229	27.1%	1.2%
	Working age (25-64 yrs)	8,567	6,778	1,789	57.5%	4.8%
	Seniors (65+)	1,819	1,712	107	12.2%	1.2%
Box Hill North	Children and youth (0-24 yrs)	3,655	3,773	-118	29.7%	-0.6%
	Working age (25-64 yrs)	6,839	6,534	305	55.6%	0.9%
	Seniors (65+)	1,819	1,654	165	14.8%	1.9%
Box Hill South	Children and youth (0-24 yrs)	2,649	2,928	-279	31.4%	-2.0%
	Working age (25-64 yrs)	4,502	4,380	122	53.3%	0.6%
	Seniors (65+)	1,294	1,172	122	15.3%	2.0%

Suburb	Age groups	2016	2021	Total change	2021 share of total pop.	AAGR
Burwood	Children and youth (0-24 yrs)	4,097	5,242	-1,145	33.3%	-4.8%
	Working age (25-64 yrs)	6,209	5,550	659	50.4%	2.3%
	Seniors (65+)	2,001	1,881	120	16.2%	1.2%
Burwood East	Children and youth (0-24 yrs)	2,805	3,056	-251	26.2%	-1.7%
	Working age (25-64 yrs)	5,546	5,132	414	51.8%	1.6%
	Seniors (65+)	2,352	2,151	201	22.0%	1.8%
Forest Hill	Children and youth (0-24 yrs)	2,955	3,062	-107	27.3%	-0.7%
	Working age (25-64 yrs)	5,492	5,561	-69	50.7%	-0.2%
	Seniors (65+)	2,390	2,234	156	22.1%	1.4%
Mitcham	Children and youth (0-24 yrs)	4,819	4,737	82	28.8%	0.3%
	Working age (25-64 yrs)	9,219	8,962	257	55.2%	0.6%
	Seniors (65+)	2,664	2,389	275	15.9%	2.2%
Mont Albert	Children and youth (0-24 yrs)	1,342	1,511	-169	28.1%	-2.3%
	Working age (25-64 yrs)	2,522	2,520	2	52.9%	0.0%
	Seniors (65+)	902	730	172	18.9%	4.3%
Mont Albert North	Children and youth (0-24 yrs)	1,738	1,729	9	31.1%	0.1%
	Working age (25-64 yrs)	2,768	2,769	-1	49.6%	0.0%
	Seniors (65+)	1,076	984	92	19.3%	1.8%
Nunawading	Children and youth (0-24 yrs)	3,404	3,408	-4	28.4%	0.0%

Suburb	Age groups	2016	2021	Total change	2021 share of total pop.	AAGR
	Working age (25-64 yrs)	6,450	6,189	261	53.8%	0.8%
	Seniors (65+)	2,146	1,941	205	17.9%	2.0%
Surrey Hills	Children and youth (0-24 yrs)	1,584	1,677	-93	30.0%	-1.1%
	Working age (25-64 yrs)	2,665	2,757	-92	50.5%	-0.7%
	Seniors (65+)	1,030	791	239	19.5%	5.4%
Vermont	Children and youth (0-24 yrs)	3,395	3,150	245	32.5%	1.5%
	Working age (25-64 yrs)	5,141	5,054	87	49.3%	0.3%
	Seniors (65+)	1,897	1,732	165	18.2%	1.8%
Vermont South	Children and youth (0-24 yrs)	3,278	3,475	-197	27.5%	-1.2%
	Working age (25-64 yrs)	5,481	5,545	-64	46.0%	-0.2%
	Seniors (65+)	3,167	2,714	453	26.6%	3.1%
Whitehorse LGA	<b>Children and youth (0-24 yrs)</b>	<b>49,594</b>	<b>51,519</b>	<b>-1,925</b>	<b>29.3%</b>	<b>-0.8%</b>
	<b>Working age (25-64 yrs)</b>	<b>88,281</b>	<b>84,021</b>	<b>4,260</b>	<b>52.2%</b>	<b>1.0%</b>
	<b>Seniors (65+)</b>	<b>31,130</b>	<b>27,909</b>	<b>3,221</b>	<b>18.4%</b>	<b>2.2%</b>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021. TableBuilder, Census of Population and Housing.  
Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016. TableBuilder, Census of Population and Housing.

**Table 20: Household composition, by suburb, City of Whitehorse, 2016 and 2021**

Suburb	Household types	2016	2021	Total change	2021 share of total pop.	AAGR
Blackburn	Couple family without children	1,202	1,408	206	24.7%	3.2%
	Couple family with children	1,801	1,841	40	32.3%	0.4%
	Single parent family	421	465	44	8.2%	2.0%
	Other one family	61	58	-3	1.0%	-1.0%
	Multiple family	67	60	-7	1.1%	-2.2%
	Lone person	1,233	1,513	280	26.5%	4.2%
	Group household	211	198	-13	3.5%	-1.3%
	Other household (inc. visitor)	174	140	-34	5.1%	-4.3%
Blackburn North	Couple family without children	579	587	8	21.4%	0.3%
	Couple family with children	1,045	1,110	65	40.5%	1.2%
	Single parent family	301	261	-40	9.5%	-2.8%
	Other one family	39	25	-14	0.9%	-8.5%
	Multiple family	40	53	13	1.9%	5.8%
	Lone person	521	561	40	20.4%	1.5%
	Group household	85	96	11	3.5%	2.5%
	Other household (inc. visitor)	62	37	-25	1.3%	-9.8%
Blackburn South	Couple family without children	835	869	34	21.1%	0.8%

Suburb	Household types	2016	2021	Total change	2021 share of total pop.	AAGR
	Couple family with children	1,427	1,467	40	35.6%	0.6%
	Single parent family	381	383	2	9.3%	0.1%
	Other one family	44	45	1	1.1%	0.5%
	Multiple family	66	86	20	2.1%	5.4%
	Lone person	929	1,050	121	25.5%	2.5%
	Group household	122	131	9	3.2%	1.4%
	Other household (inc. visitor)	137	94	-43	2.3%	-7.3%
Box Hill	Couple family without children	1,005	1,589	584	24.7%	9.6%
	Couple family with children	979	1,047	68	16.3%	1.4%
	Single parent family	400	527	127	8.2%	5.7%
	Other one family	112	128	16	2.0%	2.7%
	Multiple family	75	54	-21	0.8%	-6.4%
	Lone person	1,357	1,967	610	30.6%	7.7%
	Group household	519	641	122	10.0%	4.3%
	Other household (inc. visitor)	326	469	143	7.3%	7.5%
Box Hill North	Couple family without children	942	990	48	21.2%	1.0%
	Couple family with children	1,479	1,545	66	33.1%	0.9%
	Single parent family	460	522	62	11.2%	2.6%

Suburb	Household types	2016	2021	Total change	2021 share of total pop.	AAGR
	Other one family	93	90	-3	1.9%	-0.7%
	Multiple family	72	84	12	1.8%	3.1%
	Lone person	968	1,045	77	22.4%	1.5%
	Group household	258	259	1	5.5%	0.1%
	Other household (inc. visitor)	148	139	-9	3.0%	-1.2%
Box Hill South	Couple family without children	592	658	66	20.4%	2.1%
	Couple family with children	1,045	1,112	67	34.5%	1.3%
	Single parent family	323	323	0	10.0%	0.0%
	Other one family	48	42	-6	1.3%	-2.6%
	Multiple family	43	44	1	1.4%	0.5%
	Lone person	761	800	39	24.8%	1.0%
	Group household	189	155	-34	4.8%	-3.9%
	Other household (inc. visitor)	131	84	-47	2.6%	-8.5%
Burwood	Couple family without children	869	991	122	21.3%	2.7%
	Couple family with children	1,042	1,108	66	23.8%	1.2%
	Single parent family	401	463	62	9.9%	2.9%
	Other one family	97	92	-5	2.0%	-1.1%
	Multiple family	53	63	10	1.4%	3.5%

Suburb	Household types	2016	2021	Total change	2021 share of total pop.	AAGR
	Lone person	1,239	1,328	89	28.5%	1.4%
	Group household	583	443	-140	9.5%	-5.3%
	Other household (inc. visitor)	213	187	-26	4.0%	-2.6%
Burwood East	Couple family without children	925	1,061	136	25.8%	2.8%
	Couple family with children	1,270	1,310	40	31.8%	0.6%
	Single parent family	365	414	49	10.1%	2.6%
	Other one family	46	48	2	1.2%	0.9%
	Multiple family	89	69	-20	1.7%	-5.0%
	Lone person	713	907	194	22.0%	4.9%
	Group household	241	204	-37	5.0%	-3.3%
	Other household (inc. visitor)	97	102	5	2.5%	1.0%
Forest Hill	Couple family without children	926	923	-3	21.9%	-0.1%
	Couple family with children	1,337	1,328	-9	31.5%	-0.1%
	Single parent family	403	444	41	10.5%	2.0%
	Other one family	62	62	0	1.5%	0.0%
	Multiple family	73	94	21	2.2%	5.2%
	Lone person	1,001	1,123	122	26.6%	2.3%
	Group household	130	124	-6	2.9%	-0.9%

Suburb	Household types	2016	2021	Total change	2021 share of total pop.	AAGR
	Other household (inc. visitor)	116	126	10	3.0%	1.7%
Mitcham	Couple family without children	1,553	1,629	76	24.7%	1.0%
	Couple family with children	2,099	2,221	122	33.6%	1.1%
	Single parent family	540	583	43	8.8%	1.5%
	Other one family	63	72	9	1.1%	2.7%
	Multiple family	80	96	16	1.5%	3.7%
	Lone person	1,546	1,635	89	24.7%	1.1%
	Group household	203	235	32	3.6%	3.0%
	Other household (inc. visitor)	221	144	-77	2.2%	-8.2%
Mont Albert	Couple family without children	393	519	126	27.2%	5.7%
	Couple family with children	649	599	-50	31.4%	-1.6%
	Single parent family	153	160	7	8.4%	0.9%
	Other one family	20	30	10	1.6%	8.4%
	Multiple family	22	25	3	1.3%	2.6%
	Lone person	415	475	60	24.9%	2.7%
	Group household	59	54	-5	2.8%	-1.8%
	Other household (inc. visitor)	53	56	3	2.9%	1.1%
Mont Albert North	Couple family without children	442	509	67	24.2%	2.9%

Suburb	Household types	2016	2021	Total change	2021 share of total pop.	AAGR
	Couple family with children	776	779	3	37.0%	0.1%
	Single parent family	215	220	5	10.4%	0.5%
	Other one family	11	23	12	1.1%	15.9%
	Multiple family	27	39	12	1.9%	7.6%
	Lone person	418	456	38	21.7%	1.8%
	Group household	55	47	-8	2.2%	-3.1%
	Other household (inc. visitor)	57	43	-14	2.0%	-5.5%
Nunawading	Couple family without children	986	1,033	47	22.1%	0.9%
	Couple family with children	1457	1,516	59	32.4%	0.8%
	Single parent family	386	402	16	8.6%	0.8%
	Other one family	58	68	10	1.5%	3.2%
	Multiple family	86	83	-3	1.8%	-0.7%
	Lone person	1053	1,179	126	25.2%	2.3%
	Group household	162	183	21	3.9%	2.5%
	Other household (inc. visitor)	179	218	39	4.7%	4.0%
Surrey Hills	Couple family without children	436	502	66	25.3%	2.9%
	Couple family with children	774	743	-31	37.5%	-0.8%
	Single parent family	136	153	17	7.7%	2.4%

Suburb	Household types	2016	2021	Total change	2021 share of total pop.	AAGR
	Other one family	16	29	13	1.5%	12.6%
	Multiple family	15	21	6	1.1%	7.0%
	Lone person	408	428	20	21.6%	1.0%
	Group household	72	65	-7	3.3%	-2.0%
	Other household (inc. visitor)	43	46	3	2.3%	1.4%
Vermont	Couple family without children	812	832	20	22.4%	0.5%
	Couple family with children	1,447	1,537	90	41.3%	1.2%
	Single parent family	357	376	19	10.1%	1.0%
	Other one family	32	35	3	0.9%	1.8%
	Multiple family	59	84	25	2.3%	7.3%
	Lone person	738	719	-19	19.3%	-0.5%
	Group household	85	64	-21	1.7%	-5.5%
	Other household (inc. visitor)	79	66	-13	1.8%	-3.5%
Vermont South	Couple family without children	1,121	1,204	83	28.9%	1.4%
	Couple family with children	1,634	1,587	-47	38.1%	-0.6%
	Single parent family	343	363	20	8.7%	1.1%
	Other one family	33	34	1	0.8%	0.6%
	Multiple family	115	132	17	3.2%	2.8%

Suburb	Household types	2016	2021	Total change	2021 share of total pop.	AAGR
	Lone person	606	684	78	16.4%	2.5%
	Group household	71	86	15	2.1%	3.9%
	Other household (inc. visitor)	75	76	1	1.8%	0.3%
Whitehorse total	<b>Couple family without children</b>	<b>13,614</b>	<b>15,299</b>	<b>1,685</b>	<b>23.5%</b>	<b>2.4%</b>
	<b>Couple family with children</b>	<b>20,261</b>	<b>20,845</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>32.0%</b>	<b>0.6%</b>
	<b>Single parent family</b>	<b>5,586</b>	<b>6,060</b>	<b>474</b>	<b>9.3%</b>	<b>1.6%</b>
	<b>Other one family</b>	<b>825</b>	<b>882</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>1.4%</b>	<b>1.3%</b>
	<b>Multiple family</b>	<b>988</b>	<b>1,087</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>1.9%</b>
	<b>Lone person</b>	<b>13,910</b>	<b>15,863</b>	<b>1,953</b>	<b>24.4%</b>	<b>2.7%</b>
	<b>Group household</b>	<b>3,050</b>	<b>2,990</b>	<b>-60</b>	<b>4.6%</b>	<b>-0.4%</b>
	<b>Other household (inc. visitor)</b>	<b>2,121</b>	<b>2,013</b>	<b>-108</b>	<b>3.1%</b>	<b>-1.0%</b>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021. TableBuilder, Census of Population and Housing, Family Household Composition.  
Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016. TableBuilder, Census of Population and Housing, Family Household Composition.

**Table 21: Vehicle ownership in City of Whitehorse**

	0 vehicles	1 vehicle	2 vehicles	3+ vehicles	Total dwellings	Average motor vehicles per household
2011	4,882	20,836	21,172	7,554	57,208	1.6
2016	4,837	21,764	22,492	8,201	60,445	1.7
2021	5,242	25,087	23,673	8,743	65,127	1.7
Change 2011-2016	-0.92%	4.45%	6.23%	8.56%	5.66%	n/a
Change 2016-2021	8.37%	15.27%	5.25%	6.61%	7.75%	n/a

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011. TableBuilder, Census of Population and Housing – Number of Motor Vehicles by dwellings.

Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016. TableBuilder, Census of Population and Housing – Number of Motor Vehicles by dwellings.

Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021. TableBuilder, Census of Population and Housing – Number of Motor Vehicles by dwellings.

**Table 22: People in specific cohorts by suburb, City of Whitehorse, 2021**

The number of people with a disability is not available on a suburb level. Higher education students includes all students in tertiary education. Culturally and Linguistically Diverse individuals are identified as CALD.

Suburb	Cohort	Number of individuals	Percentage of population
Blackburn	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	58	0.3%
	CALD	2,915	35.3%
	Higher education students	1,960	4.2%
Blackburn North	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	26	0.3%
	CALD	1,154	42.7%
	Higher education students	612	11.3%
Blackburn South	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	35	0.3%
	CALD	1,611	40.0%
	Higher education students	863	22.3%
Box Hill	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	38	0.3%
	CALD	4,046	67.8%
	Higher education students	2,434	16.5%
Box Hill North	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	52	0.4%
	CALD	2,368	52.2%

Suburb	Cohort	Number of individuals	Percentage of population
	Higher education students	1,260	10.2%
Box Hill South	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	31	0.4%
	CALD	1,304	41.6%
	Higher education students	945	11.1%
Burwood	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	52	0.4%
	CALD	2,302	51.4%
	Higher education students	2,204	17.9%
Burwood East	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	15	0.1%
	CALD	2,346	58.3%
	Higher education students	1,087	10.2%
Forest Hill	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	33	0.3%
	CALD	1,853	45.4%
	Higher education students	788	7.3%
Mitcham	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	67	0.4%
	CALD	2,224	34.4%
	Higher education students	1,306	7.8%

Suburb	Cohort	Number of individuals	Percentage of population
Mont Albert	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	12	0.2%
	CALD	569	29.8%
	Higher education students	490	9.9%
Mont Albert North	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	14	0.2%
	CALD	733	35.4%
	Higher education students	478	8.5%
Nunawading	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	45	0.4%
	CALD	1,840	40.2%
	Higher education students	1,018	8.2%
Surrey Hills	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	149	0.9%
	CALD	2,390	30.7%
	Higher education students	1,725	10.9%
Vermont	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	35	0.3%
	CALD	1,463	38.5%
	Higher education students	777	7.1%
Vermont South	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	19	0.2%

Suburb	Cohort	Number of individuals	Percentage of population
	CALD	2,002	49.0%
	Higher education students	942	7.9%
Whitehorse LGA	<b>People with a disability</b>	<b>9,374<sup>22</sup></b>	<b>5.5%</b>
	<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>0.3%</b>
	<b>CALD</b>	<b>27,982</b>	<b>44.3%</b>
	<b>Higher education students</b>	<b>17,053</b>	<b>10.1%</b>

Source: ABS Census 2021. Quick Stats – accessed for each suburb and the Whitehorse LGA on 13 November 2025.

<sup>22</sup> ID Community Profile City of Whitehorse. Accessed on 31 October 2025.

[https://profile.id.com.au/whitehorse/assistance#:~:text=In%202021%2C%209%2C374%20people%20\(or,information%20and%20support%20to%20carers.](https://profile.id.com.au/whitehorse/assistance#:~:text=In%202021%2C%209%2C374%20people%20(or,information%20and%20support%20to%20carers.)

## Dwelling data

**Table 23: Dwelling permit approvals, by activity centres, City of Whitehorse, 2009 to 2014 and 2015 to 2024**

Planning area	Activity Centre type	Dwellings approved 2009 to 2014 (pre-strategy implementation)			Dwellings approved 2015 to 2024 (post-strategy implementation)		
		Total	Per annum	Share of Total	Total	Per annum	Share of Total
Box Hill	Metropolitan	1,291	215	17%	4,647	775	29%
Burwood Heights	Major	224	37	3%	1,512	252	10%
Megamile West and Blackburn		481	80	6%	450	75	3%
Nunawading and Megamile		227	38	3%	112	19	1%
Forest Hill Chase		-	-	-	-	-	-
Tally Ho		-	-	-	-	-	-
Mitcham	Neighbourhood	345	58	5%	78	13	0.5%
Burwood Village	Neighbourhood	2	0	0.03%	62	10	0.4%
Other Neighbourhood Activity Centres		109	18	1%	314	52	2%
<b>Activity Centres total</b>		<b>2,679</b>	<b>447</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>7,175</b>	<b>718</b>	<b>45%</b>
Outside of activity centres		4,878	813	65%	8,682	1,447	55%
<b>LGA total</b>		<b>7,557</b>	<b>1,260</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>15,857</b>	<b>2,643</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Whitehorse City Council (2025), Planning permit data 2009 to 2024. Note: Totals may not equal the sum of individual columns due to rounding.

**Table 24: Dwelling counts, by activity centre, City of Whitehorse, 2011 to 2016 and 2016 to 2021**

Planning area	Activity Centre type	Dwelling increase 2011 to 2016(pre-strategy implementation)			Dwellings approved 2016 to 2021 (post-strategy implementation)		
		Total	Per annum	Share of Total	Total	Per annum	Share of Total
Box Hill	Metropolitan	1,043	209	23%	2,691	538	47%
Burwood Heights	Major	231	46	6%	646	129	11%
Megamile West and Blackburn		315	63	6%	226	45	3%
Nunawading and Megamile		67	13	2%	99	20	2%
Forest Hill Chase		-	-	-	-	-	-
Tally Ho		-	-	-	3	0.6	0.1%
Mitcham	Neighbourhood	280	56	7%	61	12	1%
Burwood Village		59	12	1%	26	5	0.4%
Other NACs		87	17	2%	15	3	0.3%
<b>Activity Centres total</b>		<b>2,076</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>3,777</b>	<b>755</b>	<b>64%</b>
Outside of activity centres		2,087	417	50%	2,100	420	36%
<b>LGA total</b>		<b>4,163</b>	<b>833</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>5,867</b>	<b>1173</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: ABS Census 2011, 2016 and 2021.

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