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HOUSING

Overview

The City of Whitehorse is a middle ring municipality providing housing for a wide range of household types, ages and cultural groups. In general, the population is slightly older than the metropolitan average, indicating an ageing population, however the majority of households are families with or without children. The types of residential development in the City vary between medium rise apartment buildings around Box Hill metropolitan activity centre, small unit developments in areas with good access to public transport and amenities, and standard detached dwellings in the majority of the residential areas.

The City of Whitehorse is under increased pressure to accommodate more people who are attracted to the area due to its strategic location, high amenity residential areas and quality services and facilities. The community is concerned about maintaining the high quality residential environment and ensuring that areas of environmental, heritage or special character are protected as the City's population grows. The municipality's leafy character is particularly valued, strengthened by the presence of quality canopy trees and other native and exotic vegetation. Trees and vegetation are considered one of the most significant determinants of neighbourhood character in the municipality, and therefore tree preservation and regeneration is of vital importance if the character of residential areas is to be maintained and enhanced.

Change and growth in urban areas with good public transport access can occur while contributing to the City's valued neighbourhood character. Areas such as the Box Hill metropolitan activity centre are able to accommodate increased housing growth in an urban setting while providing high levels of amenity for residents.

The Council's *Housing Strategy 2014* identifies areas of substantial, natural and limited growth. These categories of housing change are aligned with the neighbourhood character statements prepared for each area as part of the *Neighbourhood Character Study 2014* and the planning controls applying to the land. These statements and controls aim to direct housing growth across the municipality in a way which reflects the community's neighbourhood character aspirations, while balancing the future housing needs of Whitehorse. They are described as follows:

- Substantial Change areas provide for housing growth with increased densities, including inside designated structure plan boundaries and opportunity areas, in accordance with the relevant plans as well as around most train stations, adjoining tram routes and around larger activity centres.
- Natural Change areas allow for modest housing growth and a variety of housing types provided they achieve the preferred future neighbourhood character as identified in Clause 22.03 – Residential Development.
- Limited Change areas enable specific characteristics of the neighbourhood, environment or landscape to be protected through greater control over new housing development. These areas represent the lowest degree of intended residential growth in Whitehorse.

In addition, there are a number of identified "strategic redevelopment sites" in the City, plus opportunities within the Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre and in other Activity Centres for residential growth.

The *Neighbourhood Character Study 2014* further defines the preferred future character of precincts within the City. Council agrees with the concern within the community that poorly designed residential development is eroding the character and quality of some residential areas. Based on the *Neighbourhood Character Study 2014*, residential areas have been identified as being within precincts of the following neighbourhood character types:

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

Council will use the three categories of change and the identified character types to supplement 'ResCode' to encourage high quality development design that is responsive to the site constraints and opportunities whilst making a positive contribution to neighbourhood character.

The City also needs to respond to issues of housing affordability and promote environmentally sustainable development. Sustainable and well-designed housing can improve affordability over the long term, and contribute to the preferred neighbourhood character of residential areas.

Non-residential uses in residential areas continue to require monitoring and control to ensure that amenity issues are managed.

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Vision

The vision for housing in the City is *"To ensure that housing in the City of Whitehorse meets residents' needs in terms of location, diversity, sustainability, accessibility, affordability and good design."* There are a number of key challenges facing the City of Whitehorse in relation to housing. These are:

- Accommodating an additional 12,997 dwellings to house the projected population growth in the City to 2036.
- Ensuring established residential areas continue to play an important role in providing additional housing.
- Ensuring activity centres can accommodate additional housing growth and are the focus of increased housing and employment densities, public transport and service provision. Each activity centre in Whitehorse has a different level of capacity and is equipped in different ways to support increased housing density.
- Preserving areas of valued character and vegetation or landscape significance.
- Better utilising transport corridors including train and tram routes for medium and higher density housing.
- The pressure of higher property prices on housing affordability and the type of dwellings constructed due to Whitehorse's attractive leafy character, dominance of detached dwellings and locational attributes.
- A higher demand for private rental housing, a proportion of which will need to be affordable to low income tenants.
- A higher proportion of lone person households may require smaller housing types including town houses, units and apartments. However in some instances, these housing types are more costly to buy or rent than older housing stock, and can contribute to housing affordability problems.
- The provision of specific assistance to access appropriate accommodation for new and first generation migrant populations in suitable locations.
- The need to provide more accommodation for students, and accommodation which better meets their needs in terms of quality and affordability in areas near Deakin University Burwood Campus and Box Hill Institute of TAFE.
- The need to develop or implement Structure Plans with objectives to improve housing affordability and special needs housing opportunities in activity centres.

Key Housing 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.

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Housing Location

Key Issues

- Encouraging appropriate residential development within the municipality's established network of activity centres.
- Providing appropriate housing growth in locations with potential amenity considerations (eg. sensitive interfaces, rail corridors, tram lines, main roads).
- Ensuring timely provision of infrastructure and public realm improvements to support the growth of the municipality.
- Encouraging housing in locations with good access to public transport and services, which can minimise demand on the road network and better target the delivery of community and physical infrastructure and services.

Objectives

Limited Change Areas

- Conserve and enhance those elements which contribute to the valued environmental, heritage and neighbourhood character of the place.
- Ensure new development protects and reinforces the environmental, heritage values and / or preferred future neighbourhood character of the area.
- Ensure new development mainly takes the form of renovations to existing houses, replacement of single dwellings with new dwellings and some limited medium density development.

Natural Change Areas

- Support increased housing choice by allowing for a diversity of dwelling types, sizes and tenures.
- Ensure new development contributes to the preferred neighbourhood character of the precinct.
- Encourage new development applications to include landscape guidelines that show how the enhancement or retention of existing vegetation where possible will be achieved, at the outset of the design process.

Substantial Change Areas

- Support increased residential densities.
- Support increased housing choice by allowing for a diversity of dwelling types, sizes and tenures to suit a range of household types.

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- Facilitate achieving a new, preferred character for these areas over time through quality developments.
- Support the master planning of larger sites to facilitate the development of diverse, high amenity precincts which have an identifiable sense of place.
- Encourage the provision of shop-top dwellings and low scale apartment developments in activity centres, particularly within key Neighbourhood Activity Centres and on sites abutting the Principal Public Transport Network and main roads.
- Provide space for planting, communal spaces and rooftop gardens to improve the amenity and liveability of dwellings.

Strategies

- Council will assess new applications for dwellings and subdivisions against the relevant objectives, strategies and preferred character statements as specified in Clause 22.03 – Residential Development and in the *Whitehorse Neighbourhood Character Study 2014*.

Implementation

- Specify built form and landscape expectations for the three categories of change and the identified neighbourhood character precincts within Clause 22.03 – Residential Development.
- Zone residential areas identified for Limited Change to Neighbourhood Residential Zone.
- Zone residential areas identified for Natural Change to General Residential Zone.
- Zone residential areas identified for Substantial Change to General Residential or Residential Growth Zone as appropriate.
- Apply a Significant Landscape Overlay or Neighbourhood Character Overlay to areas of significant neighbourhood character or landscape.
- Apply the Heritage Overlay to buildings, structures and natural features of historical significance.
- Apply a Development Plan Overlay or Design and Development Overlay to guide the design and built form of new development as appropriate.

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Housing Diversity

Key Issues

- Meeting the continuing high demand for private rental accommodation, which puts pressure on housing affordability.
- Providing high quality and accessible housing to meet the needs of the students that will continue to be attracted to Deakin University Burwood Campus and Box Hill Institute of TAFE and will require housing with high quality accessibility and services.
- Improving access to the housing market for the City's large proportion of first and second generation residents from non English speaking backgrounds, many of whom currently experience barriers inhibiting their entry to the market.
- Encouraging a broader range of housing types to meet the differing needs of the future population through the lifecycle.

Objectives

- Diversify the variety of housing types in the City of Whitehorse.
- Provide housing that meets the specialised requirements of particular residents.
- Monitor housing development trends and engage with relevant stakeholders.

Strategies

- Promote activity centres with high accessibility that offer a range of services and provide a high level of amenity to residents as key locations for housing diversity.
- 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.
- Encourage appropriate student housing close to the university campuses in a form that respects the existing or preferred character of the area.

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Housing Affordability

Key Issues

- Meeting an increasing demand for more affordable housing across the municipality.
- Ensuring student housing is consistent with the location and design requirements of Council Policy.

Objectives

- To increase the supply and distribution of affordable housing in the City of Whitehorse.
- To reduce housing stress in the City of Whitehorse.

Strategies

- Continue to identify opportunities for affordable housing in designated structure plans including specific location, localised need and design, and incentives for developers.

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Housing Design

Key Issues

- Ensuring new developments do not result in a loss of the existing vegetation coverage and tree canopy.
- Encouraging appropriate development within the municipality's established areas.
- Maintaining the preferred neighbourhood character of Limited Change Areas.
- Providing adequate space for substantial vegetation in Limited and Natural Change Areas.
- Strengthening and improving the preferred neighbourhood character in Natural Change Areas.
- Creating a valued and identifiable sense of place in Substantial Change Areas and providing an appropriate design response in locations with potential to support additional housing.
- Ensuring new developments adjoining or close to environmentally significant and sensitive areas are carefully and respectfully designed.
- Ensuring that physical and community infrastructure is adequate and maintained at a standard to meet the future demand.
- Encouraging private sector provision of housing that improves the environmental performance of the municipality and minimises ongoing running costs for the residents.
- Encouraging continued improvement in housing design for better functionality, universal access and adaptability to improve access for people with mobility or other physical limitations and to lessen future costs in modifications to meet the current or future occupants' needs.

Objectives

- To enhance the design quality and character of residential development.
- To build resilience in the City's housing stock to the impacts of climate change.

- To improve the environmental performance of new and existing housing.
- To protect environmentally sensitive areas from inappropriate development.
- To encourage the provision of well designed, adaptable and accessible housing.

Strategies

- Amend the Municipal Strategic Statement to provide policy support for improving the design quality of residential development in the municipality.
- Implement the Neighbourhood Character Precinct Brochures with Preferred Character Statements and Design Guidelines to provide guidance and support for future residential development and assessments.
- Investigate two identified precincts for potential additional controls:
 - Precinct Garden Suburban 16 (GS16), which requires detailed survey and analysis to determine its suitability for Neighbourhood Character or Heritage Overlay controls; and
 - Precinct Bush Suburban 9 (BS9), which includes several areas that may be suitable for further Significant Landscape Overlay controls.
- Investigate other precincts for potential additional controls, utilising the Neighbourhood Character Overlay, Heritage Overlay and Significant Landscape Overlay, as appropriate.
- 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 facilitates high levels of residential amenity for new and adjoining residents.
- Encourage and promote examples of housing design that enable future adaptation or modify existing dwellings to meet changing needs with minimal current or future expense.
- Promote the use of the *Liveable Housing Design Guidelines* to new home owners and developers.

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Non-Residential Uses

Key Issues

- Ensuring non-residential uses are designed in a way that integrates these uses and their built form into their residential environments and that there is no detriment to the community or the surrounding residential amenity.
- Ensuring that residential activity in non-residential areas is mindful of a lower expectation of amenity protection than in a residential area.

Objectives

- To ensure buildings for non-residential uses are designed to integrate with and respect the surrounding neighbourhood character.
- To ensure that non-residential uses do not cause detriment to the community or the amenity of the surrounding residential area.
- To ensure residential developments in areas where non-residential activity is encouraged are designed to ameliorate the potential impact of non-residential activity in the vicinity.

Strategies

- Implement policy to direct non-residential uses to appropriate locations, and provide parameters for their operation.
- Apply the Neighbourhood Character Precinct Brochures with Preferred Character Statements and Design Guidelines to provide guidance for future non-residential development in residential areas and assessments.

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Policy and the exercise of discretion

It is policy to:

- Ensure that all development applications comply with the Residential Development Policy at Clause 22.03.
- Ensure that all development applications are assessed in accordance with the Residential Development Policy at Clause 22.03.
- Ensure that all non residential use and development applications within a residential zone comply with the Non-Residential Uses in Residential Areas Policy at Clause 22.05.
- Require that landscape buffers between commercial parking areas and abutting residential properties be of suitable size and dimensions to provide for a range of screening vegetation and upper canopy trees.
- Ensure that all new applications for gaming machines or gaming venues comply with the Gaming Policy at Clause 22.18.
- Use local planning policy to manage student accommodation in accordance with the Student Accommodation Policy at Clause 22.14.

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Burwood Heights Activity Centre Structure Plan, June 2006

Burwood Village Neighbourhood Activity Framework Plan, May 2008

City of Whitehorse Landscape Guidelines, 2012

City of Whitehorse Responsible Gambling Policy, 2011

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Guidelines for Areas of Special Significance and Beauty

KLM, Neighbourhood Character Study Review Of Areas 14 and 16, February 2004

Liveable Housing Design Guidelines

MegaMile (west) and Blackburn Activity Centres Urban Design Framework, July 2010

Nunawading/MegaMile Major Activity Centre and Mitcham Neighbourhood Activity Centre Structure Plan, April 2008

Review of Neighbourhood Character Implementation Recommendations, Part 2 Review Areas, July 2004

Review of Three Precincts in Character Areas 16 & 18, May 2008

Tally Ho Major Activity Centre Urban Design Framework, 2007

Tally Ho Activity Centre Urban Design and Landscape Guidelines, 2013

Walker Estate Special Character Area Urban Character Study, May 1999

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Whitehorse Neighbourhood Character Study, 2014

Whitehorse Neighbourhood Activity Centre Urban Design Guidelines, 2014

131 Central Road, Nunawading: Vegetation Assessment by Stephen Mueck, Biosis (November 2007)

Municipal Wide Tree Study Discussion Paper, March 2016

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