

WHITEHORSE HOUSING STRATEGY

ADOPTED BY COUNCIL

28 APRIL 2014



It is acknowledged that the City of Whitehorse is on traditional lands of the Wurundjeri tribe of the Kulin Nation. We offer our respect to the Elders of these traditional lands, and through them to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

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ACRONYMS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
CAA	Central Activities Area (now referred to as a Metropolitan Activity Centre in <i>Plan Melbourne</i>)
DPCD	Department of Planning and Community Development (former department name - now part of DTPLI)
DTPLI	Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure
LPPF	Local Planning Policy Framework
MAC	Major Activity Centre
MSS	Municipal Strategic Statement
MW	Melbourne Water
NAC	Neighbourhood Activity Centre
SPPF	State Planning Policy Framework
UDP	Urban Development Program
VCAT	Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal
VIF	Victoria in Future
YVW	Yarra Valley Water

GLOSSARY

Density	Low density development	Detached and semi-detached dwellings and two dwellings on a lot of a pattern and layout similar to the majority of housing constructed in Whitehorse up to recent trends.
	Medium density development	Multiple dwellings on a lot (3+), terraced housing, town houses and low-rise (up to 3 storeys) apartment developments.
	High density development	Apartment and larger residential developments, not necessarily high-rise structures.
Categories of Change	Substantial Change	Areas which have been designated for increased residential development at higher densities. They may include areas within or close to major activity areas, designated structure plan boundaries and opportunity areas, in accordance with the relevant adopted plans.
	Natural Change	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 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.
Housing types	Detached dwellings	Housing which stands alone in its own grounds, with a form of separation from other dwellings. A detached dwelling may also have a small unit attached to it, such as a granny flat or converted garage.
	Dual occupancy	Two dwellings located on the same allotment or in the same building, or dwellings which have been subdivided from the same property.
	Units	Multiple (3+) dwellings located on the same allotment or in the same building. This may include dual occupancy dwellings.

	Semi-detached dwellings, townhouses, row or terrace houses	A dwelling that has their own private grounds and no other dwellings above or below them. A key feature is that they are attached in some structural way to one or more dwellings, or separated from neighbouring dwellings by less than half a metre.
	Flats and apartments	Includes all self-contained dwellings in blocks of flats or apartments. These dwellings do not have their own private grounds and usually share a common entrance foyer or stairwell. This includes houses converted into flats. Low rise apartments comprise no more than 3 storeys.
Planning Scheme	State Planning Policy Framework	Contains strategic issues of State importance which must be considered when decisions are made.
	Local Planning Policy Framework	Identifies long term directions about land use and development in local government areas, and provides the rationale for the zone and overlay requirements and particular provisions in the Scheme.
	Municipal Strategic Statement	Part of the Local Planning Policy Framework that sets out Council's vision and guides statutory planning decisions through local objectives and strategies.
	Preferred neighbourhood character	A statement of the desired built form and landscape character of a character precinct (as identified within the Whitehorse Neighbourhood Character Study) into the future. It is derived from an assessment of the key elements of the local area which are important to retain as well as the designated change for the area.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Whitehorse Housing Strategy 2014 provides an updated policy framework 'to encourage and support the provision of housing in the City of Whitehorse that meets residents' needs in terms of location, diversity, sustainability, accessibility, affordability and good design' (Whitehorse Housing Statement Vision).

The Strategy has been prepared following a review of the existing Whitehorse Housing Strategy 2003, and the Whitehorse Neighbourhood Character Study 2003. The review identified where change has occurred in the last ten years both in terms of the size, type and location of housing development, and also the types of housing being developed and how they have met preferred neighbourhood character objectives in residential areas.

Its main focus is on the role that Council can play as the Planning and Responsible Authority charged with developing and implementing planning policy. It has, however, been developed with consideration of other council, state and federal policies, objectives and roles, and is designed to complement and deliver on these.

For the purposes of this Strategy, the Victoria in Future projections have been used, along with the most current .id consulting pty ltd projections for household numbers and average household sizes. The .id consulting pty ltd forecasts, which are commissioned by Council, are based on more detailed and localised assessment of development trends, and are therefore treated in this report as a more accurate growth projection. The .id consulting pty ltd figures have been updated to take into account ABS 2011 census findings, and therefore vary from the figures contained in the draft Strategy.

The Housing Strategy seeks to address a range of challenges for the City:

- The population of the City of Whitehorse is predicted to grow by up to 28,230 between 2011 and 2036, based on .id consulting projections (2013).
- An additional 12,997 dwellings is anticipated to be required to accommodate the projected population growth in the City of Whitehorse to 2036, as well as a more diverse range of households, which, on average, are smaller than households in previous generations.
- State planning policy to delineate an Urban Growth Boundary will require established residential areas to continue to play an important role in providing additional housing.
- State planning policy considers activity centres as the best places to accommodate additional housing growth, and as 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.
- Medium and higher density housing needs to better utilise transport corridors including train, tram and bus routes.

- Whitehorse’s attractive leafy character, dominance of detached dwellings and locational attributes that command higher property prices will place further pressure on housing affordability and the types of dwellings that may be built. There is a desire to preserve areas of valued character and vegetation or landscape significance.
- Because of rising house prices, there will be higher demand for private rental – 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 / rent than older housing stock, and can contribute to housing affordability problems.
- Housing in Box Hill will continue to attract overseas investment and new and first generation migrant populations. This particular residential group may require specific assistance to access appropriate accommodation.
- Areas near Deakin University Burwood Campus and Box Hill Institute of TAFE will need to provide more accommodation for students, and accommodation which better meets their needs in terms of quality and affordability.
- Structure Plans with objectives to improve housing affordability and special needs housing opportunities in activity centres will need to be developed and / or implemented.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR HOUSING LOCATION:

- Encouraging appropriate 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.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR HOUSING DIVERSITY:

- Based on .id consulting housing projections 12,997 extra dwellings will be needed between 2011 and 2036.
- How best to meet 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 who will continue to be attracted to the City, largely due to Deakin University Burwood Campus and Box Hill Institute of TAFE.

- 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.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR HOUSING AFFORDABILITY:

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

KEY CHALLENGES FOR HOUSING DESIGN:

- 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.
- 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.
- Encouraging the retention of older dwellings in areas where these buildings dominate, and limit new development to two dwellings per lot in Limited Change Areas.

The Strategy provides a framework to address these issues, by identifying locations suitable for different rates of housing change (substantial, natural and limited change) to direct development into areas with capacity for growth, and limit change in areas with established environmental, heritage and neighbourhood character values. It includes a suite of objectives and corresponding actions to

address the issues of diversity, affordability and housing design listed above. These include a range of monitoring steps, to enable Council to better determine the effectiveness of its strategy in achieving its housing objectives.



1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Housing is a fundamental human right and one of the universal determinants of health and wellbeing. The availability of secure, well located affordable housing provides pathways to employment and education, supports choices, builds strong, connected and sustainable communities and provides opportunities to participate in community life.

This *Whitehorse Housing Strategy* involves review and update of Council's *Housing Strategy 2003* to identify what types of housing should be provided to support the municipality's growing and changing population. It seeks to ensure that the dwellings we build today will meet the needs of future generations and that future housing is appropriately located throughout the City of Whitehorse.

The study area includes all residentially zoned land within Whitehorse, as well as the business zoned land within the neighbourhood activity centres (see Figure 1).

1.1.1 BACKGROUND & BRIEF

The City of Whitehorse appointed consultants, Planisphere in conjunction with Sweett Group and Harvest Digital, to prepare a *Whitehorse Housing and Neighbourhood Character Review*.

The objectives of the Whitehorse Housing Strategy Review Brief are:

- To understand existing housing stock, population trends, opportunities and constraints on future development;
- To maintain a sustainable population;
- To facilitate diversity of housing to meet people's needs;
- To positively influence the form, location, amenity and type of new residential development;
- To examine tools to manage future change;
- To maximise and improve development potential around activity centres and transport corridors and nodes; and
- To prompt community discussion about housing issues.

DIRECTIONS FOR HOUSING

Recently released Victorian State Government strategic planning policy, Plan Melbourne, seeks to manage growth and change which will inevitably occur across metropolitan Melbourne over the next 25 years. The directions aim to plan for expected growth in additional households in Melbourne and anticipate that existing suburbs will be taking a greater majority of this growth than greenfield areas.

Underlying planning for this growth is a strong desire to retain the liveability and character of the established areas and to increasingly concentrate major change in strategically located redevelopment sites such as Activity Centres and larger parcels of undeveloped land and consolidated sites. An expectation is that Councils

will undertake the necessary strategic work to inform where growth and change can occur in each municipality.

Council has a number of relevant strategies and policies directly related to the provision of housing, including the Affordable Housing Policy 2010 City of Whitehorse, the Student Accommodation Policy within the Whitehorse Planning Scheme, and a number of existing structure plans and urban design frameworks centred around larger commercial centres (referred to as Activity Centres). In addition, there are many associated policies and strategies, including an Economic Development Strategy, Integrated Transport Strategy and Open Space Strategy. These have all been considered in the development of the Whitehorse Housing Strategy 2014.

NEW RESIDENTIAL ZONES

In addition to the above, the Victorian State Government released reformed residential zones to replace the Residential 1 Zone, Residential 2 Zone and Residential 3 Zone in the Victoria Planning Provisions. Councils are required to implement the new zones by 30 June 2014. Changes are also to be made to the Mixed Use Zone and Low Density Residential Zone. New commercial zones are also being introduced, which provide for opportunities for appropriately located and designed housing within commercial areas such as shopping centres.

The three new residential zones with accompanying schedules are the:

- **Residential Growth Zone** - enables new housing growth and diversity in appropriate locations near activity areas, train stations and other areas suitable for increased housing activity.
- **General Residential Zone** - respects and preserves neighbourhood character while allowing moderate housing growth and diversity.
- **Neighbourhood Residential Zone** – restricts housing growth in areas identified for urban preservation.

Councils are required to identify suitable locations to apply the new suite of residential zones in order to deliver housing to support future population growth and to provide housing diversity, whilst protecting areas of special character.

This Housing Strategy aims to provide Council with a tool to translate the existing suite of residential zones into the three reformed residential zones. It will also help develop an understanding of whether the Mixed Use Zone may be more broadly used if this furthers the housing objectives of this Strategy. The basis of the three levels of change needs to provide consistency between local policy and the Victoria Planning Provisions.

1.1.2 APPROACH

The Housing and Neighbourhood Character Review was developed over six key stages as set out below. This involved reviewing both the 2003 Housing Study and the 2003 Neighbourhood Character Study and a Neighbourhood Activity Centre Assessment. Review is needed to ensure the key directions of the 2003 documents

are still relevant and to provide up-to-date directions for Whitehorse's future housing needs.

The Housing and Neighbourhood Character Review 2014, when implemented, will direct new residential development to the most suitable locations in Whitehorse, and strengthen protection of neighbourhood character.

The Review was undertaken through a technical assessment of key housing issues, locational mapping and site survey, and consultation with the community, relevant stakeholders and housing providers.

Stage 1: Inception and Background

Stage 2: Draft Neighbourhood Character Review & Neighbourhood Activity Centre Assessment

Stage 3: Draft Housing Strategy Review

Stage 4: Consultation on draft Documents

Stage 5: Review of Consultation and Final Reports

Stage 6: Implementation

An Internal Working Group comprising officers from a range of Council departments has overseen and inputted into the preparation of the draft Strategy.

An External Reference Group has provided community input into preparation of the Strategy, and included members representing residential, commercial and other broad interests from the Whitehorse community.

1.1.3 THE ROLE OF COUNCIL

The focus of this Housing Strategy is on providing practical, achievable and strategic direction to guide the future mix, location and design of housing throughout the City. The scope of issues is broad, and Council has the potential to assume a wide variety of roles in addressing the future housing needs of the municipality. Council's roles include the responsibility for planning to meet the housing needs of the City within the existing legislative framework and through the Victoria Planning Provisions.

In 2011, Council adopted a series of resolutions seeking to amend the Whitehorse Planning Scheme to:

- Increase the minimum lot size for new developments;
- Reduce the site coverage and hard surface coverage within the garden and bush suburban areas;
- Require an increase in the size of private open space areas per dwelling in new residential developments; and
- Modify the standard ResCode provisions to address these matters.

Refer to [Appendix A](#) for a copy of the resolutions.

Council is responsible for ensuring that new housing meets town planning, building and public health regulations and expectations.

There are many factors that are beyond the control of local government, particularly those that relate to State and Federal policy. One of Council's roles will be to act as an advocate to these levels of government in the best interests of the local Whitehorse community, as well as a facilitator to bring stakeholders together. Council can assume an advocacy role in negotiations with developers to ensure new housing development in the City is of a quality design, appropriately serviced by hard and soft infrastructure and offers a high level of amenity to residents.

THE WHITEHORSE COUNCIL VISION

Council is guided by the following vision, drawn from *Council Vision 2013-2023*:

We aspire to be a healthy, vibrant, prosperous and sustainable community supported by strong leadership and community partnerships.

The City of Whitehorse will be:

- *One of the most liveable and sustainable municipalities in Melbourne;*
- *Recognised for the quality of its open space and natural environment;*
- *A community rich in culture and diversity that is inclusive, healthy and vibrant;*
- *A well governed city that has a healthy and strong relationship with the community; and*
- *A municipality with a prosperous and well supported local economy.*

1.1.4 POLICY CONTEXT

State, regional and local policies identify a number of issues to be addressed and strategic directions to be implemented by the housing strategy. Refer to [Appendix B](#) for a summary of key relevant strategic directions.

1.1.5 PHASE 1 CONSULTATION

The Housing Needs survey conducted during Stage 2 of the project process (see page 4) resulted in 27 responses. The responses indicated the range of housing choices to be made by the community, with more than a third stating they want to stay in their current home for at least the next 10 years, and more than a third stating that they would like housing to suit ageing needs. Many would like housing convenient to public transport, shops and services and slightly more respondents indicated they would like a larger dwelling and garden, than those indicating they would like a smaller dwelling and garden. This is not however a survey that provides quantitative results, merely one that indicates a sample of views.

1.1.6 PHASE 2 CONSULTATION

Consultation at Stage 4 of the Review provided the opportunity for comments on the Draft Housing Strategy, containing the Housing Change Map. In total, 853 submissions were received relating to the Housing Strategy, and the majority of

these related to the Housing Change area boundaries and intentions. In general, there was concern that the designated area of change would allow too much development in the area. The areas of greatest concern were around:

- Bolton Park (City Oval)
- Box Hill TAFE
- Surrey Hills and Mont Albert including Riversdale Road, Russell Street, Florence Road, Broughton Road and Windsor Estate
- Church Street/Barkly Terrace, Mitcham

In addition a smaller number of submissions (in particular those lodged on-line) made comments about the other aspects of the Housing Strategy, such as affordability and diversity.

As a result of a detailed consideration of the submissions, a number of changes were made to the Housing Change map and to other sections of the Strategy. A major change was to delete reference to a category of change 'Natural Change with Access'. It was found that this category was not necessary and overly complicated the implementation of the housing strategy while adding little to the capacity of the City to accommodate housing in the future. See Appendix C for an explanation of the translation of the categories of change.

1.1.7 PHASE 3 CONSULTATION

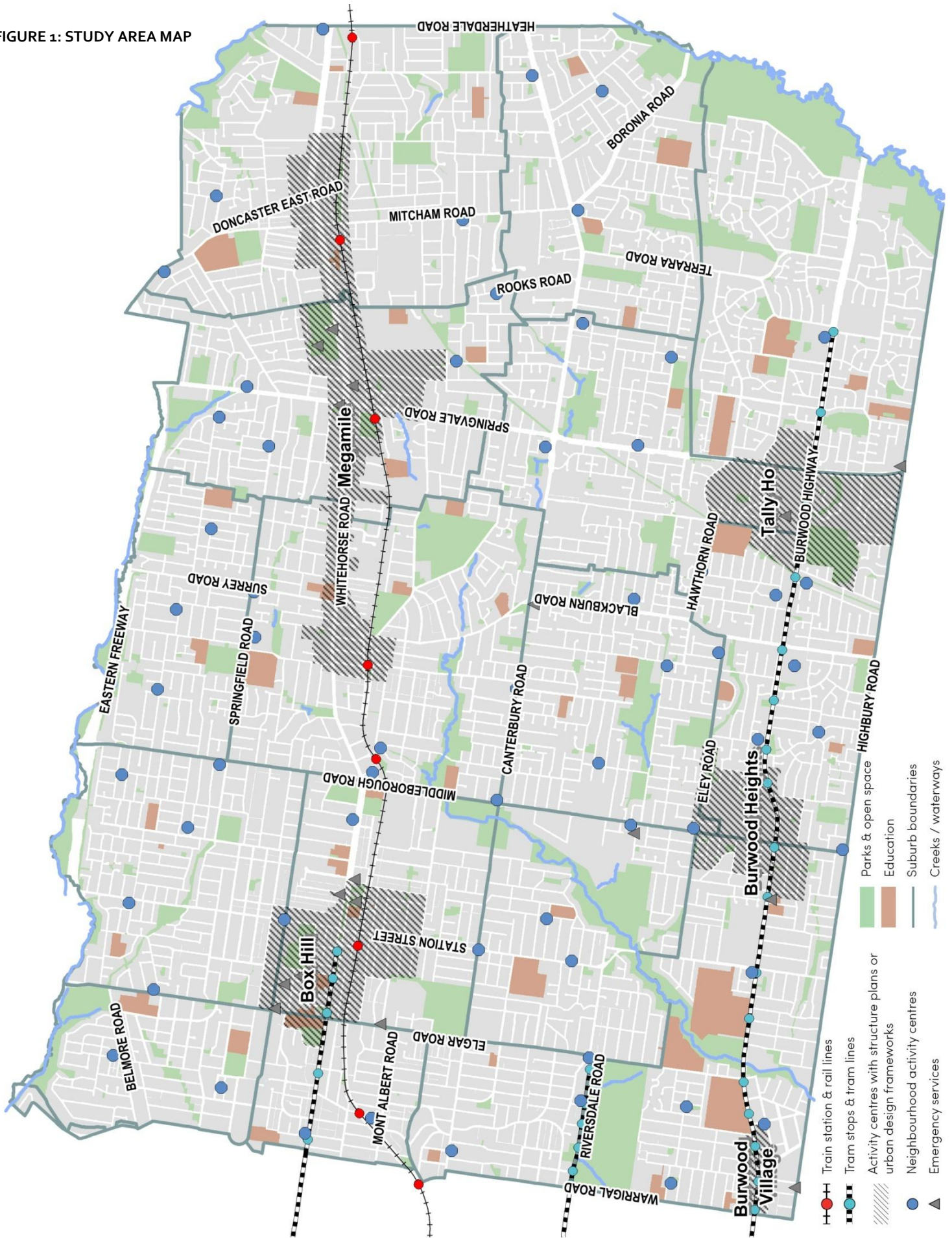
Phase 3 consultation presented the *Whitehorse Housing and Neighbourhood Character Review* as a set of background documents to inform Council's policy approach to future residential and neighbourhood development and the preparation of planning controls supporting the introduction of the new residential zones proposed by the State Government in 2013.

During Phase 3 consultation 795 submissions were received with an additional 91 late comments. Submissions were received from across the municipality with some concentrations generally west of Elgar Road, around the periphery of Box Hill Activities Area, Blackburn (north-east of Middleborough and Whitehorse Roads) and the south-east part of Mitcham. Several proforma submissions were developed by the community for different locations; each being assessed by officers as an individual submission. In addition to the above, Council held a community drop-in information session on 20 February 2014 attended by approximately 150 / 200 people, preceded by a meeting with representatives from key resident groups. Strong interest during Phase 3 was evident from the submissions received, attendance at the information session, project website visitation (exceeding 5,000 hits) and phone and counter enquiries.

During Phase 3 consultation many concerns were raised about protecting neighbourhood character, particularly pertaining to gardens and vegetation. Concerns were also raised about the balance between existing character and the need for future development, as well as managing public realm and infrastructure provision into the future. Many concerns were raised about matters beyond the

scope of the Review and the planning system. The key directions for Council will be to ensure that the public realm outcomes and urban design of medium and higher density developments are more stringently assessed, that open space and infrastructure provision needs to be considered in light of the revised population distribution, and that integrated transport planning for local roads is required to manage traffic and parking congestion and promote safe pedestrian environments across the municipality.

FIGURE 1: STUDY AREA MAP





2

CONTEXT

2.1 THE PLACE

The City of Whitehorse is located approximately 15 kilometres to the east of the Melbourne CBD. The municipality is 64 square kilometres in area, and is generally bounded by Highbury Road, Warrigal Road, streets just east of Union Road, the Koonung Creek, Heatherdale Road and the Dandenong Creek.

Whitehorse sits within the established eastern metropolitan region of Melbourne along with the municipalities of Boroondara (west), Manningham (north), Maroondah and Knox (east), and Monash (south).

The City comprises of the following suburbs and localities:

Blackburn	Forest Hill
Blackburn North	Mitcham
Blackburn South	Mont Albert
Box Hill	Mont Albert North
Box Hill North	Nunawading
Box Hill South	Surrey Hills (part)
Burwood (part)	Vermont
Burwood East	Vermont South

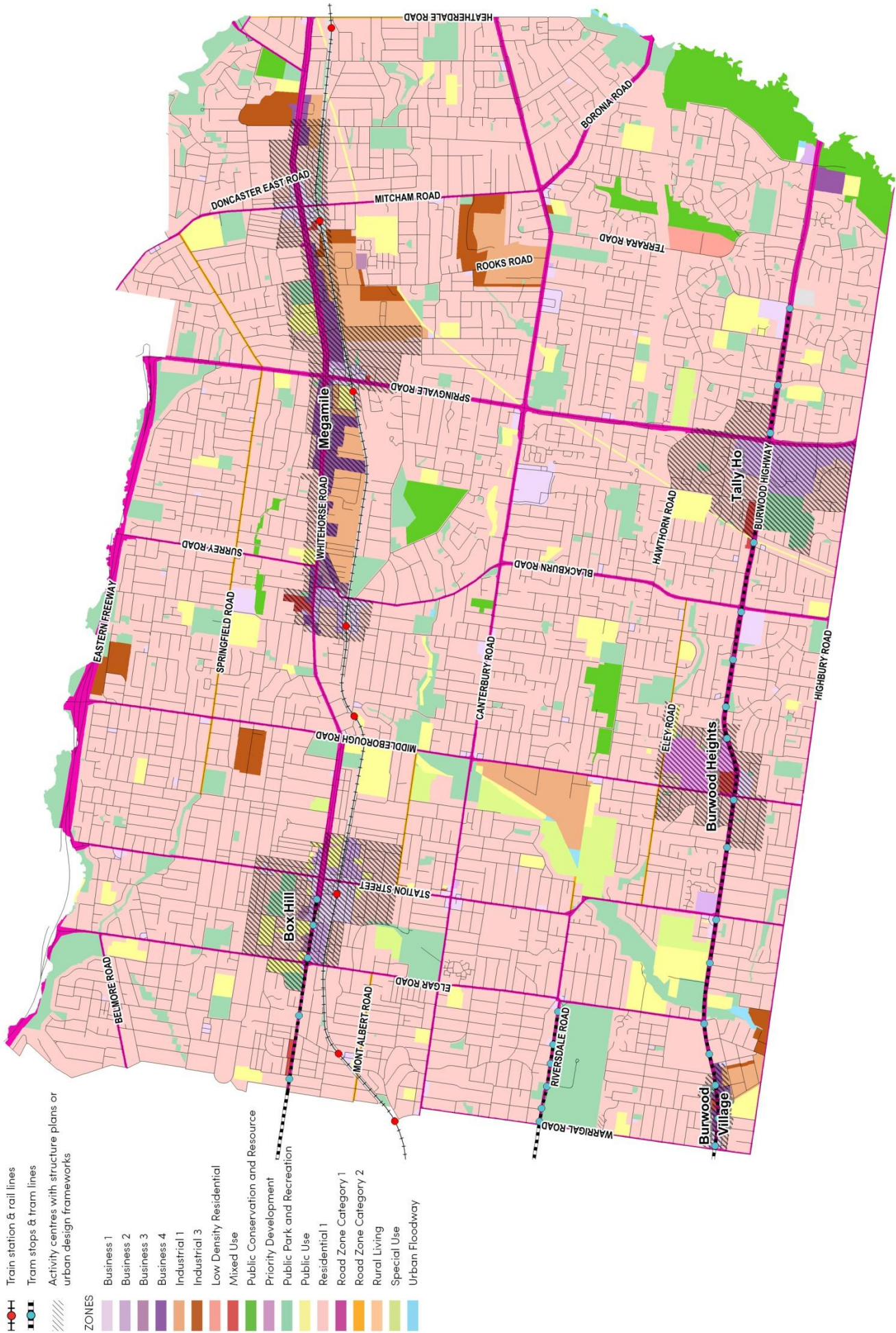
2.1.1 LAND USE

The City of Whitehorse contains a mix of residential, commercial, industrial and educational land uses, with residential the predominant land use throughout the municipality. This is shown most clearly on the land use zoning map from the Whitehorse Planning Scheme (*Refer to Figure 2*). Regionally significant land uses located within the municipality include the Box Hill Hospital; Epworth Hospital; Deakin University – Burwood Campus; Box Hill Institute of TAFE; Box Hill Central Activities Area (CAA); Blackburn Lake Sanctuary; Wattle Park; Tally Ho Business Park and Greenwood Office Park.

In addition to the Box Hill CAA, there is an established network of activity centres distributed across the City including the Nunawading Megamile Major Activities Area (MAC), Burwood Heights MAC and Forest Hill MAC and more than 60 small commercial centres referred to as Neighbourhood Activity Centres (NACs).

Whitehorse has approximately 335 open space reserves covering approximately 690 hectares of land area which equates to 10.7% of the municipality. The City has two large aquatic centres in Box Hill and Nunawading. Large regional parks and recreation facilities include Wattle Park, Blackburn Lake Sanctuary, Gardiners Creek Reserve, Koonung Creek and Dandenong Creek parklands and Yarran Dheran.

FIGURE 2: EXISTING ZONING MAP AS OF 04/04/13



2.1.2 TRANSPORT

Whitehorse is served by an extensive transport system that provides strong links to the wider metropolitan region by train, tram and bus public transport networks and regional road links.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

In 2010, 92% of Whitehorse residents lived within 400 metres of a bus stop and/or tram stop and/or 800 metres of a train station. Despite this, 2011 ABS figures on journey to work data shows 64% of Whitehorse residents use their car for their journey to work. Most residential areas to the west of Middleborough Road are within reasonably close proximity to fixed rail services (train or tram). Further east, accessibility varies, with areas close to the distinctive east-west corridors just south of Whitehorse Road and along Burwood Highway provided with fixed rail access, but limited provision in other areas.

The Belgrave / Lilydale rail line, with seven stations extending from Mont Albert to Heatherdale, links Whitehorse to central Melbourne and outer eastern Melbourne.

Three tram lines service Whitehorse. Route No. 75 commences at Southern Cross Station and operates within Whitehorse along Burwood Highway from Warrigal Road to Vermont South Shopping Centre, servicing major institutions such as Deakin University, several schools and Tally Ho Business Park. Tram route No. 109 operates between Port Melbourne and Box Hill CAA. Tram Route No. 70 commences at Waterfront City Docklands and terminates at Wattle Park (corner of Riversdale Road and Elgar Road).

Numerous bus routes service the City including:

- Metropolitan Bus Services (Route Nos.: 201, 202, 205, 207, 270, 271, 273, 279, 280, 281, 282, 284, 286, 293, 295, 302, 303, 305, 309, 313, 315, 318, 364, 612, 623, 624, 684, 703, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 740, 742, 753, 754, 765, 766, 767, 768, 850, 885)
- Smart Bus Services (Route Nos.: 901 - Frankston to Melbourne Airport; 902 - Chelsea to Airport West; 903 - Altona to Mordialloc; 906 - City to Warrandyte Bridge; 907 - City to Mitcham; 908 - City to The Pines)
- Nightrider Services (Route Nos.: 966 and 968)

There are a number of public transport interchanges at key locations throughout Whitehorse, particularly around train stations linking to multiple local and regional bus services. Tram and bus routes also connect at many of the key road intersections.

Box Hill has the busiest public transport interchange outside of the CBD, and is the only suburban public transport interchange where people can connect with trains, buses and trams.

ROAD NETWORK

Whitehorse is well served by the arterial road network and freeway linkages. The Eastern Freeway, which ends at Springvale Road or continues on to Eastlink via tunnel under the Mullum Mullum valley, provides excellent accessibility between the municipality and the Melbourne Central Business District (CBD), eastern and southern suburbs and regional Victoria. Eastlink connects Whitehorse to the regional road network including the Monash Freeway, Frankston Freeway, Peninsula Link, South Gippsland Highway and the Princes Highway.

VicRoads has funding to remove specific capacity constraints (road/rail level crossing removals) at Mitcham Road and Rooks Road, and these level crossings are intended to be removed by late 2014. Planning is also underway for the removal of the level crossing at Blackburn Road, but construction is not funded. VicRoads has not advised of any further plans to increase road capacity in Whitehorse.

VicRoads owns a significant parcel of land in the City of Whitehorse known as the Healesville Freeway Reservation, located between Springvale Road and Boronia Road. A structure plan is currently being prepared by the State Government for the future use of the land. VicRoads has indicated the land is envisaged to accommodate a degree of housing provision. Council's adopted position is that the Healesville Freeway Reservation should remain as open space for the community.

CYCLING

An increasing number of bicycle trails provide links to major open space and recreational facilities and provide an alternative form of transport for the community. Shared pathways along the Eastern Freeway, Eastlink, and along the Gardiners and Dandenong Creek corridors provide regional links between Whitehorse and surrounding suburbs including connection to the CBD.

2.1.3 ENVIRONMENT & CHARACTER

All environment, heritage and character overlays are shown on Figure 3 - Overlays Map.

HERITAGE

The City of Whitehorse contains many places of historical significance (*see Figure 3*). These structures, natural features, buildings and areas provide a snapshot into the City's past, from when it was first surveyed and settled in the 1840s, to the start of more significant development commencing in the 1880s.

There are numerous Heritage Precincts and individual sites in Whitehorse that require an appropriate level of protection in this Strategy including:

- HO100 Churchill Precinct, Mont Albert
- HO101 Combarton Street Precinct, Box Hill
- HO102 Mont Albert Residential Precinct
- HO103 Mont Albert Shopping Centre Precinct, Mont Albert
- HO118 Vermont Park Precinct

- HO178 Blacks Estate Precinct, Mont Albert
- HO 179 Thomas Street Precinct, Mitcham
- HO180 Mount View Court Precinct, Burwood
- HO191 Mates' Housing Development Precinct, Box Hill
- HO212 William Street Precinct, Box Hill
- HO228 Tyne Street and Watts Street Corner Precinct, Box Hill North

NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER

Whitehorse is a middle ring Melbourne municipality. It is dominated by detached dwellings in garden and bush settings and provides a variety of living environments ranging from the tree lined streets of Mont Albert, the bushland setting around Blackburn Lake to higher density housing around Box Hill CAA. The periods of development are reflected in the eclectic mix of architectural styles including Victorian, Edwardian, Post-war, Inter-war and contemporary buildings.

As part of this review, Council's *Neighbourhood Character Study* will be updated. This Strategy will be updated as the Neighbourhood Character Study evolves.

LANDSCAPE & VEGETATION

Whitehorse is characterised by pleasantly undulating topography, with some steeply sloping areas, enhanced by a range of indigenous and exotic landscapes.

Trees and variations in the vegetation types and densities are an integral aspect of the urban character in Whitehorse. This is reflected in the application of the Significant Landscape Overlay and Vegetation Protection Overlay to residential areas in Blackburn, Mitcham, Vermont and Mont Albert North.

The municipality is dominated by an upper tree canopy which covers a majority of the City, ranging from the exotic tree lined streets of Mont Albert to the native trees which dominate areas of Blackburn, Blackburn North, Vermont and Mitcham. Parts of the City retain a bushland appearance that has been lost from many other parts of the metropolitan area.

Vegetation in the public realm (road reserves, rail reserves, parks and gardens) is complemented by large canopy trees planted in private open spaces including back gardens. The contribution of plantings in private gardens is highly valued by the community. The increased amount of impervious surface due to increased development has led to a decrease in vegetation coverage within the municipality. This is a concern for many people in Whitehorse.

Vegetation coverage also has significant environmental benefits including providing habitat / wildlife corridors, shade, contributing to resident health and wellbeing with the positive benefits of immersion in natural surroundings, and reducing the heat island effect, amongst many others.

Significant areas of remnant vegetation can be found in the City's bushland reserves such as Bellbird Dell, Cootamundra Walk, Wandinong Sanctuary, Wurundjeri Walk, Yarran Dheran, Antonio Park and Blackburn Lake Sanctuary. In

these areas, the tree canopy cover is extensive and large mature trees dominate as well as mid level vegetation and ground coverage / bushes.

WATERWAYS

The waterways of Gardiners, Mullum Mullum, Dandenong and Koonung Creeks are significant structuring elements within the City and create important environmental, landscape and recreational locations. These creeks form part of an advanced open space network that is highly valued by the community. Some areas warrant vegetation and habitat protection while other more accessible areas are suitable for recreation purposes.

2.1.4 PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

The Whitehorse Open Space Strategy 2007 notes that the open space character broadly changes across the municipality from more formal exotic landscape character in the west to the bushland and native character in the east.

There are more than 335 open space reserves within the municipality, covering approximately 10.7% of the City. Of the total open space, approximately 590 hectares is Council owned and managed, comprising approximately 324 reserves. The remaining open space is owned and managed by other agencies such as Melbourne Water and Parks Victoria. There is a wide diversity of open space reserves throughout Whitehorse ranging from small parks, active sporting reserves, linear parks, formal gardens and bushland reserves and numerous sports fields.

Corridors of linked open space have been created as a result of open space corridors along Gardiners, Koonung, Bushy, Mullum Mullum and Dandenong Creeks. Large formal gardens include Halliday Park, Box Hill Gardens and Kingsley Gardens providing primarily informal recreation. High quality sporting reserves include East Burwood Reserve, Box Hill City Oval, Surrey Park and Elgar Park. A range of bushland conservation reserves are located within the municipality, the largest and most well known being Blackburn Lake Sanctuary, but also Yarran Dheran, Wurundjeri Walk, Bellbird Dell and Wandinong Sanctuary, all located at the eastern side of the City. Large reserves with a heritage character include Schwerkolt Cottage, Wattle Park and Old Strathdon Orchard. There are two public golf courses including Wattle Park Public Golf Course located in the west and Morack Public Golf Course in the east. One private golf course, Box Hill Golf Club in Box Hill, is relatively central in the municipality.

Of the 335 open space reserves, 220 are smaller reserves less than 1 hectare in size. These form an extensive system of local open space across Whitehorse that is used on a regular basis largely for visiting playgrounds and walking. There are around 35 medium sized open space reserves that serve local neighbourhoods and include a range of facilities. This system of open space supports a range of vegetation including remnant indigenous vegetation, mature exotic and native trees and this provides a habitat corridor framework.

The waterways are one of the main open space links into adjoining municipalities with shared trails continuing for kilometres towards Melbourne on the Main Yarra Trail and south to Dandenong. The waterways provide extensive natural habitat and bushland spines that either currently or have the potential to link together a large number of the bushland reserves in Whitehorse.

The open space vision for Whitehorse, as set out in the Whitehorse Open Space Strategy, is to 'continue to provide a diverse network of linked open space with people of all ages recreating, socialising and enjoying the outdoor space, and bushland reserves brimming with indigenous flora and fauna'.

The following key outcomes are sought to achieve the overall vision for the Strategy:

- Improve the links between open space reserves
- Improve access to and use of existing reserves and maintain existing highly valued reserves
- Build on diversity which is a key strength of the Whitehorse open space system
- Adequate open space to meet existing and future population needs
- Improve the habitat corridor links and values of the existing linear open space system of Whitehorse
- Improve environmental sustainability of open space management and maintenance practices
- Reduce conflicts between different recreational users in open space

2.1.5 ROADS AND PATHWAYS / BIKE TRACKS

The Whitehorse Integrated Transport Strategy 2011 draws together a range of specific strategies for different transport modes, and sets a framework to prioritise improvements and facilitate travel options and networks that are sustainable, convenient, accessible and safe.

The forecast growth in population for Whitehorse, along with the development of increased density living in and around activity centres, means that the demand for a safe, convenient and accessible walking environment will also increase.

The City of Whitehorse generally has excellent facilities for pedestrians in suburban locations with constructed footpaths along at least one side of most streets. There is good walking access to bus stops and tram stops within the municipality as well to the various train stations. Most of the issues associated with pedestrian safety and accessibility are located in the Box Hill CAA and the Major and Neighbourhood Activity Centres due to high pedestrian numbers and potential difficulties in crossing busy arterial roads. The focus for pedestrian improvements, such as the installation of pedestrian operated signals, raised pedestrian crosswalks on local roads, reduced speed limits and improved security and lighting will be around the Box Hill CAA, within and on the approaches to the Major Activity Centres and

shopping centres, public transport interchanges, major sporting facilities and in the vicinity of schools and educational institutions.

The City of Whitehorse has some excellent off-road paths (e.g. the Koonung Creek, Gardiners Creek, Bushy Creek, and Dandenong Creek trails) which primarily cater for recreational walk and cycling trips, and complement the limited dedicated on-road facilities for commuter cyclists. The Blackburn Road-Surrey Road link incorporates a series of on-road bicycle lanes (predominantly shared parking/bicycle lanes) while Springfield Road has a mix of on and off-road facilities.

Key focuses for the future are to seek to provide improved routes for commuter cycling, improved connections between existing and future on and off-road paths, improved facilities, and encourage increased cycling activity, particularly for travel to schools, tertiary institutions and places of employment.

Routes of particular focus include:

- The investigation and possible construction of the eastern rail trail between the Box Hill and Ringwood CAAs (CAA Connector)
- The creation of a formal shared path along the 'Pipe Track' from Mitcham to Glen Waverley (in association with Monash City Council)
- Increased application of green on-road surfacing to highlight bicycle areas at high priority intersections, and installation of repeater bicycle logos and associated broken lines at regular intervals along strategic commuter routes (e.g. Canterbury Road and Whitehorse Road) to reinforce the presence of cyclists to motorists
- The provision of bicycle storage on buses to encourage a greater level of cycle/bus/cycle trips.

2.1.6 SERVICING & UTILITIES

All servicing authorities and VicRoads have been consulted on the preparation of the Strategy. It is ascertained that existing capacity within the road, drainage, water and sewerage is limited. This is not uncommon in many areas of metropolitan Melbourne and, in many instances, it is possible to address these limitations through prioritising infrastructure and service upgrades which occur on a programmed basis. The Housing Strategy, has considered infrastructure implications in proposing locations for greater and less intensive housing development.

The following information has been obtained from the servicing authorities to date.

DRAINAGE & STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE

The City of Whitehorse and Melbourne Water share responsibility in managing the stormwater drainage system in Whitehorse. Melbourne Water is responsible for regional drains and stormwater infrastructure. Council is responsible for local drains, to which these regional drains connect.

Underground drainage systems are generally designed to cater for a 5-year average rainfall event. When rainfall exceeds this volume, the excess water follows the natural topography of the land and flows along reserved floodplains, channels and roads.

The locations subject to natural overland flows from the regional drains are generally designated through the application of a Special Building Overlay (SBO) in the Whitehorse Planning Scheme. The SBO does not currently designate land affected by overland flows that cannot be accommodated within the local drainage system, which is the responsibility of Council. For local drainage issues Council can request conditions on planning or building permits to address the drainage implications of development, however these conditions are not always upheld if an application is appealed to Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

Melbourne Water is currently implementing a long-term program of flood risk reduction works as outlined in the *Flood Management and Drainage Strategy for the Port Phillip and the Western Port Region*, published in 2007.

Two catchments partly located within the City of Whitehorse have been identified by Melbourne Water as priority areas requiring further investigation. This investigation work was due to be completed by the end of 2013. Although development is still possible within these locations, additional measures for flood mitigation may be required and the development potential in some locations may be limited until drainage improvements are implemented.

WATER SUPPLY & SEWERAGE INFRASTRUCTURE

Yarra Valley Water (YVW) is the retailer and provider of water and sewerage services in the City of Whitehorse. Their assets include pipelines, pumps and tanks. YVW have informed their service is currently operating at capacity however each development enquiry that is received by YVW is assessed against models and the capacity of infrastructure is increased accordingly.

Recent Integrated Water Management studies have been undertaken by YVW for Box Hill, Nunawading, Laburnum and Ringwood Activities Areas.

YVW state that sewerage assets within the City of Whitehorse need to be upgraded which will require further negotiation between YVW and Council to understand implications for housing.

ELECTRICITY

United Energy is a provider of electricity to the City of Whitehorse, with assets including transformers, substations, cables, and poles. Recently completed upgrades have occurred at Ringwood Terminal substation and Box Hill Hospital.

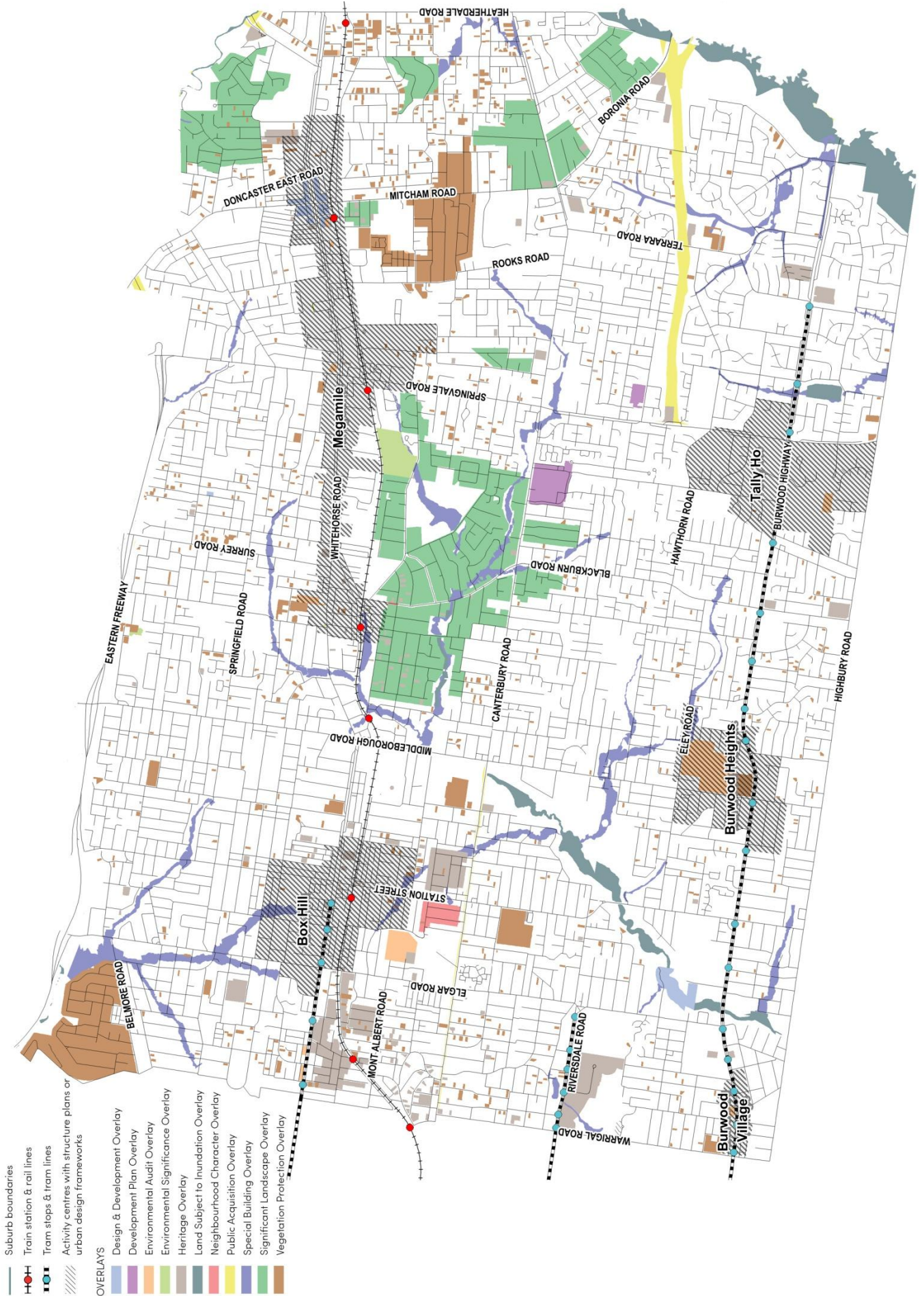


FIGURE 3: EXISTING OVERLAYS MAP AS OF 04/04/13

2.2 THE PEOPLE

The Estimated Residential Population from the 2011 Census for the City of Whitehorse is 158,992 living in 57,207 households (.id consulting 2013).

The City has experienced a relatively slow rate of population growth, with an annual average growth rate of 1.0% between 2006 and 2011. This is lower than the 1.7% growth rate of Greater Melbourne.

2.2.1 AGE STRUCTURE

The City of Whitehorse population age is varied across the City. The following analysis is based on existing .id consulting pty ltd profile data and Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census 2011.

MEDIAN AGE

The median age in the City as of the 2011 ABS Census was 39 compared to 38 in 2006, and, 3 years older than Greater Melbourne. The median age ranges from a low of 34 years in Box Hill and Burwood to a high of 45 years in Vermont South. The City of Whitehorse has a lower proportion of people in the younger age groups (0 to 17 years) and a higher proportion of people in the older age groups (60+ years) compared to the Greater Melbourne average.

SUBURB DISTRIBUTION – UNDER 18 YEARS

In 2011, 20.9% of the City of Whitehorse's population was aged less than 18 years compared to 22.2% in Greater Melbourne. Proportions ranged from a low of 14.7% in Box Hill to a high of 24.9% in Blackburn North. The five areas with the highest percentages were: Blackburn North (24.9%); Vermont (22.7%); Mitcham (22.6%); Mont Albert North (22.0%); and Blackburn (22.0%).

SUBURB DISTRIBUTION – 18 – 24 YEARS

In 2011, the City of Whitehorse had a higher proportion of people aged 18 to 24 years, with the proportional distribution reflective of areas around tertiary education providers and locations that offer smaller dwelling sizes including student accommodation. The lowest proportion was 7.1% in Mitcham, with the highest percentages in Burwood (20.9%) and Box Hill (18.4%).

SUBURB DISTRIBUTION – 25-54 YEARS

People aged between 25-54 account for 40.7% of the total population. Of these, the 25-34 years olds were still proportionally higher in Box Hill, however from 35 – 54 years, Mitcham, Nunawading, Blackburn, Vermont, Mont Albert and Surrey Hills had a higher proportion of this age cohort.

SUBURB DISTRIBUTION – 65 YEARS AND OVER

Whitehorse is ageing at a greater rate than metropolitan Melbourne, with 17.3% of the City of Whitehorse's population aged 65 years or more in 2011, compared to

13.1% in Greater Melbourne. Proportions ranged from a low of 13.7% in Mont Albert to a high of 22.2% in Forest Hill. The five areas with the highest percentages of over 65 year olds were: Forest Hill (22.2%); Blackburn South (21.6%); Burwood East (20.6%); Vermont (19.0%); and Blackburn (18.8%).

In 2011, 2.8% of the City's population was aged 85 years and over compared to 1.8% in Greater Melbourne. Proportions ranged from a low of 1.6% in Burwood East to a high of 4.3% in Burwood.

2.2.2 HOUSEHOLD SIZE

Household size in Whitehorse is currently an average of 2.58 persons per household. This figure remained relatively stable between the 2001 ABS Census (2.5) and the ABS Census 2006 (2.6)

2.2.3 HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

In 2011, 'Couple families with children' (34%) and 'Couple families without children' (24%) accounted for the majority of family households in the City of Whitehorse (58%). Whitehorse has similar household composition to metropolitan Melbourne although slightly larger proportions of 'Couple families with no children' (24% compared to 22.6% for metropolitan Melbourne). 'Lone person households' account for 23.7% of total households in Whitehorse, slightly higher than metropolitan Melbourne at 22.3%.

2.2.4 SOCIO ECONOMIC PROFILE

Between 2006 and 2011, Whitehorse had a noticeable shift towards the higher household income brackets, with 47% of households on weekly incomes of \$1,250 or above.

Analysis of household income levels in the City of Whitehorse in 2011 compared to Greater Melbourne shows that there was a larger proportion of high income households (those earning \$2,500 per week or more) and a higher proportion of low income households (those earning less than \$600 per week). Overall, 21.2% of the households earned a high income, and 20.9% were low income households, compared with 19.4% and 19.2% respectively for Greater Melbourne.

Compared with the Victorian and Australian rates, Whitehorse has a slightly lower unemployment rate of 5.1% as of the June quarter of 2012. However as of the June 2012 quarter, unemployment rates varied across the City with the lowest unemployment rate in Nunawading East at 4.7%. In comparison Box Hill (5.6%) has a slightly higher rate of unemployment compared with Victoria (5.4%) and Australia (5.2%).

The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) is a program that ranks areas in Australia according to relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage based on Census data. The City of Whitehorse is located in the top 10% of advantage in accordance with the index, but with pockets of disadvantage.

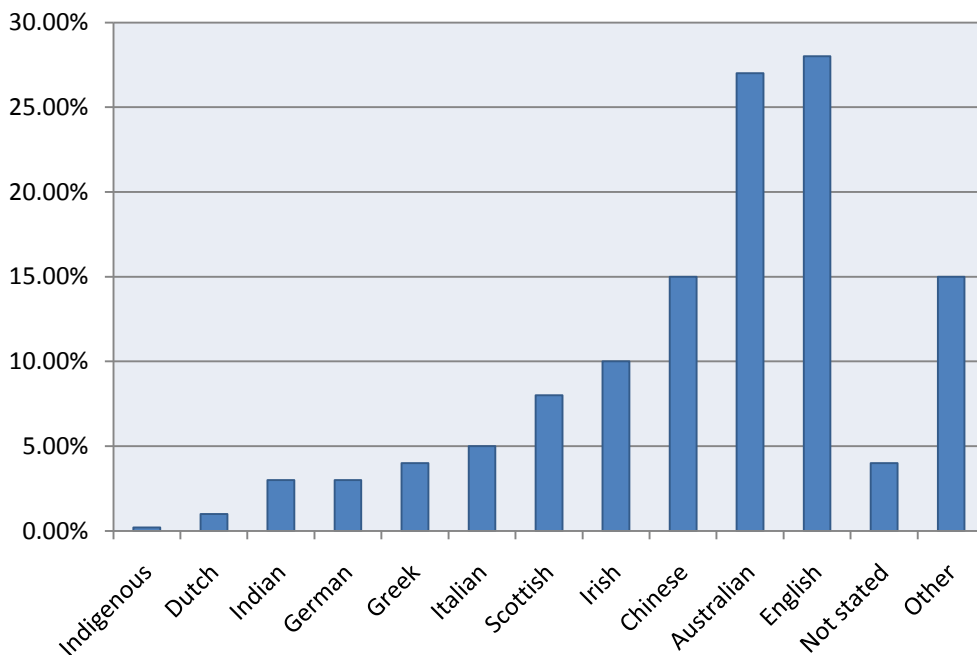
2.2.5 WORK PROFILE

The City of Whitehorse has a higher proportion of managers, professionals and technicians compared to Greater Melbourne. Most of the City of Whitehorse’s working residents travel outside the municipality for work (64%). Most (58%) travel to work by car as the driver, while 14% use the train as their main method of travel. Approximately 4% work from home. Only 0.7% cycle to work, and 2.3% walk to work.

2.2.6 CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND RELATIONSHIP TO HOUSING

The figure below shows the breakdown of ancestry groups at the 2011 Census. The large proportion of people in different ancestry groups is reflective of the cultural diversity in Whitehorse similar to wider trends in metropolitan Melbourne and Australia. Note that many people identify with more than one ancestry group.

Table 1: Ancestry Profile of Whitehorse Local Government Area, 2011





3

HOUSING NEED

3.1 CURRENT HOUSING PROFILE

3.1.1 KEY CHALLENGES FOR THE NEXT 20 YEARS

- An additional 12,997 dwellings is anticipated to be required to accommodate the projected population growth in the City of Whitehorse to 2036(.id consulting 2013).
- State planning policy directs established residential areas to continue to play an important role in providing additional housing.
- State planning policy considers activity centres to be the best places to accommodate additional housing growth, and should be 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.
- Whitehorse's attractive leafy character, dominance of detached dwellings and locational attributes that command higher property prices will place further pressure on housing affordability and the types of dwellings that may be built.
- Areas of high value character and vegetation or landscape significance should be preserved.
- Medium and higher density housing should make better utilisation of transport corridors including train and tram routes.
- Because of rising house prices, there will be high demand for private rental – 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 / rent than older housing stock, and can contribute to housing affordability problems.
- Housing in Box Hill will continue to attract overseas investment and new and first generation migrant populations.
- Areas near Deakin University Burwood Campus and Box Hill Institute of TAFE will need to provide more accommodation for students.
- Structure Plans with objectives to improve housing affordability and special needs housing opportunities in activity centres will need to be further developed.

The preceding chapter established that the population of the City of Whitehorse in 2013 comprises approximately 158,992 residents living in 62,152 dwellings (.id consulting 2013).

But 'how', 'where' and 'in what' do people currently live? This section presents the current housing profile for the City by outlining the housing type, tenure and characteristics of the municipality's existing residential areas. It is necessary to first understand these aspects of the existing housing supply and current property market, to ensure that future housing growth and change is provided in a way that enhances accessibility and liveability and enhances neighbourhood character.

This assessment is based on the following data sources:

- 'Forecast ID' projections, prepared by .id consulting pty ltd in 2013.
- ABS 2011 Census.

- Department of Planning & Community Development (2013) *Victoria in Future*.

3.1.2 HOUSING TYPE

Housing types are unevenly distributed across the municipality with diversity limited in locations where there is a high proportion of a particular housing type. The majority of dwellings in Whitehorse are detached dwellings, accounting for 75% of dwellings. The highest proportion of detached dwellings is in Vermont South with 93.5%, and the lowest in Box Hill at 34.7%. The other suburbs with a higher proportion of detached dwellings are: Burwood East (90.1%); Blackburn North (89.3%); Vermont (86.2%); and Blackburn South (80.7%). Areas with a different dominant tenure type were: Blackburn South (medium density), Box Hill (high density), and Burwood (medium density).

Detached dwellings, however, continue to account for a declining share in overall dwellings for the City, as semi-detached, row/terrace, townhouse, flats, units and apartments emerge as a growing dwelling type. Over the past 5 years multi-residential development forms have grown by 1,287 or 9.9%.

Box Hill (48.5%), Mont Albert (38.8%) and Surrey Hills (35.6%) have higher proportions of medium-density dwelling stock compared with Vermont South at 6.2%. Medium density dwellings include semi-detached, row, terrace or townhouses; flats, units or apartments in a one or two storey block; and/or flats attached to a house.

In 2011, 1.8% of the City of Whitehorse's dwellings were classified as high density dwellings (flats, units or apartments in a three or more storey block) compared to 7.2% in Greater Melbourne. Higher density housing is focused in Box Hill (16.3%) compared with 0% in Forest Hill.

NUMBER OF BEDROOMS – 2 OR LESS

In 2011, 23.3% of total dwellings were classed as two bedrooms or less compared to 24.8% in Greater Melbourne. The highest proportion of two bedroom dwellings is in Box Hill (51.7%); Mont Albert (36.4%); Surrey Hills (28.5%); Box Hill South (27.8%); and Nunawading (27.7%).

NUMBER OF BEDROOMS – 4 BEDROOMS OR MORE

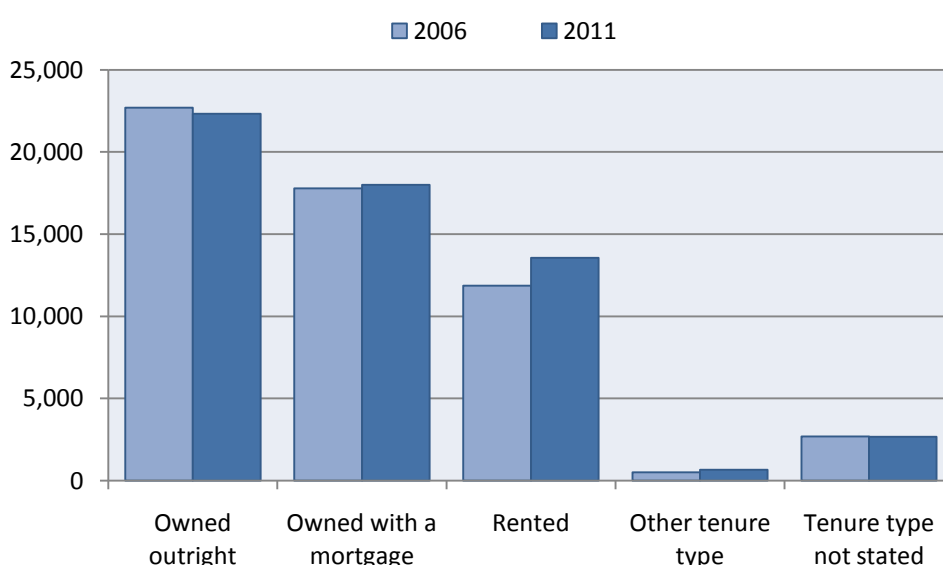
Dwellings with four or more bedrooms are similarly concentrated to locations where there is a higher proportion of detached housing stock. In 2011, 26.8% of the City of Whitehorse's total dwellings were classed as four bedrooms or more compared to 26.3% in Greater Melbourne. The suburbs with the highest percentages were: Vermont South (56.1%); Vermont (32.3%); Burwood East (31.6%); Surrey Hills (30.4%); and Mont Albert North (29.6%). Large dwellings are often occupied by families, particularly older families with teenage children. A large number of four bedrooms or more dwellings may also indicate more recently

built housing stock, as larger dwellings have been increasingly popular in recent decades.

3.1.3 HOUSING TENURE

In 2011, Whitehorse had a higher rate of home ownership of 70.5% compared to 66.8% for metropolitan Melbourne overall. This has declined slightly from 72.9% in 2006. Conversely the proportion of renters has increased from 21.4% to 23.7% over the same period which might suggest a decline in housing affordability. It could also be partly explained by new household formation with the large increase in population within the 20 to 24 age cohort which often tends to rent rather than purchase (refer Table 2). Most residents did not relocate between 2006 and 2011.

Table 2: Tenure in Whitehorse, 2006 and 2011



Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2006, 2011

3.1.4 MEDIAN HOUSE PRICE

Property prices in Whitehorse have increased substantially as a result of strong demand in many suburbs across the municipality comprising increases of 26.7% and 37.5% for houses and unit/ apartment housing forms respectively over the past 5 years. The price gap between the Whitehorse and metropolitan medians has continued to grow wider with the median house price being \$665,000 in Whitehorse compared to \$490,000 for metropolitan Melbourne in 2011.

Median house and unit prices are a commonly accepted measure and indicator of changes in housing prices. House prices within the different suburbs of Whitehorse vary significantly, with those closer to Melbourne CBD and those suburbs generally within Zone 1 on the Metropolitan rail line commanding a significant premium over those further afield within Zone 2 of the public transport network. Mont Albert and

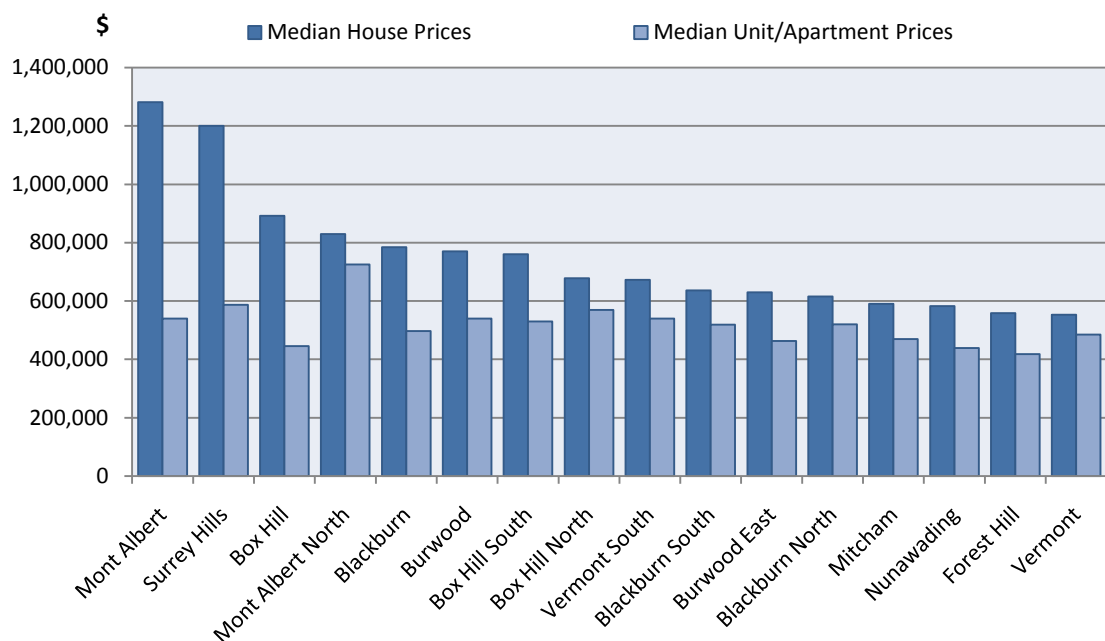
Surrey Hills, which include some of Melbourne’s most prestigious homes, have median house prices in excess of \$1.2 million (See Table 3).

In contrast, median prices within the other suburbs of Whitehorse range from \$552,500 to \$892,500 with suburbs closer to Melbourne CBD and along the rail line being more expensive than those further afield. Interestingly, unit/apartment prices within the premium markets of Mont Albert and Surrey Hills are relatively similar to the rest of the municipality.

New land supply is generally constrained to redevelopment of existing lots, which includes change of use and demolition of older housing stock. This lack of available land adds to the pressure on housing prices and limits the municipality’s ability to accommodate for future population growth within existing established areas.

The median house block price in Whitehorse in 2011 was \$411,000, compared with the metropolitan median of \$210,000.

Table 3: House and Unit/Apartment Markets in Whitehorse, 2011



Source: Valuer-General Victoria A Guide to Property Values 2011

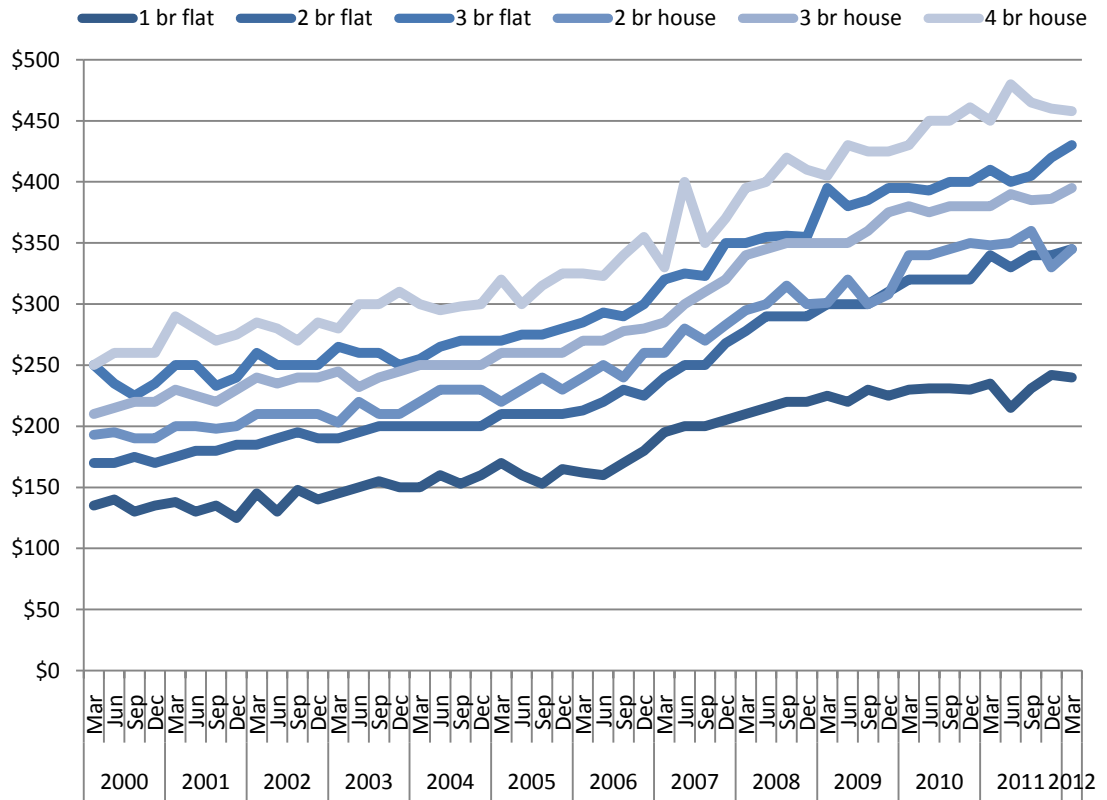
3.1.5 PRIVATE RENTAL COSTS

In the past ten years in Whitehorse, high property prices have resulted in a dramatic increase in rents. The average rents in Whitehorse range from \$240 per week for a 1 bedroom flat to \$458 per week for a 4 bedroom house.

Despite this, there has been an increase in the number of residential letting properties from around 3,400 in the year 2000 to some 4,300 in 2011.

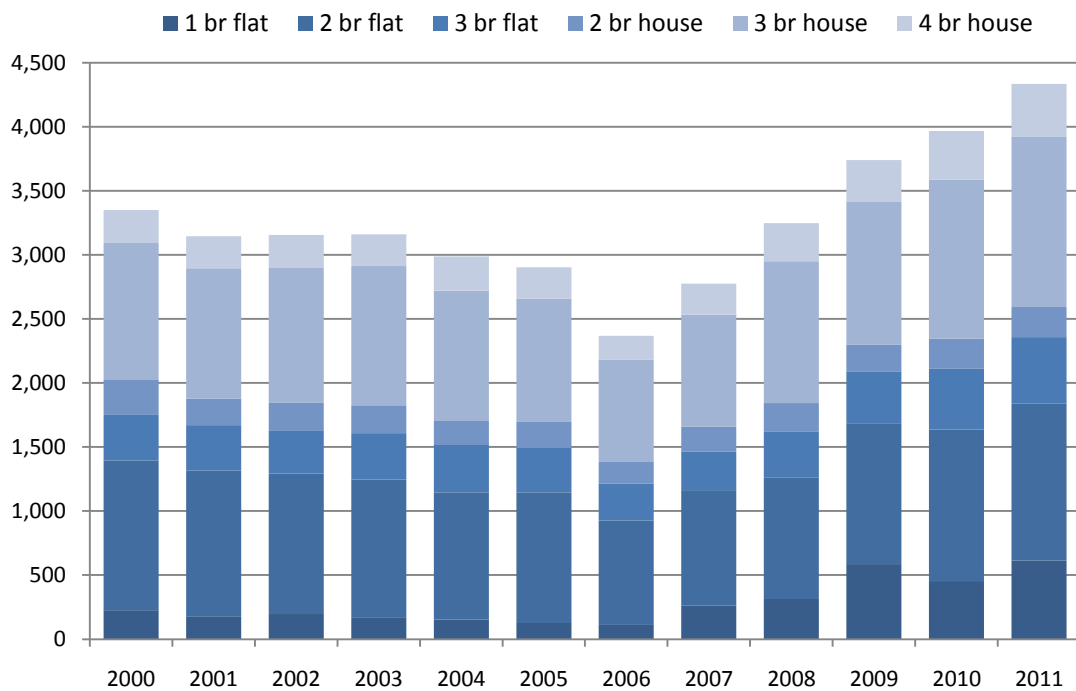
Two bedroom flats and three bedroom houses are the most common dwelling types for renters in Whitehorse LGA accounting for 59.0% of all lettings in 2011. The number of lettings per annum has significantly increased since 2006 which aligns with the point at which the residential sales market saw a dramatic increase in prices.

Table 4: Residential Rents in Whitehorse, 2000-2012



Source: DHS Rental Report

Table 5: No. of Residential Lettings in Whitehorse, 2000-2011



Source: DHS Rental Report

3.1.6 CURRENT DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

Table 6 indicates the average annual redevelopment rate of housing types in Whitehorse with the highest annual growth between 2001 and 2011 in high density residential development. Developers have focussed on developing apartments in Box Hill in line with the Central Activities Area status of the area that accounts for much of the growth in higher density dwellings.

Recent developments have included a large proportion of townhouses and units, particularly with 2 bedroom and 2 bathroom configurations targeted towards the middle of the market, or share house.

New housing includes mostly multi-unit developments, with large lot sizes of around 700 to 1,000 sq.m generally being the preferred lot size for unit development. According to local real estate agents, the high cost of acquiring lots for such development (which typically requires demolition of older housing) means that value add development such as units and townhouses are necessary to be able to provide a price point that the Whitehorse market will accept. The local real estate agents also advise that the student apartment market attracts a large proportion of investors, particularly overseas buyers, with less demand from owner-occupiers. However in recent times, the student apartment market has seen a decrease in demand, potentially due to the high Australian Dollar and falling international student enrolments.

Table 6: Annual Average Redevelopment/ Dwelling Growth Rate

DWELLING TYPE	10 YEAR CHANGE 2001 TO 2011	% OF CHANGE	AVERAGE ANNUAL GROWTH RATE
Detached House	+797	1.8%	0.2%
Medium Density	+2,369	19.3%	1.9%
High Density	+ 633	133.8%	13.4%
Caravans / Cabins / Houseboats	0	0%	0%
Other	-24	-25.3%	-2.5%
Not Stated	-204	-91.1%	-9.1%
Total Private Dwellings	+3,571	6.2%	0.6%

Source: ABS Buildings Approvals Data 2001, 2006 and 2011

Some shop-top housing has been undertaken within parts of the municipality providing for a moderate increase in density within activity centres.

The townhouse and unit market in Whitehorse has strong demand from first home buyers as well as middle age sole parents and retirees. Buyers typically target houses within the \$400,000 to \$600,000 price range due to greater affordability.

The impact of the Council's 2003 Housing Strategy, in particular the designation of Housing Change areas – Minimal, Natural and Substantial Change – in directing medium density housing development to the preferred areas, can potentially be assessed by looking at housing development that has occurred since its introduction in 2003. The figures would tend to indicate that the policy has resulted in an increase in development in Substantial Change areas, but possibly little reduced change in other areas. A comparison of the locations of new dwelling and subdivision applications in the City between 2001 and 2011 with the change area designations currently in the planning scheme indicates that dwelling development has occurred throughout the City. There have been increased concentrations of the number of developments have occurred in the Substantial Change areas, but this is not markedly different from activity that has occurred in many other parts of the City.

Housing Development Data 2011 indicates however that the quantum of housing development that has occurred (ie the number of dwellings) within Substantial Change areas represents a greater intensity than has occurred outside these areas. This tends to indicate that the policy is having some effect however stronger backing with controls or more encouragement in the Substantial Change areas would potentially result in more development occurring in the preferred areas. (Appendix D shows a map of development with the existing change areas, and Appendix E shows a map of Housing Development Data 2011)

3.1.7 DECLINING HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

The affordability of the housing market is largely influenced by the inextricable link between the rental and sales markets and availability. Lack of affordability in the

sales market can direct people into the rental market (should they wish to reside in the same area), which in turn can decrease affordability of rental properties as the demand for these properties increases.

Council's *Social & Affordable Housing Policy 2010* defines affordable housing as:

Affordable housing, from a consumer perspective, is housing which is appropriate to the needs of low to moderate income households and does not consume such a high proportion of household income that it leaves households with insufficient money to meet other basic costs.

Social housing is a sub-set of affordable housing. It refers to rental housing that is owned or managed by a government ('public housing') or a housing cooperative, community organisation or church ('community housing') and let to eligible persons.

Whitehorse's *Affordable Housing Discussion Paper, 2009*, noted that affordability is often linked with 'housing stress' – that is, where households that spend more than 30 per cent of their income on housing costs. Such a large portion of income may negatively impact the household's ability to meet other needs such as food, clothing, health care, education or transport. This is especially the case for those in the lowest 40% of Australians ranked by income (WCC, *Affordable Housing Discussion Paper, 2009*, page 8).

Table 7 indicates a decline in overall affordability with 18.1% of households having housing costs 30% or more of gross income in 2011, compared with 14.8% in 2006.

Table 7: Housing Affordability in Whitehorse LGA, 2006 and 2011

	2006	2011
Households with Rent Costs 30% or More of Gross Income	24.0%	42.2%
Households with Mortgage Costs 30% or More of Gross Income	36.2%	27.5%
Households with Housing Costs 30% or More of Gross Income (Includes Rent and Mortgage Households)	14.8%	18.1%

Source: *Community Indicators Victoria, 2006 and 2011*

In terms of rental properties, the Department of Human Services publishes data on affordable lettings, which are defined as lettings where the weekly rents are at 30% or less of the renter's income.

This rapid decline in affordable lettings after 2006 coincides with an increase in rents and sales prices. In the March quarter, only 3.9% of lettings were considered to be affordable in Whitehorse, compared with 9.5% for Metropolitan Melbourne. This will likely impact on renters' ability to accumulate savings for future purchase and could therefore affect future sales volumes in the first home buyer market.

According to the State Revenue Office of Victoria, in 2011 a total of 17,433 home purchasers claimed the First Home Owners Grant in Victoria. This accounts for 18.1% of the 96,096 house and unit/apartment transactions during the same

period. The implications of poor affordability on the overall residential market are therefore potentially quite significant.

3.1.8 PUBLIC & COMMUNITY HOUSING

As of the 2011 Census there were 1,117 dwellings within Whitehorse being rented from State or territory housing authorities, including housing associations, at a rate of 7.4 public housing dwellings per 10,000 population.

Office of Housing waiting list data for the Box Hill Office (<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au>) indicates that in September 2012, 2,231 persons were waiting for public housing which has declined by some 400 persons since 2008, indicating some improvement in provision but a continuing relative level of demand. However it should be noted, public housing waiting list data is problematic for a number of reasons as applicants may be on a number of waiting lists and may select areas based on stock available. For example, applicants requiring four bedroom properties may select areas based on understanding more four bedroom properties are available in an area.

The Eastern Affordable Housing Alliance (EAHA) is made up of seven eastern region councils. It was formed to advocate to the Victorian and Federal governments on the housing affordability needs of residents living in the eastern metropolitan region. The EAHA released data in August 2012 that indicates Whitehorse requires a minimum of 1,030 additional social housing dwellings by 2015 to meet demand. Further, that the Eastern Metropolitan Region social housing stock is 50% below the Victorian average (Eastern Affordable Housing Alliance media release, 2013).

3.1.9 STUDENT HOUSING

Current student housing in Whitehorse comprises a range of forms including boarding/ room houses, homestay and purpose built 1-2 bedroom apartments. Council's *Student Accommodation Study 2006* guides student housing development within the municipality.

Whitehorse has two major tertiary education facilities comprising Box Hill Institute of TAFE in Box Hill, and Deakin University in Burwood. Overall the two institutions have around 60,000 students of which approximately 16,000 or 27% are overseas students.

Since 2009 there has been a significant decline in overseas student enrolments comprising an annual decline to October 2012 of over 7% Australia wide. Whilst student numbers have been declining in recent years, particularly overseas students, both institutions have reported that there is an ongoing requirement for student housing.

Whitehorse in recent years has experienced a number of larger purpose built student housing developments in apartment formats, particularly along Elgar Road near Box Hill TAFE and also in areas surrounding the Deakin University Burwood

campus. However, the decline in international student numbers and overseas investor interest has reduced the market appeal for purpose built student housing developments. A number of developers have indicated that student apartments are not selling.

Council has reported anecdotal evidence that there are a growing number of private dwellings being converted to group and boarding room housing often targeted towards students. This may be a reflection of the high cost of, or limited opportunity sites, for development of student housing.

In the medium term (beyond 2014) recent assessment suggests student numbers will begin to recover. The extent to which student numbers recover will be dependent on the extent to which the Australia dollar and associated cost of studying in Australia declines and the future level of competition from international providers.

3.1.10 HOUSING FOR AGED PERSONS

Aside from aged persons continuing to reside in their own homes, the municipality has a wide range of dedicated aged care facilities operated by the private sector and not-for-profit organisations. As of 30 June 2011, there were 34 aged care services within the City of Whitehorse offering 555 Community Care places, 601 Residential High Care beds and 863 Residential Low Care beds.

In practice, however, around half of beds allocated for low care are actually used for high care due to ageing in place. Based on the utilisation rate published by the Department of Health and Ageing, there are around 1,013 high care beds and 451 low care beds in Whitehorse.

3.1.11 HOUSING FOR SPECIAL NEEDS

There are a range of specialist social housing facilities provided throughout the municipality to cater for a number of special needs including transitional and crisis housing, housing for persons with disabilities and rooming/ boarding housing facilities. A range of owners and providers are in place including:

- The Office of Housing (within the current Victorian Department of Human Services)
- Disability Services (within the Victorian Department of Human Services)
- Registered Housing Associations
- Church / Community Groups
- Private operators
- The City of Whitehorse (i.e. Local Government)

Up to date comprehensive and consolidated data sets on the provision of special housing needs is limited due to the diverse range of operators and government responsibilities for regulatory compliance for housing forms. In addition it is noted that there is a substantial overlap in data sets in terms of special housing utilised by the elderly, and students.

Council owns and operates a number of specialist facilities including Combarton Street and Gowanlea.

There has been an increase in Housing Associations and other non-government bodies providing special housing facilities including Housing Choices Australia, Villa Maria, and Anglicare, for example.

3.1.12 ROOMING HOUSES

Privately owned rooming houses are typically occupied by people who cannot otherwise afford to access rental housing. Three departments at Council have responsibility for the approvals and enforcement in relation to rooming houses – Environmental Health (under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act*), Building (through various building codes and regulations) and Planning. Council maintains a register of rooming and boarding houses. These rooming house facilities cater for a range of special needs, although many facilities provide student accommodation for the Deakin University Campus around Burwood and Box Hill TAFE.

The regulatory framework for rooming houses is complex and inconsistent. In particular, there is a gap in the decision making tools offered within the Whitehorse Planning Scheme which impedes Council's decision-making for rooming house proposals.

3.1.13 DESIGN QUALITY

Design and quality of existing and proposed housing is important for its perceived impact on character. These can be generally associated with each dwelling type: detached dwellings, semi-detached dwellings, and apartments and units.

Detached dwellings: housing which stands alone in its own grounds, with a form of separation from other dwellings. A detached dwelling may also have a flat attached to it, such as a granny flat or converted garage. The characteristics of some newly constructed detached dwellings which have raised some concerns within the community are that they are bulkier in design; different in form and scale with the existing streetscape; include inconsistent setbacks to nearby dwellings; have high fencing; unsustainable design; and are dominated by car access with wide crossovers. New developments often entail larger footprints leading to poor landscape outcomes with a lack of mature trees and vegetation compared to established areas.

Semi-detached dwellings, units, townhouses, row or terrace houses: have their own private grounds and no other dwellings above or below them. Issues associated with some newer semi-detached dwellings and units are related to inconsistent siting and scale along the streetscape; high fencing; dominating car access and crossovers; poor housing design standards with limited flexibility; lack of private open spaces; poor solar access; and lack of landscaping that may contribute to the garden settings of the preferred future neighbourhood character in relevant areas.

Flats and Apartments: includes all self-contained dwellings in blocks of flats or apartments. These dwellings do not have their own private grounds and usually share a common entrance foyer or stairwell. This includes houses converted into flats. Low rise apartments comprise no more than 3 storeys.

Issues that have raised some community concern regarding apartments are poor design standards with limited flexibility and adaptability; height and scale; unsustainable design; poor internal and external amenity; unarticulated building façades; lack of communal open spaces; and poor street interfaces with dominant car parking and service access.

3.1.14 FUTURE HOUSING NEED

Population projections form the basis of all strategic planning, however there are a number of sources for these projections which can be used to form a picture of future demand for housing. The need for housing in the City will be determined by the number of new residents over the next 20 years, and by choices made by these and existing residents as to their housing requirements.

The two key sources of population projections available for Whitehorse are:

- 'Forecast ID' projections, prepared by .id consulting pty ltd in 2013; and
- 'Victoria in Future' (ViF) projections, prepared by the former Department of Planning and Community Development in 2012.

For the purposes of this section, the id.consulting projections have been used for all detailed breakdowns of data. The most current 2013 .id consulting data have been used for total projected population growth, dwelling and household growth, and detailed breakdowns. The .id consulting pty ltd population forecasts, which are commissioned by Council, are based on more detailed and localised assessment of development trends, and are therefore treated in this report as a more accurate growth projection compared to *Victoria in Future* projections.

It should also be noted that:

- These projections are a guide only and provide an estimate of the order of magnitude of growth that the city will need to plan for over the next 20 years;
- The purpose of this Strategy is to identify appropriate locations, housing types and areas for change rather than to quantifying the exact number of dwellings required in the City over a set timeframe; and
- A higher or lower level of population growth than the State Government ViF2012 projections or the .id consulting pty ltd demographic forecasts could take place – the ultimate growth levels will depend on numerous external factors such as State planning policy, immigration levels and economic conditions.

3.1.15 POPULATION GROWTH

Projected population growth in Whitehorse is estimated to continue at 0.7% per annum up to 2036. It is expected that the municipality will have an additional increase of 28,625 persons from 2011-2036, with a total population of 186,365 and an additional 12,997 households (.id consulting 2013).

3.1.16 AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE

The average household size in Whitehorse is expected to decrease from 2.55 to 2.53 by 2036. This means that in the future fewer people are predicted to live in more dwellings across the municipality.

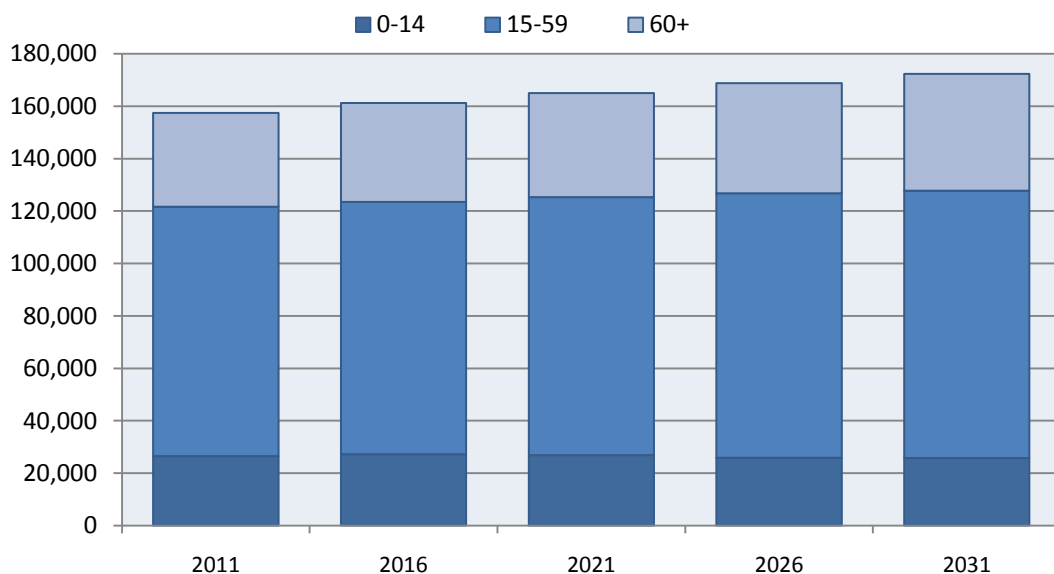
3.1.17 AGE STRUCTURE

An ageing of the population between 2011 and 2031 is evident, with the 60+ age cohort anticipated in the ViF2012 projections to increase by 8,778 people or 25%, while the 15-59 age cohort is forecast to increase by 6,848 people or 7%. The 0-14 age cohort is expected to decrease by 735 people or 3%. Table 9 shows that projected change in age structure of the City of Whitehorse between 2011 and 2031.

A large increase is projected in persons aged between 20 years and 39 years – this is largely due to a strong net migration increase of young people aged between 15 and 29 years attracted to the housing opportunities, Deakin University and Box Hill Institute of TAFE, and affordability in the municipality.

The age group forecast to have the largest proportional increase, relative to its current population size, by 2031 is residents aged over 65 years.

Table 9: Population Growth in Whitehorse by Age Cohort, 2011-2031



Source: DPCD Victoria in Future 2012

3.1.18 HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

Between 2011 and 2031, Whitehorse is forecast to see a significant increase in 'Couple family without children' and 'Lone person households', increasing by 3,190 people or 20.3%, and 3,434 people or 21.8% respectively. Conversely, the other household types are expected to see a smaller degree of change particularly 'Couple family with children' households which are expected to remain relatively constant in number and therefore will represent a smaller proportion of the population. The projected household composition of the City in 2031 is presented at Table 10.

Table 10: Net Change in Household Type, 2011-2031

Household type	Net Increase in Households 2011-2031	% Share of Total Increase
Couple family with children	171	2%
Couple family without children	3,190	38%
One-parent family	864	10%
Other family	87	1%
Group household	599	7%
Lone person	3,433	41%
Total	8,346	100%

Source: DPCD Victoria in Future 2012

3.2 FUTURE HOUSING PROFILE

This section presents the predicted future housing profile of the City, in terms of dwelling type and tenure needed to accommodate its growing and changing population.

3.2.1 FUTURE DWELLING MIX

The projected demand for different housing types as a proportion of overall dwelling requirements to 2036 for the City have been considered. Recent housing trends have been identified and tested through discussions with local real estate agents and developers, and extrapolation of ABS Census annual residential development figures.

3.2.2 DIVERSITY OF TENURE

The analysis of housing tenure contained in Section 3.1.3 identified that approximately 70.5% of all dwellings in the City were fully owned or being purchased and 23.7% of all dwellings were private rentals.

It is projected that there will be demand for additional private rental of both dwellings and apartments. This view is based on the historical tenure trend shown in Section 3.1.3 of this strategy and the well-documented overall decrease in housing affordability in Melbourne (based on housing costs as a proportion of household income) and the associated strong demand for rental properties.

A generally accepted figure is that allowance should be made for at least 3% of all privately rented dwellings to be vacant.

3.2.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STRATEGY

At present Whitehorse's housing satisfies a broad range of housing needs, however, as the greater metropolitan area expands, Whitehorse's locational advantages will attract higher prices, placing pressure on lower income households. Positive action is required now and into the future if the housing needs of the City's residents are to be adequately met in a way that also addresses community aspirations for the form and design of housing within the City.

The focus of the Housing Strategy is on identifying that a broader range of housing types should be provided to support the municipality's growing and changing population and where these are best located. It seeks to ensure that the dwellings we build today will be environmentally responsible, adaptable and meet the needs of future generations and that future housing is appropriately located throughout the City of Whitehorse



4

VISION & PRINCIPLES

4.1 VISION FOR HOUSING

The following vision for this Housing Strategy reflects feedback and input received from the community, stakeholders and Councillors during the consultation processes.

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

4.1.1 PRINCIPLES FOR HOUSING

- 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.