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HOUSING DIVERSITY

6.1 HOUSING DIVERSITY CHALLENGE

6.1.1 KEY CHALLENGES FOR THE NEXT 20 YEARS

- Based on housing projections 12,997,341 extra dwellings will be needed between 2011 and 2036 – an average of 500 new dwellings per year.
- 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.

The provision of a diverse housing stock assists in the achievement of broader strategic goals including housing choice, affordability and adaptability, and supports the concept of ageing within people's local neighbourhood. Healthy communities are characterised by diversity of people and places. Diversity makes communities vibrant and socially and economically sustainable.

The City of Whitehorse is predicted to experience population growth and a changing demographic profile over the next twenty years. It is estimated that 12,997 dwellings will be required to accommodate the projected population growth in the City of Whitehorse to 2036. The largest component of the household growth in the municipality is projected to be in lone person households.

Detached dwellings remain a dominant housing form accounting for around 75% of housing types. It is important to recognise that these dwelling types also contribute to dwelling diversity and choice throughout the City, by catering to a range of household types, from traditional to multi-generation families and group households. It is likely that this housing stock will reduce as a proportion of overall housing in the municipality as the City grows and changes.

Detached dwellings continue to account for a declining share in overall dwellings in Whitehorse as semi-detached, row/terrace, townhouses, flats, units and apartments emerge as growing dwelling types. This variety of housing types is not evenly dispersed across all suburbs of the municipality. There are areas around the Box Hill CAA and tertiary education institutions in Burwood and Box Hill that are characterised by semi-detached dwellings, apartments and student housing.

6.1.2 SPECIALISED HOUSING

Affordable and accessible housing is necessary to cater to the City's culturally and socio-economically diverse populations. This Housing Strategy recognises that students, the elderly, those with a disability and newly arrived migrants have particular housing requirements in terms of design, location, tenure and cost. In addition, accessible, or universal, housing is desirable for all households as short or longer term disability may impact anyone at any stage.

There is also an emerging issue of single older women in Australia being vulnerable to housing insecurity, due to historic trends such as wage inequality and interrupted working lives from childcare responsibilities.

Student housing needs have become increasingly significant due to the competitiveness of the tertiary and private secondary education sectors and the contribution of international students to the national economy. Although students have a variety of housing needs and preferences, the construction of high density student accommodation has been one form of specialised housing that has emerged in close proximity to tertiary establishments throughout Melbourne, and indeed the City of Whitehorse. Dwelling location is particularly important for student groups, who rely on public transport for study or work. However, it is noted that feedback from a number of developers has indicated the feasibility and market appeal of undertaking student housing development has declined in line with the softening economic conditions and decline in overseas student numbers.

Elderly residents require dwellings that are not only well located, but also accessible and adaptable for those who have limited mobility. As the health circumstances of older residents change, dwellings may need to be modified for wheelchair access and handrails. In addition, many seek accommodation with sufficient space to provide for visitors to stay, and carers if required. Many may also seek accommodation that is designed well in the first place to ensure that any modification to address mobility or changing physical conditions is minimal.

People with a disability may be able to live comfortably within standard dwellings; however some require specialised housing fitted out according to their physical needs. Provision of suitable housing for people with disabilities is reliant on a number of factors such as location, design, availability of carers and support people, housing assistance and access to employment.

Newly arrived migrants often have difficulty accessing and affording private rental housing, with costs causing housing stress for many. Language barriers and the lack of financial and social capital as well as rental history also often prevent them from entering the private market. A key priority for newly arrived-migrants is accessibility to social services, community groups and facilities, shops and employment opportunity.

The City must therefore focus on improving the diversity, affordability and accessibility of housing stock to meet the needs of different population and demographic groups. A range of dwelling types of varying sizes and tenures will be

required across the municipality to respond to the changing community profile and to ensure that the City retains its current vibrant mix of residents.

6.2 OBJECTIVES & ACTIONS

This Strategy sets the following objectives for housing diversity within the municipality:

- 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

DIVERSITY OBJECTIVE 1 -

Diversify the variety of housing types in the City of Whitehorse.

The demographic profile of the City of Whitehorse continues to evolve and change. Demographic projections indicate that the population will continue to age, households will become smaller, although couples with children will still remain strong, cultural diversity will continue with high levels of first and second generation migrants, and median housing prices and weekly household incomes will continue to be above the Melbourne metropolitan average.

To meet the needs of a diverse range of requirements and manage the levels of change expected in Whitehorse, it is important that the City's housing stock caters for a diverse range of requirements including students, culturally diverse households, couple families, single parent families and ageing residents. Developments which contain a mixture of types and include design flexibility and robustness are promoted.

According to housing projections, 12,997 additional dwellings will be required across the City to 2036 to cater for the City's growing and changing population. The Housing Framework Plan identifies areas that have the capacity to support increased densities and housing change, as well as areas with limited potential for growth. New development in:

Substantial Change Areas will predominantly comprise townhouses, units, apartments and shop-top dwellings. A mixture of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom apartments is encouraged, as well as some 2 and 3 bedroom semi-detached housing types, where appropriate.

Natural Change Areas will comprise low and medium density housing in the form of detached dwellings, semi-detached dwellings, townhouses and units. A mixture of 2 and 3 bedroom semi-detached housing and 2 and 3+ bedroom houses is encouraged.

Limited Change Areas will comprise detached dwellings and where appropriate, units and semi-detached dwellings. The development of 2 and 3 bedroom semi-detached housing and 2 and 3+ bedroom houses is encouraged.

The City also contains an established network of activity centres, including higher order centres (i.e. Box Hill CAA and the Nunawading MegaMile MAC) as well as local neighbourhood activity centres. Activity centres are highly accessible, offer a range of services and provide a high level of amenity to residents. These are key locations where a range of dwelling types of varying sizes and tenures are supported. However, future housing must be designed and developed in a way which reflects the role of the activity centre as well as the character and heritage of the area if applicable. For example, higher density apartment development is encouraged in the Box Hill CAA, while shop-top dwellings may be a more appropriate housing form in the City's smaller shopping centres.

The Whitehorse Planning Scheme can provide support for and require greater dwelling diversity throughout the City. The introduction of new residential zones by the State government will provide a more sophisticated and comprehensive means of guiding residential growth and development. The application of appropriate planning controls, such as the Development Plan Overlay on larger Substantial Change opportunity sites will assist to ensure that the future development of areas supports dwelling diversity.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- Update Clause 21.06 'Housing' in the Municipal Strategic Statement to ensure consistency with this *Housing Strategy 2014*.
- Update the local policy at Clause 22.03 'Residential Development' to ensure consistency with the policy objectives and directions for substantial, limited and natural change areas.
- 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.
- Translate the three housing change areas into the new residential zones, introducing Schedules to reflect neighbourhood character and development objectives, in the following way:
 - 'Neighbourhood Residential Zone' to be applied to Limited Change Areas
 - 'General Residential Zone' to be applied to Natural Change Areas
 - 'Residential Growth Zone' to be applied to Substantial Change Areas
- 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.

DIVERSITY OBJECTIVE 2 -***Provide housing that meets the specialised requirements of particular residents.***

Some community groups have particular requirements for housing in terms of design, location, tenure and cost. This includes the elderly, people with a disability, students and newly arrived migrants. Council has limited resources for directly providing housing suitable for these groups. As such Council must focus on improving the diversity, affordability and accessibility of housing stock provided by the private sector to meet the needs of special groups to ensure that they are not displaced or discouraged from living in the City, due to inappropriately designed and located or unaffordable housing stock.

The tertiary education campuses attract students to the City. Council's *Student Accommodation Policy* provides objectives and directions for student accommodation including for design, location and site context. There are opportunities to strengthen Council's relationship with both Deakin University and Box Hill Institute of TAFE to advocate for the Policy to guide student housing so that it offers a high level of amenity, sense of place and dwelling adaptability into the future.

A key feature of the City is its cultural diversity, particularly around the Box Hill CAA. It is important for Council in collaboration with local housing providers, agencies and community services to undertake research to address barriers to the housing market for new and non-English speaking residents.

Collaboration with local housing providers, agencies and community services should also be investigated for other housing and tenure types such as rooming houses, social housing and other special needs housing to address barriers to the housing market, and access to affordable housing in general.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- In negotiations with developers of student housing, advocate for better housing outcomes drawing on approaches used by other municipalities (i.e. City of Melbourne) and the objectives of the Student Accommodation Policy at Clause 22.14 of the Whitehorse Planning Scheme.
- Maintain relationships with Deakin University Burwood Campus and Box Hill Institute of TAFE regarding the housing needs of current and future students.
- In line with the Student Accommodation Policy encourage appropriate student housing close to the university campuses in a form that respects the existing or preferred character of the area.
- Continue to liaise with the community housing sector and service providers on an as needed basis to exchange information and research regarding the housing needs and trends of special needs groups.

DIVERSITY OBJECTIVE 3 -***Monitor housing development trends and engage with relevant stakeholders.***

The housing sector is complex and dynamic, involving a range of different stakeholders and interests and influenced by a range of internal and external forces (i.e. policy, interest rates and migration). This objective will be achieved through the monitoring of housing trends and demographic projections in the municipality; and engaging the private sector and community to understand housing needs and development trends.

It is important that a strong evidence base is developed, drawing on a range of data sources, to monitor development trends and the implementation of this Strategy. This should include information about the demographic profile of the City as well as building and planning permit data. The housing development data model prepared by the former Department of Planning and Community Development could be used as an input to monitoring the latter data system.

There are also opportunities for Council to take on a proactive role in engaging with the private sector, community and other relevant stakeholders regarding local housing needs and trends to encourage responsive development outcomes.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- Monitor development and housing and demographic trends every five years to understand housing supply and uptake. This should include the following:
 - Dwelling characteristics (ABS Census Data)
 - Tenure type – occupied private dwellings (ABS Census Data)
 - Dwelling structure by household composition and family composition (ABS Census Data)
 - Gross household income by household composition (ABS Census Data)
 - Median property price for houses, units and apartments (A Guide to Property Values)
 - Median weekly rental price by housing type (Rental Report, Department of Housing Victoria)
 - UDP Data (Department of Planning and Community Development)
 - .id Forecast (City of Whitehorse)
- Implement a co-ordinated development data collection system in order to track development outcomes and trends.
- Prepare a Housing Strategy Update / Implementation Report every five years and circulate to relevant Council departments. This report should include:
 - Updated population and demographic profile and projections
 - Assessment of dwelling mix: dwelling type and tenure

- Analysis of building and planning permit data: location and type of housing development
- Site and locational characteristics of development applications and constructed dwellings.
- Prepare a summary sheet of the key findings and directions in the Whitehorse Housing Strategy 2014 and circulate to Council Officers, local developers, industry representatives and the community.