

21.07 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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21.07-1 Overview

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Whitehorse City is committed to playing a key role in facilitating a thriving and sustainable local economy. Council will work in partnership with the local community to:

- Increase investment and employment opportunities that enhance the local economy, natural environment and quality of life for existing and future residents; and
- Enable appropriate growth of existing and future businesses in order to achieve economic well-being.

The economic development vision is supported by the following statements and represent targets which Council will work towards in partnership with the private sector, key government agencies and the community.

Commercial

- Maintain the City's position as the second largest provider of office space outside St.Kilda Road and the Melbourne CBD.
- Facilitate continued investment in high quality office space placed in attractive settings with extensive landscaping and car parking following the completion of development in the Box Hill and Tally Ho commercial precincts.

Retail

- Continue to recognise the one billion dollar turnover contribution that the MegaMile contributes to the local economy by developing, managing and promoting this retail strip as one of Melbourne's largest shopping districts.
- Support the creation of vibrant and economically viable activity centres, which provide a full range of products and services for residents and businesses.
- Instil a corporate approach to the management and development of activity centres through the adoption of business plans for key precincts such as Box Hill, Mitcham, Burwood Heights, Brentford Square, East Burwood Plaza, Blackburn Station, Blackburn South, Mont Albert Village and Wattle Park.

Education

- Recognise the important regional role that our tertiary sector fulfills and provide support for the ongoing viability of these vital institutions such that they are positioned as leading industry providers.
- Strengthen the working relationship between our education leaders and the local business community by encouraging greater involvement by our tertiary education sector in facilitating private sector projects and increasing business training opportunities.

Manufacturing

- Strengthen our key manufacturing sectors in machinery and equipment, printing, publishing and recorded media, wood and paper product, and textile clothing,

footwear and leather, by encouraging and attracting investment which is internationally focused and based on world's best practice and state-of-the-art technology.

- Create and manage sensitive interfaces between our key industrial precincts and adjoining residential areas and facilitate high quality, attractive development that is environmentally sustainable and enhances the appearance of the area.

Information Technology

- Continue to promote the City as a prominent location for leading edge and international IT firms.
- Harness the skills and capabilities of our IT sector to ensure that our other key sectors in manufacturing, health and education continually have access to and apply state-of-the-art technology.

Home Based Business

- Provide a nurturing environment for our home based business sector that provides access to business planning and information services, and networking opportunities.
- Where appropriate, support the transition to local commercial premises when operations are no longer suited to residential locations.
- Provide a network of established local firms to act as mentors for start-up enterprises.

Cultural and Recreational Tourism

- Increase participation in the cultural and recreational tourism of the City by facilitating the provision of entertainment, arts, cultural, recreational and leisure facilities and promoting these locally and regionally.
- Support the development of our activity centres as cosmopolitan places that function as important community meeting places for entertainment and passive recreation.

Melbourne 2030 outlines a plan that seeks to build up activity centres as a focus for high-quality development, to broaden the base of activity centres that are currently dominated by shopping, and to locate a substantial proportion of new housing in or close to activity centres. Activity centres are central to *Melbourne 2030*'s objectives in terms of sustainability and reducing the dominance of car based travel in Melbourne. The structure planning process is vital to identifying the potential of individual activity centres and to involving stakeholders and the community in the planning process.

Melbourne 2030 identifies Box Hill as a Principal Activity Centre which provides significant opportunities for investment in terms of retail, public transport, entertainment and medium and higher density residential development. It is essential that the Box Hill Principal Activity Centre develops as a major regional activity centre through the development of appropriate retail and office activities. It is also vital that the centre develops more residential and entertainment facilities to strengthen this role. Council will support new commercial, residential and retail development in this Activity Centre consistent with the role of the centre and will prepare a Structure Plan to guide the preferred location and urban form of the new investment in the centre.

The Burwood Heights Major Activity Centre includes a large vacant strategic development site. It offers a potential to be developed into an activity centre of a form envisaged by *Melbourne 2030*. A structure plan has been prepared to guide future development and improvement of Burwood Heights.

Council recognises the importance of the ‘MegaMile’ area on **Whitehorse Road**, between Blackburn and Mitcham and believes it is vital that the role of this peripheral retail strip is reinforced and strengthened. Council considers that inappropriate development and use within this area could weaken its function. Megamile is the preferred location for bulky goods retailing, and development of bulky goods/facilities elsewhere will need to demonstrate net community benefit and it will not detract from the Megamile centre.

Melbourne 2030 identifies Burwood Heights, Tally Ho, and Forest Hill Chase as Major Activity Centres. These centres are generally expected to become the preferred locations for further retail, commercial and cultural activities, and accommodate a significant proportion of the new dwellings that may be developed in the City. They are also to be the focus for improvements to the public transport networks in the City and to regional centres. Improvements to their design and amenity should encourage these places to become places for social interaction and community activities. Council recognises that each of these centres has special circumstances and opportunities, and will complete Structure Plans to provide a detailed framework for each centre.

The City contains about eighty centres, each of which fulfils various needs within the community. Large centres, such as Burwood East Plaza play an important role in the economic activity of the municipality. This role should be further enhanced.

Small neighbourhood centres play an important social and community role. They should be the focus of social interaction and provide for community facilities and spaces. There will, however, be small neighbourhood centres that are no longer viable. Some small centres contain several vacant shops or non-retail uses which fail to provide for the daily needs of the surrounding community. Furthermore, they are run down and can become targets for vandalism, which is of some concern given that residential properties directly abut them. These centres need to be further assessed as to whether it is appropriate to develop these centres as mixed use precincts with an appropriate mix of uses which help provide meeting places such as cafes, community facilities and even small scale residential development especially in the form of “shoptop” housing. The amenity of these centres can be vastly improved by high quality design, minimisation of signage and streetscape improvements. Gaming establishments can divert local expenditure.

The City contains the largest concentration of **offices** outside of Central Melbourne and St Kilda Road and some of the largest **industrial** areas in this region. The development of information technology, telecommunication and media related businesses is an emerging strength for the municipality. Important areas include Tally Ho, which is home to several large offices and information technology based businesses, and Rooks Road, which is a focus for industrial activity but is constrained by the abutting residential areas. The operation of extractive industries has been a long-standing land use within the City. There is now only one extractive industry in Whitehorse, located at 58-74 Station Street, Nunawading. Council supports this industry subject to the adoption of best practice environmental management. There are also several major industrial estates that are surrounded by residential uses. These include McIntyre Street in Burwood, Middleborough Road in Box Hill South, Joseph Street in Blackburn and Lexton Road in Box Hill. Council supports redevelopment within these areas that respects and enhances the amenity of the abutting residential properties, while maintaining their industrial focus.

The Box Hill Hospital, Box Hill Institute of TAFE and Deakin University are key activities in Whitehorse, in both a social, cultural and an economic sense. Deakin University is identified as a Specialised Activity Centre under Melbourne 2030. The Council recognises the wider metropolitan, regional and national role of these **institutions**, as well as the other major private schools in the City. All of these facilities are important in ensuring that the City is a prime residential location for families and students, and are important to the economy of the City. Council understands the need to retain opportunities to expand and consolidate the facilities provided on site. Expansion

of these facilities, if not comprehensively planned, can lead to conflicts between the needs of the institutions and those of residents nearby. The surrounding community must be involved in the development of a master plan outlining the future aspirations of the institutions given they may be directly affected by future activities. This process will reduce potential conflicts between residential areas and these major land uses, as well as providing certainty both for the institution/school and the residents as to where buildings are likely to be located and how the grounds may be used in the future.

Other drivers of economic activity in the municipality include an emerging **tourism** focus which will be promoted; as well as facilitating **home business** and home occupation activities which, with the advent of improved telecommunications, are likely to be a more attractive option than ever before.

*Council's **Economic Development** strategy is based on the retention and promotion of all the existing key economic drivers in the municipality.*

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Key issues

- Box Hill Activity Centre.
- Whitehorse Road Mega Mile.
- Industrial activity.
- Integrated transport.
- Local shopping centres.
- Redevelopment sites.
- Institutional uses.
- Emerging Information Technology industries
- Burwood Heights Major Activity Centre.

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Objectives

- To develop the Box Hill Activity Centre as the major focus for retail, commercial, health, education and entertainment facilities in Melbourne's east.
- To ensure that all shopping centres and civic spaces are safe, attractive and are developed in accordance with their role.
- To provide support for the ongoing viability of the municipality's academic and health institutions.
- To maintain a strong commercial office sector in the city.
- To facilitate the expansion of the Information Technology industry in the city.
- To facilitate the on-going development and refurbishment of industrial estates.
- To facilitate the redevelopment of key sites in association with the community.
- To encourage and promote the bulky goods retail focus along the Whitehorse Road 'Mega Mile'.
- To facilitate the timely redevelopment and enhancement of the Burwood Heights Major Activity Centre including the Strategic Redevelopment Site through implementation of the Structure Plan.
- To facilitate the continued enhancement of the Forest Hill Chase and Tally Ho Major Activity Centres through Structure Plans.

- To facilitate the continued enhancement of the Burwood East Plaza Neighbourhood Activity Centre.
- To encourage the continued enhancement and use of public transport and cycling modes of transport.

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Strategies

Strategies to achieve these objectives include:

- Facilitate development within the Box Hill Activity Centre in accordance with the Box Hill Urban Design Framework Strategy.
- Encourage a wider range of uses in Box Hill including residential and entertainment, that will help the Activity Centre become a focus of activity.
- Develop appropriate levels of parking within all commercial precincts.
- Require equitable developer contributions to new residential, industrial and commercial areas.
- Minimise signage clutter.
- Ensure that development and use in shopping centres is appropriate to the role and function of the centre.
- Direct large entertainment, comparison or convenience retail uses serving a regional catchment into the Principal and Major Activity Centres.
- Restrict the establishment of gaming machines in all shopping centres.
- Identify neighbourhood centres that are no longer viable.
- Investigate and encourage shoptop housing and other appropriate development in neighbourhood activity centres.
- Direct industrial uses into appropriate locations.
- Discourage non-industrial related uses from locating in industrial areas.
- Ensure industrial uses within these areas are suitable to protect the amenity of abutting land uses, particularly if it is residential.
- Provide a buffer between intense industrial activity and residential areas.
- Developing appropriate zoning, overlay and design guidelines for strategic redevelopment sites, responding to issues such as appropriate treatments to existing residential areas.
- Encouraging the development of institutional master plans, which outline the desired future land use and development on the site.

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Implementation

These strategies will be implemented by:

Zones and overlays

- Applying a Business 1 Zone to all shopping centres including the core of the Box Hill Activity Centre to facilitate the development of retailing and other complementary commercial, entertainment and community uses.

- Applying a Business 2 Zone to areas where Council wishes to encourage offices and associated commercial uses including around the Prospect Street area, Rutland Road, Oxford Street and parts of the area to the north of Whitehorse Road, Box Hill.
- Applying a Business 3 Zone to part of the area to the north of Whitehorse Road, Box Hill in recognition of the mixture of office and light industrial activity.
- Applying a Business 4 Zone exclusively to the Whitehorse Road ‘mega mile’ area to encourage a mix of bulky goods retailing and their associated business services.
- Applying a Priority Development Zone to the Strategic Redevelopment site at 78 Middleborough Road, Burwood East to encourage an appropriate mixed use development of the property.
- Applying the Mixed Use Zone to those shopping centres requiring renewal.
- Applying a Heritage Overlay to buildings, structures and places with historical significance as identified in the Heritage Review (2001).
- Applying an Industrial 1 Zone to most industrial areas.
- Applying an Industrial 3 Zone to industrial areas surrounded by residential land use.
- Applying an Environmental Audit Overlay to the key redevelopment sites to ensure that any contamination is identified and treated before use and development occurs.
- Applying a Public Use Zone 2 to the Box Hill Institute of TAFE, Deakin University and State Schools to recognise their role as key educational facilities.
- Applying a Public Use Zone 3 to the Box Hill Hospital as a major health facility.
- Applying a Development Plan Overlay to all major redevelopment sites and private schools to ensure all necessary plans are in place prior to redevelopment.
- Applying a Design and Development Overlay schedule to the Mitcham Neighbourhood Activity Centre (height limits), to ensure that new development within this activity centre reflects the neighbourhood character.

Policy and the exercise of discretion

- Ensuring that all use and development in Box Hill Activity Centre and surrounds complies with the Box Hill Activity Centre Policy at Clause 22.07.
- Ensuring compliance with the Visual Amenity Policy at Clause 22.02.
- Ensuring that all use and development in Activity Centres complies with the Activity Centre policy at Clause 22.06 or the relevant specific policies at Clauses 22.07 to 22.14.

21.07-6 Further strategic work

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- Prepare local parking precinct plans for all relevant commercial centres.
- Prepare a Development Contributions Plan for inclusion in the Planning Scheme.
- Conduct a Shopping Centre Strategy for all local and neighbourhood shopping centres.
- Prepare an Urban Design Framework for Tally Ho.
- Prepare Structure Plans, including Shopping Centre Business Plans for identified centres.

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Reference documents

Housing Study – City of Whitehorse – Feb, 2003

Economic Development Strategy 2008-2013

Box Hill Urban Design Framework 2001

Integrated Transport Study The 2020 Vision For Whitehorse, MAY 2002

Burwood Heights Activity Centre Structure Plan, June 2006

Burwood Village Neighbourhood Activity Centre, Looking Towards the Future, May 2008

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