

Review of Strategic Direction **Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre Analysis & Options**

April 2020

Prepared by MGS Architects | TQ Planning
Movement & Place Consulting | SGS Economics & Planning



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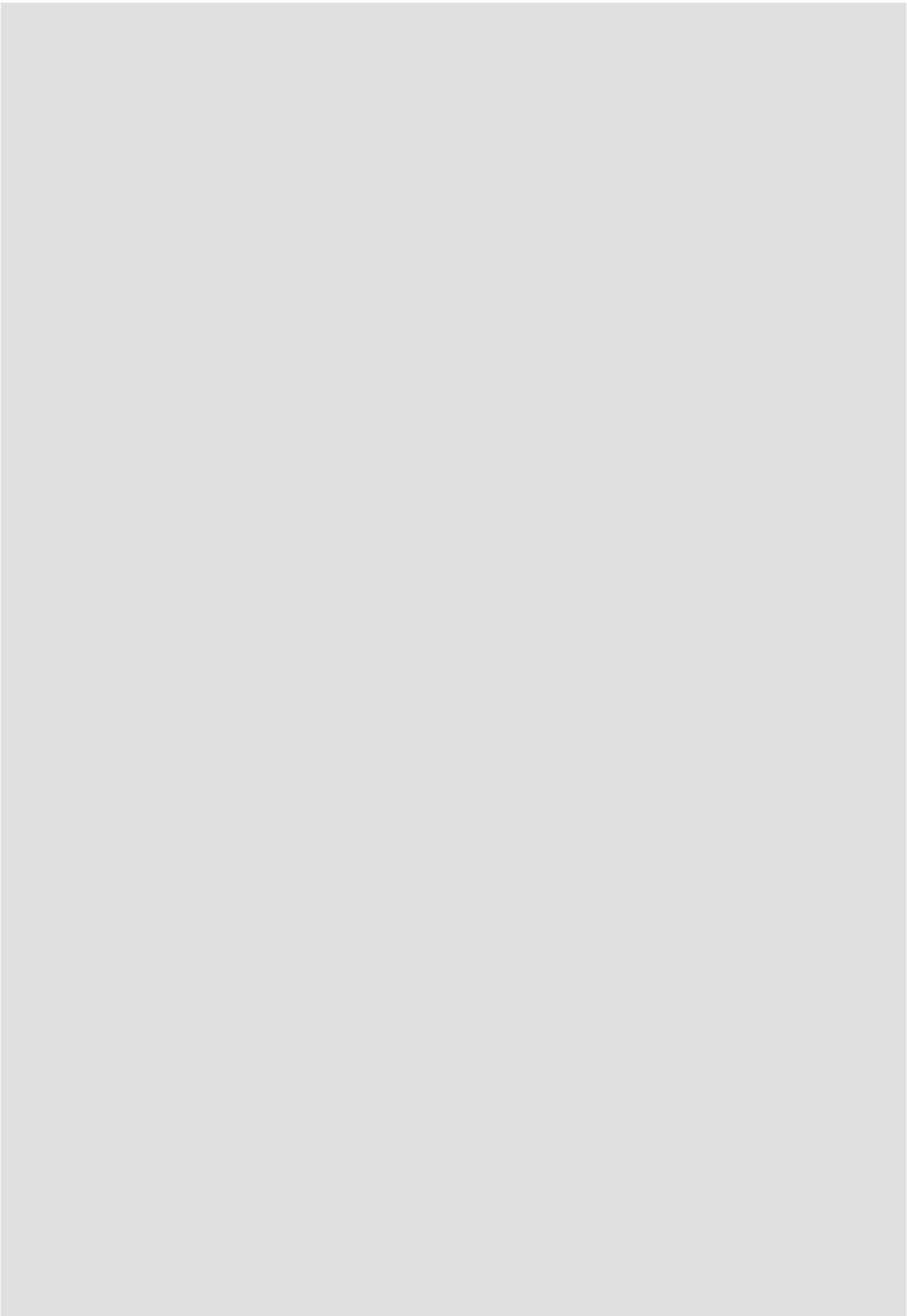
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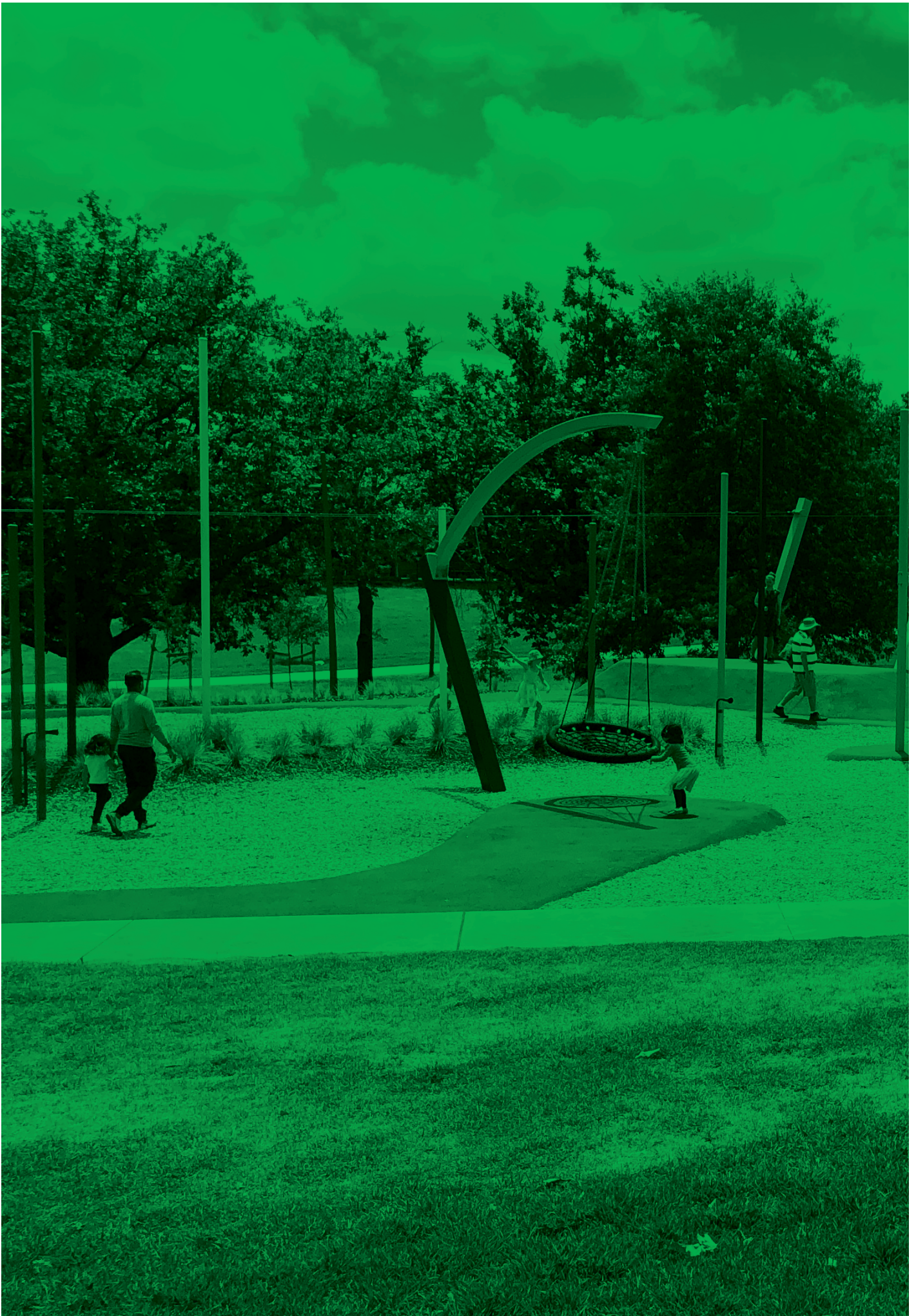
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Glossary of terms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
BHI	Box Hill Institute (formerly Box Hill TAFE)
BHTI	Box Hill Transit Interchange
BHURT	Box Hill Urban Realm Treatment — operational Council document providing guidelines for urban treatments within Box Hill
CBD	Central Business District
DELWP	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (State Government of Victoria)
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act 1992
DDO	Design and Development Overlay
FAR	Floor Area Ratio — the ratio of a building's total floor area (gross floor area) to the size of the piece of land upon which it is built.
ITS	Integrated Transport Strategy
IV	Infrastructure Victoria
MAC	Metropolitan Activity Centre (<i>Plan Melbourne 2017-2050</i>)
MUZ	Mixed Use Zone
MSS	Municipal Strategic Statement
NEIC	National Employment and Innovation Cluster (<i>Plan Melbourne 2017-2050</i>)
NEL	North East Link
P&E Act	Planning & Environment Act 1987
PDZ	Priority Development Zone
PTV	Public Transport Victoria
R1Z	Residential 1 Zone (now superseded by reformed residential zones)
RGZ	Residential Growth Zone
SRG	Stakeholder Reference Group
VCAT	Victorian Civil & Administrative Tribunal
VIF	Victorian Government's Victoria in the Future forecasts
VPA	Victorian Planning Authority
VPP	Victorian Planning Provisions
WOSS	Whitehorse Open Space Strategy





Introduction

1

1.1 Project overview

1.1.1 Project Team, Project Scope and Timeline

MGS Architects was engaged by the Whitehorse City Council in December 2018 to prepare a review of the strategic direction for the Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre (hereinafter referred to as 'Box Hill' unless explicitly stated otherwise), alongside a multi-disciplinary team including TQ Planning (statutory and strategic planning), SGS Economics and Planning (economics and demographic projections), Movement and Place Consulting (strategic transport) and Mary Papaioannou Landscape Architecture (public realm).

Project team
MGS Architects Urban Design & Precinct Planning Project Management & Consultant Team Co-ordination
TQ Planning Strategic & Statutory Planning
SGS Economics & Planning Demographic & Economic Analysis
Movement and Place Consulting Strategic Transport Planning
Mary Papaioannou Landscape Architecture

The scope of the project is contained within the study area boundary identified in the *Box Hill Transit City Activity Centre Structure Plan 2007* (hereinafter referred to as the '2007 Structure Plan'), see Figure 1.1 opposite.

This boundary remains unchanged as there is adequate space within this study area to accommodate future projected growth, consistent with the principles of activity centre planning. The area contained within the boundary is 130 hectares.

The project has been prepared and delivered in three phases over a period of approximately nine months. Multiple key stakeholders have been engaged through critical points of the project. This report disseminates the key findings of Phase 1 of the project.

1.1.2 Purpose of Document

The purpose of this document is to provide a context for strategic decision-making by providing a summary of existing issues within the centre and provide options for alternative strategic planning approaches that could be incorporated into the strategic planning for Box Hill. This report will identify the key emerging issues within Box Hill, describe the strategic drivers of development and identify the key enablers of change.

The *2007 Structure Plan* forms the starting point for this planning investigation. The findings and analysis contained here seeks to review the first decade of implementation, extend the original analysis with new data and update the planning framework to respond to emerging trends and external influences.

This document will form a technical background report supporting the recommendations contained in the *Draft Structure Plan* and *Urban Design Framework*, contained in separate volumes.

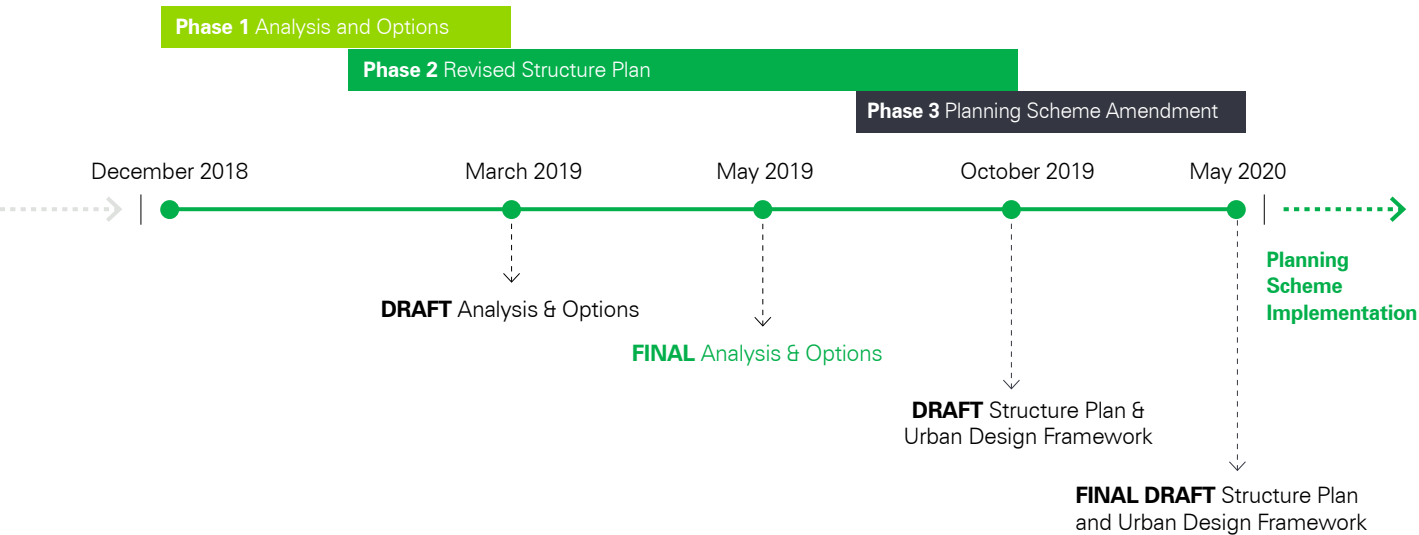
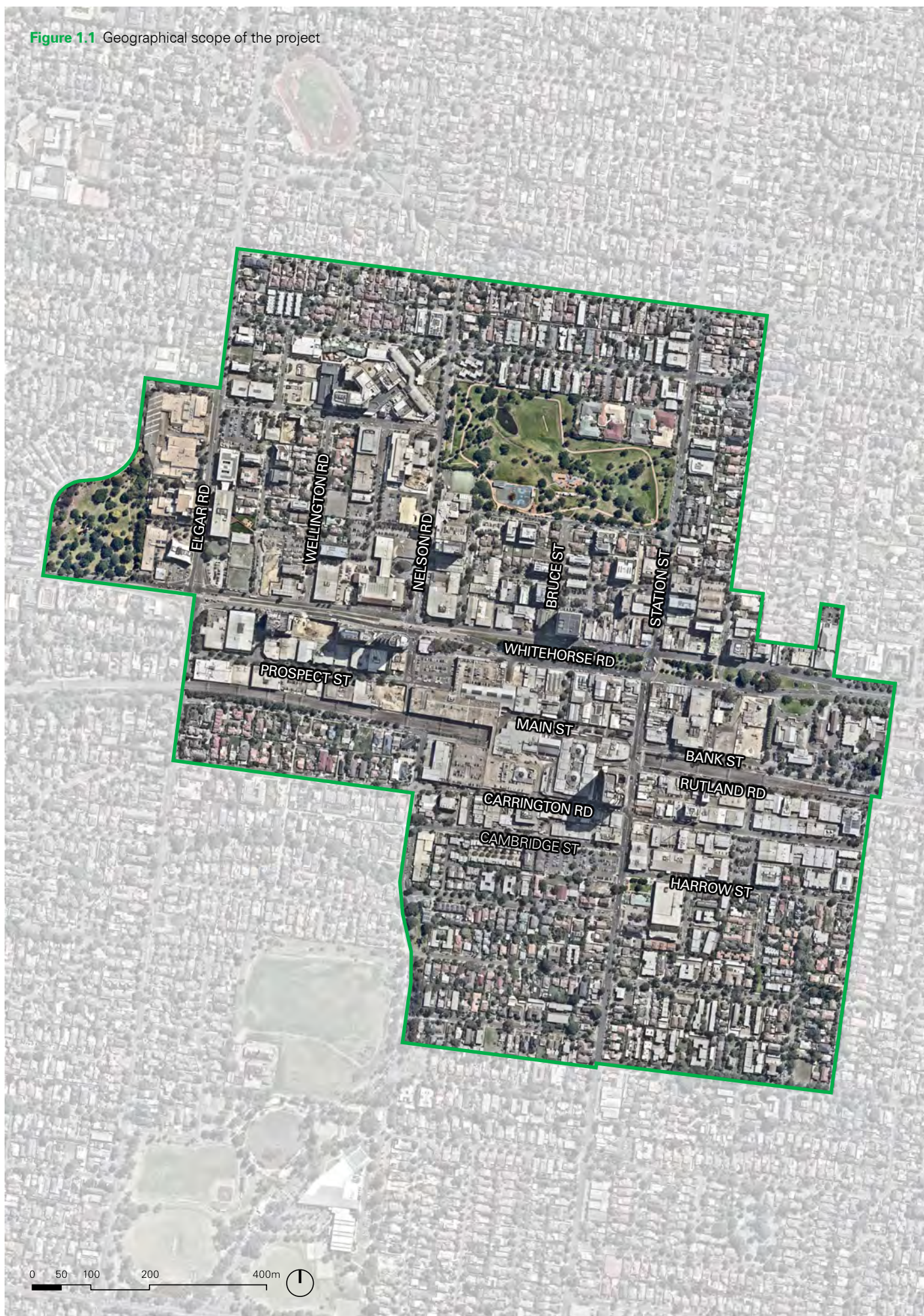
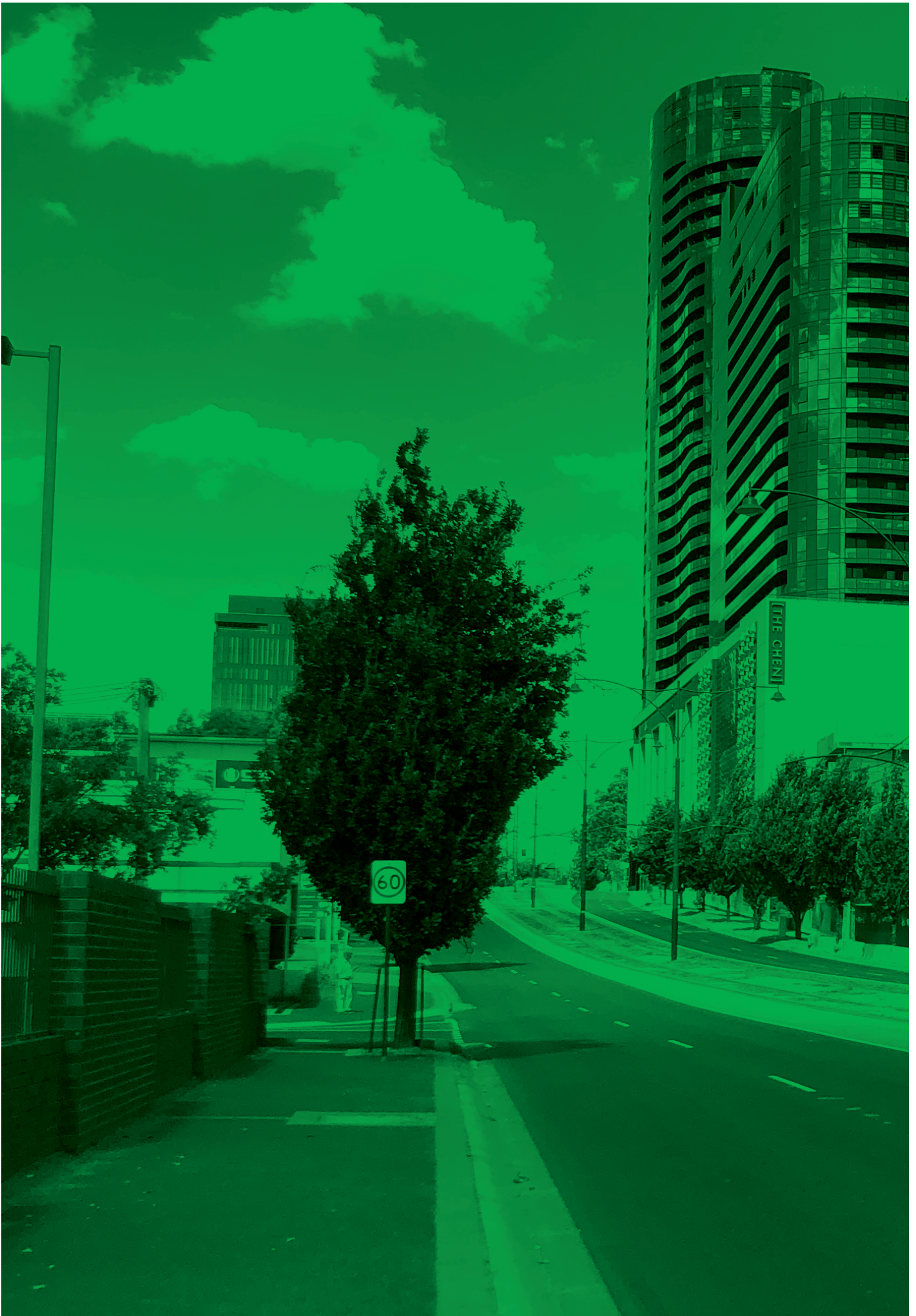


Figure 1.1 Geographical scope of the project





Strategic Context

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2.1 Overview

2.1.1 Location

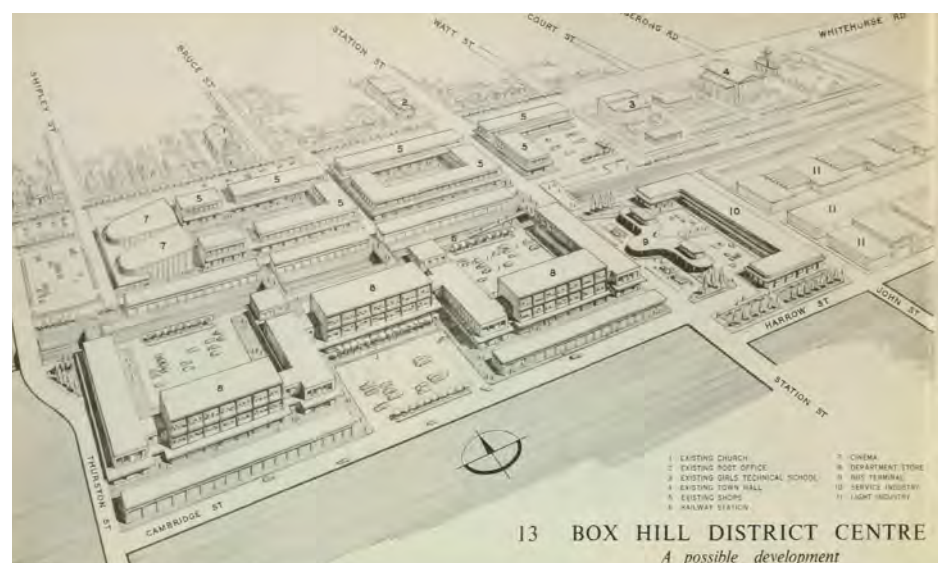
The Wurundjeri– Balluk Tribe are the traditional custodians of the land on which Box Hill is located. The tribe, whose traditional language is Woi Wurrung, is one of the five tribes that make up the Kulin nation. The tribe has historical links with the wider area now known as the City of Whitehorse extending over 40,000 years. Whitehorse City Council respectfully acknowledges the Traditional owners of the land which is now called Whitehorse, the Wurundjeri people and their elders past and present.

Box Hill is located approximately 14km east of Melbourne’s Central Business District (CBD). Box Hill is located in what is considered Melbourne’s ‘middle ring’ with a gateway role in connecting the outer region with inner Melbourne. The centre is located at an important location on the Lilydale and Belgrave rail line, Whitehorse Road and at the terminus of the 109 tram route.

Box Hill’s origins are completely dependent on transport and it being a focal point for economic activity and transfer of goods and services. This role has strengthened over time, though been less relevant over the last 50 years of automobile dependence. As traffic congestion increases we are now at a tipping point where Box Hill’s locational strengths could again be a key driver of growth.

Box Hill has consistently been considered a strategic centre in Melbourne metropolitan planning policy since its designation as a District Business Centre in the 1954 Metropolitan Planning Scheme, see Figure 2.1. This has continued through to the current iteration of the metropolitan plan, *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050*. In each plan, the important regional role of the centre for the provision of employment, services and increased development has been reiterated.

Figure 2.1 A illustrative view of a ‘possible development’ of Box Hill District Centre in the 1954 Metropolitan Planning Scheme.





2.1.2 Box Hill Transit City Activity Centre Structure Plan 2007

The 2007 *Structure Plan* was written in the context of Melbourne 2030, with the aim of guiding the early stages of Box Hill's transformation into a higher-density transit oriented urban centre. There was explicit and general recognition, supported by Council, that Box Hill had the potential to support substantial growth in the transition from a suburban centre to an urban centre. The structure plan set out a framework for development with actions for both the public and private sectors in delivering the necessary amenity improvements that support the change.

The vision set out within the structure plan is as follows:

“Box Hill will be sustainable, safe and accessible to all. It will be a distinctive, vibrant, diverse, inclusive, participatory, caring and healthy community where you live, work and enjoy – day and night.”

Importantly, the vision is also composed of six constituent sub-points:

- Box Hill will be a place where people can live, work, shop and access social networks and personal services.
- Box Hill will be a focus for regional health care, educational and community services.
- Box Hill will support a diverse, inclusive, participatory, caring and healthy community.
- Box Hill will be a distinctive, vibrant and enjoyable place – day and night.
- Box Hill will be sustainable.
- Box Hill will be accessible to all.

The 2007 Structure Plan identified the varied role of various parts of the centre towards this overall vision. The preferred land uses were set out in terms of the following activity precincts, see Table 2.1 and Figure 2.2.

Table 2.1 Activity Precincts and preferred land use outcomes | 2007 Structure Plan

	Desired Outcomes
Precinct A Box Hill Transport and Retail Precinct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Intense mixtures of activity over extended hours to create the central focus for Box Hill. — Retail sustained throughout the precinct, complemented by entertainment, commercial and other uses e.g. hotel and conference facilities. — A vital streetscape environment that will encourage additional investment in retail activity.
Precinct B Prospect Street Precinct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Consolidation as the primary office precinct in the region.
Precinct C Civic and Eastern TAFE Precinct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Consolidation of council services, meeting spaces, and cultural, community and educational facilities in the precinct.
Precinct D Hospital and Western TAFE Precinct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Growth and enhancement of educational and medical institutions and support for related businesses. — Property consolidation to facilitate redevelopment and creation of public accessways through the precinct. — Development addressed to Nelson Road to create a pedestrian-friendly street.
Precinct E Box Hill Gardens Precinct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Provision for significant residential growth, in an area with good access to transport services and Box Hill Gardens. — Development of small scale offices, community services and retail to activate ground levels.
Precinct F Southern and Eastern Precincts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Accommodation of growth in the local supply of office space. — Continuation of the precinct's role in supporting some retail activity. — Office and retail activities that respond to prominent Whitehorse Road and Station Street frontages. — Mixed uses including higher density residential as a buffer to established residential precincts.
Precinct G Box Hill Gardens & Kingsley Gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Convenient access to high quality public open space and recreational opportunities within the Activity Centre.
Precinct H Residential Precincts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — The areas' residential role protected. — Medium density residential development encouraged. — Encroachment of medical facilities north of Thames Street prohibited.

Source: 2007 Structure Plan, Section 5.1 Land Uses, p.54-55

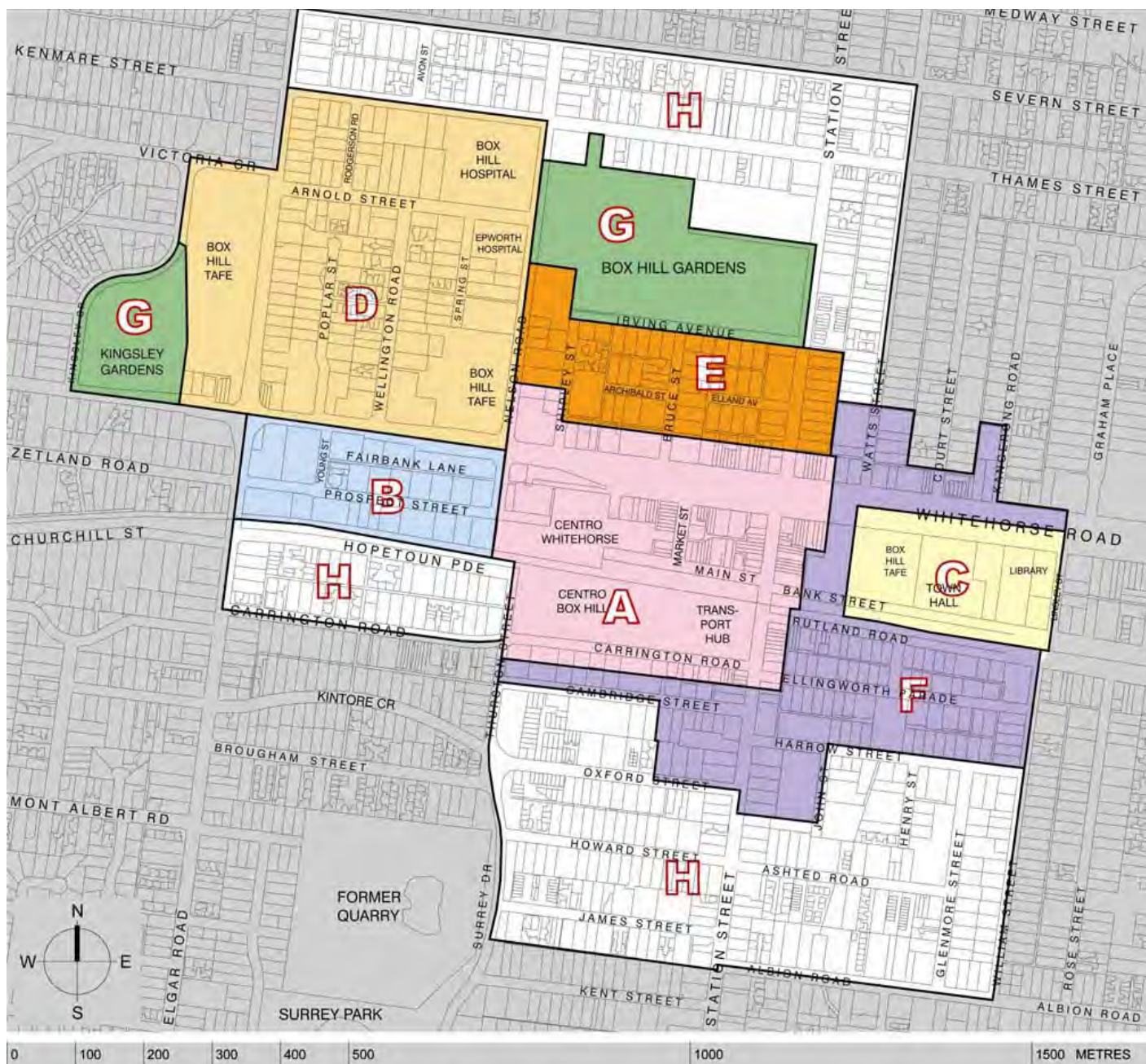


Figure 2.2 'Activity Precincts' |
Reproduced from the 2007 *Structure Plan*, pg.16

Built form controls were described in parallel to the activity precincts, using a specific arrangement of built form precincts. In summary, the controls applying to each was set up as follows, see Table 2.2 and Figure 2.3.

Table 2.2 Built Form Precincts and built form outcomes | *2007 Structure Plan*

	Desired Outcomes
Precinct A Peripheral Residential Precincts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — The area's residential amenity protected. — Modest increases in density.
Precinct B Low-rise Higher-density Residential Precincts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Attractive residential streetscapes enhanced by private gardens. — A transitional building scale between residential areas at the edge of the Activity Centre and high-density redevelopment areas. — Increased residential development densities. — High standards of privacy and amenity in new developments and adjoining sites. — The amenity (including access to sunlight) of Key Public Spaces protected.
Precinct C Traditional Town Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Pedestrian-friendly streets and lanes lined by attractive buildings, given a sense of vitality and safety by active building frontages. — The precinct's built form character retained and heritage buildings protected. — Retail activity sustained throughout the precinct and complemented by shop-top commercial and mixed use. — The amenity (including access to sunlight) of Key Public Spaces protected.
Precinct D Mid-rise Commercial and Mixed Use Precincts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Attractive pedestrian friendly streets lined by buildings and given a sense of vitality and safety through their activation by adjoining uses. — A transitional scale between low-rise development near the periphery of the Activity Centre and high-density redevelopment areas. — Increased land use densities. — The amenity (including access to sunlight) of Key Public Spaces protected.
Precinct E Town Hall Precinct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Attractive pedestrian friendly streets and open spaces given formal definition by buildings and a sense of vitality and safety through their activation by adjoining uses. — Consolidation of civic and educational facilities in the precinct. — Civic buildings given visual emphasis and the significance of heritage buildings and associated open spaces protected.
Precinct F Major Development Precinct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — A fine grain of attractive pedestrian-friendly streets, lanes and arcades lined by buildings and given a sense of vitality and safety through their activation by adjoining uses. — Significantly increased land use densities close to the railway station, and in the area between the station, hospitals and TAFE. — The amenity (including access to sunlight) of streetscapes and Key Public Spaces protected. — Synergies between public parklands and uses at their edges, and enhanced community safety in parkland. — Amenity in surrounding low rise precincts protected.
Key Open Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Convenient access to public open space and recreation opportunities in the Activity Centre. — Protection and enhancement of open spaces' character. — An effective increase in useable open space through removal of encumbrances and design improvements.

Source: *2007 Structure Plan, Section 5.2 Built Form, p.59-62*

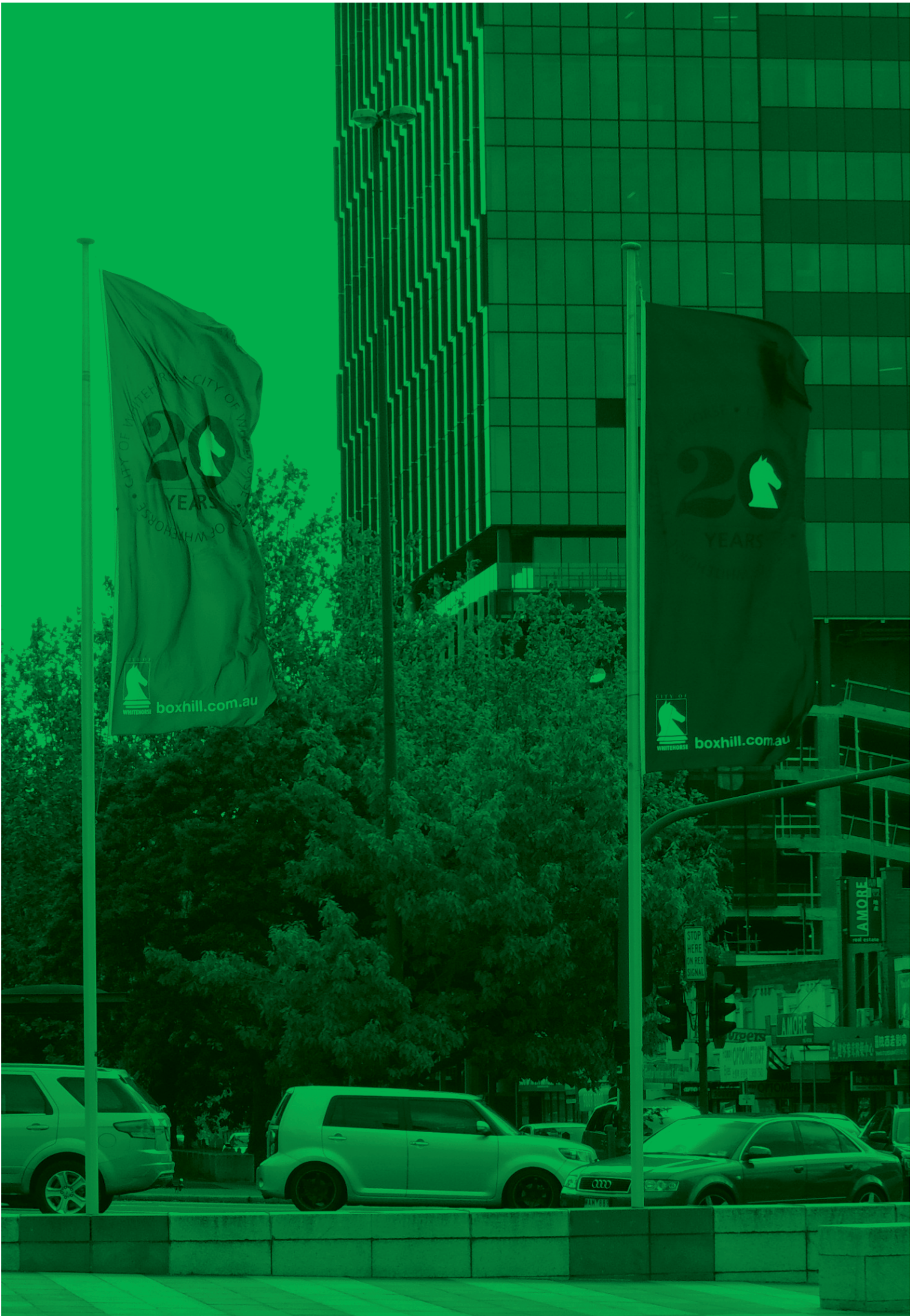


Figure 2.3 'Built Form Precincts' |
Reproduced from the 2007 *Structure Plan*, pg.17

2.1.3 Key Changes in the Broader Strategic Planning Context Since 2007

In the time since the adoption of the *2007 Structure Plan*, there have been substantial changes in the broader strategic planning context that need to be considered in relation to their impact on the future planning for the Box Hill.

- Metropolitan planning for Melbourne has extended significantly in this time. In high-level terms, *Melbourne 2030* had a relatively greater emphasis on centre hierarchies derived from retail floorspace and encouraging residential intensification within transit rich locations. *Plan Melbourne* extended the residential and retail planning by introducing a relatively stronger focus on the importance of supporting employment opportunities, health and community services and integrating transport planning into the consideration of the overall metropolitan form.
 - The shift in emphasis within metropolitan planning has coincided with an increased focus on jobs and economic development across government. The important economic and social role of the health and education sectors has been emphasised through increased recognition and new investment in major facilities. The particular importance of distributing these services across the whole city has become an important consideration for state government, both for their role in providing key services closer to where people live and also for distributing employment opportunities more broadly. Investment decisions for major transport infrastructure have also increasingly been considered in metropolitan terms.
 - The Victorian zoning regime has undergone significant reform since 2007. Of particular relevance is the removal of the Priority Development Zone (PDZ) which was a feature of the *2007 Structure Plan*. In addition to this, reforms to residential zones introduced mandatory and discretionary height controls. In Box Hill, the previous Residential 1 Zone (R1Z) was largely replaced by the reformed Residential Growth Zone (RGZ) with a discretionary maximum building height of 13.5m (nominally 4 storeys). Commercial zones were also reformed and simplified with the purpose of providing greater flexibility and growth opportunities.
- This allows for a broader range of as-of-right land uses including allowing for accommodation and retail uses within commercial zones.
- Increasing house prices and greater numbers of apartment development have led to increased scrutiny of the role of planning schemes in facilitating both affordable housing and acceptable levels of internal amenity within higher density parts of the city. The *Better Apartment Standards* have influenced development typologies through the need for improved solar access and ventilation. More recently, affordable housing has been legislated as a specific objective of planning in Victoria, allowing for greater support for this housing sector to be implemented within planning schemes.
 - Activity centres across Melbourne have been a focus for contestation and divergent views amongst the wider community on acceptable development outcomes. A significant proportion of larger development applications have been subject to VCAT review, increasing costs and uncertainty both for applicants and the affected community members. During 2018, DELWP (Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning) prepared new guidance and practice notes from the *Activity Centre Pilot Program* to clarify preferred planning approaches for activity centres, for example on the appropriate use of mandatory and discretionary heights to give greater planning certainty and guidance about preferred built form outcomes.
 - Other municipalities across Melbourne have begun to investigate and implement new planning tools that provide stronger guidance on preferred outcomes while allowing a managed level of flexibility to respond to individual circumstances. Tools such as Floor Area Ratios (FAR) and dwelling density controls have been successfully implemented by the City of Melbourne and Port Phillip to facilitate substantial change but constrain excessive intensification. These tools have also successfully been extended to include mechanisms to incentivise community benefits from intensive development through density bonus schemes. There are transferable lessons from other municipalities and interstate examples that could be applied to Box Hill.



2.2 Metropolitan and Regional Strategic Planning and Policy Context



2.2.1 *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050*

Plan Melbourne 2017-2050 outlines a vision for Melbourne as a global city of opportunity and choice. This vision also establishes a clearly defined city structure of the central city connect by a network of National Employment and Innovation Clusters (NEIC) and Metropolitan Activity Centres (MAC) with each leveraging particular competitive advantages towards attracting investment, and promoting innovation and employment growth for a growing population, see Figure 2.4. In addition, this vision is supported by a principle of 'living locally' through the creation of 20-minute neighbourhoods where people can access the majority of their everyday needs within a 20-minute walk, cycle or public transport trip. This vision is underpinned by directions that seek to improve the transport network to bring jobs closer to where people live and deliver higher quality and higher density housing closer to jobs and public transport such as MACs, clusters and train stations. At a micro-scale, the plan outlines the role of good urban design in the creation of transit-oriented and walkable neighbourhoods with great public places to support 20-minute neighbourhoods.

Box Hill is one of nine existing Metropolitan Activity Centres designated in *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050*.

This reaffirms Box Hill's role as a metropolitan centre of regional significance with the purpose of providing diversity of jobs, activities, and housing for the eastern region. As a Metropolitan Activity Centre, the Box Hill has a major role in delivery of higher-order services, including health and education, governmental and justice services in addition to major retail and commercial opportunities for the region. Planning for the future of Box Hill will need to consider particular strategic drivers of change, key competitive strengths such as health and education employment and the role of the Box Hill in accommodating growth in population, jobs and infrastructure while improving the public realm and connectivity for a regional catchment.

While Box Hill is not designated in *Plan Melbourne* as a NEIC, it shares many of the characteristics of a cluster with its excellent public transport links and pre-existing strengths in health and education with Box Hill Hospital, Epworth Eastern and Box Hill Institute. Strategically, it is located between two identified NEICs; the La Trobe NEIC with La Trobe University, Northland and Heidelberg; and the Monash NEIC with Monash Health, Monash University and the forthcoming Victorian Heart Hospital. Notably, MACs differ from NEICs in their dual function in providing both opportunities for substantial housing growth while also supporting growth in employment and services.



Figure 2.4 Box Hill's location in Metropolitan Melbourne

Legend

- Urban Growth Boundary
- Green Wedge land
- Metropolitan Activity Centre
- National employment and innovation cluster (NEIC)
- Rail network
- State-significant road corridor
- North East Link Project
- West Gate Tunnel Project
- Suburban Rail Loop Concept Route



2.2.2 Health and Education Precincts

Health and education has long been one of Melbourne's underlying strengths. The Box Hill Hospital and Box Hill Institute (BHI) Precinct is identified in *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050* as a Health and Education Precinct for further services and jobs growth. Beyond the core purpose of providing higher-order health and education services, these precincts are generally supported by ancillary retail, commercial and accommodation services which provide further opportunities for employment.

Box Hill Hospital is the largest hospital in the Eastern Health network, admitting more than 48,000 patients annually and growing, and has recently undergone major redevelopment, increasing by 200 beds.

Monash University has recently partnered with Eastern Health for a new Eastern Clinical Trials and Research Centre at Box Hill Hospital which will accommodate over 600 highly skilled staff. In addition, the hospital has on-going research and training partnerships with Deakin University (Eastern Health Partnership), Monash University and La Trobe University.

Epworth Eastern, a private hospital located adjacent to Box Hill Hospital, is currently at capacity and redevelopment is expected to begin in 2019 in partnership with council, Salvation Army and BHI. This demand for hospital beds across the eastern metropolitan region was primarily driven by overall population growth which is expected to continue. In evidence to the Amendment C175 Planning Panel,

Epworth Eastern provided future projections which show that 705 additional beds would be required from 2013/2014 levels across the eastern region. A large proportion of this number is likely to be located in Box Hill.

BHI is one of Victoria's largest Vocational Education and Training providers with up to 60,000 students enrolled annually. Recently, the BHI has sought to grow through diversification by partnering with local, national and global enterprise partnerships. This can be demonstrated by a recent partnership with Epworth Eastern for the delivery of a new nurse training facility for the institute alongside the expansion of the hospital. This demonstrates the potential of health and education partnerships and synergies to facilitate further growth in knowledge-intensive jobs and productivity.

Box Hill is easily accessible from other major education institutions. Deakin University (Burwood campus) is located approximately 3.5 kilometres from Box Hill Central station but can be reached within 15-20 minutes by bus and 15 minutes by bicycle. While Deakin University is the nearest university by proximity, across much of the day Swinburne University can be reached within a quicker travel time despite being 8 kilometres away due to access by train services rather than less frequent buses. This concentration of access to institutions supports the importance of Box Hill for student housing.



2.2.3 Metropolitan Partnerships – Eastern Metro Region (2018)

Box Hill is located in the Eastern Metropolitan Region which comprises of six local government areas in the region; Whitehorse, Monash, Knox, Maroondah, Manningham and Yarra Ranges. In 2018, the State Government established Metropolitan Partnerships as advisory groups to improve local community engagement, including youth groups, and co-ordination between levels of government in the identification of key priorities for each region. A key outcome of these partnerships is the delivery of five year implementation plans that explicitly identify funding and investment actions related to jobs, services and infrastructure – relevant to Box Hill is the Eastern Metro Region Five Year Plan. Box Hill is one of two Metropolitan Activity Centres in the Eastern Metro Region along with Ringwood and is expected to accommodate much of the region's anticipated population growth over the next five years as well as driving growth in employment in health. Recent investments through Eastern Metropolitan Partnerships include the partially completed Box Hill to Ringwood shared-use path along the rail corridor. Still in its early stages, the Eastern Metro Partnerships represents an opportunity for improved community ownership and co-ordination of funding and delivery of key projects and priorities between Box Hill and its regional partners.



2.2.4 Infrastructure Victoria 30 Year Strategy (2016)

Infrastructure Victoria (IV) was established in 2015 as an independent statutory authority to provide advice for the long-term planning of infrastructure in Victoria. In 2016, IV delivered Victoria's first 30-year infrastructure strategy which identified the need to improve access to middle and outer metropolitan activity centres and more broadly the need to improve accessibility for people with mobility challenges. However, IV will update the 30-year strategy in 2019/2020 to account for changes in circumstances and announced projects such as the proposed Suburban Rail Loop and the Airport Rail Link project. At present, the plan contains two key recommendations that are relevant to Box Hill.

- The Box Hill Transit Interchange (BHTI) is identified in the plan as a priority interchange due for upgrade to facilitate faster and easier passenger transfers, including for those with mobility challenges, to support and strengthen Melbourne's multi-modal public transport network.
- The plan repeats *Plan Melbourne's* overarching goal of encouraging growth in business activity, services and higher density housing in major employment centres to enable more people to live closer to jobs and identifies NEICs and MACs as areas of emphasis.

2.2.5 Regional Transport Networks

Box Hill has its prominence today thanks to its historical transport context. The ongoing prominence of Box Hill relies on efficient and effective transport that can cater for the number of people who want to live, work, recreate in, and pass-through, Box Hill.

Box Hill's transport network has evolved from the 1800's when Whitehorse Road and later the train lines to Gembrook, Healesville and Warburton connected fertile agricultural land east of Melbourne to the urban area. Much of the Box Hill region was fully developed with residential sub-urban development by the 1960's.

Over the last 50 years the amount of space dedicated to transport has barely increased (the addition of the Eastern Freeway being the main change).

Since 1960 the transport network in Box Hill has had to cater for higher volumes of movement within an essentially static amount of space.

This will also be the ongoing approach to the coming 50 years, as more people seek to live, work and play in Box Hill, but the space dedicated to transport will barely increase. Some large peripheral projects including North East Link and Suburban Rail Loop will increase the capacity of regional connections; however they will not increase the capacity for local travel around Box Hill CBD (the area that is subject to the Structure Plan).

The number of people visiting and passing through Box Hill has grown significantly over the past 35 years. To date, the transport network has barely evolved to meet the current and future challenges.

Figure 2.5 Transport in the region including proposed major transport projects



2.2.6 Major Transport Projects

Recently, Melbourne has experienced significant investment in transport infrastructure with \$38 billion of transport projects currently in construction including the Melbourne Metro Tunnel, West Gate Tunnel and the Level Crossing Removal Project with many further projects in planning and investigation stages. Relevant to Box Hill and the Eastern Metro Region is the North East Link (NEL) and the Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) project.

North East Link

The North East Link project proposes to connect the Metropolitan Ring Road (M80) with the Eastern Freeway (M3) with the later upgraded to incorporate a dedicated separated busway from Doncaster to the city. The NEL will have a marginal impact in terms of the catchment for people accessing Box Hill but is likely to have a significant impact on levels of through traffic on arterial roads through Box Hill. Elgar Road and Station Street are anticipated to absorb some of this increase in through traffic resulting from a wider Eastern Freeway and a three lane wide bottleneck at the Mullum Mullum Tunnels. NEL documents shows that the project will increase the level of traffic congestion on north south arterial roads through Box Hill. As a result, Council will need to work with the community to find ways to discourage through traffic through Box Hill and improve pedestrian amenity in the CBD.

In the *2007 Structure Plan*, there was an expectation that the Middleborough Road level crossing removal would ease traffic congestion in Station Street. With large road projects such as NEL there is a significant risk that the project creates more traffic (induced demand). If this happens there will be pressure to retain and extend clearways in Elgar Road and Station Street to enable through traffic easy passage through the Box Hill CBD.

Suburban Rail Loop

The Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) project seeks to transform Melbourne's public transport network by providing a 90 kilometre partially underground rail loop connecting activity centres, including three MACs (Box Hill, Broadmeadows and Sunshine) and four of six NEICs. SRL would facilitate a shift in the railway network structure from one that is focussed on radial travel to Melbourne CBD to a polycentric orbital network structure that improves connectivity between Melbourne's middle-ring activity centres and NEICs. Both *Plan Melbourne* and Infrastructure Victoria's 30-year Infrastructure Strategy highlight the need to facilities jobs growth in MACs and other major employment centres outside of the CBD. In this respect, SRL will have a significant impact on regional catchment across the corridor, reducing the transit travel times from the distant regional catchment. For Box Hill, this would likely increase the ability of office space to attract tenants as travel times decrease and Box Hill's employee catchment increases.

The project is at early stages of planning and is expected to be delivered in four phases, Box Hill lies at the centre of the first and second planned phases: Cheltenham to Box Hill (south-east) and Box Hill to Melbourne Airport. The south-east section has been identified as priority and work may commence by end of 2022. The new Box Hill Station is anticipated to be underground. At this stage, it is not clear how the new station will relate with the Box Hill Transit Interchange.

2.3 Local Strategic Planning and Policy Context

2.3.1 Council Vision 2013

In the *Council Vision 2013-2023*, Whitehorse City Council has set 5 strategic directions that guide the long term planning and delivery of its policies and operations, based on the aspirations of Councillors, staff and the wider community. The directions are:

- 1 Support a healthy, vibrant, inclusive and diverse community.
- 2 Maintain and enhance our built environment to ensure a liveable and sustainable city.
- 3 Protect and enhance our open spaces and natural environments.
- 4 Strategic leadership and open and accessible government.
- 5 Support a healthy local economy

These directions have been used to inform the *Council Plan 2017-2021* and incorporated into the Whitehorse Planning Scheme Municipal Strategic Statement.

2.3.2 Box Hill Transit City Activity Centre Structure Plan 2007

Prepared by SGS for Whitehorse City Council in response to Melbourne 2030, the *2007 Structure Plan* sought to build on earlier transport and urban design work to provide direction for development of Box Hill into a high density, pedestrian friendly urban centre connected to public transport, help reduce urban sprawl and reduce dependency on private motor transport.

The *2007 Structure Plan* sought to address the following issues to ensure the objectives of Melbourne 2030 were achieved:

- Providing clarity as to the expectations of appropriate development within the Activity Centre, to facilitate the development process.
- Improving infrastructure and services to enable intensive development and support new activities within the public realm – transforming a place created to support ‘suburban’ activity into one that supports ‘urban’ activity.
- Managing transitions between existing low-density uses that will remain for the foreseeable future and areas of high density new development, and managing the evolution over time of a new character in areas where existing low density uses will sit amongst high density development over a transitional period.

The *2007 Structure Plan* addresses these issues by providing:

- A Vision for Box Hill (as set out in 2.1.2 of this report)
- A framework for development (as set out in 2.1.2 of this report) addressing:
 - Public spaces including parks, plazas and pedestrian streets
 - Access – circulation network for pedestrians, bicycles, public transport, road traffic and car parking
 - Land use and activities
 - Built form

- Objectives Strategies and actions for each of the above components of the Structure Plan
- Development Control Guidelines to achieve desired outcomes for
 - Land uses – Activity Precincts
 - Built form Precincts
- Managing Change (Implementation actions)

2.3.3 Whitehorse Housing Strategy 2014

This study was completed in 2014, utilising future population projections based on the 2011 Census. The strategic approach outlined in the document highlights the importance of location, diversity, affordability and design in planning for future housing growth. Specifically, the strategy highlights a range of key challenges relevant to Box Hill, including:

- Encouraging housing within established activity centres and in areas with good access to public transport.
- Encouraging a broader range of housing types to meet differing needs from across the population, including the specialist needs of an aging community and of the high proportion of students within Box Hill
- Increasing the supply of affordable housing
- Encouraging higher quality design responses for more intensive development, including better integration of landscape opportunities into developments to deliver higher quality local urban character.

All of the residential areas within the Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre boundary are identified as a substantial change area and either the Residential Growth Zone or Mixed Use Zone has been applied. This designation supports higher density development up to four storeys and increased residential densities in order to maximise the benefit derived from proximity to transport and services. The objectives of this strategy include facilitating the emergence of a new urban character over time in areas identified for growth and increasing the diversity of housing provision (considering tenure, housing size and type of housing).

2.3.4 Whitehorse Integrated Transport Strategy 2011

The Whitehorse Integrated Transport Strategy 2011 creates a framework which considers the different modes of transport available to the Whitehorse community and provides direction to facilitate travel options and networks that are sustainable, convenient, accessible and safe. The Council has recognised the need for safe, sustainable and active modes of transport to benefit the community by making positive difference to the health and environment. Hence, this strategy promotes the use of sustainable modes such as walking, cycling and public transport.

The strategy addresses the key issues raised by stakeholders, which developed the strategic goals of:

- Improving linkage between different transport modes
- Minimising the impact of transport on the environment
- Promoting healthy lifestyles
- Creating safe environment for residents and commuters
- Promoting economic development and social connectedness.

The strategy was formed on the basis of four strategic objectives which address the transport to be controlled or influenced by the Council. It aims to encourage walking; maintain and improve the cycling network; encourage shift towards public transport; and provide safe and efficient movement of vehicles.

The strategy has proposed a review to be undertaken every year. Box Hill has experienced significant growth in recent years, increasing the need for attention to detail when creating places for people. As a result, the Council is currently undertaking a review of the Integrated Transport Strategy specifically for Box Hill and its immediate context.

2.3.5 Whitehorse Cycling Strategy 2016

The Whitehorse Cycling Strategy 2016 sits under the Whitehorse Integrated Transport Strategy 2011 and the Road Management Plan 2015. The Whitehorse Cycling Strategy 2016 aspires to create a well-connected network of attractive, safe and inviting low stress streets and paths for the cyclists yet respects all the users. Through this strategy the Council promotes five directions which support a healthy, vibrant, inclusive and diverse community; maintain and enhance our built environment to ensure a liveable and sustainable city; protect and enhance our open spaces and natural environments; strategic leadership and open and accessible government; and support a healthy local economy.

This is a very important strategy to help the Council achieve its vision 2013-2023 to be a healthy, vibrant, prosperous and sustainable community supported by strong leadership and community partnerships. The strategy demonstrates a well adopted network in some parts of the Box Hill CBD. However, with the increasing vehicular movement on the arterial roads and growth in the CBD even more infrastructure will be required. The Cycling Strategy includes some mention of riding a bicycle for transport but does not provide detailed recommendations related to accessing Box Hill by bicycle and the improvements required.

2.3.6 Box Hill Car Parking Strategy 2014

The Box Hill Car Parking Strategy 2014 was developed to evaluate the demand and supply of the car parking within the CBD. The strategy aims to establish existing car parking characteristics; to identify shortfalls in existing car parking and develops strategy to address the identified shortfalls; to identify future demand for parking; to establish the tools to manage existing and future parking demands; and to determine strategies relevant to the Box Hill Central Activities Area. The strategy proposes 38 strategic recommendations to better cater for community needs.

The Box Hill Car Parking Strategy identifies the supply for car parking is approximately 1.5 times more than the demand for car parking during the peak hours of the weekday; and approximately 2.5 times higher than the demand during peak hours on a weekend.

Most of the recommendations are relevant, although some do not go far enough to take full advantage of the transport situation in Box Hill. Subsequently there was an implementation report completed in 2018 which specifically investigated 15 of the 38 recommendations.

Car parking is a significant issue for Box Hill, it is abundant, yet perceptions around lack of parking are holding back visitation and economic activity. A key change to the management of parking resources is required.

2.3.7 Whitehorse Open Space Strategy 2007

The Whitehorse Public Open Space Strategy (WOSS) was prepared in 2007 to set out a cohesive vision of the future needs and character of public open space areas to ensure adequate and diverse public open space for a growing population. The strategy establishes an open space hierarchy and identifies the distribution of open space within that hierarchy to identify issues and locates shortfalls in particular public open space typologies and sets out recommendations for council to implement. It outlines a range of key outcomes that remain relevant for Box Hill, including; improving access to and linkages between open spaces; building upon the diversity of open space types; enhance biodiversity, eco-corridors; and to improve environmental sustainability practices in management and maintenance practices.

For Box Hill, a key recommendation of the WOSS for the preparation of a masterplan for Box Hill Gardens. The masterplan was adopted in February 2011 and supported the successful implementation of recent upgrades such as the Box Hill Gardens Multipurpose Area (2014 by NMBW & ASPECT Studios) and Box Hill Gardens Play Space (2018).

The strategy establishes a funding framework for the implementation of these recommendations in the context of continued population growth. The WOSS was the key document supporting the adoption of Amendment C99 in February 2010 which introduced a requirement of a minimum 4% public open space contribution for all subdivisions (Clause 53.01) and also provides scope for greater than 4% contribution for strategic sites, subject to the negotiation of a Development Plan.

2.4 Strategic Planning and policy context for Box Hill

2.4.1 Municipal Strategic Statement

The Municipal Strategic Statement at Clause 21 of the Planning Scheme sets out the overall strategic directions to manage future growth and development within the City of Whitehorse. It is to be read in conjunction with Council's Council Plan. It identifies three key strategic issues that need to be addressed: Environment, Settlement (housing) and Economic Development, and provides the overarching strategic framework plan for the City of Whitehorse.

Key strategic directions of particular relevance to Box Hill include:

Settlement

Clause 21.06 Housing which sets out the Vision for housing as: "To ensure that housing in the City of Whitehorse meets residents' needs in terms of location, diversity, sustainability, accessibility, affordability and good design." It also identifies the need to:

- Accommodate nearly 13,000 additional residents (as at 2014),
- Ensure activity centres can accommodate additional housing growth and are the focus of increased housing and employment densities, public transport and service provision.
- Better utilising transport corridors including train and tram routes for medium and higher density housing
- The need to develop or implement Structure Plans with objectives to improve housing affordability and special needs housing opportunities in activity centres

It provides specific objectives and strategies relating to housing location, housing diversity, housing affordability, housing design, and includes the 2007 Structure Plan and Whitehorse Housing Strategies as a Reference Documents. The Housing Framework Plan identifies much of the land within Box Hill as 'Significant Change Area'. Objectives set out for these areas (Clause 21.06-3) include:

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

Other key strategies include:

- 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. (Clause 21.06-4)
- Continue to identify opportunities for affordable housing in designated structure plans including specific location, localised need and design, and incentives for developers. (Clause 21.06-5)
- Prepare and adopt design guidelines for identified opportunity sites to ensure their redevelopment positively contributes to their surrounding context, provides high quality and innovative building design and facilitates high levels of residential amenity for new and adjoining residents. (Clause 21.06-6)
- Clause 21.04 directs that it is policy to ensure that all development applications are assessed in accordance with the residential Development Policy at Clause 22.03

Economic Development

Clause 21.07 Economic Development states in the overview:

Plan Melbourne identifies Box Hill as a Metropolitan Activity Centre (MAC) which provides significant opportunities for investment in terms of retail, public transport, health, justice, education, entertainment and medium and higher density residential development. It is essential that the Box Hill MAC 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 the Box Hill Structure Plan which also seeks to guide the preferred location and urban form of the new investment in the centre

Key strategic objectives at Clause 21.07-3 include:

- *To develop the Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre as the major focus for retail, commercial, health, transport, 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 recognise the important regional role that our tertiary education and health sectors fulfil and provide support for the ongoing viability of these vital institutions such that they are positioned as leading industry providers.*
- *To maintain the City's position as the second largest provider of office space outside St Kilda Road and the Melbourne Central Business District.*
- *To promote the City as a prominent location for leading edge and international IT firms and 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.*

- *To ensure additional retail floorspace allows for improved access to retail goods and services by members of the community and supports the planned role and function of the activity centre and its place in the retail hierarchy.*
- *To encourage innovation in retailing and promote new retail formats where it can be demonstrated that consumer trends are evolving.*
- *To ensure Activity Centre development encourages a more effective use of public transport and cycling modes of transport.*
- *To increase participation in the cultural and recreational tourism of the City and facilitate the provision of entertainment, arts, cultural, recreational and leisure facilities and promoting these locally and regionally.*
- *To provide a nurturing environment for our homebased business sector that provides access to business planning and information services, and networking opportunities.*
- *To support, where appropriate, the transition to local commercial premises where operations of home based businesses are no longer suited to residential locations.*
- *To encourage the continued enhancement and use of public transport and cycling modes of transport.*

This clause specifically directs that all use and development in Box Hill and surrounds complies with the Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre Policy at Clause 22.07. It includes the 2007 *Structure Plan*, Whitehorse Housing Strategy 2014, and Economic Development Strategy 2008-2013 as Reference Documents.

Infrastructure

Clause 21.08 sets out strategic directions for infrastructure across the City of Whitehorse. Key issues identified include:

- *Land use and transport planning needs to be integrated with development around public transport facilities designed to ensure maximum utilisation*
- *Providing improved facilities and safety for cyclists, pedestrians and public transport users, and maximising accessibility for all users but particularly the elderly, disabled and people with prams and young children is important. This includes upgrading the functionality, appearance, comfort, security and way-finding at the Box Hill Transport Interchange.*
- *Council needs to further investigate the opportunities to introduce Development Contributions to ensure that appropriate facilities are provided where new development is occurring within the City.*
- *Council has the responsibility to utilise open space contributions to help meet its future open space needs. Land contributions will be taken in certain areas where there is an opportunity to improve existing open space linkages and provision in accordance with Clause 22.15.*

2.4.2 Planning Policy Clause 22.07 – Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre

Clause 22.07 'Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre' applies to land in Box Hill (in the area defined within the structure plan boundary) to implement the *2007 Structure Plan*.

Policy objectives include:

- *To ensure that the Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre can continue to expand in line with market demand.*
- *To ensure that future development within the Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre seeks to maximise employment growth for Whitehorse.*
- *To ensure that Box Hill provides accessible, lively and comfortable public spaces that offer diverse opportunities for recreation and social engagement.*

- *To support walking as the primary means of access in and around Box Hill and encourage most trips of 1km or less to be taken on foot.*
- *To encourage cycling as a sustainable and healthy means of travel within Box Hill and for trips of up to 5km between the Activity Centre and surrounding areas.*
- *To encourage significantly increased use of public transport and reduced rates in the use of private vehicular transport for travel to and from the Box Hill Activity Centre.*
- *To carefully manage vehicular traffic in Box Hill to support choice of travel mode and create transit supportive roads (as defined by the 2007 Structure Plan).*
- *To ensure that car parking in Box Hill balances access, sustainable transport and land use needs, consistent with the Box Hill Central Activities Area Car Parking Strategy 2013.*
- *To ensure that Box Hill accommodates a more intensive and diverse range of activities that increase choices and opportunities, support synergies between different uses, encourage use of sustainable transport and complement surrounding areas.*
- *To ensure that development and use in the Box Hill Transport and Retail Precinct are appropriate to its role and function as a regional transport interchange for rail, bus, tram and taxi services.*

Clause 22.07 states that use and development of land is to be consistent with the vision for the centre, and the activity and built form precincts in the *2007 Structure Plan*. This is supported by specific policy guidance relating to:

- *Public places*
- *Pedestrian mobility and bicycle access*
- *Public transport*
- *Road traffic management*
- *Car parking*
- *Motor cycle parking*
- *Land use mix and economic and social activities*
- *Built Form*

The activity and built form precincts and public spaces and access frameworks (as established by the Structure Plan 2007) are included in the policy.

In addition to the Box Hill Structure Plan, other Reference documents listed are:

- Box Hill Transport Interchange Concept Design, March 2002
- Site Development Framework – 545 Station Street, Box Hill, April 2011
- City of Whitehorse Retail Strategy Review, October 2010
- Box Hill Central Activities Area Car Parking Strategy 2013

2.4.3 Clause 22.03 Residential Development

This policy applies to all applications for development within the Neighbourhood Residential, General Residential, Residential Growth, Mixed Use and Priority Development Zones. This policy builds on the MSS objectives in Clause 21.06 – Housing relating to maintaining and enhancing the character of the City's residential areas.

Key policy objectives include:

- *To recognise the potential for change as a result of new social and economic conditions, changing housing preferences and State and local planning policies.*
- *To accommodate the population increases in the municipality in the areas identified as being able to sustain higher density based on environmental and infrastructure considerations.*
- *To recognise that areas of substantial and natural change will make a significant contribution to increases in housing stock.*
- *To facilitate development in areas of substantial change.*

Key strategies for Substantial Change Areas include:

- *Encourage the following forms of housing in Substantial Change areas:*
 - Townhouses.
 - Units.
 - Flats and apartments.
- *Locate new development in the form of flats and apartments in Substantial Change Areas only.*
- *Provide a range of dwelling types, sizes and tenures, including affordable housing, in larger developments.*
- *Ensure buildings interfacing sensitive areas and uses have a scale and massing appropriate to the character and scale of their context.*
- *Create a new, higher density urban character in areas located away from sensitive interfaces.*

Also relevant, Clause 22.03 identifies areas within the activity centre boundary as being located within 'Garden Suburban 11' Neighbourhood Character Area, described as:

A variety of well articulated dwelling styles will sit within compact garden settings. Infill development will be common, however new buildings and additions will be setback at upper levels to minimise dominance in the streetscape. The consistent front setbacks and spacing between dwellings will be retained, with buildings setback or appearing to be setback from at least one side boundary. Low or open style front fences will provide a sense of openness along the streetscape, and allow views into front gardens.

2.4.4 Whitehorse Planning Scheme – Existing Zoning and Overlays

The current land use zone regime within Box Hill includes:

- **Commercial 1 Zone** applies in the core of the centre focussed on the south side of Whitehorse Road and Station Street, and including properties with frontage to the north side of Whitehorse Road.
- **Residential Growth Zone** applies to much of the Activity Centre, operating as a transitional zone between the Commercial 1 Zone and Neighbourhood Residential or General Residential Zones surrounding the activity centre. Schedules 1, 2 and 3 are in operation.
- **Mixed Use Zone** applies to small isolated pockets of land across the centre.
- **Public Use Zone** applies to numerous sites across the centre, including larger institutions, and council or government owned land.
- **Public Park and Recreation Zone** applies to key areas of public open space, including Box Hill Gardens and Kingsley Gardens.
- **Site specific exclusions** apply to a number of individual sites, understood to have been implemented to overcome previous prohibition on accommodation in previous Commercial 2 Zoning of areas of land.

There is only a very approximate alignment between the current planning regime with the 'Activity Precincts' designated in the *2007 Structure Plan*. The Commercial 1 Zone generally covers land designated for Transport and Retail Activity 'Precinct A' and 'Prospect Street - Primary Office' (Precinct B). The Purpose of this zone includes:

- *To create vibrant mixed use commercial centres for retail, office, business, entertainment and community uses.*
- *To provide for residential uses at densities complementary to the role and scale of the commercial centre.*

These purpose statements, and the provisions within the zone, operate universally. For both Precincts A and B, the Commercial 1 Zone provides limited opportunity to respond to the nuances established by the Structure Plan for each precinct.

The Residential Growth Zone applies to significant portions of all other activities precincts, including Hospital and Western TAFE (Precinct D) and Southern and Eastern (Precinct F). The purpose of this zone includes:

- To provide housing at increased densities in buildings up to and including four storey buildings.
- To encourage a diversity of housing types in locations offering good access to services and transport including activity centres and town centres.
- To encourage a scale of development that provides a transition between areas of more intensive use and development and other residential areas.
- To ensure residential development achieves design objectives specified in a schedule to this zone.
- To allow educational, recreational, religious, community and a limited range of other non-residential uses to serve local community needs in appropriate locations.

The *2007 Structure Plan* includes reference to a secondary, residential role for both precincts, but has clear directions for educational, medical and support for related business in Precinct D, and office, retail and mixed use for Precinct F. The current application of the Residential Growth Zone (RGZ) in both precincts demonstrate a mismatch between zoning and the desired land use outcomes set out in the *2007 Structure Plan*.

Recommendations of the *2007 Structure Plan* to rationalise the land use zone regime and apply a more appropriate suite of zones were not fully implemented. This was due to a range of issues including the zoning reforms which resulted in an alternative range of zones available for implementation. For instance, the Residential Growth Zone (RGZ) became a reasonable alternative to the Mixed Use Zone (MUZ), as proposed in the C175 Planning Scheme Amendment.

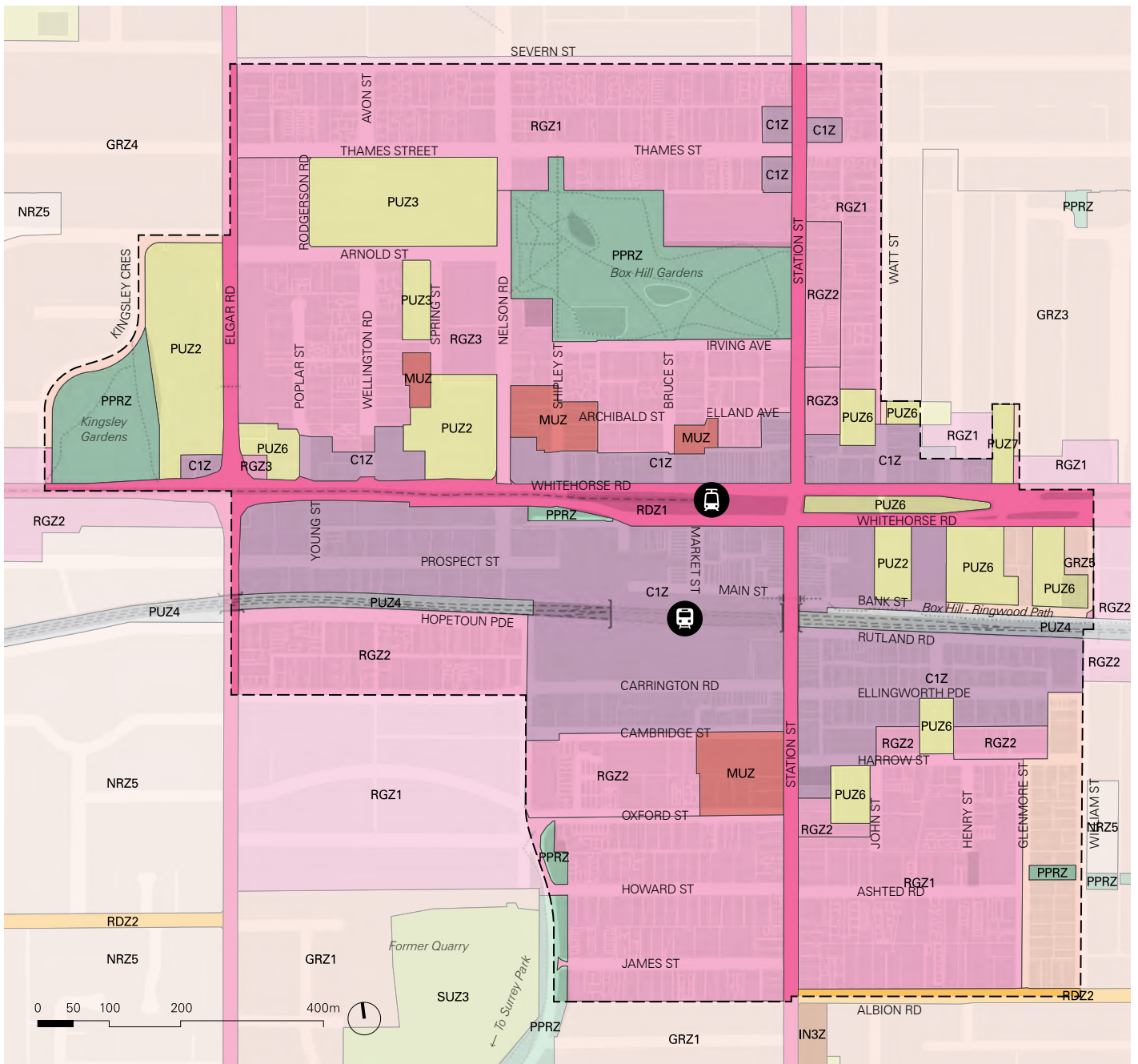


Figure 2.6 Existing zones

Legend

[---] Structure Plan boundary

Zones

- Residential Growth (RGZ)
- General Residential (GRZ)
- Neighbourhood Residential (NRZ)
- Mixed Use (MUZ)
- Commercial 1 (C1Z)
- Industrial 3 (IN3Z)
- Special Use (SUZ)

- Public Use - Education (PUZ2)
- Public Use - Health & Community (PUZ3)
- Public Use - Local Government (PUZ6)
- Public Use - Other (PUZ7)
- Public Use - Transport (PUZ4)
- Public Park & Recreation (PPRZ)
- Road 1 (RDZ1)
- Road 2 (RDZ2)

Overlays

The suite of overlays that currently applies within Box Hill include:

- **Parking Overlay** – applies across the core of the centre, to Commercial and Mixed Use zoned land
- **Heritage Overlay** – applies to individual sites of recognised heritage value across the centre
- **Environmental Audit Overlay** – applies to specific sites known to have formerly been used by a potentially contaminating use
- **Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO9)** – applies to all of the Residential Growth zoned land.
- **Development Plan Overlay (DPO8)** – applies on a site-specific basis at 16-18 Spring Street
- **Design and Development Overlay (DD04)** – affecting the small Neighbourhood Activity Centre, 'Thames & Station Street Shops', in the north east of the Activity Centre.
- **Road Zone Category 1** applying to Whitehorse Road, Station Street, and Elgar Road.
- **Special Building Overlay** applying overland flow paths which affect the southern, and northern, periphery of the centre, as well as part of Box Hill Gardens.

A key aspect for the implementation of the 2007 Structure Plan was the preparation of Design and Development Overlays (DDOs) to incorporate built form controls. This has yet to be successfully implemented.

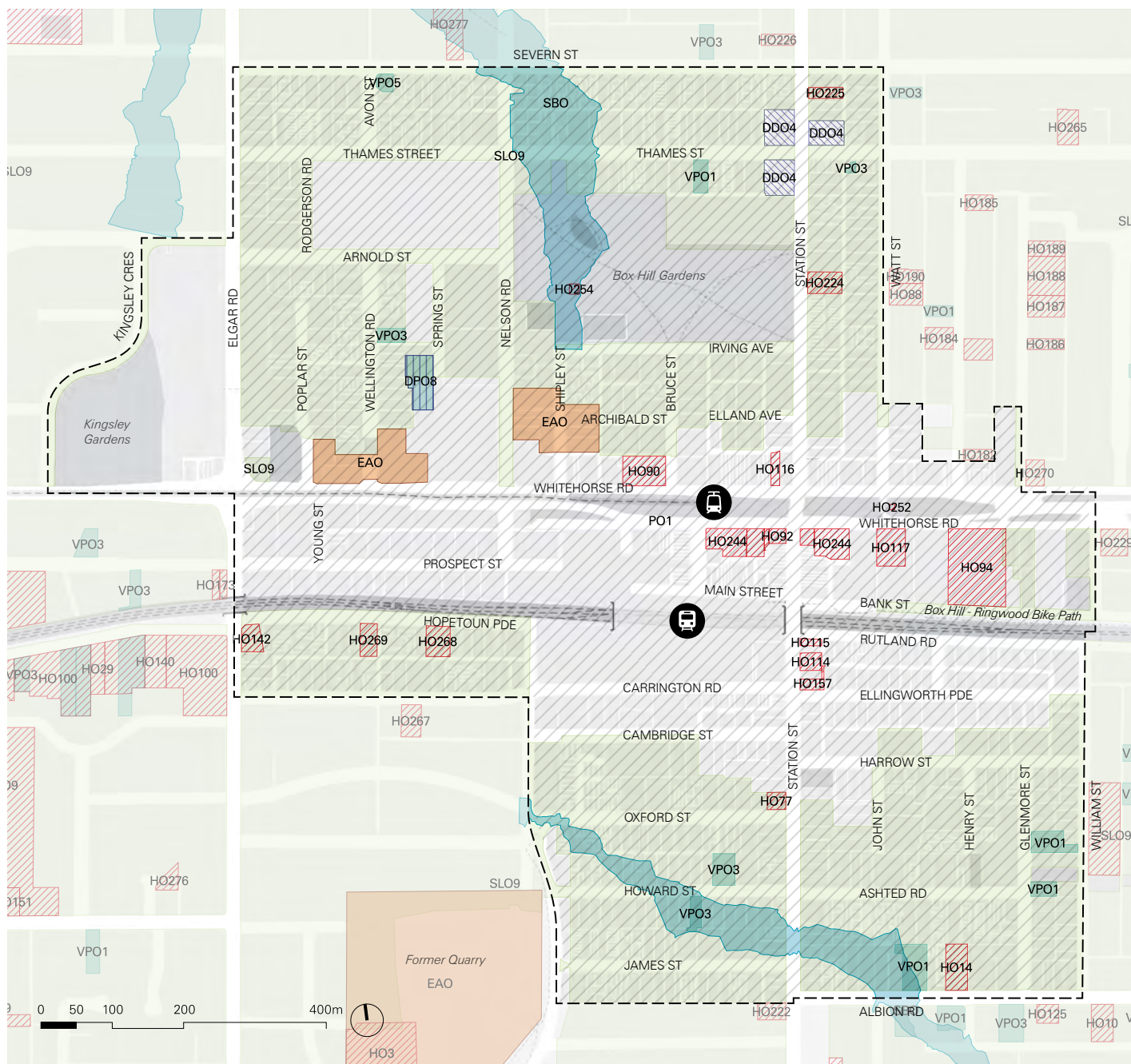


Figure 2.7 Existing overlays

Legend

[---] Structure Plan boundary

Heritage & Built Form overlays

- [Red hatched] Heritage Overlay (HO)
- [Blue hatched] Design & Development (DDO)
- [Purple hatched] Development Plan (DPO)

Environment & Landscape overlays

- [Green hatched] Significant Landscape (SLO)
- [Teal hatched] Vegetation Protection (VPO)

Land Management overlays

- [Solid blue] Special Building (SBO)

Other overlays

- [Orange solid] Environmental Audit (EAO)
- [Grey hatched] Parking Overlay (PO)

2.4.5 Whitehorse Planning Scheme Amendment C175 – Key issues from the process

In 2016, Council commissioned a project *'to provide more detailed information and guidance on the preferred future built form outcomes in central Box Hill to improve planning certainty for the community and developers. This work will also form the basis of a Design and Development Overlay for the centre.'* (City of Whitehorse Project Brief 'Built Form Guidelines for Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre' May 2016)

This work led to Amendment C175 to the Whitehorse Planning Scheme which proposed to implement the *Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre Built Form Guidelines 2016 (the Box Hill Guidelines)* by Hansen Partnership through the application of a new DDO with accompanying zone and local policy changes. It also proposed to rezone parts of the centre located north of Whitehorse Road from residential to mixed use and commercial zones to allow for a greater level of growth.

The Panel's analysis of State Planning Policy notes, *'Box Hill is a Metropolitan Activity Centre, a health and education precinct and has a key transport interchange. The State Planning Policy Framework clearly requires investment and growth to be focused in Box Hill.'* (C175 Panel Report, pp7).

The Panel found that the proposed rezonings were supported by current policy in the Planning Scheme, although did recommend considering the Special Use Zone for the Epworth Private Hospital site.

However, the Panel recommended the other key elements of the proposed amendment be abandoned. Reasons set out in the Panel Report (October 2017) included:

- **Inconsistency and conflict between the two key reference documents** – the *2007 Structure Plan* and the proposed Box Hill Guidelines (2016),
- **Imposition of height limits and built form policy that work against metropolitan planning policy** and strategic directions set out for Box Hill in local planning policy

- **Lack of strategic rigour and justification** provided by the Guidelines for the proposed built form controls, and concern with the statutory drafting of the DDO
- **Lack of engagement** with key stakeholders and landowners.

For reference, a copy of the Executive Summary from the C175 Panel Report is attached as an appendix to this report (Appendix 4).

Submissions

Key issues raised in submissions generally related to one of four main categories of concern:

- Process and consultation
- Character and built form/amenity
- Infrastructure – Transport
- Infrastructure – Open space and community

As summarised in the C175 Panel Report, the key issues raised in the submissions of the various parties are as follows:

Process and consultation: The consultation process was inadequate, including that:

- A referendum should have been held
- The Amendment documents were difficult to understand

Character and built form/amenity

- The proposed boundaries of the sub-precincts and sites proposed for rezoning
- The preferred building heights and setbacks proposed in the Guidelines and DDO6
- The effects of the Amendment on amenity, claiming it will destroy, or result in a loss of amenity, integrity and character of the Box Hill
- The effect of the heritage overlay on properties
- Two submitters raised concerns about the approval of current high rise buildings.
- Eight submissions raised concerns about the culture of Box Hill, including racist sentiments.

Infrastructure - Transport

- The inadequacy and overcrowding of public transport infrastructure and its ability to withstand further population increase
- Traffic congestion, the inadequacy of car parking and a perceived inability to cope with an increase in population
- The lack of provision for walking or cycle paths and lanes in the Guidelines

Infrastructure – open space and community

- A perceived inadequacy of open space and a lack of open space or green space provided for in the Guidelines
- The provision of community infrastructure such as schools and sporting facilities

Other key issues raised in the Panel Report included:

A need for engagement with key stakeholders

The Panel found that the development of the DDO did not adequately engage with relevant stakeholders who control land uses that are specifically identified for change, including Vicinity Centres, VicTrack, Box Hill institute and Epworth.

The Panel highlighted the need to ensure that institutions and key authorities are not unreasonably constrained through the planning process where there are clear operation imperatives, and to engage with key stakeholders to determine mutually beneficial outcomes. The Panel also noted the opportunity for a schedule to the DDO to specify that an application is exempt from third party notice and review provisions. (p.47)

The Panel also noted that consultation with land owners of large sites would have resulted in a more informed approach to built form requirements.(p.57)

A need for integrated transport planning and master-planning for the transport interchange

The Panel raised concern that Amendment C175 may limit the redevelopment potential of the Interchange and the relationship between the requirements of the Transport Integration Act and

the Amendment warrant further consideration. The Panel found there is a need to undertake a master planning exercise for the Interchange, with input from key stakeholders including Vicinity Centres and Victrack as identified in the *2007 Structure Plan*. (p.7)

The Panel agreed with Vicinity Centres that a comprehensive assessment and an integrated development proposal was warranted in this area. As a result, the Panel considered that the area should be removed from the DDO, subject to a separate master planning approach. This would enable Vicinity Centres to “work with a range of stakeholders, including Council” towards a comprehensive proposal for the area and the preparation of an appropriate suite of planning tools to facilitate and guide the development of this proposal (p.20-21).

A need for built form modelling and analysis to underpin height controls

The Panel concluded that the development of a DDO has significant strategic support, and is specifically recommended by the Structure Plan, and that there is strategic support for application of the DDO with discretionary controls. The Panel also acknowledged the possibility that a more detailed analysis of the activity centre could result in a potential case for mandatory controls across all or part of the centre, subject to:

- Appropriate strategic justification. (p.10)
- Rigorous built form testing
- Establishment of a clear vision to underpin an Urban Design Framework

The Panel also noted that the absence of height controls in Precinct F was a deliberate policy position reflecting the Structure Plan ambition to encourage significant high density development. (p.17) Any proposal to introduce height limits in this precinct needs to ensure it does not provide contradictory policy directions or introduce inconsistencies with broader strategic planning objectives for intensification in major activity centres, the vision for Box Hill, and directions set in the updated structure plan. Height limits also need to be underpinned by a coherent rationale.

The Panel also recommended further work was required to justify any street wall and setback controls. It suggested that a detailed investigation of amenity impacts resulting from existing development in the activity centre should be completed to inform future built form controls. It also suggested that a more detailed streetscape analysis is required to inform controls for street wall heights and setbacks, taking into account recently constructed and approved development, topography, street trees and so on. (p.64-65)

Potential role for density controls

Amendment C175 proposed to include plot ratio controls for large sites. The Panel noted that some form of plot ratio approach may be appropriate for the development of land within the activity centre, but that the Amendment was not supported by any rationale for such a development control or explanation of how it could work in Box Hill.

The Panel's recommendation was that if a plot ratio approach is to be pursued by Council, then it needs significantly more work to justify and explain any plot ratio approach to managing development in the activity centre. (p.57).

Although not explicitly stated by the Panel, the inclusion of a plot ratio approach may provide a foundation to build in opportunity for development uplift as an incentive for delivery of public benefits. Any such approach would need to be unambiguous and strategically justified.

Delivery of public infrastructure

The scope of Amendment C175 focussed on development and implementation of new built form guidelines. The Panel cautioned against the inclusion of mechanisms which could result in the public acquisition of land without appropriate compensation. (p.71). This recommendation was made in the context of requiring provision of land for new streets/laneway access.

The Panel did not provide recommendations regarding the need for infrastructure contributions. However, the updated structure plan and urban design framework should ultimately be supported by a public and private investment plan, which could include an infrastructure contributions plan as a key component.

Special Use Rezoning

The Panel noted the various recommendations for rezonings in the 2007 Structure Plan including use of:

- Public Use Zone for various institutional sites (noting this has now been applied)
- Priority Development Zone for part of Hospital and Western TAFE Precinct D (area bounded by Whitehorse Road, Nelson Road, Arnold Street and Elgar Road)

Amendment C175 proposed to use the Mixed Use Zone for much of Precinct D, as well as Box Hill Gardens Precinct E.

The Epworth submitted that a Special Use Zone would be more appropriate than the MUZ, having regard to the health and education uses encouraged by *Plan Melbourne* and the Structure Plan. The Panel found that the Mixed Use Zoning could be supported on the basis that the Special Use Zone had not been exhibited. However it considered that Council should give future consideration to rezoning the Epworth site to a Special Use Zone.

Council's Response (following consideration of the Panels recommendations)

While Council acknowledged the Panel's conclusion, it remained 'concerned about the ability of the area to balance the need for investment and growth whilst creating a liveable, vibrant and attractive State significant metropolitan centre, and the need to provide more detailed information and guidance on preferred future built form outcomes in central Box Hill.' (Whitehorse City Council Ordinary Council Minutes 25 June 2018, pg.9)

Council considered the Panel Report and its recommendations at the meeting on 25 June 2018. At this meeting, Council resolved to;

- Abandon Amendment C175 and notify the Minister for Planning of Council's decision.
- Note the program of future work for the Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre included in the 2018/19 budget process.
- Continue advocating to the State Government about upgrading the Box Hill Transit Interchange as a result of the ongoing designation of Box Hill as a Metropolitan Activity Centre and furthermore the Amendment C175 Panel Report which discusses the importance of the interchange.
- Advise all submitters of this resolution in relation to the Panel Report for Amendment C175.

This project seeks to assist Council in progressing planning for Box Hill, and specifically to address the issues raised by the Panel Report.



2.5

Project Brief

Review of Strategic Direction for Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre

2.5.1 What we have been asked to do

In late 2018 Council issued the brief for the current project. The project brief was to undertake “a review of the vision and existing strategic direction for Box Hill and provide future guidance for the Metropolitan Activity Centre”, including the preparation of a vision for the future of Box Hill, reviewing and updating the *2007 Structure Plan* with a revised Structure Plan and preparing an urban design framework to support the structure plan.

The brief essentially seeks to establish the future urban form and develop controls to guide development towards this outcome. The revised vision for the activity centre provides the guidance for preferred outcomes delivered through the planning controls.

The project brief assumes that:

- Public transport remains largely in its current form. An integrated transport strategy will be undertaken separately, concurrent with this project.
- Masterplanning for the transport interchange will be undertaken at a later date, involving direct and more detailed engagement with Vicinity and VicTrack as primary land owners.
- The activity centre boundary will remain as defined in the *2007 Structure Plan*.
- Contribution schemes to support community infrastructure will be considered at a later point.

Note that questions on all of these topics are likely to be raised at a future planning panel, consistent with the submissions made during the C175 panel hearing.

2.5.2 Gaps that need further investigation

The evidence set out in this report shows Box Hill is at a tipping point. Substantial change has already occurred but future projections and the planning applications currently under consideration begin to indicate that much more substantial change is likely in the future. The magnitude of change has significant implications for the geographic extent of the activity centre, models of public transport provision, location and scale of community infrastructure, public open space provision and mechanisms for shared funding of community needs.

Planning Practice Note 58: Structure Planning for Activity Centres (PPN58) sets out a range of considerations that should be addressed through a full structure planning process, including the need to define the activity centre boundary in relation to established criteria.

In addition, the growing future community has implications for changing infrastructure needs. Future population growth will increase the need for schools, childcare and other lifelong learning opportunities. Comparable centres experiencing significant change such as Footscray and Glen Waverley have demonstrated that growth in community infrastructure needs to be in accessible locations in order to support sustainable transport mode share targets.

These gaps will need further technical investigation beyond the scope of this current report.

