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C177**MUNICIPAL PROFILE**

The City of Whitehorse is approximately 65 square kilometres in area, and is generally bounded by Highbury Road, Warrigal Road, Union Road, the Eastern Freeway, Heatherdale Road and the Dandenong Creek. The western boundary of the City is 12 kilometres east of Melbourne. The Strategic Framework Plan at Clause 21.04 shows the extent of the municipality.

The City hosts many activities of importance to the Eastern region of Melbourne and several of State importance. These are viewed as strengths, which the City can build upon, including:

- **Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre** and its provision of important education, health and commercial facilities. These include the Box Hill Institute of TAFE, Box Hill and Epworth Hospitals and a branch of the Australian Taxation Office.
- **MegaMile Activity Centre** along Whitehorse Road is a focus for bulky goods retailing and motor vehicle sales. It serves a substantial catchment area attracting people from throughout metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria.
- **Burwood Heights Activity Centre** at the intersection of Burwood Highway and Middleborough Road, which includes a 20 hectare 'former brickworks' strategic redevelopment site and the potential to provide a significant mixed use activity centre.
- **Regional Parks and Gardens** such as Blackburn Lake Sanctuary, Wattle Park, Box Hill and Morack Golf Courses, the Dandenong Creek, Gardiners Creek, Schwerkolt Cottage and Yarran Dheran. All are individual in character and attract people from throughout Melbourne. They are part of important open space linkages, some continuing through to neighbouring municipalities.

The City is characterised by pleasantly undulating topography, with some steeply sloping areas, enhanced by a range of native and exotic landscapes. Trees are an integral aspect of the City and are a key determinant of the **character** of the residential areas of the city. Parts of the municipality are dominated by an upper tree canopy which covers a significant proportion of the City, ranging from the exotic tree lined streets of Mont Albert to the native trees in areas of Blackburn, Blackburn North, Vermont and Mitcham. There is a bushland appearance in parts of the City that is uncommon in middle ring suburbs of the metropolitan area.

Significant natural **environmental** assets are evident in the City including areas of remnant vegetation at Bellbird Dell, Cootamundra Walk, Wandinong Sanctuary, Wurundjeri Walk, Yarran Dheran, Antonio Park and the Blackburn Lake area. In these areas, the tree canopy cover is extensive and large mature trees dominate. The waterways of Gardiners, Mullum Mullum, Dandenong and Koonung Creeks are significant environmental, landscape and recreation locations. These creeks form part of an advanced open space network that is highly valued by the community. The municipality also contains many places of historical significance. These structures, natural features, buildings and areas provide a snapshot into the City's past and trace the development of the City from its agricultural origins to the post war housing boom.

The City is typical of middle ring Melbourne areas in that it is dominated by detached dwellings. The City provides for a variety of living environments ranging from the tree lined streets of Mont Albert, the bushland setting around Blackburn Lake to higher density housing around Box Hill. In 2011, around 74% of the housing stock was detached housing. There has been an annual net addition of 357 new dwellings developed in the City between 2001 and 2011. Medium density development in the City has been strong in recent years and reductions in household size, greater numbers of single parent families and older single person households is likely to mean that the demand for smaller dwelling sites with less garden maintenance will increase over the next decade.

The estimated population of the City of Whitehorse in 2013 was approximately 158,992 people. In the future the City's population is expected to change with the over 60 year old

cohort anticipated to increase by 25% to 2031, alongside a large increase in persons aged between 20 and 39 years. The growth in young adults can be attributed to Whitehorse's housing opportunities and tertiary education facilities. Strong housing development will contribute to a more diverse housing stock to meet socio demographic changes but must be carefully managed to respect the character of residential neighbourhoods.

The City of Whitehorse has a \$7.2 billion economy that is strategically integrated into the wider regional economy. There are approximately 61,000 jobs within the City supported by a large proportion of the local workforce. There are also approximately 9,000 businesses operating in the City. Whitehorse's gross regional product is estimated at \$8.4 billion which represents 17% of Melbourne's Eastern gross regional product, 2.4% of Victoria's gross state product and 0.53% of Australia's gross regional product. Almost 20% of Whitehorse's gross regional product is contributed by the Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre.

Manufacturing remains a major contributor to Whitehorse's revenue generation (output) (14.3%). This is followed by Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services (9.6%), Wholesale Trade (8.8%), Professional, Scientific & Technical Services (8.4%) and Health Care & Social Assistance (7.2%). In terms of employment, 16.6% of jobs in Whitehorse are in Health Care & Social Assistance, followed by Education & Training (12%), Retail Trade (11.7%), Professional, Scientific & Technical Services (8.2%) and Public Administration & Safety (7%).

There are numerous activity centres in the municipality providing a range of roles and functions. The Metropolitan Activity Centre (MAC) of Box Hill plays a major service delivery role for a subregional catchment. Large Activity Centres at Forest Hill, Burwood Heights, Tally Ho (East Burwood) and Nunawading MegaMile each have their own attributes and functions. A range of neighbourhood activity centres form a more localised focus for commercial and retail activities. These range in scale from Burwood One (Kmart Plaza) to Mitcham and Blackburn. Deakin University is designated as a Health Precinct and Box Hill as a Health/Education Precinct in *Plan Melbourne*.

The future role and function of activity centres throughout the municipality will be influenced by *Plan Melbourne* which places considerable emphasis on activity centres as the focus of new development and as an essential element of policies regarding sustainability, reducing the dominance of car travel, and in building a sense of community and a sense of place. Together all of these activity centres will contribute to the creation of '20 minute neighbourhoods' across Melbourne. The structure planning process, including the involvement of the community and other stakeholders, will be the means by which the opportunities available in centres are identified and realised.

The City has one of the biggest concentrations of office space in Melbourne outside of the Melbourne Central Business District and St Kilda Road with major office centres at Box Hill, Tally Ho Activity Centre and Greenwood office parks. Demand for office space remains high.

Industrial activity in the City is a highly important part of the regional economy and provides significant employment opportunities for the local area and the Eastern region. Major industrial precincts include Rooks Road, Middleborough Road, Redland Drive Estate, Joseph Street and Lexton Road. While manufacturing continues to contribute strongly to local output, the number of jobs in the sector declined by 25% between 2006 and 2011.

The City contains several large educational and health institutions that employ a significant number of people and generate a substantial amount of economic activity within the City. These institutions include the Box Hill Institute of TAFE, Deakin University, Box Hill Hospital, Epworth Private Hospital and Mitcham Private Hospital, all of which have experienced considerable growth over recent years. There are several other private educational as well as specialised institutions particularly in the west of the municipality that serve regional catchments.

The City is served by an excellent transport system that provides strong links to the wider metropolitan region and is an important part of the Principal Public Transport Network.

Major public transport facilities include the city to Lilydale/Belgrave rail line, with seven stations in Whitehorse extending from Mont Albert to Heatherdale. This infrastructure has been the catalyst for a significant amount of industrial, commercial and residential development.

The municipality benefits from the Vermont South to city tram line which extends from Warrigal Road to Hanover Road, servicing major institutions such as Deakin University, several private schools, Greenwood Office Park, Burwood Heights Activity Centre, Burwood One, Tally Ho Activity Centre and Vermont South Neighbourhood Activity Centre. There is also a tram route connecting the Box Hill MAC to the city. This route reinforces Box Hill's role as a major regional transport interchange.

These important elements of the Principal Public Transport Network, which also include Smart Bus Routes along Springvale, Blackburn and Warrigal Roads, are key criteria for the assessment of applications for additional housing and employment generators.

The City is well served by the arterial road network and freeway linkages. The Eastern Freeway and Eastlink provide excellent accessibility between the municipality and Melbourne Central Business District for residents and businesses.

An increasing number of bicycle trails provide linkages to major open space and recreation facilities and provide an alternative form of transport for the community.