

Planning and development

WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

Local government has a crucial role in setting local planning policy and making decisions that are responsive to community needs. Council plans for a municipality that has a well-distributed network of vibrant activity centres, providing diverse living, working, shopping and community opportunities within the heart of their respective neighbourhoods.

Plan Melbourne Refresh anticipates an additional 2.9M people in the next 35 years. To accommodate this the Plan applies pressure to achieve infill development and higher density housing in already constrained inner city locations, creating conflict between planning for population growth and maintaining a reasonable level of amenity.

Stonnington requires a well-designed policy to manage growth pressures that consider changes to local character, services, open space, traffic and transport access (including improved pedestrian and cycling opportunities and residential parking impacts).

Plan Melbourne 2017–2050 gives the State Government, represented by the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA), a greater role coordinating strategic planning within sub-regions, specifically in relation to housing densities, employment nodes, activity centres and major transport

nodes. This may directly impact Council's ability to implement reformed residential zones.

Council calls for greater emphasis on the need for higher density development to be contextually appropriate and responsive to local strategic policy. It is essential that the City of Stonnington (and other local government authorities) retain authority over local land use and development policy setting and planning decision-making.

What needs to change?

- » The State Government should stop imposing tight time frames that do not allow local governments adequate time to respond to important strategic planning issues (recent examples: *Reformed Residential Zones*, *Better Apartment Design Guidelines*, *Community Housing reforms*).
- » The State Government needs to engage more effectively with affected residents on important state-led planning reforms and planning scheme changes (for example the *Amendment along the Yarra River*).
- » Councils should be the lead agency for many actions included in *Plan Melbourne*, (particularly for implementing urban design and sustainability outcomes), rather than a secondary partner accountable to the VPA or Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP).
- » The Forrest Hill Precinct should be included as an urban renewal area in *Plan Melbourne* or the implementation plan, otherwise government funding opportunities for strategic priority projects in the precinct may be limited.
- » The City of Stonnington should be identified as a key partner in the future *Monash National Employment and Innovation Cluster*. Chadstone Shopping Centre provides over 5,000 retail jobs per year and should be identified as a cluster because it is surrounded by residential and educational areas. Establishing this cluster would also give greater substance to the case for improved public transport (train or tram) to and through Chadstone.
- » *Plan Melbourne 2017–2050* identifies the need for high quality urban areas and public open space and a *Metropolitan Open Space Strategy* is proposed. There is no indication that the plan considers the challenges of increasing open space for a growing population in inner city areas that already have shortages.
- » While *Plan Melbourne 2017–2050* supports renewable energy for individual households, it should also comment on solar access rights for existing solar photovoltaic (PV) systems.

Council action

In 2017/2018 Council strengthened our local planning policies to respond to growing Melbourne and State Government policy demands by:

- » reviewing our Local Planning Policy for consistency with *Plan Melbourne 2017–2050*
- » progressing our *Activity Centres Strategy*
- » preparing structure plans and specific planning provisions for activity centres, including Glenferrie Road, High Street and Hawksburn Village
- » implementing the *Neighbourhood Character Strategy* to ensure that development is in line with the preferred neighbourhood character
- » undertaking urban design framework plans for areas under pressure for growth
- » advocating for a state wide *Environmentally Sustainable Design* policy to achieve a sustainably built environment
- » identifying place-making opportunities through activity centre planning to support long term viability of shopping strips
- » lobbying the State Government for improved higher density amenity requirements, and
- » lobbying the State Government to improve public housing.