

2. WHAT DOES OUR COMMUNITY VALUE?

The Liveable Yarra panel members were proud of the city they live in and wanted to see the following elements promoted and enhanced:

- Diversity of people and places, with a sense of multiculturalism and community throughout;
- Significant historical, heritage and natural spaces of the local areas; and
- Proximity and ease of access that living in Yarra affords – for example, to the CBD, the night time economy, or sporting and cultural events.

The panel members indicated that residents valued environmentally sustainable design and new infrastructure. They were more willing to accept higher density housing with the provision of affordable housing options and activated communal spaces.

A key action identified by the panel was for Council to actively plan for Yarra's projected housing growth, including identifying the range of housing needs and options to support a diverse community. The panel acknowledged that this would deliver:

- A clear direction about how to accommodate projected housing growth;
- Better informed planning for infrastructure and community facilities;
- A more diverse housing profile; and
- Certainty regarding the locations and nature of growth, leading to a reduced need for Council resources associated with major developments.

FINDINGS FROM THE LIVEABLE YARRA PANEL

PROMOTE AND ENHANCE



Diversity of people and place



Significant history, heritage and natural spaces



Proximity and ease of access to sporting and cultural events

HIGHLY VALUED



Environmentally sensitive and sustainable design for the whole community



More detailed findings can be found in the *Liveable Yarra Engagement Summary Report*, Capire & City of Yarra, October 2015.

Community priorities for housing growth and change in Yarra

The Liveable Yarra panel provided clear direction to Council on the key issues for consideration when planning for housing growth and change.

Seven actions in the *Liveable Yarra Engagement Summary Report* (Capire & City of Yarra, October 2015) related to the following issues.

- Heritage;
- Economic development;
- Communal open space;
- Diversity and adaptability;
- Affordable housing;
- Access and movement; and
- Sustainability.

In early 2018, Yarra sought community feedback on the actions. The majority of the respondents believed that the actions were still very important in terms of Yarra meeting future housing needs, reaffirming the findings of the Liveable Yarra panel.

This section provides an overview of how these key issues and actions have been considered in the development of the strategy, and outline where they are being addressed through other projects or policy.

2018 COMMUNITY RESPONSES TO: HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING LIVEABLE YARRA ACTIONS?

Continue to protect existing high value heritage areas across Yarra

Promote the inclusion of accessible and adaptable housing, and housing suitable for all life stages

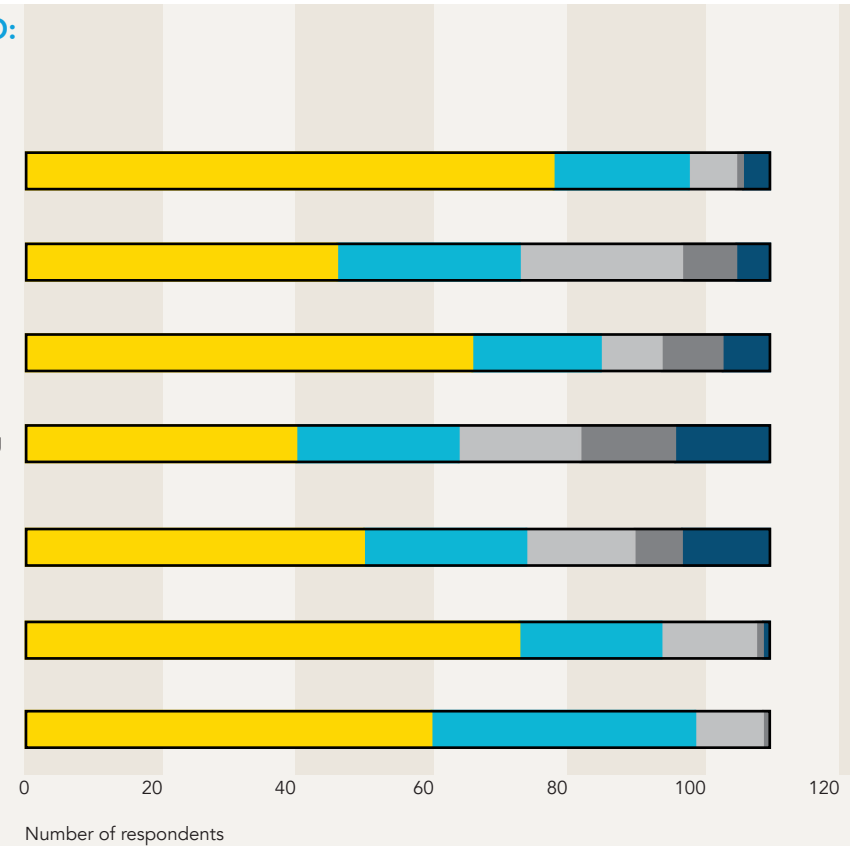
Encourage the provision of communal spaces in housing development

Support the provision of affordable housing, including through co-housing and housing associations

Increase space for pedestrians and bikes, dedicated lanes/corridors.
Decrease car space on the streets

Encourage housing development with high environmental qualities

Retain land for non-residential uses to support arts, cultural and other employment and economic uses



- 5 - very important
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1 - not important

Heritage

“Continue to protect existing high value heritage areas across Yarra”

Home to some of Melbourne’s first suburbs, Yarra boasts many prized heritage streetscapes and residential, commercial, and grand civic buildings. The former industrial areas provide important links to Yarra’s past.

Yarra protects its unique and diverse heritage by applying the Heritage Overlay to properties of identified heritage significance. The Heritage Overlay is a tool that requires a planning permit to subdivide land, demolish, build or alter a property that has heritage significance. About two thirds of all properties in Yarra are covered by the Heritage Overlay and, in fact, more properties are covered by the Heritage Overlay in Yarra than in any other municipality in Victoria. The strategy will need to respond to the high level of heritage protection in Yarra.

While Yarra’s activity centres have key attributes that make them ideal for accommodating housing growth, they also include unique and intact heritage streetscapes and buildings. The Heritage Overlay applies to large sections of Yarra’s major activity centres including Brunswick, Smith and Swan Streets, as well as Bridge Road. Future growth in these areas will need to be managed to respond to the heritage significance of these centres.

Balancing heritage protection with other important factors – like sustainability, the demand for urban growth and metropolitan planning policy – is an ongoing responsibility for Council.

Built form frameworks have been prepared for Swan, Victoria, and Johnston Streets, along with Queens Parade and Bridge Road. The frameworks are informed by detailed heritage reviews to determine how best to protect and enhance heritage streetscapes (as well as individual buildings) in each activity centre, while accommodating opportunities for future housing and employment growth.

This work will form the strategic basis for new site specific built form controls that will guide the scale and form of new development in these activity centres.



The housing strategy will need to respond to the high level of heritage protection and provide guidance on the appropriate level of growth in residential neighbourhoods and activity centres.

Economic development

“Retain land for non-residential uses to support arts, cultural and Other employment and economic uses”

Yarra hosts a diverse range of industry sectors, with an increasing emphasis on professional services, health care and education, creative industries and a diverse offering of retail and hospitality. It also has a long tradition as a location for arts and culture, with many galleries, artist run spaces and live music venues.

Yarra’s diverse range of businesses are vital to Melbourne’s economy. While Yarra represents just 0.2% of Greater Melbourne’s land area, it constitutes to 4.3% of Melbourne’s total economic output. Yarra’s economy is well-connected and benefits from an inner-city location with access to transport infrastructure, customers, other businesses and a large workforce. This spatial context is driving economic growth.

The municipality’s employment land is a strategic resource, accommodating a large and diverse range of businesses, and providing employment for an extensive and growing number of workers with a wide range of skills. To ensure there is capacity to grow Yarra’s economy, a Spatial Economic and Employment Strategy (SEES) has been prepared, which provides strategic directions and future opportunities for employment land. The strategy recognises a series of employment areas that accommodate business needs and additional employment to support the growth of the local economy.

Yarra’s employment areas include:

- Major activity centres;
- Major employment precincts – Cremorne (Church Street) and Gipps Street, Collingwood;
- Commercial and industrial land outside activity centres; and
- Health and education precincts.

Yarra is an attractive location for residential development. If residential development is not managed and planned for it can displace existing economic activity. To reduce pressure for ad hoc conversion of employment land, Council proposes to retain the existing zoning in these employment areas, except where residential development on employment land has been identified in strategic work, including structure plans and local area plans. Council recognises the primacy of employment activity above housing in these areas.

Yarra’s activity centres however are appropriate locations for new housing, given their proximity to services, facilities and public transport. Council recognises that there are economic benefits that flow on from additional housing in activity centres, including increased local expenditure, and supporting the generation of new land uses and commercial formats. Separate strategic work - structure plans and local area plans - will identify any rezoning potential.



Communal open space

“Encourage the provision of communal spaces in housing development”

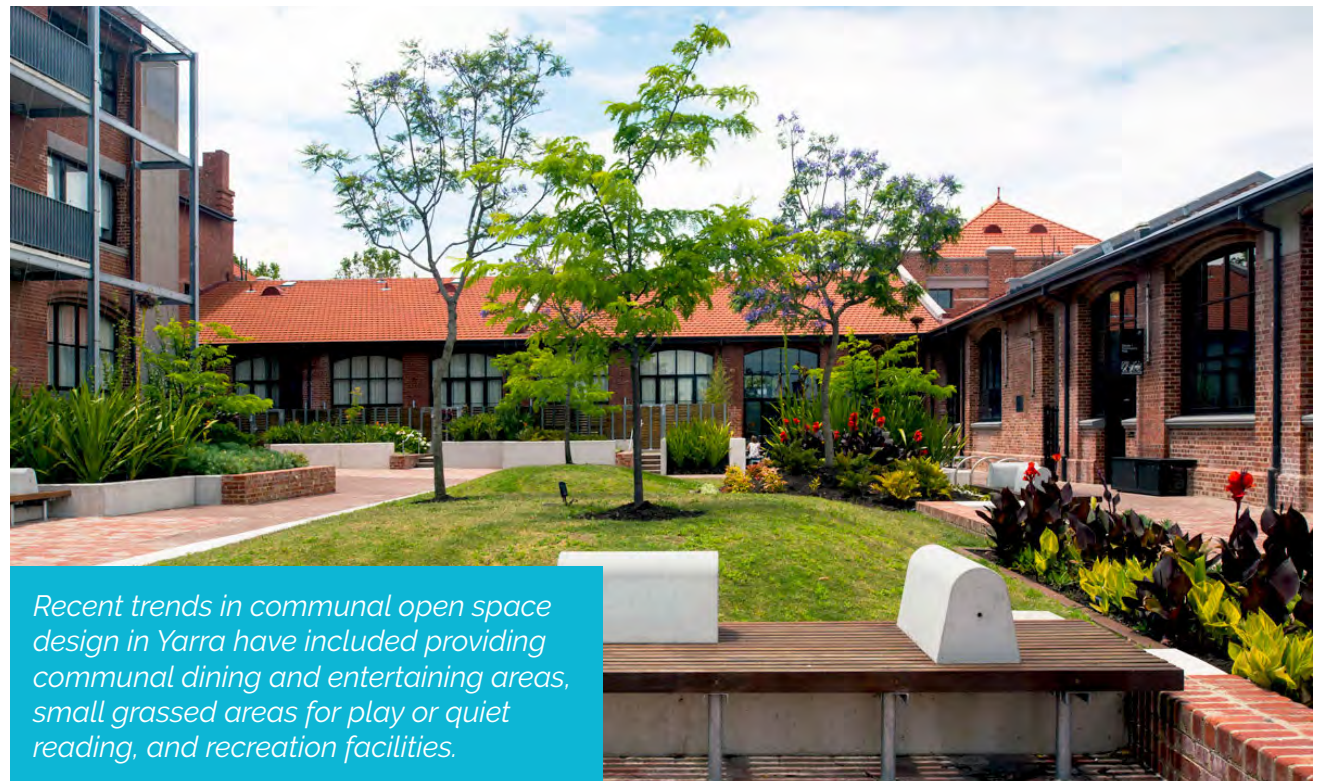
The new state-wide apartment design requirements in the Victorian Planning Provisions (VPP) require a minimum area of communal open space for development over 40 dwellings. The requirements do not provide guidance on the design, location, usability and accessibility of communal open space for particular households.

Given apartments are going to be the predominant housing form built over the next 15 years in Yarra, there is a need to ensure that the needs of all household types are considered in the design of communal open spaces in future high density developments.

It is anticipated that families will account for 30% of household growth over the next 15 years¹. The City of Vancouver’s *High-Density Housing for Families with Children Design Guidelines*² has been successful in providing clear guidance on designing family-orientated communal open space. The guidelines recommend that family units are concentrated on lower floors and around common play areas, which incorporate a mixture of durable hard and soft surfaces. In larger developments, it is good practice to provide a hierarchy of communal open spaces to allow households with different needs to use and enjoy the spaces.

Recent trends in communal open space design in Yarra have included providing communal dining and entertaining areas, small grassed areas for play or quiet reading, and recreation facilities. These facilities create a good environment for residents to interact and provide a balance between private open space in apartments and public open space in the surrounding area.

Improving the quality of the design and functionality of communal open spaces in apartment developments will enhance the long-term attractiveness of apartment living for all households in Yarra. The strategy will provide specific directions on how this can be achieved through the planning system.



Recent trends in communal open space design in Yarra have included providing communal dining and entertaining areas, small grassed areas for play or quiet reading, and recreation facilities.

¹ Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, 2016, *Victoria in Future 2016: Population and Household Projections to 2051*, Melbourne.

² City of Vancouver, 1992, *High-Density Housing for Families with Children Guidelines*, Vancouver.

Diversity and adaptability

“Promote the inclusion of accessible and adaptable housing, and housing suitable for all life stages”

As more homes are constructed in Yarra, it is important to ensure that they are designed and built to meet the changing needs of occupants across their lifetime and enhance the liveability of the dwellings for the longer term. Providing a diverse mix of housing options for all residents in Yarra (including people with disabilities, older persons and families) helps support social inclusion and will maintain Yarra’s vibrant community into the future.

Planning for student housing

Yarra has four large tertiary institutions within its boundary, including:

- University of Melbourne, Burnley campus;
- Australian Catholic University, Melbourne campus;
- Melbourne Polytechnic, Fairfield and Collingwood campuses; and
- Kangan Institute, Richmond campus.

These institutions cater for a number of students from overseas, interstate and regional Victoria. Some of these students may require purpose built student housing to undertake their studies in Yarra. Student housing has a role in supporting tertiary institutions and their students. It allows students to more easily secure housing close to their place of study and also live with other students. Yarra supports the tertiary institutions and also student housing that has good access (by walking, cycling or public transport) to these institutions.



Better housing for larger groups, including family and share households

As apartment development in Yarra is expected to increase, there is a need to integrate housing diversity into apartment developments to cater for a wider range of households.

If apartment living is to be adopted by family and share households, the design of high-density housing needs to consider their needs, including sufficient internal space and adequate outdoor space³. The participants in the youth workshop noted that there is a lack of suitable share housing options in Yarra. They suggested that having access to large communal open and private spaces are key housing needs for groups of 3-4 people.

The *Auckland Design Manual* includes the following apartment design checklist for larger households⁴:

- Provide a diversity of apartment types and sizes;
- Provide good levels of amenity both inside and outside for larger groups and children;
- Provide a mix of housing tenure including affordable housing; and
- Ground floor apartments should be specifically designed for families with children and people with limited mobility.

Apartment development in Yarra should provide for larger apartments (three or more bedrooms) and for these to be located on the ground floor, particularly around or near communal space. Lower level apartments are considered more accessible for the disabled, the elderly and families with children.

Planning for an aging population

New apartments also need to better accommodate the needs of older people and people living with a disability (in 2016, 10.5% of the population in Yarra was 65 and over, and 3.5% needed help in their day-to-day lives due to a disability).

In Yarra, more older people are living in apartments. The number of people aged 60 and over living in apartments increased from 2,380 people in 2006 to 3,745 people in 2016⁵. A person may choose to relocate to an apartment for many reasons including financial factors, health issues, death of a spouse, lifestyle change or wanting to downsize.

The Federal Government actively encourages older people to downsize. People aged 65 and over are able to make a large contribution to their superannuation fund from the proceeds of selling their family home. The purpose of this measure is to encourage people to downsize into housing that is more suitable to their needs, freeing up larger homes that can accommodate families.

Research on downsizing among older Australians revealed that satisfaction with a dwelling is often related to⁶:

- Limited home maintenance;
- Having enough internal space to entertain;
- Having access to shared common spaces;
- The layout and accessible design of the dwelling;
- Adequate storage;
- Good owners' corporation;
- Proximity to shops, transport and services; and
- Living in a safe area with good security.

3 Waltham Forest Council, 2009, *High Density Housing Qualitative Study Presentation of Findings*, Urban Initiatives, London.

4 Auckland Council, 2018, *Auckland Design Manual: Apartment mix and designing for families*, Auckland

5 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Population and Housing 2006 and 2016*.

6 Judd, B. et al, 2014, *Downsizing amongst older Australians: AHURI Final Report No.214*, Melbourne.

Planning for more inclusive housing

The provision of apartments that adopt universal design principles helps support independence and improves a resident's quality of life by allowing them to remain in their local area longer. Yarra supports the Australian Network for Universal Housing Design and Rights and Inclusion Australia's position statement that the homes we build for today should be fit for all of tomorrow's Australians. The *Livable Housing Design Guidelines*⁷ is a benchmark for making housing more accessible and usable for everyone.

The guidelines note that a liveable home is designed to be:

- Easy to enter;
- Easy to navigate in and around;
- Easy and cost-effective to adapt; and
- Responsive to the changing needs of home occupants.

New state-wide, apartment development planning requirements now require that 50% of dwellings include basic adaptability provisions.



7 Livable Housing Australia, 2017, *Livable Housing Design Guidelines: Fourth Edition*.

8 Department of Social Services, 2017, *2016–17 Report on the Operation of the Aged Care Act 1997*, Australia.

Planning for more residential aged care facilities and retirement villages

While Yarra supports and encourages people being independent long into retirement, it is sometimes necessary for a person to relocate to a residential aged care facility or retirement village to receive adequate support.

In Yarra, seven residential aged care facilities provide 304 beds and two retirement villages provide 202 apartments. While an additional 501 beds have been recently approved via the planning permit process, Yarra will still have a predicted shortfall of 109 beds by 2025 (Federal Government target based on 80 aged care beds per 1,000 people aged 70 years or over⁸).

Yarra's adopted *River of Life Positive Ageing Strategy and Action Plan 2007-2016* identifies that a person's ability to age in place is determined by the availability of appropriate accommodation. To meet future demand from an aging population, Yarra will require more residential aged care facilities and retirement villages.

The Planning Policy Framework (PPF) recognises that residential aged care facilities are different to dwellings in their purpose and function, and will have a different built form (including height, scale and mass) to other forms of residential development.

Residential aged care facilities in inner Melbourne typically take the form of apartment buildings, given high land values and the industry's standard operating model. Yarra should encourage that this type of development is located in activity centres

that are well serviced by public transport, and accessible to hospitals and other specialist medical facilities.

The existing maximum building height controls in the current suite of residential zones often do not support state planning policy to facilitate aged care development. The Victorian Government is in the process of reforming existing planning controls to support a more streamlined approach to developing residential aged care facilities. The proposed controls will be in the form of a new Particular Provision that has been prepared to provide a focused point of assessment for residential aged facilities in residential areas. The Particular Provision will form part of the Victoria Planning Provisions and be included in every planning scheme across the state, including the Yarra Planning Scheme.

Emerging housing model - cohousing

Cohousing is an emerging housing model that aims to mix private and shared spaces in a way that meets the need for both privacy and a sense of community and support.

Typical characteristics of cohousing include:

- Future residents are involved in the design process to ensure the building meets their needs;
- Both private and shared spaces, and encourages community interaction;
- Residents are usually actively involved in the governance of the property; and
- Mix of dwelling size and density.

Research⁹ on cohousing has found that, for older people in particular, it can provide:

- An affordable home;
- Accessible design;
- Ageing in place and connections to their friends and local community across generations;
- Good access to care (e.g. shared residential carers); and
- Positive social and environmental outcomes.

Cohousing can provide housing that is affordable, accessible and facilitates social interaction. In Yarra cohousing and its benefits are not well understood by the community and this may limit residents acceptance of cohousing development. Planning policy support for cohousing can remove some barriers to this type of development.



⁹ *Advancing Cohousing for Seniors*, 2017, Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology Sydney, viewed 24 July 2018, <<https://www.uts.edu.au/research-and-teaching/our-research/institute-sustainable-futures/our-research/social-change-4>>.

Affordable housing

“Support provision of affordable housing including through co-housing and housing associations”

The strong demand to live in Yarra has resulted in rapid house price growth and high land values in the past 5-10 years. The high purchase prices in Yarra (the median house price in 2017 was approximately \$1,400,000 with units at \$582,750)¹⁰ mean that many households are unable to purchase property in Yarra, especially lower income households. While renting for many households is more viable than purchasing a home, the cost of renting in Yarra is still cost prohibitive for many households.

Currently most of the Yarra’s workers (86%), including key workers, live outside the municipality. Key workers, including teachers, fire/emergency workers, nurses, paramedics and police, provide essential services for the community and, due to the nature of their work, often need to live close to their workplace. Research has shown that key workers are increasingly being priced out of inner city areas, such as Yarra¹¹, as they typically earn moderate rather than high incomes¹².

To maintain Yarra’s social and economic diversity, there needs to be more affordable housing (as defined at section 3AA of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*) in Yarra.

Planning for more affordable housing

An objective of planning in Victoria is to facilitate the provision of affordable housing.

Within the current legislative framework, local government can provide for more housing for very low, low and moderate income households by:

- Entering into an agreement, under section 173(1A) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, with a land owner for the development or provision of affordable housing;
- Advocating for policy and legislative changes; and
- Facilitating partnerships between developers and affordable housing associations/providers.

With respect to affordable housing (that is not social housing), the exact income ranges of very low, low and moderate income households are specified by the Governor of Victoria, based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data.

In November 2017, Council adopted the *Policy Guidance Note on Affordable Housing in Significant Redevelopments in Yarra*. The note is one way that Yarra encourages the provision of affordable housing in new developments.

The note outlines Yarra’s expectations relating to affordable housing at significant redevelopment sites. With significant rezoning of commercial and industrial land to residential use, developers are expected to provide at least 5% affordable housing at sites yielding 50 dwellings or more, and work with a registered housing association/provider to deliver affordable housing.

Since adoption of the note, the property sector has become more receptive to providing more than 5% affordable housing at significant redevelopment sites. During public consultation of the draft strategy, many residents also stated that 5% is not a high enough target for affordable housing in Yarra, and that 10-15% would be more appropriate.

Yarra has worked with a number of site owners to provide at least 10% affordable housing. At the former GTV9 site, Richmond, affordable housing will represent at least 10% of the total number of new apartment dwellings. At the former Gasworks site, Fitzroy North a range of dwelling types will cater for a variety of housing needs including the provision of up to 20% affordable housing. Council will continue to seek additional affordable housing for our very low, low and moderate income community.

¹⁰ Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning, 2017, *A Guide to Property Values: Annual data and analysis from Valuer General Victoria 2017*.

¹¹ MacLennan, D, Ong, R, Wood, G, 2015, *Making connections: housing, productivity and economic development*, AHURI Final Report No. 251, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne.

¹² Gurrán, N, Phibbs, P, Gilbert C, Zhang, Y. 2018, *Options to improve key worker access to home ownership*, the University of Sydney, Sydney.

This strategy recommends introducing requirements into the Yarra Planning Scheme that seek at least 10% affordable housing when sites are rezoned for residential use, and in significant developments of 50 or more dwellings.

Emerging affordable housing models

There is currently a focus on strengthening the role of planning in facilitating and delivering affordable housing.

Emerging affordable housing models in Victoria include:

- Shared equity schemes, whereby an eligible purchaser shares the cost of purchasing a home with an equity partner;
- Inclusionary zoning that requires development in a certain zone include affordable housing;
- Utilising surplus government land to deliver additional affordable housing; and
- Specialist companies facilitating collaborative development projects for key workers¹³.

Yarra should continue to advocate for policy and legislative changes that enable councils to secure affordable housing. As the community and the affordable housing sector respond to the issue of affordability, Council needs to be receptive to innovative models that may arise.



The term affordable housing refers to housing, including social housing, that is appropriate for the housing needs of very low, low and moderate income households.

¹³ Gurrán, N, Phibbs, P, Gilbert C, Zhang, Y. 2018, *Options to improve key worker access to home ownership*, the University of Sydney, Sydney.

Access and movement

“Increase space for pedestrians and bikes, dedicated lanes/corridors decrease car space on the streets”

Yarra is well serviced by all modes of public transport and has an extensive cycling and pedestrian network. The public transport network in Yarra has resulted in a large number of people using sustainable transport modes on a day-to-day basis. In Yarra, more residents per capita ride bicycles to and from work than in any other metropolitan Melbourne area. In 2016, 8.6% of people in Yarra travelled to work on a bicycle, compared to the greater Melbourne average of 1.4%. Yarra’s compact urban form also promotes shorter travel distances and is conducive to active modes of transport.

The strategy should continue to promote Yarra as a place where people can get most of their day-to-day goods and services, or access schools and open spaces, within a short walk or cycle. Identifying areas in activity centres that are appropriate to accommodate housing growth will help achieve this outcome. There is a need to ensure car parking is supplied and managed to promote more sustainable transport modes.

While Yarra has excellent public transport options, it also includes a number of major arterial roads, which are highly utilised and important for the wider metropolitan region. These through-roads generate increased traffic volumes on Yarra’s local road networks and create traffic congestion. Addressing the impacts of traffic congestion in Yarra will require a significant societal shift from private car based travel to more sustainable forms of transport. This cannot be addressed by the strategy alone.





Sustainability

“Encourage housing development with high environmental qualities”

With increased growth and development there is a corresponding community expectation to increase the standards of design and amenity, communal open and internal space and responsiveness to local character.

Recent changes to the Yarra Planning Scheme [including the introduction of the Environmentally Sustainable Development (ESD) local planning policy and the new apartment design requirements] have provided a robust, consistent planning framework to optimise ESD outcomes at the planning stage of development.

The Built Environment Sustainability Scorecard (BESS) is a free assessment tool created by local governments to assist planning permit applicants demonstrate that their development meets best practice sustainability requirements as part of their planning permit application. In Yarra, a large number of applicants are utilising the BESS tool to create environmentally sustainable development reports for both smaller and larger developments.

These ESD planning initiatives are achieving substantial environmental benefits and contributing to enhancing the liveability of Yarra. Monitoring data of the ESD policy demonstrates that eligible dwellings commonly exceed the minimum energy efficiency requirements of the National Construction Code, which requires dwellings to achieve a minimum NatHERS rating of 5 stars and an average of 6 stars. With these planning provisions in place, no further guidance is required in the strategy to respond to this issue at this time.