

Greater Dandenong
HOUSING STRATEGY
2014-2024





MESSAGE FROM THE STEERING GROUP COUNCILLORS

Council recognises that residents of Greater Dandenong expect and desire high-quality, affordable housing. For many of our residents, this is not an easy feat, as many households are struggling to access appropriate housing that meets their needs. The need to improve housing choice for all residents and support residents experiencing housing stress has prompted us to steer the development of Greater Dandenong’s first housing strategy.

Many of the housing challenges facing Greater Dandenong are common across Melbourne. For instance, all councils are working to direct housing growth to appropriate locations, to increase housing choice, to enhance the liveability and amenity of residential areas, to improve the quality and design of housing and to provide housing options that meet the needs of Melbourne’s ageing population.

Greater Dandenong enjoys more affordable housing than the rest of metropolitan Melbourne, but at the same time has higher levels of housing stress and disadvantage. It is this complex housing issue that sets us apart from other municipalities.

On the one hand, we need to support our vulnerable residents who are struggling to access affordable and appropriate housing. Housing affordability in Greater Dandenong is declining and highlights the need for local intervention if we are going to ensure an ongoing supply of affordable housing for our community.

On the other, we need to attract greater levels of investment in the housing market, support housing for a broader range of income earners and embark on initiatives that will turn Greater Dandenong into a favoured “residential destination” for residents, developers and investors.

We are pleased to present the Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy 2014-2024, which outlines Council’s proposed response to these housing challenges.

The strategy builds on Council’s existing housing related activities and has been informed by extensive community consultation and research.

It also steers Council in a new direction to play a greater role in the housing market to facilitate housing outcomes that meet the needs of our community and contributes to the revitalisation of Greater Dandenong. This will involve partnerships with housing associations, developers and the State Government to help deliver the housing that our community needs and expects.



Councillor,
Jim Memeti



Councillor,
Roz Blades



TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY..... 5

1. INTRODUCTION..... 7

1.1. Why does Greater Dandenong need a housing strategy? 7
 1.2. How was the strategy developed? 8
 1.3. The policy context 9
 1.4. The structure of the strategy 12

2. COUNCIL’S HOUSING VISION 13

2.1. Council's housing vision..... 13
 2.2. Key principles 13

3. HOUSING THEMES..... 15



A. GROWTH AND LIVEABILITY 17

Key challenges 17
 Our goal for Greater Dandenong in 10 years..... 25
 Council's objectives and strategies..... 25



B. DESIGN AND DIVERSITY 29

Key challenges 29
 Our goal for Greater Dandenong in 10 years..... 42
 Objectives and strategies 42



C. REVITALISATION AND INVESTMENT 48

Key challenges 48
 Our goal for Greater Dandenong in 10 years..... 53
 Objectives and strategies 53



D. HOUSING AFFORDABILITY 60

Key challenges 60
 Our goal for Greater Dandenong in 10 years..... 66
 Objectives and strategies 66

4. NEXT STEPS77

5. APPENDICES79

5.1. Appendix 1: Glossary80
 5.2. Appendix 2: References83
 5.3. Appendix 3: How did Council develop the strategy?85



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Summary of the Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy 2014-2024.....	6
Figure 2: Project stage and completion date.....	8
Figure 3: Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy planning framework	10
Figure 4: Roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders in the housing market.....	11
Figure 5: Greater Dandenong residential framework	18
Figure 7: Access to affordable housing	63
Figure 7: Council's three tiered approach to increase affordable housing .	68
Figure 8: Greater Dandenong Affordable Housing Toolkit.....	70
Figure 9: The housing scale and Council's role	78

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CASBE	Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment
CAV	Consumer Affairs Victoria
CBD	Central Business District
CGD	City of Greater Dandenong
CRAS	Commonwealth Rental Assistance Scheme
ESD	Environmentally Sustainable Design
DPCD	Department of Planning and Community Development
DTPLI	Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure
GRZ	General Residential Zone
HDD	Housing Development Data

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Summary of compliance challenges common in unregistered rooming houses	37
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IRC	Infrastructure Recovery Charge
MSS	Municipal Strategic Statement
NAHA	National Affordable Housing Agreement
NRAS	National Rental Affordability Scheme
NRZ	Neighbourhood Residential Zone
RAAV	Registered Accommodation Association of Victoria
RGZ	Residential Growth Zone
SDAPP	Sustainable Design Assessment in the Planning Process
SPPF	State Planning Policy Framework
UGB	Urban Growth Boundary
VPP	Victoria Planning Provisions



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Access to secure, appropriate, affordable and well-designed housing is an important source of wealth creation and contributes to the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the community.

The *Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy 2014-2024* provides Greater Dandenong with the policy framework and direction to plan for the sustainable supply of housing. This will ensure the current and future housing needs of Greater Dandenong residents are met.

The strategy represents a whole-of-Council response to housing issues within Greater Dandenong, recognising that all areas of Council play a role in influencing housing outcomes or managing the effects of housing.

The strategy will guide Council's housing related activities in areas of:

- policy development and strategic planning;
- capital investment;
- education, promotion, advocacy and engagement;
- development facilitation and regulation; and
- service delivery.

The strategy will direct engagement with key stakeholders on all housing-related matters and seek to provide certainty to the community, developers, government agencies and the community housing sector.

A Steering Group comprised of Councillors and Council staff was established in January 2012 to provide strategic advice and oversight for the development of the strategy.

An extensive research and consultation program has guided the development of the strategy. This has ensured that the strategy

objectives and accompanying actions are supported by local housing research and reflect community priorities. Local developers, Victorian Government departments, local residents, the community housing sector and local community services have been involved in the development of this document.

The strategy has been summarised on the following page. It consists of an overarching housing vision and nine housing objectives. The *Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy 2014-2024* is structured around four related housing themes: Growth and Liveability; Design and Diversity; Revitalisation and Investment, and Housing Affordability.

The strategy proposes a range of initiatives to achieve the housing vision, from changing the *Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme* to other non-statutory actions involving all of Council.

Key implementation strategies include:

- expanding the role and membership of the Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy Steering Group to give strategic advice and oversight for the implementation phase of the strategy; and
- the establishment of a Housing Development Fund to ensure that the implementation of the strategy is appropriately resourced.

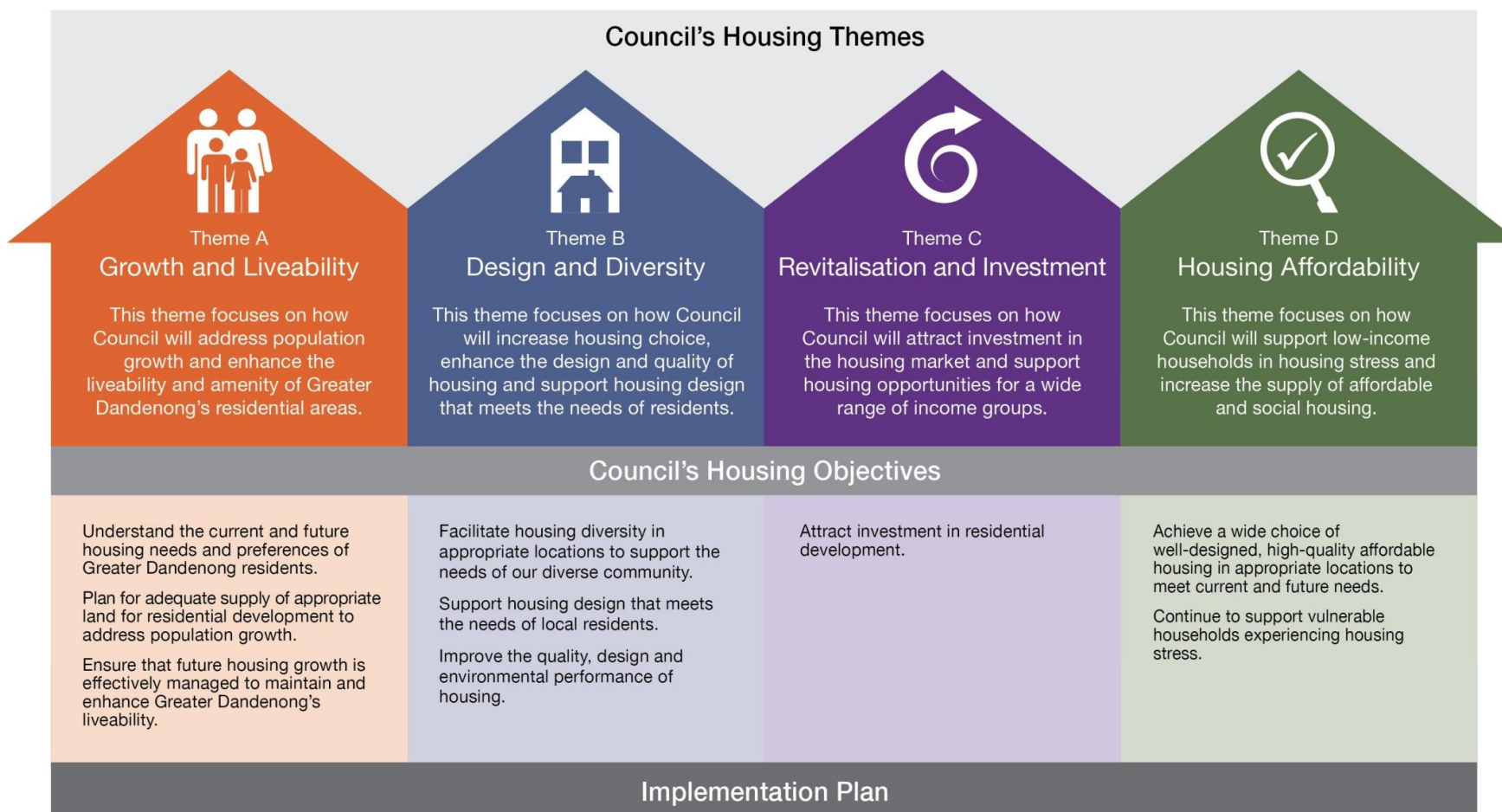
A forthcoming Action Plan document will set out these and other actions in more detail in early 2015.



Figure 1: Summary of the Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy 2014-2024

Council's Housing Vision

The City of Greater Dandenong will foster a strong housing market that meets the community's diverse and changing needs, contributes to the revitalisation of the municipality, directs housing growth to appropriate locations and delivers housing that enables all Greater Dandenong residents to access a range of affordable, sustainable and well-designed housing products and services.





1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. WHY DOES GREATER DANDENONG NEED A HOUSING STRATEGY?

Housing is affected by, and affects, the whole city structure, not just its physical structures but its social and economic structures too. Housing affects all aspects of its people's lives, such as ageing, employment, education, family type, income, socio-economic status, and lifestyle.

Access to secure, appropriate, affordable and well-designed housing is an important source of wealth creation and contributes to the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the community.

There are many local housing issues that Council needs to address, including the need to:

- Maintain and enhance the liveability and amenity of Greater Dandenong's residential areas, in the context of population and housing growth in the municipality and the southern metropolitan subregion.
- Enhance the design, quality and construction of new housing to improve amenity for residents and enhance the image of the municipality.
- Further diversify the housing offering in Greater Dandenong to meet the diverse needs of our community and increase options for residents to remain in their local communities as their needs change.
- Improve the environmental sustainability of housing to reduce the impact on the natural environment, reduce ongoing living costs for residents, provide housing that is resilient and adaptable in design

and ensure that the community is better equipped to respond to climate change.

- Support the needs of our ageing population and people with disabilities who will need accessible, affordable, age-friendly homes and neighbourhoods.
- Respond to entrenched structural imbalances in the local housing market, whereby Greater Dandenong has an abundance of affordable housing relative to metropolitan Melbourne house prices and rents, yet high levels of housing stress.

The development of a local housing strategy is identified as a key outcome of the *Council Plan 2013-2017*. Developing a local housing strategy gives Council the opportunity to:

- respond to local housing challenges and community housing needs
- clearly articulate Council's role in the housing market
- establish an overarching housing vision
- review and collate all of its existing housing policies, objectives and priorities into a single comprehensive strategy
- identify further strategic work, projects and actions that will contribute to the achievement of the housing vision.

At a metropolitan planning level, *Plan Melbourne and the State Planning Policy Framework* support the development of local housing strategies to identify and plan for expected housing needs and improve housing choice.

A local housing strategy enables Council to respond to local housing issues and address state government policy requirements. Moreover, an adopted local housing strategy will ensure that Council is well placed to respond to future state and federal housing policy.



1.2. HOW WAS THE STRATEGY DEVELOPED?

The process for developing the *Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy 2014-2024* is outlined in the figure to the right and detailed in full in Appendix 3.

AN INTEGRATED PLANNING APPROACH

Council's Planning and Design Department, together with the Community Services Directorate, have developed the strategy. A Steering Group comprised of Councillors and Council staff was established in January 2012 to provide strategic advice and oversight for the development of the strategy.

RESEARCH PROGRAM

Council has conducted a comprehensive research and consultation program to identify key housing challenges and opportunities facing the City of Greater Dandenong and its community.

A range of reports have been produced as part of the preparation of the *Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy 2014-2024*, including:

- *Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy 2014-2024: Background Report* (CGD, 2014)
- *Mechanisms to Influence the Supply of Social and Affordable Housing* (prepared by SGS Economics and Planning for the City of Greater Dandenong, 2013)
- *Housing Development Data Analysis* (DTPLI, 2013)
- *Qualitative Housing Research Project* (prepared by Collaborations for the City of Greater Dandenong, 2012). This project was funded by

the Victorian Government, represented by the DPCD, via the Housing Growth Requirements Local Government Data Grant

Figure 2: Project stage and completion date





CONSULTATION PROGRAM

Community feedback has been integral in the development of the strategy. Council has conducted three stages of community engagement to inform the preparation of the strategy.

The first two stages of consultation (completed in 2012) focused on identifying the key housing challenges facing the community and potential solutions or Council actions to address these issues. Councillors, local developers, Victorian Government departments, local residents, the community housing sector and local community services have all been involved in this process.

The purpose of the third stage of community consultation (completed in July 2014) was to receive community feedback on the content of the *Draft Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy 2014-2024*. The draft strategy was on exhibition for a 5 week period from 16 June to 18 July 2014. Community consultation on the draft strategy and the *Residential Planning Policy and Controls Project* were conducted concurrently. During the consultation period Council held three community Information Drop-In Sessions and two workshops with the local development industry and Dandenong residents respectively. Minor changes have been made to the draft strategy in response to community feedback. A detailed summary of community feedback on the draft strategy has been prepared to accompany the strategy.

1.3. THE POLICY CONTEXT

Traditionally, the City of Greater Dandenong has not played an active role in the local housing market. Without a proactive policy articulating Council's role and the mechanisms by which it will intervene in the market, significant change in the supply or design of housing stock and transformative urban renewal, are unlikely to transpire.

The development a local housing strategy provides Council with an opportunity to reconsider its role in shaping housing outcomes and managing the impacts of housing, and offers Council the means to influence housing outcomes.

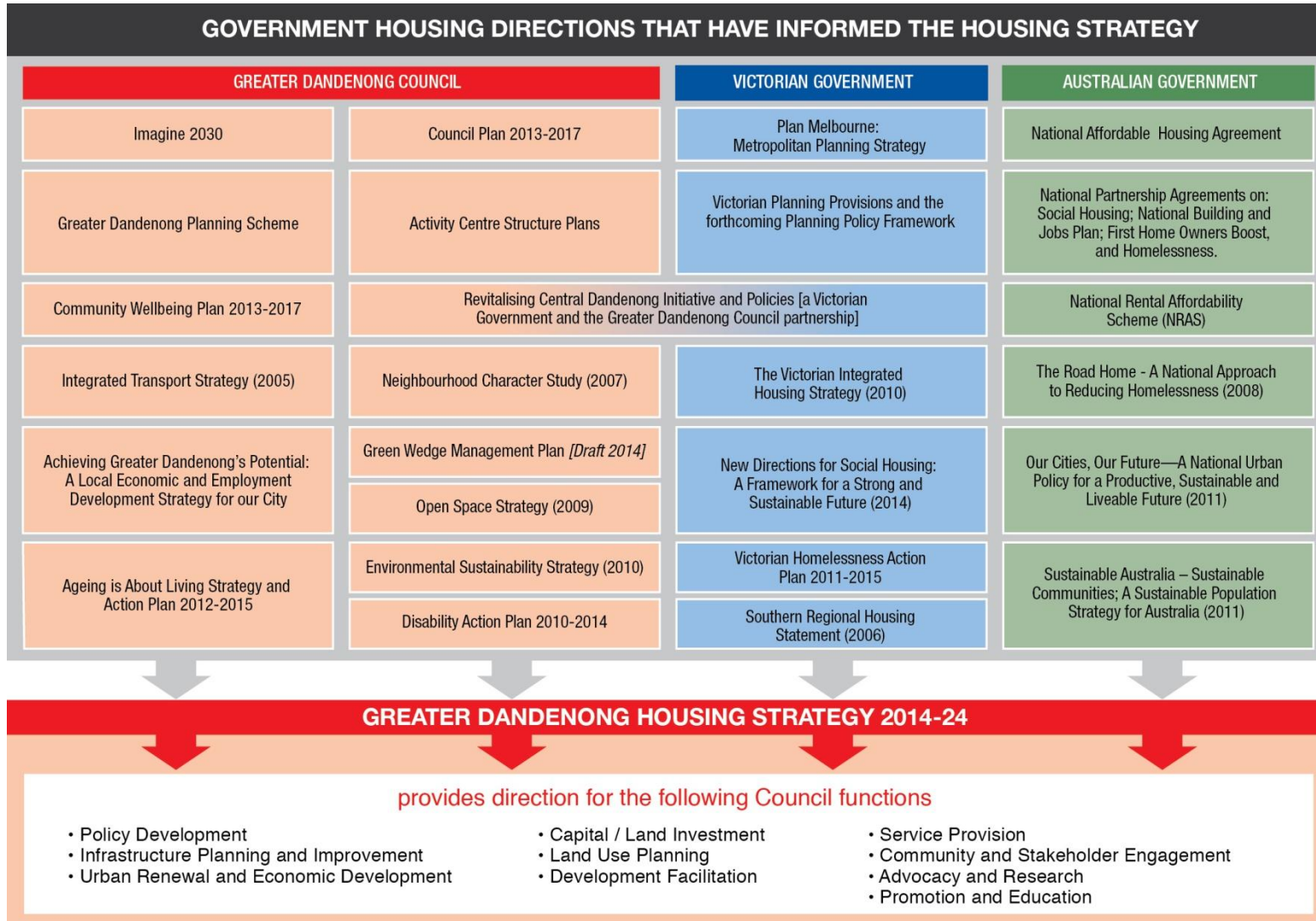
The Australian and Victorian Governments and Greater Dandenong Council have developed numerous policies that directly or indirectly influence housing (see figure on the next page). These policies span the topics of: housing requirements for population growth; housing supply in terms of productivity, sustainability, affordability and liveability; integration of planning across land use, social and economic infrastructure, and the alleviation of homelessness through funding and service delivery.

Council anticipates that Australian Government housing policy context will change to respond to the changing national political and budget context.

The *Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy* reflects these policy directions and shares significant links with a range of related Council plans and process.



Figure 3: Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy planning framework





In turn, the strategy will provide direction to Council's functions such as: policy development and strategic planning; capital investment; education, promotion, advocacy and engagement; development facilitation and regulation, and service delivery.

The strategy does not necessarily separately develop policies and programmes in each of these areas, but will provide the policy basis for their future development. Therefore, the strategy, in its full extent will encompass a compendium of separate Council-wide policies, strategies and plans

Council recognises that many aspects of the housing market are beyond its sphere of influence and require commitment from the Australian and Victorian Governments and other key stakeholders. The table to the right sets out the key stakeholders which exert an influence on the housing market.

Local governments can take on a range of roles in the housing market to influence housing outcomes. Local government can influence the location, design, diversity, density, affordability and sustainability of housing through buildings approvals, development planning, municipal planning schemes and social planning initiatives. Some local governments also invest in housing, either on their own or in association with a development partner. The spectrum of possible engagement in the housing market is set out in the figure to the right

Figure 4: Roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders in the housing market

INFLUENCE IN THE HOUSING MARKET		STAKEHOLDER					
		Local Government	State Government	Federal Government	Service Sector	Development Industry	Community Housing Sector
PASSIVE ROLE ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲	Research and Advocacy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Promotion and Education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Policy Development	✓	✓	✓			
	Regulatory Role	✓	✓	✓			
	Development Facilitation	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
ACTIVE ROLE ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼	Incentive and Grant Schemes	✓	✓	✓			
	Financial Sector Regulation, Taxation and Assistance		✓	✓			
	Infrastructure Planning and Improvement	✓	✓	✓		✓	
	Service Provision	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
	Capital/Asset Investment	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
	Housing Provider / Landlord	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓



1.4. THE STRUCTURE OF THE STRATEGY

The strategy is structured around four key housing themes (illustrated below).

The four housing themes are inherently related. For instance, increasing the supply of social housing (*Theme D*) and attracting investment in housing for middle and upper-income households (*Theme C*) support Council's efforts to diversify the housing offering in Greater Dandenong (*Theme B*). Likewise, the location (*Theme A*), type and design (*Theme B*) of housing will influence affordability (*Theme D*).



Chapter 2 sets out Council's proposed Housing Vision and the key principles that underpin the strategy.

Chapter 3 discusses each housing themes and outlines the rationale for Council's housing objectives.

Chapter 4 outlines the next steps for the project.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

The strategy is accompanied by a *Background Report*, which contains:

- a summary of community feedback
- an overview population and housing conditions and trends
- an outline of relevant local, state and federal government policy.

The *Draft Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy 2014-2024: Summary of Submissions and Council Response* presents an overview of community submissions to the draft strategy and Council's response, highlighting where revisions have been made to the strategy as a result of community and stakeholder feedback.



2. COUNCIL'S HOUSING VISION

2.1. COUNCIL'S HOUSING VISION

The City of Greater Dandenong will foster a strong housing market that meets the community's diverse and changing needs, contributes to the revitalisation of the municipality, directs housing growth to appropriate locations and delivers housing that enables all Greater Dandenong residents to access a range of affordable, sustainable and well-designed housing products and services.

2.2. KEY PRINCIPLES

ADDRESSING MORE THAN JUST HOUSING

Access to appropriate, affordable and well-located housing is vital to people's health and wellbeing.

Council takes a comprehensive view of housing, acknowledging that it is affected by, and influences, other aspects of people's lives, such as employment, education, family type, income, demographics, lifestyle and car ownership.

A strong housing market will promote a resilient economy, foster community wellbeing, contribute to the revitalisation of activity centres and consolidate Dandenong as the regional capital of the south-east.

COUNCIL'S ROLE IN THE MARKET

Local government has a key role to play in addressing the gap between housing need and affordability. Council can use planning controls, land use policies, design guidelines and other tools to support the housing needs of local residents.

The success of the *Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy 2014-2024* will rest upon the active participation of all areas of Council, in partnership with other key external stakeholders.



INTEGRATED PLANNING

The strategy applies and responds to Commonwealth and State Government housing policy.

The strategy represents a whole-of-Council response to housing issues within the municipality, recognising that all areas of Council play a role in influencing housing outcomes or managing the effects of housing.

Any housing strategy is inextricably linked to the economic environment to which it is intended to apply and must be seen not as a single entity, but a blend of mutually supportive (and dependent) strategies, actions and projects. The strategy identifies approaches to co-ordinate planning across Council departments and is consistent with and builds on existing policies, such as the *Neighbourhood Character Study*, *Ageing is About Living Strategy*, *Community Wellbeing Plan*, *Local Economic and Employment Development Strategy*, *Integrated Transport Strategy* and the *Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme*.

INNOVATIVE AND PIONEERING

Council will seek opportunities to partner with government, the private sector and community housing sector to deliver projects that contribute to the balanced outcomes of this strategy.

In doing so, Council will move beyond the traditional role of local government in the housing market – as a “regulator”, “researcher”, “advocator”, or “planner” – to demonstrate leadership and innovation by contributing to the housing outcomes through direct capital or asset investment and development facilitation.

DIRECTING POPULATION GROWTH

Council is committed to implementing State Government policy that aims to increase residential densities near and within activity centre, as well as protecting areas of valued neighbourhood character.

The *Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy 2014-2024* builds on Council's existing *Neighbourhood Character Study (2007)* and planning controls to outline the policy basis for managing future housing growth and change. This will enable Council to accommodate forecasted population growth, while ensuring a high degree of residential amenity.

URBAN RENEWAL AND HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Council recognises that a range of housing options are required to address the current and future housing needs of our community. This includes planning and making provision for housing to support low-income households while also encouraging middle- and upper-income households to live in Greater Dandenong. This can only be achieved through close co-operation between Council, the state government and the private and community housing sectors.

Council seeks to expand opportunities for housing investment in Greater Dandenong, while ensuring that housing remains available to those on low or supported incomes. In this way, the community's social mix remains diverse, activity centres are reinvigorated, the economic wellbeing of Greater Dandenong continues to grow, while the most vulnerable households in our community are supported.



3. HOUSING THEMES



GROWTH AND LIVEABILITY



A. GROWTH AND LIVEABILITY

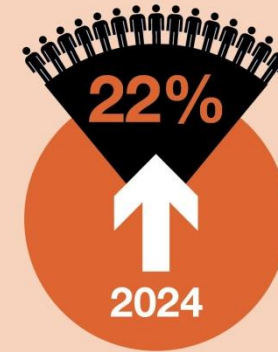
KEY CHALLENGES

SUMMARY OF KEY CHALLENGES

- Greater Dandenong's population is expected to rise by 22 per cent, from 147,000 to 179,000 in the decade to 2024, placing pressure on transport networks, infrastructure, services and public open space.
- Housing and population growth will need to be accompanied by the provision of family services, parklands and other amenities, as well transport, drainage and community infrastructure, to ensure a safe and liveable environment for all our residents.
- Ensuring sufficient housing supply in appropriate locations is available to address demand, while also managing the impact on neighbourhood character as development pressure intensifies are key factors which will play a crucial in future.

FUTURE HOUSING NEED

The *Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy: Background Report* provides a comprehensive overview of demographic trends which are likely to have implications for future housing needs and supply.



Greater Dandenong's population is expected to rise by **22%** or **32,000**, from **147,000** to **179,000** in the decade to 2024.



This reflects an average annual growth of **3,000** people.



Approximately **9,950** new households will need to be accommodated across the municipality.



Greater Dandenong is forecast to experience a significant increase in **couples without children, along with group and one person households** in the decade to 2024.



HOUSING LOCATION

The functionality of a house depends as much upon its neighbourhood as upon its features. Personal wellbeing is affected by being able to safely walk between home and various services, schools, shops and transport.

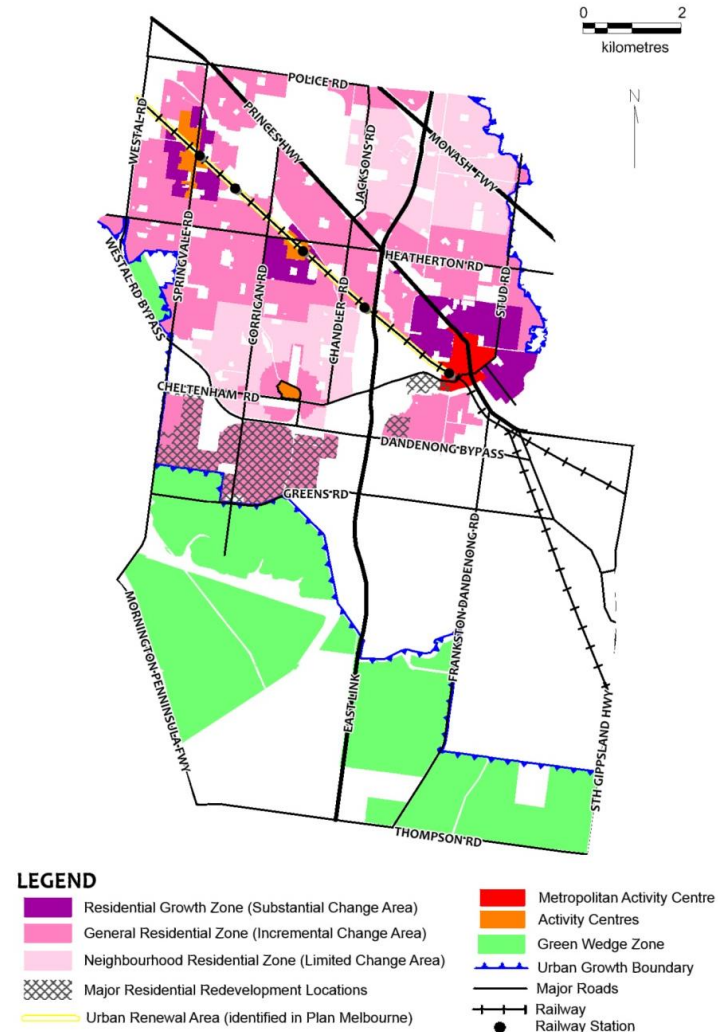
Metropolitan and local planning policy have consistently promoted urban consolidation within and in proximity to activity centres to: curb urban sprawl; deliver ecological and environmental benefits; increase access to public transport; create more diverse housing forms; produce social and health benefits, and make better use of existing infrastructure.

Within the Greater Dandenong context, neighbourhoods that encourage walking and cycling, and where services, shops, schools and recreational opportunities are close by will help offset some of the effects of social disadvantage. For example, a person on a low or unreliable income living in a well-served walkable neighbourhood near frequent public transport may not need to own a car, freeing up scarce financial resources.

Council's *Residential Development and Neighbourhood Character Policy* (Clause 22.09 of the *Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme*) applies to all residential development requiring a permit in a residential zone. The policy provides guidance to manage the character of neighbourhoods within Greater Dandenong as they evolve over time and forms a key policy by which Council is able to facilitate a range of housing options for the local community.

As illustrated to the right, the policy divides residential zoned land in Greater Dandenong into three areas – Substantial Change Areas, Incremental Change Areas and Limited Change Areas, based on urban consolidation principles.

Figure 5: Greater Dandenong residential framework as of February 2014





These three categories correspond to, and are therefore implemented by, the three residential zones and provide clarity as to the type of development that can be expected in any residential area (a summary of the residential zones is set out below). They are also subject to design guidelines which, in turn, go some way to improving the standard and quality of residential development in Greater Dandenong, which is also a major goal of Council.

RESIDENTIAL GROWTH ZONE (RGZ) - SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE AREA

The purpose of the RGZ is to enable new housing growth and diversity.

Council has applied the RGZ to areas nominated for “Substantial Change” that are planned for increased housing growth, change and density because of their convenient access to transport, retail and services amenities.

The RGZ surrounds the higher order activity centres of Dandenong, Noble Park and Springvale. Owing to their locational advantages, these areas are suitable for medium to higher scale housing development, including apartments

Substantial Change Areas comprise only 11 per cent of the City’s residential zoned land, yet have become the fastest growing and changing existing urban area in the municipality, growing at an average of 1.3 per cent per annum (DTPLI 2013; 15)¹.

¹ The term Existing Urban Areas is used to distinguish locations subject to traditional infill development from major residential redevelopment sites in broad hectare locations. Existing Urban Areas are therefore defined as areas that prior to 2004, have been developed for residential purposes. Existing commercial areas in which housing is permitted are also included in this category, for example, the core commercial area of Dandenong Metropolitan Activity Centre. Major residential redevelopment sites such as Metro3175 are not included

GENERAL RESIDENTIAL ZONE (GRZ) – INCREMENTAL CHANGE AREA

The purpose of the GRZ is to enable moderate housing growth and diversity while respecting urban character.

Council has applied the GRZ to areas nominated for incremental change, because they are located further from Greater Dandenong’s central transport, employment and amenity spine than Substantial Change Areas. These locations are suited to medium to lower density housing including a mix of detached dwellings, dual occupancies, villa units and townhouses.

The majority of Greater Dandenong’s existing housing stock and households are within Incremental Change Areas, which comprise approximately 62 per cent of residential zoned land in the City. From 2004-2011, Incremental Change Areas contributed approximately 61 per cent of the new housing supply within Greater Dandenong’s existing urban area.

NEIGHBOURHOOD RESIDENTIAL ZONE (NRZ) – LIMITED CHANGE AREA

The purpose of the NRZ is to restrict housing growth in areas identified for urban preservation.

Council has applied the NRZ to approximately 27 per cent residential zoned land, in areas where single dwellings prevail and change is not identified. Given the planning controls in this area, it is likely that housing and population density will remain relatively stable into the future.

These locations generally comprise areas which are at a greater distance from the central spine of the municipality and have been identified as suitable for low-density housing (such as detached and dual occupancy housing) because they lack access to the Principle Public Transport Network and Activity Centres.



This well-established housing development policy enabled Greater Dandenong Council to promptly introduce the reformed residential zones into its planning scheme in November 2013.

Application of the reformed zones was a key step towards ensuring the planning controls affecting residential land in Greater Dandenong continue to be appropriate and balance the needs of the community and landowners. The reformed residential zones were applied with the understanding that the Residential Growth Zone near the major shopping centres of Dandenong, Springvale and Noble Park would be reviewed to achieve preferred design outcomes for particular areas, better manage growth and continue to balance the needs of the community and landowners.

Housing development data suggests that the Council's existing residential framework has generally worked to encourage increased housing development, change and diversity in the Substantial Change Area (and to a lesser extent, in the Incremental Change Area), while generally restricting change in the Limited Change Area.

Plan Melbourne identifies the Huntingdale to Dandenong Corridor as an urban renewal location (see Figure 6). According to the plan, urban renewal locations will become a major source of housing to meet Melbourne's growth needs.

Council expects that the market will continue to demand multi-unit, medium-density housing in the Substantial Change and Incremental Change Areas, along with traditional lower-density housing forms that currently make up most of the Greater Dandenong's housing stock.

Council's land use planning policies must continue to provide opportunities for the development of a range of housing.

Despite strong policy support to increase residential development within activity centres through shop-top housing and higher-density apartment development, the core commercial areas of Greater Dandenong's activity centres are presently not a focus for new housing development or households (DTPLI 2013: 13). Based on the experience of other metropolitan activity centres (such as Box Hill and Ringwood), Council expects greater housing development to occur within the activity centres over coming years as land values increase and market conditions support apartment style construction.

During 2004-2011, 45 per cent of the municipality's housing supply was provided through major residential redevelopment locations (see Figure 6) of Metro 3175, Somerfield and Meridian. As supply in these major broad hectare locations diminishes, the availability of major redevelopment sites in Greater Dandenong for traditional residential dwellings will become constrained. At this point, Council's objective to facilitate higher- and medium-density development within activity centres may gain further development impetus.

The final consideration with respect to the location of residential development relates to the successful integration of non-residential uses in residential areas, such as medical centres, child care, community facilities, convenience shopping, places of assembly and car washes. Local planning policies are needed to address potential issues around both amenity for residents and the protection of land uses that support residential areas and need to be located nearby.



HOUSING GROWTH AND INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

Housing growth needs to be accompanied by the provision of family and aged care services, parklands and other amenities, as well as transport, drainage and community infrastructure to ensure a safe and liveable environment for all our residents.



Enormous costs are involved in upgrading existing infrastructure and building new infrastructure. Council has successfully introduced

Development Contributions Plans for the provision of physical and community infrastructure in new residential and industrial development plan areas in Keysborough and Dandenong South.

HOUSING GROWTH AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

Growth in the number of private dwellings, particularly through infill and greenfield development, generally leads to a localised rise in population. As the occupants of these new dwellings are largely younger to middle-aged adults, an increase in the number of children and young people is a common result. This is a pattern well established in the recent experience of this municipality, in southern Dandenong and Keysborough South.

Among the consequences of these patterns of population growth for Council, is increased demand for primary school places, as well as kindergarten, child care, maternal and child health and other early ears services. Appropriate transport, recreation, social and employment options for families, including women caring for children at home, or seeking to accomplish a transition to paid employment, may also be required. These trends are typically coupled with a delayed increase in local demand for secondary school places and for sporting and recreational options for young people. The requirement for services for older residents in such residential developments, on the other hand, is generally modest at first, before rising during succeeding decades.

These developments make it necessary for local government to monitor housing trends and their implications for population growth, and plan or advocate for the timely establishment of educational and community services.



TRANSPORT PLANNING

Traffic management, public transport and parking improvements are required to support housing growth in activity centres and other strategic redevelopment sites.

Key transport trends and challenges requiring careful management in the context of increased housing growth are summarised in the box to the right.

KEY TRANSPORT TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

- Increased demand for higher-frequency public bus transport services
- The need to provide adequate access to public transport
- Increasing collaboration with State agencies to eliminate at-grade rail crossings
- The growing number of cyclists using shared path and other bicycle facilities
- Increasing size and number of heavy freight vehicles on local roads and arterial roads
- Taking advantage of opportunities that Victorian Government transport infrastructure projects afford Greater Dandenong (for instance, the Springvale Level Crossing Removal Project)
- Increasing resourcing for the implementation of Council's shared path network plan
- Managing parking demand issues that arise from increasing development densities in and around activity centres.

Access to private transport is limited for many Greater Dandenong families, especially those with young children and recently-arrived settlers. In 2006, 37 per cent of two-parent families with young children (under six years old) had either one or no cars, compared to 23 per cent of similar families across Melbourne (CGD 2013; 44).

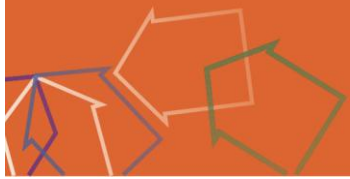
The 2011 Census found that more than four-fifths (85 per cent) of Greater Dandenong residents who travelled to work journeyed by car, either as a driver or passenger. A further 11% travelled by train, 5% by bus and 2% walked to work². Generally, local patterns of travel to work were similar to those across metropolitan Melbourne, though with slightly more local residents travelling by car or bus, and few using other modes of transport.

The proportion of residents who journey to work by car rises with increasing distance from central Melbourne, from 33 per cent among working residents of the municipality of Melbourne to 59 per cent among those living in Stonnington, and 91 per cent of residents in outer urban Casey and Cardinia (Census 2011, customised data).

As the housing supply intensifies in these growth areas, increasing pressure will be placed on transport networks

It is critical that housing is supported by and has access to public transport services. An efficient and sustainable transport system relies on an integrated and efficient public transport network, a range of transport modes, good pedestrian and cycle access, and connectivity between modes of transport.

² Many workers used more than one mode of transport, with the consequences that the sum of percentages exceeds 100%.



Council is not directly responsible for public transport, but plays an active role in advocating for improved public transport links and bicycle path networks. The Dandenong railway line is the major public transport link to Melbourne's CBD and is supplemented by numerous local and regional bus routes. The Westall Station Upgrade and Springvale Level Crossing Removal Project are among the recent improvements along the railway line. Despite these significant infrastructure investments, public transport is made more difficult by inadequate service frequencies (particularly on weekends and weeknights), a lack of ancillary infrastructure (such as seating and shelters at bus stops) and poor access to public transport services in some residential areas.

Victoria's freight network strategy, *Freight Futures* (2008) indicates that freight volume across all transport modes is expected to grow by close to 50 per cent by 2020 and by 100 per cent by 2030. This growth has implications for Greater Dandenong's transport network as the municipality is home to the Dandenong South Employment Cluster (one of state's most significant industrial concentrations and, according to *Plan Melbourne*, a "National Employment Cluster"). Council will need to manage freight movement through the municipality to support the growth of the Dandenong South Employment Cluster, while avoiding adverse effects on residential areas.

HOUSING GROWTH AND OPEN SPACE

Quality public open space that is well-located and well-developed, positively contributes to urban amenity as well as the environmental, social, health and wellbeing, and economic sustainability of the community.

Council's *Open Space Strategy* (CGD 2009) notes that not only are there gaps in access to open space in some areas, but population growth will result in a further decline in the ratio of open space provision to population. Noble Park, Noble Park North and Springvale are identified

as "key priority suburbs" for access to additional open space to serve existing and future residents.

Continued improvements to the open space network are required to support anticipated population and housing growth.

Although the Strategy recognises that the significant purchase of land to add to the public open space network is not likely to be feasible, Council has worked over time to increase open space provision, improve the quality of parks in areas experiencing significant residential growth and undertake infrastructure works to improve connectivity between parks. For example, through open space contributions and the development planning process, open space has been delivered as part of the development of new residential estates in Somerfield (Keysborough), Metro 3175 and Meridian (Dandenong) and Davis Way and Osborne Avenue (Springvale).

Open space improvements are underway in the heart of Greater Dandenong's major activity centres. Significant improvements are being made to existing district parks of Ross Reserve (Noble Park) and Dandenong Park (Dandenong). New civic and open spaces have also been introduced including: Multicultural Place in Springvale; the Noble Park Civic Space, and, in Dandenong, Settlers Square, Halpin Way, the Pop-Up Park, the Dandenong Civic Centre and the transformation of Lonsdale Street into an award-winning pedestrian-friendly boulevard. As residential and commercial development in and around the activity centres intensify, these streetscapes and civic spaces may take on a greater role in providing important bicycle and pedestrian linkages, amenity value and open space for nearby residents.



HOUSING GROWTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Reductions in net energy and water consumption and waste are needed for a more sustainable human environment.

Climate change and an increasing population have put a strain on environmental resources, and necessitate sustainability in all new developments [refer to Theme B – *Design and Diversity*].

This will be achieved through increases in building and material recycling, the capture and use of storm-water, the recycling of wastewater and waste, and improvements in urban form and structures. It also requires changes in behaviour by individuals, making education and awareness-raising efforts essential.

Housing growth and development continues to result in a loss of local biodiversity. The City of Greater Dandenong, like all local governments, makes a significant contribution to the management and protection of local biodiversity through statutory roles and non-statutory activities (such as community education, planting days and the protection and enhancement of significant areas of remnant vegetation). For example, within the Somerfield development in Keysborough, hundreds of red gums have been saved and incorporated into new reserves with new parkland, waterways, recreation areas and walking paths designed around these trees.

A recognised infrastructure constraint is drainage capacity. A number of flooding events over the past few years have highlighted that much of the existing stormwater infrastructure across the municipality, particularly in the older areas, was installed before current drainage standards were developed.

In urban areas, the amount of hard surfaces (i.e. roofs, pavements and roads) is increasing substantially, which increases the amount and rate of run-off generated (Alluvium 2014:13).

As housing growth in Greater Dandenong and the broader region intensifies, the amount of impervious services will increase, resulting in increased stormwater run-off and increasing the risk of flooding

Melbourne Water monitors the water quality of waterways around Melbourne, including the Dandenong Creek and its tributaries. The majority of waterways in the Dandenong Creek catchment are in poor (67 per cent of total length) or very poor (9 per cent) condition, which appears to be closely related to changes in land use across the catchment (CGD 2010; 50). Large sections of Dandenong Creek as it passes through this municipality are concrete-lined and therefore of minimal ecological value.

Responsibility for stormwater drainage in Melbourne is shared between local government and Melbourne Water. Local drains are the responsibility of councils and the main drains are the responsibility of Melbourne Water. Therefore, Council is responsible for managing most of the municipality's drainage system and advocates for improved drainage within the waterways managed by Melbourne Water. Council also has a responsibility for managing stormwater pollution and community education.

Greater Dandenong Council engaged a consultant to identify the implications of future pressures on the water cycle for Greater Dandenong (such as climate change and increasing population and housing growth). The study found that urbanisation is forecast to be the largest issue in managing the water and pollutant balance into the future. Without a change to policy and the way water is managed, both within the City of Greater Dandenong, and upstream, there is a risk of incurring increased community, business, municipality, liveability, environmental costs (Alluvium 2014: 65)



OUR GOAL FOR GREATER DANDENONG IN 10 YEARS

Council housing policies and guidance materials are influencing the location, design, diversity, affordability and sustainability of housing.

Well- designed residential development is increasing in appropriate locations, while areas of valued neighbourhood character are protected.

Council's integrated approach to land use, as well as environmental, community and infrastructure planning, supports housing growth and enables residents to live, shop and work in their local area.

The municipality is a safe, attractive and desirable place to live.

COUNCIL'S OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Housing Objective 1: Understand the current and future housing needs and preferences of Greater Dandenong residents.

To sustain and enhance Council's efforts, the implementation of the *Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy* must be informed by an understanding of housing need and demand, and supported by collaboration and consultation among local, regional and state-wide agencies. Council's activities will involve:

- monitoring contemporary trends in social circumstances, housing provision, and Government policies
- participating in the activities of local, regional and inter-council bodies to exchange information about housing issues, collaborate in regional initiatives, and advocate for improved housing conditions
- liaising with housing providers and other relevant agencies, to monitor local housing requirements and ensure that the implementation of Council's strategy continues to address the needs of residents.

Housing Objective 2: Plan for adequate supply of appropriate land for residential development to address population growth.

This strategy provides the overarching policy framework to guide future housing development. The strategy includes an indication of future housing demand, rather than quantifying the exact number and type of dwellings required in Greater Dandenong over a set timeframe.



Council will build on the *Neighbourhood Character and Residential Development Policy* (Clause 22.09) by reviewing the planning controls for residential areas (particularly, the Residential Growth Zone) and by preparing *Residential Design Guidelines*. This project – *Residential Planning Policy and Controls Project* (Planning Scheme Amendment C182) – will ensure that Council can continue to accommodate population growth and new, more intense housing in appropriate locations within and near activity centres, while protecting areas of well-defined character.

Through the activity centre structure planning processes for Dandenong, Springvale and Noble Park, Council will investigate why residential development within the commercial core of these centres has been minimal. This will enable Council to better understand the market factors that are required to facilitate policy objectives for the Dandenong, Springvale and Noble Park activity centres.

Over the medium term, Council will consider the application of Commercial and Mixed Use Zones to identify business or light industrial areas that could be converted to residential use.

Housing Objective 3: Ensure that future housing growth is effectively managed to maintain and enhance Greater Dandenong's liveability.

Council is committed to maintaining the amenity and liveability of residential areas through an integrated approach to land use, community infrastructure and environmental planning.

Council aims to ensure that the provision of physical infrastructure is well co-ordinated with population and housing growth.

Council will identify new and upgraded physical infrastructure needed to support housing growth in new and existing urban areas. This will be identified through the preparation and implementation of asset management plans, together with strategic land use and infrastructure plans (such as development plans, structure planning for activity centres and community infrastructure plans).

Where appropriate, Council will advocate for new and upgraded physical infrastructure to be well-timed and co-ordinated to support housing growth. For instance, Council takes a leading role in developing a strategic approach to transport issues in the south-east region through its participation in the Eastern Transport Coalition and South East Metropolitan Integrated Transport Group.

Growth in housing, population and service demand in various locations, oblige Council to monitor housing developments and their implications for service delivery. Council has implemented a process by which growth in private dwellings may be documented and mapped, and its implications for service demand calculated. These steps enable Council to project the population by age group and forecast demand for early years, education, youth, family and older person's services in discrete localities in the city, and across the municipality as a whole.

More detailed planning for community services – including the optimal location, timing and characteristics of planned facilities – frequently requires closer investigation by Council, often in collaboration with relevant local service providers.

Advocacy for funding for the establishment of community services is a further stand of Council's response to housing and population growth. A practical illustration may be found in Council's advocacy to the Victorian



Department of Early Childhood and Education for the purchase of land to accommodate a school and community centre in the Keysborough South region.

Council is updating the *Integrated Transport Strategy* to ensure a holistic response to transport planning in Greater Dandenong. Improving walkability and other active transport options will be achieved through the implementation of the *Bike Shared Paths Network Plan* and the *Integrated Transport Strategy*. Council will manage parking demand issues arising from increasing development densities in and around the Dandenong, Springvale and Noble Park activity centres through the preparation of car parking management plans for these shopping centres.

Council is also working towards implementing 'Liveable Streets' pilot projects in the municipality. The 'Liveable Streets' concept aims to accommodate the needs of all street users (including pedestrians, cyclists and motorists) and improve pedestrian safety through the introduction of traffic calming measures, landscaping, public artwork and other streetscape improvements.

Population and housing growth will continue to place pressure on Melbourne's water supply. Council has a key role to play in managing water resources across the municipality, particularly the local stormwater drainage system. As Greater Dandenong's population grows and climate change becomes more of a factor in all of our lives, how we use water and how we manage flood events and even sea-level rise is being considered and planned for by Council through the development of an integrated drainage and water management strategy. This integrated approach aims to reduce the runoff that enters the drainage system through measures that increase the capture, re-use and infiltration of the stormwater before it enters the drainage system.

Other environmental challenges associated with increased housing growth and development will be addressed through a comprehensive review and update of Council's *Environmental Sustainability Strategy*.

The amenity of residential areas will be further improved through the continued implementation of Council's *Open Space Strategy* (2009), *Playground Strategy and Action Plan* (2013), *Non-Residential Uses in Residential Areas Policy* (2014) and *Waste Management Guidelines* for residential development; along with the development of a *Neighbourhood Activity Centre Strategy* and an updated *Community Safety Plan*.



DESIGN AND DIVERSITY



B. DESIGN AND DIVERSITY

KEY CHALLENGES

SUMMARY OF KEY CHALLENGES

- Encouraging the provision of housing stock in a range of sizes and designs for the community's diverse households and accommodate changes in peoples' circumstances through life.
- Enhancing the design, quality and construction of new housing to improve amenity for residents and enhance the image of the municipality.
- Improving the environmental sustainability of housing to reduce the effects on the natural environment, reduce ongoing living costs for residents, provide for housing that is resilient and adaptable in design and ensure that the community is better equipped to respond to climate change.
- Supporting the needs of our ageing population and people with disabilities who will need accessible, affordable, age-friendly homes and neighbourhoods.
- Supporting needs of low-income and vulnerable households who have limited options for secure and affordable housing.
- Ensuring that rooming houses, student accommodation and residential villages comply with minimum standards, while also seeking to enhance the quality of low-cost housing beyond current requirements.

HOUSING DIVERSITY

Housing diversity refers to form, type and tenure of housing. Greater Dandenong suffers from a lack of housing diversity in several ways, with current housing failing to fully cater for our community's diverse needs.

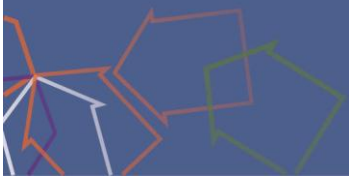
Dwellings within the existing urban area are predominately 1950s and 1960s detached houses with some more recent multi-unit and low-rise apartments. In 2011, the breakdown of housing by type in Greater Dandenong was 70 per cent detached houses, 22 per cent flats and 7 per cent semi-detached housing. Medium-density housing offers limited diversity in terms of the size of dwellings and number of bedrooms.

There is a pronounced lack of higher-quality housing catering for middle- and upper-income households within the existing urban area. While much of Greater Dandenong's housing stock in the existing urban area could be considered affordable by metropolitan standards, the majority is of poor quality.

A greater mix of housing stock is required to support the current and future needs of our diverse community, which includes people and families of different cultures, ages, lifestyles, incomes and life stages.

Diversifying the housing offering in Greater Dandenong increases options for residents to remain in their local communities as their circumstances change, such as through family formation or breakdown, housing or financial stress or, on the other hand, as they accumulate wealth. Housing in a range of designs and sizes better supports the various cultural communities in Greater Dandenong who have different housing requirements.

In addition to providing for a range of housing and accommodation types (such as detached dwellings, apartments and townhouses), there is also a need to increase diversity within the same type or subset of dwelling,



with respect to the dwelling sizes, dwelling configurations, the number of bedrooms and open space provision. However, Council's ability to achieve this through current planning controls is limited with the provisions of the Scheme only requiring proposals of ten or more dwellings to meet specific diversity requirements³

As our population ages, there will be a need for more specialised supported aged care accommodation, such as nursing homes and retirement villages. Housing stock should also be adaptable, allowing older residents to remain living in their home as long as possible.

Council's land use planning policies must continue to provide opportunities for the development for a range of housing products.

Recent housing construction trends reveal a very active infill development industry in the municipality, with the Substantial Change Areas / Residential Growth Zone the fastest growing and changing existing urban area in the municipality⁴. Of the 680 dwellings developed in Substantial Change Areas during 2004-11, approximately half were of an average site density that was greater than 100 dwellings per hectare. This density is typically associated with apartment development,

suggesting that the Substantial Change Area is a key location of new apartments.

For some residents medium-density housing may offer housing opportunities, such as an opportunity to "downsize" from a large family dwelling, live in more affordable accommodation or offer a way out of substandard accommodation. Council expects that the market will continue to demand apartment-style, townhouse and other forms of high to medium-density housing, alongside traditional lower-density housing forms that account for most of the City's housing stock.

Greater Dandenong is in the ironical situation of having too much affordable housing and not enough. Relative to the rest of Melbourne, Greater Dandenong has some of the cheapest house prices and rents in Melbourne and this appears to be having the effect of attracting low-income earners.

This demand for low-cost housing can affect the long-term social and economic sustainability of Greater Dandenong.

The residential population base represents an integral component of local economic development. A strong housing market that provides housing opportunities for people on low-, moderate- and high-incomes would enhance Greater Dandenong's image, improve the quality of local housing development and contribute to the revitalisation of activity centres (Charter Keck Cramer, 2007; Burke et al, 2003: 71).

The Revitalising Central Dandenong Initiative and the Springvale Level Crossing Removal Project have the potential to drive increased housing development in the Dandenong and Springvale activity centres and their surrounds. The Metro Village 3175 project (currently under way) is providing significant medium- to high-density housing close to the

³ Clause 55.02-3 of the *Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme* encourages a range of dwelling sizes and types in developments of ten or more dwellings, including dwellings with a different number of bedrooms.

⁴ The term Existing Urban Areas is used to distinguish locations subject to traditional infill development from major residential redevelopment sites in broadhectare locations. Existing Urban Areas are therefore defined as areas that prior to 2004, have been developed for residential purposes. Existing commercial areas in which housing is permitted are also included in this category, for example, the core commercial area of Dandenong Metropolitan Activity Centre. Major residential redevelopment sites such as Metro3175 are not included



Dandenong Metropolitan Activity Centre. Somerfield (Keysborough) and Meridian (Dandenong) are also providing high-quality larger homes that are attracting people of higher-incomes to the municipality.

Continued supply of higher-end housing products is critical, as there is the ongoing risk that “aspirational households” will seek to purchase homes in alternate locations, most likely towards the fringe of Melbourne.

DESIGN AND APPEARANCE OF RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

High-quality, well-designed residential buildings and public spaces will encourage more people to live, work and invest in Greater Dandenong and can contribute to a sense of place and community.

Managing and enhancing the quality of medium-density housing presents a key challenge for Council, particularly as housing growth and development pressure further intensifies.

The high proportion of low-cost housing in Greater Dandenong has a significant impact on the design and appearance of residential development. Typically, units designed for the low-cost rental market are designed to meet minimum planning and building standards. While in many cases the low-cost rental market is based on existing older, post-war houses, and multi-unit development of the 1960s and 1970s, many of the more recent apartment developments are intended for the same low-cost market, either as rental units or private ownership. A long-term consequence of this perpetuation of minimal standards in multi-unit development is to create a landscape of poor-quality housing. As low-income renters continue to demand affordable housing in Greater Dandenong, this discourages on-going investment in private housing stock (Charter Keck and Cramer 2007: 24; Burke et al. 2003, 16).

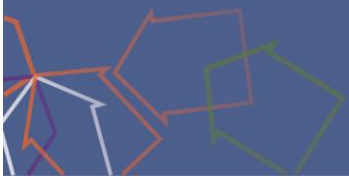
Council’s 2011 *Qualitative Housing Research Project* revealed that many residents understood that increased development and density are due to metropolitan-wide drivers; including population growth; changes to household size; housing affordability; and the need to house people close to existing services in order to reduce the burden of providing new infrastructure. There was also recognition that the old subdivision patterns had established relatively large housing blocks, which have now become financial opportunities to sell, subdivide and redevelop. Community concerns about housing intensification policies and multi-unit development were often a result of their exposure to poorly designed multi-unit development.

Better controls over the design of medium- and higher-density development were called for, with many citing the following concerns around the multi-unit developments currently being produced in municipality:

- the poor design and architectural quality
- that they brought unwanted changes to the “character” of their neighbourhood⁵
- the impacts on the transport networks
- the potential social implications of higher-density, low-cost housing.

The infill multi-unit housing market in Greater Dandenong must compete with “new home markets” such as Sommerfield, Metro 3175 and Meridian, along with new residential estates in the Casey-Cardinia growth area.

⁵ However, cultural differences were also apparent in these discussions around medium density housing, with residents who have come from cities with a tradition of higher density generally more accepting of it.



These alternatives offer purchasers the ability to acquire a block in a new residential estate where the surrounding housing will be of a similarly high standard and value, streetscapes will be well-presented and immediate amenity will not be compromised by low-cost housing (Charter Keck Cramer, 2007: 39). To provide a lower-priced, competitive housing product, the short-term success of the Greater Dandenong multi-unit housing market often relies on reduced quality, increased yields and cheaper construction and materials. This further contributes to the city's unfavourable housing image and underperforming housing market, generating greater social and economic costs to the community in the long-term.

Council needs to manage and enhance the quality of new housing development (particularly multi-unit development) to improve the appearance and amenity of Greater Dandenong's residential areas.

Many infill, dual-occupancy developments in Dandenong involve the subdivision and development of new dwellings at the rear of a lot, without improving the existing dwelling to the front. Since new development of this nature fails to make any improvements to the streetscape or contribute to an improved neighbourhood character, its capacity to improve the streetscape or enhance the image of Greater Dandenong is limited.

The ad hoc nature of infill development is unlikely to fundamentally shift perceptions of Greater Dandenong as a residential destination. Instead, broader considerations of neighbourhood renewal, involving large-scale redevelopment of precincts, is required (Charter Keck Kramer, 2007). This will require consolidation of lots to provide a contemporary housing product that offers development opportunities at sufficient scale.

Significant improvement to the quality of housing development in Greater Dandenong has been realised in recent years, with the quality of designs as well as materials now achieving higher standards than the past.

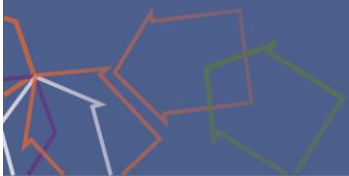
This has, to a large extent, been achieved by deliberate intervention and application of urban design expertise in Council through the development permit assessment process and the development of Council's *Neighbourhood Character Study (2007)* and accompanying *Residential Development and Neighbourhood Character Policy (Clause 22.09)*. Council officers consistently provide urban design advice to encourage local developers to devise residential developments that are architecturally interesting, sustainable, incorporate good internal amenities and respond to their local neighbourhood context.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Buildings play a key role in resource use and pollution. They consume 32 per cent of the world's resources, including 12 per cent of its water, and up to 40 per cent of the energy we use. Activity that occurs in buildings also produces 40 per cent of waste going to landfill and generates 40 per cent of all air emissions⁶.

When sustainable building practices are encouraged at a Council level, an opportunity exists to tackle larger economic issues such as climate change, security of water and energy supplies, job creation and long-term resilience. Additional benefits to Council and the community are outlined on the following page.

⁶ Australian Federal Department of Industry Science and Tourism, *Environmental & Economic Life Cycle Costs of Construction*, Canberra (1998) cited in Organica Engineering (2013), *Background Report: Sustainability in Planning for the City of Greater Dandenong*.



ECONOMIC BENEFITS

- Reducing the on-going living and maintenance costs for occupants of local buildings.
- Improved cost effectiveness through early integration of sustainability principles.
- Lessening the effect of rising utility costs on the local community through reduced building energy demands (such as gas or electricity for heating, cooling, hot water heating, the cost of water consumption, etc.).
- Reducing the cost of infrastructure upgrades, including storm water infrastructure.
- Ensuring equality for local property purchasers against Councils that have already adopted the Sustainable Design Assessment in the Planning Process (SDAPP) framework.
- Improved returns for local property investors who will future proof their buildings against rising energy costs, future legislation and market trends towards sustainability.
- Contributing to security of energy and water supplies.
- Providing opportunities for employment in local sustainable building industries.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS

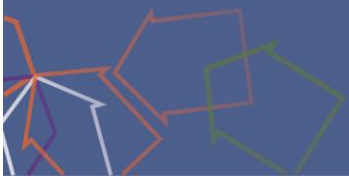
- Assisting in reducing the impacts of climate change in the region.
- Reduced energy, potable water and materials use.
- Contributing to improvements in the quality of local waterways and natural environments.
- Building resilience into the local building stock by designing for a longer building life, using more durable materials and designing for climate extremes or change.

LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY

- Joining the growing number of councils that are leading by example.
- Encouraging best practice building standards in the region.
- Providing support to the Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment Network (CASBE) for wider integration of sustainable development initiatives into new housing development.

Most environmentally focused building code provisions are implemented during the building permit application stage. However, the existing building code framework does not adequately address many important environmental issues, such as greenhouse gas emissions and climate change, water use, peak energy, sustainable transport, indoor air quality and waste management.

Favourable environmental outcomes may be achieved through the introduction of Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) standards to



the planning permit application process, as the early design characteristics of a building will define and often set the limits to its environmental performance. For instance, it is prohibitively expensive to compensate for poor initial design (such as poor orientation, a lack of properly designed eaves and cross ventilation) through mechanical means. As such, the opportunity would be lost if sound, passive design is not considered at the planning stage.

Despite support for environmentally sustainable development in the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the Victoria Planning Provisions, the State Government has not mandated comprehensive ESD standards or application requirements as part of the planning permit application process.

HOUSING FOR OLDER RESIDENTS AND PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

The most pressing housing issues facing older people in Greater Dandenong include affordability, poor-quality housing, inappropriate design and insecure tenure.

An ageing population will increasingly need access to housing that is affordable on the aged pension and consistent with the needs of aged households, which can include low-maintenance conventional housing to a broad range of supported residential care accommodation, ranging from residential villages, retirement villages, nursing homes or live-in carer arrangements.

Various models of flexible housing and approaches are available to support older people to remain living in the community for as long as possible. However, people on low incomes, particularly those who have been dependent on social security payments for significant periods throughout their lives, are particularly vulnerable.

The shortage of public and community housing, the cost to maintain or modify ones existing home, the high cost of private rental and the lower income status and asset worth of many Greater Dandenong households (relative to metropolitan Melbourne) may limit the capacity of older Greater Dandenong residents to access appropriate aged housing options in their retirement.

Although some commentators maintain that an ageing of the population will raise demand for housing suited to one- and two-people households as older people 'downsize' to smaller homes, there is no substantial foundation for this conclusion. The *2005/6 Housing Occupancy and Costs Survey* found that just 5 per cent of older couples and 13 per cent of older singles resided in flats, with most of the balance in detached houses (ABS, 2009). The 2011 Census recorded that 78 per cent of Greater Dandenong residents above the age of 40 lived in a separate house, with only 14 per cent residing in a flat.

Among the participants of the Council's Housing Strategy Focus Group – Disability in late 2011, many residents described modifications which had been installed in their homes, such as ramps, handrails and adjusted cupboard heights. Others, though, had experienced difficulty arranging modifications and expressed concerns about matters such as steps in their homes, or having enough space to turn a wheelchair. In addition, some of the older participants across Council's 2011 resident's focus groups expressed a preference for housing features such as a ground-floor dwelling, a small garden, minimal steps or a ramp, and internal modifications such as easy access to showers and other facilities.

The incidence of retro-fitting existing homes is likely to rise as the population ages if current trends of "ageing in place" continue.

Adaptable and accessible housing designed to meet the changing needs of residents across their lifecycle creates the greatest opportunity to address the needs of our ageing population.



WHAT IS ADAPTABLE AND ACCESSIBLE HOUSING DESIGN?

- *Adaptable Housing* is designed in such a way that it can be modified easily in the future, at minimal extra cost, to become accessible to both occupants and visitors with disabilities or progressive frailties⁷.
- *Accessible Housing*, or “barrier-free” housing, considers access for *all* users. Accessible housing is built to meet the changing needs of occupants across their lifecycle.

HOUSING AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

It is widely recognised that asylum seekers are amongst the most vulnerable members of the community due to a range of complex issues such as financial disadvantage, social isolation, lack of physical access to long term support networks, inaccessibility of many general community support services, lack of proficiency in English language, general life instability together with risk of future detention or deportation.

The conditions and entitlements of people who are seeking asylum and living in the community vary depending on the Federal Government policy at the time of their arrival (and potentially other factors). The majority of asylum seekers in Greater Dandenong have been offered ‘bridging visas’ (approximately 90%) where they can live within local communities. Those on ‘bridging visas’ are generally provided with some housing assistance during their first six weeks after arrival (funded by the Federal Government). After this time they are required to access their

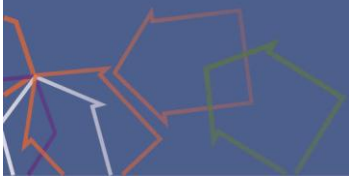
own housing (most commonly in the form of ‘share housing arrangements’ via the private rental market).

Given that most asylum seekers have limited income and no employment rights this financial disadvantage places significant pressures on their ability to access private housing.

The lack of access to affordable, stable and appropriate housing options for asylum seekers has resulted in an increased demand on private affordable housing stocks locally and also creates risks of overcrowding or exploitation. There are also concerns about health and wellbeing repercussions associated with asylum seekers living in unstable or unsuitable housing arrangements – especially given an increase in women and children within the community. It has additional flow-on effects where local services and community aid agencies are seeing unprecedented demand for assistance in areas of housing and basic necessities.

It is estimated that there are currently approximately 2,000 people within the Greater Dandenong community that are currently seeking asylum. In 2013, people seeking asylum largely originated from areas in and around Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, and Iran. From 2008 to 2013 people seeking asylum were predominantly individual men, many with families seeking repatriation. In more recent years there have been larger numbers of women and children seeking asylum. As existing community links are a key driver in determining the area in which they settle, asylum seekers continue to move into Greater Dandenong and to a lesser extent, the City of Casey. Understandably, people seeking asylum seek to be physically located closer to their families and existing support networks.

⁷ AS 4299-1995 Australian Standard Adaptable housing (Standards Australia)



ROOMING HOUSES

Well-designed, compliant and high-quality rooming houses, caravan parks and residential villages can play a vital role in supplying housing for people who are experiencing homelessness or, for various reasons, are unable to rent independently in the private market or access public housing.

The rooming house sector in Melbourne is diverse. Rooming houses were historically large-scale facilities, principally consisting of private bedrooms with shared facilities. Now ageing but purpose-built, they are predominantly located in the inner suburbs of Melbourne. New forms of rooming houses have since emerged. A rapidly growing segment of the rooming house market is characterised by smaller rooming houses, typically involving the conversion of existing commercial or residential buildings, which are operated for profit (Foley, 2009).

During the post-war era, rooming houses in Greater Dandenong were popular for low-income, older, single males, particularly servicing those that were unemployed, experiencing mental illness or substance abuse or lacked family support (or other supportive networks). The private rooming house market changed as new migrants and humanitarian arrivals were settled in Greater Dandenong. Rooming houses in Greater Dandenong began to target and accommodate these new arrivals, international students and seasonal farm workers. More recently, property investors have noted the higher return on investment, therefore choosing to offer a rooming house rather than simple family rental.

As more residents are priced out of the private rental market and the demand for social housing outstrips supply, low-income and vulnerable households have limited options for secure and affordable housing in Greater Dandenong. Rooming houses have become part of the system of emergency housing relied on by housing referral and support agencies. This has led, in part, to a growth in the number of rooming

houses, with a net annual increase of approximately 5 per cent in Greater Dandenong. There is an increasing incidence of illegally operating rooming houses across Melbourne, with the City of Greater Dandenong currently receiving one complaint per week on average relating to unregistered rooming houses.

Not all private rooming houses provide quality accommodation and living conditions.

Public health issues are often accentuated at some rooming houses (and caravan parks) because of the mix of social issues, such as aged residents, alcohol, drug use, mental health problems and people seeking crisis accommodation. Liaison with other organisations, including welfare groups and consumer affairs, is necessary to improve and resolve ongoing issues at these facilities.

The table on the next page summarises the key compliance challenges common in unregistered rooming houses. These issues affect the health and wellbeing of tenants and may have an impact on the amenity of surrounding properties.



Table 1: Summary of compliance challenges common in unregistered rooming houses

<p>PUBLIC HEALTH UNIT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that disease outbreak is prevented. • Prevent overcrowding. • General occupant wellbeing and access to ability to store food and cook. • General sanitary conditions. • Ensure appropriate toilets and bathrooms. • Kitchen cleanliness and ensure that the facilities are appropriate for the number of occupants. • Rubbish and waste removal (as a normal 240 litre bin for 12 occupants is inadequate). • Impact on surrounding property (rats, mice, pests).
<p>BUILDING SERVICES DEPARTMENT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure appropriate building permits. • Illegal conversion of rooms / non-approved domestic dwelling reconfiguration. • Illegal extensions or conversions of garages – Ensure no occupants in garages, tool sheds or other inappropriate structures. • Hard-wired smoke detectors needed in each room. • Evacuation light (exit lighting). • Natural light, ventilation, openable windows. • Electrical safety. • Structural non-compliance.
<p>PLANNING AND DESIGN DEPARTMENT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure appropriate planning permits (if required). • Car parking requirements under the planning scheme. • Amenity impact (on-site and on neighbouring sites)
<p>LOCAL LAWS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of motor vehicles. • Excess rubbish. • Noise. • Amenity (long grass, pets etc.).

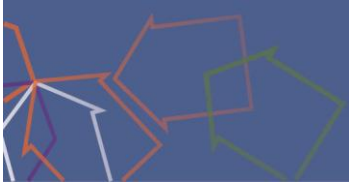
A further challenge in resolving these issues is when an existing dwelling or building is used illegally as a rooming house while awaiting a planning permit for an alternative use or development, as the landlord or operator is reluctant to invest in the property in the interim.

Generally, purpose-built rooming houses offer superior living environments for tenants and more readily comply with relevant legislation and regulations, as they have been designed and constructed with these requirements in mind.

Of the 89 registered rooming housing within Greater Dandenong, less than 10 per cent are purpose-built facilities. Most rooming houses in Greater Dandenong are in existing, ageing dwellings or buildings that have been converted into rooming houses.

The *Disability (Access to Premises - Buildings) Standards 2010* may limit the option of converting existing buildings in Greater Dandenong into a rooming house as these buildings are unlikely to meet the new building standards. Given that most rooming houses are in converted buildings or dwellings, this may affect the future supply of rooming houses within the municipality. Moreover, rogue operators managing illegal rooming houses in converted dwellings may be further discouraged from registering as they are unlikely to comply with the new disability standards.

An emerging challenge in Greater Dandenong relates to rogue operators who attempt to circumvent registration requirements by placing family members within the same rooming house. For instance, a dwelling with seven occupants that operates or functions as a rooming house, may house seven occupants from two families. Consequently, the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act* “trigger” of “four unrelated people” does not apply and the operator is not required to register the rooming house nor meet the minimum standards. Addressing this issue is a particular



challenge in rooming houses that accommodate new migrants or humanitarian arrivals.

Further issues concerning tenancy mix relate to:

- Operators are becoming increasingly selective in their tenancy to protect their property. This prevents the most vulnerable and disadvantaged from accessing rooming house accommodation, such as people experiencing substance-abuse or disability
- Unsuitable tenancy mix, where women seeking crisis accommodation may be housed with older, single, unemployed males suffering from alcohol or drug abuse.

The surge in house prices and increased media attention to recent deaths in rooming houses across Melbourne has seen a shift in Victoria Government policy focus, creating an additional demand on Council to ensure its statutory duty of care is met. Regulations for rooming houses are distributed across four separate Acts of Parliament⁸, with each Act containing different enforcement powers and minimum standards, and responsibility for enforcement and compliance rests with three council departments and Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV).

This complicated regulatory framework has implications for Council's decision-making for rooming house proposals and enforcement activity.

Rooming house owners and operators are often confused about what standards must be met and who has responsibility for enforcement, while some rogue operators may attempt to exploit gaps in the regulatory

framework to avoid registration. Establishing and running a rooming house now attracts greater scrutiny from regulators and agencies such as CAV, Registered Accommodation Association of Victoria (RAAV) and organisations representing occupants.

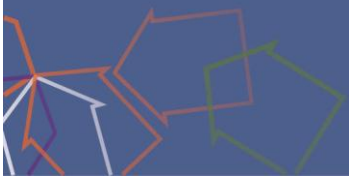
In recent years, sector compliance has tightened and requirements and responsibilities increased for rooming house operators. These developments have been coupled with efforts to improve occupant and public awareness of these requirements. Together, this has increased levels of compliance and standards in identified rooming houses.

The lack of appropriate affordable housing supply in Greater Dandenong makes rooming house tenants more vulnerable to living in substandard conditions, which they may endure uncomplainingly, for fear of eviction and homelessness.

Many rooming house occupants are unaware they are being exposed to risks that should be regulated or they do not know that their living conditions constitute a rooming house. For some, such as international students and new arrivals, this may be compounded by language barriers that prevent them from learning about their rights and the responsibilities of operators.

The trends and challenges cited above are not unique to Greater Dandenong. The *Rooming House Standards Chairperson's Report* (Foley, 2009) documented the prevalence of overcrowding, illegal building works, profiteering, poor management practices, poor amenity and conditions and the rapid growth in unregistered rooming houses across Melbourne. The report also exposed the emergence of a "new rooming house provider" that is taking advantage of declining affordability, the tight rental market and limited availability of social and public housing to maximise returns from rooming houses. These unscrupulous operators were found to be operating outside the current

⁸ *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, Building Act 1993, Planning and Environment Act 1987 and the Residential Tenancies Act 1997.*



registration and regulatory regimes and exploiting vulnerable groups in urgent need of affordable or emergency accommodation.

STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

Student accommodation may range from informal share house arrangements to on-campus colleges; new purpose-built student accommodation and conversions of existing buildings for exclusive student-housing use.

The 2011 Census recorded 1273 tertiary students residing in Greater Dandenong and living independently of their families (alone or in a group households), representing a 54 per cent increase from 2006 (compared to an 18 per cent increase in the City of Monash, 27 per cent increase in the City of Casey and 22 per cent increase in the City of Frankston). The number of tertiary students living independently of their families was higher in Greater Dandenong than the surrounding municipalities of Kingston, Casey, Frankston and Knox.

Chisholm TAFE is the largest tertiary institution within Greater Dandenong, though there are numerous other smaller business/training schools scattered across the municipality's commercial and industrial areas. The Revitalising Central Dandenong Initiative aims to encourage a greater number of tertiary institutions to locate within the municipality, specifically, within the Dandenong Activity Centre, which could have flow-on effects on student-housing demand. However, the demand for student housing is not simply driven by the number of tertiary institutions within the municipality. The residential catchment of some tertiary education institutions can extend to the entire metropolitan region.

The Greater Dandenong Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) recognises the need for different types of housing to respond to the diverse needs of Greater Dandenong households. Facilitating the provision of well-designed student housing is one way to meet the changing needs of existing and future households.

High-quality, purpose-built student accommodation can play a key role in broadening the social mix, adding to the vitality of the Greater Dandenong's activity areas and supporting Council's urban renewal and revitalisation efforts.

A key challenge for the student-housing sector, developers and Council is how to deliver affordable student housing without compromising the quality and amenity of accommodation. The following design and amenity issues are typically associated with student housing development:

- **Poor internal design** relating to room size, shared facilities, security, privacy, overlooking between rooms, internal layout and configuration, safety standards and poor cross ventilation.
- **Off-site amenity effects**, such as noise, waste disposal and car and bicycle parking.

While new student housing developments may target students in the short-term, over the long term, the owner may apply to change the land use to service a broader range of households. Moreover, poorly-designed, substandard student accommodation can have a detrimental impact on neighbourhood character, amenity and streetscapes over the long term.

A further challenge for Council lies in enforcing the planning permit, specifically, that the ongoing management arrangements comply with the permit and provide for the appropriate use of the facility.

Over time, student housing may be (*illegally*) converted into a quasi-rooming house or subject to informal subletting arrangements, so that the facility no longer exclusively houses legitimate tertiary students. Section 173 Agreements have not proved to be a reliable tool in that regard.



Responding to all of the above design and management issues requires coordination between Council's Planning and Design, Regulatory Services and Building Services Departments.

Because of limited guidance in the Victorian Planning Provisions (VPP) on student accommodation, many councils have resorted to developing their own local planning policies and accompanying design and management guidelines for rooming houses, student housing and shared accommodation. These policies are designed to guide Council decision-making on such proposals and mandate additional requirements regarding their design and location.

CARAVAN PARKS AND RESIDENTIAL VILLAGES

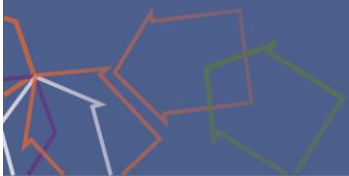
Caravan parks and residential villages play an important role in the Greater Dandenong housing market, traditionally servicing low-income households that are satisfied with permanent caravan park occupancy and are unable to afford other forms of accommodation. Over the past 15 years, Greater Dandenong has also experienced a growth in boutique mobile dwellings. In recent years, many caravan parks have changed as caravans are replaced with more permanent and home-like residences. In other instances, residential villages have been developed with shared amenities, such as bowling greens or community centres.

Caravan and residential park tenants may include several groups of people. Among them are itinerant or seasonal workers, people with mental illness, young people leaving home, others escaping family violence, some with a debt history, and older residents who may be downsizing to cheaper accommodation in residential parks or attracted to their security, sense of community and lifestyle.

A number of concerns have been raised about conditions within caravan and residential villages, such as security of tenure, park fees and management, building standards and town planning. These include:

- **Security of tenure:** no tenancy rights until resident for 60 consecutive days in the park.
- **Right to sell:** park owners often claim exclusive right to sell (or re-sell) homes.
- **High fees:** park owners may claim a high deferred management fee, payable on sale of home.
- **Fear of exercising rights:** some managers create a climate of fear and retribution.
- **Building design:** units often not built to meet needs of older adults – as for instance, wheelchair access to cabin and shower, hot water regulators, numbers on streets and units for taxi and ambulance access.
- **High operating costs:** as “moveable dwelling” cabins are often not energy efficient, which increase the operating costs for residents.
- **Location:** parks located in inappropriate locations such as:
 - In a non-conforming zone in non-residential areas, often inaccessible to shops, community services and public transport, thereby isolating residents
 - locations that do not offer long-term security, such as road reserves.
- **Park closures:** owner-renters have to move their homes, others become detached from local agencies.
- **Homelessness:** park closures place some renters at risk of homelessness.

Various reforms have been proposed as a means to alleviate these difficulties, such as tenancy rights from day one, residents being accorded the right to sell their own home, clear standard contracts, a basic formula for management fees, accreditation of parks and better regulation of park utilities, a review of building standards and increased supply of government-subsidised housing to accommodate renters displaced from caravan parks.



Local Councils are responsible for registering caravan parks and residential villages within their municipality. The regulations require the Council to be provided with a copy of the most recent report of the relevant fire authority and the emergency management plan. Council must consider these documents before making a decision on the registration of a new caravan park. In 2012, the Victorian Fire Services (CFA and MFB) released the *Caravan Park Fire Safety Guideline*, aimed at providing a uniform set of technical provisions for the design and construction of caravan parks throughout Victoria, to enable the achievement of consistent, minimum and necessary provisions for fire safety and emergency management.

There are five caravan parks and residential parks within the municipality. Excluding the Willow Lodge residential village, the 2011 Census recorded 842 caravan park and cabin park residents within Greater Dandenong⁹. Approximately two-thirds lived alone: nearly a third as couple-only households and one in twenty as members of one or two parent families. Just over a half (52 per cent) were paying more than a third of their gross income on rent.

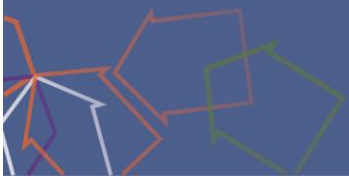
In contrast to other caravan parks and residential villages in the municipality, Willow Lodge residential village is a predominantly older community. Of the 512 residents (in 362 dwellings) counted in the 2011 Census, 96 per cent of its residents were over the age of 50 and just over half of the community (53 per cent) is over the age of 70. Fourteen per cent of residents had a disability.

Caravan parks and residential villages in Greater Dandenong serve a number of important functions, which also raise numerous challenges for Council. Some caravan parks provide a low-cost housing option for vulnerable households that cannot access social housing or the private rental market; while others principally serve a tourism or commercial function.

Caravan parks and residential villages also play a welfare role, as they are increasingly relied on by housing referral and support agencies for emergency accommodation. As a result, public health issues are often accentuated because of the mix of social issues, such as aged residents, alcohol, drug use, mental health problems and people seeking crisis accommodation. Responding to the varied and complex needs of these residents will require careful management in future.

A further challenge lies in the location of some caravan parks. Willow Lodge is inappropriately located in terms of transport and services, infrastructure provision and is within a non-conforming zone. Although the use is incompatible with the Green Wedge Zone, the village is considered an entrenched use and enjoys existing use *rights under Clause 63 of the Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme*. The sustainability and location of the Shawlands Caravan Park also presents a long-term challenge for Council as it sits in a road reserve.

⁹ Census data may not capture the true number of residents residing in caravan parks, particularly so among people who may be marginalized, have limited formal education and so forth. Accordingly, the number of people counted in caravan parks may be an understatement of the likely true number. Moreover, the group who completed the Census, are likely to be a more literate, motivated group, and therefore, more likely to be employed etc. Therefore, the findings, particularly as they relate to caravan park residents, should be interpreted with circumspection.



OUR GOAL FOR GREATER DANDENONG IN 10 YEARS

A range of housing options are available in Greater Dandenong to meet the different needs and aspirations of local residents.

The quality and design of residential development enhances residential areas.

Housing development in Greater Dandenong demonstrates best practice sustainable design and is accessible to our ageing population and people with a disability.

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Housing Objective 4: Facilitate housing diversity in appropriate locations to support the needs of our diverse community.

The strategy aims to facilitate greater housing diversity to support the varied housing needs of our community, including ageing households, single people, younger families and special needs groups.

The *Residential Development and Neighbourhood Character Policy* (at Clause 22.09 of the *Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme*), activity centre planning policies and the balanced application of the three residential zones are the key planning mechanisms by which Council facilitate a wide range of housing types and styles for the community to cater for the changing needs of households.

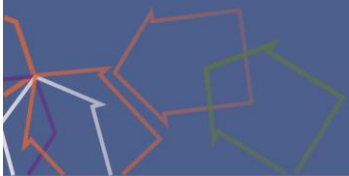
For instance, the Residential Growth Zone (substantial change area) supports housing diversity by permitting a broad range of housing types (including apartment, town house and other forms of multi-unit development). In contrast, the Neighbourhood Residential Zone provides for larger, low-density dwellings catering for family households.

The ongoing implementation of Council’s Residential Development and Neighbourhood Character Policy, the balanced application of the three residential zones and continued activity centre structure planning will, over time continue to ensure that a range of housing types are delivered across the municipality.

This must be supported by efforts to inform the community and the development sector of the benefits of this balanced residential zoning framework.

Council will also encourage the development of affordable and varied accommodation options for older residents and people with disabilities to ensure their security, comfort and wellbeing.

This will involve advocacy, changing the *Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme* and investigating innovative intergenerational housing models that could be implemented in Greater Dandenong.



Subsequent Housing Themes – *Revitalisation and Investment and Housing Affordability* – will detail how Council will support and facilitate housing opportunities for a wider range of income groups.

Housing Objective 5: Support housing design that meets the needs of local residents.

ADAPTABLE AND ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

Council will encourage new housing development to incorporate accessible and adaptable design principles by promoting the use of *Liveable Housing Design Guidelines* and through the provision of information about the demand for age-friendly housing within Greater Dandenong. Council will also continue to advocate for the reform of relevant laws, building standards and planning schemes to require that the design of new homes better meets the needs of older people and residents with a disability.

HOUSING AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

The *Greater Dandenong Asylum Seeker and Refugee Communities Action Plan 2014-2017* provides a framework for how Greater Dandenong City Council will coordinate activities and bring together partners and key stakeholder organisations to strengthen supports for refugees and asylum seekers.

The Plan addresses a number of strategic and local challenges and contributes to other groups and networks that exist to support asylum seekers and refugees. A priority action area is advocacy for adequate resource allocations and innovative approaches to improve accessibility to short and long term local housing options for asylum seeker and refugee communities. The implementation of the *Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy* will be critical in this regard.

ROOMING HOUSES AND STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

The principal objective of Council's role in relation to rooming house compliance management is to ensure that buildings within the municipality are used and occupied in accordance with the *Building Act 1993*; the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*; the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the *Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme*. Apart from being the local authority responsible for registering rooming houses under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, Council is also responsible for the enforcement of building and planning requirements in regard to the use of rooming houses, the number of residents and the implementation of essential safety measures to maintain health, building and safety standards.

Council has and will continue to prosecute responsible parties for non-compliance if the situation warrants legal action. Council has instigated a significant number of prosecutions. Landlords, as well as rooming house operators, may be implicated in legal action. Established rooming house operators compliant with all aspects of operating a rooming house are now quick to report non-registered premises. Similarly, organisations responsible for housing vulnerable people will often contact Council's public health team to ensure a rooming house is correctly registered.

In 2011, Council developed comprehensive *Procedures for the Investigation and Management of Unregistered Prescribed Accommodation Premises*, which focus on taking a "whole of Council" approach. These procedures are frequently reviewed, evaluated and updated to ensure that Council's approach to compliance management continues to reflect best practice standards.

To improve the overall standard and quality of local rooming houses and student housing, Council must balance the need for pro-active education and awareness programs with the need for reactive enforcement.



Council plays a key role in informing and educating residents, owners, operators and other stakeholders of the minimum requirements needed to operate safe and compliant prescribed accommodation premises and distributing educational materials from CAV and RAAV to both occupants and operators. Key external stakeholders that Council engages with include rooming house occupants, rooming house operators and landlords, the real estate and insurance sector, Consumer Affairs Victoria and other State Agencies, local housing referral and support agencies, welfare groups and Greater Dandenong residents.

In addition to providing guidance on the minimum standards required under relevant legislation, Council will encourage new 'shared accommodation' (rooming houses and student housing) within the municipality to exceed minimum standards. Council will develop guidelines to influence the design, amenity and location of shared accommodation and encourage innovative building practices and conversions. These guidelines will promote best-practice design and establish reasonable location, design, amenity, car parking and on-going management standards that will apply to shared accommodation use and or development within Greater Dandenong, for incorporation into the Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme.

CARAVAN PARKS AND RESIDENTIAL VILLAGES

Council will continue to work with caravan park owners to ensure that:

- all existing caravan parks in the municipality comply with relevant legislation
- all emergency management plans are developed and implemented to an appropriate standard
- they provide safe, healthy and liveable environments for Greater Dandenong households.

Any proposals to expand or increase the facilities at an existing caravan park or residential village site will be considered on a case-by-case basis

and assessed against the relevant provisions of the *Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme* and other relevant legislation.

Council will consider proposals to develop new caravan parks within the municipality only if they are appropriately located with respect to services, transport and activity areas, and they satisfy all legislative requirements, including the provisions of the *Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme* and the *Residential Tenancies (Caravan Parks and Movable Dwellings Registration and Standards) Regulations 2010*.

Council will review the application process for new residential villages and caravan park proposals with consideration to matters such as their location, access requirements, emergency management and servicing capacity.

Council will continue to monitor and investigate the provision of social support services at residential villages and caravan park sites to ensure equitable access to Council services as required.

For example, despite the fact that Willow Lodge is operating as a de-facto retirement village and offers a range of recreational and social facilities on-site, the park is not designed for mobility impaired or disabled residents. Council can assist residents at Willow Lodge by providing Community Care Services, which brings together traditional home care, personal care and other support services for older, frail or disabled people in their homes.

In the event of a park closure, Council is not the responsible authority for re-housing displaced residents.

Council will support local services, housing providers and government agencies that are responsible for re-housing park residents should a caravan park within the municipality close down.



Housing Objective 6: Improve the quality, design and environmental performance of housing.

DESIGN AND APPEARANCE OF RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Council will continue to manage residential development and neighbourhood character through the application of the *Residential Development and Neighbourhood Character Policy* at Clause 22.09 of the *Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme*.

Council will continue to support higher densities and more intensive built forms within the Residential Growth Zone, while maintaining lower densities in the General Residential Zone and Neighbourhood Residential Zone.

Building on the principles established in the *Neighbourhood Character Study* (2007), Council is currently preparing easy-to-use, illustrative *Residential Design Guidelines*.

These Residential Design Guidelines will address the key elements of dwelling design and include specific advice for medium and higher density housing development. This will improve the development community's understanding of Council's aspirations for quality residential buildings.

The guidelines will provide design advice for different types of housing focusing on design features such as building height, building materials and colours, landscaping, car parking, bin storage, site coverage and set-backs.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

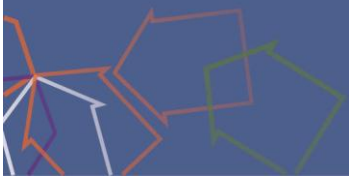
In Victoria there has been a strong history of local governments leading the introduction of mandatory sustainability requirements. While the Building Code (to an extent) has, and will continue to, evolve in relation to Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD), the desire to see improved sustainability integrated into early design and the lack of holistic ESD policy at a state planning policy level has led to the creation of the Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment (CASBE) and the Sustainable Design in the Planning Process (SDAPP).

The SDAPP framework refers to the consistent inclusion of key environmental performance considerations into the planning permit approvals process in order to achieve more sustainable outcomes for the long-term benefit of the wider community. SDAPP program aims to provide consistency between Councils in the request for applicants to include and report on ESD initiatives at planning permit application stage.

The SDAPP framework identifies 10 key sustainable design criteria that need to be addressed by applicants. These are:

- Energy efficiency
- Water resources
- Storm water management
- Building materials
- Indoor environment quality
- Transport
- Waste management
- Urban ecology
- Innovation
- On-going building and site management

SDAPP is supported by an ever growing number of Victorian councils (24 as at May 2013) and is supported by the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV). Greater Dandenong Council is a member of CASBE and has been trialling the introduction of SDAPP since December 2010. During the trial, residential development applications of 10 or more dwellings



trigger a requirement for a Sustainable Design Assessment, while a development of 14 or more dwellings are required to submit a Sustainability Management Plan.

From December 2010 to July 2013, 12 per cent of all multi-residential planning applications were referred under the SDAPP program, comprising 656 dwellings. Eighty per cent of these projects passed all of the best-practice benchmarks in the STEPS tool. As of July 2013, the City of Greater Dandenong, SDAPP trial has led to residential dwellings saving 1800 tonnes of greenhouse gas and 14 Olympic swimming pools of water, every year.

Incorporating the SDAPP program into the Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme, via an ESD policy in the Local Planning Policy Framework, offers the greatest potential to improve the sustainability of new residential development.

An ESD policy would establish expectations for environmental sustainability in new developments, as well as giving policy support for Council's assessment and decision-making on specific planning applications.

Six councils have started a planning scheme amendment process to introduce a local policy into the respective planning schemes that will require applicants to consider environmental sustainability at the planning stage (rather than just at the building stage). In response, the Minister for Planning has appointed an Environmentally Efficient Design Advisory Committee to provide advice on the applicability and suitability of local planning policy that requires environmental sustainability to be considered at the planning stage rather than just at the building stage.

The Environmentally Efficient Design Advisory Committee found that there is a role and statutory obligation for planning to advance sustainability and supported the introduction of the proposed local planning policies.

Council will prepare an amendment to *Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme* to require the consideration of environmental sustainability in the planning process in accordance with the recommendations of the Environmentally Efficient Design Advisory Committee, once these amendments have been approved by the Minister for Planning.



REVITALISATION AND INVESTMENT



C. REVITALISATION AND INVESTMENT

KEY CHALLENGES

SUMMARY OF KEY CHALLENGES

- Greater Dandenong has a disproportionate number of low-income households and an abundance of poor quality, low-cost, ageing housing stock.
- Greater Dandenong's relative housing market disadvantage is at odds with its strategic position and attributes. Competing locations in the south-east have absorbed much of the regional demand for new housing
- Investment in higher quality housing would improve the Greater Dandenong's image, attract people of higher incomes and help bolster the local economy. A decline in investment in housing has implications for the economic performance of retailers and local industry, as well as for broader economic and social well-being of Greater Dandenong.
- The ad hoc nature of infill housing development is unlikely to fundamentally change the property market or shift perceptions of Greater Dandenong as a "residential destination".
- A significant risk of urban renewal is that property prices and rents rise beyond the reach for all but higher income earners.

The City of Greater Dandenong and Places Victoria have prepared and commissioned numerous studies and reports that are of relevance to this Housing Theme (for example, CGD and VicUrban, 2008; Charter Keck Cramer, 2007; Burke et al. 2003). The findings and discussion in these reports have been integrated into the *Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy*, as appropriate.

IMBALANCES IN THE LOCAL HOUSING MARKET

Within Greater Dandenong, social conditions clearly reflect a marked concentration of social disadvantage. Rates of unemployment, early school leaving and the proportion of employed residents in manufacturing, trades and technician occupations are the highest in metropolitan Melbourne, while levels of youth disengagement and police family violence callouts are the second highest, and incomes the lowest in Melbourne.

Greater Dandenong has some of the cheapest house prices and rents in Melbourne and this appears to be having the effect of attracting low-income earners. A perverse by-product of this context is significant housing stress in Greater Dandenong, owing to the relatively low incomes of many households, which are struggling to meet housing costs even in Greater Dandenong's relatively affordable housing environment.

These trends have implications for the economic performance of retailers and local industry, as well as for broader economic well-being, and can affect the image of the area and set limits to urban and economic renewal.



The effect of lower perceived appeal may be self-reinforcing, as such conditions further reduce the attraction of an area, thereby lowering local rents, leading to a continued influx of people in conditions of social disadvantage and to a polarisation of social disadvantage, among other consequences (Burke et al, 2003).

The *Dandenong Residential Attraction Study* (Charter Keck Cramer, 2007: 44) described these structural imbalances in the housing market as follows:

Dandenong's residential housing sector may be seen as unsustainable (from a property market perspective) due to:

- *Its inability to adequately cater for aspirational households seeking moderately higher-priced housing and hence forced to relocate outside the municipality*
- *A relatively high proportion of Dandenong's working population residing outside the municipality*
- *Greater Dandenong's growing role as a location for affordable housing, which discourages on-going investment in the private housing stock".*

A key challenge facing Council is how can support housing for a broader range of income earners. This is particularly important in areas with high levels of older and low-cost housing stock and areas with high concentrations of government-subsidised housing.

RELATIVE HOUSING MARKET DISADVANTAGE

Greater Dandenong has regionally significant transport systems, retail and other services and business hubs.

Competing locations, such as the City of Casey, have absorbed much of the regional demand for new housing. New growth areas have been able to offer households, especially young family households, more product options, housing estate amenity and housing choice. To a lesser extent, the inner-city region of Melbourne has also had an effect by drawing higher skilled residents of the region towards its "new economy" job market and lifestyle opportunities (CGD and VicUrban, 2008: 11).

Greater Dandenong's relative housing market disadvantage is at odds with its strategic position and attributes.

BROADENING MARKET APPEAL

Though Greater Dandenong is attracting some regional housing demand geared to middle and upper-income households; this is largely confined to major residential redevelopment locations on the periphery of the existing urban area (including Somerfield, Metro 3175 and Meridian).

A key challenge for Council is how to lift these levels more broadly across the municipality and revitalise and renew the municipality's existing urban areas; particularly in areas with concentrations of older and low-cost housing stock (including the central transport and amenity spine of the municipality and around Dandenong and Springvale activity centres).

Limited availability of large-scale sites for broad-scale residential development and fragmented ownership reduces the development potential because of the difficulty to consolidate lots. Ad-hoc, medium-



density development is unlikely to achieve the critical mass required to fundamentally shift the property market.

The identification and availability of large-scale sites, and possibilities for renewal on a consolidated precinct basis, are vital in order to have an impact on the residential landscape.

ATTRACTING HOUSING INVESTMENT IN ACTIVITY CENTRES

Despite increased residential development within the Greater Dandenong's Substantial Change Area, there is limited demand for higher-density housing within the core commercial areas of the City's activity centres, because of:

- the availability of large lots
- the financial viability of apartment and multi-unit development (particularly when it must compete with an affordable detached housing market)
- bank lending practices
- low interest from developers because of increased financial risk
- the dominance of smaller-scale developers and local builders in the Greater Dandenong housing market.

The Infrastructure Recovery Charge (IRC) has also been raised as a factor that may be curtailing housing growth within the Dandenong activity centre (Charter Keck Cramer, 2007). The IRC is equivalent to 5% of development value (that is, the construction costs and land value) for projects of more than \$250,000. The purpose of the IRC is to partially recoup the Victorian Government's \$290 million investment in central Dandenong. Concerns have been raised by the development industry that the IRC undermines the feasibility of projects that it is intended to encourage and that it is perceived as a disincentive to invest in

Dandenong relative to other locations in Melbourne (Charter Keck Cramer, 2007).

A further challenge for Council relates to the appearance and amenity of some of the municipality's activity centres. While significant improvements have been made to the Dandenong, Springvale and Noble Park activity centres, they still require ongoing improvements, as do the many of the municipality's neighbourhood activity centres.

GREATER DANDENONG AND URBAN RENEWAL

Housing trends suggest that Greater Dandenong needs to achieve a better balance with its housing mix in order to attract broader commercial investment. Without balanced housing diversity, investment in the housing sector will decline.

Increased private investment in the housing market is expected to promote a resilient economy, foster community wellbeing, contribute to the revitalisation of activity centres and consolidate central Dandenong as the regional capital of the south-east. The development of local housing stock that caters for a diversity of ages, life stages and life styles will create a more balanced social mix.

Facilitating increased home ownership is an investment in both the building of communities as well as enabling communities to create wealth for themselves through increased exchange value and collateral that (the asset of) home ownership can provide.

Urban renewal generally refers to place-based programs that aim to bring higher-quality amenities to areas that have a significantly weakened economic base, characterised by large concentrations or unemployment and social exclusion as well as a poor physical environment. A defining characteristic of urban renewal programs is that public investment is used



to stimulate private investment on a much larger scale (Burke et. al, 2003; Charter Keck Cramer, 2007: 55-56).

WHAT IS URBAN RENEWAL?

Urban renewal involves kick-starting the process to attract private sector investment towards enhancing a sustainable and diverse community and a rejuvenated sense of place. Urban renewal typically involves efforts to:

- enhance the economic base of declining areas,
- attract private investment,
- improve the quality of housing and streetscapes,
- improve amenity,
- reduce crime
- increase community pride and participation
- improve access to services
- promote health and wellbeing
- generally create the picture of an attractive municipality

(CGD and Places Victoria 2008)

COUNCIL'S URBAN RENEWAL AND REVITALISATION ACTIVITIES

Investment attraction, urban renewal, revitalising activity centres and strengthening the Greater Dandenong's economic resilience form key priorities in the Council Plan 2013-2017, Imagine 2030 and the Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme.

Council regularly undertakes place-based community development initiatives to improve public space and increase the social and economic participation and wellbeing of local residents. Council's activities range from neighbourhood renewal projects (such as Menzies Avenue) to open space and streetscape improvements to enhance public space.

This commitment is also demonstrated by Council's investment in the Revitalising Central Dandenong Initiative, a project which is being delivered in partnership with the Victorian Government (through Places Victoria).



CASE STUDY - THE REVITALISING CENTRAL DANDENONG INITIATIVE

Traditionally, Central Dandenong has been the social and economic centre of the southeast. However, competition from newer neighbouring areas for investment in retail and entertainment activities, plus traffic and amenity concerns has reduced activity in Central Dandenong.

In 2006, the Victorian Government in conjunction with the City of Greater Dandenong detailed a shared vision to position Central Dandenong as the capital city of the South-East and a great location for people to live, learn, work and play. The Victorian Government pledged \$290 million for the revitalisation of Central Dandenong. It is estimated that the revitalisation will help to create up to 5000 new jobs, 4000 new homes and to leverage \$1 billion in private sector development in the city centre over the next 15 to 20 years.

A centrepiece of the Revitalising Central Dandenong initiative is the attraction of residential development to the city centre, aiming for 4000 additional households between 2007 and 2021. This objective has been set to meet the projected increased demand for housing as the region's population grows, in the context of the liveability factors that Central Dandenong already offers – proximity to transport, road networks, entertainment, jobs and retail

Key public and private infrastructure projects have been delivered through this partnership including: the transformation of Lonsdale Street into an award-winning pedestrian friendly boulevard; Stockmans Bridge; the Dandenong Civic Centre; the creation of new civic spaces in the heart of central Dandenong, including Settlers Square, the Civic Centre Plaza, Halpin Way and the pop-up park, and the development of Metro Village 3175.

GETTING THE RIGHT BALANCE - URBAN RENEWAL AND HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Greater Dandenong has a much higher proportion of low-income households and housing need than most other areas in metropolitan Melbourne. As median house prices in Greater Dandenong soared from 68 per cent of the metropolitan median in 2001, to 87 per cent by 2013, the relative affordability of Greater Dandenong appears to be declining.

Urban renewal invariably involves a focus on middle- and higher-income markets to drive the process and attract private sector investment.

A significant risk with urban renewal is longer-term over gentrification, whereby property prices and rents move out of reach for all but higher income earners.

A strategy for facilitating the provision of more affordable housing has to be put in place early in the urban renewal process, but in a way that does compromise Council's revitalisation and investment goals.

Opportunities have been built into the *Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy 2014-2024* to provide greater housing choice for people on a range of incomes to manage the risk of longer-term over-gentrification and loss of diversity (see Housing Theme D - *Housing Affordability*).



OUR GOAL FOR GREATER DANDENONG IN 10 YEARS

Greater Dandenong is a destination for public and private investment and provides high-quality housing development and public spaces for all who live, work and recreate in Greater Dandenong.

Council supports and works with the private and public sectors to facilitate high quality residential development.

Greater Dandenong retains and attracts middle- and upper-income households, while supporting vulnerable residents experiencing housing stress.

Greater Dandenong's activity centres feature high-quality urban design and provide a diverse range of jobs, services, activities and housing.

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Housing Objective 7: Attract investment in residential development.

CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE LOCAL HOUSING MARKET

To sustain and enhance Council's efforts, the implementation of the *Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy* must be informed by an understanding of housing and market conditions. Council will continue to:

- monitor the delivery of all new housing in the city against Council's housing objectives and targets
- engage with the development industry sector to document changes and trends in the local housing market to ensure that the implementation of Council's strategy continues to respond to market realities.

PROMOTE GREATER DANDENONG AS AN ATTRACTIVE PLACE TO LIVE AND INVEST

Increased housing diversity and improved housing quality will only be achieved through increased public and private investment in the Greater Dandenong housing market.

Central to promoting Greater Dandenong as an attractive place to live, and invest are strategies to reduce poor design, create exemplar schemes and drive performance standards across the industry. The development of *Residential Design Guidelines* [see *Theme B: Design*



and Diversity] will form a critical tool to establish Council's built form expectations and improve housing quality.

The quality of built form and streetscapes make an important contribution to the appearance, public safety and image of an area.

High-quality architecture, strengthened mixed-use development, coupled with well-designed and managed public spaces and activity centres are fundamental to attracting private sector investment and realising Council's Revitalisation and Investment Vision (see *Case Study – Postcode 3000 Program* for an example where local government has successfully introduced such an approach).

CASE STUDY – POSTCODE 3000 PROGRAM

The City of Melbourne's Postcode 3000 Program (City of Melbourne 1993) was designed to facilitate and support residential development in and around Melbourne's Central City.

The program offered financial incentives, technical support, promotion and street-level support (through minor works such as investment in street furniture, street trees, lighting, pavings etc.) with preference given to proposals involving a contribution by the developer.

According to the City of Melbourne, "Postcode 3000 was spectacularly successful as the city managed to reintroduce more than 30,000 new homes in just over 15 years" (City of Melbourne, 2013: 26).

With this in mind, Greater Dandenong Council will prepare and implement "place-based action plans" for capital works and infrastructure improvements, with the aim of improving the appearance and amenity of the Greater Dandenong's activity centres and attracting broader commercial investment in these locations.

Facilitating redevelopment opportunities at sufficient scale is vital to transform the residential landscape in the existing urban area.

Through the development of *Residential Design Guidelines*, Council will explore if the residential zones schedules can be used to encourage site consolidation. Providing opportunities to maximise development yield on consolidated sites may also attract greater interest from larger building companies and developers to Greater Dandenong.

However, Council does *not* support the use of planning concessions to facilitate its housing diversity, urban renewal or affordable housing objectives. The potential trade-off in design guidelines and liveability standards is not supported by City of Greater Dandenong policy. For instance, the use of "density bonuses" (height, setbacks, open space etc.) could result in built form outcomes that are inconsistent with Council's planning policy, have the potential to set a damaging "neighbourhood character precedent" (which may influence future planning permit applications and VCAT decisions and, in turn, cause further agitation in the community against multi-unit development) and, consequently, hamper Councils urban renewal and revitalisation strategies.



How the development industry views Council from a procedural stand point is just as critical as the quality of the built and social environment.

The “town planning environment” often forms part of developers’ due diligence process, as it can effect processing times and holding costs. Council will continue to improve efficiencies in the planning permit application and planning scheme amendment process (see case study – Pre-Application Advice Service).

CASE STUDY – PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE SERVICE

Over the past 12 months, Council has made improvements to, and formalised, its pre-application process, including offering a formal “Pre-Application Advice Service”. The service aims to provide potential applicants with the opportunity to meet with planning officers to discuss proposals, identify key areas of concern and gain an understanding of the planning permit application process.

The advice service aims to identify improvements to a proposal before submission and avoid the submission of applications that have little prospect of success. This process is expected to achieve quicker delivery of decisions, time and cost savings, and higher-quality developments. This initiative highlights the significant work Council has already made in improving its planning processes.

Council will investigate the impact of the Infrastructure Recovery Charge, finance availability and construction costs on the delivery of state and local urban consolidation policies and their influence on the provision of housing and apartment development.

A *Greater Dandenong Marketing Strategy* can help change market perceptions of Greater Dandenong through the promotion of attributes such as the local and regional benefits of living in Greater Dandenong; the physical improvements that are planned for the area; and the housing opportunities being made available at Metro Village 3175, Osborne Avenue and Somerfield.

As the housing market is intrinsically linked to the performance of the local economy, Council will also complement this housing renewal strategy with efforts to enhance the economic foundation of the City. This will involve efforts to promote the municipality as a destination for industry, business, tourism and education through Council’s *Local Economic and Employment Development Strategy* and *Tourism Strategy*, along with the *Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme* and *Plan Melbourne*.

FACILITATING AND PURSUING URBAN RENEWAL OPPORTUNITIES

This Strategy proposes that Council take an active role in procuring development opportunities, identifying vacant or underutilised public and private sites with redevelopment potential, and pursuing partnership opportunities to deliver urban renewal and revitalisation outcomes.



The supply of land is the single most important issue in the provision of affordable housing and urban renewal - no strategy can expect to be successful unless it addresses the land supply issue and considers the acquisition, assembly and release of land.

Using Council land holdings to realise Council urban renewal and housing vision is not a new role for Council. Metro Village 3175 and the No. 8 Balmoral Avenue project (see case studies) are recent examples where Council entered into partnerships to develop underutilised, strategically-located Council land.

CASE STUDY- METRO VILLAGE 3175

Metro Village 3175 offers a recent example where Greater Dandenong Council has successfully used its land holdings to provide a catalyst for residential renewal in a strategic and high profile gateway location.

Through a development partnership with Places Victoria, the site, the former stock saleyards (south west of Dandenong station, and adjoining the Dandenong Metropolitan Activity Centre) has been transformed into a master-planned community offering a range of new high-quality housing opportunities (from apartments, through to townhouses) to unlock latent demand in central Dandenong and boost the local economy.

CASE STUDY- NO. 8 BALMORAL AVENUE

In the early 1980s, the former City of Springvale identified the need to consolidate diversify and extend the Springvale Activity Centre and improve its parking, traffic circulation, pedestrian quality, streetscape and other characteristics.

Through a partnership with Joleta Pty Ltd. the site – an underutilised Council car park and vacant land – development has achieved the following outcomes:

- Consolidation of the activity centre, drawing together and integrating the retail uses which surround the site.
- Introduction of housing development within the Springvale Activity Centre core through a 'skin' of residential apartments around the central multi-deck car park.
- Enhanced the attractiveness of the shopping and business environment through the delivery of a new civic space (Multicultural Place) and improved passive surveillance.
- Improving the activity centre's parking provision through a new multi-deck car park (owned and operated by Council) and on-street spaces, linked to an improved traffic circulation system.



The Dandenong Residential Attraction Study (Charter Keck Cramer, 2007: 52) noted that Council-owned sites offer considerable opportunities for implementing strategic initiatives because:

- *“Larger sites offering a critical mass of development opportunities that may be sufficient to attract interest from developers*
- *The opportunity for the Council to engage in a process of land swaps in order to facilitate larger scale residential development*
- *The availability of open space reserves as a basis for the creation of high amenity residential estates required to establish Dandenong as a preferred residential location*
- *The opportunity to facilitate the development of demonstration residential projects”*

The Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy 2014-2024 includes measures to establish processes and governance structures that will enable Council more strategically identify land that can be used for housing redevelopment; rather than engaging in one-off, ad-hoc development or partnership proposals.

The strategy recommends that Council expand the role of the Housing Strategy Steering Group to oversee the implementation of the strategy, and establish a Housing Development Fund to:

- identify vacant or underutilised public and private sites with redevelopment potential and facilitate their development for urban renewal and social housing

- pursue development opportunities and engage in partnerships with housing associations, developers and the Office of Housing to deliver urban renewal and social housing outcomes for the community.

This will enable a “whole of Council” approach to assess the supply and strategic potential of Council land and facilitate development partnerships between the private sector, government and community on issues relating to planning, investment and development.

Site selection criteria will be developed to guide research on public and private land. This will focus on the potential of sites to:

- change the image of the area
- act as a catalyst for “flow on” residential investment
- realise Council’s housing diversity, urban renewal and social housing goals.

This initiative will be coupled with actions to review and update Council’s policies and procedures guiding the sale or transfer of Council land and air rights to facilitate the goals of this strategy.

Council has identified some residential areas that contain high concentrations of public housing stock. Council will also advocate to the Office of Housing to redevelop and enhance these areas through a place-based approach.

IDENTIFYING AND PROMOTING EMERGING MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

Much of this section has emphasised the need for a shift in Greater Dandenong’s image, which will not only alter the perception of the municipality, but will positively change the economic life of the area. A key constraint on realising Council’s housing vision will be the lack of understanding by prospective builders and developers of Council’s



policies and strategies, particularly the small-scale developers and applicants, which are predominant in Greater Dandenong.

To this end, Council will issue regular housing bulletins to assist major investors and developers to better understand local housing and population trends, emerging development opportunities and Council policies and strategies.



HOUSING AFFORDABILITY



D. HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

KEY CHALLENGES

SUMMARY OF KEY CHALLENGES

- An increase in house purchase prices and rental costs in Greater Dandenong over the past 15 years has escalated housing-related financial stress among residents.
- Approximately 12 per cent of housing in the municipality is not affordable to Greater Dandenong residents based on local median income levels.
- Housing-related financial stress is an especially acute issue for older Greater Dandenong residents, affecting nearly a third of sole older persons aged over 65.
- Decreased Victorian Government involvement in social housing provision and the lack of recurrent capital funding to support the growth of social and affordable housing.
- As Council undertakes urban renewal efforts, the ongoing maintenance of affordable housing as a share of overall housing stock will need to be preserved for the long-term.

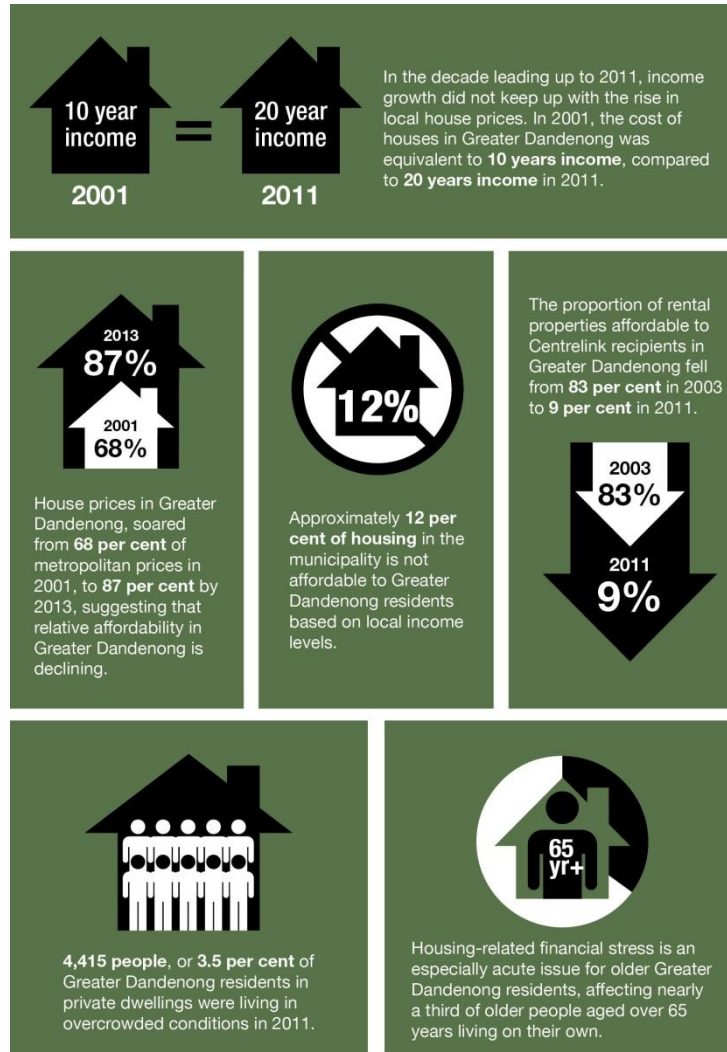
Greater Dandenong Council commissioned SGS Economics and Planning to investigate the mechanisms available to council to increase the level and range of affordable government and subsidised and private housing. This section presents the findings of that report and positions Council to play an active role in the housing market to improve housing affordability.

HOUSING STRESS IN GREATER DANDENONG

Greater Dandenong has historically enjoyed comparatively affordable housing, which has offered housing opportunities for key workers and enabled older residents to age in place and young adults to purchase in the area. However, rising property and rental prices have reduced relative affordability in Greater Dandenong and is highlighting the need for local intervention.

The key groups within the Greater Dandenong experiencing housing stress are single parents, single people looking for smaller units, people experiencing long-term unemployment, new migrants and refugees and aged residents.

With an additional 32,000 people projected to live in Greater Dandenong by 2024, there is a growing need to consider how Council can ensure an ongoing affordable supply.



OLDER PEOPLE AND HOUSING RELATED-FINANCIAL STRESS

To remain active, healthy and living independently in the community for as long as possible, older people require access to affordable, appropriate quality housing.

Older people in the rental market are often disadvantaged in terms of housing costs, security and quality of housing as they receive relatively little income support and are therefore at high risk of poverty and homelessness (Berry, 2007; Jones et al, 2007, Aged and Community Services Australia, 2004). Nationally, Jones et al (2007) forecast a rise of 115 per cent in the need for affordable accommodation by older renters between 2011 and 2026, reporting that the social housing system is unlikely to be able to adequately respond to these demands from older renters (because of the lack of growth in the sector and the competing claims of other population groups).

Housing-related financial stress is an especially acute issue for older Greater Dandenong residents, affecting nearly a third of older people aged over 65 years living on their own.

For people who have endured low-incomes for most of their lives, the possibility of living in poverty after retirement is far higher. Women's capacity to accumulate retirement income through superannuation is reduced through interruption in employment, a result of caring responsibilities for children and parents, as they grow older (Sharman, 2011). In 2008, superannuation balances and payouts for women were approximately half of those of men (O'Connell et al, 2009). Projections indicated that this would continue to be a problem for coming generations.

Other people on low incomes, including refugees and immigrants with poor English-language skills, face similar difficulties. An accumulation of



factors – lack of access to education, periods of unemployment, instability in employment, poor health, insecure housing – can all contribute to, and compound, poverty in older age.

The challenge is to create environments that support and encourage older people to remain active for as long as possible, increase the supply of age-friendly, affordable housing and design communities that enable older people to access the services that they require.

Increasingly, older people are choosing to remain independent for as long as possible, with social policy supporting the concept of “**ageing in place**”. Ageing in place refers to supporting people to remain living independently in their homes for as long as possible, as well as developing supported accommodation and care located close to where older people have lived for most of their lives to ensure that they do not lose touch with their local communities if they are unable to continue living independently.

The shift in Commonwealth policy to support ageing in place reflects this change and the desire of older people to remain living in the community. Ageing in place is socially and financially beneficial to the community as well as to the various levels of government tasked with providing services within these communities.

Research indicates that older people from non-English speaking backgrounds choose to live at home longer than the Australian-born population. At the same time, they tend to access aged care services only when they reach a point of crisis, when other options within family and community have been exhausted (ECCV, 2011).

Providing community services for vulnerable older residents is a key way to help residents to remain in their homes during periods of housing stress, thus avoiding recourse to social

housing, or the risk of experiencing homelessness. Council already plays a key role in this regard and will continue to provide these services.

WHAT IS SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING?

There is often confusion about the terms used to describe different types of social and affordable housing, with terms commonly used interchangeably.

WHAT IS AFFORDABLE HOUSING?

The term “affordable housing” generally refers to housing for low to moderate income households for which the housing payments (rent or mortgage) is no more than 30% of a household’s income, enabling households to meet other basic and long term living costs. Typically, this measure is applied to households receiving the lowest 40% of gross income.

Affordable housing is providing by:

- *the **public housing sector**, provided by state governments;*
- *the **community housing sector** (a not-for-profit sector, typically government funded or supported but also bringing their own assets and funding to the table); and*
- *the **private sector**, which may provide affordable rental or home ownership opportunities at market rates.*



WHAT IS SOCIAL HOUSING?

“Social housing” is a term used to describe below market rental services provided by the Victorian Government and community housing sector.

Social housing is for people who are on low incomes and in greatest need including the homeless, those living in inappropriate housing or where rental costs are too high.

Social housing is provided and managed by either government or non-government organisations.

Social housing is dominated by State- owned and operated “public housing”. However, the small “community housing” sector is growing rapidly.

- **Public Housing** is financed, owned and managed by the Victorian Government through the Director of Housing.
- **Community Housing** is managed by registered housing associations or providers. It can be financed, developed and owned by State Government housing authorities, by a registered housing association, or under joint ventures with State Government housing authorities where the costs are shared.

As set out in the diagram to the right, the public housing, community housing and private sectors can be understood as roughly arranged along a “scale of housing need” – from the most vulnerable (i.e. those not able to rent on the open market), to those on the middle to higher income brackets who are able to access private markets and conventional home ownership products.

Figure 6: Access to affordable housing



Source: Adapted from SGS (2013), *Mechanisms to Influence the Supply of Social and Affordable Housing*, prepared for the City of Greater Dandenong



WHY IS COMMUNITY HOUSING IMPORTANT?

Community housing has wide-ranging benefits, not only for individual tenants, but also for the broader community.

Benefits that community housing provides tenants include:

- **connecting tenants with support services** and other opportunities, such as education and training
- **positive mental health outcomes** via integration with the local community and access to support services
- the capacity to **address specific needs**, such as through provision of communal areas or housing suitable for people with a disability.

Broader community benefits resulting from community housing provision can include:

- **developing sustainable communities** by supporting social diversity including people of varied incomes, abilities and household types
- **supporting social inclusion and tolerance** via the integration of lower-income housing into local communities
- **a better return on investment** compared to public housing
- **a decrease in dependency on government funding** over time through mechanisms such as alternative financing and procurement arrangements (such as bank finance leveraging and partnerships) and innovative development modelling (such as cross-subsidisation from mixed community and private housing)
- **long-term certainty of affordable housing provision**, through maintenance and/or increase of a stock of permanently available rental housing set at affordable levels.

CASE STUDY: COMMUNITY HOUSING - HARMONY VILLAGE

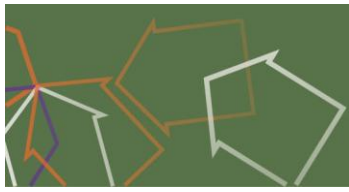
Harmony Village is located in the heart of Dandenong, within walking distance to the Dandenong Market, RSL and Dandenong Plaza. The development consists of a retirement village comprising 92 units with basement car parking and a resident's community centre. Designed and built with community in mind, the residential apartments are clustered around landscaped surrounds and a generous Community Centre

The project provides 66 units at an affordable rate for older people experiencing in housing stress. This co-operative social housing component is being operated under CEHL rent setting principles which are based on residents paying 25% of their income plus 100% of the Commonwealth Rental Assistance payment. As all residents are over the age of 55 years old, the rents have been set at rates affordable those limited to the Aged Pensions as their only source of income.

High priority has been given to 'tenure-blind design – that is, no visible difference between co-operative and private market dwellings.

Project Partners:

Common Equity Housing Ltd, Doutta Galla Aged Services, Department of Human Services, Dandenong RSL



THE CHANGING ROLE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN SOCIAL HOUSING PROVISION

A variety of factors have led to the increased need for local government involvement in the social and affordable housing space and, consequently, the need to investigate alternative models of social and affordable housing provision. These are:

- **Decline in housing affordability:** Housing affordability has declined across Australia over the past few decades. This can be attributed to factors including insufficient housing supply, planning regulations, demand for larger houses, better quality housing stock and increased labour and construction costs. Meanwhile, funding for public housing at the state and federal level has also declined, resulting in an increase in the number of households in housing stress and insufficient public and community housing to meet the housing needs of low-income households.
- **Reduced investment in new State-owned social housing:** The Victorian Government has gradually moved away from a role as primary provider and operator of housing, with not-for-profit and community housing associations taking on this role. Government involvement in affordable housing has shifted to providing subsidies for low-income households to bridge the gap in rent in the private housing market and providing incentives for other organisations to develop and manage social housing for those who are still unable to engage in the private housing market.

This change in state government policy has prompted many local governments to identify measures, within their scope of responsibility, to support the provision of social and affordable housing.

GETTING THE RIGHT BALANCE – URBAN RENEWAL AND HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Theme B – *Design and Diversity* and Theme C – *Revitalisation and Investment* have set out the rationale to support and facilitate housing opportunities for a wide range of income groups.

While Greater Dandenong has an oversupply of stock at the low end of the housing spectrum, Council renewal and revitalisation processes must ensure that the pendulum does not shift fully the other way.

Low and moderate-income households must be able to have access to a share of quality housing units in Greater Dandenong over the long term.



OUR GOAL FOR GREATER DANDENONG IN 10 YEARS

There are increasing opportunities to attract housing investment in Greater Dandenong and ensure that, in the process of urban renewal, housing remains available to those on low or supported incomes.

Council, government, the private sector and community housing associations are working in partnership to increase the range and quality of affordable housing.

Council will increase the supply of social housing through strategic use of its land assets and direct financial contributions.

Council encourages and participates in social housing demonstration projects that support Greater Dandenong's vulnerable residents.

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Housing Objective 8: Achieve a wide choice of well-designed, high-quality affordable housing in appropriate locations to meet current and future needs.

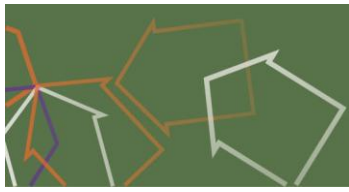
COUNCIL'S SOCIAL HOUSING GOAL

Housing targets are valuable as they set a measure against which a government can track its progress, through setting an agreed minimum standard for affordable housing provision. However, the setting — and reaching — of housing targets at the local government level can be problematic, as the provision of social and affordable housing relies on continued government investment in the sector.

In researching an affordable housing target for the City of Greater Dandenong, SGS Economics and Planning undertook a national assessment of housing need and then applied the results to the municipality¹⁰. This approach is premised on the assumption that affordable housing targets should be generic rather than location specific.

¹⁰ SGS based their analysis on national targets for the following housing need categories, with consideration to the current provision of social housing stock:

- homeless households sleeping rough, such as in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping on the streets;
- homeless households in supported homeless accommodation, in temporary accommodation with other households, in rooming houses, temporary lodging or living in severely crowded dwellings;
- persons marginal housing including crowded dwellings, improvised dwellings or caravan parks; and
- very low and low income private renters in housing stress.



That is, there is no reason why the City of Greater Dandenong should aspire to a greater (or lesser) target of social and affordable housing than the general community.

SGS Economics and Planning's found that just under 10 per cent of all housing stock would need to be social or permanently available affordable housing to meet the housing needs of the most vulnerable in society. This 10 per cent target would meet only the most critical current needs, which are likely to grow rapidly in the next 10 years or so. If met, this minimal target will still not avoid public housing waiting lists nor will it make inroads into "moderate" housing stress. If social housing was expected to play a "platform for opportunity" role instead of simply a welfare safety net role, the targeted expansion of social housing would be significantly greater.

Maintaining the current proportion of social housing in Greater Dandenong will depend on continued Government investment in social housing, at least at the current levels of provision (3 to 4 per cent of total stock), and retention of the current proportion of affordable rental stock.

The latter may be a significant challenge given the private rental market is subject to market forces which are likely to cause continued upward pressures on rents. Without commensurate increases in incomes a decline in the proportion of affordable housing proportion would result. That is to say, left unchecked, the proportion of affordable housing is likely to decline over time.

For this reason, Council has decided not to adopt a "housing target". Instead, Council's strategy is focused on how Council can directly influence the provision of social housing through land and financial contributions. This approach is considered appropriate in this period of funding uncertainty at the Victorian and Australian Government level.

WHAT IS COUNCIL'S SOCIAL HOUSING GOAL?

Council is committed to addressing the gap between housing need and supply.

Council aims to increase the supply of social housing through strategic use of its land assets and direct financial contributions.

When selling or gifting land for development purposes, Council will seek to facilitate the provision of social housing and will consider investing a proportion of the revenue realised in the Housing Development Fund.

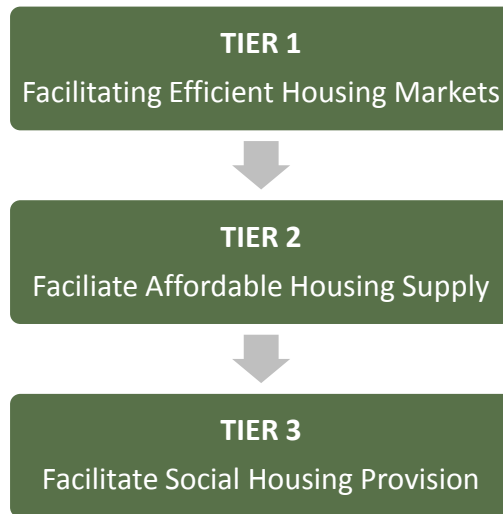
HOW WILL COUNCIL INCREASE SOCIAL HOUSING SUPPLY?

Affordable housing is provided through three key channels – the private market, the community housing sector and the public housing sector – Council's efforts to increase affordable housing supply should target all three channels.

The first step is to ensure that the housing market is operating as efficiently as possible. Following this, subsidies may be used as required to further stimulate the supply of affordable and social housing as required. This three tiered approach is outlined in the figure on the next page.



Figure 7: Council's three tiered approach to increase affordable housing



*Council's largest and most significant role in boosting the availability of affordable housing is in Tier 1 - **facilitating efficient private housing markets**, which supplies up to 90 per cent of affordable housing.*

Ensuring that housing markets across the board are operating as efficiently and effectively as possible is important as, depending on the size of a given land-developers debt, delays can have a significant impact in prolonging 'holding costs', as well as increasing the contract costs of external contractors.

Efficient housing markets mean that supply is able to readily meet demand. Council plays a major role in facilitating efficient housing markets through setting policies and making decisions that affect:

- planning controls and standards
- land release for residential expansion
- redevelopment of brownfield sites for housing
- the ease (or complexity) and timing of planning assessments
- charges which will apply for infrastructure
- the quality and quantity of information about the state of the housing market.

In aggregate, these roles of Council will have a significant impact on the efficiency of the local housing market and perceptions of risks and return. For example, if a developer experiences higher costs and delays from one local council, they are more likely to seek to invest elsewhere in the future. The effect of facilitating efficient markets can thus be seen not only as reducing the cost of housing for that particular development, but also in encouraging and improving the supply of housing (and thus the range of affordable options) more generally. As such, if perceived or actual barriers to residential development are dismantled a higher rate of development could occur.

However, increasing the potential housing supply, at an aggregate level, does not necessarily mean housing markets are operating efficiently. In the context of significant capacity for new housing there may be a mismatch between supply and the specific preferences for location and dwelling type. In particular, there may be limited supply of more affordable dwellings types and/or low-cost rental accommodation. Accordingly, Council will also play a role in specifically **facilitating affordable housing supply** (Tier 2), as well as undertaking research and advocacy in support of greater social and affordable housing provision in the municipality.

Even where housing markets are operating efficiently, providing a range of housing products, including affordable rental and purchase properties, there is still likely to be demand for social housing to provide accommodation for those residents with very low or no income, that find



themselves excluded from all housing markets. Therefore, Council will respond by **facilitating social housing provision** (*Tier 3*).

While there are various social housing delivery models available to local government, the Council is not proposing to enter into ownership or management of affordable or social housing. As such, this third tier is limited to mechanisms that, while providing a role for Council in direct facilitation of housing development, do not leave it with an ownership or management responsibility¹¹.

PRINCIPLES FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

- *The provision of affordable housing needs to be integrated into larger market led housing developments and be indistinguishable from the private homes.*
- *Government-subsidised housing should not be concentrated in specific locations*
- *Government subsidised housing should be well-located close to public transport and services.*

COUNCIL'S AFFORDABLE HOUSING TOOLKIT

The complex and interrelated nature of the housing and construction market, local government planning policies and programs, coupled with the need to incrementally develop housing policy to manage risk means that the best methods by which to increase the supply of social and affordable housing is to take a “tool kit” approach rather than relying on one or two mechanisms.

Council's **Affordable Housing Toolkit** outlines the range of ways that Council will improve efficiencies in the housing market and facilitate affordable and social housing development. The tools range from research and advocacy (which will not place a high burden on Council resources) through to direct financial and property contributions towards social housing development.

This approach will allow Council to incrementally build up skills, capacity and political appetite to undertake a wider range of mechanisms – to support not only the development of affordable housing, but to promote affordable living in Greater Dandenong.

The tool kit is illustrated in the figure on the next page. Detail on each “tool” contained within Council's affordable housing toolkit is set out on the following pages.

¹¹ This position is in line with the trend across Australia for governments to reduce the involvement in social housing delivery. Legislative changes have restricted the ability of local governments to access funds to grow or develop social housing stock. In Victoria, the key legislative change was an amendment to the Housing Act in 2004 which mandated that the State would overwhelmingly favour joint venture agreements with registered Housing Associations to fund the construction of new or fully refurbished stock.



Figure 8: Greater Dandenong Affordable Housing Toolkit



Source: Adapted from SGS (2013), Mechanisms to Influence the Supply of Social and Affordable Housing, prepared for the City of Greater Dandenong.



TOOLS IN COUNCIL'S AFFORDABLE HOUSING TOOLKIT

TIER 1: FACILITATE EFFICIENT HOUSING MARKETS

ZONING FOR LAND SUPPLY

The supply of land for new housing – through zoning, rezoning or land release – is a key planning system measure through which councils can influence housing markets. By maintaining a substantial, predictable and readily tapped supply of housing development opportunities in Greater Dandenong, Council will ensure smooth operation of a key element of the local housing market, and this is vital for affordability overall. Council has an effective and well-established residential land supply strategy (*Residential Development and Neighbourhood Character Policy* at Clause 22.09 of the *Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme*). This land supply strategy will be reviewed at regular intervals to ensure that objectives are being met.

SUPPORTIVE PLANNING POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

Council will ensure that its planning policies and strategies are supportive of housing development, encouraging of affordable and social housing, provide a clear framework for the identification of opportunities for new housing and facilitate a range of housing types to suit housing needs.

IMPROVE THE DEVELOPMENT APPROVALS PROCESS

Improving efficiencies in the planning approvals process is critical to reducing holding costs. Marketing any 'fast track' processes or planning incentives is one way to attract development in a given area. Specific strategies for Council include:

- Improve processing times and developer certainty through the development of *Residential Design Guidelines*.

- Review planning bottlenecks, such as the subdivision approvals process and the processing of complicated multi-level, multi-unit residential development applications.
- Improve skills/capacity of statutory planners in assessing complicated multi-unit or apartment developments and increasing their understanding of development costs/property economics.
- Improve the availability of advice to applicants to reduce application processing times and confusion and deliver benefits such as time and cost savings and higher quality developments.
- Investigate the feasibility of a 'Fast-Track' process for housing applications that have a social housing component.

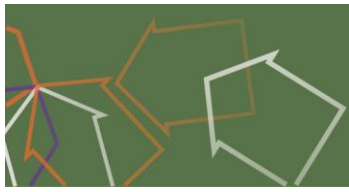
INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION THROUGH DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTIONS PLANS

Market efficiency can be boosted by ensuring areas nominated for additional housing are adequately equipped with supporting infrastructure. New or upgraded infrastructure can improve the amenity of a location and improve accessibility to services.

Development Contribution Plans (DCPs) offer the ability to commit to clear funding and delivery timelines for infrastructure. Council has successfully introduced DCP for the provision of physical and community infrastructure in some newly-emerging residential and industrial areas, and has also introduced a public open space levy (which covers most of the municipality). Where applicable, DCPs will be considered in new development areas.

PROVIDING INFORMATION ON HOUSING AND POPULATION TRENDS TO KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Council will contribute to the efficiency of housing markets by providing information on housing needs, housing types, trends, best practice, innovative tenures and designs to active and prospective builders and developers. Additionally, Council will play a key role in educating the community on the role and importance of affordable housing.



RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY

Council will advocate for the increased supply of particular forms of housing and services in the municipality.

Council will continue to engage with builders and developers to better understand the issues and challenges associated with the provision housing, with a view to removing barriers, increasing efficiency and decreasing costs.

TIER 2: FACILITATE AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUPPLY

PROVIDING SUPPORTIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

Housing is only truly affordable if the cost of living is also included. Improving the accessibility of locations to social infrastructure, by providing a higher concentration of facilities and services and/or by improving public transport access, can help to lower living costs. A secondary effect of this would be to make more locations attractive for development, thereby potentially inducing higher dwelling yields generally, which might add to the supply of affordable housing. Council has a role to play in providing, planning and advocating for the delivery of supportive infrastructure.

NEGOTIATED ARRANGEMENTS WITH DEVELOPERS DURING THE PLANNING PERMIT APPLICATION PROCESS

Council may enter into negotiated arrangements with developers with regard to the provision of affordable housing (or other community benefits) in conjunction with a development, either on-site or off-site, in cash or in-kind. This provides the opportunity to champion best-practice projects and support projects that meet Council's housing priorities.

SUPPORT HOUSING DIVERSITY TO IMPROVE HOUSING CHOICE

Encouraging greater housing diversity can assist in addressing housing affordability issues. This can include supporting the development of smaller or more affordable forms of housing such as: small lot design, accessory dwellings, studio apartments over garages and shop-top housing.

TIER 3: FACILITATE SOCIAL HOUSING PROVISION

Council believes that the supply of land is the most important issue that needs to be addressed if we are going to realise the housing vision to improve housing affordability and achieve urban renewal.

VESTING COUNCIL-OWNED LAND OR AIR RIGHTS IN A HOUSING ASSOCIATION OR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPER

This tool involves the transfer of a land asset or development right (either on land or in the air above current developments) to a Housing Association or affordable housing developer in order to develop affordable housing. This is an immediate, effective and low-risk mechanism by which Council could see delivery of affordable housing. It undoubtedly represents a call on Council's future revenue stream.

As in other investment of Council resources, for parks, community support services and infrastructure, a significant return to the Greater Dandenong community can be anticipated, including more vibrant local economies and more cohesive communities which align with Council's aspiration to be a "City of Opportunity". Stronger, more resilient communities become less dependent on government and Council support services and are more productive in all areas of social function. Therefore, this tool will have not only increased social benefit, but increased financial benefit to Council over time as well.



Council is committed to using the following mechanisms to give impetus to facilitating social housing:

- The option of entering into agreements with developers during the sale of Council land to incorporate within any development a portion of social housing.
- The “air rights” model (as pursued in the City of Port Phillip) where Council retains the asset (i.e. a car park) but allows a housing association or affordable housing developer to develop housing above it (see Case Study – Community Housing Development in Air Space on the next page). A further benefit of the air rights model is that the asset is retained on Council’s balance sheet, but the Housing Association can leverage off the air rights.
- Providing a long-term peppercorn lease over land so that it remains within Council’s assets, but enables Housing Associations to leverage further funding.

As already discussed in Theme C – Revitalisation and Investment, the *Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy* includes measures to establish processes and governance structures that will enable Council to more strategically identify land that can be used for housing redevelopment; rather than engaging in one-off, ad-hoc development or partnership proposals.

The strategy recommends that Council expand the role of the Housing Strategy Steering Group to oversee the implementation of the strategy, and establish a Housing Development Fund to:

- identify vacant or underutilised public and private sites with redevelopment potential and facilitate their development for urban renewal and social housing

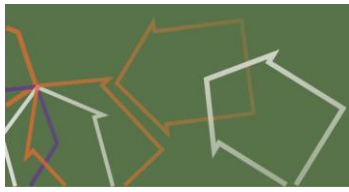
- pursue development opportunities and engage in partnerships with housing associations, developers and the Office of Housing to deliver urban renewal and social housing outcomes for the community.

This will enable a “whole of Council” approach to assess the supply and strategic potential of Council land and facilitate development partnerships between the private sector, government and community on issues relating to planning, investment and development.

Site selection criteria will be developed to guide research on public and private land. This will focus on the potential of sites to:

- change the image of the area
- act as a catalyst for “flow on” residential investment
- realise Council’s housing diversity, urban renewal and social housing goals.

This initiative will be coupled with actions to review and update Council’s policies and procedures guiding the sale or transfer of Council land and air rights to facilitate the goals of this strategy.



CASE STUDY: COMMUNITY HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IN AIR SPACE

WHAT IS THE AIR RIGHTS MODEL?

The City of Port Phillip has pioneered the **“air rights model”**, which refers to using the air space above Council land to deliver community housing outcomes. This development approach provides a means to achieve dual use and increased community benefit from Council land by maintaining current Council use – car park or a community facility – while providing for community housing development in the air space (City of Port Phillip, 2013).

Community housing development in air space can occur when Council facilities reach the end of their economic life and require major upgrading or asset-renewal. New community housing can be constructed over the facilities at the time facilities are upgraded/renewed.

Once construction has completed, ownership of the two uses (community housing and public car park/facility) is separated by a Two Lot Plan of Subdivision. This subdivision creates two titles: the car park or facility owned by Council and the community housing owned by a community housing organisation.

CASE STUDY: WOODSTOCK COMMUNITY HOUSING

This project was a joint venture between the City of Port Phillip and the Department of Human Services - Office of Housing (Social Housing Innovations Project). The land was owned by Port Phillip Council as a 24 space, at grade Council (public) car park and Council constructed the housing largely in the air space over a replacement car park provided by the housing project. 20 of the car spaces were retained in the replacement Council car park.

Completed in 2006, the \$4.9 million project provided 31 units of community housing for single people comprising a 30-unit rooming house and one flat for a person with a disability. The rooming house component comprise 15 traditional rooming house rooms with shared communal facilities, along with 15 mostly self-contained bedsitters (two of which are disability modified).

Project Partners: City of Port Phillip (25 per cent of funding), Department of Human Services (75 per cent of funding), Arts Victoria \$20,000 integrated arts grant.

Architect: MGS Architects Artists: Bill Kelly and Ben McKeown Photography: John Gollings





ESTABLISHING A HOUSING DEVELOPMENT FUND

Council will establish a Housing Development Fund to provide targeted support to the development of actual social and affordable housing, whilst also minimising ongoing financial or operational risk to Council.

A key task of the Housing Strategy Steering Group will be to

- *determine the preferred structure for the management of the fund*
- *establish clear priorities for the fund*
- *establish the funding and revenue streams options for the fund (this may include recurrent funding through the Long Term Financial Strategy and/or the dedication of a portion of proceeds from the sale of Council land).*

JOINT VENTURE AND SHARED EQUITY SCHEMES

Engaging in joint ventures and shared equity schemes with the private, community and government housing sectors to provide affordable housing or mixed tenure development will have a strong, measurable effect and also hold the potential to showcase innovations in design and delivery of social and affordable housing.

Joint ventures are an increasing popular way by which government bodies (both local and state) are delivering social and affordable housing, with parties sharing the project costs. Joint ventures can involve a government agency or local government formally partnering with a private sector developer, housing association or other tier of government to develop and/or manage a housing project. Such developments often encompass mixed tenure options (a mix of social, affordable and/or private market housing).

Joint ventures can involve direct financial contributions by all parties, or, for example, through a local government 'gifting' land to a social housing provider or else providing cash payments. This option is often preferable

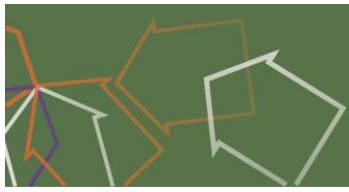
when a local government wishes to contribute some asset or funding to the development of affordable housing, and to have the ability to influence the style and location of a development, but does not wish to have an on-going ownership or management role.

Shared equity housing makes home ownership more affordable by enabling eligible buyers to purchase a home at below market values in higher costs areas typically well located to critical services such as transport and health, without needing to increase mortgage repayments. This typically achieved by deferring payment of the market value which is repayable, plus an appreciation factor, when the affordable dwelling is sold in the future. Shared equity models will be explored by Council, but are unlikely to be implemented in the short term.

Shared equity schemes typically operate in two different forms. The first is a "community equity model" where a buyer would purchase a proportion of a property with a subsidy from an equity partner. The second is the individual equity model, which is more common in Australia. In this case, the purchaser takes out a loan on a proportion of a dwelling (i.e. 70 per cent) with the equity partner providing the rest of the capital and the option of allowing the purchaser to buy more equity in the property when it is affordable for them. This option enables Council to directly invest in and facilitate ownership of affordable housing, without necessarily having an ongoing ownership and management role.

COUNCIL'S ROLE OVER THE LONG TERM

Over the long term and as Council gains capacity and experience in the social housing sector, Council may investigate the possibility of establishing a housing trust model to expand the supply of social housing. In the housing trust model, it is the initial responsibility of Council to establish the trust and set up a governance arrangement. At this point Council has the option to determine the extent of its involvement in the trust (such as maintaining a seat on the governance committee or the power to veto certain investment decisions). Benefits of



using a housing trust model in the development and delivery of affordable housing include:

- The ability to leverage funding available only to Housing Associations;
- Council can donate land (where available) to the trust;
- The charitable tax status of the trust and associated housing provider reduces the cost of building programmes; and
- The trust can access tax free incentives from NRAS for providing rental properties to tenants at 80% or less of the going market rate.

Housing Objective 9: Continue to support vulnerable households experiencing housing stress.

Council will continue to support vulnerable households experiencing housing stress. This will be achieved through actions ranging from direct support (such as supporting older residents age in place) through to advocacy to improve security and access to housing for vulnerable low-income residents.

Rates rebates for low-income households are a mechanism by which local governments can reduce the operating costs of owning a home. Councils are empowered to provide such waivers for eligible properties under the *Local Government Act 1989*. Greater Dandenong Council currently has a *Rates and Charges Hardship Policy* – where ratepayers may have rates and charges, or part thereof deferred, although rates and charges will continue to be levied, subject to particular conditions. Where

property ownership changes on any assessment with a rate deferral agreement in place, all rates and charges must be fully paid at the point of this change.

Council assists older and frail residents to remain in their home through a range of home-based community care services, which bring together the traditional home care, personal care and other support.

Although Council is the service provider, the service model is supported through contributions from Council as well as the Australian and Victorian Governments. These services are vital to assist older and frail residents maintain their properties and “age in place”. As at 5 September 2011, there were 4461 clients, from 105 different countries of birth, receiving services from the Council.

For households on low to moderate incomes, ageing in place can be problematic if the dwelling is in poor condition or not adapted for older person living. Given the age of housing stock in Greater Dandenong, with a proportion of it poorly maintained, ageing in place may become a problem and a potential risk for a number of older households in the community. Council’s Home Maintenance Service provides assistance with maintenance and repair of the home to maintain it in a safe and habitable condition. Examples of the work undertaken are minor repairs to a house, changing light bulbs where a ladder is required, unblocking drains, gutter repair and cleaning, and other minor household repairs that do not require the skills of a qualified tradesperson. A significant component of the work involves the installation of grab rails and shower rails. This service is funded through HACC and is a critical program assisting older people to remain in their home and community.



4. NEXT STEPS

HOW WILL COUNCIL ACHIEVE THE HOUSING OBJECTIVES?

The “Housing Scale” (illustrated on the next page) consists of a range of housing options available to households of all income levels, extending from housing for the homeless, through to affordable rental housing and home ownership. Council and the community face significant challenges at all points along the housing scale. Some challenges along the housing scale are beyond Council’s ability to influence.

Using the housing theme colours, the diagram on the next page summarises how Council will address local housing challenges and achieve the housing objectives at all points along the “Housing Scale”.

DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN

The strategy proposes a range of initiatives to achieve the housing vision, from changing the *Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme* to other non-statutory actions involving all of Council.

Many actions are dependent on other activities happening concurrently, as well as a gradual development of capacity within Council. This is particularly the case with the establishment of the Housing Development Fund and the identification and development of urban renewal and social housing opportunities.

Council’s ability to realise the housing vision will be significantly affected by the resources which are dedicated to its implementation. As such, there is a need to provide policy and program co-ordination for the implementation of the strategy and ensure that the strategy implementation is appropriately resourced. Therefore, the following implementation strategies are vital to the strategy’s success:

- the establishment of a Housing Development Fund to ensure that the implementation of the strategy is appropriately resourced.
- expanding the role and membership of the Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy Steering Group to give strategic advice and oversight for the implementation phase of the strategy. This expanded role will include the:
 - identification of vacant or underutilised public and private sites with redevelopment potential;
 - management of the Housing Development Fund; and
 - identifying partnership opportunities with government, private, and community housing sectors.

The forthcoming Action Plan document will set out these and other actions in more detail in early 2015. The Action Plan will:

- include all the objectives and actions for each theme;
- identify Council’s role and the relevant Council department for each action; and
- provide the desired timing for each action.

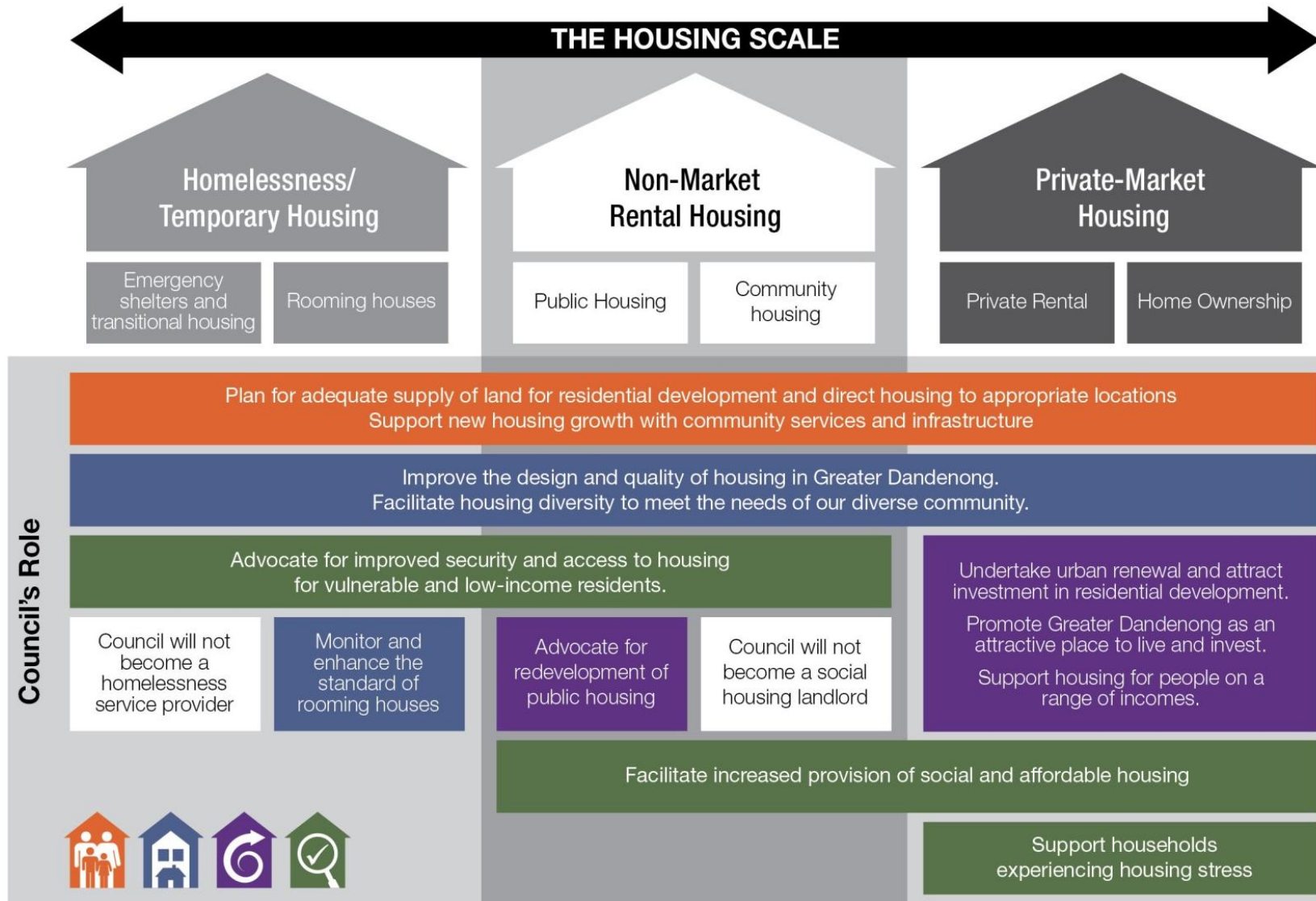
MONITORING

The success of the strategy rests upon the active participation of all areas of Council in partnership with other key external stakeholders. Ongoing monitoring of the implementation of the strategy will include:

- incorporating the actions into the work plans of all relevant departments;
- reporting annually to Council on the implementation of the strategy; and
- evaluating the effectiveness and relevance of the strategy’s objectives and actions every five years.



Figure 9: The housing scale and Council's role





5. APPENDICES



5.1. APPENDIX 1: GLOSSARY

Accessible housing

Accessible Housing, or 'barrier-free' housing, considers access for *all* users. Accessible housing is built to meet the changing needs of occupants across their lifecycle. Housing design considers entrance into the dwelling (such as wider doorways, step-free entries, paths from car-park to the dwelling and the inclusion of lifts in multi-storey development) and the ease of navigating within and around the dwelling (such as through the provision of wider bathrooms and corridors, step free showers and reinforced walls around the toilet, shower and bath to enable the future installation of grab rails etc.)¹².

Adaptable housing

An adaptable housing unit is designed in such a way that it can be modified easily in the future, at minimal extra cost, to become accessible to both occupants and visitors with disabilities or progressive frailties¹³. Features may include: constructing the dwelling in a way to enable walls to be moved relatively easily (i.e. that there are no structural issue preventing a dwelling from being reconfigured internally); provision of a room at the ground floor which can be easily converted into a bedroom in future; ensuring that there is bathroom located at the ground floor etc.

Affordable housing

Housing for low- to moderate-income households for which housing payments are such that the household is able to meet other basic and long-term living costs. Affordable housing includes public, community, social and high needs housing. Affordable housing is often measured via specific criteria such as housing costs being less than 30 per cent of household income and the occupants being the bottom 40 per cent of household income.

Housing is thus considered "unaffordable" when a middle- or low-income household's mortgage or rental payments exceed 30 per cent of their gross income. For example, if the combined income of a household is \$1000 per week, housing costs of over \$330 per week would be considered unaffordable and to detrimentally impact that household. This is commonly termed, "housing stress".

To put this in perspective, at current interest rates the weekly repayment for a mortgage of \$440,000 (median house price in Melbourne in 2013 is \$562,000, mortgage based on 20% deposit) is approximately \$600.

Affordable living

The concept of "affordable living" takes into account not only the upfront costs of buying or renting a house, but also the costs of travel and utility bills. Affordable living is supported by housing that is well located in terms of access to education, work, leisure, health, transport and other required services. Reducing travel-to-work times and enhancing access to public transport to reduce car dependence, as well as ensuring that new housing meets environmental and energy standards are key ways in which affordable living can be achieved.

Age in place

Ageing in place refers to supporting people to remain living independently in their homes for as long as possible, as well as developing supported accommodation and care located close to where older people have lived for most of their lives to ensure that they do not lose touch with their local communities if they are unable to continue living independently.

¹² Liveable Housing Australia 2012, *Liveable Housing Design Guidelines* (Liveable Housing Australia, Sydney)

¹³ AS 4299-1995 Australian Standard Adaptable housing (Standards Australia)



Broadhectare land	Undeveloped land identified for residential development, generally located on the fringe of the metropolitan area. Within Greater Dandenong major broadhectare residential sites have been realised from the conversion of disused industrial sites and former VicTrack land and the rezoning of former farming land.	Lower-income households	Households earning an equivalised income equal to or lower than the lower quartile of Victorian households (\$427 per week). That is, households which, after taking into account the normal requirements of a household of that size and composition, experience a standard of living equal to, or lower than, the least affluent 25 per cent of households in Victoria.
Community housing	<p>A form of social housing provided for low- to moderate-income or special needs households. The two types of community housing available are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing that is managed by registered housing associations and providers for affordable housing purposes, but is financed, developed and owned by state housing authorities. • Housing that is financed, developed and owned by the registered housing association in its own right or under joint ventures with state housing authorities where the costs are shared. 	Public housing	<p>In Greater Dandenong, 16,012, or 35 per cent of households fell into this category in 2011 – the highest proportion of all municipalities in Melbourne.</p> <p>A form of social housing where the dwellings are financed, owned and managed by the State through the Director of Housing. The Director of Housing acts as the landlord to public housing tenants</p>
Existing urban areas	The term Existing Urban Areas is used to distinguish locations subject to traditional infill development from major residential redevelopment sites in broadhectare locations. Existing Urban Areas are therefore defined as areas that, before 2004, have been developed for residential purposes. Existing commercial areas in which housing is permitted are also included in this category, for example, the core commercial area of Dandenong Metropolitan Activity Centre. Major residential redevelopment sites such Metro3175, Somerfield and Meridian are not included.	Rooming house	A rooming house is defined under the <i>Public Health and Wellbeing Act Regulations 2009</i> as a building in which there is one or more rooms available for occupancy on payment of rent, in which the total number of people who may occupy those rooms is not less than 4.
Housing Development Data (HDD)	Housing Development Data is a dataset held by the DTPLI which provides information on the number and location of existing dwellings, vacant residential land, and recent residential development across all land within metropolitan Melbourne.	Social housing	A term used to describe public and community housing. Social housing is for people who are on low incomes and in greatest need including the homeless, those living in inappropriate housing or where rental costs are too high. Housing is provided and managed by either government or non-government organisations.
		Transitional housing	A form of social housing that provides supported short-term accommodation for people who are in housing crisis, homeless or at risk of homelessness. This type of housing is typically coupled with intensive social services support to assist households in housing crisis to transition to permanent housing in the public, community or private market. The social services support varies depending on the needs of the household in crisis. Services can range from advice on financial management and planning to drug rehabilitation.

**Upper-income households**

Households in receipt of an equivalised income equal to or above the upper quartile of Victorian households (\$1203 per week). These are households which, after taking into account the normal requirements of a household of that size and composition, are receiving an income which affords them a standard of living equal to, or above, that of the most affluent 25 per cent of households in Victoria.

In Greater Dandenong, in 2011, 4958 or 11 per cent of households fell into this category – the lowest proportion of all municipalities in metropolitan Melbourne.

Urban renewal

Urban renewal generally refers to place-based programs that aim to bring higher-quality amenities to areas that have a significantly weakened economic base, characterised by large concentrations of unemployment and social exclusion as well as a poor physical environment (Charter Keck Cramer, 2007: 55).

Urban renewal involves kick-starting the process to attract private sector investment towards enhancing a sustainable and diverse community and a rejuvenated sense of place.

Urban renewal typically involves efforts to: enhance the economic base of declining areas; attract private investment; improve the quality of housing and streetscapes; improve amenity; reduce crime; increase community pride and participation; improve access to services; promote health and wellbeing and generally create the picture of an attractive municipality



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5.3. APPENDIX 3: HOW DID COUNCIL DEVELOP THE STRATEGY?

Stage and completion date	Details
STAGE 1 January 2012	<p>Housing Strategy Steering Group Established</p> <p>A Steering Group made up of Councillors and Council staff was established in January 2012 to provide strategic advice and oversight for the development of the strategy.</p>
STAGE 2 March 2012	<p>Housing research and community engagement on housing challenges in Greater Dandenong</p> <p>Qualitative Housing Research Project <i>[Prepared by Collaborations, funded by the Victorian Government in connection with the metropolitan-wide Housing Growth Requirements Project]</i></p> <p>The <i>Qualitative Housing Research Project</i> explored the housing circumstances, preferences and aspirations of local residents; the constraints and enablers influencing housing supply and the key housing issues facing the community. Conducted between November 2011 and February 2012, the project included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 focus groups with targeted groups including: home owners, home renters, rooming house tenants, disabled and senior residents, people experiencing homelessness, recent humanitarian arrivals and single parents • a mail out to approximately 2,500 residents inviting them to complete a research questionnaire (resulting in 431 responses) • 148 intercept surveys with the general public at activity

Stage and completion date	Details
	<p>centres</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a <i>Housing Industry Workshop</i> with members of the local development industry on housing market trends and issues. <p>Preliminary Housing Strategy Background Report <i>[Prepared by the City of Greater Dandenong]</i></p> <p>The report documents the circumstances which affect housing, local housing conditions, and the influence of those conditions upon the community. Comprehensive information about local housing conditions and trends is presented while taking consideration for relevant Australian, Victorian and Local Government policies so that the extent of Council's influence on housing conditions is understood. The report also includes an investigation of broader issues such as housing affordability, special housing needs and environmental sustainability.</p>
STAGE 3 April 2012	<p>Community consultation on housing challenges and Council's role in the housing market</p> <p>Housing in Greater Dandenong Briefing Paper</p> <p>The key findings from the <i>Housing Background Report (2012)</i> and the <i>Qualitative Housing Report Project (2012)</i> were summarised in a <i>Housing in Greater Dandenong Briefing Paper</i> for stakeholder and community feedback. This paper succinctly summarised the key housing challenges and opportunities facing the City of Greater Dandenong and its community into 13 themes. They cover a range of themes, from the specific needs of low-income families, the ageing, and people with disabilities, to broader approaches which government agencies and the development sector can play a role. Each theme was accompanied by a series of questions to prompt ideas, opinions and suggestions from the community.</p>



Stage and completion date	Details
	<p>Community and Stakeholder Engagement on the Housing Briefing Paper</p> <p>During this five-week community consultation period, residents were able to take advantage of a range of opportunities to provide feedback on local housing issues and possible roles for Council in improving housing conditions including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> attendance at two information and feedback session at the Dandenong Market completion of an online survey submission of written comment for Council’s consideration. <p>Thirty-five residents submitted surveys, submission or provided feedback at the Dandenong Market feedback sessions.</p> <p>Additionally, the housing and community service sector, State Government Departments and the local development industry were invited to nine focus groups with each session concentrating on a specific housing topic to enable an in-depth discussion on a particular housing issue.</p>
<p>STAGE 4 July 2014</p>	<p>Statement of Intent adopted by Council</p> <p>The findings from the housing research and community consultation shaped the development of the <i>Municipal Housing Strategy: Statement of Intent</i>.</p> <p>The adoption of the Statement on 9 July 2012 formed a key milestone in the preparation of Council’s housing strategy. The <i>Statement of Intent</i> set out the scope, directions and housing priorities for the future strategy, establishing five priority areas of population growth; housing design and diversity; revitalisation and investment; housing affordability; and liveable neighbourhoods.</p>

Stage and completion date	Details
<p>STAGE 5 June 2014</p>	<p>Draft Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy and Background Report developed</p> <p>Mechanisms to Influence the Supply of Social and Affordable Housing</p> <p><i>[Prepared by SGS Economics and Planning for the City of Greater Dandenong]</i></p> <p>This report explores and evaluates possible mechanisms Council could deploy to address the under-supply of social and affordable housing, within the context of Council’s overarching urban renewal and revitalisation efforts. The report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> examines the Australian, Victorian and local policy context for social and affordable housing sets out the rationale for increasing the supply of social and affordable housing in Greater Dandenong discusses the evidentiary basis upon which to develop an affordable housing target and makes recommendations for the setting of a target in Greater Dandenong identifies mechanisms available to local government to increase the range/supply of social and affordable housing and their suitability (or otherwise) for Greater Dandenong provides examples/case studies of mechanisms that have been implemented in other jurisdictions develops a framework to assess mechanisms and their suitability and assesses mechanisms against this framework, taking into account the local context outlines an implementation plan to guide Council action on social and affordable housing into the future.



Stage and completion date	Details
	<p>Housing Development Data Analysis <i>[prepared by DTPLI for the City of Greater Dandenong]</i></p> <p>The Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure provided Council with information on the performance of Council's residential change and development areas as designated in the Strategic Residential Framework at Clause 21.04-1 of the <i>Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme</i>. The results highlight the key local housing development trends and dynamics that may warrant close attention in the implementation of the new zones.</p> <p>Background Report</p> <p>This research phase concentrated on new sources of information that had become available and government policy changes since the <i>Preliminary Housing Background Report (2012)</i> had been prepared. For instance, this included the 2011 Census findings, the release of the reformed residential zones and the <i>Draft Plan Melbourne</i>, as well as the above specialist reports.</p>
<p>STAGE 6 July 2014</p>	<p>Community consultation on the draft strategy</p> <p>The purpose of this four week consultation period (conducted from 16 June to 18 July 2014) was to seek stakeholder and community feedback on the <i>Draft Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy 2014-2024</i>. Community consultation on the draft strategy and the <i>Residential Planning Policy and Controls Project</i> were conducted concurrently.</p> <p>The following activities were held during the consultation phase:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an Information Stall at the Dandenong Market at 10am to 1pm, Sunday 22 June; • three Information Drop-In Sessions in Dandenong, Noble Park and Springvale on 24 and 26 June 2014; and • two facilitated workshops undertaken with the local

Stage and completion date	Details
	<p>development industry and Dandenong residents respectively on 26 June 2014.</p> <p>A total of seventy-nine residents registered their attendance at the Information Drop in Sessions. Council received 15 submissions specifically relating to the <i>Draft Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy 2014-2024</i>.</p>
<p>STAGE 7 December 2014</p>	<p>Community feedback considered and final strategy adopted by Council</p> <p>The <i>Draft Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy 2014-2024: Summary of Submissions and Council Response</i> presents an overview of community submissions to the draft strategy and Council's response, highlighting where minor revisions have been made to the strategy as a result of community and stakeholder feedback.</p> <p>Moreover, many of the submissions Council received in response to the <i>Residential Planning Policy and Controls Project</i>, alluded to broader housing issues such as housing diversity, affordability, housing design, amenity and infrastructure capacity. This feedback has also been considered in the finalisation of the <i>Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy 2014-2024</i>.</p> <p>A few minor changes to the <i>Draft Greater Dandenong Housing Strategy 2014-2024</i> have been made in response to community feedback.</p>