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1.0 Background and approach

1.1 Background

The City of Whitehouse is currently undertaking the Residential Corridors Built Form Study to determine built form guidelines for those areas of the municipality along key road corridors where land in the Residential Growth Zone (RGZ) interfaces with land in the Neighbourhood Residential Zone (NRZ) and the General Residential Zone (GRZ).

In particular, it is intended for the guidelines to assist in the design of new development along Whitehorse Road and the Burwood Highway and guide various planning issues such as:

- height and overshadowing
- how the building will look and interact with adjacent and nearby properties
- setbacks from the street and adjacent properties boundaries
- landscaping and where trees and plants should be planted
- overlooking
- managing views into adjoining properties and
- interface and streetscape - how the apartments and units look like from the street.

1.2 Engagement Framework

The project has included two phases of engagement:

Phase 1: (March/April 2018)

The objectives for this phase of community engagement were to:

- promote the project and opportunities for community input and feedback;
- build the community's understanding of the planning controls and issues impacting the design of residential corridors located in the RGZ;
- gain insights about what issues the community thinks should be considered in this review and why;
- gain insights about what the community thinks are good or bad housing development examples; and
- promote the next steps for the project.

Phase 2: (July/August 2018)

The objectives for this phase of community engagement were to:

- promote the project and opportunities for community input and feedback;
- inform the community about how their feedback has been incorporated into the study; and
- present and test the draft Residential Corridor Built Form guidelines.

1.3 Engagement Approach for Phase 2

Two drop-in sessions were undertaken for this stage of engagement, one in the northern corridor and one in the southern corridor.

The drop-in sessions included:

- information boards that presented the key issues, information and draft recommendations.
- technical experts to provide feedback and answer questions; and
- opportunity for residents to learn more about the project and provide comment/feedback on the draft report.

The sessions were promoted by Council through

- multiple advertisements in the Whitehorse Leader;
- Council's website; and
- a newsletter distributed to all owners / occupiers within the study area

Date	Time	Address	Attendees
Wednesday 25 July 2018	4pm-7pm	East Burwood Hall (310 Burwood Hwy, Burwood East)	45 attendees 38 registered and 7 people who did not want to provide their contact detailed.
Tuesday 31 July 2018	4pm-7pm	Wills Room, Whitehorse Civic Centre (379-397 Whitehorse Road, Nunawading)	47 attendees 42 registered attendees and 9 people who did not want to provide their contact detailed.

At each drop-in session participants were invited to read through a series of information posters (see Appendix 1) outlining key issues and information about the draft recommendations, as well as discuss any questions or comments with Council staff or the consultants. Participants were there invited to take part in a survey which asked several key questions:

1. What do you think about the seven draft principles?
2. What do you think about the draft controls relating to:
 - building setbacks?
 - building height?
 - landscaping?
 - the streetscape?
 - shadowing?
 - wind effects?
3. Do you have any additional comments?

1.4 Participation rates

In total, 66 responses to the survey were received:

- 21 were provided through Council's online website
- 45 were hard copy surveys or submissions.

Information provided as a submission has been included under the relevant theme.

1.5 Purpose of this report

Social Fabric Planning supported Ethos Urban by assisting with the community engagement activities for the project.

This report provides a summary of the second phase of community engagement and presents the feedback received as a series of key themes.

2.0 Resident Submissions and Surveys

2.1 Question 1: What do you think about the seven draft principles?

Approximately 50% of respondents appreciate the greater level of certainty the principles aim to give residents and developers regarding the ways in which growth will take place in the municipality, and expect that the principles will deliver better outcomes for both current and future residents. They note that with the growth taking place in and around Whitehorse, a strategy such as this is urgently needed.

There is doubt regarding how the principles will be enforced; some respondents do not believe that Council will be able to hold developers accountable if challenged at VCAT. Respondents suggest that some of the principles may be too loosely worded and will not provide enough clarity and certainty to be enforced as intended.

The other half of respondents do not think the principles are conservative enough. That is, they believe that the principles will allow for too much medium- to high-density development at inappropriate heights that will negatively impact the existing character of Whitehorse. Some respondents cite concerns around the obstruction of views and sunlight, overlooking, and unattractive visual bulk of developments over two storeys.

Approximately one-tenth of respondents suggested that additional principles focussing on traffic and parking concerns and/or delivery of infrastructure and services are required as these are directly related to growth and larger scale development.

Example comments:

- *"I agree with the 7 principles since it forms more certainty about balancing appropriate built form with the available land."*
- *"The proposed draft guidelines of 6 storey maximum height is totally unwanted and out of character for this area. This is too high and does not fit into the character of the area and will cause over development and congestion."*
- *"Good guidelines - am not clear how they can be enforced or how I can be assured that they will be adhered to."*
- *"They do not address peripheral issues like increased residential capacity = more traffic and congestion"*

2.3 Question 2: What do you think about each of the draft controls?

This section provides a summary analysis of responses to each of the proposed draft controls, with example comments.

Building setbacks: Of the 54 respondents who commented on this draft control, 23 (43%) voiced support for the proposed setbacks. Respondents believe the proposed setbacks are appropriate and adequate, and many believe this will encourage more opportunities for vegetation/trees around new developments.

Approximately 16 respondents (30%) felt that the setbacks need to be greater to address privacy and overshadowing concerns and suggest that anything above two storeys should take on a “wedding cake” form, with each ascending façade further set back into the site. Another group of four respondents would prefer more flexible controls that allow for setbacks to be determined on a case-by-case basis, depending on what is most appropriate for the specific site. For example, where there is a railway line rather than residences abutting a property, a larger setback may not need to be imposed.

Example comments:

- *“Agree the new setbacks would provide decent space between existing residential homes and new development.”*
- *“Bigger setbacks are welcome but privacy controls/screening/barriers still need to be considered to protect privacy of neighbouring properties. If there is nothing in between you still have no privacy even if a few metres back”.*
- *“I do not support the current proposal in regards to rear, front and side setbacks, they are not sufficient for any useful purpose. I would prefer front setbacks of 8 metres, rear setbacks of 12 metres and side setbacks of 6 metres would allow for landscaping and recreation.”*

Building height: A total of 57 respondents addressed this issue. Support for the proposed building height is mixed. While approximately one-third of respondents believe a 6-storey height limit—or higher—is appropriate, almost two-thirds would prefer the maximum building height to be reduced to 4 storeys, or even 2-3 storeys, especially adjacent to existing single- and double-storey residential areas.

A small minority group of respondents (approximately 5%) argue for heights greater than 6 storeys or no limit at all, to accommodate future growth and match the high-rise development that has already occurred.

Example comments:

- *“More than 6 level is acceptable as population increases fast may need amendment again soon”*
- *“Not in favour of anything over 4 storeys. Consideration should be given to the character and existing buildings in the area/neighbourhood.”*
- *“I feel really disappointed. This is too high for a local suburban area.”*

Landscaping: A total of 50 respondents addressed this principle. Respondents support the inclusion of landscaping controls, but several (6 respondents) note that the proposed controls do not explicitly address landscaping requirements or desired outcomes. There are some questions as to how Council may enforce private landscapes, particularly maintenance. According to respondents, a major priority in landscaping controls should be that setbacks allow enough space for substantial, mature vegetation roots and canopy. Adequate vegetation can reduce energy costs, prevent urban heat islands, and act as privacy screens. Respondents also encourage the protection and creation of shared green spaces and innovative greening solutions such as vertical planting and rooftop gardens.

Example comments:

- *“Excellent!! Encourages more vegetation.”*
- *“Pleased to see it mentioned. Mature trees need to be planted, but who will ensure they are protected and cared for?”*
- *“These controls need to be refined to make sure they are enforced”*

The streetscape: of the 42 respondents to this principle, almost one-third explicitly support the draft controls regarding streetscape, or pedestrian interfaces; streetscapes should be active, attractive, safe, and functional. Approximately 24% of respondents (10 individuals) suggested that streetscape is negatively impacted by high rise buildings, but three respondents noted that Box Hill still has a ‘good’ streetscape with the presence of high rises. Most agree that vegetation, quality design and materials, lighting, and pedestrian access are important contributors to a positive streetscape.

Example comments:

- *“The proposal of large setbacks and landscaping is good, but also to be conscious of the visual effect with quality of materials and design to blend in with existing residents surrounding these new developments.”*
- *“Once again, very good guideline to encourage thought about the visual impact the built form will have on the neighbourhood.”*
- *“The streetscape would be more welcoming and less like a concrete tunnel if developments were kept to and below 3 storeys (8 meters) with front, sides and rear setbacks from the boundaries to allow for residential use and landscaping, trees and gardens.”*

Shadowing: The commentary on this draft control suggests that respondents agree that shadowing is an important aspect to consider with new development. Approximately 10 (22%) of the total 46 responses to this principle voice support for this draft control. Nine respondents suggest that Council should limit shadowing of private spaces as well, not only public open spaces. A small group (4 respondents) proposes evaluating overshadowing impacts on surrounding homes on a case-by-case basis with the planning application.

Another issue raised with the draft control was the specific sunlight requirement; 7 residents questioned whether the 11am – 2pm sunlight period is a large enough window to assess the extent of overshadowing. This proposed control also gave rise to more comments suggesting stricter setback and height controls to address shadowing concerns.

Example comments:

- *“The variable of shadowing between 11am and 2pm should be increased as more people are out either earlier in the day or later, particularly with school children and adults returning from work.”*
- *“Only a mention of shadowing on open spaces. What about adjacent homes and gardens?”*
- *“High rise buildings will create unwelcome shadows.”*

Wind effects: Of the 41 responses to this principle, approximately one-third expressed approval for its inclusion, noting that wind is important to consider. Another 9 respondents suggest that this control is too vague, that it is unclear how a wind assessment is conducted, or that this control should be extended to all developments over a single storey. A smaller group (7 respondents) pointed out that wind effects would not be necessary consideration if stricter height and setback controls were implemented.

Example comments:

- *“This is crucial. Wind tunnel testing is important. It should be applied not just to the Height of the development, but the site”*
 - *“I believe this is very important. Walk past some of the new buildings in box hill and you are almost swept off of your feet on a calm day”*
 - *“The effects of wind would be negligible if developments were kept to and below 3 storeys (8 meters). Landscaping and trees would also act as natural wind breaks.”*
- Question 3: Additional comments

A total of 56 responses addressed additional comments that speak to the full range of issues around built form in Whitehorse. Most respondents used the opportunity to provide additional feedback to reemphasize their earlier comments regarding the draft controls and principles, especially those that opposed aspects of the proposals. Again, some respondents expressed the sentiment that Council's attempts to control development will ultimately be futile.

Other issues related to the built form that respondents recommend be addressed moving forward include:

- building design
- location of new development
- traffic and parking
- light and noise pollution
- provision of infrastructure and services
- protection of existing character; and environmental impacts of development.

3.0 Summary of Responses

In summary the primary issues of concern to submitters, based on the frequency of response are:

- The potential impacts of buildings in the RGZ of up to 6 storeys
- Car parking and traffic management around higher density development
- Enforcement of landscaping requirements
- Shadowing impacts on private land

There was support for:

- The setbacks proposed from front, side and back boundaries
- Tree planting and vegetation in setback areas
- Controls relating to lighting, pedestrian access, wind effects and good design

4.0 Next steps

Next steps

- Council to review draft document
- Make any changes as required
- Issue final report.