

**Report to the Future Melbourne Committee****Agenda item 6.1****Neighbourhood key issues and City of Melbourne Projects for West Melbourne****15 March 2022****Presenter:** Justin Hanney, Chief Executive Officer**Purpose and background**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the West Melbourne neighbourhood community and upcoming key initiatives. (Refer Attachment 2).
2. On 14 December 2021, Council endorsed Future Melbourne Committee meetings to occur in neighbourhood locations to encourage and support more local residents, businesses, workers and students to participate, experience and engage in Future Melbourne Committee meetings through attending, observing, making a submission and/or asking a public question in a neighbourhood setting.
3. This initiative is part of a neighbourhood approach commenced last year to strengthen how the Council understands and works with different communities across the municipality as we continue to navigate the impacts of COVID-19.
4. The municipality is made up of a broad set of neighbourhoods, each with its own unique characteristics and needs – from densely populated urban environments, such as the central business district, to more residential areas, such as Kensington, Carlton and South Yarra. Using community development practice and a place-based approach, Council seeks to better understand the strengths, needs and priorities of communities to guide its work. Ensuring opportunity of access and participation of diverse voices and views will be a key priority as this approach is embedded this year through neighbourhood plans and projects, developed in partnership with communities.

**Key issues**

5. West Melbourne is shaped by three waterways; the Maribyrnong River, the Birrarung (Yarra), and Moonee Ponds Creek and residents enjoy the environment, easily reached by walking, and its proximity to the city centre. Most of the suburb's 8,263 residents live close to Flagstaff Gardens, a defining feature of the area.
6. Increasingly West Melbourne is popular among students, young professional couples and downsizers with more than 80% of local residents living in apartments. They are drawn to the city life represented by venues such as Festival Hall, synonymous with live music in the city for decades; and by the many creative spaces and studios which offer a welcome for artists and independent enterprises. The neighbourhood is also known for the Islamic Council of Victoria on Jeffcott Street, the peak body representing an estimated 200,000 Victorian Muslims.
7. The historic and industrial character of West Melbourne is highly valued by the community and has the potential for much creative re-use. Currently, the western section of this area features railway lines, container yards, shipping docks and industrial warehouses. East of Railway Place has become a dynamic mixed-use residential area, with a strong sense of community, a diverse mix of businesses and a rich cultural and architectural heritage. Wide streets and established trees give West Melbourne a distinct inner-urban feel, with workers cottages, factories and apartment buildings standing side by side.
8. By 2040, West Melbourne is predicted to house 9,000 additional residents and generate more than 7,000 new jobs. The West Melbourne Structure Plan and proposed Planning Scheme Amendment C385 sets out a vision for the evolution of the neighbourhood, focusing on Spencer Street as a social and dining hub.
9. City of Melbourne will progress work on revitalising Moonee Ponds Creek, with neighbouring councils; and the Maribyrnong waterfront. The Victorian Government leads a project constructing the West Gate Tunnel elevated roads creating a second freeway connection between the city and Melbourne metro's west.

**Recommendation from management**

10. That the Future Melbourne Committee notes the overview of the West Melbourne neighbourhood community and upcoming key initiatives.

**Attachments:**

1. Supporting Attachment (Page 3 of 10)
2. West Melbourne: Neighbourhood Highlights and Initiatives (Page 4 of 10)

## Supporting Attachment

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### Legal

1. Council adopted the schedule of Future Melbourne Committee and Council meetings on 14 December 2021, in accordance with its Governance Rules. This included the locations for the community Future Melbourne Committee meetings, which commence from February until November 2022.

### Finance

2. The financial impact associated with the key initiatives outlined in the overview of the West Melbourne Neighbourhood community and upcoming key initiatives in Attachment 2 are in 2021-22 budget.

### Conflict of interest

3. No member of Council staff, or other person engaged under a contract, involved in advising on or preparing this report has declared a material or general conflict of interest in relation to the matter of the report.

### Health and Safety

4. No Occupational Health and Safety issues or opportunities have been identified.

### Stakeholder consultation

5. The holding of meetings in community locations, will increase the community's capacity to experience and participate in the democratic process, in addition to engaging with Councillors informally on a range of matters.

### Relation to Council policy

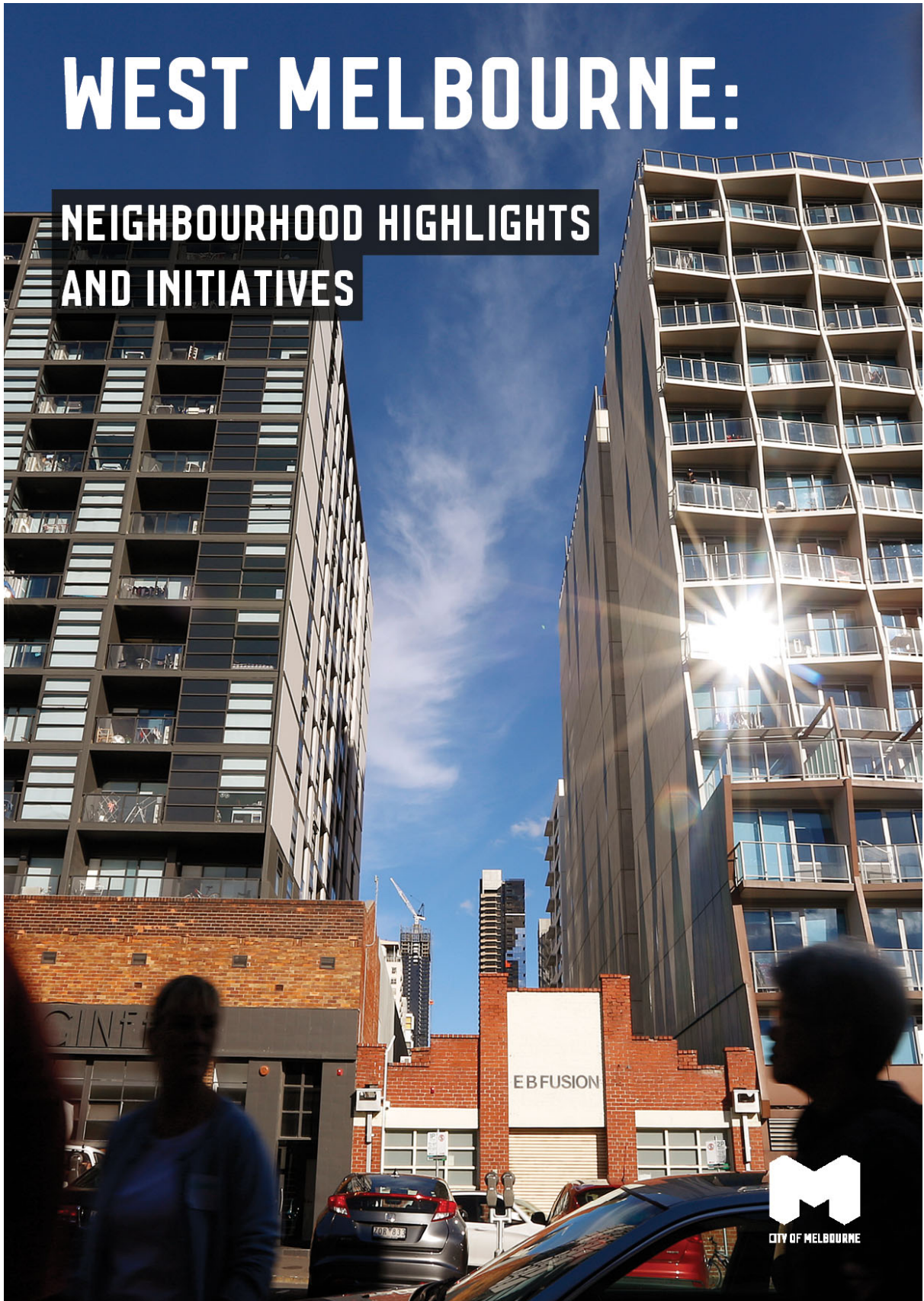
6. This report aligns with the community aspirations identified in the Council Plan 2021-2025 and the Governance Rules.

### Environmental sustainability

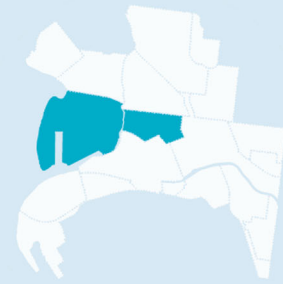
7. This report has no significant impact on environmental sustainability.

# WEST MELBOURNE:

## NEIGHBOURHOOD HIGHLIGHTS AND INITIATIVES



# WHO LIVES IN WEST MELBOURNE?



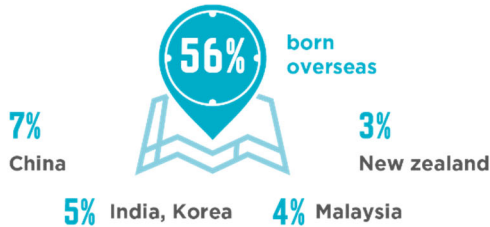
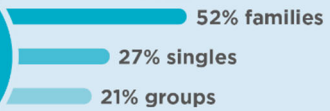
**residents**  
Up 50% in 4 years



**aged 20-34 years**  
median age: 30



**homes**  
62% rent



\*volunteer



average personal rating  
\*\*"feeling part of the community"



study at uni or TAFE



\*experience food insecurity



**median weekly income**  
higher than municipal median of \$1,354



**local jobs**  
9% unemployed



**Business establishments**  
Most common industries:  
Transport & Storage and Business Services

Sources: ABS Census 2016, SGS Population Forecast 2020, City of Melbourne Census of Land Use & Employment 2020, \*CoM Social Indicator Survey 2021 (small neighbourhood sample size)  
Find out more at [participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au/participate-west-melbourne](https://participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au/participate-west-melbourne)



## **About West Melbourne 3003**

West Melbourne, postcode 3003, is a sprawling suburb shaped by three waterways; the Maribyrnong River, the Birrarung (Yarra), and Moonee Ponds Creek. It is a landscape that the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong Boon Wurrung people of the Eastern Kulin Nation have been intrinsically connected to for tens of thousands of years. At the time of British colonial settlement, much of this area formed a large blue-water lagoon, surrounded by marshes and open grasslands. As more of West Melbourne was taken up for industrial purposes and the swamp filled in, the landscape changed significantly.

Today, the western section of West Melbourne is devoted to railway lines, container yards, shipping docks and industrial warehouses. East of Railway Place has become a dynamic mixed use, residential area, with a strong community, diverse mix of businesses and a rich cultural and architectural heritage. Its eclectic building types and uses, as well as wide streets and established trees, gives West Melbourne a distinct inner-urban character, where you'll find workers cottages, mid-rise factories, and high-rise apartment buildings standing side by side.

Most of the suburb's 8,263 residents live in close proximity to Flagstaff Gardens, a significant and defining feature of the neighbourhood.

By 2040, West Melbourne is predicted to house almost 9,000 additional residents and generate over 7,000 new jobs. The West Melbourne Structure Plan and proposed Planning Scheme Amendment C385, set out a vision for this next evolution of the neighbourhood, which will see Spencer Street become the local high street with shops, cafés and restaurants. Public transport, pedestrian and bike lane upgrades will improve connections throughout, and major street greening and park projects will support a balance of commercial, retail and residential experiences.

## **Neighbourhood Highlights**

### ***Community life***

Described as being “as close as you get to the CBD without actually being in it”, West Melbourne's residents love the walkability of the neighbourhood. An increasingly popular, inner-city location for students, young professional couples and downsizers, over 80% of West Melburnians live in apartments.

West Melbourne has a Resident Association, Business Precinct Association, two local newspapers, active social media member groups, and a professional network for community service agencies. Two key community leaders are 'The Centre' neighbourhood house and West Melbourne Baptist Community Centre, both offering a range of inclusive social, learning, and wellbeing programs for people of all ages and circumstances. At the site of the former West Melbourne Primary School, is Flagstaff Crisis Accommodation, supporting people experiencing homelessness through holistic care and case management.

St James' Old Cathedral on the corner of King and Batman Streets is believed to be the oldest standing building in Melbourne. Among other initiatives, their Neighbours meeting Neighbours program aims to increase community connections and tackle loneliness in West Melbourne.

Islamic Council of Victoria on Jeffcott Street host mosque services and is also the peak body representing an estimated 200,000 Victorian Muslims and over 70 member societies. It

offers advocacy and social support services while partnering in over 20 multifaith and multicultural groups.

### **Cultural Spaces**

River Studios in West Melbourne is well known for its industrial location and welcomes small independent creative enterprises. Part of City of Melbourne's Creative Spaces program, it accommodates 60 artist studios, as well as Unit 4 River Studios' factory makerspace.

Nearby are arts, music and entertainment venues including Heritage listed Festival Hall, Witches in Britches, West End Art Space, One Fine Print, The Blender Studios and Dark Horse Entertainment.

Iconic Festival Hall has been pivotal to the lifestyle of West Melbourne since 1913. An early hub for indoor sport and entertainment, it drew visitors from afar to enjoy boxing and pro wrestling matches. Following a fire in 1955, the stadium was rebuilt to host the Olympics. Headline performers such as the Beatles, Johnny Cash, Frank Sinatra, Oasis and Silverchair have entertained crowds here, which today, brings together the Hillsong faith congregation for worship.

### **Parks and Reserves**

West Melbourne enjoys more than 148,138 m<sup>2</sup> of public green space.

The City of Melbourne manages and maintains 14 of these parks: Dynon Road Reserve, Maribrynong River Trail, Wominjeka Park, Eades Park, Hawke & Curzon Street Reserve, Hawke and Adderley Street Park, Howard and William Street Reserve, King & Victoria Street Reserve, Moonee Ponds Creek, Railway Place and Miller Street Reserve, Railway Viewing Platform, Sheperd Bridge Reserve and Wildlife Sanctuary, as well as the Heritage listed Flagstaff Gardens, and Hawke & King Street Reserve.

### **Key Initiatives**

#### ***Work underway in West Melbourne:***

- Development of a new Neighbourhood Plan for West Melbourne focusing on local priorities. Community consultation will occur throughout March and April 2022. West Melbourne residents, businesses, workers, students and visitors are encouraged to participate: [participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au/participate-west-melbourne](https://participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au/participate-west-melbourne).
- City of Melbourne supports large community-led cultural celebrations and entertainment through the Event Partnership Program including:
  - Russian Festival 2021
  - Northside Summer Festival 2021
  - NYE Celebrations at Flagstaff Gardens 2021
  - Arriba Melbourne Mexican Festival 2022
- Assessment and issue of permits in West Melbourne parks and streets in 2021-22 includes 14 public events, 11 private events and six film productions.
- Direct connection with 114 businesses through City of Melbourne's Business Concierge service (2020-22) to advise on financial and hardship support, assist new businesses with their startup, support existing businesses to transform to new operating models and to gain insights from businesses for service improvement and policy development.

- Progress implementation of Council's Affordable Housing Strategy by testing the feasibility of developing council-owned assets as well as collaborating with PDG Corporation to deliver 48 affordable housing units alongside Queen Victoria Market.
- Through City of Melbourne's Creative Spaces program, local arts production is supported through 60 sponsored studio residencies at the 3000m<sup>2</sup> award-winning warehouse conversion, River Studios.
- Consultation with residents and the business community in the development of plans to transform busy Hawke Street that has two small parks with a substantial amount of parallel and median-strip parking along its length into a green linear park, with protected bike lanes and enhanced pedestrian connectivity.
- Progress development of a Spencer Street North Master Plan and a North Melbourne Station Precinct Master Plan (initial concept proposed to Council in 2022).
- Neighbourhood-wide parking and traffic studies to inform future urban planning.
- Continue construction of the West Gate Tunnel elevated roads above Maribyrnong River, Footscray Road, Moonee Ponds Creek and E-Gate – creating a second freeway connection between the city and Melbourne metro's west. The project is led by the Victorian Government in conjunction with Transurban and is scheduled for completion in 2025.
- Deliver progressive Transport and Amenity Program upgrades for priority projects within West Melbourne, North Melbourne and Docklands to mitigate future traffic impacts of West Gate Tunnel, as a partnership between City of Melbourne and the Victorian Government.

***Recent Council investment in West Melbourne:***

- \$45,000 – Arts Grant to support artists including organisation, Kings Artist Run Initiative, which will present work in West Melbourne at various venues throughout 2021-22
- \$110,638 – Property maintenance and urban forest health works in 2021-22
- \$846,340 – Renewal works for roadways, footpaths, flood mitigation, and landscapes in 2021-22
- \$140,000 – Upgrade Maribyrnong River Bike Trail with path resealing and planting in 2022
- \$90,000 – Business Precinct Program grant applied for annually by traders of the North & West Melbourne Precinct Association. Funds enable professional coordination of local member businesses (including business-to-business collaborations, shared website, social media, other marketing, and local activations)
- \$100,000 – Melbourne City Recovery Fund grant in 2021 for North & West Melbourne Precinct Association to further support local businesses managing the economic impacts of COVID-19. A five year Strategic Plan was developed as well as a localised activation campaign (including, refreshed association branding, 'love local' printed tote bags, and 'shop local' gift cards)
- \$100,000 – Annual Neighbourhood House Collaboration funding to support The Centre: Connecting Communities in North & West Melbourne Inc. to deliver community development activities (including homework club, individual welfare support, publishing local newspaper and events)
- \$286,000 – Installation of protected bike lane along Peel Street in 2021 (Hay Market roundabout to Franklin Street)
- \$33,496 – Smooth bluestone ground pavers to enhance accessibility of through-block laneway link between Capel Street and Queen Victoria Market for wheelchairs, prams and delivery trolleys
- \$380,000 – Dynon Road (stage 1) shared user path safety upgrades
- \$400,000 – Dynon Road (stage 2) pedestrian upgrades including Lloyd Street intersection (awaiting VicRoads approval)



**City of Melbourne will progress delivery and strategic work for:**

- **Moonee Ponds Creek Strategic Opportunities Plan**
  - The Moonee Ponds Creek Strategic Opportunities Plan outlines opportunities to revitalise Moonee Ponds Creek with a chain of parklands, new open spaces and wetlands.
  - While the City of Melbourne does not control the Moonee Ponds Creek corridor, City of Melbourne plays an important role in working with the Victorian Government, neighbouring councils and community groups to ensure that Moonee Ponds Creek meets the needs of the community in the future.
  - The Plan recommends eight improvement opportunities across the West Melbourne section of the Creek, which runs from Dynon Road to Footscray Road. These include dedicated cycle connections, redesign of pipe and transport bridges, as well as the creation of ecological wetlands for research, storm water cleansing and forming of tidal barriers.
  
- **Maribyrnong Waterfront – A Way Forward**
  - This paper summarises key findings from background studies and presents next steps and future opportunities for the land adjacent to the bank of the Maribyrnong River, within the industrial area of West Melbourne.
  - The Maribyrnong waterfront area is identified within the future urban renewal precinct of Dynon, and plays an important economic and employment role in the city. An Aboriginal Cultural Values Assessment of the catchment has been undertaken with Traditional Owners, which documents aspects that can be embedded into future precinct planning frameworks.
  - Three principals have been developed to help guide the future of the Waterfront; Adapt to a Changing Context, Regenerate and Celebrate the Maribyrnong River, Improve Connectivity.
  
- **West Melbourne Structure Plan and Planning Scheme C385**
  - The 2018 West Melbourne Structure Plan: Planning for Sustainable Growth in a Distinct Neighbourhood was developed through three phases of consultation with community and other stakeholders to establish a transformational vision for the residential area of the suburb. It proposes Spencer Street to become a vibrant local high street with cafes, shops and restaurants. Prioritised public transport, significant street greening and requirements for buildings to meet high eco-performance standards will showcase the neighbourhood's climate resilience.
  - Melbourne Planning Scheme Amendment C309 (now Amendment C385) introduces new planning controls to guide the use and development of land in West Melbourne and celebrate its character. It was referred to the Minister for Planning for approval in May 2020. A determination is pending.
  
- **Flagstaff Gardens Master Plan**
  - The Flagstaff Gardens are a key component of inner Melbourne's network of parks and contain one of the city's most historic sites, Flagstaff Hill. They are also, on an area basis, the most intensively used public garden in the City of Melbourne.
  - The 2000 Master Plan sets out a long-term vision and guides the future management of this area, dealing with change as well as preservation. The Plan's activation and landscaping principals have underpinned the way City of Melbourne has worked with the Bowls Club, transitioned the tennis courts for

multiple purpose accessible sports, and guided planting decisions over the last decade.

- North and West Melbourne Urban Forest Precinct Plan
  - Developed in collaboration with our local community, North & West Melbourne's urban forest is envisioned in the 2012 - 2024 Plan to be "...alive with colour, diversity and interest. Its shady, layered and connected canopy will provide a retreat for people and wildlife. The varied character of the precinct will be reflected in the character of plantings."
  - The Plan sets out principles and tree canopy targets. It identifies specific greening opportunities in the Market/Flagstaff North Precinct, Flagstaff West Precinct, West Warehouse Precinct, Dynon Growth Area, West Melbourne Port Precinct, and E-gate Precinct.
  
- Open Space Opportunities in North and West Melbourne
  - This 2002 study focuses on the irregular spaces that occur between North and West Melbourne's skewed street grids as opportunities for new open space.
  - The Railway Place & Miller Reserve was designed and delivered as a result of this scoping, and provides an important green break and views for residents and visitors in this part of the neighbourhood.