

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE PLANNING SERVICES REVIEW



Image credit: City of Yarra.



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Foreword

Streets Alive Yarra is a non-profit, volunteer, resident and ratepayer action group with a vision for more trees, wider footpaths and vibrant businesses in thriving neighbourhoods. We see our streets being used by people from all ages, irrespective of whether they walk, roll on a wheelchair, cycle, use public transport or drive. Residents and shoppers should be able to move safely, comfortably, and conveniently around Yarra; and park near shops.



Image credit: OCULUS Landscape Architecture and Urban Design

Streets Alive Yarra was founded in 2017 and now has over 2,900 followers on Facebook. A network of local champions develops concepts and proposals for how to improve their local street or precinct. Streets Alive Yarra is also a member of the Victoria Walks Walkability Action Group network.

Further information is available at: streets-alive-yarra.org/about.

Statutory Planning

Council should improve the service delivered by Statutory Planning by offering improved notifications, i.e.:

- a RSS feed of all planning applications, and
- opt-in email notifications based on filters, e.g. within a certain distance of my home, within a certain neighbourhood, over a certain height.

Both RSS and email are methods of communication which are open and independent of 3rd party control. In particular, a RSS feed would align well with Council's commitment to Open Data as part of its Public Transparency Policy.

Even better would be to offer 'red dot' notifications via a 'City of Yarra' smartphone app. We suggest that such an app should:

- require accounts (for any resident or ratepayer) to be verified,
- offer a wide range of services, including payment of rates or fines, purchase of permits, library card, and community engagement surveys (Your Say Yarra).

Strategic Planning

Council should improve the service delivered by Strategic Planning by engaging with a much wider range of people, particularly those who we believe are under-represented, including future residents, younger people, people renting in Yarra, and those who don't yet live in Yarra.

We suggest the Council's existing Planning Scheme is an outcome of engagements that over-represented one cohort, namely older property owners. We suggest that Council should focus more on the hundreds of thousands of people who would like to live in Yarra, and acknowledge that significantly increasing our population density would allow us to do much more, e.g. underground power lines, expand the tree canopy, acquire land for new green open space, convert asphalt to pocket parks, etc (via increased rates), as well as increase the customer base for each local businesses, enable more services to be reached via walking or biking, reduce carbon emissions from transport, reduce stormwater runoff per capita, etc.

We speculate that if Council did engage with a much wider range of people, then Strategic Planning would recommend a population target of 300,000 by 2050, and recommend revisions to our Planning Scheme, Overlays, and Heritage Strategy, to enable the necessary housing to be constructed, i.e. 'legalise Paris' across the municipality, allowing beautiful, high-quality 6-storey mixed-use buildings to deliver ground-floor retail, two floors of offices, and three floors of residences, as long as the development complies with CASBE performance standards, and the Future Home high quality design standards.

Concluding remarks

Streets Alive Yarra supports the review of Planning Services, because we believe it would help build a more beautiful, liveable and accessible city. We would be delighted to provide further detail or explanation of the themes raised in this document.

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