Rethinking Town Centres as Social Hubs

City of Whittlesea
Leading Practice Series
Local Town Centres
October 2017

Steve O’Brien
Director Planning and Major Projects
The City of Whittlesea

The City of Whittlesea is the 3rd largest growing municipality in Victoria.

Approximately 207,881 people live in the City of Whittlesea.

Approximately 353,910 are expected to live in the City of Whittlesea.

The City of Whittlesea is the 4th fastest growing municipality in Victoria.
Growing Pains

67% work outside City of Whittlesea
(2017 Household Survey)

DORMITORY SUBURBS
Growing Pains

62% own multiple cars
(2017 Household Survey)

CAR DEPENDANCY
Growing Pains

“Need more local schools.”
(2015 Household Survey)
“Any unique local businesses left are not being given assistance to be visible, how can they compete with the big concrete boxes”

(Skye of Mernda: Voices of Outer Suburbs)
Town Centres in Whittlesea

19 existing town centres

16 new town centres
Roles of Centres

- Social hub - places to meet
- Community hub - civic facilities
- Local businesses and employment
- Access to food and services
- Civic Pride / Identity
- Housing diversity
Roles of Centres

Small centre: Corner store/ cafe
Roles of Centres

Neighbourhood Centre: Main Street model

Laurimar Town Centre
Hazel Glen Drive, Laurimar
What’s Working

Colocation of passive open space for recreation, gathering and local character

Colocation of community facilities assists creation of a community hub

Range of retail opportunities endourages local businesses and employment

Strong tree planting in main street improves character and pedestrian experience

Integration of existing natural features such as River Red Gums greatly improve sense of place and local identity

Built form assists legibility of entries and street enclosure
What’s Not Working

Traffic dominance and poor pedestrian environment

Dominance of signage

Inactive facades and internal fronting retail limits street activation

Servicing and storage areas of supermarket dominate facades

Lack of activation and seating to encourage street activity

Insufficient mix of uses or local walkable catchment
Town Centre Principles

Key Ingredients of successful local centres: maximising opportunities for social exchange

Walkability
Mixed use
Inclusive for all

High quality public space
Active edges
Cultural expression
Mixed Use
Inclusive
Active Edges
Early Delivery

Display Home Model
Selandra Rise Community Centre

Cafe and Meeting Space
Aurora Sprout Community Hub

Relocatable community centre
Whittlesea township

Shipping Container Pop Ups
Christchurch, New Zealand
Case Study

Total Area - 5ha
Length of main street - 250m
Width of main street - 20m

Traffic Volumes
Hazel Glen Drive - 12300 vpd (2014)
Street Based Design
Active Edges to Spill Onto and Gather
Thank you