MUNICIPAL STRATEGIC STATEMENT

21.01 MUNICIPAL PROFILE – MOONEE VALLEY TODAY

Location & Regional Context

Close to Melbourne’s Central Business District and nestled between Melbourne’s northern and western suburbs, Moonee Valley combines a culturally rich community, history and natural environment in its diverse suburbs.

The City’s boundaries are in part its major environmental features – the Maribyrnong River and Moonee Ponds Creek and their associated parks and reserves. In the north, the interstate train line – parallel to the Western Ring Road – continues the City’s boundary. In the south, the boundary forms on the outside of Flemington Racecourse and Racecourse Road.

While Moonee Valley’s population capacity will ultimately be constrained by land availability, it is important to recognise that the municipality is located in a major population growth region. Projections prepared by DPCD shows that the population of the Western Region is forecast to increase by some 250,000 persons over the coming 25 years. Significant population growth is also projected in municipalities to the north and north-east of Moonee Valley (Hume, Whittlesea).

Regional population growth in both the West and North has the potential to generate significant economic benefits for Moonee Valley. These opportunities stem from the increased expenditure in the municipality through shopping and visitation from residents of the region (which supports existing jobs and generates new local employment) and industry development opportunities through regional synergies and leveraging off new technologies.

People

In June 2007, the estimated resident population of the City was about 112,500 people. Allowing for the recent municipal boundary change in the south, it is estimated that the June 2008 population for the City was approximately 107,000 persons. In Moonee Valley a growth of about 3,250 dwellings in the ten years to 2001 has been needed just to keep the population constant. As the City establishes itself as a more inner-city municipality, there are now less families but more couples and singles.

Population projections prepared for Council (Id Consulting, May 2008) show that Moonee Valley is expected to experience relatively modest population growth, at a rate of 0.4% pa over the period 2006 to 2031. The municipality’s population is projected to increase by approximately 10,420 persons over the coming 25 years, from its 2006 level of 106,560 persons to about 117,000 persons in 2031. The projected population growth rate is half the rate forecast for metropolitan Melbourne (0.8% pa) over this period (DSE Victoria in Future).

The age profile of Moonee Valley is broadly similar to metropolitan averages, although there are slightly lower proportions of 0 -11 year olds and 12 - 24 year olds, while the proportion of people aged over 60 years is higher. The population is ageing and the city has a greater proportion of older people compared to the Melbourne average. One of the most notable trends has been the loss of 25 – 34 year olds. Between the period 2001 and 2006, the City of Moonee Valley lost 1,944 people within this age group. This is likely to reflect housing opportunity and affordability. People from this age group are likely to be accessing family type housing in the areas in the west, such as Melton, Brimbank and Wyndham. Despite an ageing population, birth rates have been relatively stable since 2001. In the 2006/07 financial year 1,483 babies were born in the municipality.

Natural Environment
The natural assets in Moonee Valley are largely located along the western and eastern borders. To the west, the Maribyrnong River is bordered by extensive parkland and forms a natural focus for Moonee Valley residents. The Moonee Ponds Creek forms the eastern boundary of Moonee Valley, and along part of its length runs the Moonee Ponds Creek Trail which provides a recreational path for cyclists and walkers, connecting many reserves, parks and sporting grounds along the creek.

Parkland adjoining the waterways contains indigenous vegetation remnants and provides habitat for native fauna. The waterways are therefore an important part of the city’s environment, linking major parks and open spaces across the City. The Maribyrnong Valley is important to Melbourne with restaurants, boats, walking and bike trails bringing people back to the river.

**Built Environment**

Council’s streetscapes are strong features of all parts of the City. Major boulevards complement tree-lined streets and neighbourhood shopping centres. A strong sense of Moonee Valley’s history can be seen in the many preserved older houses, shops and civic buildings. The municipality can be divided into three distinct geographic precincts.

*Southern Precinct*

Gentrification has changed the once traditionally working-class, inner-city suburbs in the City’s south, such as Flemington and Ascot Vale. Originally many residents residing in these suburbs worked in traditional manufacturing sectors, in addition to the horse racing industry. Today these suburbs offer high quality period housing close to the Central Business District. These suburbs include a number of local activity centres (Racecourse Rd, Flemington, Union Rd Ascot Vale) and have good access to fixed-rail public transport.

*Middle Precinct*

Moonee Valley’s middle-suburbs (Moonee Ponds, Essendon, Strathmore and Niddrie) have wide boulevards and historic mansions. These suburbs are home to some of Melbourne’s major private schools and shopping strips such as Puckle Street in Moonee Ponds, Mt Alexander Road in Essendon and North Essendon, Keilor Road in Niddrie and Napier Street in Strathmore. Housing styles are traditionally homes on larger lots, with established gardens.

*Northern Precinct*

Housing development in Moonee Valley’s northern and western suburbs (Avondale Heights, East Keilor and Airport West) has been more recent, mostly since the 1970’s. Many settling in these suburbs were part of Melbourne’s post-war migration. The housing styles are typical of other Melbourne suburbs developed in this era, with larger blocks and traditional three bedroom brick veneer homes.

**Housing**

The projected population growth for Moonee Valley will be concentrated in infill developments such as Valley Lakes and Ascot Chase, as well as around Moonee Ponds given its designation as a Principal Activity Centre under Melbourne 2030, and the other activity centres. House prices are impacting on affordability of living in Moonee Valley. Median house prices have more than doubled in the ten years to 2005. The City’s services, facilities and infrastructure – such as child care centres, schools, aged care, shops, public transport and employment – all influence who moves in and who moves out.

The number of dwellings in Moonee Valley is increasing. In the 5 years from 2001 to 2006, dwelling numbers have increased by 1,021. Household size in Moonee Valley has decreased marginally from an average of 2.51 people per dwelling in 1991 to 2.45 in 2006. This is projected to decrease to 2.33 by 2031. Residential property prices over the past few years have risen at a relatively fast rate in comparison to the Melbourne metropolitan area. The median house price increased from $156,000 in 1996 to $440,000 in 2006.
Economic Development

The Moonee Valley Economic Development Strategy 2008 presents a framework for the future development of the economy in the municipality. It adopts the principle of economic sustainability in encouraging responsible development and growth by maximising the economic capacity of existing resources and meeting the social, cultural and environmental needs and expectations of the community.

Moonee Valley is well positioned in terms of its skills base. Moonee Valley’s occupational structure shows a strong and growing professional or white collar workforce base. ABS Census data for 2006 shows that 48% of Moonee Valley residents were occupied as managers and administrators, professionals and associate professionals (up from 45% in 2001), compared to 43% occupied in these categories across metropolitan Melbourne (up from 41% in 2001).

Most residents, who work, commute to jobs either within Moonee Valley, or neighbouring local authority areas – 20% work in Moonee Valley, 27% in the City of Melbourne and 22% in one of the other four neighbouring Council areas.) This mixed and generally high skilled workforce base shows that Moonee Valley is well positioned to support a wide range of industrial and commercial activity and this emphasises the Moonee Valley’s competitive advantage as a fringe CBD location.

Community facilities

Moonee Valley has a range of excellent parks and open space including Queens Park, Woodlands Park, Buckley Park and Boeing Reserve; the Maribyrnong River and adjoining parkland, Moonee Ponds Creek; recreational and sporting facilities including Windy Hill, Moonee Valley Racing Club, Moonee Valley Athletic Track, the Ascot Vale Leisure Centre and proximity to Flemington Racecourse. Arts and cultural attractions are also well represented by the Clocktower Theatre and Incinerator Arts Complex.

Transport & Access

The municipality has excellent road and rail (both tram and trains) linkages to Melbourne’s CBD, Melbourne Airport, CityLink and the Western Ring Road. Efficient transport linkages and access are important requirements for residents and for businesses looking to locate in a particular area.