

Management report to Council

Agenda item 6.7

Planning stimulus and recovery initiatives in response to COVID-19

Council

Presenter: Alison Leighton, General Manager Strategy, Planning and Climate Change

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Purpose and background

1. The purpose of the report is to seek endorsement of the City of Melbourne's planning stimulus and recovery initiatives in response to COVID-19, including its support to the Building Victoria's Recovery Taskforce (BVRT) by the Victorian Government.
2. On 24 April 2020, the Victorian Government announced the BVRT. The BVRT, overseen by the Minister for Planning and Housing Richard Wynne and Treasurer Tim Pallas, will investigate planning and investment opportunities to boost Victoria's building and development industry over the short, medium and long term. The BVRT was announced in conjunction with Ministerial planning approval of four new projects, located within the City of Melbourne, worth more than \$1.5 billion dollars. All four projects had prior Council support.
3. Council, in its roles as Responsible Authority and recommending referral authority, provides unique technical expertise and plays a crucial role in assessing development proposals in and around the Central City, due to the complex nature and scale of higher density proposals.

Key issues

4. Management seeks to work closely with the BVRT and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), contributing at a strategic level regarding planning reform, as well inputting into significant priority planning projects to ensure that localised, place specific and high quality outcomes are achieved in the City of Melbourne.
5. The current and future impacts of COVID-19 present an opportunity for intensified innovation and reform, not the unlocking of evidence based policy. Planning systems and processes must adapt and innovate in a measured way to secure ongoing high quality land use and development outcomes in the city which contribute to maintaining its value and distinctiveness long term.
6. Management has identified many opportunities through ongoing work towards a reimagined statutory planning (development approvals) service model, which alongside elements of Better Regulation Victoria's '*Planning and Building Approvals Process Review*' could enhance and improve the planning and development process for all parties involved.
7. Initiatives where Council can, in collaboration with other stakeholders, expedite the process and reduce timeframes while maintaining the rigour of planning assessments and quality of outcomes have been identified in three key areas:
 - 7.1. **Land use, development and construction approvals** - expedite 'shovel ready' state and locally significant projects and subsequent post planning permit approvals such as construction related permits; and collaborate with state government to progress improvements to the planning and building approvals system .
 - 7.2. **Approved projects yet to commence construction:** identify and facilitate the 3.8million square metres of already approved and permitted projects to proceed to construction and define opportunities to resolve post permit conditions to facilitate project delivery.
 - 7.3. **Strategic planning and policy:** progressing Structure Plans and site based Amendments in the urban renewal areas, as well as advocate for priority, catalytic infrastructure which will unlock investment; request expedited gazettal of adopted Amendments to provide clarity and certainty for industry and the community; advocate to the Victorian Government to embed strategic policy outcomes as a condition of fast-tracking or Government investment; and work with DELWP and Councils to seek efficiencies in the Planning Scheme and the Planning Scheme Amendment process .

Recommendation from management

8. That Council:
- 8.1. Work in unison with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and the Building Victoria's Recovery Taskforce (BVRT) to expedite assessment of 'shovel ready' state significant projects, ensuring a Council decision is on the public record prior to Ministerial approval.
 - 8.2. Advocate for the Victorian Governments Review of Victoria's Building System to be expedited and aligned with planning stimulus.
 - 8.3. Work with the BVRT, industry and land owners to explore ways to maximise commencement of the approximate 3.8 million square metres of approved development yet to commenced construction.
 - 8.4. Establish a City of Melbourne fast track process for 'shovel ready' projects that ensures rigour of planning assessments and quality of outcomes is maintained while reducing timeframes and expediting decision making.
 - 8.5. Establish City of Melbourne criteria to identify and prioritise assessment of 'shovel ready' projects of local significance.
 - 8.6. Undertake a review of Council's post planning approvals processes, such as construction related permits and approvals.
 - 8.7. Establish a City of Melbourne fast track process for post-planning approvals, such as construction related permits and approvals, to prioritise and expedite 'shovel ready' state and locally significant projects.
 - 8.8. Work with the Victorian Government to implement a re-imagined statutory planning (development approvals) service model and other improvements to the planning and building approvals system that would:
 - 8.8.1. reduce development approval timeframes and project risk for applicants;
 - 8.8.2. enable more meaningful engagement with the community; and
 - 8.8.3. result in better outcomes for the city.
 - 8.9. Seek Council input into the principles guiding planning reform being considered by the BVRT and Victorian Government departments, and request early input and review of any planning reform which may affect the Central City.
 - 8.10. Prioritise planning in urban renewal areas - Arden, Macaulay and Fishermans Bend, releasing strategic plans to provide community and development certainty and build investment momentum.
 - 8.11. Work with the relevant Victorian Government Departments to progress site based amendments for catalytic sites in Arden and FBURA Employment Precinct, which will facilitate early high quality, sustainable developments and work with DELWP to streamline approval process.
 - 8.12. Work with the relevant Victorian Government Departments to identify and help deliver catalytic public infrastructure for the renewal areas, including active and public transport, community infrastructure and flood management systems which provide the pre-conditions for their renewal and the creation of liveable neighbourhoods.
 - 8.13. Work with DELWP to identify opportunities to streamline and simplify the Melbourne Planning Scheme as part of its translation into the new Planning Policy Framework. Work with inner metropolitan Councils to review the Planning Scheme Amendment process to identify potential efficiencies in terms of cost and time, increased transparency and ways to secure and protect intended strategic outcomes.
 - 8.14. Work with inner metropolitan Councils to review the Planning Scheme Amendment process to identify potential efficiencies in terms of cost and time, increased transparency and ways to secure and protect intended strategic outcomes.
 - 8.15. Share with the Victorian Government the evidence based policy work undertaken through Annual Planning Initiatives on social and affordable housing, environmentally sustainable development, and student housing and advocate for state wide planning provisions to provide a level playing field for industry, and certainty of outcome for the public.

Attachments:

1. Supporting Attachment (Page 3 of 3)

Supporting Attachment

Legal

1. No direct legal issues arise from the recommendation from management.

Finance

2. The recommendations in this report will require a redirection of resources to facilitate delivery.

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 direct or indirect interest in relation to the matter of the report.

Health and Safety

4. In developing this proposal, OHS issues have been considered. Providing clarity and certainty within the planning system to the industry and community ensures development is appropriate and achieves broader city outcomes in line with Council policy, including the wellbeing of the broad community.

Stakeholder consultation

5. Councillors and management have met with the Chairs of the BVRT and management have met with both DELWP and VPA's FastTrack team.

Relation to Council policy

6. The recommendations within this report represent expedited delivery of current Annual Plan Initiatives and reflect the endorsed policy and strategy positions of Council. All Amendments referred to have been endorsed by Council.

Environmental sustainability

7. The recommendations include reference to achieving high ESD standards in all developments being considered by the BVRT. City of Melbourne will share the work achieved as part of the Green our City Action Plan which establishes standards for ESD and greening and will, if implemented, reduce emissions. This could significantly reduce the emissions of developments coming forward in this time.