
17 March 2023

Greater Shepparton City Council,
council@shepparton.vic.gov.au

RE: SUBMISSION Possible Sale of Land for Affordable Housing – High and Rowe Streets Car Park.

The Committee for Greater Shepparton (C4GS) supports the potential sale, lease, or gift of the High and Rowe Streets Car Park (the southeast corner block of 84-90 High Street, Shepparton) for future mixed use including affordable housing development.

C4GS strongly supports the provision of a variety of housing typologies, including developments which facilitate opportunities for social, affordable, key worker and executive housing in the one development.

Our position reflects the following key points.

1. Market signal to encourage investment in well-designed and well-located housing.

C4GS recognises Greater Shepparton City Council's current community consultation is the first stage in a two-step process.

C4GS believes this first stage is a vital step in providing the market with a clear signal that the site is available for development. Interested private and public investors and developers can commence the process of assessing the site, exploring potential designs and if desired, can seek public and Council feedback on their ideas as part of their due-diligence process.

The second stage will commence if and/or when council receives an application to develop the site and should involve further community consultation to provide feedback on the development proposal. We believe the community should have confidence that if a proposal proceeds to an application for development, the second stage of the process will provide adequate safeguards for community feedback.

Moreover, we recognise that GSCC has provided multiple strategies and plans to guide future development, and recent events including October 2022 floods have demonstrated the strength of work by agencies including the Goulburn-Broken CMA to understand risks to development.

C4GS welcomes the process for the High and Rowe Street car park site, and we encourage council to undertake the equivalent process for more sites in the central urban precinct.

2. Affordable housing is key to attracting and activating a regional workforce.

The [Specification of income ranges](#) (23 June 2022) highlights the wide range of households included in the definition of affordable housing in Victoria. In regional Victoria this includes a family with dependent children and an annual combined income of up to \$97,980 and a single adult earning up to \$46,660¹.

Greater Shepparton's median weekly incomes are 11-20% below the state average at \$712 (equivalent to \$37,043 annual salary) for personal and \$1759 for family (equivalent to \$91,468 annual salary), and both medians are below the affordable housing thresholds.²

Whether these individuals and families work part time or full time, are combining study or apprenticeships with work, beginning their careers, caring for others, or transitioning to retirement, they are vital to the workforce and the ongoing economic strength of Greater Shepparton. To ensure this continued contribution, the available housing stock must reflect the needs of different household types to ensure people can be appropriately accommodated in our community.

Greater Shepparton's supply of housing at price points that are affordable to renters and buyers in this cohort is a key factor in attracting, retaining, and growing our region's workforce and addressing current and future chronic workforce shortages.

3. Record low unemployment underscores need to eliminate obstacles to participation.

Greater Shepparton's education, employment and key services including childcare are concentrated within a few kilometres of the CBD. An increase in the supply of affordable housing options within Greater Shepparton's urban precinct is anticipated to result in an increased participation in education and employment and lift the hours and availability of key workers and staff. This is vital to supporting the sustainability and growth of our local industries.

4. Catalyst for more housing, including affordable and for key workers.

Greater Shepparton is competing with other regional centres to attract key workers and skilled professionals including health specialists, nurses, aged care, advanced manufacturing, freight and logistics, vets, teachers, and engineers.

C4GS has been a partner in the delivery of Greater Shepparton's Community Connector Program (CCP) since its commencement in early 2021. Across the two years CCP has supported approximately 500 professionals to relocate to Greater Shepparton to take up roles in more than 90 different local businesses – with more than half the participants relocating from intrastate and interstate.

¹ [Planning and Environment Act 1987 Section 3AB – Specification of Income Ranges, 23 June 2022](#)

² [Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 Census all person Quickstats](#)

Data collected from this cohort indicates only 3% want a free-standing house in a greenfield residential development. In contrast, almost 9 out of 10 would prefer an apartment or townhouse in the CBD. This data is consistent with findings from across regional Australia³.

Regional towns and cities that can provide housing stock to meet these preferences are winning the talent war – and their communities benefit from increased access to key services and local economic growth.

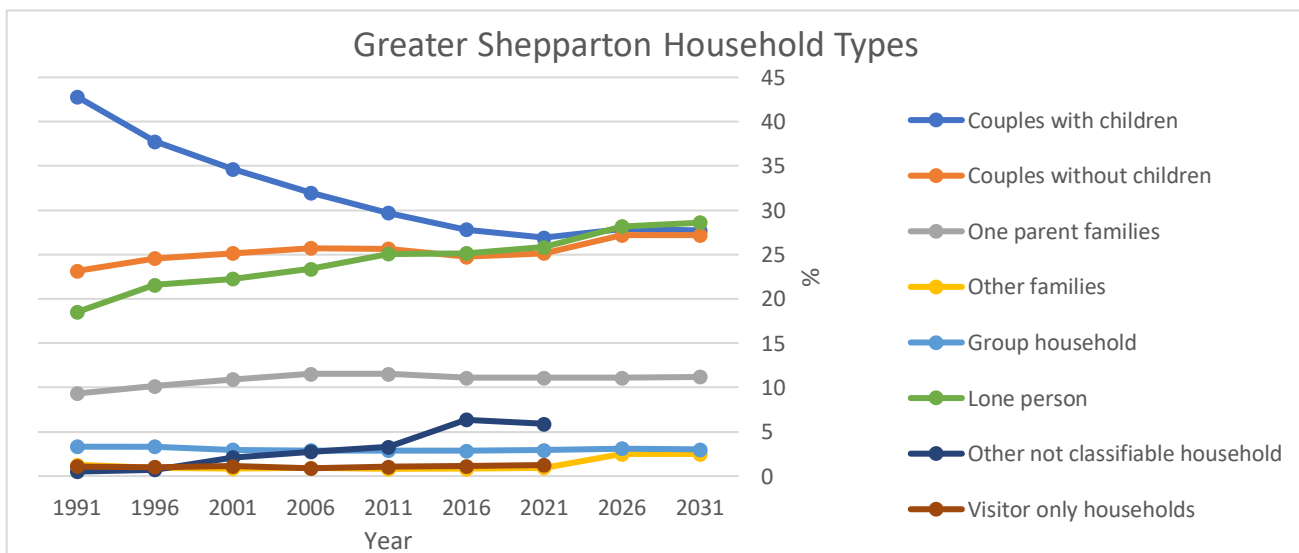
C4GS is aware of a range of housing development models⁴ in metro and regional centres⁵ that are combining a variety of housing types and providing opportunities for social, affordable, and key worker and executive housing in the one development.

Many of these developments are progressing without government funding, are incorporating sustainable housing principles, are increasingly sought after by first home and younger home buyer segments as well as values-driven buyers, and are available in regional [cities](#).

C4GS strongly supports the release of sites within Greater Shepparton’s urban precinct to attract investment in well-designed, well-located, multi-user developments.

5. Greater Shepparton’s households are changing faster than our housing options.

In the next five years, there will be more single person households in Greater Shepparton than couples with children⁶. Single person households, couples without children, and couples with



³ [Regional Australia Institute – Building the good life – meeting the demand for regional housing](#)

⁴ An example includes [Nightingale Housing](#). Co-founder Jeremy McLeod is currently leading the cohort of University of Melbourne Master of Architecture students exploring housing in Greater Shepparton.

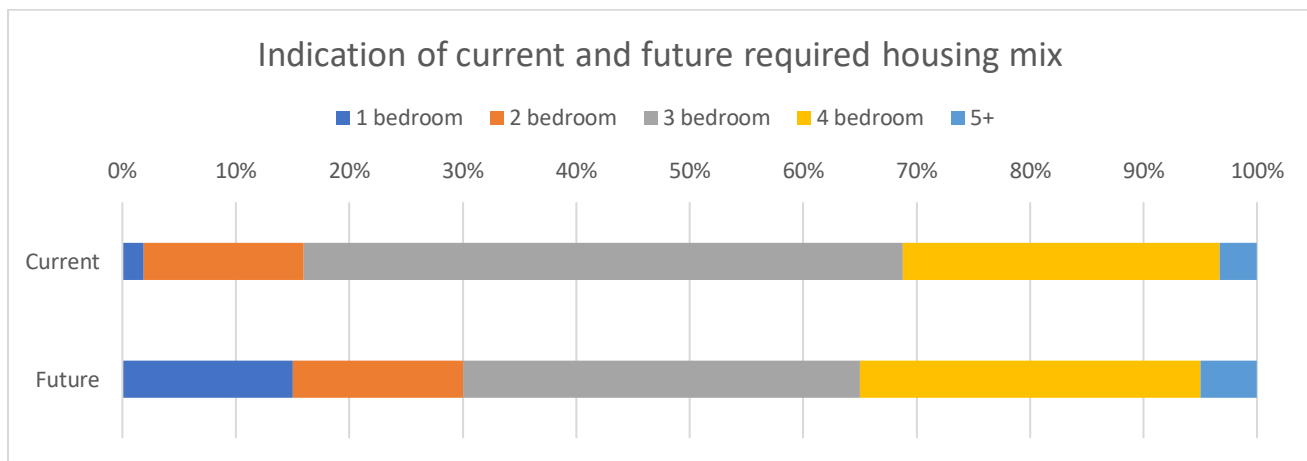
⁵ [Calls to build more one-bedroom apartments ... in Dubbo?](#), SMH 14 September 2022, ‘Dubbo has three development-approved high-rise unit blocks in the works – two of which are almost sold out off the plan, an indication there was demand as well as a “change in attitude”, Dubbo mayor Mathew Dickerson said.

⁶ <https://profile.id.com.au/shepparton/households>

children will each make up around 27% of household types. The single biggest shift has been the decline in households comprising couples with children.

In contrast, Shepparton’s housing supply is still dominated by 3+ bedroom houses (>80%) increasingly located away from key services, retail, education, and employment.

In March 2022 the CCP commissioned *Greater Shepparton Key Workers Housing Analysis – Final Summary Report*. The report highlighted the current and future imbalance of housing available in Greater Shepparton and further underscores the opportunity for Greater Shepparton to optimise the use of sites within the urban precinct to address the shortage of higher density housing opportunities.



Source: *Greater Shepparton Key Workers Housing Analysis – Final Summary Report, 2022*

The release of sites within Greater Shepparton’s urban precinct can be a catalyst for housing developments that provide a greater mix of options for a more diverse mix of households, and providing the amenity sought by these households.

6. Step change required to address car parking challenges.

We note the concerns raised regarding the potential loss of part of the current car parking area.

While development of the proposed site could incorporate car parking options, if Greater Shepparton continues its existing development trends (increased development around the edges of the city) the demand for car parking in the CBD during business hours and at other times will escalate.

Encouraging higher density development in the CBD that eliminates, or at least moderates, the need for car ownership can mitigate the projected demand for car parking in Greater Shepparton over time. Car share models available in other cities and regional centres, provide a well understood alternate to personal car ownership – and are rapidly becoming the preferred ownership model for younger cohorts.

While these trends are yet to emerge in Greater Shepparton, they can and should be encouraged through the design and location of new housing developments. At the same time, it is important to retain the existing supply of car parking.

C4GS supports mixed use development above the proposed site that does not compromise the supply of ground level carparking.

Conclusion

The Committee for Greater Shepparton supports the process for the investigating the potential sale, lease or gift of the High and Rowe Streets Car Park (the southeast corner block of 84-90 High Street, Shepparton) for future mixed use including affordable housing development for the reasons outlined in our submission.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposal, and we welcome the opportunity to present to Council on these matters and in support of our submission.

Yours sincerely

Leigh Findlay
Chair
Committee for Greater Shepparton

Linda Nieuwenhuizen
CEO
Committee for Greater Shepparton