Strategic Property Framework

2025

Contents

Executive Summary

The Strategic Property Framework (SPF) provides Whitehorse City Council with a structured, long-term approach to managing its property portfolio. With over 400 council-owned properties valued at more than $3.5 billion, this portfolio is integral to delivering essential services, supporting infrastructure, and enhancing the municipality's liveability. The SPF ensures that property decisions – whether acquisitions, disposals, or developments – are strategic, transparent, and aligned with community priorities and Council objectives.

Through the SPF, the Council aims to:

- **Strengthen Community Wellbeing:** Property actions are guided by the goal of creating vibrant, accessible, and equitable spaces that respond to community needs.
- **Promote Sustainability and Resilience:** Decisions prioritise environmental stewardship, adaptability, and proactive responses to demographic and urban changes.
- **Enhance Governance and Accountability:** Clear criteria, robust frameworks, and ongoing stakeholder engagement ensure transparent and effective decision-making.
- **Optimise Portfolio Performance:** The framework maximises value through efficient resource allocation, aligning with financial sustainability and Council goals.

The SPF is organised into four key parts:

1. **Introduction and Context:** Establishes the framework's purpose, scope, and alignment with Council's strategic objectives, setting the foundation for informed property management.
2. **Guiding Principles, Objectives and Approach:** Defines the principles and objectives that underpin all property decisions, ensuring a consistent approach across acquisitions, disposals, and developments.
3. **Property Functions:** Details the decision-making processes, criteria, and methodologies for each property function, supported by flowcharts and evaluation tables.
4. **Portfolio Management and Evaluation**: Outlines strategies for regular monitoring, adapting to changing needs, and maintaining alignment with Council priorities.

The SPF is grounded in the principle that all property decisions must deliver meaningful benefit to the Whitehorse community. Whether through preserving open space, enhancing services, or responding to future needs, the SPF ensures community priorities remain at the centre of Council's property portfolio decisions.

By implementing the SPF, Whitehorse City Council positions itself to proactively manage its property portfolio, ensuring every asset contributes to a resilient, vibrant, and thriving municipality. This framework reflects the Council's commitment to meeting the evolving needs of its community while safeguarding long-term sustainability and value.

Section 1: Introduction and Context

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Purpose

The SPF is designed to provide Whitehorse City Council with a comprehensive and proactive approach to managing its property portfolio. This framework ensures that all property-related decisions – whether acquisitions, disposals, or developments – are aligned with the Council's strategic objectives, supporting the delivery of community services, infrastructure, open space, sustainable growth, and long-term financial stewardship.

By establishing clear principles, criteria, and processes, the SPF enables the Council to navigate complex challenges such as urbanisation, demographic changes, and shifting community needs. It ensures that property actions are not only transparent and accountable but also guided by a commitment to optimising public value and ensuring inclusive engagement with community members, local stakeholders, and service partners. Through this structured approach, the SPF positions the Council to make informed decisions that balance immediate service delivery needs with the municipality's future aspirations.

1.1.2 Scope and Application

The SPF applies to Council-owned and managed properties that contribute to community services, municipal operations, and long-term strategic planning. It guides decisions on acquisitions, disposals, and developments to optimise the property portfolio in alignment with Council's broader objectives.

The SPF also guides how Council engages with stakeholders across the community. This includes involving residents, local organisations, and service providers in identifying needs, shaping proposals, and understanding the implications of property-related decisions.

While the SPF supports strategic decision-making, it does not set land use priorities. Decisions about the preferred use of land, such as open space, community infrastructure or redevelopment, are guided by other strategic planning documents, including the Open Space Strategy and the Community Infrastructure Plan (in development).

The framework does not apply to properties under external management, routine lease agreements, or statutory transfers or disposals mandated by legislation.

1.1.3 Structure of the Framework

The SPF is structured to provide a clear, actionable guide for property decision-making across three core property functions:

1. **Acquisitions:** Evaluating and securing properties that align with Council’s service delivery needs, community priorities, and long-term growth objectives.
2. **Disposals:** Identifying and releasing underutilised or surplus properties to optimise the portfolio and reinvest in higher-priority projects and services.
3. **Developments:** Planning, constructing, or repurposing properties to support infrastructure goals, stimulate economic growth, and meet evolving community needs.

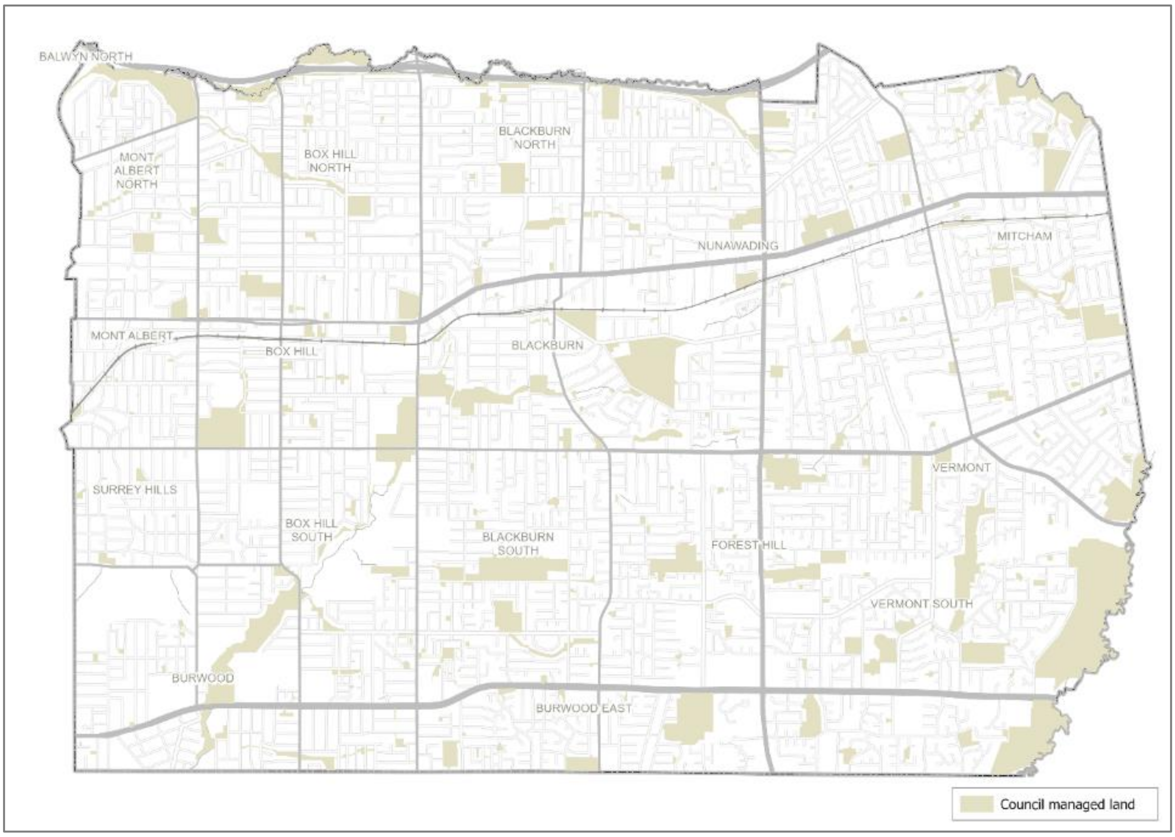
Each section includes detailed methods and decision-making criteria to ensure property actions are strategic, evidence-based, and aligned with community and financial objectives.

1.2 Context

1.2.1 Overview of the Whitehorse Property Portfolio

Whitehorse City Council oversees a diverse property portfolio of over 400 council-owned properties, collectively valued at more than $3.5 billion. This portfolio encompasses civic buildings, community centres, libraries, parks, reserves, operational facilities, and public open spaces. These assets are integral to meeting community needs across health, education, recreation, and cultural activities, while also playing a crucial role in delivering essential services, supporting infrastructure, and enhancing the municipality's overall liveability.

A map of the Whitehorse municipality is shown below.



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1.2.2 Strategic Alignment

The SPF aligns with Whitehorse City Council's key strategies to ensure property decisions are evidence-based, community-centred, and strategically driven. It ensures property decisions are guided by and contribute to the delivery of Council's strategic directions, community vision, and relevant State policy and planning frameworks. The SPF ensures land use decisions are made with a clear understanding of how they support Council's broader objectives, whether related to infrastructure, service delivery, environmental and open space outcomes, financial stewardship or urban planning. The table below highlights how the SPF integrates with these strategic documents to support coordinated and impactful outcomes.

Strategic Document	Key Objectives	Alignment
Council Plan	Promote sustainable development, enhance community wellbeing, and ensure financial sustainability.	Ensures property decisions align with goals for infrastructure, sustainability, and community services.
Health and Wellbeing Plan	Create healthy, accessible public spaces and improve social equity.	Guides acquisitions and developments that enhance public health and accessibility, ensuring inclusive and equitable outcomes.
Community Infrastructure Plan *(in development)*	Plan and deliver community infrastructure that meets evolving service needs, supports equitable access, and promotes sustainability.	Informs prioritisation of investment in new and existing facilities, supports co-location and shared use, and guides adaptable, accessible, and sustainable infrastructure provisions.
Open Space Strategy	Expand, improve and diversify open space to meet the needs of a growing, changing population while protecting natural values.	Directs land use decisions to help address open space gaps, enhance quality and access, and deliver environmentally resilient outcomes.
Financial Plan	Maintain financial sustainability by optimising resource allocation and managing costs.	Promotes fiscally responsible property management, balancing investment with returns and lifecycle cost considerations.
Asset Plan	Preserve and optimise Council assets for long-term community use and benefit.	Establishes a structured approach to maintaining and enhancing the value and utility of Council-owned properties.
Community Engagement Policy	Engage with diverse community, key stakeholders and internal staff to inform key decisions, actions and strategies.	Ensures property decisions align with approach to community engagement, including legislative requirements.
Climate Response Strategy	Support climate action, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable land use.	Prioritises environmentally responsible property practices, including sustainable development and green space preservation.
Investment and Economic Development Strategy	Foster local economic growth, attract investment, and create employment opportunities.	Directs property decisions toward projects that stimulate economic activity, such as mixed-use developments and innovation hubs.

Strategic Document	Key Objectives	Alignment
Local Government Act 2020	Uphold accountability, transparency, and legal compliance in Council operations.	Provides a governance framework that ensures property decisions adhere to regulatory requirements and best practices.
Planning and Environment Act 1987	Support integrated planning and development that aligns with broader urban planning goals.	Ensures property activities comply with planning regulations and contribute to cohesive urban development.

1.2.3 Governance and Oversight

Effective governance is fundamental to all property-related activities, ensuring Council decisions are transparent, accountable, and aligned with strategic objectives. The SPF governance framework is embedded within the broader governance structure of Whitehorse City Council, providing a robust foundation that defines clear responsibilities, outlines decision-making processes, and ensures compliance with established standards.

Key Governance Elements

Transparency and Accountabiltiy

Property decisions are documented and communicated to stakeholders, including the Council, community and relevant authorities.

Reporting mechanisms ensure regular updates on property actions, outcomes, and alignment with strategic objectives.

Reviewing and endorsing significant property prosals via Council resolution.

Compliance with Legislative and Policy Requirements

All property actions comply with applicable laws, including the Local Government Act 2020, Planning and Environment Act 1987, and other relevant legislation.

Adherence to Council policies ensures consistency with long-term goals and governance standards.

Delegated Authority Framework

Property-related decisions are made within a clear framework of delegated authority.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is authorised to approve actions within financial and operational thresholds, with significant decisions escalated to the Council for approval.

Delegated authority processes are regularly reviewed to reflect evolving governance needs and legislative updates.

Risk Management

Comprehensive risk assessments are conducted for acquisitions, disposals, and developments, focusing on financial, legal, environmental, and reputational risks.

Mitigation plans are developed for identified risks, with periodic reviews to address emerging challenges.

A proactive approach ensures resilience in property management and safeguards community interests.

Community Engagement

Governance processes include mechanisms for engaging community members, local businesses, government agencies, and other stakeholders.

Feedback is incorporated into property decisions to enhance community trust and alignment with public priorities.

Conflict of Interest Management

Decision-makers are required to declare and manage conflicts of interest to maintain the integrity of governance processes.

Policies and procedures are in place to ensure impartiality and fairness in all property-related decisions.

1.2.4 Key Responsibilities by Function

The SPF defines key responsibilities for managing acquisitions, disposals, and developments to ensure coordinated, effective, and accountable property management. The table below outlines responsibilities for each property function, ensuring all actions align with the Council's broader objectives.

Function	Key Responsibilities
Acquisitions	• Identify and assess potential properties for acquisition based on service delivery needs, strategic priorities, and community benefits. • Conduct comprehensive due diligence, including legal, financial, and environmental assessments. • Prepare and present property acquisition proposals for Council approval. • Ensure acquisitions align with Council's long-term vision, land-use strategies, and budgetary frameworks. • Incorporate stakeholder input and ensure decisions reflect community needs and equity considerations.
Disposals	• Identify surplus or underutilised properties through portfolio reviews, community needs analysis, and strategic alignment checks. • Evaluate disposal options, considering market trends, environmental impacts, and long-term financial implications. • Conduct transparent disposal processes, including public auctions, expressions of interest, or direct negotiations, ensuring compliance with governance standards. • Reinvest proceeds from disposals into priority community projects or infrastructure. • Facilitate community engagement to ensure disposals address community priorities and maintain public trust.
Developments	• Plan and manage development projects that align with Council's strategic goals, such as infrastructure expansion, urban renewal, or adaptive reuse. • Collaborate with internal teams and external stakeholders to design and execute developments that deliver measurable community benefits. • Conduct feasibility studies, financial analysis, and risk assessments to ensure developments are viable and sustainable. • Oversee project timelines, budgets, and quality control measures to ensure successful project delivery. • Integrate feedback from community engagement processes into the planning and design phases.
Portfolio Management	• Conduct regular portfolio reviews to identify opportunities for acquisitions, disposals, or redevelopment. • Monitor and evaluate the performance of Council-owned properties to ensure alignment with service delivery needs and strategic objectives. • Develop and implement property management strategies that promote sustainability, resilience, and efficient use of resources. • Ensure properties remain fit for purpose and adapt to evolving community needs.

Function	Key Responsibilities
Governance and Compliance	• Ensure all property-related decisions comply with Council policies, governance standards, and legislative requirements. • Maintain transparent records of decisions, approvals, and financial transactions. • Manage delegated authority processes, escalating significant decisions to Council where required.
Community Engagement	• Facilitate community engagement and incorporate feedback into property-related decisions. • Ensure property projects and actions reflect community priorities, equity goals, and shared values. • Provide clear and timely communication to stakeholders about project objectives, progress, and outcomes.
Financial Oversight	• Analyse financial feasibility and lifecycle costs for acquisitions, disposals, and developments. • Align property actions with Council's financial sustainability goals and budgetary frameworks. • Oversee reinvestment strategies to maximise community value from property-related income.

The table below defines the responsibilities of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Council in providing oversight, strategic direction, and governance for property-related activities, ensuring high-level accountability and alignment with community priorities.

Role	Responsibilities
CEO	• Approve property actions within delegated financial and operational thresholds in accordance with Council's Instrument of Delegation and Procurement Policy. • Provide leadership and operational oversight of property management activities. • Escalate significant decisions to the Council for approval as needed.
Council	• Approve major property actions, including acquisitions, disposals, and developments beyond delegated thresholds in accordance with Council's Instrument of Delegation and Procurement Policy. • Ensure all property decisions align with the Council's strategic objectives and governance standards. • Oversee transparency and accountability in property management.

Section 2: Guiding Principles, Objectives and Approach

2.1 Guiding Principles, Objectives and Approach

The SPF is built on guiding principles that reflect the Council's core values and provide a consistent foundation for all property-related decisions. These principles shape the framework's objectives, ensuring property management aligns with the Council's long-term vision and delivers measurable outcomes.

The table below outlines how these guiding principles connect to key objectives and guide the approach for the three core property functions: acquisitions, disposals, and developments.

Reference	Principle	Objective	Approach		
			Acquisitions	Disposals	Developments
1.	**Community Benefit** Ensure property decisions enhance quality of life and meet evolving community needs.	Deliver infrastructure and services that address community needs.	Acquire properties that address service gaps, community priorities, or business needs, such as parks, community centres, or health facilities.	Dispose of underutilised assets and reinvest proceeds into projects that enhance community well-being, such as community facilities, services or open space, where aligned with strategic priorities.	Develop multi-functional community hubs, public open space, recreational spaces, and accessible facilities that improve quality of life for residents.
2.	**Strategic Alignment** Coordinate property actions with broader economic, social, and environmental priorities.	Align property decisions with the Council's strategic goals and objectives.	Target properties that align with Council plans for urban renewal, infrastructure expansion, open space provision, or economic growth initiatives.	Divest from properties that no longer align with strategic priorities, while also considering disposal opportunities that deliver a demonstrated benefit to the community.	Design and execute developments that reflect Council's strategic goals, including community infrastructure, economic activity and public open space where appropriate.

Reference	Principle	Objective	Approach		
			Acquisitions	Disposals	Developments
3.	**Financial Stewardship and Sustainability** Balance cost-effectiveness with long-term value for the community.	Promote financial sustainability by optimising property resources.	Conduct market valuations, negotiate cost-effective purchases, and prioritise acquisitions with strong long-term financial benefits.	Assess disposal opportunities that optimise financial returns and reinvest proceeds into high priority Council projects and services.	Ensure developments are financially viable and provide sustainable long-term returns, considering lifecycle costs and revenue opportunities.
4.	**Environmental Responsibility** Prioritise sustainability, efficient land use, and adherence to the National Construction Code.	Support environmentally responsible property practices that promote sustainability, biodiversity, and climate resilience.	Acquire properties that promote biodiversity, green and open spaces, and sustainable land use.	Dispose of properties that conflict with environmental goals, or that may enable more sustainable land use elsewhere in the portfolio.	Design developments that support sustainability and minimise environmental impact.
5.	**Adaptability and Resilience** Ensure the portfolio can respond to demographic, technological, and urban changes.	Build a resilient and adaptable property portfolio.	Focus on flexible acquisitions that can be repurposed to meet future demands or demographic shifts.	Release properties that no longer serve operational or strategic purpose, ensuring the portfolio remains responsive to changing community needs.	Develop multi-purpose spaces and infrastructure that can evolve with technological, social, or economic changes over time.
6.	**Equity and Inclusion** Address disparities to ensure fair access for all community members.	Foster equitable access to services and facilities for all, recognising diverse demographics, accessibility needs, and community contexts.	Prioritise acquisitions in areas to address disparities and ensure access to essential services.	Dispose of properties where reinvestment can better support equitable and inclusive access to services and community infrastructure.	Develop accessible facilities with universal design principles to ensure equity and inclusivity for all, with consideration for language, age, mobility, and cultural factors.

Reference	Principle	Objective	Approach		
			Acquisitions	Disposals	Developments
7.	**Economic Development and Innovation** Support economic growth and innovation to strengthen the municipality's economy and foster community prosperity.	Maximise opportunities for local economic development, investment attraction and technological advancement.	Acquire properties that facilitate business growth, innovation hubs, or strategic investments that stimulate economic activity.	Divest properties that unlock economic opportunities, create investment potential, or support broader economic development goals.	Deliver modern, multi-use facilities and infrastructure that promote investment, job creation, and long-term economic resilience.
8.	**Governance and Risk Management** Ensure compliance, minimise risks, and uphold decision integrity.	Strengthen governance and decision-making processes.	Perform thorough due diligence on all acquisitions, including legal, financial, and environmental assessments.	Conduct disposals through a transparent and accountable process that aligns with legislative and governance requirements.	Implement governance frameworks to oversee development projects, ensuring legal compliance and effective risk management.
9.	**Culture and Heritage** Protect and celebrate the municipality's unique character and heritage.	Preserve and enhance properties of cultural, historical, or social significance, and respect the municipality's character.	Acquire culturally or historically significant properties only where there is a demonstrated community benefit, alignment with Council's strategic objectives, and a clear contribution to long-term planning and responsible asset management.	Consider disposal options that balance development opportunities with the protection of cultural and heritage values.	Restore or repurpose heritage properties only where there is a clear community benefit, alignment with Council's strategic objectives, and a sustainable contribution to long-term planning.
10.	**Transparency and Engagement** Foster trust through open communication, stakeholder input, and clear processes.	Increase community engagement in property-related decisions	Involve the community in acquisition decisions through engagement and clear communication about objectives and benefits.	Ensure disposals are undertaken with clear public communication, stakeholder engagement, and adherence to governance frameworks.	Actively involve the community in the design and planning of developments, fostering shared ownership and trust.

Section 3: Decision-Making Framework

3.1 Property Functions

Effective property management is central to Whitehorse City Council's ability to deliver services, meet community needs, and adapt to future challenges. The SPF defines three key property functions – acquisitions, disposals, and developments – that ensure the Council's property portfolio remains responsive, sustainable, and strategically aligned.

Each function operates within a robust decision-making framework designed to promote consistency, transparency, and alignment with the Council's long-term objectives. Acquisitions focus on securing assets that address service gaps and future priorities. Disposals release underutilised properties, optimising resources for reinvestment in high-priority initiatives. Developments transform properties to support community needs and drive economic growth. Together, these processes enable proactive, accountable, and strategic property management that maximises long-term value for the municipality.

3.1.1 Acquisitions

Acquisitions play a strategic role in expanding the Council's property portfolio to meet current and future needs. By securing properties that align with service delivery priorities and community goals, the Council addresses gaps in infrastructure, enhances access to open space, and supports long-term growth. A clear evaluation framework ensures acquisitions align with principles of financial sustainability, environmental responsibility, and measurable community benefits. This structured approach enables the Council to make informed decisions that contribute to the municipality's resilience and adaptability.

3.1.2 Disposals

Disposals are a critical tool for optimising the Council's property portfolio, allowing underutilised or non-essential properties to be reallocated for greater community benefit. Proceeds from disposals are directed toward higher-priority projects that enhance service delivery and align with Council's strategic goals. The disposal process emphasises transparency, equity, and consistency with long-term objectives. While disposals are primarily guided by strategic priorities and service delivery needs, Council periodically reviews its property portfolio to ensure assets remain fit for purpose. Where a property is no longer required for operational or strategic purposes, it may be considered for disposal in accordance with the Local Government Act 2020 and Council's governance framework. Through rigorous evaluation and alignment with the Council's broader priorities, disposals ensure that resources are used efficiently to maximise value for the municipality.

3.1.3 Developments

Developments transform properties to address evolving community needs and create spaces that are inclusive, accessible, and sustainable. Whether through new construction, adaptive reuse, or redevelopment, developments strengthen infrastructure, promote economic growth, enhance public space, and support environmental stewardship. Guided by a robust framework, development projects ensure alignment with Council's strategic objectives while remaining adaptable to future demands. This approach enables the Council to deliver outcomes that enhance liveability, resilience, and long-term community wellbeing.

3.2 Methods

The table below outlines, but is not limited to, the range of methods Council employs for acquisitions, disposals, and developments.

Acquisitions	Disposals	Developments
• **Private Purchase:** Direct negotiation with property owners to secure properties that fulfill specific strategic needs. • **Market Purchase:** Buying property through listings available on the open market, allowing Council to negotiate directly without a competitive auction process. • **Development Agreements:** Acquiring property as part of negotiated development outcomes, enabling Council to leverage development partnerships for community benefit. • **Compulsory Acquisition:** Utilising statutory powers to acquire land necessary for public services or infrastructure, in line with legislative requirements. • **Land Exchanges:** Swapping Council-owned land for other properties that better align with strategic goals, optimising land use and resource allocation. • **Public Auction:** Acquiring properties through competitive bidding at public auctions, where Council can obtain properties listed for open sale to the highest bidder. • **Joint Ventures or Partnerships:** Acquiring property through partnerships with private entities	• **Open Market Sale:** Selling property on the open market to maximise exposure and ensure a competitive sale price. • **Public Auction:** Disposing of property through public auction, providing transparency and securing market-driven value. • **Expressions of Interest (EOI):** Inviting expressions of interest from potential buyers to assess market interest and negotiate favourable terms. • **Tender Process:** Conducting a competitive tender to identify buyers who align with Council objectives and support community benefit. • **Direct Sale to Adjoining Landowners:** Selling property directly to adjoining landowners, typically for minor parcels that enhance usability or accessibility. • **Land Swaps:** Exchanging land with other public or private entities to optimise strategic land use and enhance Council's property portfolio. • **Lease with Option to Buy:** Offering leases with an option to purchase, allowing lessees to assess viability before committing to full ownership.	• **Direct Council-Led Development:** The Council manages the entire development process to ensure direct alignment with community objectives and strategic priorities. • **Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs):** Partnering with private sector entities to co-develop properties, combining resources for projects that provide mutual community and economic benefits. • **Joint Ventures:** Collaborating with public or private partners to jointly develop assets, sharing responsibilities, risks, and rewards. • **Community-Driven Initiatives:** Working with local organisations or community groups on projects that address specific local needs, such as recreational spaces, cultural hubs, or youth facilities. • **Development Agreements with External Partners:** Negotiating with developers or other entities to establish development goals that align with Council's strategic objectives.

Acquisitions	Disposals	Developments
or government bodies, allowing for shared ownership and collaborative outcomes. • **Lease-to-Purchase Agreements:** Engaging in lease agreements with an option to purchase, allowing Council to assess property viability before full acquisition. • **Government Grants or Transfers:** Acquiring properties through transfers or grants from other government agencies to support Council services or infrastructure. • **Donations or Bequests:** Accepting properties gifted or bequeathed to the Council, particularly those that align with Council's long-term objectives.		

3.3 Decision-Making Framework

This decision-making framework provides a clear, structured process to evaluate proposals for acquisitions, disposals, and developments. It is designed to ensure that every proposal aligns with Council objectives, strategic priorities, and community needs, while maintaining transparency and accountability. The framework also recognises that Council properties vary in function, scale and community value, and that flexibility may be required to appropriately respond to different property types within a consistent process.

Proposals are assessed in four stages, each with specific criteria outlined in the Evaluation Criteria Table below:

Stage 1: Identify Needs, Strategic Alignment, and Community Impact: Proposals begin with an initial assessment to establish their alignment with service requirements, strategic objectives, and community priorities.

Stage 2: Evaluate Alternatives and Determine the Optimal Solution: If the proposal meets the Stage 1 criteria, it moves to Stage 2, where alternative approaches are reviewed to confirm the most effective and sustainable solution.

Stage 3: Perform Comprehensive Assessments and Due Diligence: Proposals that satisfy the criteria in Stage 2 progress to Stage 3, where detailed assessments, including financial, legal, and environmental considerations, are conducted to validate feasibility and compliance.

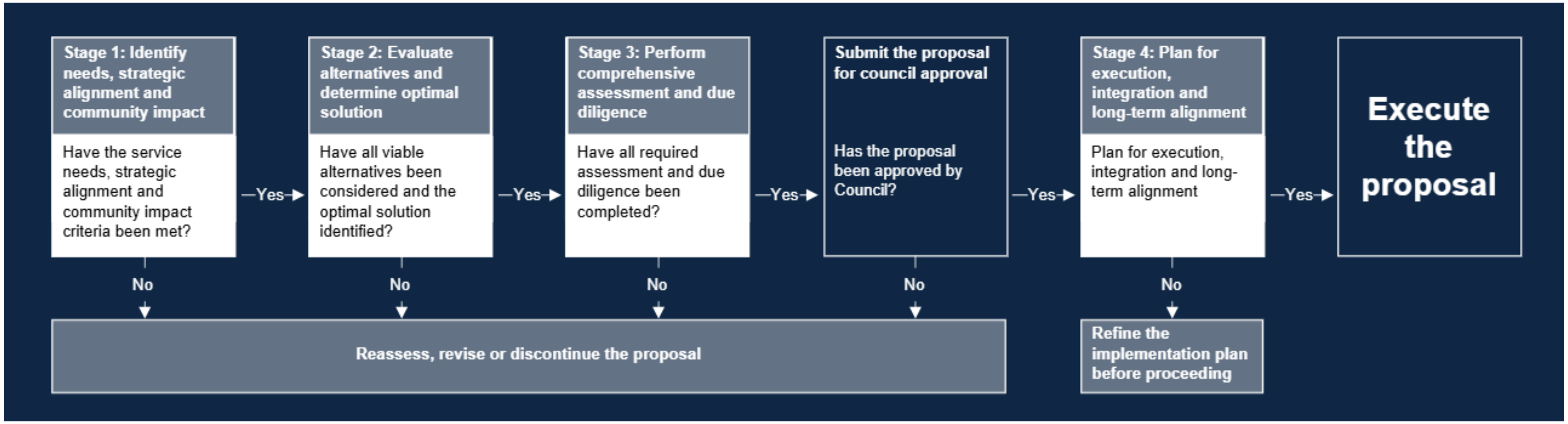
Council Approval: Once the proposal successfully meets the criteria in Stages 1 through 3, it is presented to Council for approval.

Stage 4: Plan for Execution, Integration, and Long-Term Alignment (Post-Council Approval): Following Council approval, the proposal enters Stage 4. This stage focuses on detailed planning, operational readiness, and integration into Council's portfolio, ensuring ongoing alignment with community and organisational goals.

If a proposal fails to meet the criteria at any stage, decision-makers must explore further analysis, revisions, or alternative options before it can progress. Proposals that do not satisfy the criteria should not proceed to Council.

The Evaluation Criteria table provides a detailed reference for assessing proposals at each stage, ensuring consistency and alignment with the Council's strategic vision.

The flowchart below illustrates the progression through these stages, helping decision-makers navigate the process effectively and systematically.



3.3.1 Evaluation Criteria Table (with link to Guiding Principles (see Section 2))

Decision Area	Decision Criteria			Guiding Principles
	Acquisitions	Disposals	Developments	
Stage 1: Identify Needs, Strategic Alignment and Community Impact Establish the purpose and necessity of the proposal by evaluating its alignment with service requirements, strategic objectives, and community priorities. Confirm its contribution to Council's long-term goals and municipal vision, ensuring relevance and positive impact.				
Service Needs	• Proposal fulfills a documented need in Council strategies or plans and demonstrates strong community needs and future demand based on demographic trends and adaptability. • Directly addresses an identified service gap within the community, such as access to community infrastructure or open space. • Delay in acquisition would undermine strategic value or accessibility.	• The property is no longer necessary for current or future service delivery.	• Proposal addresses a specific need identified in Council strategies or plans. • Fills gaps in infrastructure, services or community amenities. • Delaying the development would negatively impact accessibility or strategic opportunities.	1, 2, 5, 6
Strategic Alignment	• Proposal aligns with Council's strategic documents and relevant regional or state policy settings. • Provides additional benefits, such as land consolidation or unlocking development potential. • Resolves strategic challenges, such as enhancing connectivity or eliminating constraints.	• Resource reallocation supports higher-priority strategic objectives. • Property no longer aligns with Council's broader strategic vision.	• Proposal aligns with Council's strategic documents and relevant regional or state policy settings. • Leverages opportunities, such as partnerships or innovative design, to enhance value. • Complements urban planning initiatives, such as improving connectivity or unlocking development potential.	2, 3, 5, 7

Decision Area	Decision Criteria: Acquisitions	Decision Criteria: Disposals	Decision Criteria: Developments	Guiding Principles
Community Impact	• Enhances access to services or amenities in underserved areas. • Takes into account equity and inclusivity factors relevant to the community, and recognises the needs of priority groups or communities experiencing barriers to access. • Consider feedback from stakeholders, including community groups and services users where relevant.	• Creates new opportunities for community projects or services. • Considers stakeholder input, including feedback from local residents and community groups. • Disposal guided by community benefit and reinvestment opportunities.	• Contributes to equity and inclusivity by improving access to services or amenities in underserved areas, and recognises the needs of priority groups or communities experiencing barriers to access. • Incorporates feedback from community stakeholders to ensure alignment with shared values.	1, 6, 10
Stage 2: Evaluate Alternatives and Determine the Optimal Solution Examine alternative approaches, such as repurposing assets, leveraging partnerships, or innovative solutions, to confirm the proposal offers the most effective and sustainable outcome for achieving desired objectives.				
Alternative Solutions	• Alternative solutions, such as leasing, partnerships, development, or reallocating existing Council-owned properties, have been thoroughly explored. • Acquisition is confirmed as the most effective option, delivering a unique or superior benefit compared to alternatives. • The potential to reuse or adapt existing assets has been fully explored and found to be less effective than new acquisition.	• The property is unsuitable for repurposing, leasing, or partnership-based development to achieve similar benefits. • Disposal is identified as the most appropriate means to support Council's strategic objectives and maximise value.	• Feasible alternatives, such as partnerships, adaptive reuse, or repurposing assets, have been rigorously evaluated. • Development is determined to be the optimal solution, delivering the desired outcomes most effectively and sustainably.	2, 3, 5, 7, 8

Decision Area	Decision Criteria: Acquisitions	Decision Criteria: Disposals	Decision Criteria: Developments	Guiding Principles
Stage 3: Perform Comprehensive Assessments and Due Diligence Undertake thorough evaluations, including financial, legal, environmental, and operational considerations, to validate the proposal's feasibility and adherence to Council policies. Identify risks and establish strategies for compliance and sustainability.				
Feasibility Analysis	• Property is in suitable condition and manageable within Council's operational resources.	Not applicable as disposals do not involve acquiring or maintaining property. The feasibility of releasing property is assessed as part of financial analysis and community impact.	• Project scope and complexity are manageable within Council resources and expertise. • Site suitability and availability are confirmed.	3, 5, 8
Fit for Purpose	• Property is suitable for its intended purpose with minimal modification required.	Not applicable. Suitability is evaluated as part of the determination to declare the property surplus.	• Proposal aligns with intended use and accommodates future community and operational needs.	5, 7, 8
Legal and Regulatory Compliance	• Property complies with existing zoning, environmental, or other legal and regulatory requirements, or adjustments (e.g. rezoning) are achievable if necessary.	• Compliance with all applicable laws and regulations is ensured. • Legal obligations, including restrictions or encumbrances on the property, are addressed.	• Proposal complies with all planning, zoning, legal and regulatory requirements, or adjustments are feasible.	8, 9, 10
Cost and Market Analysis	• Price is supported by an independent valuation and demonstrates fair financial value.	• Estimated market value and expected return align with financial goals.	• Budget aligns with Council's financial strategies, including lifecycle costs and projected returns. • Funding sources, such as grants or partnerships, are secured.	3, 7

Decision Area	Decision Criteria — Acquisitions	Decision Criteria — Disposals	Decision Criteria — Developments	Guiding Principles
Financial Analysis	• Sufficient budget is available, and long-term financial sustainability and community return is confirmed. • Ongoing costs, including maintenance and operational expenses, are accounted for.	• Projected net proceeds are sufficient to support Council's reinvestment objectives, such as infrastructure, service delivery or open space enhancements that deliver community benefit.	• Funding aligns with lifecycle costs, long-term sustainability goals, and broader community value.	2, 3, 7
Risk Management	• Key risks (e.g. environmental, legal, financial) are identified, with mitigation plans in place. • Contingency strategies address market fluctuations or uncertainties.	• Risks associated with disposal (e.g. financial, legal, environmental) are identified and mitigated.	• Risks related to budget, community perception, or legal compliance are addressed with mitigation plans.	3, 4, 5, 8
Environmental Impact	• Supports Council's environmental goals. • Sustainability objectives are met through eco-friendly practices.	• Environmental considerations or liabilities are assessed. • Disposal aligns with Council's sustainability goals.	• Incorporates sustainable practices, such as green materials or renewable energy.	4, 5, 7
Economic Development Impact	• Acquire properties that support economic growth by attracting businesses, creating jobs, or enhancing local infrastructure.	• Dispose of properties to unlock opportunities for repurposing, partnerships, or projects that drive local investment and economic activity.	• Develop infrastructure or facilities that stimulate job creation, attract investment, and strengthen the local economy.	2, 4, 5, 7

Decision Area	Decision Criteria: Acquisitions	Decision Criteria: Disposals	Decision Criteria: Developments	Guiding Principles
Impact on Other Priorities	• Proposal does not adversely affect high-priority Council projects or resource allocations. • Opportunity cost of proceeding with the acquisition is justified when compared to alternative Council investments.	• Disposal does not hinder high-priority Council projects or services that rely on the property. • Timing of the disposal aligns with other strategic initiatives or resource plan.	• Development proposal does not compete with or detract from other high-priority Council initiatives. • Resources allocated for the development are justified in the context of broader strategic objectives.	3, 5, 7
Community Engagement	Not typically required as acquisitions do not affect community use and are often commercially sensitive. Engagement may occur in line with Council's Community Engagement Policy.	• Consult with community and stakeholders to ensure disposals reflect public interest and address potential impacts.	• Engage community and stakeholders to ensure developments align with community priorities and deliver shared benefits.	1, 6, 10
Stage 4: Plan for Execution, Integration, and Long-Term Alignment (POST-COUNCIL APPROVAL) Prepare a comprehensive plan to implement the proposal, focusing on operational readiness, timing, adaptability, stakeholder engagement, and ongoing evaluation. Ensure actions align with Council's strategic priorities, community needs, and sustainability goals.				
Operational Readiness	• Develop detailed management and maintenance plans to ensure efficient use of the property. • Prepare for operational integration to address staffing and service delivery requirements.	• Prepare transition plans for services impacted by disposals, ensuring minimal disruption.	• Verify readiness for operational integration, including staffing, maintenance, and service delivery.	3, 5, 8
Execution and Timing	• Schedule acquisitions strategically to align with market conditions and Council objectives.	• Optimise the timing of disposals to maximise market value and achieve Council goals.	• Ensure development timelines consider funding availability, regulatory milestones, and market trends.	2, 3, 7, 8

Decision Area	Decision Criteria			Guiding Principles
	Acquisitions	Disposals	Developments	
Adaptability and Resilience	• Plan for flexibility in acquired properties to accommodate future community needs or service requirements.	• Consider including future-use provisions in disposal agreements to safeguard community benefits.	• Design developments with adaptability in mind, allowing for future modifications or expansions.	5, 6, 7
Stakeholder Engagement	• Plan for stakeholder engagement where the future use of the property may impact the community, in line with Council's Community Engagement Policy.	• Address stakeholder feedback to enhance outcomes, ensure transparent and equitable disposal processes, and clearly communicate rationale and community benefits.	• Maintain ongoing dialogue with stakeholders to integrate feedback into design and execution.	1, 6, 10
Monitoring and Evaluation	• Implement performance monitoring to track the property's contribution to Council objectives, including community benefit.	• Evaluate the impact of reinvested proceeds on strategic objectives and community outcomes, guided by ongoing assessment of future service needs and demographic trends.	• Conduct post-completion reviews to assess project success, adaptability over time, and identify opportunities for improvement.	3, 5, 10

Section 4: Portfolio Management and Evaluation

4.1 Overview of Portfolio Management

Whitehorse City Council is committed to the proactive and strategic management of its property portfolio to ensure it continues to meet community needs, align with long-term goals, and respond to evolving priorities. Portfolio management is a dynamic process that balances the immediate demands of service delivery with the long-term vision of sustainable growth and development. The Council will adopt an integrated decision-making approach, leveraging this framework to guide all property-related activities, including acquisitions, disposals, and developments. By regularly assessing its portfolio, the Council ensures that its property assets remain optimised, efficient, and strategically aligned with its objectives.

4.2 Regular Monitoring and Review

To maintain a robust and responsive property portfolio, the Council will conduct regular reviews and evaluations. These reviews ensure that the portfolio evolves in line with the municipality's needs, market conditions, and strategic priorities.

The following activities are key components of the Council's approach to regular monitoring and review:

- **Portfolio Reviews:** Regular assessments will identify properties that are underutilised, no longer aligned with Council priorities, or have potential for repurposing or development.
- **Community Needs Analysis:** Periodic engagement and demographic trend analysis will inform the Council’s understanding of service gaps, evolving community needs, and future demand.
- **Market Monitoring:** Keeping a close watch on property market trends will enable the Council to seize acquisition opportunities and identify optimal disposal timing.
- **Alignment Checks:** Reviews will ensure that the portfolio remains consistent with updates to the Council Plan and other key strategic documents.

4.3 Determining Opportunities for Acquisitions, Disposals, and Developments

As part of regular portfolio evaluations (refer to Section 4.2), opportunities for acquisitions, disposals, and developments are identified and assessed against initial criteria (see table below). If an opportunity meets the initial assessment, it is included in the Strategic Property Register, and the relevant Decision-Making Framework is initiated (refer to Section 3.3). This process involves a detailed analysis to ensure that decisions are strategic, transparent, and aligned with Council objectives.

The table below outlines the definition of acquisition, disposal and development opportunities and provides high-level initial criteria for identifying opportunities across the portfolio.

	Acquisitions	Disposals	Developments
Definition	An **acquisition opportunity** refers to any property that meets current or foreseeable future service delivery needs or aligns with the Council's strategic objectives. These properties are typically: • Required to address identified service gaps or community needs. • Positioned to support strategic priorities, such as infrastructure growth or economic development. • Expected to deliver long-term value through adaptability, financial sustainability, or enhanced community outcomes.	A **disposal opportunity** refers to any property that no longer meets current or foreseeable future service delivery needs or strategic objectives. These properties are typically: • Underutilised or no longer fit for their intended purpose. • Unable to be adapted or repurposed to meet evolving community or organisational needs. • Considered non-essential to achieving Council's long-term goals.	A **development opportunity** refers to any property that can be created, enhanced, or repurposed to meet the Council's evolving service delivery needs and strategic objectives. These opportunities are typically: • Identified as having potential for new infrastructure or improved functionality. • Positioned to address community needs, promote economic growth, or enhance urban liveability. • Capable of supporting long-term strategic priorities through innovative or sustainable solutions.

	Acquisitions	Disposals	Developments
Initial Criteria	• **Service Delivery Alignment:** The property addresses specific service gaps or supports existing and planned Council services. • **Strategic Relevance:** The property aligns with objectives set out in the Council Plan, or other key strategies. • **Community Benefit:** The acquisition will enhance access to services, amenities, or open space, particularly in underserved areas. • **Financial Viability:** The property demonstrates long-term financial sustainability, with acquisition costs justified by potential returns or benefits. • **Adaptability:** The property can be repurposed or developed to meet evolving community or operational needs.	• **Service Delivery Alignment:** The property is no longer required to support existing or planned Council services. • **Strategic Relevance:** The property does not align with the objectives set out in the Council Plan, or other key strategies. • **Utilisation:** The property has low or negligible utilisation rates, indicating limited community or operational value. • **Financial Sustainability:** The ongoing maintenance, operational costs, or opportunity costs of retaining the property outweigh its benefits. • **Market and Strategic Value:** The property presents an opportunity for reinvestment into higher-priority projects or services due to favourable market conditions, strategic partnerships, or alternative land uses that better support Council objectives.	• **Service Delivery Alignment:** The development addresses specific infrastructure gaps or enhances existing service delivery capabilities. • **Strategic Relevance:** The project supports objectives outlined in the Council Plan, or other key strategies. • **Community Impact:** The development will deliver significant social, cultural, or economic benefits, prioritising equity and inclusivity. • **Financial and Environmental Feasibility:** The project demonstrates financial sustainability and integrates environmentally responsible practices. • **Future Flexibility:** The proposed development can adapt to changing community or operational needs over time.