

## 21.01 MUNICIPAL PROFILE

05/03/2015  
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### Location & Regional Context

In close proximity to Melbourne's Central Business District (approximately 5km at the closest point) and nestled between Melbourne's northern and western suburbs, the City of 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. Moonee Valley is located close to Melbourne Airport, and includes the Essendon Airport in the north of the municipality.

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 DTPLI shows that the population of this Western Region is forecast to increase by some 366,700 persons over the coming 20 years. Significant population growth is also projected in municipalities to the north and north-east of Moonee Valley (Hume, Whittlesea).

### People

In June 2013, the estimated resident population of the City was about 116,000 people. The number of dwellings in Moonee Valley has increased steadily in recent years, with an additional 2,208 dwellings in 2011 compared with 2006. As the City establishes itself as a more inner-city municipality, the most prevalent new household type has been couples without dependants.

Population projections prepared for Council (Id Consulting, May 2013) show that Moonee Valley is expected to experience relatively modest population growth, at a rate of 0.84 per cent per annum over the period 2013 to 2031. The municipality's population is projected to increase by approximately 19,000 persons over the coming 18 years to around 135,000 in 2031. The projected population growth rate is slightly less than that forecast for metropolitan Melbourne (1.5 per cent pa) over the 20 years from 2011 to 2031 (DTPLI Victoria in Future).

A detailed analysis of age fluctuations over time suggests that typically the municipality has attracted young adults (single and couples) to move into the area, with a recent extension of appeal to also encompass young families. Indeed, between 2006 and 2011 the municipality saw over 3,000 new residents within the 20-29 year age bracket. This highlights the increasing need for affordable family housing, whilst still providing support for elderly residents as the population ages. According to recent population forecasts, by 2031 there will be 3,500 more people over the age of 70 years in Moonee Valley than in 2013. Typically, birth rates have been relatively stable since 2001, with 1,366 babies born in the municipality in 2011.

### Natural Environment

There are 30 hectares of conservation areas of which 17 hectares are remnant vegetation across Moonee Valley with valuable Ecological Vegetation Classes, including Temperate Grasslands, Plains Grassy Woodlands, Escarpment Shrublands and Riparian Woodland. In addition to parks and open space areas, backyards, roofs and walls play a growing role in our local urban ecology.

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. This trail provides a recreational path for cyclists and walkers, connecting many reserves, parks and sporting grounds along the creek.

The waterway corridors (including tributaries Steele Creek and Five Mile Creek) contain remnants of indigenous vegetation as well as natural habitat links/corridors. 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.

As an urban area, Moonee Valley is vastly modified from the original pre-European environment and yet still provides important habitat for flora and fauna.

The City is home to, or frequented by, more than 93 native bird species, twelve mammal species, three frog species and numerous insects. Creation of new wetlands within the municipality provides great habitat improvements for local fauna.

Council acknowledges the role nature plays in enhancing Moonee Valley's liveability as it underpins the connection between the community and their natural environment, in addition to providing recreational opportunities.

### **Built Environment**

Council's streetscapes are strong features of the City, with major boulevards complementing tree-lined streets and neighbourhood shopping centres. A strong sense of Moonee Valley's history can be seen in the significant number of preserved older houses, shops and civic buildings. Gentrification has changed the once traditionally working-class, inner-city suburbs in the City's south, such as Flemington and Ascot Vale.

Council's Neighbourhood Character Study (2012) identifies five neighbourhood character types in Moonee Valley. These are Central Residential, Inner Urban, Urban Contemporary, Garden Suburban and Garden Court.

The built environment must be designed to moderate and provide protection from predicted disruptive climate impacts. In addition to being resilient to climate change, we must also find ways to mitigate it by ensuring a reduction in our greenhouse gas impacts as a first principle.

### **Housing**

The projected population growth for Moonee Valley will be concentrated in infill developments such as Valley Lakes and Ascot Chase, as well as in and around activity centres. The premier location for growth in the City is Moonee Ponds, given its locational attributes and potential to accommodate larger scale mixed use developments. This is coupled with its designation as an Activity Centre under *Plan Melbourne*.

House prices are impacting on affordability of living in Moonee Valley. Median house prices have more than doubled from 2000 to 2005 (from around \$350,000 in 2000 to \$700,000 in 2011). 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 2006 to 2011, dwelling numbers have increased by 2,208. Household size has remained relatively unchanged over recent years with an average of 2.48 people per dwelling. This is projected to fall to 2.42 by 2031. It is anticipated the biggest change in household type by 2031 will be an increase in the numbers of single person households, to nearly 14,900 (up 3,600, from the 11,300 in 2013).

## Economic Development

Moonee Valley is a thriving community with strong businesses, diverse cultures, many leisure opportunities and a widespread concern for the environment.

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.

Moonee Valley has significant economic potential as a premier location for business and investment. Its attraction includes a skilled workforce, ease of access to business nodes, good transport infrastructure and its reputation for livability. However, investment capital is now highly mobile and Moonee Valley is in competition for business investment with other locations across Greater Melbourne, the state, the country and even internationally.

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 2011 shows that 59 per cent of employed Moonee Valley residents were occupied as managers, professionals, and clerical and administrative workers (up from 57 per cent in 2006), compared to 52 per cent occupied in these categories across metropolitan Melbourne (little change from 51 per cent in 2006).

Most residents who work commute to jobs either within Moonee Valley, or neighbouring local authority areas – 20 per cent work in Moonee Valley and 32 per cent in the City of Melbourne. 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, emphasising the City's competitive advantage as a fringe CBD location.

## Transport

The municipality has excellent road transport linkages to Melbourne Airport, CityLink and the Western Ring Road. It also has good public transport access (including both tram and train) to Melbourne's CBD. Efficient transport linkages and access are important requirements for residents and for businesses looking to locate in a particular area. The road network accommodates many different transport modes including private vehicles, cyclists, pedestrians, trams, taxis and buses. This can impact on the train network at level crossings.

As the City of Moonee Valley and the greater Metropolitan area are experiencing a growth in population, reliance on private vehicle travel for a majority of trips is unsustainable. Although Council is committed to improving and encouraging more sustainable modes of transport, approximately 61.8 per cent of Moonee Valley's residents use a car as their main method of travel to work. This, in addition to the significant through-traffic originating from outside of the municipality, adds significant pressure to the local transport network.

Public transport modes such as trains, trams and buses are recognised as more efficient ways of moving large numbers of people, resulting in less congestion, less impacts on local roads, less safety issues and less pollution. However, only 17.5 per cent of Moonee Valley residents use public transport as the main method of travel to work, reducing to 10.1 per cent in poorly serviced areas such as Avondale Heights.

A growing number of Moonee Valley residents are either walking or cycling to work, an increase of 522 residents (or 4.1 per cent) over the period from 2006-2011. This may be attributed to the economic, social, environmental and health benefits arising from walking and cycling. However, the incidence of Moonee Valley residents walking or cycling to work is lower than employees in the neighbouring Councils of Moreland (7.2 per cent) and Maribyrnong (5.4 per cent).

## **Community facilities and infrastructure**

The value of Council's infrastructure assets is approximately one billion dollars. These assets need to be maintained for future generations. Infrastructure also needs to ensure that it is delivered in line with population growth.

There are 220 open space reserves in the municipality covering 528 hectares with about 80 per cent of these being Council's responsibility. Enhancing the resilience of open space so it better withstands a changing climate and further greening the city to provide shade, habitat and beauty are significant community aspirations requiring appropriate resources.

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.

There are important institutional uses such as higher education and training facilities that are of regional importance in the City of Moonee Valley and are assets to the local and wider community. The City of Moonee Valley also hosts a number of large public and private schools, and two of these (Penleigh and Essendon Grammar and Lowther Hall) have prepared Master Plans for long term growth and development. Redevelopment of institutional sites should retain significant environmental or historical features.

Regional Context Plan

