Toolkit

Municipal Heritage Strategies:
A guide for Councils

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Developing a Municipal Heritage Strategy

Local councils across Victoria play a critical role in the identification, protection and management of our legacy of much valued heritage places.

The protection of heritage places has become increasingly sophisticated since the first tentative steps were taken in the goldfields town of Maldon in the 1960s. Today, the majority of councils have completed heritage studies and implemented protection for heritage places in their planning schemes. More than 160,000 properties fall within heritage overlays across Victoria.

Despite these considerable efforts, there are still omissions from heritage studies and overlays and more can be done to better manage and interpret the heritage resource. In an effort to improve heritage management, Heritage Victoria has prepared this toolkit for local government.

The completion and implementation of a Heritage Strategy will assist councils to more effectively protect and manage Victoria's heritage places. It will also enable the Victorian Government to understand the particular needs and priorities of local government. A Heritage Strategy may also help to identify opportunities for our heritage resource in a way which can benefit community wellbeing and local economies.

The development of this toolkit has been undertaken with the input and advice of councils. The process has been tested by local government and the toolkit refined to reflect these experiences. The toolkit has been designed to make the process as straightforward and simple as possible. It need not be a lengthy or time-consuming exercise.

Demonstrating its worth, the toolkit has been trialled by several councils which have used it to develop their own heritage strategies which have been well received by councils and their communities.

I thank everyone who has contributed to the process of developing the toolkit. I commend this guide to you and encourage all councils to embark upon the important step of developing a Heritage Strategy.

Matthew Guy MP

Minister for Planning

Introduction and Purpose

This toolkit has been prepared to help a Council to prepare a Heritage Strategy for its municipality.

The document consists of:

1. A checklist, which will identify:

    *   positive heritage measures already employed by Council

    *   areas of heritage identification, management and promotion that need to be addressed in the future.

2. A strategy template, which puts the identified achievements and future actions into a format that can used by Council staff, Councillors and the community.

Context

One of the objectives of planning in Victoria is:

"to conserve and enhance those buildings, areas and other places which are of scientific, aesthetic, architectural or historical interest, or otherwise of special cultural value".

[Section 4(1)(d) – *Planning and Environment Act* 1987]

Councils have a duty under section 12(1)(a) of the Act to implement this objective.

It is also state planning policy that planning should, among other things:

"Identify, assess and document places of natural and cultural heritage significance as a basis for their inclusion in the planning scheme."

"Provide for the conservation and enhancement of those places which are of aesthetic, archaeological, architectural, cultural, scientific, or social significance, or otherwise of special cultural value."

"Encourage appropriate development that respects places with identified heritage values and creates a worthy legacy for future generations."

[Clause 15.03-1 – State Planning Policy Framework]

What is a Heritage Strategy?

A Heritage Strategy is a document that assists a Council to meet its heritage obligations as set out in the *Planning and Environment Act* 1987, the State Planning Policy Framework and the *Aboriginal Heritage Act* 2006. A Heritage Strategy will normally include actions that address the identification, protection, management and/or promotion of a municipality's heritage.

It allows a Council to:

*   identify positive heritage measures already employed by Council;

*   identify and prioritise work to be done in the future;

*   appropriately manage and monitor the heritage assets of their community; and

*   report on and celebrate achievements.

The Strategy should be as simple and concise as possible. Ideally it should be no more than eight pages. This will encourage wide understanding and use of the document.

A Heritage Strategy should be a 'whole of Council' strategy with full Council support. The actions identified within the Strategy should be appropriately funded. It is recommended that the strategy is tied to the Council Plan and is reviewed every four years.

Importantly, a Heritage Strategy should consider how a Council identifies, manages and promotes the heritage assets under its ownership. Leading by example is an important element of promoting good heritage management within the community. The following checklist provides prompts to specifically address this issue.

Scope

The following strategy checklist and template are focussed on the conservation of Victoria's Aboriginal and historic cultural heritage. The strategy can easily be expanded to include the conservation of places of natural significance (such as geological sites, paleontological sites and other scientific places).

Councils are encouraged to tailor the Heritage Strategy to address the heritage issues that are relevant to them.

Heritage Strategy Themes

A Heritage Strategy will normally include actions under four key themes:

1. Knowing (i.e. identifying, assessing and documenting heritage places).

2. Protecting (i.e. securing statutory protection for significant places, developing policy/guidelines to assist decision making, appropriate management).

3. Supporting (i.e. incentives, advisory services, financial assistance).

4. Communicating and promoting (i.e. measures to raise awareness and appreciation of the heritage of the area).
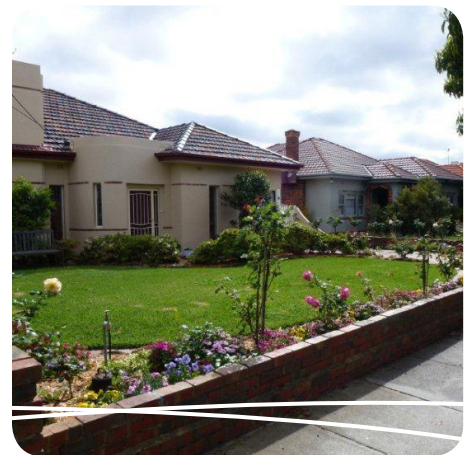
Heritage Strategy Checklist

The checklist below is intended to prompt a consideration of the heritage-related actions a Council currently undertakes and could take in the future. It is not exhaustive. Users of this checklist are encouraged to think broadly about the heritage issues that are relevant within their municipality.

1. Knowing (identification, assessment and documentation of heritage places)

		YES	NO
1.1	Has a heritage study to identify places of heritage significance across your municipality been completed?	☐	☐
1.2	If a heritage study has been completed, there may still be gaps in the information base. For example:		
	- Are there geographical gaps in your heritage study? (Are there parts of the municipality which have not been surveyed as part of a heritage study)?	☐	☐
	- Are there any gaps in the types of places which your heritage study covers? (Does the heritage study primarily concentrate on buildings? Does the heritage study address other types of heritage places including structures, gardens, significant cultural landscapes, public art, monuments and places of significance to people from diverse backgrounds? Does the heritage study adequately consider inter-war and post-war heritage?)	☐	☐
	- Is there a need to identify, assess and document places of Aboriginal, archaeological or natural significance?	☐	☐
	- Are there places identified in your heritage study that need to be further researched and documented?	☐	☐
1.3	Has a thematic environmental history been completed for your municipality?	☐	☐
1.4	If you have undertaken a heritage study/ies, is the documentation available in the HERMES database?	☐	☐
1.5	Are there locally important objects and collections that require assessment?	☐	☐
1.6	Does the Council allocate modest resources on a regular basis for the identification, assessment and documentation of additional emerging places?	☐	☐
1.7	Does the Council engage with Registered Aboriginal Parties and Traditional Owner groups?	☐	☐

Council heritage:

1.8	Have all Council-owned and Council-managed heritage places/objects/collections been adequately assessed and documented?	☐	☐
1.9	Has a register of Council-owned and Council-managed heritage places/objects/collections been compiled? Does this include significant Aboriginal places?	☐	☐

2.   Protecting (statutory protection, policy development, appropriate management)

		YES	NO
2.1	If you have undertaken a heritage study/ies, are all places which are recommended in the study/ies for statutory protection listed in your planning scheme (using the Heritage Overlay, Significant Landscape Overlay or other relevant planning scheme instrument?)	☐	☐
2.2	Are all places included in the planning scheme correctly scheduled and mapped (including having the relevant controls triggered) and do each have a statement of significance?	☐	☐
2.3	Are places which are currently included on the Commonwealth's Register of the National Estate provided with statutory protection through your planning scheme? (NB Property on the Register of the National Estate does not have statutory protection. The inclusion of these places in the planning scheme is therefore important. Further information is available at www.environment.gov.au/heritage/places/rne)	☐	☐
2.4	Are places which are currently Classified by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) provided with statutory protection through your planning scheme? (NB Places which are solely included on the National Trust Register do not have statutory protection. The inclusion of these places in the planning scheme will ensure a basic compliance with the requirements of the *Planning and Environment Act*.)	☐	☐
2.5	Are Council staff aware of places that are currently being assessed for their heritage significance (to enable action under s.29 of the *Building Act* 1993 if required)?	☐	☐
2.6	Does Council have a current and effective heritage policy in the Local Planning Policy Framework of its planning scheme? (Does it adequately guide Council's discretion in assessing permit applications for heritage places?)	☐	☐
2.7	Has Council adopted effective heritage guidelines for heritage places? Are these publicly accessible?	☐	☐
2.8	Are all Council staff aware of the statutory requirements of the different types of heritage protection (such as the *Heritage Act* 1995, the *Aboriginal Heritage Act* 2006 or the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* 1999)?	☐	☐

Council heritage:

		YES	NO
2.9	Are all Council-owned or managed heritage assets afforded statutory protection under the planning scheme or other statutory instrument (such as the *Heritage Act* 1995, the *Aboriginal Heritage Act* 2006 or the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* 1999)?	☐	☐
2.10	Has Council prepared a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for each of the heritage assets it owns and/or manages?	☐	☐
2.11	Are all Departments within Council aware of the CMPs and do they use them to guide decision-making?	☐	☐
2.12	Does Council have a Redundant Assets Policy and an Assets Transfer Policy to ensure heritage values are adequately protected beyond the use-life of the asset or when it is transferred into the ownership of another?	☐	☐
2.13	Does Council have policies in place for managing and protecting historic infrastructure such as laneways, kerbing and street furniture?	☐	☐

3. Supporting (assistance, advice and incentives to help conserve heritage places)

		YES	NO
3.1	Does your Council have a heritage advisor?	☐	☐
3.2	Does the availability of the heritage advisor meet demand from the community and Council staff? (Council might also consider a regional heritage advisor program in partnership with neighbouring municipalities.)	☐	☐
3.3	Is the heritage advisor encouraged to perform a public education/staff education/heritage promotion role?	☐	☐
3.4	Does your Council have a community heritage advisory committee?	☐	☐
3.5	Does your Council have a library and/or online repository of publications, guidelines and other material on heritage conservation for the use of the community?	☐	☐
3.6	Does your Council have its own heritage financial assistance program (e.g. a small grants scheme, a loan revolving fund or a rate incentives scheme) to assist owners of places listed in the planning scheme? (Councils might also consider a regional assistance program in partnership with neighbouring municipalities)	☐	☐
3.7	Does your Council require a fee to accompany a planning application for conservation work in the Heritage Overlay? (NB – Some councils waive planning permit fees for minor works or conservation works in the Heritage Overlay).	☐	☐
3.8	Does Council inform community organisations of grant programs run by State and Commonwealth agencies?	☐	☐
3.9	Does your Council provide support to local historical societies, museums and other heritage-related organisations?	☐	☐

Council heritage:

		YES	NO
3.10	Are Council staff who are responsible for the day-to-day management of heritage assets able to access the heritage advisor or other heritage expertise for advice?	☐	☐

4.   Communicating and promoting (measures to raise awareness and appreciation of the heritage of the area)

	YES	NO
4.1 Is heritage place information available to the community through the Victorian Heritage Database?	☐	☐
4.2 Does your Council have a publication or other product that provides information about places of heritage significance within the municipality?	☐	☐
4.3 Does your Council have a program of interpreting places of heritage significance (e.g. plaques or sign boards; heritage trails etc)?	☐	☐
4.4 Does your Council have a brochure or does your website provide an explanation of Council's heritage services and statutory controls?	☐	☐
4.5 Does Council use its newsletter or some other publication to promote heritage?	☐	☐
4.6 Does your Council send periodic reminders to owners of places listed in the planning scheme about the heritage controls in place and any heritage services which Council may provide to owners?	☐	☐
4.7 Is there a heritage award or recognition program operating within the municipality?	☐	☐
4.8 Has Council considered undertaking any collaborative heritage projects (with neighbouring Councils, State Government, education institutions, tourism bodies, local historical societies, multicultural organisations, Registered Aboriginal Parties or Traditional Owner groups etc)?	☐	☐
4.9 Is there a "main street" program operating within the municipality?	☐	☐

Council heritage:

	YES	NO
4.10 Does your Council provide on-going training opportunities for councillors and staff on the management of places of heritage significance (including through "informal briefings" by the heritage advisor and planning staff and through formal training programs like DPCD's PLANET course)?	☐	☐
4.11 Are Council staff responsible for heritage identification, protection and management on Heritage Victoria's HeritageChat network?	☐	☐
4.12 Does Council's heritage advisor and planning staff responsible for heritage attend Heritage Victoria's regular "Local Government Heritage Workshop"?	☐	☐

Heritage Strategy Template

Once the checklist is complete, a Heritage Strategy can be developed using the compiled information.

To reiterate, the Heritage Strategy should be as simple and concise as possible. Ideally it should be limited to eight pages. This will encourage wide understanding and use of the document.

The following template contains a number of headings which are provided as a guide. The headings can be modified to address the particular circumstances of the Council.

Councils should not aim to have an action for each of the checklist sub-headings. Councils are encouraged to carefully identify the key heritage gaps and needs within the municipality and to direct appropriate resources to these areas. The checklist has been designed to help identify where these key gaps are. The action plan should contain realistic goals for the Council: when these are achieved they should be celebrated and used to encourage further heritage best-practice within the municipality.

Consultation with all Council departments and with Councillors is integral to developing a strong Heritage Strategy. External consultation may also be undertaken. This will foster support for the Strategy by all those responsible for identifying, managing and promoting heritage within the municipality.

[Council] Heritage Strategy

[Date – Date]

Adopted by Council on [Date]

1. Council's Heritage Vision Statement

A short statement articulating Council's commitment to heritage.

2. Strategy Context

State context – Planning and Environment Act, State Planning Policy Framework, other relevant legislation and policy.

Local context – Council Plan, Municipal Strategic Statement, other relevant policy.

3. Heritage Challenges and Opportunities

Use bullet points. Be concise.

4. Heritage-related achievements

Briefly highlight heritage-related achievements within the municipality.

5. Strategy Action Plan

Four Year Action Plan *(Drawn from checklist. Try and limit to a maximum of 4 actions under each of the 4 checklist headings. Target actions as much as possible e.g. "Undertake a study of post-war heritage places within the municipality" or "Make Council's heritage data available to the community through the Victorian Heritage Database")* *(NB there may be multiple actions under the sub-headings, for example under heritage studies)*	Resourcing *(Indicate how action will be funded e.g. by Council, State funding etc)*	Target Date for Completion *(May be on-going)*	Progress/Outcome *(For long-term actions provide a progress update. For projects completed within the Strategy period, celebrate the achievement)*
Knowing			
Heritage studies			
Thematic Environmental History			
HERMES			
Objects and collections			
Council-owned asset assessment and register			
Engagement with Aboriginal Groups			

Four Year Action Plan	Resourcing	Target Date for Completion	Progress/Outcome
Protecting			
Implementation of study/ies			
Adequacy of controls (mapping & content)			
Register of the National Estate & National Trust Classified places			
Staff awareness of places subject to heritage assessment			
Heritage policy and guidelines			
Statutory protection of Council's heritage assets			
Conservation Management Plans for Council's heritage assets			
Redundant Assets Policy/Asset Transfer Policy			
Heritage policy for Council-managed infrastructure			
Supporting			
Heritage advisor			
Heritage resources for community use			
Financial assistance program			
Council support to local heritage organisations			
Council access to heritage expertise			
Communicating and promoting			
Victorian Heritage Database			
Heritage information/publications			
Interpretation			
Heritage award or recognition program			
Main Street program			
Staff and Councillor training			
HeritageChat and Heritage Victoria workshops			

This 2011 testimonial from a Victorian regional Council should dispel any doubts about the worth of the toolkit to guide the development of a Heritage Strategy:

I found the guidelines very helpful. The councillors were very happy with the end result and the fact it was a whole of Council effort and prepared in house. Council has had a lot of heritage issues over the past two terms and it was refreshing to hear the councillors support the strategy and say that they learnt something about the diversity of Council activities in the area.

It can be quite daunting to think about all of Council's roles and responsibilities in heritage and the ... toolkit really helps gauge where you are at and prioritise what you can achieve over a four year period. It is a great tool to start the discussions internal to Council and communicate issues and priorities in the community.