



PROJECT OVERVIEW

Whitehorse City Council is transforming the ageing Whitehorse Centre into a highly accessible, flexible and contemporary venue that will provide an expanded array of arts and cultural opportunities for the entire Whitehorse community to enjoy for generations to come.

Demolition of the centre will occur from September 2020. Construction works will commence in 2021 with an expected project completion in late 2023.

PROJECT NEED AND BENEFITS

Why is Council building a new performing arts facility?

The Whitehorse Centre is Council's performing arts and cultural venue and a beloved community facility, attracting over 100,000 attendees and 40,000 festival goers annually. However, now more than 30 years old, it is nearing the end of its functional working life.

Understanding the enormous value of the Whitehorse Centre to the entire Whitehorse community—for local performing arts groups, schools, community groups, private hirers and commercial users as well as the loyal patrons—planning for a new facility began in 2010. A comprehensive business case, cost benefit analysis of the options, and extensive community consultation informed Council's decision to fully redevelop the Whitehorse Centre into a venue that will serve the needs of the community into the long-term future.

The new facility will deliver on Council's arts and cultural vision "to be a creative community that is vibrant, diverse and engaged through our arts, culture and heritage".

How will a new performing arts facility benefit user groups and patrons?

The new centre will remain, first and foremost, a community arts and cultural facility, while still attracting high quality national touring shows.

The main users of the new centre (an estimated 80%) will be local community groups, schools and community-based Council programs such as the Whitehorse Centre professional Main Season, Midweek Matinee program, sports awards and women's forum.

The new centre will benefit all of these user groups and patrons and will have flexible spaces for a variety of uses.

How will a new performing arts venue benefit the broader Whitehorse community?

A larger, purpose-built performing arts facility will enable a greatly expanded range and number of performing arts, events and function opportunities for the wider community to participate in and enjoy.

Council recognises that arts and culture are as important to the community's mental health and wellbeing as sport and recreation are to physical health and wellbeing. As such, Council is committed to its responsibility of providing arts and cultural activities as part of the more than 100 different services it delivers to the community every week.

DESIGN

Who will design the new facility?

To achieve the most effective and sustainable outcomes for the project—functionally, operationally and financially—Council conducted a design competition in the first half of 2019. BKK Architects in collaboration with KTA Architects were announced as the successful lead design team for the project in May 2019.

What is the design approach to be taken by the architects?

The following design statement by the architects captures the essence of the design approach:

“The Whitehorse Centre Redevelopment project represents a unique opportunity to create a civic asset that will serve as a cultural focal point for the Whitehorse community for decades to come. Envisaged as a welcoming and inspiring place, the Whitehorse Centre will function as both a premiere performance and events facility, and as a base for a diverse range of local community and business groups, artists, performers and patrons alike. This carefully calibrated balance between everyday use and special events will enable the Whitehorse Centre to contribute significantly to the City of Whitehorse’s vision for liveability and inclusivity, as well as its cultural diversity and vibrancy.

The Whitehorse Centre Redevelopment Concept Design has been considered as a precinct wide approach that connects architecture, landscape, ecology and infrastructure as part of an integrated public realm, acting as a catalyst for enhanced community engagement and activation within its unique parkland setting.

Interfaces between building, landscape and public realm areas have been carefully curated to provide enhanced connections throughout the precinct and maximise place-making and community programming opportunities within the building itself and its surrounds.”

BKK Architects and KTA Architects

PROJECT FEATURES

What features will the new facility have?

Council will build the new facility to cater for current and future use.

Key features will include:

- 600-seat auditorium - large stage and modern backstage area
- 200-seat studio theatre
- multipurpose rehearsal/dance studio
- multipurpose function room
- improved soundshell for community festivals and other outdoor events
- improved car parking, enabling easy and convenient access to the Whitehorse Centre, library, Council offices, local parkland and the nearby Walker Park sports precinct.

Will the new facility cater for all abilities?

Yes. From the car park design and pathways through to the performing arts centre seating and space functionality, this project will be delivered in line with universal access principles and comply with the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.

What sustainability measures will be put in place?

Council is committed to building sustainable, and energy and water efficient buildings in accordance with Council's Sustainability Strategy 2016-2022.

Environmental design consultants have been engaged to provide advice on opportunities for sustainability in facility design, plant and equipment, services and maintenance as well as future-proofing to enable sustainability measures to be taken up in the future.

What will happen to the leadlight glass windows at the entrance of the Whitehorse Centre?

Council acknowledges the historical significance and sentimental value of the leadlight windows at the entrance to the Whitehorse Centre. As such, we will be carefully removing and reinstating the leadlight within the new performing arts centre for the continued enjoyment of the Whitehorse community.

What is proposed for the precinct landscape?

The new centre will connect strongly to its parkland setting. There will be extensive new landscaping and trees will be located to assist in wayfinding and to create spaces and pocket parks within the wider environment.

While construction of the new centre will require the removal of trees in certain areas, there will be no net loss of trees within the precinct through replanting of existing trees and new tree plantings. New tree species will be selected to complement those already on site.

CAR PARK

What car parking will be provided?

A new open, double-storey car park will significantly improve parking, enabling easy, convenient and safe access to the performing arts centre, library, Council offices, local parkland and nearby Walker Park sports precinct.

There will be more than 430 car parking spaces on site.

BUDGET

How much will the new centre cost?

The project budget is set at \$78 million and will be funded over several financial years without any new borrowings or rate increases.

How will Council ensure the project stays on budget?

A rigorous process is in place, including engagement of a quantity surveyor, to ensure costs are regularly assessed and value-for-money outcomes are achieved. Council will conduct public tender processes for all demolition and construction activities.

TIMELINES

What is the timeframe for the project?

Following closure of the Whitehorse Centre in August 2020, demolition will occur from September 2020. Construction works will commence in 2021 with an expected project completion in late 2023.

CONSULTATION

Will the Whitehorse community have input into the project?

Council will engage with key stakeholders and the wider community throughout the project to inform the design of a modern facility for the Whitehorse community.

CONSTRUCTION STAGE

How will local parking and traffic flow be affected during construction?

Council will work with VicRoads, as the main road authority, to ensure that traffic and parking associated with the project is planned, managed and monitored. During the construction phase, the appointed contractor will be required to keep local residents and other nearby property owners informed of any changes to pedestrian or traffic movements, and provide traffic management to minimise any potential disruption to local traffic flow.

What about potential construction impacts?

The appointed construction contractor will be required to develop a Construction Management Plan that identifies and mitigates against any potential impacts such as noise and dust.

FUTURE OPERATIONS

What will happen to the current Whitehorse Centre performances, functions and other activities?

The show will go on! After closure, the Whitehorse Centre's professional Main Season and Midweek Matinee program will be presented at alternative venues within the municipality while the redevelopment is underway. We're also assisting Whitehorse Centre theatre and function clients to find alternative venues so they can continue their activities during this time.

Will the fees and charges be affordable in the new centre?

Council adopts its service fees and charges as part of the annual budget process. As the new performing arts centre is predominantly a community facility, Council is mindful of the need to provide affordable hire options for the community.

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

How will Council keep the community informed during the project?

Council will communicate regularly with clients and patrons of the Whitehorse Centre as well as local residents and others in the immediate vicinity of the site. Council will also keep the wider community up-to-date on the project with regular project newsletters, a dedicated website, social media updates and via the community newsletter *Whitehorse News*.

People can stay informed of this project and/or sign up to regular email updates, by visiting www.whitehorsecentre.com.au/whitehorse-centre-redevelopment or contacting the project team via email whitehorsecentre.redevelopment@whitehorse.vic.gov.au or phone on 9262 6357.

These FAQs were updated on 14 July 2020.