

Position Description

Principal Research and Foresight Analyst (Urban Economics)

Position details

Group:	Strategy Planning and Climate Change
Branch:	City Strategy
Team:	Urban Research and Foresight
Reports to:	Manager Urban Research and Foresight
Position No:	19424
Classification:	6
Financial management	NIL
Direct reports:	NIL
Volunteers being supervised by this position:	NIL
Job Family:	Research

Our Vision and the Way we Work



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The way we work is underpinned by our Values:

- **INTEGRITY** is being honest and reliable in all dealings with others and conducting activities professionally and ethically.
- **COURAGE** means to step out of our own comfort zone and accept responsibility for the consequences of our own actions.
- **ACCOUNTABILITY** means to take personal responsibility for decisions and actions to achieve agreed outcomes.
- **RESPECT** means to value the contribution and individuality of others and contribute to healthy working relationships.
- **EXCELLENCE** means we aim to achieve the highest standard and best possible result in everything we do.

Team context

City Strategy

The City Strategy Branch leads long-term thinking that helps shape the City of Melbourne's future. Through deep insight, rigorous foresight and strategic planning, the branch positions Melbourne to be a thriving, resilient and inclusive city. By understanding community and city, analysing community needs, and interpreting emerging social, economic and urban trends, the branch guides sustainable urban renewal, manages and plans for change and develops a clear strategic direction for the decades ahead, including delivering on the aspirations of the City of Melbourne long-term strategic vision. To deliver this work, the City Strategy Branch is structured into five teams:

- Urban Research and Foresights which leads horizon scanning, trend analysis, benchmarking and future scenario testing to inform long term decision making.
- City Strategy which develops and maintains an organisational strategy framework and supporting tools in addition to leading and supporting development of integrated citywide strategies, policies and plans that unify long term outcomes across Council and align with the City's long-term strategic vision.
- Strategic Urban Planning (3 teams) address key city shaping matters including land use and development, movement and transport, built form and heritage, housing and affordable housing. Infrastructure and development contributions, precinct delivery, policy development and emerging strategic issues.

Together, these teams collaborate across the branch and the wider organisation to deliver insight led, long-term visioning, future focused integrated strategies, Council Plan strategic objectives and key activities, the Melbourne Planning Scheme, analysis and planning required to guide Melbourne toward a sustainable, equitable and future ready city, risks and opportunities, ensuring all work is evidence-based, forward-looking, and aligned with Council's long-term vision

Urban Research and Foresights team

This team supports the long-term direction of our community vision and the ambitions of the Council Plan, providing evidence based insight to inform strategic decision-making and long-term city shaping.

Working in close partnership with key areas of the organisation, which provide core datasets and analytical inputs, the team interprets and synthesises this information to produce meaningful research and foresight that guides Council's strategic choices.

The team takes a whole of city systems perspective, spanning human needs and social dynamics, urban design, land use economics and demographic change.

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Urban Research & Foresight delivers strategic research, foresight, and analytical products by integrating intelligence from City Insights and Analytics, the Neighbourhood Knowledge Bank, global benchmarking, and other data sources. This work explores potential long-term futures for the city (10+ years) while also informing present-day policy and investment decisions.

This team will undertake strategic research, analysis and foresight activities to inform long-term planning and decision-making across the organisation. This includes exploring and testing future scenarios and megatrends to build plausible futures that guide strategy development and key initiatives. Contribute to the investigation and delivery of relevant Council Plan priorities through evidence-based studies and analysis. Insights generated support integrated, forward-looking strategies and strengthen the organisation's ability to respond to emerging risks and opportunities.

Together, this work equips Council and the organisation to anticipate change, test future scenarios, and make confident, informed decisions that support a sustainable, resilient, and future-ready city.

Position Purpose

The Principal Urban Research and Foresight (Urban Economist) is responsible for leading and advancing the organisation's urban research, foresight and insights capability, shaping a robust evidence base to inform strategic decision-making and long-term city outcomes, with a strong integration of urban economics expertise.

The role establishes and drives a forward-looking approach to understanding emerging trends, risks and opportunities, translating complex data, spatial analysis and urban land economics considerations into clear, actionable insights that influence organisational priorities, planning policy development and city-shaping decisions.

Operating with a high level of autonomy and expert judgement, the position provides authoritative, strategic and design-informed advice in complex and uncertain environments, supporting Councillors, the Executive Leadership Team and senior leaders with informed, future-focused perspectives that integrate both analytical and place-based outcomes.

Working collaboratively across the branch and economic development, creative sectors and activation teams across the organisation, the Principal ensures research, foresight and land economics thinking is embedded in strategy, planning and policy, strengthening the City of Melbourne's ability to anticipate change and deliver high-quality, resilient and people-focused urban outcomes.

The position ensures economic evidence is integrated into land use planning, city strategies, precinct development and major projects, supporting informed decision-making and sustainable economic outcomes.

Key Accountabilities

The Principal Research and Foresight Analyst (Urban Economics) is a senior specialist role accountable for leading sophisticated research, insight generation and foresight work. The role also applies strong urban economics expertise to ensure all insights translate effectively into place-based, people-focused and high-quality urban outcomes.

Strategic Research and Foresight Delivery

- Lead the delivery of complex research, analysis and foresight projects to inform strategic planning and decision-making
- Deliver high-impact work including scenario planning, trend analysis, spatial insights, urban land economics analysis and evidence-based frameworks

Analysis and Professional Judgement

Position Description

Principal Research and Foresight Analyst (Urban Economics)



- Analyse complex data, trends and emerging issues, applying professional judgement and urban land economics understanding to develop clear, evidence-based recommendations
- Interpret uncertainty, risks and opportunities to support long-term planning and place-based outcomes

Foresight Development and Application

- Translate research, foresight and urban land economics considerations into actionable insights that inform strategies, policies and organisational priorities
- Integrate data, research findings, spatial and design analysis, and stakeholder inputs into coherent and relevant outputs

Urban Economics Integration and Capability Uplift

- Apply expert urban land economics knowledge to ensure research and foresight outputs respond to place-based challenges and opportunities
- Provide urban land economics informed advice that supports high-quality, inclusive, sustainable and resilient urban environments
- Integrate built form, public realm and place-making considerations into strategic analysis and city-shaping decisions
- Lead and support the uplift of urban land economics capability across the branch and organisation, embedding design literacy into research, strategy and policy work
- Mentor and guide teams to strengthen their understanding and application of urban land economics principles, fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement

Strategic Contribution

- Contribute to the development of city strategies, planning frameworks, urban land economics policies and initiatives
- Support integrated, evidence-based and design-informed decision-making across the organisation

Professional Advice and Communication

- Provide high-level professional and design-informed advice to Council, Executive leaders and project teams
- Prepare high-quality analytical reports, briefings and presentations tailored to a range of audiences

Methodology and Continuous Improvement

- Apply and adapt research, data analysis, urban land economics and foresight methodologies to respond to evolving challenges
- Support continuous improvement in analytical and design-informed approaches, tools and frameworks

Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement

- Collaborate across teams to support coordinated outcomes and knowledge sharing
- Build effective relationships with internal and external stakeholders, including close partnerships with strategic planning, economics development and data/insights teams, to inform and strengthen integrated insights

Project Management and Quality Assurance

- Manage project scope, timelines and quality within established frameworks

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- Ensure the accuracy, integrity and relevance of all outputs

Strategic Context and Systems Thinking

- Apply a strong understanding of city-shaping dynamics—including demographic change, economic trends, urban systems and community needs
- Incorporate place-based insights, urban land economics principles, cultural context and First Nations perspectives into research and analysis

General Responsibilities (across all roles)

- Contribute across work streams and broader branch priorities as required
- Undertake administrative and operational tasks including reporting, invoicing, and support for statutory planning and engagement processes
- Maintain accurate records, systems and workflows to ensure transparency and efficiency
- Support effective business operations through adaptable and responsive delivery
- Incorporate understanding of place, community needs and cultural context, including First Nations perspectives

Key Relationships

Internal

- Collaborate with broader branch and economic teams across the organisation, aligning work programs and integrating urban land economics insights into strategic planning, research and foresight outputs.
- Work across the branch, with the Manager, Head of City Strategy and Research, Head of Urban Strategic Planning, Director, senior leaders and project teams to ensure research, foresight and urban design inputs inform major strategies and planning initiatives.
- Provide expert advice on emerging trends, risks and opportunities, incorporating urban land economics place-making and built form considerations.
- Prepare high-quality reports, briefings and presentations for Councillors, Committees and senior executives, including clear articulation of urban design implications.
- Maintain strong relationships to support integrated, evidence-based and urban land economics decision-making across the organisation.

External

- Engage with government, industry, academic, design and urban economics expert networks to inform and validate research and urban land economics thinking.
- Represent Council at forums, panels and advisory groups as required, contributing expertise in research, foresight and urban land economics.
- Provide advice on stakeholder perspectives, risks and opportunities, including implications for urban land economics, public realm and place outcomes.
- Support consultation, research and engagement activities, ensuring urban land economics perspectives and place-based considerations are effectively incorporated.

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Key Selection Criteria

- Relevant tertiary qualifications in urban economics, urban planning, research, data analytics, geography or a related discipline, with substantial professional experience
- Demonstrated experience delivering complex research, analysis or foresight projects
- Strong analytical and problem-solving capability, including interpretation of complex data and trends
- Proven ability to develop clear, evidence-based insights and recommendations
- Sound understanding of urban systems and city-shaping dynamics
- Strong written and verbal communication skills, including preparation of high-quality reports and presentations
- Demonstrated ability to work independently and collaboratively across multidisciplinary teams
- Proven ability to build effective stakeholder relationships across government, industry and community
- Ability to research and synthesise complex trends, community needs and place-based insights, including First Nations perspectives

Inherent Requirements

The reference to the Inherent Requirements for this position is **DM 19273628**.

Commitment to Child Safety

All CoM employees are required to hold a valid Working with Children Check (WWCC).

The City of Melbourne is a child-safe organisation with zero tolerance for child abuse. All children and young people have the right to be and feel safe. We embed child safety into daily practice and require all employees, volunteers and contractors to understand, prevent, detect and report any concerns relating to child safety.