



Advocacy Priorities

2023-25

The City of Whittlesea is located

20 kilometres north

of Melbourne's Central Business District.

Covering some 490km²,
the City of Whittlesea is

**one of Melbourne's
largest municipalities.**

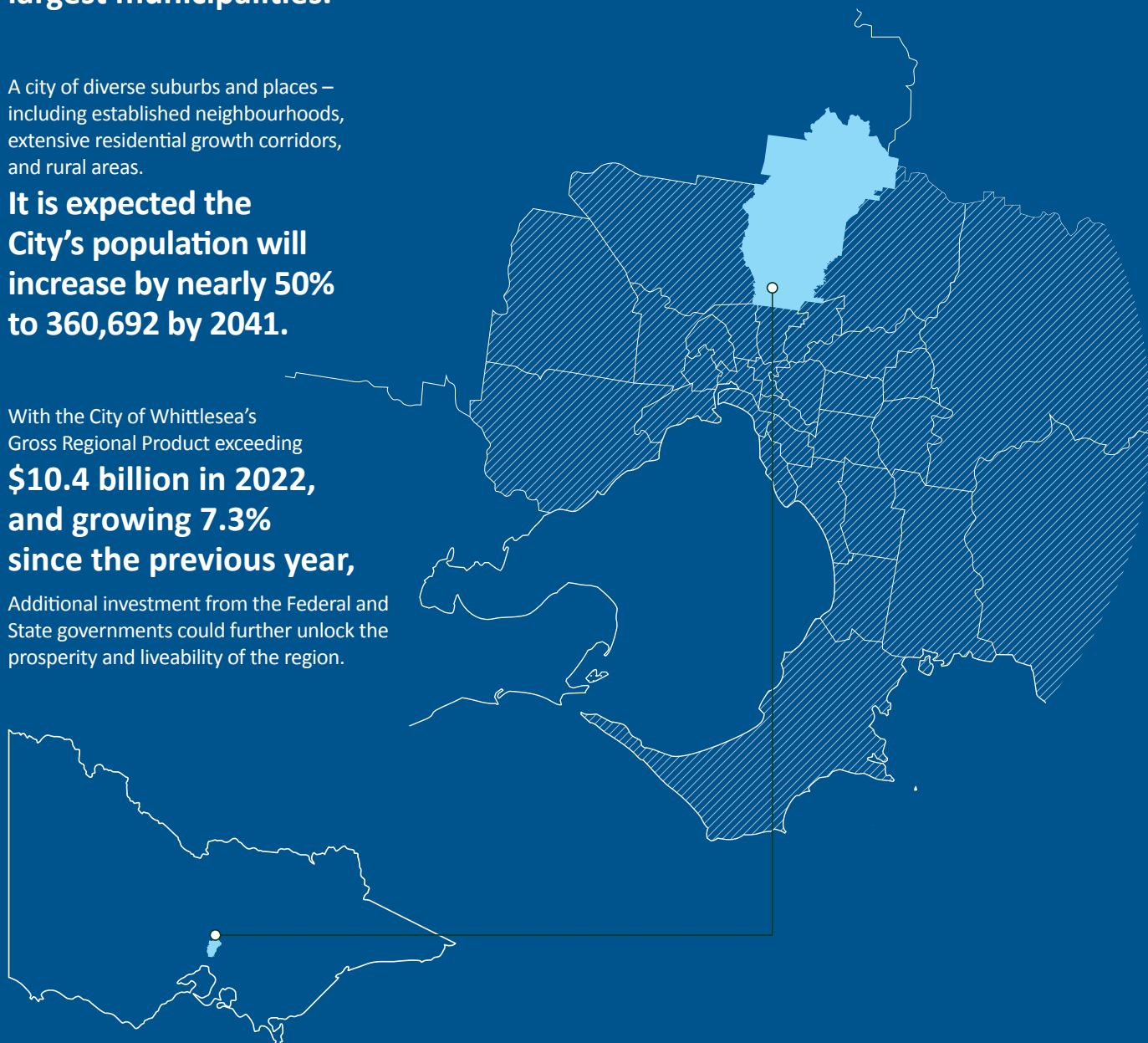
A city of diverse suburbs and places –
including established neighbourhoods,
extensive residential growth corridors,
and rural areas.

**It is expected the
City's population will
increase by nearly 50%
to 360,692 by 2041.**

With the City of Whittlesea's
Gross Regional Product exceeding

**\$10.4 billion in 2022,
and growing 7.3%
since the previous year,**

Additional investment from the Federal and
State governments could further unlock the
prosperity and liveability of the region.



Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

We recognise the rich Aboriginal heritage of this country and
acknowledge the Wurundjeri Willum Clan and Taungurung People as
the Traditional Owners of lands within the City of Whittlesea.

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A growing community that's shaping Victoria

This advocacy prospectus seeks State and Federal Government co-investment in 18 key initiatives across seven integrated economic domains:

- 01 Community services and infrastructure**
- 02 Employment**
- 03 Public transport**
- 04 Health and wellbeing**
- 05 Affordable housing**
- 06 Roads**
- 07 Environmental sustainability**

These domains interact to affect economic development, with investment in the initiatives in one domain also advancing outcomes in others. For example: investment in our public transport initiatives will increase local housing values by \$2.44 billion and deliver travel time savings of \$523 million by 2030.¹

Investment in our community services and infrastructure initiatives will deliver more than \$4.5 million in improved health outcomes each year, create 800 jobs, and add more than \$784 million in economic value to the region.²

In this way, our investment initiatives work together to create and enhance the conditions for economic growth, liveability, and sustainability. This is essential for our residents now – and critical if we are to meet the needs of our rapidly expanding population.

This integrated approach can also inform municipal development in other rapidly growing, outer suburban councils. By co-investing across all domains, Council and State and Federal governments can work together to develop a transparent, evidence-based model that sets meaningful benchmarks for future growth areas.

“Our investment initiatives work together to create and enhance the conditions for economic growth, liveability, and sustainability. This is essential for our residents now – and critical if we are to meet the needs of our rapidly expanding population.”

The City of Whittlesea is one of the fastest growing municipalities in the state-projections show it will grow change by nearly 50% between 2021-2041.³ This exceptional growth poses challenges and opportunities.

ABS figures show the City is the fifth most disadvantaged metropolitan municipality in Victoria. The pandemic has compounded this disadvantage. Unemployment in the City is now at 4.2% - higher than Victoria and Australia at 3.7% and 3.5% respectively.

But initiatives such as the E6 Freeway and the Melbourne Food Innovation and Export Hub (MFIH) will revive our region. The E6 will provide a key national-scale road corridor for Victoria, NSW, ACT and Queensland, and connect trade gateways.

The MFIH will create 3,500 construction jobs and 6,500 ongoing jobs. This will drive Victoria's food and fibre exports and help reboot the food services and distribution sectors, which experienced an 80% drop in income through the global pandemic.

All the initiatives in this prospectus are supported by our communities. They address our region's chief deficits and optimise our region's strengths.

Together they will:

- deliver world-class infrastructure and services;
- build a stronger, inclusive, and more resilient community;
- increase participation and reduce disadvantage;
- enhance health outcomes and living standards;
- reinvigorate our regional and state economies; and
- protect and enhance our environment.

Most importantly, they will transform Victoria, advancing the objectives of *Victoria's Infrastructure Strategy 2021-2051* and generate social, economic, and environmental prosperity for our state.

We welcome your support.



Lydia Wilson
Chair of the Panel
of Administrators



Craig Lloyd
Chief Executive Officer

¹ Public Transport Modeling Reports 2021, Independent study by Hale

² Deloitte Australia, 2022, *Regional Sports Centre at Mernda Business Case*, pp25-26

³ Unless stated otherwise, the population data in this section is from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021, Census and Informed Decisions (ID), 2023 City of Whittlesea profiles

Summary of Partnership Opportunities

For more information on the City of Whittlesea advocacy priorities visit:
www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/advocacy

COMMUNITY SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE

OPPORTUNITIES

- **Regional Sports Precinct**
Co-invest in a state-of-the-art regional sports precinct in Mernda.
- **Aboriginal Gathering Place**
Co-invest \$4M in a purpose-built Aboriginal Gathering Place in Quarry Hills Regional Park, South Morang.
- **Mobile and Broadband Coverage**
Investment to fix mobile and broadband blackspots in existing areas and provide connectivity for future growth areas.





EMPLOYMENT

OPPORTUNITIES

- **Melbourne Food Innovation and Export Hub**
Fund the development of MFIX as a transformational project establishing the northern region of Melbourne and Victoria as a world-class agri-food industry and innovation precinct.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

OPPORTUNITIES

- **Wollert Rail**
Expedite and disseminate findings of the Wollert Rail Feasibility Study. Government investment in construction of Wollert Rail, with an immediate and interim bus service prior to the delivery of Wollert Rail.
- **Tram 86 Extension**
Utilise existing land to extend Tram Route 86 (T86) to the Plenty Valley Town Centre.
- **Better Bus Services**
Reform bus services, including expanding the network and catering to growth areas.
- **Wallan Electrification and Connection**
Extension and electrification of the Upfield line to Wallan, connecting the local community in Wallan and Donnybrook to the metropolitan train network

HEALTH & WELLBEING

OPPORTUNITIES

**Adolescent Mental Health Services**

Commit \$1.036M pa in ongoing funding for the Youth Enhanced Service to support our young people.

**Family Violence Prevention Programs**

Invest \$200K year one (\$160K pa thereafter) to deliver locally tailored initiatives, including preventing violence against women and assisting with family violence recovery.

**Gambling Harm Minimisation**

Expand the Libraries After Dark program to minimise gambling harm by investing \$240K pa.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

OPPORTUNITIES

**Social and Affordable Housing**

Invest in affordable and social housing, allocate funding for dedicated access point and outreach services, and reduce rental and mortgage stress.

ROADS

OPPORTUNITIES

**E6 Freeway**

Bring forward construction of the proposed E6 Freeway to 2027 to ensure completion by 2035.

**Road Upgrades**

Deliver key planned road upgrades for arterial roads across the City of Whittlesea.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

OPPORTUNITIES

**Securing the Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands**

Fulfil the 2009 commitment to establish a 1200-hectare Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands Reserve within the City of Whittlesea.

**Integrated Water Management**

Invest \$1M for IWM initiatives in Council buildings, facilities and public realm projects, capital works projects in flood hotspots, and collaboration with State government to implement stormwater harvesting schemes.

**Electric Vehicle (EV) transition plan**

Co-invest to support Council's Electric Vehicle (EV) transition plan by 2025.

**Active Travel Infrastructure**

Partner with Council to deliver active travel infrastructure projects to promote walking and cycling in our community.

About the City of Whittlesea⁴

50%

population
increase by 2041

38%

residents
born overseas

27%

under the age of 20

41%

of households
couples with children

13%

of households
one-parent families

LOCATION

- Located over 490km² in Melbourne’s north and about 20 kilometres from the CBD, the City of Whittlesea is one of Melbourne’s largest local government areas (LGAs).
- It spans the Federal electorates of Scullin and McEwen.

TRADITIONAL OWNERS

- The First Nations communities of Wurundjeri Willum and Taungurung people are the original inhabitants of the area and the Traditional Owners of lands within the City of Whittlesea.

POPULATION

- The City is projected to be home to 250,711 residents in 2024.
- This is expected to increase to 360,692 residents by 2041 – a 43.9% increase – with more than 8,000 new residents settling each year and more than 60 babies born each week.^{5,6}

LOCALITIES

Beveridge	Epping	South Morang
Bundoora	Kinglake West	Whittlesea
Donnybrook	Lalor	Wollert
Doreen	Mernda	Woodstock
Eden Park	Mill Park	Yan Yean

COMMUNITIES

- More than 70% of the City of Whittlesea is rural but most residents live in the City’s established suburbs: Bundoora, Epping, Lalor, Mill Park and Thomastown.⁷
- These established areas, and the new suburbs of Mernda, Doreen, South Morang, Epping North, Wollert and Donnybrook, are expanding rapidly.

⁴ Unless stated otherwise, the data in this section is from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), *Census Data*

⁵ Informed Decisions (.ID) (2024) *City of Whittlesea – Population Forecast*
<https://forecast.id.com.au/whittlesea>

⁶ City of Whittlesea (2022), *Community Plan 2022-2025*

⁷ City of Whittlesea (2023), *Our Suburbs and Residents*

INDUSTRY



The City of Whittlesea's Gross Regional Product was \$10.40 billion in the year ending June 2022, growing 7.3% since the previous year.

In 2022, there were 21,617 local businesses and 77,935 local jobs in the City of Whittlesea.

The four largest industry employers are healthcare and social assistance; construction; retail trade; and manufacturing. Major employment precincts in Epping Central, New Epping, Cooper Street and O'Herns Road, Cooper Street West and South East, Thomastown Industrial Area, Plenty Valley Town Centre and University Hill.^{8,9}

In addition, the Beveridge Intermodal Precinct (BIP) will connect the industrial north to the National Inland Rail and create 20,000 associated jobs. When fully operational in 2028-29, the BIP is expected to contribute \$3.5 billion annually to the economy.

PEOPLE



- The City of Whittlesea has the third largest population of First Nations communities in metropolitan Melbourne.¹⁰
- It is also home to vibrant migrant communities, with more than 37.6% of residents born overseas – compared to 30% in Victoria and 27.7% in Australia.¹¹
- More than 45.1% of households speak a language other than English at home – compared to 27.6% in Victoria 22.3% and across Australia.¹²
- The main languages spoken at home are Arabic (5.2%), Macedonian (4.3%), Punjabi (4.3%), Italian (3.6%) and Greek (3.1%).

AGE



- The median age is 34 years – compared to 38 for both Victoria and Australia.
- Almost 27% of the population is under 20 years – compared to 23.6% for Victoria and 23.9% in Australia.
- Around 18% of the population is over 60 years – compared to 22.4% for Victoria 23% in Australia.

GENDER



The City has slightly fewer females and slightly more males than Victoria or Australia, with:

- 50.4% females – compared to 50.8% in Victoria and 50.7% in Australia.
- 49.6% males – compared to 49.2% in Victoria and 49.3% in Australia.

HOUSEHOLDS



The City has more couples with children and more one-parent families than Victoria or Australia, with:

- couples with children comprising 41.2% of all households – compared to 30.9% in Victoria and 29.7% in Australia.
- couples without children comprising 21.3% of all households – compared to 24.6% in Victoria and 29.7% in Australia.
- one-parent families comprising 12.6% of all households – compared to 10.2% in Victoria and 10.5% in Australia.

SOCIOECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE



- The City of Whittlesea is the fifth most socioeconomically disadvantaged of Victoria's 31 metropolitan local governments.¹³
- 19.1% of households in the municipality fall within the lowest income range – \$0 to \$799 per week.¹⁴

EDUCATION



- Almost 20% of children in the City were vulnerable on one or more childhood development domains.¹⁵
- 51.2% of residents aged over 15 years held educational qualification at certificate level or above – compared to 55.7% in Victoria and 54.8% in Australia.
- Only 23.4% had a Bachelor or higher degree – compared to 29.2% in Victoria and 26.3% in Australia.
- 17.5 had vocational qualifications – compared to 16.7% in Victoria and 19.1% in Australia.

EMPLOYMENT



63% of residents were in the labour force – compared to 62.4% in Victoria and 61.1% in Australia.¹⁶

Of residents in the labour force:

- 56.3% were employed full-time – compared to 56.2% for Victoria and 55.9% in Australia.
- 31.5% were employed part-time – compared to 32.3% for Victoria and 31.2% in Australia.
- 28.8% were employed as professionals or managers – compared to 39% in Victoria and 37.7% in Australia.¹⁷
- 4.2% were unemployed – compared to 3.7% in Victoria and 3.5% in Australia.¹⁸

⁸ Informed Decisions (.ID) (2023) City of Whittlesea – *Employment by Industry*. <https://economy.id.com.au/whittlesea/employment-by-industry>

⁹ City of Whittlesea (2022), *Investment Prospectus 2022*

¹⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022), *Victoria: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population Summary* <https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/victoria-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-population-summary>

¹¹ Informed Decisions (.ID) (2023), *City of Whittlesea – Birthplace* <https://profile.id.com.au/whittlesea/birthplace>

¹² Informed Decisions (.ID) (2023), *City of Whittlesea – Language used at home* <https://profile.id.com.au/whittlesea/language>

¹³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023) *Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA)*

¹⁴ Informed Decisions (.ID) (2023) *City of Whittlesea – Household Income* <https://profile.id.com.au/whittlesea/household-income>

¹⁵ Australian Early Development Census (2021) *Data Explorer*

¹⁶ Informed Decisions (.ID) (2023) *City of Whittlesea – Employment Status* <https://profile.id.com.au/whittlesea/employment-status>

¹⁷ Informed Decisions (.ID) (2023) *City of Whittlesea – Occupations* <https://profile.id.com.au/whittlesea/occupations>

¹⁸ Informed Decisions (.ID) (2023) *City of Whittlesea – Unemployment June 2023* <https://economy.id.com.au/whittlesea/unemployment>

Section 1

Community services and infrastructure

Investment in our community services and infrastructure initiatives will provide opportunities for Aboriginal residents, deliver more than \$4.5 million in improved health outcomes each year, create 800 jobs, and add more than \$784 million in gross benefits to Victoria over 30 years.



Investment
Initiative



Regional Sports Precinct

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

Future investment for
remaining phases

Initiative	Electorates
Co-invest to construct a state-of-the-art sports precinct in Mernda	Yan Yean McEwen

With additional government investment, the Precinct’s complete design will include:

- 6 indoor and 8 outdoor floodlit multipurpose courts;
- 50 metre multipurpose pool;
- warm water, teaching and leisure pools;
- spa, steam and sauna;
- gymnasium with group fitness rooms; and
- health consulting and wellness.

Benefits

- Deliver \$784.3M in economic value and \$150.7M in social value to Victoria over 30 years
- Deliver \$135.6M in improved health outcomes over 30 years
- Create 800 jobs

Rationale

Almost 45% of adults residing in the City of Whittlesea do insufficient physical activity – the second highest proportion in north-eastern Melbourne. The City also has:¹⁹

- the highest proportion of adults who are overweight in north-eastern Melbourne – 58%;
- the sixth highest proportion of adults with heart disease in Victoria – 7%;
- the third highest proportion of adults with type 2 diabetes in Victoria – 6%; and
- high rates of adults with arthritis (25%) and osteoporosis (20%).

Increasing the rate of physical activity by just 10% can reduce disease and death related to physical inactivity by 13% and 15% per year respectively. More children participating in sports drives better health and educational outcomes for them and increases lifetime earnings by \$1.5 billion every year.²⁰

Research shows significant benefits from investing in community sports and active recreation infrastructure, including the following health benefits:²¹

- reduced risk of chronic disease, dementia, and falls;
- improved mental health and wellbeing;
- improved education and employment outcomes;
- reduced anti-social behaviour; and
- increased connectedness and inclusion.

Return on investment

Community engagement shows strong support for the Precinct – 72% of survey respondents rate the centre's importance at 7 out of 10 or higher and 45% rate it at 10 out of 10.²²

Council estimates the Precinct will attract up to 550,000 visits per year and run at a profit when fully operational.²² Modelling shows the Precinct will generate:

- \$784.3 million of economic value for Victoria over 30 years.
- Around 800 jobs, including 430 local jobs, comprising:
 - 135 direct jobs in the local building and construction sector;
 - 241 jobs in indirect intermediate industries; and
 - 54 jobs through indirect consumption impacts.

- \$4.52 million each year and \$135.6 million over 30 years in improved health outcomes including:²³
 - \$2.3 million each year in acute benefits through improved mental health, increased productivity, and improved educational outcomes;
 - \$1.31 million each year in chronic benefits through reduced rates of cardiovascular disease, breast and bowel cancer, Type 2 diabetes, dementia, as well as health system savings; and
 - \$0.86 million each year through increased water safety education and reduced risk of drowning.

Our business case also identifies the following key benefits:

- increased participation in more non-physical activities;
- increased participation by women and girls in structured and unstructured physical activity; and
- improved job opportunities for women.

Additional multipurpose indoor and outdoor courts will increase participation in netball and basketball. This is particularly significant for women and girls who comprise 96% of the City's netball registrations and 28% of our basketball registrations.

In 2017, Netball Victoria identified that half of the 1,967 registered netballers within the Whittlesea local government area (LGA) played with associations outside the LGA. The new courts will allow almost 1,000 netballers to stay in the LGA to play.²⁴

According to Royal Life Saving Australia, more than 70% of the 67,000 workers in the national aquatic industry are female.²⁵ Providing infrastructure that encourages and supports gender equity in physical activity will also create job opportunities for women in areas such as sports centre management and leadership, lifesaving, fitness and aquatic exercise instruction, and swimming and water safety instruction.

Progress

City of Whittlesea welcomes the Victorian Government's \$10M investment towards phase two in delivering a four court indoor stadium. Council is seeking further investment for phase two to deliver an additional two indoor courts and up to eight outdoor courts, and phase three to deliver the aquatic centre.

¹⁹ Victorian Population Health Survey, 2017, *Dashboard, selected results and quick statistics for local government areas and time series data (2015-2017)*, LGA Snapshot.

²⁰ Boston Consulting Group, 2017, *Intergenerational review of Australian sport*, p37.

²¹ KPMG, 2018, *The value of community sport and active recreation infrastructure*.

²² Sport and Leisure Solutions, 2018, *Mernda aquatic centre planning study*, City of Whittlesea, p10.

²³ Deloitte Australia, 2022, *Regional Sports Centre at Mernda Business Case (Draft)*, pp25-26

²⁴ City of Whittlesea, 2019, *Netball and Basketball Plan 2019-2041*.

²⁵ Royal Life Saving Australia, 2019, *National Aquatic Workforce Profile*.

Investment
Initiative



Aboriginal Gathering Place

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

\$4M

Initiative	Electorates
Co-invest in a purpose-built Aboriginal Gathering Place in Quarry Hills Regional Park, South Morang, to be completed by mid-2025.	Mill Park Scullin

Benefits

- Advance ‘closing the gap’ targets with improved health, education and employment outcomes for local First Nations residents
- Increase reconciliation between First Nations and non-First Nations residents

Rationale

Victoria has 14 Aboriginal Gathering Places, but none in the City of Whittlesea, despite the City having one of the fastest growing First Nations population in Metropolitan Melbourne.

Research shows that Aboriginal Gathering Places have positive impacts on the health and wellbeing of First Nations people.²⁶ They:

- enhance physical health through improved attendance and participation in community health checks, chronic disease screening and specific health programs;
- boost social and emotional wellbeing through the development of social support networks and social connections;
- enhance pathways to education and employment;
- enrich cultural awareness and cultural identity through cultural activities and links to community networks; and
- empower community members through leadership development and mentoring.

Aboriginal Gathering Places also benefit the wider community by:

- optimising the contribution of First Nations' skills and knowledge across the community and economy;
- fostering mainstream awareness of, and respect for, First Nations culture; and
- creating opportunities for reconciliation between First Nations and non-First Nations people.

These outcomes reduce government and community costs associated with poor health and economic and social disadvantage. They are consistent with the goals of the Federal Government's *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021–2031*, which recognises culture as a protective influence on physical, social, and emotional wellbeing.

Return on investment

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, family and community, Country and place, cultural identity, and self determination are strongly associated with improved health and wellbeing outcomes.²⁷

The Aboriginal Gathering Place in the City of Whittlesea will advance progress towards key 'closing the gap' targets through inclusive and innovative programs.

The First Nations community and stakeholders will also help co-design the facility.

Progress

The Quarry Hills Regional Park in South Morang is the site for the Gathering Place. One of the defining landscapes of the City of Whittlesea, this unique area is surrounded by natural habitat.

It provides easy access to connect with Country, space to balance private cultural ceremonies and community programs, and opportunities to facilitate connection across the broader regional park and wider community.

Council has also formed a Whittlesea Aboriginal Gathering Place Advisory Group (WAGPAG) comprising grassroots community members. The group has provided constructive advice to Council and architects to inform the concept plan.

²⁶ Indigenous Health Equity Unit University of Melbourne and Gathering Place Reference Group, 2016, *Health and wellbeing outcomes of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander gathering place model in Victoria: a place for inclusion, connection and empowerment*, Final report for the Department of Health and Human Services, ppv-vi.

²⁷ Verbunt, E, Luke, J, Paradies, Y, et al, 2021, Cultural determinants of health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – a narrative overview of reviews. *Int J Equity Health* 20, p181.

Investment
Initiative



Mobile and broadband coverage

Initiative	Electorates
Black spots Fix eight mobile and broadband blackspots, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cooper Street business precinct;• University Hill;• Olivine Estate and Kinbrook Estate;• Thomastown;• Aurora Estate;• Whittlesea Township;• Beveridge, Merriang and Glenvale; and• 100c Gorge Road, South Morang.	ALL
New connections Provide connectivity for six future growth areas, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cooper Street West, Epping;• Donnybrook/Woodstock Precinct;• Wollert Precinct;• Mernda Town Centre;• Beveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal (BIFT); and• Northern Quarries/Craigieburn South.	Thomastown Yan Yean McEwen Scullin

Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure all residents and businesses are connected during emergency events• Improve access to, and participation in, employment and education• Improve social connection• Eliminate disruption to local business• Prepare for future demand

Rationale

Mobile and broadband are essential infrastructure, they are critical for relaying information and staying connected in emergencies.

Blackspots have a direct impact on the social determinants of health, including access to health care and education, employment, and business opportunities.

Residents and businesses report that poor connectivity at home and work is having the following serious impacts:

- disrupting employment seeking activities;
- disrupting business operations;
- increasing business costs as businesses seek alternative coverage;
- affecting business and employment income;
- reducing family and community connection;
- disrupting education, including home schooling, homework, and other study;
- disrupting library services; and
- disrupting the delivery of emergency services and community safety information.

“I called emergency services for an ambulance...The operator couldn’t hear me and the call continuously dropped out”

*– local resident,
Donnybrook*

Return on investment

Upgraded and improved mobile and broadband connectivity will reduce and remove these impacts. They will:

- enhance community safety, particularly during emergencies;
- improve social connection; and
- increase access to, and participation in, education, employment, and health services.

Providing services for planned developments will allow residents, businesses, and services immediate access to mobile and broadband and all the benefits of connectivity. This will help circumvent social problems that arise through isolation and reduced opportunities to connect and participate.

Progress

Council has recently convened an independent study on mobile coverage to identify blackspots across the municipality, particularly in growth areas. The study found:

- 41% of the combined mobile coverage is either fair or poor and 10% is unusable signal for network quality
- 13% of emergency markers had poor or unusable signal, although at least one carrier had fair or better quality coverage for triple zero calls
- More than 1 in 3 places of interest, including educational facilities, community centres and aged care facilities, had unusable or null coverage
- 36% of 2,093 road segments tested had unusable or null coverage.²⁸

The State Government's Connecting Victoria program recently announced projects covering the City of Whittlesea. These include mobile towers in Donnybrook, Doreen, Eden Park, Epping, Humevale, Mernda, Mill Park, South Morang, Whittlesea, Wollert, Woodstock and Yan Yean, and broadband solutions in Doreen and Mill Park.²⁹

Council has been engaging closely with Connecting Victoria to identify priority areas for mobile and broadband investment to address current and future needs in our fast-growing municipality.

²⁸ Independent study for City of Whittlesea by CartGIS. July 2024

²⁹ Connecting Victoria, 2022, Projects near City of Whittlesea Projects near you | Connecting Victoria | Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (djsir.vic.gov.au)

Section 2

Employment

Our employment initiative will generate 10,000 ongoing jobs and add billions to the Victorian economy. This is crucial for our City's projected population growth.



Investment
Initiative

04

MFIX – Melbourne Food Innovation and Export Hub

Initiative	Electorates
Infrastructure Fund the development of MFIX as a transformational project for the northern region of Melbourne and Victoria.	Thomastown Scullin
Incentives Provide incentives for a major industry player to relocate to Epping as an anchor tenant to attract other food and export businesses.	Thomastown Scullin

- Benefits**
- Generate 3,500 construction jobs
 - Generate 6,500 ongoing jobs
 - Improve productivity, collaboration and exports in the food and beverage industry
 - Unlock Melbourne’s North as an international agri-food and beverage hub



Rationale

Home to the Melbourne Wholesale Fruit, Vegetable, and Flower Market (the Melbourne Market), Melbourne's north is already a food hub of national significance with produce worth \$2 billion passing through the market each year as more than 5,000 businesses buy and sell there.³⁰

With around 120,000 square metres of warehouse space – the largest warehousing precinct of any central market in Australia – the Melbourne Market readily facilitates the integration of supply chain logistics. This unique capacity has already seen the local food production sector develop into an industry cluster of tertiary institutions, freight networks, and a burgeoning skilled workforce.

Leveraging on its proximity to the Melbourne Market, MFIX will be developed as a global agri-food and beverage hub. The City of Whittlesea's Agri-Food Plan 2023-2026 identifies MFIX as a key initiative to grow and attract agri-food businesses in Melbourne's north. MFIX will play a vital role in securing food and beverage industry investment and jobs in the region, and connect food industry stakeholders across the state and nationally.³¹

Northlink's *North Investment Attraction Strategy* identifies MFIX as a key investment to secure food-related jobs for Victoria, with Melbourne's north expected to increase its output to \$5 billion.³²

Return on investment

Developing a 50-hectare land parcel adjoining the Melbourne Market into MFIX will optimise the market's assets and deliver lasting infrastructure and job opportunities for the region. Modelling shows MFIX will:³³

- create 3,500 construction jobs and 6,500 ongoing jobs;
- establish the northern region as a world-class agri-food industry and innovation precinct;
- provide a strategic platform to collaborate and innovate across Victoria's food and beverage industry ecosystem;
- double the food and beverage sector's annual turnover in 10 years (from \$2.6 billion to \$5 billion); and
- encourage new ancillary business.

Comprising approximately 120 hectares including the Melbourne Markets, MFIX will offer direct access to Melbourne's airport and extensive freeway network. This will deliver logistical advantages and reduce handling, transport, and labour costs. It will also:

- create opportunities for food and beverage processors, manufacturers, packaging specialists, cold-chain suppliers, and logistic and transport companies to co-locate, expand and grow; and
- drive Victoria's food and fibre exports (already 28% nationwide) and reboot income in the food services and distribution sectors after an 80% drop during the pandemic.³⁴

³⁰ Melbourne Market, 2021, *Overview - Melbourne Wholesale Fruit Vegetable & Flower Market*.

³¹ City of Whittlesea, 2023, *Agri-Food Plan 2023-2026*

³² Northlink- Urban Enterprise, 2023, *Melbourne's North Investment Attraction Strategy*

³³ Melbourne Market Authority, 2018, *The Melbourne Food Hub at Epping*.

³⁴ Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, 2020, *Victorian Food and Fibre Export Performance Report 2019-20*, pdf, p2.

Section 3

Public Transport

Investment in our public transport initiatives will increase local housing values by \$2.44 billion and deliver travel time savings of \$523 million by 2030.



Investment
Initiative

05

Wollert Rail

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

Government investment in construction of Wollert Rail, with an immediate and interim bus service prior to the delivery of Wollert Rail

Please visit the Advocacy webpage to hear from our community on why Wollert Rail matters
whittlesea.vic.gov.au/advocacy

Initiative

- Expedite the Wollert Rail Feasibility Study and disseminate findings with Council and other stakeholders
- Provide new bus services as an interim option connecting the Epping Metropolitan Activity Centre (MAC) and Wollert before Wollert Rail
- Acquire the remaining 5% land needed for the Wollert Rail Corridor
- Construct Wollert Rail by 2030

Electorates

Thomastown
Scullin

Benefits

- Connect the Wollert community to employment, education and health hubs
- Increase property values by \$2.44B
- Deliver travel time savings of \$523M and 500,000 hours
- Reduce congestion on local and arterial roads



Rationale

The City of Whittlesea is one of the fastest growing municipalities in the country. Significant developments in the Epping-Wollert Growth Corridor call for a high capacity and high frequency train line:

- In the Epping-Wollert area, population will grow by 88%, number of dwellings will double to 417,611³⁵ and travel demand will rise by 111% between 2021 and 2041³⁶
- The Epping North Strategic Plan 2002 designated a planned transport corridor featuring a train line to promote high density developments and activity centres in the area, but the train line is yet to become a reality more than two decades later
- The Epping MAC is a major employment, education, retail and health hub requiring a train line for sustained business and industry growth
- Investing in a train line will also help improve community health and wellbeing with reduced emissions, walking and cycling connections, and future shared paths.

Return on investment

Wollert Rail will connect the growing local population with jobs and opportunities in the Melbourne CBD as well as local precincts.

It will also:

- increase property values by \$2.44 billion by 2030;
- remove at least 2,000 cars per hour from heavily congested roads and improve liveability the area
- generate approximately 500,000 hours and \$522.8 million in travel time savings to road users by 2030;
- generate 2,000,000 hours and \$1.5 billion in travel savings to rail users each year by 2040;³⁷ and
- make it easier for staff and visitors to get to the Northern Hospital, which has one of the busiest emergency departments in the state, treating nearly 90,000 patients each year and employing around 3,000 people

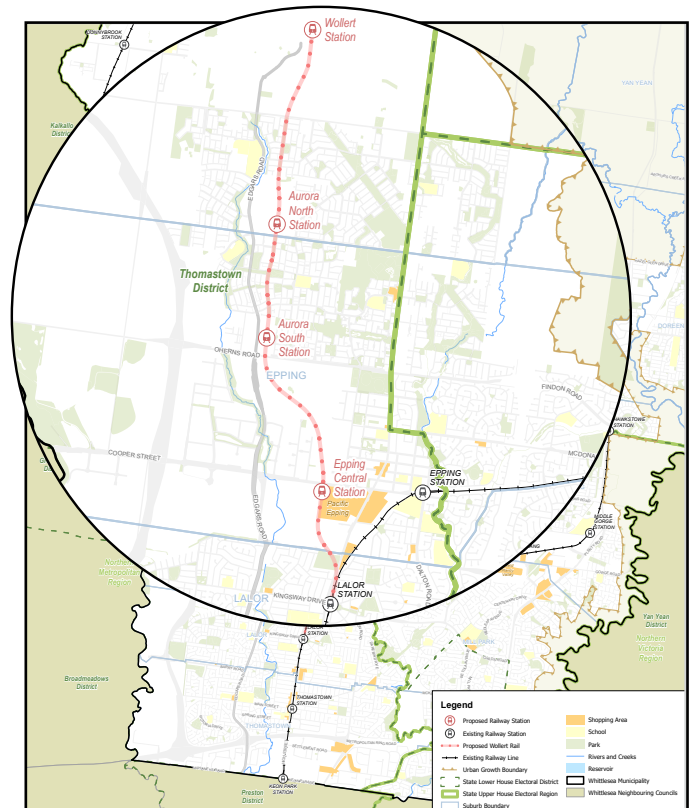
“If you're working part time in the city and looking at a four hour shift, you're spending four hours in transit... that is really hard on families. The community has expanded, there is a requirement for a train station.”

*– Dixsha,
local Wollert resident*

Progress

There is both State and Federal Government Commitment to undertake a feasibility study into Wollert Rail. In the 2022-23 Federal Budget, the Federal Government announced a \$250k investment to fund a feasibility study into Wollert Rail that is subject to matching fund by the State Government.

The State Government had earlier committed to this feasibility study as part of the Victorian Infrastructure Plan 2017. Council understands the feasibility study for the Epping-Wollert Transport Corridor is in its preliminary stages and calls for the delivery of Wollert Rail by 2030.



³⁵ Informed Decisions (.ID) 2024, City of Whittlesea – Forecast Dwellings and Development <https://forecast.id.com.au/whittlesea/dwellings-development-map>

³⁶ City of Whittlesea projections based on trip generation per household

³⁷ Epping – Wollert Rail Corridor Independent Study by Hale Infra Consulting, 2021



Better bus services

Initiative	Electorates
Improve existing services Review and reform Whittlesea’s bus network to provide a network that is more connected to enable our residents faster, more frequent and more reliable journeys with improved timetable integration. Expand the bus network to cater for our new communities in Wollert and Donnybrook. Provide an interim rapid bus service that connects Epping Station to Wollert mimicking the future Wollert Rail service. Introduce flexible services in the growth areas that can quickly respond to changes in the network as roads are built and residents move in.	Thomastown Yan Yean McEwen Scullin

Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Faster and more convenient travel• Improved accessibility• Health and environmental benefits• Social inclusion• More people on buses

Rationale

A higher frequency and more connected bus network integrating with other public transport modes will encourage more people to use buses for meeting their daily transport needs. Improved facilities and connections in bus stops and interchanges will also boost bus patronage in the municipality. At this point, less than 1% of the community use buses.³⁸

Improving the bus network coverage will benefit residents with better transport choices and lesser car dependency. This will help to manage traffic congestion, which is an ongoing issue in the municipality due to inadequate or absent public transport, particularly in growth areas. More bus usage will also help residents relieve affordability issues associated with running a car.

Over 60% of our residents work outside the municipality with heavy reliance on cars.³⁹ By improving bus connections to train stations, more residents will be able to choose public transport to access work. An interim bus services in place of the Wollert Rail extension will help provide much-needed capacity until the train line is constructed.

4.1% of households in the municipality do not own a car.⁴⁰ These households will also benefit from improved bus services.

Return on investment

By reforming the bus network in the City of Whittlesea, our residents can expect to benefit from improved connections and more convenient transport choices to meet their daily transport needs, including employment, education, health services and recreation.

The proposed changes will:

- Enable residents to better access the Epping Metropolitan Activity Centre (MAC) and high-value jobs in Melbourne's CBD and inner-suburbs
- Reduce car dependency by providing convenient public transport choices, which will also help relieve some costs associated with lower car usage
- Manage traffic congestion and vehicle emissions
- Improve accessibility for disadvantaged members of our community, including those experiencing family violence and those who do not own a car.

Progress

State Government has announced a new bus service Route 524 from Kalkallo to Olivine via Donnybrook Station under the Growth Area Infrastructure Contribution (GAIC) 2023-2024 funding. Council welcomes this announcement and seeks extension of the route from Olivine Estate to Peppercorn Hill Estate for the greater benefit of the Donnybrook community.



³⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021, Census

³⁹ ibid

⁴⁰ ibid

Investment
Initiative



Wallan electrification and connection

Initiative	Electorates
Extend and electrify the Upfield line to Wallan – connection to the metropolitan train network will support the rapidly growing residential, commercial and industrial development in the region	Yan Yean McEwen

- Benefits
- Service the fast growing areas of the Northern Growth Corridor
 - Improve access to employment, education and health services for current and future residents

Rationale

Electrifying between Craigieburn and Wallan is fundamental to the success of the metropolitan growth strategy and to connecting residents in the Northern Growth Corridor (including Donnybrook) to employment, education, health and recreation.

Released in 2002, *Melbourne 2030: Planning for Sustainable Growth* established an Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) around Melbourne to manage outward expansion in a coordinated way.

The Northern Growth Corridor is projected to accommodate 30% of Melbourne's future growth over the coming decades, with the region becoming home to more than 1.5 million people.

Growth area communities experience a significant service deficit compared to established areas, particularly in respect of public transport services.

Return on investment

New suburbs in the Northern Growth Corridor are currently serviced by infrequent V-Line services. Electrifying the metropolitan rail network through to Wallan will connect and integrate these suburbs and fast growing developments.

Donnybrook is forecast to experience major population growth over the next two decades. Therefore, connection into the metropolitan rail network will provide additional capacity and service frequency for the large growth in rail passengers.

Improved access to public transport services will also alleviate the health, wellbeing and other social issues our residents currently face through social isolation and poor access to education, employment and health services.

Extension and electrification of the Upfield line to Wallan will support the need for increased capacity at Wallan and Donnybrook stations.

Electrification will facilitate improved service frequencies for Donnybrook residents to connect to the CBD as well as the Sydney Road employment precinct in the Brunswick-Coburg corridor.

Investment
Initiative



Tram 86 (T86) extension

Initiative	Electorates
Extend Tram Route 86 (T86) from the Plenty-McKimmies roads intersection to the Plenty Valley Town Centre.	Mill Park Bundoora Scullin

Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Allow an additional 15,000 residents to easily use South Morang station on the Mernda line for better access to education, employment, retail, and health services

Rationale

The T86 was extended to RMIT Bundoora in 1993. In the 30 years since, residential growth has exploded along Plenty Road to South Morang and beyond.

Rapid population growth and new and expanded education and employment precincts such as University Hill and RMIT demand greater capacity and an expanded tram service in the area.

Residents have long called for the route to be extended.

Land has already been set aside to allow the T86 extension to be designed and delivered efficiently and without delay.

“Tram 86 needs to be extended to South Morang. Very long overdue considering the benefits that it will bring by opening up the transport between Bundoora and South Morang.”

– local resident

Return on investment

Extending T86 to the Plenty Valley Town Centre will enhance the lives of additional 15,000 residents. It will:

- improve access to significant education, employment, and service hubs such as RMIT Bundoora, La Trobe University, La Trobe National Employment and Innovation Cluster, University Hill, Mill Park Library, and the Plenty Valley Town Centre; and
- allow users of the Mernda train line to transfer at South Morang for university campuses, employment hubs, and health services across the expanded tram network.



Section 4

Health and wellbeing

The City of Whittlesea is an area of high need. Between 2021 and 2041, our population will grow by nearly 50%, and we need urgent investment to expand our health services and community wellbeing programs.



Investment
Initiative



Adolescent mental health services

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

\$1.036M pa

Initiative

Electorates

Youth Enhanced Service

ALL

Ongoing funding for the Youth Enhanced Services as a primary care providing psychological support for young people who are at risk of deteriorating mental health.

Benefits

- Reduce associated long-term impacts of mental health issues
- Reduce experiences of social isolation
- Reduce high risk taking and substance misuse
- Prevent suicide
- Reduce interruptions to education and employment
- Reduce hospital Emergency Department presentations



Rationale

In 2018, the Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Care Network (EMPHN) identified the City of Whittlesea as ‘an area of high need’ with: ⁴⁰

- fewer adolescent mental health services than other municipalities in the region;
- the highest rate of emergency department presentations with anxiety in the network catchment.

Demand for mental health services continues to exceed availability. Services report:

- an increase in the number of young people seeking mental health support, with 15% experiencing a high level of psychological distress – higher than the State average of 13%;⁴¹
- an increase in the number of risk assessments conducted each week; and
- wait times of up to four weeks for an initial assessment and eight months for ongoing counselling.

Youth Enhances Service provider reports:

- an increase in the number of referrals from individuals and from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS);
- an increase in the complexity and risk in the referrals they receive; and
- an increase in the number of referrals they are unable to accept.

Return on investment

Youth Enhanced Service provides responsive and flexible support to young people 12-25 who have developed, or are at risk of developing, severe mental illness, and their family/carers. This is a critical service for young people who do not meet the criterion for tertiary mental health care, but are at risk of deteriorating mental health.

Expanding Youth Enhanced Service will help to:

- reduce hospital Emergency Department presentations;
- reduce experiences of social isolation;
- reduce high risk taking and substance misuse;
- prevent suicide; and
- reduce interruptions to education and employment and associated long term impacts.

These outcomes are consistent with Federal and State Government plans, including:

- the Federal Government’s *Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan*;
- the *National Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan*, which aims to support the mental health of Australians during and after the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- *Victoria’s infrastructure strategy 2021-2051*, which recommends the delivery of infrastructure for a more responsive and integrated mental health system (recommendation 72).

⁴⁰ Bell, T, Mendoza, J, Stretton, A, and Salvador-Carulla, L, 2018, *EMPHN integrated mental health and AOD service atlas (East and North East Melbourne) – Final report*.

⁴¹ Whittlesea Community Futures, 2021, *Lockdown Survey* June 2021.

Investment
Initiative



Family violence prevention programs

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

\$200k Year 1 + \$160k pa

Initiative	Electorates
Fund locally tailored initiatives to prevent violence against women and to assist with family violence recovery, including:	
Migrant women’s driving program (\$100k pa)	ALL
CALD women’s social groups (\$30k pa)	ALL
CALD women’s recovery groups (\$70k Year 1 + \$30k pa)	ALL

Benefits

- Prevent and reduce family violence
- Reduce mental and physical health consequences of family violence
- Improve family cohesion
- Build community understanding of gender equality and how to prevent family violence

Rationale and return on investment

The City has the highest rate of family violence incidents in the North East Melbourne Region – a rate of 1,258 incidents reported per 100,000 of population in 2021-2022. There was an average of 1,182 incidents reported to the police in the municipality.⁴²

From April 2023-March 2024, there were 2,767 family violence incidents in the City of Whittlesea, which was 2.2% higher than the previous year.⁴³

The City of Whittlesea has been working with community partners to prevent and respond to family violence. It is important to continue investing in family violence programs to sustain any gains made as our community continues to grow.

These locally tailored initiatives will help reduce the number of incidents and support recovery.

*"I need my driving licence for my children and employment purposes, to gain my independence and freedom." – Sarah **

⁴² Crime Statistics Agency Victoria, Family incident rate per 100,000 population by police region and local government area, July 2017 to June 2022

⁴³ Reference Crime Statistics Agency, 2024, Total Family Incidents by Local Government Area, City of Whittlesea data

* Names have been changed to protect individual identities

Investment
Initiative



Gambling harm minimisation

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

\$240K per annum

Initiative

Electorates

Extend library operating hours to:

ALL

- provide a safe and welcoming alternative for community members at risk of social isolation, gambling harm, family violence;
- provide internet access for lower income households; and
- allow Council to expand prevention programs such as *Libraries After Dark*.

Benefits

- Reduce social isolation – a risk factor for gambling
- Reduce rental and mortgage stress
- Reduce family violence
- Increase access to work and study friendly spaces for low-income households

Rationale

Poker machines account for about 80% of all gambling addictions and are known to increase mortgage stress, family violence, crime, and family breakdown.^{44, 45}

The City of Whittlesea is ranked fourth in Victoria for money lost on Poker machines. Residents lost nearly 138 million through gaming machines in the 2022-2023 financial year, which is equivalent to \$318,000 per day.⁴⁶

The State Government allowed a 25% increase in the number of poker machines in the municipality in 2017.⁴⁷

Residents in our new communities are particularly vulnerable to gambling because they are geographically isolated and have limited access to leisure and recreation facilities.

Many households in Lalor, Mill Park, and Thomastown rely on libraries for internet access. Expanded hours will provide greater access for people who need it for study, work, and job seeking.

Return on investment

The successful *Libraries After Dark* program gives communities a weekly alternative to gambling. Every Thursday evening, participating libraries extend their opening hours and become community lounges, where residents can relax and connect, instead of going to a gambling facility.

Recurrent government investment will allow the Yarra Plenty Regional Library branches at Mill Park and Thomastown to continue this valuable program one night per week, and the Lalor, Mernda and Whittlesea branches to expand their opening hours to commence the program one night per week.

*“Being lonely and on my own
I was easily led to gamble and
in no time lost a lot of money.
I then came along to the
Thomastown Library and what
a blessing... It is just so nice to
share a meal with others and
not be on my own.” – May**

⁴⁴ Productivity Commission, 2010, Gambling. (No.50). Canberra: Australian Government. Retrieved from <http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/gambling-2009/report>.

⁴⁵ Dowling, N, 2014, *The impact of gambling problems on families* (AGRC Discussion Paper No. 1). Melbourne: Australian Gambling Research Centre.

⁴⁶ Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, 2023 <https://responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/resources/gambling-victoria/pokies-across-victoria/whittlesea>

⁴⁷ Victoria Government Gazette, 2017, S 318, 20 September.

* Names have been changed to protect individual identities

Section 5

Affordable housing

Investment in social and affordable housing infrastructure benefits society and delivers significant cost savings to government by supporting social inclusion, participation, place making, and economic productivity.





Social and affordable housing

Initiative	Electorates
Increase and improve stock	
Introduce state-wide planning measures that mandate and provide incentives for affordable housing: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a state-wide minimum of 15% affordable housing for significant developments; and• measures to ensure developments are close to services and infrastructure.	ALL
Invest in all types of affordable and social housing in the City of Whittlesea from crisis accommodation to affordable home ownership. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allocate budget towards increasing the City’s social housing provision rate from 1.3% to the national average of 4.1% of dwellings – equivalent to almost 5,000 social housing dwellings – by 2041• Develop a dedicated funding package to deliver social and affordable housing in growth areas, piloting delivery in the City of Whittlesea	ALL
Use surplus State land in the City of Whittlesea for affordable housing.	ALL
Improve the thermal performance and energy efficiency of existing social and affordable housing.	ALL
Access point and outreach services	
Allocate funding for a dedicated homelessnesss Access Point in the City of Whittlesea.	ALL

Benefits

- Break the cycle of homelessness
- Relieve pressure on local homelessness services
- Reduce number of young people sleeping rough
- Reduce rental and mortgage stress and improve wellbeing
- Improve and increase participation in employment, education, and health care
- Strengthen connections to support systems
- Improve access to financial support
- Reduce household energy usage and operational costs



Social and affordable housing

Continued

Rationale

The City of Whittlesea has a housing crisis, with 30.4% of renting households and 15.3% of mortgage households (more than 10,000 households in total) experiencing housing related stress.^{48, 49}

Demand for affordable rentals for very low-, low- and moderate- income groups exceeds supply, with more than 4,400 households having a need for affordable housing.⁵⁰

Similarly, there are 17,000 Victorian Housing Register applicant location preferences for social housing in the north-eastern region.⁵¹

Housing may appear affordable when compared with other LGAs, but cost of living pressures compounded by poor public transport and access to local jobs make it out of reach for many.

19% of households in the municipality fall within the lowest income range – \$0 to \$799 per week. More than 56% fall within the medium income range – \$800 to \$2999 per week.⁵²

The City’s stock of new rental housing that is affordable to these lower income households declined from above 43% in June 2003 to only 8.9% in March 2024.⁵³

City of Whittlesea had fewer social housing households (1.1%) compared with Greater Melbourne (2.3%) and Victoria (2.5%).⁵⁴

The City has the third highest rate of family violence amongst northern municipalities with 1,228 incidents per 100,000 population.⁵⁵

More than 40% of people accessing homelessness support services reported experiencing domestic and family violence.⁵⁶

With the City of Whittlesea experiencing the twelfth highest levels of homelessness in Victoria, there is a growing and urgent need for a homelessness service access point in the municipality. On 2021 census night, 854 people were experiencing homelessness in the municipality. This rate has increased by 150% since 2006.⁵⁷

Further, residents of Whittlesea are accessing homelessness services at a high rate. Haven Home Safe, located approximately 10 kilometres outside the southern boundary of the municipality in the City of Darebin, is the allocated provider for homelessness services for City of Whittlesea residents.

Due to its location, many vulnerable people are not able to access these services or experience further financial hardship from travelling to reach these services, given the barriers associated with paying for a taxi or public transport.

According to data from service providers, 1985 people were in the City of Whittlesea a week before entering a homeless service.⁵⁸

The State Government’s Big Housing Build is delivering 319 social housing homes in the City of Whittlesea, which will not meet the growing needs of our community.⁵⁹

Established areas such as Epping, Lalor, Thomastown, South Morang, and Bundoora present excellent opportunities to deliver affordable housing for very-low-income households. These suburbs have more access to jobs, public transport, education, and community infrastructure than newer areas.

Council recently amended its local planning scheme to incorporate specific social and affordable housing measures. Regulatory action remains with the State and Federal Governments.

⁴⁸ Informed Decisions (.ID) (2024), City of Whittlesea- Housing Stress

⁴⁹ Rental and mortgage stress refers to households spending 30% of its income on rent and mortgage costs respectively

⁵⁰ Informed Decisions (.ID), 2024, City of Whittlesea – Housing Monitor <https://housing.id.com.au/whittlesea>

⁵¹ Homes Victoria, 2024, Applications on the Victorian Housing Register (VHR)

⁵² Informed Decisions (.ID) (2021) City of Whittlesea- Household Income <https://profile.id.com.au/whittlesea/household-income>

⁵³ Victorian Government, 2024, Rental Report- Quarterly Affordably Lettings by LGA - Dataset Rental Report - Quarterly: Affordable Lettings by LGA – Dataset

⁵⁴ Informed Decisions (.ID), 2021, City of Whittlesea – Housing Tenure

⁵⁵ Crime Statistics Agency (2022), Victorian Family Violence Incidents <https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/family-violence-data-portal/family-violence-infographics/victoria-police-family-violence-incidents>

⁵⁶ Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI), 2020, Housing, homelessness and domestic and family violence

⁵⁷ <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/housing/estimating-homelessness-census/latest-release>

⁵⁸ Australian Urban Observatory. Available at: <https://map.auo.org.au/> (Accessed: 13 June 2023).

⁵⁹ Homes Victoria, 2024, What’s happening in my area – City of Whittlesea

Return on investment

Affordable and social housing infrastructure benefits society by supporting social inclusion, participation, place making, and economic productivity.

People living in affordable or social housing can experience improvements in their health, safety, and sense of empowerment once they are no longer at risk of homelessness.

Social housing is particularly effective at reducing homelessness: it's affordable, because rents are typically set at around 25% of income. It's more likely to be secure, because long-term and lifetime leases are available.

Housing security benefits individuals and communities. It also benefits government through savings in costs associated with health, justice, and welfare services.

Research shows investing in long-term social housing can deliver significant cost savings to government. An ACT study estimated that:⁶⁰

- costs of service use for people in stable and affordable housing were around \$15,300 per person per year less than for people who were experiencing homelessness; and
- government will recoup 57 cents for every dollar it spends on a new, low-cost housing through welfare offsets.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Davison, J, Brackertz, N and Alves, T, 2021, *Return on investment for social housing in the ACT*, report prepared for ACT Shelter, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne.



Section 6

Roads

Targeted investment in our roads will increase capacity for industry and community. It will improve life for thousands of residents, save millions in travel hours, and make access to employment, education, and health services much easier. Investment in active travel infrastructure will result in better health outcomes for our community and reduce congestion on roads.



Investment
Initiative



E6 Freeway

Initiative	Electoralates
Bring forward construction of the E6 Freeway to 2027 to ensure completion by 2035.	ALL

- Benefits**
- Provide capacity for 80,000 vehicles per day
 - Allow traffic to bypass Hume Freeway
 - Relieve congestion on arterial roads
 - Provide a designated route for heavy vehicles
 - Service freight movements
 - Cater for growing communities

Rationale

The proposed E6 Freeway connecting the outdated and overused Hume Freeway to the M80 Ring Road will provide a much needed north-south corridor through the City of Whittlesea.

The Federal Government allocated \$10 million in the 2021-22 Budget to develop the business case, which has been recently confirmed by the Federal Infrastructure Investment Program Strategic Review in November 2023.

The City of Whittlesea’s population is projected to increase by 43.9% to 360,692 from 2024-41.⁵³ During this same period, strong population growth is also projected in neighbouring LGAs. Mitchell Shire is expected to grow by 187.3% to 176,261 people, and Banyule by 20% to 160,176 people.^{57,58,59}

This rapid growth makes it imperative that construction of the E6 is brought forward so the freeway is complete and traffic ready by 2035, including:

- complete business case by FY 2024-25;
- commence construction by FY 2027-28;
- complete construction and delivery by FY 2032-33.

Land along the designated route is already reserved and no known impediments to this timeline exist.

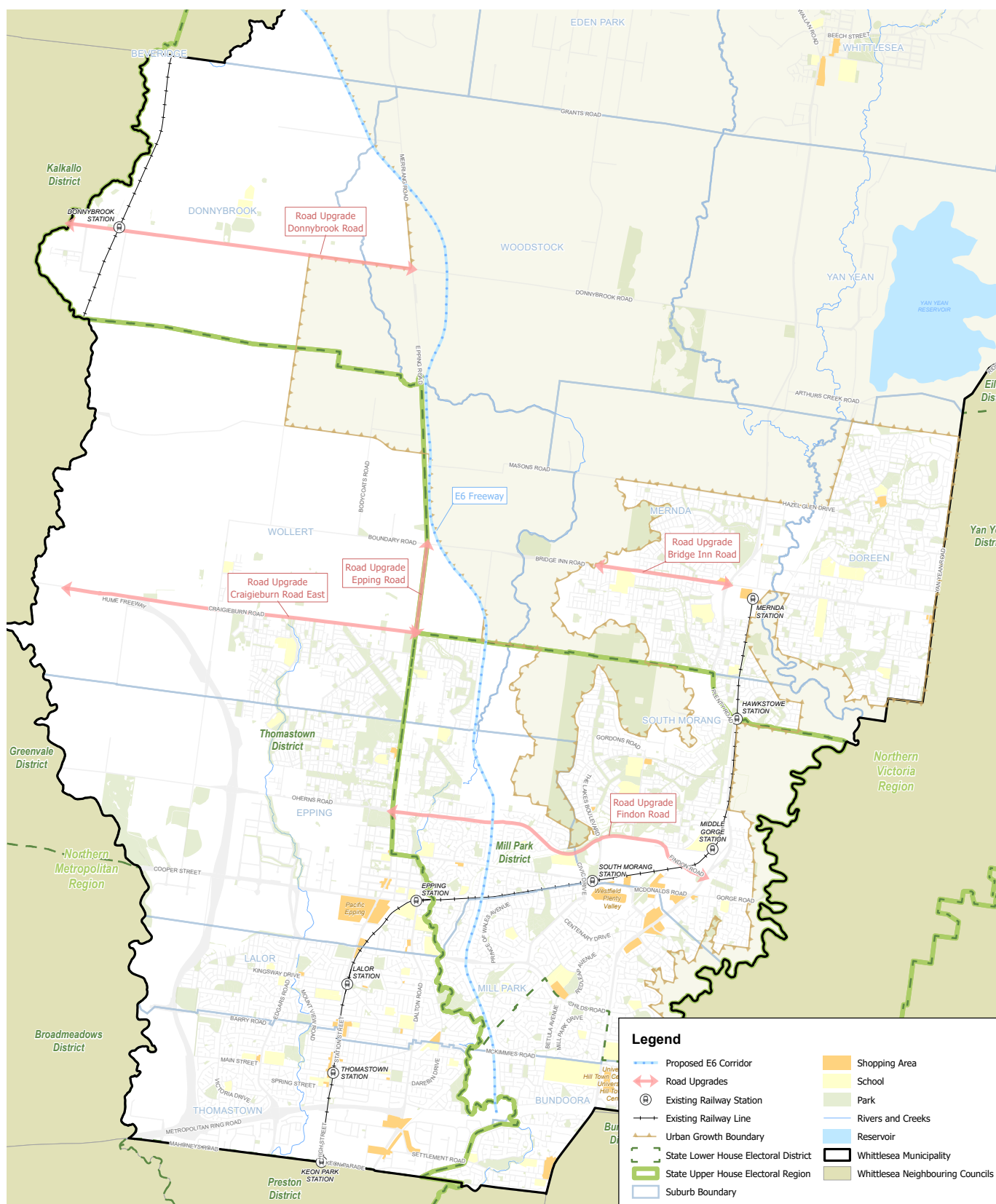
Return on investment

The E6 is a freeway of national significance, providing a key national-scale road corridor for Victoria, NSW, ACT and Queensland. Capable of carrying more than 80,000 vehicles each day, the E6 will:

- connect planned and existing trade gateways and national manufacturing and distribution clusters;
- connect established suburbs and growth areas and improve access to regional employment centres for residents from the outer north; and
- with land now secured for the development of the Beveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal (BIFT), the E6 will facilitate increased capacity for future freight movements.

At the local level, the E6 will:

- create more liveable communities by supporting the delivery of future passenger and freight rail services to Melbourne's north and west, reducing the freight network's overall impact on local communities and environments;
- increase the mobility and participation of residents by providing an essential north-south road connection along the Northern Growth Corridor, especially for residents of Epping North, Wollert, Donnybrook, Kalkallo, Beveridge, and Wallan;
- provide accessibility to jobs, education, and other social and economic opportunities for residents;
- streamline growth of communities by increasing road capacity; and
- reduce traffic congestion on arterial roads including Epping Road/High Street, Dalton Road, Edgars Road, Cooper Street, Plenty Road, and Yan Yean Road.



⁵⁷ Informed Decisions (.ID), 2024, City of Whittlesea: Population forecasts.

⁵⁸ Informed Decisions (.ID), 2024, City of Whittlesea: Population forecasts.

⁵⁹ Informed Decisions (.ID), 2024, City of Whittlesea: Population forecasts.

Investment
Initiative



Road upgrades

Initiative	Electorates
Deliver key planned road upgrades	Yan Yean Mill Park Thomastown

- Benefits**
- Improve frequency and reliability of bus services
 - Safe, continuous and connected active travel infrastructure, including separated walking and cycling paths
 - Create time savings
 - Improve access to employment, education, and services
 - Continuous and separated walking and cycling paths connecting key destinations





Road upgrades

Continued

Rationale and return on investment

Bridge Inn Road – Duplicate and urbanise between Plenty Road and Wellington Street, and urbanise the remaining section between Wellington Street and Epping Road by 2030

Bridge Inn Road is the main east-west road through the northern suburbs of the City of Whittlesea, connecting the growing suburbs of Mernda and Doreen with the rapidly developing Wollert area.

It is built to rural standards and not suitable for high volume urban traffic. It currently carries 21,000 vehicles each day west of Plenty Road and modelling projects it will carry 32,000 vehicles per day by 2032. This poses serious safety risks to road users and to children going to and from school.

The Victorian Government is undertaking the duplication and urbanisation of Bridge Inn Road from Yan Yean Road to Plenty Road.

We now seek the commitment to extend this project from Plenty Road to Wellington Street. As well as addressing safety and congestion concerns, this will improve access to Mernda Town Centre and the train station.

Craigieburn Road East – duplicate between Epping Road and the Hume Freeway by 2025

Craigieburn Road East will be the key east-west road connecting Epping North and Wollert residents to the Hume Freeway and employment precincts to the west in the City of Hume. The current population of 39,000 in Wollert is set to increase to 91,000 by 2030.⁶¹

Traffic volumes are forecast to increase from 14,000 vehicles per day (at present) to around 32,000 vehicles per day by 2030.

Duplication will:

- provide \$295 million in travel time savings
- significantly increase road capacity to cater for future traffic demand
- allow for increased frequency, reliability and punctuality of bus services to run along Craigieburn Road East, so residents can travel to local town centres, Craigieburn Town Centre, and their jobs in the west.
- provide continuous separated footpath and bicycle paths to allow community access to key destinations and bus stops along Craigieburn Road East
- provide high quality active travel infrastructure to facilitate greater levels of local walking and cycling trips.

⁶¹ City of Whittlesea Northern Growth Corridor Development Sequencing 2023-2050 State Transport Projects, July 2023

Epping Road – Duplicate between Craigieburn Road East and Bridge Inn Road and upgrade the Epping Road/Bridge Inn Road intersection as soon as possible

Epping Road is the main road servicing the fast-growing areas of Epping North and Wollert and one of two arterial roads providing access to the rapidly expanding Donnybrook community.

Population in Wollert and Donnybrook are expected to increase to 91,000 and 34,000 by 2030 respectively. Traffic volumes are expected to increase from 22,900 (at present) to 30,000 vehicles per day by 2030.⁶²

Victorian government has commenced the duplication of Epping Road from Memorial Avenue to Craigieburn Road East. We now seek the commitment to continue the duplication works to Bridge Inn Road/Boundary Road (another 1.6kms).

This will unlock a 2,900-lot residential subdivision that will inject \$225 million into the local economy and provide more than 1,000 jobs. Duplication will generate \$38 million of benefit in the form of travel time savings.⁶³

Findon Road – Declare and duplicate between Plenty Road and Epping Road by 2030

Findon Road crosses the City of Whittlesea and provides a link between the Hume Freeway and Plenty Road. It already carries 21,000 vehicles each day and modelling suggests it will carry 35,000 vehicles per day by 2031. This is commensurate with the forecast population rise in Wollert from 39,999 (at present) to 91,000 by 2030.⁶⁴

This project will ensure it becomes a continuous east-west link with significantly increased traffic capacity. This will reduce the volume of traffic on McDonalds Road, ease congestion, and make it easier for people to get to facilities and services such as the Plenty Valley Town Centre.

It will also make it possible to run more regular and reliable bus services on Findon and McDonalds roads.

Improved design will separate oncoming traffic, provide turning lanes, and restrict right turns. This will:

- unlock \$422million in travel time savings⁶⁵
- improve pedestrian and cyclist safety
- reduce head on and rear end collisions
- facilitate safe traffic flow.

Donnybrook Road – Duplicate between Epping Road and the Merri Creek by 2025

Donnybrook Road will be the key east-west road connecting Donnybrook residents to the Hume Freeway and employment precincts to the west and north west in Hume City Council and Mitchell Shire Council. The current population of 2,200 in Donnybrook is forecast to grow to 72,000 by 2041. Traffic volumes are forecast to rise from 10,000 to 46,000 vehicles per day by 2046.⁶⁶

This project will increase road capacity and allow bus routes to run along Donnybrook Road, allowing residents access to Donnybrook Station, local town centres, and employment and activity centres to the west and north west.

Improved design will also separate oncoming traffic, provide turning lanes, and restrict right turns. This will:

- improve pedestrian and cyclist safety
- reduce head on and rear end collisions
- facilitate safe traffic flow
- support the expansion, frequency and reliability of bus services in Donnybrook and the growing estates
- provide continuous separated footpath and bicycle allowing the community access to access key destinations, including Donnybrook Train Station and bus stops along Donnybrook Road
- deliver \$91 million in prospective travel time savings.⁶⁷

⁶² City of Whittlesea, Northern Growth Corridor Development Sequencing 2023-2050 State Transport Projects, July 2023

⁶³ Epping – Wollert Corridor Study, Roads Report, Prepared by Hale Infra Consulting, 2021

⁶⁴ City of Whittlesea, Northern Growth Corridor Development Sequencing 2023-2050 State Transport Projects, July 2023

⁶⁵ Epping – Wollert Corridor Study, Roads Report, Prepared by Hale Infra Consulting, 2021

⁶⁶ Our Community Needs Donnybrook Road Duplication', Advocacy Fact Sheet, September 2021

⁶⁷ Deliver 91 million" Epping – Wollert Corridor Study, Roads Report, Prepared by Hale Infra Consulting, 2021

Section 7

Environmental sustainability

Investment in conservation of our Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands Reserve and water management will preserve the City of Whittlesea as a unique urban environment with a rich biodiversity for generations to come.



Investment
Initiative



Securing the Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

**\$20M + 10-year
funding plan**

Initiative

Fulfil the 2009 commitment to establish a 1200-hectare Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands Reserve within the City of Whittlesea. This includes a need to:

- develop a funding plan to secure the reserve by 2031; and
- immediately invest \$20M to secure the first land holdings through voluntary negotiation with landowners, with similar investments made available thereafter until the land is secured.

Electorates

Yan Yean
Thomastown
McEwen

Benefits

- protect the woodlands which are listed as critically endangered
- protect nationally threatened species:
 - golden Sun Moth;
 - striped Legless Lizard
- prevent further loss and/or degradation of sites supporting Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands
- protect and improve biodiversity
- increase community connection to nature
- safeguard and increase environmental amenity for the region
- reduce threat of climate change on flora and fauna

Rationale

The City of Whittlesea has a unique urban/rural interface. It also has a burgeoning population. Combined, these two characteristics create environmental opportunities and challenges.

The Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands is made up of majestic Red River Gums that are the environmental hallmark of the municipality. They are also home to a variety of wildlife including woodland birds and possums as well as threatened species, such as the Golden Sun Moth, Striped Legless Lizard and threatened flora. Unfortunately, its existence is under threat.

The woodlands are endemic to Victoria and used to be widespread across the Victorian Volcanic Plain but have undergone severe decline and are now mostly reduced to small and degraded fragments. Less than five per cent of the original woodlands remains. Unfortunately, some land management practices associated with farming and agriculture, as well as urban development, have contributed to the significant destruction, degradation, and fragmentation of the woodlands.

In 2009, the State Government committed to establishing the 1200-hectare Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands (GEW) Reserve by 2020. This reserve was to be established to offset the loss of native vegetation associated with extending the urban growth boundary. So far, no land within this reserve has been secured.

A June 2020 report by the office of the Victorian Auditor General found the State Government had failed to meet its commitments and that *“delays in acquiring land, and continuing threats of degradation, pose significant risks to the ecological values of native vegetation within the reserves.”*

Acquiring the land now will ensure that the important flora and fauna values of the reserve can be protected and maintained for current and future generations.

Return on investment

Investment will ensure the City of Whittlesea retains its hallmark majestic woodlands and remains a municipality with rich biodiversity and a healthy environment. Additionally, it will:

- improve health, life expectancy, and sustainability outcomes for the rare and threatened species that call the City of Whittlesea home;
- improve waterway health;
- reduce urban heat island effects;
- increase resilience to climate change risks;
- increase community participation in outdoor and environmental protection activities; and
- improve health and wellbeing for residents.

Investment
Initiative

16

Integrated water management

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

\$1M

Initiative	Electorates
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Funding to support Council to trial and demonstrate Integrated Water Management (IWM) initiatives in new Council buildings, facilities and public realm projects▪ Funding to support Council to develop a program and implement appropriate IWM responses and capital works actions in areas of flooding hotspots▪ Funding to support collaboration between Council and State government agencies to implement stormwater harvesting schemes at strategically relevant sites	ALL

Benefits

- Build rural climate resilience
- Protect agricultural land in Melbourne’s peri-urban food bowl

Rationale

Water is essential to our wellbeing and is imperative to the healthy function of our communities, our environment, and our agriculture and food industries. The overall need for water in our municipality will increase substantially as our population grows, from 15.2 to 19.6 gegalitres per year in 2040. This increased usage will also create more wastewater. At the same time, our water supply is likely to decline as the climate changes. Reduced supply and increased demand could threaten the area’s future agricultural productivity, reducing economic growth and jobs. An effective water management plan is therefore essential, where all forms of water augmentation are explored.

Return on investment

- Facilitating integrated water management will:
- improve sustainable water access in rural areas;
 - build rural climate resilience; and
 - protect and support agriculture productivity uses in Melbourne’s peri-urban food bowl.



Investment
Initiative



Electric Vehicle (EV) transition plan

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

\$180k

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

\$2.1M

INVESTMENT SOUGHT

\$1M

Initiative	Electorates
Charging Infrastructure Co-investment to support the delivery of six new light fleet charging stations across Council depots and office facilities by 2025. Co-investment to support the delivery of fifteen new heavy fleet charging stations across Council depots and office facilities by 2025.	All
Vehicle purchase subsidies Support the purchase of the following electric vehicles to support Council light fleet by 2025: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• two (2) community buses;• seventeen (17) utes;• thirty-two (32) passenger vehicles; and• nine (9) vans.	All
Vehicle purchase subsidies Facilitate the trialling of heavy fleet replacement vehicles to support Council fleet transition priorities by 2025.	All
Benefits <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expedite council fleet EV transition• Support community awareness and knowledge of EVs• Support the emerging second-hand EV market• Reduce carbon footprint and emissions for environmental sustainability• Lower long-term operational costs of Council’s fleets	

Rationale

Electric vehicles (EVs), including personal e-mobility devices, are important to help communities transition to lower carbon lifestyles. In 2021, the State Government released Victoria's Zero Emissions Vehicle Roadmap to drive uptake of EV infrastructure across the State.

The Commonwealth Fleet Vehicle Selection Policy has set a target of 75% low or zero emission vehicles by 2025.⁶⁸ The State Government has reiterated its commitment to be a leader in the adoption of EVs in Australia.⁶⁹

Assisting councils to rapidly transition their fleet to net zero supports the delivery of Victoria climate change action.

Currently it's still more affordable for Council's to purchase internal combustion or hybrid vehicle within their fleet, particularly for heavy fleet.

Providing co-funding towards Council's fleet transition reduces this inequality and assists in building stronger business cases to rapidly transition and reduce Council's reliance on carbon offsetting to achieve climate goals.

The two main areas where financial support can assist the City of Whittlesea is in the capital purchase of fleet vehicles and funding to install charging devices at Council facilities.

Return on investment

By reducing the barriers to the capital purchase, ongoing operational costs of EVs are less than traditional vehicles. This will reduce the cost of managing the fleet to the broader community.

Council transitioning rapidly to EV fleet now will also generate more EVs in the second-hand market over the next 3-4 years, further supporting community wide transition.

⁶⁸ Australian Government, 2022. Commonwealth Fleet Vehicle Selection Policy | Department of Finance

⁶⁹ Premier of Victoria, 2022., Driving Zero Emissions Vehicles | Premier of Victoria

Investment
Initiative



Active travel infrastructure

Initiative	Electorates
<p>Infrastructure delivery</p> <p>Partner with Council to deliver active travel infrastructure projects from Council’s Walking and Cycling Plan and the Northern Trails Strategy, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ High Street Shared Path between Keon Park Station and Epping Park Station▪ Whittlesea-Mernda Shared Path▪ Yan Yean Pipe Track between Childs Road and Bush Boulevard, Mill Park	All
<p>Behaviour change</p> <p>Investment in behaviour change programs to support our community to walk and cycle more.</p>	
<p>Benefits</p> <p>Allow a growing population improved and safer access to local services, facilities and recreational opportunities, which will result in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Better health outcomes: Walking and cycling can contribute to minimising risks of cardiovascular disease, Type 2 diabetes, some cancers and osteoporosis, according to the National Health Survey 2017-2018 Australia. This is an important factor in our municipality where 51 per cent of residents are overweight and 35.5 per cent do less than one hour of physical activity per week.⁷⁰• Reduced traffic Congestion: Active travel can reduce traffic congestion by substituting trips made by car to active travel modes, resulting in lower transport related emissions and lower costs to remaining road users.⁷¹• Economic benefits: Including increased public transport usage, reduced vehicle operating costs, reduced health costs and potential for changes in land use planning to cater for more public spaces.• Environmental benefits: Walking and cycling as modes of transport have been identified as crucial to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating climate change in Victoria’s Climate Change Strategy.⁷² It also reduces parking requirements with space and cost savings.	

Rationale and return on investment

Many of our established areas are relatively walkable. The Covid-19 pandemic disrupted our residents' normal habits and forced them to experience change. It demonstrated to our residents that walking and cycling were viable choices for undertaking local living and local trips. Post pandemic, our community are reverting back to undertaking short trips by private car.

In the municipality's growing suburbs, there is an incomplete pedestrian and bicycle network resulting in many missing links which act as impediments to undertaking walking or cycling. There is also a focus on increasing residential densities to support more walkable neighbourhoods.

Council has recently endorsed a Walking and Cycling Plan, improved walking and cycling infrastructure and connections around the catchment of key public transport nodes and interchanges, and along with other councils of the Northern Councils Alliance, endorsed the Northern Trails Strategy. Both documents set out a list of priority projects to improve conditions and increase walking and cycling participation.

The Movement and Place framework supports the notion of local streets performing a role focussed on reduced traffic speeds and a safer area for pedestrians and cyclists to visit.

By 2041, the City of Whittlesea's population is forecast to increase to approximately 360,692, an increase of almost 50%.⁷³ This puts pressure on the existing road network, requiring the need to look at increasing active travel as a viable option for people in our community. There are particularly high levels of chronic disease, sedentary behaviour and social isolation in the City of Whittlesea.

The provision of high-quality infrastructure would provide better connections for walking and cycling and would be well-supported by targeted travel behaviour change initiatives.

The key advantage of initiating behaviour change is that these can be implemented much more quickly than infrastructure projects. Behaviour change initiatives would be helpful in delivering accessible information, facilities, programs and services that encourage people to build social connections and participate in community life and to make walking and cycling a viable, safe and enjoyable experience.

Funding for behaviour change programs for young people such as ride/walk to school initiatives, bike education, safety and skill development is sought from the State Government.

Return on investment

Investing in active travel infrastructure and funding behaviour change programs will:

- increase levels of walking and cycling participation and share of transport trips undertaken by these modes;
- improve health outcomes for the community;
- increase pedestrian and cyclist safety;
- deliver a 13:1 benefit: cost ratio of investment in walking infrastructure
- reduce congestion at peak times by promoting walking – time spent in traffic is estimated to cost \$10.5B in Melbourne by 2030;⁷⁴ and
- reduce health care costs – 10% reduction in physical inactivity would result in \$96M annual health care savings.

⁷⁰ City of Whittlesea, Walking and Cycling Plan 2022-2027

⁷¹ Transport and Infrastructure Council, 2017, Australian Transport Assessment and Planning Guidelines (ATAP)

⁷² Victoria Government: Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, May 2021, Victoria's Climate Change Strategy

⁷³ Informed Decisions (.ID), 2021, City of Whittlesea Population summary

⁷⁴ Victoria Walks, 2018, The Economic Case for Investment in Walking

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