Agenda

Scheduled Council Meeting

Tuesday 19 December 2023 at 6:30 pm

You are advised that a Meeting of Council has been called by the Chief Executive Officer on Tuesday 19 December 2023 at 6:30 pm for the transaction of the following business.

This meeting will be held in the Council Chamber at Civic Centre, 25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang and will be livestreamed via Council's website.

C Lloyd
Chief Executive Officer

Administrators

Lydia Wilson	Chair of Council
Peita Duncan	Administrator
Christian Zahra AM	Administrator

On 19 June 2020 the Acting Minister for Local Government appointed the Panel of Administrators for the City of Whittlesea and appointed Lydia Wilson as Chair of the Panel. The Panel of Administrators comprises of Lydia Wilson, Peita Duncan and Christian Zahra who will undertake the duties of the Council of the City of Whittlesea until the October 2024 Local Government Election.

Senior Officers

Craig Lloyd	Chief Executive Officer
Emma Appleton	Director Planning & Development
Agata Chmielewski	Director Community Wellbeing
Sarah Renner	Director Customer & Corporate Services
Debbie Wood	Director Infrastructure & Environment
Frank Joyce	Executive Manager Strategy & Insights
Janine Morgan	Executive Manager Public Affairs
Jacinta Stevens	Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

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Note:

At the Chair of Council's discretion, the meeting may be closed to the public in accordance with Section 66(2)(a) of the *Local Government Act 2020*. The provision which is likely to be relied upon to enable closure is set out in each item. These reports are not available for public distribution.

Question Time:

Council will hold public question time for up to 30 minutes at each Scheduled Council Meeting to allow for public questions, petitions or joint letters from our community to be read out by the Chief Executive Officers delegate and responses will be provided by the Chief Executive Officer.

Questions are required to be submitted in writing no later than 12 noon on the day prior to a Scheduled Council Meeting.

Priority will be given to questions or statements that relate to agenda items. Any questions submitted after 12 noon the day prior will be held over to the following Council Meeting.

The Public Question form can be downloaded from Council's website. Refer: https://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/about-us/council/council-meetings/

Council is committed to ensuring that all residents and ratepayers of the municipality may contribute to Council's democratic process and therefore, if you have special requirements, please telephone the Governance Team prior to any Council Meeting on (03) 9217 2170.

1 Opening

1.1 Meeting Opening and Introductions

The Chair of Council, Lydia Wilson will open the meeting and introduce the Administrators and Chief Executive Officer:

Administrator, Peita Duncan;
Administrator, Christian Zahra; and
Chief Executive Officer, Craig Lloyd.

The Chief Executive Officer, Craig Lloyd will introduce members of the Executive Leadership Team:

Emma Appleton, Director Planning and Development;
Agata Chmielewski, Director Community Wellbeing;
Sarah Renner, Director Corporate and Customer Services;
Debbie Wood, Director Infrastructure and Environment;
Frank Joyce, Executive Manager Strategy and Insights;
Janine Morgan, Executive Manager Public Affairs; and
Jacinta Stevens, Executive Manager Office of Council and CEO.

1.2 Apologies

1.3 Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners Statement

The Chair of Council, Lydia Wilson will read the following statement:

"On behalf of Council, I 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.

I would also like to acknowledge Elders past, present and emerging."

1.4 Diversity and Good Governance Statement

The Chair of Council, Lydia Wilson will read the following statement:

"At the City of Whittlesea we are proud of our diversity and the many cultures, faiths and beliefs that make up our community. We strive to be an inclusive welcoming City that fosters active participation, wellbeing and connection to each other and this land. We commit as a Council to making informed decisions to benefit the people of the City of Whittlesea now and into the future, to support our community's vision of A Place For All."

1.5 Acknowledgements

2 Declarations of Conflict of Interest

3 Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Meeting/s

Recommendation

THAT the following Minutes of the preceding meeting as circulated, be confirmed:

Scheduled Meeting of Council held on 21 November 2023

4 Public Questions, Petitions and Joint Letters

4.1 Public Question Time

4.2 Petitions

No Petitions

4.3 Joint Letters

No Joint Letters

5 Officers' Reports

5.1 Proposed Amendment C275 - Local Policies Update to Clause 13.07-1L - Display Homes, Clause 19.02-1L - Medical Centres and Clause 19.03-5L - Materials Recycling Centre

Director/Executive Manager: Director Planning & Development

Report Author: Strategic Planner

In Attendance: Manager Strategic Futures
Coordinator Planning Policy and Implementation

Executive Summary

Amendment C275 proposes changes to the following three local policies in the *Whittlesea Planning Scheme* (scheme): Clause 13.07-1L-Display homes, Clause 19.02-1L - Medical centres and Clause 19.03-5L - Materials recycling centre. This proposal implements 3 of 37 recommendations made in the *Planning Scheme Review 2018* (PSR). The proposed policies are included as Attachment 1 of this report.

This report recommends that Council approves the proposed amendment for submission to the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) to seek authorisation from the Minister for Planning to exhibit the proposed amendment.

While the review found that the scheme is generally operating effectively, it makes several recommendations to update and further improve its efficiency. This included a program to amend or update 5 local policies that had not been reviewed for some time. This amendment focuses on 3 local policies, with the remaining two local policies to be the subject of future amendments.

Following consultation with relevant internal Council departments and external stakeholders, including the Environment Protection Agency (EPA), the 3 policies were redrafted to update existing content, objectives, strategies, guidelines and include new policy documents. In summary, the proposed changes seek to focus greater attention on the offsite impacts of the 3 land uses, for example through strategies to minimise potential negative amenity impacts like noise and dust. The changes are also aimed at improving useability for users of the scheme.

The amendment will ensure the scheme is up to date with current policy and community expectations.

The three policies with proposed changes (shown in track-changes) are included at Attachment 1.

Officers' Recommendation

THAT Council Approves the proposed Amendment C275 for submission to the Department of Transport and Planning for authorisation from the Minister for Planning, to formally prepare and exhibit Amendment C275 to the Whittlesea Planning Scheme, as outlined within Attachment 1.

Background / Key Information

Planning Scheme Review 2018

The *Whittlesea Planning Scheme Review 2018* (PSR) was prepared in accordance with Planning Practice Note 32: *Review of Planning Schemes and the requirements* under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. In summary, Council must review the scheme within one year of approval of the Council Plan, unless otherwise determined by the Minister for Planning. The Council Plan (Community Plan) was adopted in 2021, and a second informal review of the scheme was undertaken in 2022.

In accordance with the Practice Note, the review assessed whether provisions, such as local planning policies, zones, overlays and schedules have been effective and efficient in achieving the objectives and strategies of the scheme.

Informed by previous audit recommendations, internal consultations, Planning Panel reports and VCAT decisions, changes to state planning policy and other strategic work, the review found that the scheme is generally operating well. It also made 37 recommendations to update and further improve the efficiency of the scheme. Five recommendations (6, 7, 8, 19 and 20) have been addressed within Amendment C249wsea, which was approved for submission to Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) at the Council meeting on 27 June 2023. Amendment C249 was lodged on 22 August 2023 and is currently with DTP, awaiting ministerial authorisation to proceed with the amendment.

Of the 15 local policies included in the scheme at the time of the review, it was recommended that five required updating to ensure they adequately address the needs of Council and the community. Of the other 10, four were relatively new; four had recently been reviewed and two were no longer relevant and were removed as part of Amendment C249.

This proposed amendment implements the recommendation to update three of these five local policies, with the remaining two reviews of the Development Contribution Plan and Industrial Development policies to be the subject of future amendments.

The need to review these three policies was based on a combination of officer experience utilising the policies, implications of relevant VCAT decisions, and in the case of the Materials recycling centres policy, the impact of regulatory (EPA) guidelines that needed to be taken into account.

Project timing

Implementation of the PSR recommendations has been delayed by the implementation of the Planning Policy Framework translation.

While this was a policy neutral change, it involved a significant restructuring of the Scheme required by the (then) Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. It should be noted that due to this State Government Planning Policy Framework translation, the three policies are now found in different parts of the Scheme to the clause numbers noted in the original recommendations of the review.

Where does this amendment apply?

The proposed amendment applies to all land in the municipality. However, it is important to note that as per all local policies, they are only applicable where new planning permit applications are made for the specific uses of display homes, materials recycling centres and medical centres.

No transitional arrangements have been proposed given the minor nature of the proposed changes. The amendment will not change the requirement for a permit for the three subject land uses, which is determined by relevant zones and overlays of the scheme. Instead, the amendment seeks to change how the discretionary elements of these land use are assessed by Council officers and other users of the scheme where a planning permit is required.

Proposed Amendment C27

The proposed amendment updates three local policies - Display homes, Materials recycling Centre and Medical centres, which had not kept pace with current state government policy, VCAT decisions and community expectations. These proposed changes are summarised briefly in the following sections and addressed in more detail in Attachment 2.

Display homes policy

Key issues addressed through the updates to the Display homes policy include the preference to locate them closer to the development site to which they relate, to minimise traffic and other impacts on residents. Further, the policy encourages consideration of the design and use of display homes so they can transition to a residential use once they are no longer required as a display home.

This was achieved through the addition of two new policy objectives, a new strategy and policy guideline, and two new policy documents that addressed relevant location, design, landscape and traffic considerations when assessing a planning permit application for display homes.

Medical centres policy

Updates to this policy were primarily informed by a number of VCAT decisions in relation to medical centres, which relate to potential negative amenity impacts and incorporation of ancillary uses, such as chemists, so that they are integrated with the primary use.

Additionally, a number of other issues relating to built form and traffic management were raised through internal consultation with statutory planning.

While there are several proposed changes to this policy, many replicate those made as part of Amendment C250 - Child care centre policy in 2020 and therefore improves policy consistency across the scheme. A number of changes, including three new policy objectives, 13 new strategies, two new policy guidelines and two new policy documents are proposed to address issues identified.

Materials recycling centres policy

Proposed changes to this policy were informed through Council officer feedback, and subsequent EPA advice in response to the draft policy. Issues raised were primarily in relation to potential negative visual and other amenity impacts. Additionally, the EPA advised that the policy should reflect updated EPA policy and guideline documents.

Changes were made through five new strategies and guidelines, and updates to four existing strategies. These related to location of Materials recycling centres, management of amenity impacts and land use outcomes. These changes will encourage better located facilities, improved landscaping and building orientation. Amenity management outcomes, including noise, air quality including dust suppressant management, traffic and car parking, visual appearance and site maintenance, and hours of operation have also been addressed.

Changes to the three policies cannot be considered in isolation and the impacts on other parts of the scheme need to be addressed. The relationship between the proposed policy changes and relevant clauses in the scheme that have been reviewed is summarised below.

Policy Strategy and Legislation

Clause 02.03-3 – Environmental Risk and Amenity

Notes the importance of Display homes to the municipality, but also provides the following advice: 'Site and design display homes so that they do not detrimentally impact residential amenity'. The changes to the display homes policy are consistent with this existing policy. The Materials recycling policy and the Medical centres policy will not impact upon this clause.

Clause 02.03-9 – Infrastructure

Notes the importance of medical centres to the municipality. The policy also seeks to differentiate centres that are located in activity centres and those that are found in a residential context. The intent of this clause is to ensure the size and intensity of the use is consistent with the surrounding context.

The Medical centres policy has been drafted to support this differentiation, by linking land use intensity to activity centres, traffic circulation and design guidelines to ensure the centre responds to its urban context.

Clause 13.07 – Amenity, Human Health and Safety
The Display homes policy is nested broadly within this heading at Clause 13.07-1L, under Clause 13.07-1S – Land use compatibility (state policy). The proposed changes to the local policy are in keeping with this mandatory state policy. The updated Display homes policy responds appropriately to this Clause.

Clause 19.02 – Community Infrastructure
The Medical centres local policy is nested within this heading at Clause at 19.02-1L, under Clause 19.02-1S – Health facilities (the state policy) and Clause 19.02-1R – Health precincts - Metropolitan Melbourne (the regional policy). The proposed changes to the local policy are consistent with the intent of the mandatory state and regional policies.

Clause 19.03 - Development Infrastructure
The Materials recycling centre local policy is nested within this heading at Clause 19.03-1L, within 19.03-5S - Waste and resource recovery (state policy). The proposed changes to the Materials recycling centre policy are consistent with the applicable state policy.

Clause 53.14 - Resource Recovery
Outlines a state policy that is applicable to Materials recycling centres. The Particular Provisions are implemented via the state government. The provision sets out requirements to be met for a materials recycling centre. The proposed local policy will not duplicate this particular provision. It will also complement the discretionary parts of this state policy.

73.03 - Land use terms
Outlines the following relevant definitions:

- **Display home centre** - One or more buildings constructed as a dwelling, but used for display, to encourage people to buy or construct similar dwellings. It may include a sales office.
- **Materials recycling** - Land used to dismantle, treat, process, store, recycle, or sell refuse, used or surplus materials. The clause also notes that Materials recycling is a sub-category of the broader “industry” land use.
- **Medical centre** - Land used to provide health or surgical services (including preventative care, diagnosis, Medical centre medical and surgical treatment, pathology services, and counselling) to out-patients only. This clause also notes medical centres are a sub-category of the broader “office” land use.

The proposed changes will not impact upon the definitions as outlined in Clause 73.03 Land Use Terms. As outlined above, the proposed changes will not impact upon the permit triggers and have been written to respond to state and regional policies.

The aim of the changes is to improve how decision makers exercise their discretion during planning permit assessment to deliver better outcomes for the community. It is also aimed at improving usability for end users of the Scheme.

Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

Connected Communities
We work to foster and inclusive, healthy, safe and welcoming community where all ways of life are celebrated and supported.

Liveable Neighbourhoods
Our City is well-planned and beautiful, and our neighbourhoods and town centres are convenient and vibrant places to live, work and play.

Strong Local Economy
Our City is a smart choice for innovation, business growth and industry as well as supporting local businesses to be successful, enabling opportunities for local work and education.

Considerations of *Local Government Act (2020)* Principles

Financial Management
There is no budget required to send the proposed Amendment C275 for submission to the Department of Transport and Planning for authorisation from the Minister for Planning.

Community Consultation and Engagement
Consultation on this proposed amendment was primarily undertaken with relevant Council officers with limited engagement with key external stakeholders, including the Environment Protection Agency. This consultation process and its outcomes is outlined in Attachment 2 to this report.

This Planning Scheme Amendment will be subject to the normal public exhibition process as per the requirements of the *Planning and Environment Act, 1987*. This will involve notification of the general public, key stakeholders and state agencies through a combination of locally circulated newspapers, direct written notification, the government gazette and Council's website. This notification will inform interested parties of the proposed amendment and details for making a submission.

Other Principles for Consideration as per the *Local Government Act (2020)*

Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles

(a) Council decisions are to be made and actions taken in accordance with the relevant law.

(b) Priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations.

(c) The economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted.

(d) The municipal community is to be engaged in strategic planning and strategic decision making.

(h) Regional, state and national plans and policies are to be taken into account in strategic planning and decision making.

Public Transparency Principles

N/A

Council Policy Considerations

Environmental Sustainability Considerations (including Climate Emergency)

The proposed amendment seeks to improve guidance to users of the scheme on matters, including environmental impact, that already require consideration within the policies. Many of the proposed changes seek to minimise potential negative impacts of the three uses on amenity, through the provision of vegetation, screening and onsite waste management practices.

Social, Cultural and Health

The proposal will have no impact upon cultural, or cultural issues within the municipality. However, the proposal may have indirect public health benefit (particularly the Materials recycling local policy) as a result of improved management of potential negative amenity impacts. Additionally, the policies also aim to facilitate services within walking distances of dwellings which will have a public health benefit.

Economic

The proposal will have intangible economic benefits, by improving planning outcomes in the municipality. It is also anticipated that the improved useability of the provisions will support investment in the municipality, albeit indirectly.

Legal, Resource and Strategic Risk Implications

No implications.

Implementation Strategy

Communication

Should DTP authorise the proposed amendment, the *Planning and Environment Act, 1987* outlines the requirements for public exhibition. This has been discussed above.

Critical Dates

This report is intended to go to a Council Meeting on 19 December 2023.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

Attachments

1. Local policies [**5.1.1** - 7 pages]
2. Summary of policy formulation and development [**5.1.2** - 6 pages]

Attachment 1: Proposed Local Policies

13.07-1L xx/xx/20xx Cxxxwsea	**Display homes – City of Whittlesea** **Policy application** This policy applies to the use or development of display homes.
	Objectives To facilitate well-located and designed display homes that are integrated with future residential development projects. To encourage the design and location of display homes so that they do not detrimentally impact on the amenity of the surrounding area. To encourage display homes to be designed to enable them to transition to an appropriate use once the use as a display home is no longer required. **Location strategies** Encourage display homes to locate in areas experiencing residential and building activity. Discourage display homes in established residential areas. Encourage display homes to locate together in residential estates, forming a display home centre. Locate display homes on sites with sufficient area to provide adequate car parking, pedestrian access, and landscaping. **Design strategies** Encourage a variety in housing type and style, including dual occupancy and multi-unit developments in display home centres. Encourage display homes to locate on main or collector roads, preferably on a corner location. Site and design individual display homes so they do not surround private residential dwellings. **Landscape strategy** Encourage landscaping for display homes which integrates with the surrounding residential environment and streetscape. **Traffic strategies**

Attachment 1: Proposed Local Policies

	Design display homes so that vehicle movements to and from the site are not detrimental to the road network and traffic movements in the area. Design car parking areas and driveways to contribute to the functionality and safety of the display home by: • Providing convenient access, with well-defined vehicle entry points including separate access for pedestrians. • Enabling vehicles including waste collection to exit the site in a forward direction. • Ensuring that waste collection areas are separated from general parking and access/egress areas. **Policy guideline** Consider as relevant: • Whether the building can transition to a residential dwelling when it is no longer required for use as a display home. **Policy documents** Consider as relevant: • *Landscaping Guidelines for Non-Residential Uses in Residential Areas, (City of Whittlesea, 2016).* • *City of Whittlesea Neighbourhood Design Manual (City of Whittlesea, 2023).*

Attachment 1: Proposed Local Policies

19.02-1L 18/12/2020 C2xxwsea	**Medical centers – City of Whittlesea** **Policy application** This policy applies to the use or development of land for a medical centre.
	Objectives To support medical centres in locations that are compatible with surrounding land uses. To prioritise medical centres in, or adjacent to, an Activity Centre or co-located with compatible community service uses in a planned community hub. To facilitate medical centres in strategic locations that have convenient access to existing or future planned public transport. To support medical centres that positively contribute to the character and appearance of established and establishing areas through their siting and design. **Preferred location strategies** Support medical centres in locations that are: • In, or within, a walkable distance from an existing or proposed activity centre or recognised community activity cluster. • Within a walkable distance from existing or future planned public transport stop or train station. • Readily and safely accessible by road, public transport, bicycle and pedestrian networks. Encourage 24-hour medical centres ~~to locate~~ in activity centres and not residential areas. Encourage medical centres ~~to locate~~ on main roads and collector roads. Discourage medical centres ~~from locating~~ in cul-de-sacs. Locate medical centres so that impacts on residential amenity are minimised. Discourage medical centres from locating on larger lots intended for medium density housing. **Preferred location guidelines** Consider as relevant:

Attachment 1: Proposed Local Policies

	• A walkable distance from an existing or proposed activity centre or recognised community activity cluster as being 400 metres measured by the shortest route reasonably accessible on foot. • A walkable distance from an existing or future planned public transport stop or train station as being 200 metres measured by the shortest route reasonably accessible on foot. **Built form strategies** Design medical centres to respect the existing or proposed character of the surrounding area, having regard to scale, height, massing, setbacks, building and roof form. Minimise the extent of car parking in the front by providing a front building setback consistent with existing or future surrounding front setbacks.
	Provide for landscaping within the front setback which contributes and responds to the public realm and screens any car parking. Provide clearly defined, accessible entries that address the street frontage and are a design feature of the building. Encourage high quality facades that contain a variety of robust and attractive finish materials. **Built form guideline** Consider as relevant: • Medical centre design should provide visual interest and complement surrounding built form. **Amenity strategy** Provide for the visual and acoustic privacy of, and minimise odour impacts to adjoining or nearby properties through the siting of car parks, service and waste collection areas, storage areas, windows, doors and the use of design, fencing and landscaping techniques.
	Traffic, circulation and car parking strategies Provide car parking at the side or rear of a property where practicable. Minimise the extent of car parking in the front setback.

Attachment 1: Proposed Local Policies

	Design access to and from the site to allow for the safe and efficient movement of vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Design car parking areas and driveways to contribute to the functionality and safety of the medical centre by: • Providing convenient access, with well-defined vehicle entry points including separate access for pedestrians. • Enabling vehicles including waste collection to exit the site in a forward direction. • Ensuring that waste collection areas are separated from general parking and access/egress areas. Locate car parking within basement and/or undercroft parking areas, for developments in activity centres or for larger medical centres. Support medical centres where the expected increase in traffic will not adversely affect the amenity, environment or safety of the surrounding locality. Locate medical centres so that impacts on residential amenity are minimised. **Policy documents** • *Landscape Guidelines for Non-Residential Uses in Residential Areas (Whittlesea, 2016).* • City of Whittlesea *Neighbourhood Design Manual* (City of Whittlesea, 2023).

Attachment 1: Proposed Local Policies

19.03-5L 18/12/2020 C2xxwsea	**Material recycling centres – City of Whittlesea** **Policy application** This policy applies to the use and development of land for material recycling centres.
	Location strategies Support material recycling centres in areas with an industrial zoning or in an identified State waste and resource recovery hub. Discourage materials recycling centres in activity centres, commercial areas or in the Green Wedge. Locate materials recycling facilities in the core of industrial zones. Discourage material recycling centres on arterial roads and on roads with high public exposure. Discourage vehicular access to the site from residential streets. Site material recycling centres on land that is of sufficient size to cater for adequate on-site car parking, pedestrian access, and landscaping.
	Location guideline Consider as relevant: • Discourage visual intrusion of material recycling centres on the key industrial gateways of Cooper Street, High Street, Mahoneys Road, Dalton Road, and Settlement Road. **Amenity strategies** Minimise adverse impacts from materials recycling facilities on the amenity of surrounding areas, including by mitigating and managing: • Noise from the site. • Air quality, including dust suppression management. • Traffic and parking. • Visual appearance and site maintenance. • Hours of operation. Provide landscaping to enhance the visual appearance of the site and to screen the development from sensitive uses. Provide a landscaped setback adjacent to street frontages.

Attachment 1: Proposed Local Policies

	Amenity guideline
	Consider as relevant
	• Encourage sealed car parking facilities and internal roads to minimise dust and noise, unless other measures to reduce the spread of mud and dust by vehicles are utilised.
	
	Use strategies
	Undertake all loading and unloading of materials on-site.
	
	Avoid the storage and stacking of materials along the frontage of the site.
	
	Encourage the containment of materials treatment and processing within buildings.
	
	Encourage the use of new technologies that reduce emissions.
	
	Encourage ongoing monitoring of dust suppression, stormwater management and soil leaching.
	
	Use guidelines
	
	Consider as relevant:
	• The ability to minimize environmental and health risks.
	• Appropriate buffers from significant environmental features, such as waterways to minimise adverse offsite impacts.
	• The recommendations of any accompanying Sustainable Design Assessment (including an assessment using BESS, STORM, MUSIC or other Methods).
	• The following amenity management documents (as relevant):
	  • Management and storage of combustible recyclable and waste materials – guideline (Publication 1667.3, Environment Protection Authority, July 2021).
	  • Noise limit and assessment protocol for the control of noise from commercial, industrial and trade premises and entertainment venues (Publication 1826.4 Environment Protection Authority, May 2021).

Attachment 2 - Summary of policy formulation and development

Clause number / name	Underpinning research
13.07-1L – Display homes	**Initial policy research and formulation** The recommendation for review made in the 2018 Planning Scheme Review (PSR) was underpinned by the age of the policy, rather than any known, poor outcomes from the application of the existing policy. Initial research involved a review of the existing policy against comparable policies in other planning schemes. Additionally, several recent applications for display homes were examined, to understand any issues to be addressed through the policy review. This information was coalited into proposed changes, that where subsequently circulated to internal departments for comment. The following internal departments were consulted on this policy: - Growth Area Development Assessment; - Statutory Planning; - Urban Design and Parks; - Council's ESD Officer; - Strategic Infrastructure Planning; and, - Development Engineering (stormwater and traffic). **Consultation outcomes** The following issues were raised during the consultation processes: - Concerned about display homes being established far from the housing estate. - Concern that there often is not a trigger for buildings and works for display home applications. Applications often only involved a use component, which did not allow control over the buildings and works on the subject site. - Concern about amenity management, given much of the infrastructure associated with these uses is temporary and often results in poor outcomes. Past examples include unmade car parking and pedestrian facilities. Council therefore seeks to update the display homes policy, to ensure display home centres are located near to the estates they are associated with and to better manage amenity impacts. **Out of scope issues** While there was a desire for a building and works permit trigger for display centres expressed during the consultation process, this is outside the scope of the local policy, which does not trigger the need for a permit, which is controlled by relevant zones and/or overlays. **Restructuring the policy**

Attachment 2 - Summary of policy formulation and development

	The policy was restructured, grouping strategies by common intent under the following new headings: • Location Strategies, • Design Strategies, • Landscape Strategies, and • Traffic Strategies. Additionally, a new 'policy documents' section including relevant policy documents was included. These changes were aimed at improving useability of the policy for decision makers and end users of the scheme. Additions to the policy included two (2) new policy objectives, one (1) edited policy objective, one (1) new strategy, one (1) new policy guideline and two (2) new policy documents. These changes were included to address the issues raised by the PSR and also during the consultation period.
19.02-1L – Medical centres policy	**Initial research and development** The impetus for this policy update were several poor development outcomes as well as relevant VCAT decisions that are elaborated upon below. Research for this policy review comprised evaluation of a comprehensive list of VCAT cases and review of comparable policies in other metropolitan planning schemes. Furthermore, the Whittlesea Child Care Centres local policy, updated in 2020 as used as a template, due to the similarity with medical centres from a land use perspective. Relevant VCAT rulings that informed the policy update include: - Chen v Boroondara CC [2017] VCAT 1520 (20/09/2017) • Need for appropriate medical waste disposal and maintenance of waste storage area - El-Katatemy v Casey CC [2007] VCAT 2156 (15/11/2007) • An emphasis on discouraging separate entry/exit to ancillary uses such as chemists so they are not stand-alone establishments. It is worth noting that the reviewed VCAT cases did not raise other issues and were consistent with the issues discussed during the internal consultation process. The policy was updated to reflect the outcomes of this review and circulated to internal departments for comment. **Consultation** The following internal departments were consulted on this policy: - Statutory Planning; - Environmental Health; - Development Engineering; and,

Attachment 2 - Summary of policy formulation and development

	- Urban Design. The following issues were raised during the internal consultation process: - Location of medical centres, including the need to provide separate guidance for medical centres located in residential areas and those near activity centres. - The need for guidance around the type of roads Medical centres should be located on. - The need for the design of medical centres to be appropriate and in accordance with neighbourhood character. - The need for improved accessibility of medical centres. - The need for guidance relating to the management of ancillary uses to medical centres (e.g. chemist, pharmacy, drug store). - Management of onsite car parking and traffic management, with the preference of car parks to be at the rear, and other car parking design suggestions. - Onsite waste disposal and collection management. - A review of appropriateness of current guidance in relation to landscaping. **Out of scope issues** A number of issues raised during consultation were out of scope of the policy review, including: - Inclusion of more specific wording, for example in relation to building design, as policies must be outcome-based rather than prescriptive. This is due to limitations of what can be included in a local policy and the Planning Policy Framework drafting rules. - Discouraging medical centres from locating on corner block due to concerns that on-street parking close to intersections would reduce sight distances and create conflict between parked cars, bikes and pedestrians. - A requirement to provide a traffic assessment, as this is only appropriate where variation to parking provision rates is sought, under clause 5.06 Car parking. - Including guidance in relation to signage, as this is addressed in another policy (Amendment C226, which updated Clause 15.01-1L Signs). - Request to include reference to health guidelines within the policy, which is inappropriate in a local policy that relates to land use and built form. - Reference to non-City of Whittlesea documents within the policy. Information from the review process was used to redraft the policy, which was then circulated to the stakeholders outlined above. **Restructuring the policy**

Attachment 2 - Summary of policy formulation and development

	The policy was restructured to include policy objectives to provide overarching direction to aid decisions about application s for medical centres. Additionally, strategies and associated guidelines were grouped by their intent, into the following categories: • Preferred location strategies and guideline; • Built form strategies and guideline; • Amenity strategies; and, • Traffic, circulation and car parking. This was followed by a policy documents section. **Additions to the policy** The proposed include thirteen (13) new strategies, four (4) new policy objectives, three (3) new policy guidelines and two (2) new policy document. These policies were formulated to address the concerns raised during consultation by the VCAT cases identified above. This included location of busier medical centres in activity centres as opposed to residential neighbourhood, design preferences, amenity protection measures and co-location with other land-uses of a similar intensity.
19.03-5L **- Materials recycling centres**	**Initial policy research and formulation.** Initial research comprised a review of the issues registers as well as a review of comparable policies in other planning schemes, particularly those of growth area Councils. The resulting draft policy was then circulated internally and to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for comment. **Consultation** The following internal departments were consulted on this policy: - Statutory Planning; - City Design and Transport; - Parks and Urban Design; and, - City Presentation. The following issues were raised during the internal consultation process: - Preference for materials recycling centres to be located on main roads. - Specific case of quarrying/rock crushing with offsite noise and dust impacts that are not appropriately managed. - Preference for materials recycling centres to be located away from key gateway locations such as key roads that are highly visible to through traffic. - Preference for the built form to present towards the street, rather than away from it.

Attachment 2 - Summary of policy formulation and development

	- The need to consider the potential negative amenity impacts of new technologies (e.g. noise) which are unknown at the time of this review. - Car parks, entry/exit points and internal roads should be sealed to minimise offsite dust impacts. In this instance, the EPA was considered a significant stakeholder, and their input was sought during policy formulation, this included: - A request to reflect a number of EPA requirements in the updated policy. - A general concern that sensitive uses were being established within buffers of existing potentially contaminated land uses. Sought to include requirements to address this issue. - Recommendation that the clause be updated to reflect the new Waste Management Policy (gazetted on 29 August 2018). - Recommendation that the Management and Storage of Combustible Recyclable and Waste Materials Guideline (August 2017) be included as a reference document within this clause. **Out of scope issues** A number of issues raised during the consultation process were out of scope of the policy review, including: - The EPA raised specific concern with smaller operators (specifically car recyclers) who are unlikely to follow EPAs regulations. - Development engineers expressed a preference for Materials recycling centres to be located on main roads, which were considered more appropriate for heavy vehicles, However, it was confirmed that local roads are also designed to cater for heavy vehicles and are deemed more appropriate locations for materials recycling centres due to the reduced visual and amenity impact in these less busy locations. - Annotations to the policy made by the EPA's were mostly outside of the scope of what could be included within a local planning policy. Where possible, Council tried to include EPA content. Unfortunately, some of the requests were outside the scope of a local policy and could only be included via other instruments in the scheme. **Restructuring the policy** The policy was restructured to group strategies and accompanying guidelines according to their intention, into the following categories: • Location strategies and guidelines, • Amenity strategies and guidelines, and • Use strategies and guidelines. The above research and consultation resulted in five (5) new strategies and five (5) new guidelines. Additionally, four (4) existing strategies were amended to ensure they responded to feedback. Generally, the

Attachment 2 - Summary of policy formulation and development

	policies were aimed at directing the use into appropriate locations and better amenity management. **Additions to the policy** The combination of this research and consultation will result in better located facilities, improved landscaping, building orientation and amenity management outcomes. Furthermore, the restructuring of the policy will ensure improved clarity for decision makers and other end users of the Scheme.

5.2 Integrated Strategies - Connected Community, Long Term Infrastructure Plan and Liveable Neighbourhoods

Director/Executive Manager: Director Community Wellbeing
Director Planning and Development

Report Author: Social Planning & Project Officer

In Attendance: Manager Strategic Future
Manager Community & Place
Acting Manager Strategic Projects

Executive Summary

This report seeks endorsement of the Connected Community Strategy 2023-2033 (CCS), the Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan 2024-2033 (LTCIP), and the Liveable Neighbourhood Strategy 2023 –2033 (LNS) (the Strategies), following community consultation on the draft documents.

Council's Integrated Planning Framework guides the development of integrated Council Strategies to ensure alignment, efficiency, effectiveness and to avoid duplication. The three Strategies under consideration are closely aligned and, together, identify priorities to enable liveable neighbourhoods and connected communities, through the provision of community infrastructure and community programs and services, and the planning and design of great places for people.

The CCS outlines the Council's commitment to fostering inclusive, healthy, safe, and welcoming places where all community members are celebrated and supported. The CCS articulates shared community outcomes that provide a focus towards strengthening social connections and building community.

The LNS outlines the City of Whittlesea's approach to creating and maintaining liveable neighbourhoods that are attractive and well-planned with open spaces and town centres that are convenient and vibrant places for all.

The LTCIP uses guiding principles to prioritise community infrastructure for the City of Whittlesea over the next ten years, considering a climate of significant population growth, a diverse and changing community, and state government policy reform.

As the Strategies are closely aligned, community and stakeholder consultation was undertaken on the three Strategies together from May to October 2023.

This consultation sought feedback to ensure priorities in each of the Strategies were aligned with community and stakeholder expectations, and that the draft Strategies were informed by community and stakeholder input.186 community contributions were received during the consultation period with over 90 per cent of participants supportive of the Strategies.

Officers' Recommendation

THAT Council:

1. **Notes the feedback received during the integrated community consultation process, run from May to October 2023, for the Connected Community Strategy 2023-2033, Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy 2023-2033, and Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan 2024-2033 at Attachment 1.**
2. **Endorses the Connected Community Strategy 2023-2033 at Attachment 2.**
3. **Endorses the Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy 2023-2033 at Attachment 3.**
4. **Endorses the Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan 2024-2033 at Attachment 4.**
5. **Acknowledges and thanks the community and stakeholders who have contributed to the development of the Connected Community Strategy 2023-2033, Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan 2024-2033, and Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy 2023-2033.**

Background / Key Information

Achieving positive community outcomes requires a multidisciplinary and integrated approach. The three Strategies have been developed in close alignment to reflect the interconnection of community infrastructure, liveable neighbourhoods and community connection. Together, the Strategies outline priority areas to increase community wellbeing through well-functioning, vibrant neighbourhoods, inclusive of well-integrated community infrastructure and the provision of targeted and appropriate community programs and services.

The three Strategies are closely aligned to the long-term community vision *Whittlesea 2040: A Place for All* (Whittlesea 2040).

To support this long-term vision, an integrated planning approach focuses on the delivery of outcomes for the community, reducing complexity, increasing transparency, and removing duplication. In addition to the targeted community consultation undertaken for these specific Strategies, each has also been informed by extensive research and engagement undertaken since 2020 across several Council projects, including the City of Whittlesea Connected Communities Background Research Report, Whittlesea 2040, and Community Plan 2021–2025.

The key purpose of each Strategy is summarised below:

The Connected Community Strategy 2023-2033 (CCS)

The CCS (Attachment 2) outlines the City of Whittlesea's commitment to fostering a connected, inclusive, healthy, safe, and welcoming place where all community members are celebrated and supported.

The CCS recognises the importance of fostering a positive sense of identity and belonging and aims to meet the diverse needs and aspirations of the community by supporting access to appropriate services and programs, ensuring that people of all backgrounds, ages and abilities feel safe and part of our community.

The CCS set out the challenges, opportunities, and priorities for action under the following Key Focus Areas:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities: building better relationships in our local community and promoting cultural identity.
- Arts, Culture and Events: creating community connections by providing opportunities to participate in arts programs, cultural and community events.
- Multicultural Communities: celebrating and supporting a rich diversity of cultures and backgrounds.

- Access, Inclusion and Discrimination: supporting people of all backgrounds and abilities to feel safe and have equitable access to services and facilities.
- Physical and Mental Health: providing access to sporting activities and working with our partners to increase access to health services.
- Life Stages: providing services and facilities to support the distinct stages in a person's life and promoting intergenerational connections that enhance wellbeing and create a sense of belonging.
- Community Safety: addressing safety concerns, promoting gender equity, and partnering with emergency services to support our community to be prepared for, respond to, and recover from emergencies.
- Community Participation: promoting and enabling participation in community life through information, education, and volunteering.

Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy 2023-2033 (LNS)

The LNS (Attachment 3) sets out the challenges, opportunities, and priorities for well-designed, vibrant, and accessible neighbourhoods for our community. It establishes a framework for a place-based approach to planning for the services, facilities, and infrastructure that people need to meet most of their daily needs, close to home. It does this through the following four themes:

- Public space and infrastructure
- Activity centres
- Integrated transport
- Housing

The LNS acknowledges the great diversity within our community and the need to plan for these diverse needs, now and into the future as our community changes. It also acknowledges the importance of balancing the needs of communities in established areas, where there are existing services and infrastructure, that may be outdated, as well as the needs of new communities in need of the basic and essential elements to support their daily needs. The LNS seeks to implement the goal established in Whittlesea 2040, for well-planned and beautiful neighbourhoods, with town centres that are convenient and vibrant places to live, work and play.

Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan 2024-2033 (LTCIP)

The LTCIP (Attachment 4) establishes an evidence-based framework for the prioritisation of Council's investment in community infrastructure across the municipality. It outlines the guiding principles for the planning, design, delivery, and activation of community facilities and ensures that proposed projects can effectively respond and adapt to the changing needs of the City of Whittlesea's growing community.

The guiding principles include:

- **Service led:** Community infrastructure planning is based on community needs, include demand for Council services.
- **Local responses:** Community infrastructure provision considers the distinct characteristics of the local community and place and involves community in the design and development process.
- **Welcoming, safe, inclusive, and accessible:** A focus on equity, inclusion, cultural safety, and accessibility in how spaces are designed and integrated into local neighbourhoods so they are places where all community members can connect and participate.
- **Flexible and multipurpose:** Creating multipurpose community hubs that provide complementary services, recreation, leisure, and cultural experiences on a single site or in close proximity.
- **Collaboration and partnership driven:** Designing and resourcing hubs to provide convenience for visitors and opportunities to users to explore complementary programs/services.
- **Optimised investment:** Seeking opportunities to repurpose existing facilities, as well as investing in new infrastructure.
- **Sustainable:** Reducing Council's environmental impact through designing and building facilities to be resource efficient, easy to maintain and long-lasting.

Using the above guiding principles, and in close consultation with relevant internal and external stakeholders, the LTCIP identifies community infrastructure priorities and projects for delivery in the short and medium term. Short-term actions are those that are already underway or expected to commence in the next 5 years. Medium and long-term actions are expected to commence in the next 5 to 10 years.

Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

Connected Community
We work to foster and inclusive, healthy, safe and welcoming community where all ways of life are celebrated and supported.

Liveable Neighbourhoods
Our City is well-planned and beautiful, and our neighbourhoods and town centres are convenient and vibrant places to live, work and play.

Strong Local Economy
Our City is a smart choice for innovation, business growth and industry as well as supporting local businesses to be successful, enabling opportunities for local work and education.

Considerations of *Local Government Act (2020)* Principles

Financial Management

Connected Community Strategy and Liveable Neighbourhood Strategy

The CCS and LNS include priorities for action to support implementation over the next 10 years. Development of two-yearly action plans over the life of the two Strategies will involve consideration of Community Plan Actions, the potential to access external grant funding, and partnership approaches with community and relevant stakeholders from the public and private sectors. Endorsement of Action Plans, including prioritisation and cost of actions, will form part of Council's annual budget process.

Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan 2024-2033

The LTCIP includes action plan priorities for projects over the next 10 years. As part of the prioritisation process, 'financial viability' was one of the assessment criteria, considering the potential to access funding, land, works-in-kind, developer contributions, public/private funding, or other resources to contribute to project planning and delivery. As each of the projects identified in the LTCIP are at differing stages in their project life cycle, the cost of each project will be determined as part of Council's Project Management Framework, including budget and business case approvals.

Community Consultation and Engagement

Community and stakeholder engagement was undertaken in an integrated way to reflect the close alignment of the three Strategies. Community wellbeing is supported by the provision of services, programs and activities, community infrastructure and well-designed neighbourhoods. The consultation and engagement undertaken reflected the close alignment of these different but connected aspects of community life.

Consultation and engagement activities also aligned with Council's place-based approach, which recognises and appreciates demographic and geographic diversity of our community. The first stage of consultation, conducted May to August 2023, established community priorities and informed the development of the draft Strategies and considered the existing consultation undertaken as part of the following engagement projects.

- **Whittlesea 2040: A place for all -** engagement with over 4,000 people, through submissions, workshops, and forums to inform the development of Whittlesea 2040.
- **Community Plan: 2021–2025** –engagement with more than 1,300 people.
- **Household Survey 2021** –a total of 1,545 residents answered 54 questions about a range of topics relevant to the CSS, LNS and LTCIP.
- **Community priorities focus group 2023-** a community priorities focus group was established and attended by 17 residents from a diverse age groups, genders, abilities, cultural backgrounds, suburbs and household structures in June and October 2023. The group were asked targeted questions relating to key themes of the 3 Strategies to help identify, assess, and prioritise community interests.

Following Council endorsement of the draft Strategies, stage 2 of community consultation was conducted between 22 September – 29 October 2023. This engagement included numerous pop-up events, focus groups for community and relevant stakeholders, business, and youth; online and hard copy surveys; online engagement; and promotion through local media.

To ensure that community members across the City of Whittlesea were provided with the opportunity to have their say, the engagement approach provided access to Council staff across the municipality, at a variety of locations, attendance at advisory and network Group meetings and through reconvening the community priorities focus group.

A total of 186 people participated in the community consultation activities, as detailed below:

- **Face to face** - A total of 14 community-based pop-ups were held in popular locations across the municipality where Council officers discussed the draft Strategies with 167 people face to face.
- **Online** - The draft Strategies were available for consideration and feedback on the Engage Whittlesea website. During the consultation period, there were 386 visitors to the page and a total of 19 people completed the survey. Ten people made written comments.
- **Targeted stakeholders** - Council approached community and CALD groups for feedback on the Strategies. Targeted consultation was also undertaken with our local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community through a series of tailored engagement activities that included drop-in sessions, yarns, and stakeholder meetings with Whittlesea Reconciliation Group (WRG), the Whittlesea Aboriginal Gathering Place Advisory Group (WAGPAG), Traditional Owners (Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation), Bubup Wilam Aboriginal Child and Family Centre. Input was also sought from other local stakeholders by Council and WRG members.
- **Advisory groups** - in accordance with the recommendation from Council at the 19 September 2023 meeting, Council advisory groups were provided with the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Strategies through direct contact with Council officers.

These advisory groups and networks included:

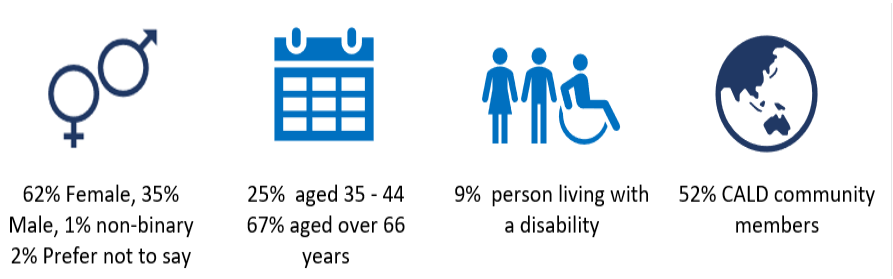
- Whittlesea Disability Network
- Whittlesea Interfaith Network
- Whittlesea Reconciliation Group
- Youth Advisory Committee
- Whittlesea Community Futures Partnership

- Child Friendly Cities and Communities Advisory Group
- Best Start Partnership Group
- Whittlesea Early Years Partnership Meeting
- Community Leadership Program participants
- Local service providers operating out of Epping Services Hub
- Local sporting clubs
- Regular users of Council Community Centres
- Yarra Plenty Regional Library staff and visitors

- **The community priorities focus group -** was reconvened in October 2023. At this session the participants were asked to provide feedback on the draft Strategies to confirm alignment with their expectations and identify any gaps.
- **State government departments** - relevant state government departments were notified about the development of the draft Strategies

Response to Community Feedback

Council received valuable feedback on the draft Strategies from the community and stakeholders during the consultation. The people that participated in the consultation process represented a diverse cross-section of our community.



A full analysis of the feedback provided on the draft Strategies and how this informed the final document is provided at Attachment 1. A summary of the feedback from this final phase of consultation and how this informed finalisation of the strategies is discussed in the following:

Connected Community Strategy

Responses by the community during the consultation period were overwhelmingly supportive of the CCS. This is evidenced by 90% of participants indicating support of the draft CCS, 9% indicated they were not sure and 1% indicated they were not supportive.

Themes raised in the feedback were identified and the draft CCS reviewed to ensure they were adequately addressed in line with community expectations.

Feedback provided during the community consultation period will be particularly relevant to and will be further inform the development of the CCS Action Plan once the CCS is endorsed by Council.

This feedback included consideration of the LGBTQIA+ community, enhanced support for young people, communication and information regarding services and programs that support community participation and will be further addressed in the development of the CCS Action Plan through:

- Equitable access to council services, facilities, and programs for all
- Supporting older adults to live safely and independently
- Enabling participation, across all life stages
- Supporting families, children, and young people to thrive.

Feedback received resulted in the following amendments to the draft CCS:

- Providing additional information in the Executive Summary and Making it Happen sections to improve readability
- Provision of information on how to access translation services at the fore of the document
- Articulating Council's role more clearly in supporting priority actions.

Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy

In general, feedback from the community during the consultation period was supportive of having long term strategies, including a vision for liveable neighbourhoods. This is evidenced by the 90 per cent of participants that supported the draft LNS, with only 2 per cent not supporting it, and 8 per cent saying they were unsure.

Many comments received were more focused on specific detail of the LNS. Rather than responding to individual comments, the themes raised in the feedback were identified. The draft LNS was reviewed considering these themes to ensure they were adequately addressed in line with community expectations.

Below is a summary of these themes and the changes that were made in the final LNS to better reflect community priorities.

Timeliness of infrastructure delivery

A strong theme, particularly within the community priorities focus group, was the lag in community infrastructure delivery in growth areas leaving the community without the ability to access programs, services, and connection within their neighbourhood.

Consequently, two new priorities for action were added to the public space and infrastructure section, under the heading of 'Timely infrastructure delivery'.

These focus on firstly, Council's responsibility for infrastructure delivery, and secondly, our role in advocating to state government and relevant authorities to meet their responsibilities in this area.

Public space infrastructure

Much of the face-to-face feedback provided during the pop-up events related to requests for infrastructure in specific locations, for example a request for additional toilet facilities at Red leap Reserve. While this level of detail is not captured in the LNS, it reflected the need for our public spaces to include the infrastructure required to meet the diversity of needs across our community.

The draft LNS addresses the importance of public infrastructure at several levels, from the outcomes and outcome indicators through to the discussion around the pressures created by our rapidly growing and diverse community. Minor edits were also made to clarify the need to plan and deliver public infrastructure in line with delivery of homes.

Maintenance

Maintenance of public spaces and infrastructure was identified as important to people's perception of safety and sense of pride in their local neighbourhood. The importance of the appearance and functionality of our places and spaces was reflected in the text of the draft LNS as well in as in the outcomes and outcome indicators. Additionally, asset management is covered comprehensively in the High Performing Organisation Strategy, which is cross referenced in the infographic on page 9 of the Strategy.

Given the importance of this issue to the community, a number of changes were made to the Strategy to give more weight to this theme. These include a slightly amended outcome relating to the appearance and function of public space and infrastructure and new text in the public space and infrastructure section.

Accessibility

Many comments were received from people that have specific physical needs due to age, disability or other factors. These comments related to issues including a lack of accessible housing, poor accessibility of activity centres including a lack of adequate, appropriately located disabled parking, public transport, and transport infrastructure.

Ensuring the accessibility of our neighbourhoods was a significant consideration in the drafting of the LNS and is incorporated into a number of the outcomes and outcome indicators. The LNS supports a universal design approach to planning and building our neighbourhoods, so that they are accessible to people regardless of age, ability, or other factors. It aims to address barriers to participation by creating places and spaces that can be used by the maximum number of people possible.

This will be implemented through relevant outcome indicators, and through the detailed design of community infrastructure with progress against these measured and reported on annually.

High density housing

Three out of the 10 comments received in response to the draft LNS via the Engage Whittlesea were not supportive of high-density residential development. The need for increased medium- and high-density housing in appropriate locations is supported by the *City of Whittlesea Housing Diversity Strategy 2013–2033*, which guides housing growth to areas in proximity to the principal public transport network and activity centres, with housing growth to be minimised areas outside these areas. Furthermore, the *Residential Demand and Capacity Analysis* completed by SGS Economics and Planning as an input to the LNS found that in order to meet the future housing demand within the municipality, and to support service provision and economic activity, increased supply of higher density housing in established areas is required.

The recently released *Victoria's Housing Statement*, also aims to deliver an additional 60,000 homes around ten activity centres, including the Epping Metropolitan Activity Centre. The LNS supports increased provision of medium and high-density housing in appropriate locations, for example around activity centres and public transport. The Strategy includes an outcome indicator to increase implementation of best practice building design for all new housing, to ensure it is well designed and sustainable and that the housing contributes to high quality neighbourhoods and places.

The consequences of population growth on our neighbourhoods are acknowledged in the LNS, with actions to improve the timely delivery of community infrastructure. The LNS also discusses the increased pressure on public spaces as a result of our growing population and the requirement for them meet a wide range of needs as people increasingly rely on them for a range of recreational use. This will be explored in more detail in the forthcoming *Open Space Plan* and the masterplans currently in preparation for a number of open spaces across the municipality.

Other minor changes

A number of minor changes have been made to the final LNS. In summary, these are as follows:

- Updates to a number of images to better represent the range of urban environments within the City of Whittlesea, and their contribution to the liveability of our neighbourhoods.
- Edits to a number of priorities for action in the public space & infrastructure and integrated transport sections, to ensure they are at a strategic level appropriate to a ten-year strategy, and to ensure they have a stronger focus on implementation, as well as planning.
- Corrections and clarifications of some of the open space and infrastructure data.

- Minor edit to the smart, connected transport network outcome, to ensure it appropriately reflects the need to plan for sustainable transport options, in addition to building and maintaining our roads.

Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan 2024-2033

A total of 93% of participants indicated they support the LTCIP, with 107 respondents taking the opportunity to provide additional comments in relation to their feedback (98 in-person and 9 online).

The feedback received has been collated and categorised into the following key themes and responses in relation to the final LTCIP.

Key theme	Response
Infrastructure not addressed in the LTCIP, e.g., roads, toilets, parks and playgrounds.	As outlined on page 12 of the LTCIP, parks and playgrounds, public toilets, Council offices and transport infrastructure, including roads, car parks and footpaths, are not included in the scope of the LTCIP. However, they are captured in other Council strategies and plans including the Open Space Strategy, Parks and Open Space Asset Management Plan, Public Toilet Amenities Plan, Buildings and Facilities Asset Management Plan, Walking and Cycling Plan 2022-2027, and the Transport Asset Management Plan.
Comments relating to infrastructure that is not the responsibility of Council, e.g., schools and hospitals.	As schools and hospitals are a State Government responsibility, they have been omitted from the scope of the LTCIP, however their locations have been considered for co-location opportunities.
Support for multipurpose facilities and co-location/integration of services.	The principles used to guide the prioritisation, planning, design, operation, and activation of community infrastructure focus on multipurpose facilities and co-location/integration of services.
Comments that relate to maintenance and renewal of existing facilities.	As per page 43 of the LTCIP, routine maintenance and renewal is out of scope as it is considered in Council's Asset Plan.
Optimising facilities to meet urgent community need (Operational or school agreements)	The LTCIP addresses the comments relating to optimisation in a number of sections, including the following planning process steps and priorities for action: • Opportunities are explored to optimise operation and management of existing facilities to

Key theme	Response
	accommodate additional demand for community services and activities (Detailed on Page 20). • Council is moving away from delivery of single sports grounds to promote club sustainability and co-location of facilities for formal and informal sports participation and wider community use. Multi-use sports precincts are identified in multiple growth suburbs, whilst infrastructure renewal in established areas will be focused on fair access for all and optimising utilisation of existing access. Furthering partnerships with schools and retaining open space are also key features in ensuring community sport and leisure needs can continue to be met in the long-term (Detailed on Page 35). • Speaking directly to schools, partner with Sport and Recreation Victoria and the Department of Education to develop a standardised Joint User Agreement policy to benefit schools and communities through the provision of increased access to meeting and activity spaces. (Detailed on Page 35).
Increased need for Ageing Well services and facilities.	The LTCIP commits to supporting infrastructure and services to support positive ageing, including the following priorities for action: • Evaluate the Mernda Social Support Centre model to ascertain learnings and applicability to other Council community centres. (Details on Page 29). • In the long term, investigate the feasibility of delivering wellness hubs designed to support partnership approaches with other aged care providers and community groups for co-location of a range of complementary health and wellbeing services. Potential sites include the Barry Road Community Centre in Lalor, expansion of the Mernda Social Support Centre and a planned for community centre in the north of the municipality (Details on Page 29).

Key theme	Response
	Once specific projects/sites have been identified and approved as part of the above priority actions, the LTCIP will be updated accordingly as part of its annual review.
Seeking accessible facilities and increased support for people with a disability.	As described on Page 19 of the LTCIP, one of the guiding principles of the LTCIP is 'Welcoming, safe, inclusive and accessible'. The prioritisation process therefore considered the following tenets in developing the action plan. • A focus on equity, inclusion, cultural safety, and accessibility in how spaces are designed and integrate into local neighbourhoods so they are places where all community members can connect and participate. • Locating community infrastructure to optimise community access, including proximity to other services and amenities within town or neighbourhood activity centres close to where people live, and easily reached by public transport and active travel such as walking or bike riding • Reducing barriers to access public buildings and spaces for people with a disability.
Timing of infrastructure to align better with community need/development.	As the City of Whittlesea has, and is expected to continue to experience unprecedented growth, the LTCIP puts measures in place to provide temporary infrastructure solutions to align with service need. As per Page 19 of the LTCIP, temporary spaces, such as pop-ups, will provide short-term solutions to address gaps in infrastructure provision, to test diverse types of space and uses and to activate town and neighbourhood centres in emerging communities. An example of this in practice is the activation of a temporary library at Mernda Town Centre, put in place to address immediate service need until a permanent library facility is built.
Support for Neighbourhood House infrastructure.	The 'Community Activation' section of the LTCIP highlights Council's focus on creating facilities and spaces to best meet the needs for informal gathering and social/wellbeing activities. As per Page 31, the LTCIP commits to the following priorities for action:

Key theme	Response
	• Review Council's relevant community infrastructure strategies, policies, and guidelines to ensure they provide best practice functional understanding of flexible, adaptable space design and service delivery aligned with the community infrastructure principles. • Deliver new multipurpose community centres in the northern growth areas that provide complementary services, recreation, leisure, and cultural experiences on a single site, including investigating the scope of selected community centres to deliver neighbourhood house services in partnership with a local service provider. • In consultation with local stakeholders, review and implement community hall, neighbourhood house and community centre renewal, taking into consideration: facility condition and fitness for purpose; compliance; emerging community needs; opportunities for optimisation and expansion, as well as service co-location and integration. The LTCIP's infrastructure priorities identify new and existing sites for feasibility review. Any additional sites identified and approved as part of the above priority actions will be updated within the LTCIP as part of its annual review.

Based on the feedback and key themes highlighted above, the following amendments have been made to the final LTCIP.

- The imagery has been updated to better reflect the infrastructure 'in scope' of the plan. Parks, playgrounds, and road infrastructure images have been omitted as they are not captured in the LTCIP.
- The timeline for the development of the kindergarten reform options paper and implementation plan has been updated. This is to ensure better alignment with the Department of Education's processes and timelines for reform planning, in particular the Kindergarten Infrastructure Service Plan review (KISP).
- Community infrastructure list updated (Appendix 1 of LTCIP) to reflect review of Council's assets register.

Other Principles for Consideration as per the *Local Government Act (2020)*

Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles

(a) Council decisions are to be made and actions taken in accordance with the relevant law.

(b) Priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations.

(c) The economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted.

(d) The municipal community is to be engaged in strategic planning and strategic decision making.

(f) Collaboration with other Councils and Governments and statutory bodies is to be sought.

(h) Regional, state and national plans and policies are to be considered in strategic planning and decision making.

(i) The transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.

Public Transparency Principles

(c) Council information must be understandable and accessible to members of the municipal community.

(d) Public awareness of the availability of Council information must be facilitated.

Council Policy Considerations

The Integrated Planning Framework (IPF) emphasises an integrated approach for development of Council strategies and future consideration and development of policies. Following endorsement of the Strategies a further review of Council's policies, strategies and plans will be conducted. Current policy considerations include:

Environmental Sustainability Considerations (including Climate Emergency)

In line with the Sustainable Environment Strategy (SES) 2022-2032, the three Strategies integrate consideration of environmental sustainability, including addressing the Climate Emergency through supporting initiatives that contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation.

- The CSS highlights that providing a safe environment to live, work and play builds and strengthens communities and leads to better physical and mental health and wellbeing. The CCS recognises that building a resilient community is one where strong community connections can minimise the impacts of disasters and build safer communities.

- Issues of environmental sustainability and climate change are integral to the LNS. For example, the LNS supports reducing the dependence on car use and increasing access to, and use of other modes of transport. This is to be achieved by creating neighbourhoods where the transport network is integrated with the built form in a manner where people can access most of their services and facilities locally. The LNS seeks to ensure that the planning and delivery of Council's open space network and public realm provides for the greening and cooling for neighbourhoods as temperatures increase and also supports a built environment which is designed to be resilient to the changing climate.

- The LTCIP ensures that environmental considerations at the forefront of Council's infrastructure planning and delivery, the LTCIP identifies 'Sustainable' as one of the seven guiding principles in the plan and commits to reducing Council's carbon footprint through designing and building facilities to be resource efficient, easy to maintain and long-lasting. Additionally, Consideration to Council's *Environmental Design Guidelines*, with all projects presenting the opportunity to maximise sustainability performance in design and construction.

Social, Cultural and Health

The strategies each contribute to the social, cultural and health outcomes for our community, as summarised below:

- The CCS demonstrates the connection to culture, health, and wellbeing by recognising the importance of fostering a positive sense of identity and belonging. The CCS aims to meet the diverse needs and aspirations of the community by supporting our community to access the services, programs, and facilities they need and by ensuring that people of all backgrounds, ages and abilities feel safe and part of our community.

- The LNS supports social connection by facilitating neighbourhood design that enables people to live locally and which create opportunities for incidental interactions that foster a sense of community within neighbourhoods. This also has positive health benefits for our community through the mental health benefits of community connection, in addition to increased walking and cycling for those that are able.

- The LTCIP highlights that community facilities such as community centres and sports infrastructure play a pivotal role in improving social, cultural, and health outcomes. They serve as focal points for social interaction, fostering a sense of belonging and unity among diverse community members. Activities and events hosted in these spaces promote understanding and appreciation for various traditions, contributing to a vibrant local culture.

Additionally, sports facilities not only encourage physical activity, promoting better health outcomes, but also serve as platforms for teamwork, reinforcing social bonds. Community infrastructure creates a supportive environment where individuals can thrive socially, culturally, and physically, leading to a healthier and more connected community.

Economic

The Strategies demonstrate how they contribute to building a prosperous and inclusive economy as summarised below:

- The CCS seeks to improve the economic wellbeing of communities by strengthening participation in all areas of community life and reducing the proportion of the population that experiences financial stress. The CCS supports economic participation through the provision of education, and lifelong learning, inclusion, and equity through the provision of services, programs, and facilities.

- The LNS recognises that well designed, safe, accessible, and attractive activity centres serve as hubs for economic and social participation. Housing density around activity centres, open spaces and public transport encourages people to visit, stay and enjoy these places, increasing footfall and economic activity. The LNS also recognises the need to investigate options to increase social and affordable housing options.

- The LTCIP outlines that infrastructure drives economic growth by facilitating investment, stimulating enterprise opportunities, generating employment, and providing people with access to basic services. Through the development of new community infrastructure, jobs are created for facility management, program coordination, and maintenance, thereby contributing to local employment. Additionally, community centres and sport/recreation infrastructure facilitate diverse events and activities, boosting the local economy by drawing visitors who spend on dining and retail. The development and upkeep of these facilities also stimulate demand for construction and related services, generating a cycle of economic growth.

Legal, Resource and Strategic Risk Implications

Implementation of each of the Strategies and their associated actions will involve significant resource from Council. In order to deliver on strategic outcomes, the planning phase for implementation of priority areas for action will require skilled personnel for project management, feasibility studies, site selection, project briefs, reporting, design, and community engagement.

The delivery phase will also require Council resource to ensure that project management is undertaken in accordance with Council's agreed processes. In relation to the delivery of infrastructure, once operational, ongoing resourcing is required for maintenance, facility staff, and program implementation.

Without intervention, City of Whittlesea residents will experience barriers of access to critical Council services including kindergarten programs, maternal and child health services, social support services, ageing well initiatives, community sport and youth engagement activities.

In particular, timely delivery of community infrastructure, in pace with population growth and essential service demand, will improve health and wellbeing outcomes, lower instances of social isolation and increase civic participation. Similarly, implementation of the LTCIP aims to provide increased access to early childhood education and reduce early intervention for family and gender-based violence.

Implementation Strategy

Communication

Once adopted, our new strategies will be published on Council's website and broadly shared with the City of Whittlesea community across Council's communication channels. We will also be closing the loop with those who participated in the consultation including key stakeholders and our Community Priorities Focus Group.

Critical Dates

Council meeting – Strategies approved 19 December 2023

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

Attachments

1. FINAL Planning for a Place for All Engagement Summary Report [**5.2.1** - 20 pages]
2. Connected Community Strategy 2023 - 2033 [**5.2.2** - 36 pages]
3. Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy 2023 – 2033 [**5.2.3** - 36 pages]
4. Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan 2024 - 2033 [**5.2.4** - 80 pages]

Planning for *A Place for All*
Engagement Summary
November 2023

Introduction

Whittlesea 2040*: A place for all* is the long-term vision for the City of Whittlesea. The Community Plan 2021-2025 is Council's main medium-term strategic planning document. It expands on the community vision, to include key outcome priorities, services, and initiatives over the four-year period. It plays a central role in Council's overall strategic planning and reporting framework. There are five goals, each with key directions to guide Council's work and partnerships with the community and others.

Council has taken an integrated approach to its planning framework and is developing six separate strategies that outline Council's goals, commitments, the outcomes we strive for and the actions we will deliver for our community. The six strategies form Council's Integrated Planning Framework. Each strategy expands on our long-term community vision, Whittlesea 2040: A place for all. The strategies being developed are:

- Connected Community Strategy 2023-2033
- Liveable Neighbourhood Strategy 2023-2033
- Long-term Community Infrastructure Plan 2024-2033
- Strong Local Economy Strategy 2022-2026 (adopted)
- Sustainable Environment Strategy 2022 – 2032 (adopted)
- High Performing Organisation Strategy 2023-2028 (adopted)

The purpose of this community engagement was to capture community views to assist Council in finalising the draft Connected Community Strategy, draft Liveable Neighbourhood Strategy and the draft Long-term Community Infrastructure Plan.

Council took an integrated approach to the community engagement as the three strategies intersect and feedback captured on one would be used to help shape the others. For instance, whatever you decide to do in a neighbourhood in a built sense, whether that be a community centre, library or another Council facility will also impact community connection as well the liveability of the neighbourhood.

Draft Connected Community Strategy 2023-2033
The draft Connected Community Strategy 2023-2033 (CCS) outlines the City of Whittlesea's commitment to fostering an inclusive, healthy, safe and welcoming place where all community members are celebrated and supported.

The CCS presents eight Key Focus Areas that respond to the needs and aspirations of the community. Each Focus Area provides priorities for action that have been informed by background research, extensive community and stakeholder engagement and the review and consolidation of 36 individual policies and strategies.
CCS key focus areas are:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities
- Arts, Culture and Events
- Multicultural Communities
- Access, Inclusion and Discrimination
- Physical and Mental Health
- Life Stages
- Community Safety
- Community Participation

Draft Liveable Neighbourhood Strategy 2023-2033
The draft Liveable Neighbourhood Strategy 2023-2033 (LNS) outlines Council's overall strategic direction across four areas related to liveable neighbourhoods:

- public space and infrastructure
- activity centres
- integrated transport
- housing.

Draft Long-term Community Infrastructure Plan 2024-2033
The draft Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan (LCIP) has been developed to guide Council's ongoing investment in community infrastructure, defined as the buildings and spaces Council has a responsibility for, that support the delivery of community services, programs, organised activities, sport and recreation. Taking a long-term outlook, the Plan uses evidence-based analysis and prioritisation, with a focus on equitable and timely community infrastructure provision, supporting our long-term community vision, Whittlesea 2040: A place for all.

How we engaged you

Engagement activities were undertaken across two phases.

Phase 1: Community Priorities consultation to inform development of the drafts (COMPLETED May to August 2023)

Between May and August 2023 Council captured community feedback online through Council's Engage Whittlesea platform and at community-based pop-ups. Insights captured through this phase of consultation were used to help shape a number of key plans and strategies including 2023-24 Budget, 2023-24 Community Plan Action Plan, Connected Community Strategy, Liveable Neighbourhood Strategy and Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan as well as other plans.

A **Community Priorities Focus Group** was established with participants chosen to reflect the diversity of the local community. During two extended sessions with the Group (totalling seven hours) in July 2023, Council was able to provide participants with a comprehensive overview of the draft themes the strategies were seeking to address. Through facilitated workshop discussions the Group was able to speak to their lived experiences as they related to the themes of the strategies. This deliberative approach ensured Council captured important and informed insights from a group that is representative of the wider community with people of diverse ages, genders, abilities, cultural backgrounds, suburbs and household structures. The valuable insights from the Group were used to help shape and inform the final drafts of the strategies.

Highlights of Phase 1 consultation include:

- Fifteen community-based pop-ups
- Two Community Priorities Focus Group workshops
- 534 community contributions to the engagement (captured online and in-person)

Noting that:

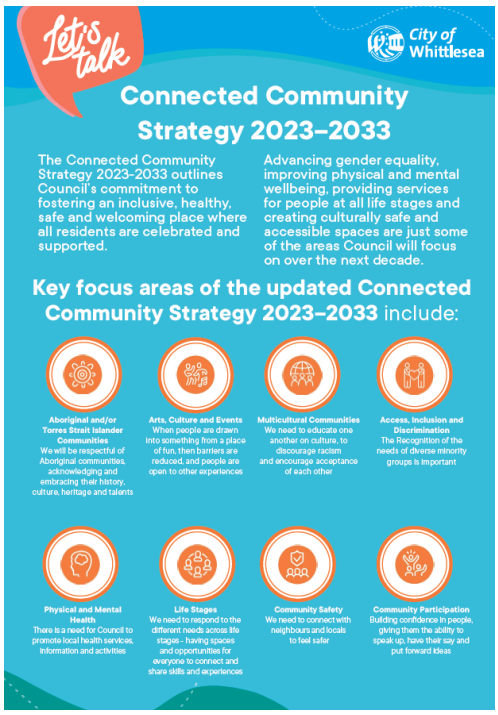
- Fifty-four percent of participants speak a language other than English at home
- Fourteen percent of online participants identified as a person living with a disability
- Fourteen percent of online participants identified as an unpaid carer of an older person or a person with a disability.

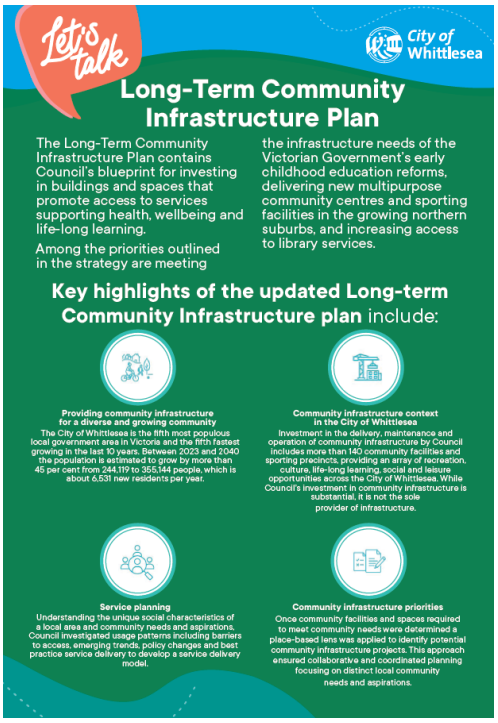
Refer to the Community Priorities Engagement Summary for further details on activities undertaken and feedback received in Phase 1.

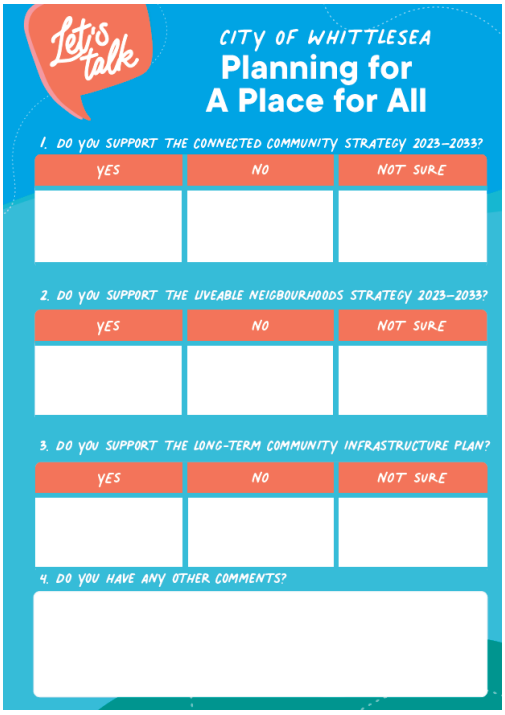
Phase 2: Planning for a Place for All consultation to present the drafts for community feedback (22 September to 29 October 2023)

The City of Whittlesea presented the three drafts to the community for feedback between 22 September and 29 October 2023. The drafts were provided to the same Community Priorities Focus Group that met again on Saturday 14 October to share their thoughts on the final draft. Wider community feedback was again sought online through Council's Engage Whittlesea platform and at community-based pop-ups.

Using large activity boards, participants at community-based pop-ups were presented with an overview of each strategy as well as the key focus areas/directions. On a separate board they were asked if they support each of the drafts with 'yes ', 'no' and 'not sure' as available options. There was space for participants to make any other comments. Hard copies of the three draft strategies were available at the pop-ups.







Above: information boards and dot board activity used at the community-based pop-ups.

The Engage Whittlesea platform presented the information slightly differently with a background section included, however the same feedback was sought through a short survey. Visitors to the page could download each of the draft strategies from the project page.

Making our engagement accessible

The Engage Whittlesea platform utilises an accessibility add-on which enables users to easily switch to screen reader mode or easily adjust settings such as font size, contrast, dyslexia friendly options to improve the overall accessibility of the site. The platform also has an in-built translation tool to reduce language barriers to participation, allowing the page to be translated into the top ten languages spoken within the municipality. Additionally, bi-lingual staff attended targeted community-based pop-up sessions to support in person communication. Community-based pop-ups were held across the municipality at different days and times of the week to offer varied opportunities for community participation.

Inviting participation

Key stakeholders and the wider community were informed of the consultation through a range of channels including direct mail, email, social media posts, marketing, media and flyers. Registered groups with council and high priority groups were all included in the electronic direct mail that included a link to the project Engage page where the drafts could be accessed.

Targeted stakeholders included:

- Council registered community and CALD groups
- First Nations community members
- Advisory groups and networks including:
    - Whittlesea Disability Network
    - Whittlesea Interfaith Network
    - Whittlesea Reconciliation Group
    - Youth Advisory Committee
    - Whittlesea Community Future Partnership
    - Child Friendly Cities and Communities Advisory Group
    - BestStart Partnership Group
    - Whittlesea Early Years Partnership Meeting
    - Community Leadership Program participants
- Local service providers operating out of Epping Services Hub
- Local sporting clubs
- Regular users of Council Community Centres
- Yarra Plenty Regional Library staff and visitors.

Background

The City of Whittlesea has drafted three key strategies to help bring to life its *Whittlesea 2040 community vision of A Place for All*. We would love to hear your thoughts and feedback on the three strategies. **Consultation is open until 29 October 2023.**

The draft Connected Community Strategy 2023–2033, draft Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy 2023–2033 and the draft Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan were endorsed for further consultation at the 19 September Council Meeting.

The three strategies are part of Council's seven key strategies, and also include the Sustainable Environment Strategy 2022–2032, High Performing Organisation Strategy 2023–2028, Strong Local Economy Strategy, and Reconciliation Action Plan.

In June, Council hosted two Community Priorities focus groups, with participants chosen to reflect the diversity of the local community.

The focus groups comprised people of diverse ages, genders, abilities, cultural backgrounds, suburbs and household structures and provided valuable insights to assist Council shape these strategies.

Council also conducted 14 pop-up consultations across the municipality to capture our community's priorities and feedback was sought online via the Community Priorities project page.

Open

Click the start button to fill in survey

Let us know if you support these key strategies in this short survey.

This survey will be open from 22 September to 29 October 2023

Start

Connected Community Strategy 2023-2033

Outlines Council's commitment to fostering an inclusive, healthy, safe and welcoming place where all residents are celebrated and supported.

Advancing gender equality, improving physical and mental wellbeing, providing services for people at all life stages and creating culturally safe and accessible spaces are just some of the areas Council will focus on over the next decade.

Download document ›

Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy 2023-2033

Sets out Council's approach to creating and maintaining well-planned and attractive neighbourhoods with convenient and vibrant open spaces and town centres.

The 18 priorities contained in the report include creating a regional sports centre in Mernda, building an Aboriginal Gathering Place, improving walking and cycling networks and increasing social and affordable housing options.

Download document ›

Timeline

Community Priorities Focus Groups participation Expression of Interest
May 2023

Community Priorities Focus Groups
June - July 2023

Community Consulation
17 July to 20 August 2023

Development of the draft strategies and plans
Connected Community, Liveable Neighbourhoods and Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan
August to September 2023

Council endorsement of the draft strategies
Connected Community, Liveable Neighbourhoods and Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan
September 2023

Sharing the draft strategies with the community for feedback
Connected Community, Liveable Neighbourhoods and Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan
22 September to 29 October 2023

See more

Document Library

Draft Connected Community Strategy 2023 - 2033
PDF (1.66 MB)

Draft Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy 2023 - 2033
PDF (5.55 MB)

Draft Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan
PDF (12.66 MB)

Contact Us

Have questions or want to learn more about a project, contact us below:

Name Engagement Team
Phone 9217 2170
Email engagement@whittlesea.vic.gov.au
Website www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au

Above: screenshot of project page on the Engage Whittlesea platform (captured 23 October 2023)

Above: Project team engaging at the Norris Bank Reserve, Bundoora and at the Let's Talk with Council community forum held at Galada Community Centre Epping.

Fourteen community-based pop-ups were held in high foot traffic locations across the municipality at:

- Norris Bank Reserve on Tuesday 26 September from 9.30am - 11.30am
- Olivine at Donnybrook on Wednesday 27 September from 9.30am - 11.30am
- Mill Park Reserve on Thursday 28 September from 9.30am - 11.30am
- Laurimar Village Shops on Tuesday 3 October from 10am – 12pm
- Thomastown Library on Thursday 5 October from 9.30am -11.30am
- Mill Park Lakes Shopping Centre on Thursday 5 October from 2.30pm - 4.30pm
- Citizenship Ceremony at Civic Centre on Monday 9 October from 11am – 12.30pm and 2pm – 3.30pm
- Lalor Library on Wednesday 11 October from 9.30am - 11.30am
- Mernda Community Activity Centre on Thursday 12 October from 10.30am - 12.30pm
- Community Forum at Galada Community Centre on Tuesday 17 October from 6.15pm - 7.15pm
- Whittlesea Community Centre and Library on Wednesday 18 October from 2.30pm - 4.30pm
- Mill Park Library on Monday 23 October from 11.30am - 1.30pm
- Kirrip Community Centre on Tuesday 24 October from 10am – 12pm
- Epping Village Shops on Wednesday 25 October from 11am – 1pm

Participation

We received a total of 186 community contributions during the consultation, with 89% of these captured at community-based pop-ups.

A snapshot of consultation activities and community participation is below:

14 community-based pop-ups

167 in-person contributions and 17 people attended focus group

386 visitors to the project Engage page

19 digital contributions

Draft documents downloaded 262 times

62% Female, 35% Male, 1% non-binary 2% Prefer not to say

25% aged 35 - 44 67% aged over 66 years

9% person living with a disability

52% CALD community members

Community Priorities Focus Group

The final Community Priorities Focus Group held at the Civic Centre on Saturday 14 October was attended by the same 17 community members who attended the earlier sessions. This focus group was made up of individuals who reflect the diversity of the local community.

Participants were required to read the draft strategies prior to the session and the three project teams presented back to the group on how their feedback from the previous two focus groups helped shape the draft documents. The project teams also noted that additional feedback received may be incorporated into the accompanying action plans that will be developed from the draft strategies.

At the completion of each project presentation, feedback from the focus group was encouraged and was positive overall for all three strategies with the group commenting that the documents are well informed and they as a collective felt grateful for having had the opportunity to contribute to consultation.

What we heard

Draft Connected Community Strategy

When asked at community-based pop-ups and online if they were supportive, **90% of participants indicated they support the draft Connected Community Strategy** (full results below).

(90%)
Yes

(9%)
Not Sure

(1%)
No

Participants had the opportunity to provide additional comments, with 103 taking advantage of this opportunity (98 in-person and 5 online).

The main themes of online community comments were roads, neighbourhood connection, financial hardship, diversity and inclusion and shared pathways.

> One thing that is evidently missing here - how do we encourage neighbours to connect and support one another? Community is about connection. If everyone on the block/street is looking out for one another, then it lifts the feeling of isolation. How will CoW facilitate neighbourhood connection (don't say Facebook groups please).

Themes identified by the Focus Group included ensuring representation for the LGBTQI+ community, a focus on youth and acknowledgement of First Nations issues. The group also supported the opportunity for a place-based approach to communicating the strategy's outcomes. These themes have been identified for further development through the strategy's action plan.

During the final focus group session, the Draft Connected Community Strategy received enthusiastic praise for proactively using language generated in earlier consultations and its comprehensive, place-based approach.

Draft Liveable Neighbourhood Strategy

When asked at community-based pop-ups and online if they were supportive, **90% of participants indicated they support the draft Liveable Neighbourhood Strategy** (full results below).

(90%)
Yes

(8%)
Not Sure

(2%)
No

Participants had the opportunity to provide additional comments, with 108 taking advantage of this opportunity (98 in-person and 10 online).

The main themes of online community comments were accessibility, maintenance, timeliness of infrastructure delivery and public space infrastructure.

> Living in Epping for 53 years and now being older citizens, we are disappointed that there aren't community facilities, especially like a Library. Why have they been established in every suburb except Epping? Libraries offer so much, yet it is so much harder for us to access …

Themes identified by the Focus Group included prioritisation of local roads, issues relating to disability, affordable housing, youth facilities, employment initiatives. The group was also interested in green wedge areas, community facility planning, public transport, and partnerships with educational institutions and businesses highlighting the groups holistic approach to creating a truly liveable environment.

During the final focus group session, the draft Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy was commended for its responsiveness to community needs.

Draft Long-term Community Infrastructure Plan

When asked at community-based pop-ups and online if they were supportive, 93% of participants indicated they support the Long-term Community Infrastructure Plan (full results below).

(93%)
Yes

(6%)
Not Sure

(1%)
No

Participants had the opportunity to provide additional comments, with 107 taking advantage of this opportunity (98 in-person and 9 online).

The main themes of online community comments were roads, schools, and female friendly sport facilities. Other themes included rundown buildings, hospitals, and street parking.

> Infrastructure is about 40 years behind the times. It is clearly evident everywhere in our neighbourhood.

The majority of comments captured at community-based pop-ups were focussed on localised concerns and didn't relate specifically to any of the draft documents. The main themes of comments captured across all in-person activities were (Note: verbatim comments are available in Appendix 3):

- amenity and maintenance of public spaces
- rubbish
- roads and paths
- social connections, access and inclusion.

Themes identified by the Focus Group included disability and the provision of community facilities and infrastructure timelines particularly in new estates as well as school planning and safety for pedestrians and motorists.

During the final focus group session, the draft Long-term Community Infrastructure Plan received positive feedback for its clarity. Participants appreciated the informed documents and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to contribute.

What we heard from key stakeholders and advisory groups

Feedback was received from key stakeholder groups including Whittlesea Community Connections, Olivine Community Group and Whittlesea Disability Network. Feedback was provided on all three strategies, but predominantly on the Connected Communities Strategy and the Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan. The focus of the feedback centred around access, inclusion and discrimination, road traffic congestion, pedestrian safety as well as physical and mental health. Refer to Appendix 4 for the feedback received from these groups.

Changes to the strategies following community consultation

The constructive feedback from the final Focus Group session along with feedback captured through broader community engagement has been provided to the project team for consideration. This collaboration ensures that community input, including the valuable insights shared during this consultation, plays a crucial role in shaping the final strategies. Following consultation, the project teams made minor amendments to the draft strategies; -refer to Appendix 2 for a summary of the changes that were made to the final strategies as a result of the consultation to reflect community priorities.

Next steps

The final draft of the three strategies will be presented to Council for consideration and adoption on 19 December 2023. Once adopted the final documents will be shared with the community to close the loop post consultation. This will be shared through digital communications, direct contact with stakeholders, and updates on the project Engage Whittlesea page.

Appendix 1: Feedback sentiment

Below is the breakdown of the quantity of feedback and sentiment captured at each community-based pop-up and through the project Engage page.

Pop Up	**Connected Community Strategy**				**Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy**				**Long-term Community Infrastructure**			
Location	Yes	No	Not Sure	Total	Yes	No	Not Sure	Total	Yes	No	Not Sure	Total
Norris Bank Reserve	15	0	6	**21**	15	0	6	**21**	15	0	6	**21**
Olivine, Donnybrook	4	0	0	**4**	4	0	0	**4**	4	0	0	**4**
Mill Park Reserve	19	0	0	**19**	19	0	0	**19**	19	0	0	**19**
Laurimar Shops	10	0	0	**10**	10	0	0	**10**	10	0	0	**10**
Thomastown Library	18	0	0	**18**	18	0	0	**18**	18	0	0	**18**
Mill Park Lakes	4	0	1	**5**	4	0	1	**5**	5	0	0	**5**
Citizenship Ceremony	7	0	2	**9**	7	0	2	**9**	9	0	0	**9**
Lalor Library	13	0	1	**14**	13	1	0	**14**	14	0	0	**14**
Mernda CAC	17	0	0	**17**	17	0	0	**17**	17	0	0	**17**
Community Forum - Galada CC	4	0	0	**4**	4	0	0	**4**	4	0	0	**4**
Whittlesea CAC	16	0	0	**16**	16	0	0	**16**	16	0	0	**16**
Mill Park Library	17	0	0	**17**	17	0	0	**17**	17	0	0	**17**
Kirrip CC	8	0	0	**8**	8	0	0	**8**	8	0	0	**8**
Epping Village - Greek Grill	5	0	0	**5**	5	0	0	**5**	5	0	0	**5**
Online	10	2	7	**19**	11	3	5	**19**	12	1	6	**19**
Total	**167**	**2**	**17**	**186**	**168**	**4**	**14**	**186**	**173**	**1**	**12**	**186**

Appendix 2: Amendments made to strategies post consultation

Connected Community Strategy (CCS)
Minor amendments were made to the draft CCS following community consultation. The majority of the feedback received will be most effectively addressed in the two-yearly action plan which will be developed following endorsement of the strategy and will detail the specific work Council will undertake to respond to the key priorities, established in the CCS.

The minor amendments made are as below:

- executive summary revised to make it more easily digestible and identify how the strategy is integrated across Council
- the additional of information regarding translation services to contents page section
- the reduction of repetitive language
- the statement regarding Council's participation in the Whittlesea Anti-Racism Support Network project was removed as this was coordinated by Whittlesea Community Connections and Victoria University.

The other feedback/questions received has been collated with Council responses/actions as below:

Key theme	Response
Greater First Nations acknowledgment and ensuring there are locally accessible connection and cultural opportunities for Frist Nations communities in Whittlesea particularly for young people.	Consider under action planning
More farmers markets, local events and increased promotion of opportunities to participate.	Consider under action planning
Translation of strategies into other languages as well as increasing prominence of translation services available.	Information regarding translation services added to contents page section. Translation of strategies to be considered
Localised inclusive events to foster greater community connections	Consider under action planning
Fostering cultural safety through partnerships and a community-wide approach.	Consider under action planning
Supporting and sustaining freedom from discrimination, continuing to provide equitable access to council services, facilities and programs especially for people with a disability. Service eligibility to be made clearer.	Consider under action planning

Strategy references Council participating in the Anti-Racism Project which isn't accurate.	Removed statement
Continuing to provide equitable access to council services, facilities and programs and providing easily accessible information about these in a range of formats. Embedding gender equality and supporting and sustaining freedom from discrimination	Consider under action planning
Service and program gaps – more demand for allied health, mental health and respite services for all ages. Need for more regular recreation and leisure activities and programs.	Consider under action planning
Need for increased assistance with food relief and financial hardship	Consider under action planning
Supporting families, children and young people to thrive through programs, connection opportunities and youth hubs	Consider under action planning
Supporting older people with access to programs and services as well as appropriate infrastructure.	Consider under action planning
Embedding gender equality and supporting and sustaining freedom from discrimination particularly for the LGBTQI+ community.	Consider under action planning
Prevent family violence for all of our community, with a focus on sporting clubs.	Consider under action planning
Improving perception of safety within the community	Consider under action planning
Enabling participation in governance and democracy by supporting the community to easily understand the strategies and inform subsequent action plans.	Consider under action planning Revise draft to include reference to action plans
66% of priorities begin with "Continue …", in a 10-year strategy if we are already doing it, what is the point?	Remove word continue in the strategy

Liveable Neighbourhood Strategy (LNS)
Below is a brief summary of the themes raised during consultation and the changes that were made in the final LNS.

Key theme	Response
Timeliness of infrastructure delivery eg lag in community infrastructure delivery in growth areas.	Following a review of the draft LNS it was deemed appropriate to strengthen Council's acknowledgement of this issue and our commitment to improving the timeliness of our community infrastructure delivery. Consequently, two new priorities for action were added to the public space and infrastructure section, under the heading of 'Timely infrastructure delivery'. These focus on firstly, Council's responsibility for infrastructure delivery, and secondly, our role in advocating to state government and relevant authorities to meet their responsibilities in this area.
Public space infrastructure eg requests for specific infrastructure such as toilets in parks	The draft LNS addresses the importance of public infrastructure at a number of levels, from the outcomes and outcome indicators through to the discussion around the pressures created by rapid growth, and the great diversity within our community. While no significant changes were deemed necessary, minor edits to clarify the need to plan and delivery public infrastructure in line with delivery of homes were made. Detailed feedback relating to public infrastructure will be shared with appropriate teams to inform future planning and delivery.
Maintenance eg open space, litter and roads.	Given the importance of this issue to the community, a number of changes were made to the strategy to give more weight to this theme. These include a slightly amended outcome relating to the appearance and function of public space and infrastructure and new text in the public space and infrastructure section.
Accessibility eg access to activity centres, public transport and transport infrastructure	Ensuring the accessibility of our neighbourhoods was a significant consideration in the drafting of the LNS, and is incorporated into a number of the outcomes and outcome indicators. The LNS

	supports a universal design approach to planning and building our neighbourhoods, so that they are accessible to people regardless of age, disability or other factors. It aims to address barriers to participation by creating places and spaces that can be used by the maximum number of people possible. This will be implemented through relevant outcome indicators, and through the detailed design of community infrastructure with progress against these measured and reported on annually.

Long-term Community Infrastructure Plan (LTCIP)

On the whole the feedback received through community consultation aligned to the draft LTCIP. Only one change was required, which was an updated timeline for the development of the kindergarten reform options paper and implementation plan. This is to ensure better alignment with the Department of Education's processes and timelines for reform planning, in particular the Kindergarten Infrastructure Service Plan review.

The feedback received has been collated and categorised into key themes with Council responses as below:

Key theme	Response
Infrastructure not addressed in the LTCIP, e.g., roads, toilets, parks and playgrounds.	As outlined on page 12 of the LTCIP, parks and playgrounds, public toilets, Council offices and transport infrastructure, including roads, car parks and footpaths, are not included in the scope of the LTCIP. However, they are captured in other Council strategies and plans including the Open Space Strategy, Parks and Open Space Asset Management Plan, Public Toilet Amenities Plan, Buildings and Facilities Asset Management Plan, Walking and Cycling Plan 2022- 2027, and the Transport Asset Management Plan.
Comments relating to infrastructure that is not the responsibility of Council, e.g., schools and hospitals.	As schools and hospitals are a State Government responsibility, they have been omitted from the scope of the LTCIP, however their locations have been considered for co-location opportunities.
Support for multipurpose facilities and co-location/integration of services	The principles used to guide the prioritisation, planning, design, operation and activation of community infrastructure focus on multipurpose facilities and colocation/integration of services.
Comments that relate to maintenance and renewal of existing facilities.	As per page 43 of the LTCIP, routine maintenance and renewal is out of scope as it is considered in Council's Asset Plan

Optimising facilities to meet urgent community need (operational or school agreements)	The LTCIP addresses the comments relating to optimisation in a number of sections, including the following planning process steps and priorities for action: • Opportunities are explored to optimise operation and management of existing facilities to accommodate additional demand for community services and activities (Detailed on Page 20). • Council is moving away from delivery of single sports grounds to promote club sustainability and colocation of facilities for formal and informal sports participation and wider community use. Multi-use sports precincts are identified in multiple growth suburbs, whilst infrastructure renewal in established areas will be focused on fair access for all and optimising utilisation of existing access. Furthering partnerships with schools and retaining open space are also key features in ensuring community sport and leisure needs can continue to be met in the longterm (Detailed on Page 35) • Speaking directly to schools, partner with Sport and Recreation Victoria and the Department of Education to develop a standardised Joint User Agreement policy to benefit schools and communities through the provision of increased access to meeting and activity spaces. (Detailed on Page 35).
Increased need for Ageing Well services and facilities.	The LTCIP commits to supporting infrastructure and services to support positive ageing, including the following priorities for action: • Evaluate the Mernda Social Support Centre model to ascertain learnings and applicability to other Council community centres. (Details on Page 29). • In the long term, investigate the feasibility of delivering wellness hubs designed to support partnership approaches with other aged care providers and community groups for co-location of a range of complementary health and wellbeing services. Potential sites include the Barry Road Community Centre in Lalor, expansion of the Mernda Social Support Centre and a planned for community centre in the north of the municipality (Details on Page 29). Once specific projects/sites have been identified and approved as part of the above priority actions, the LTCIP will be updated accordingly as part of its annual review.
Seeking accessible facilities and increased support for people with a disability.	As described on Page 19 of the LTCIP, one of the guiding principles of the LTCIP is 'Welcoming, safe, inclusive and accessible'. The prioritisation process therefore considered the following tenets in developing the action plan.

	• A focus on equity, inclusion, cultural safety and accessibility in how spaces are designed and integrate into local neighbourhoods so they are places where all community members can connect and participate. • Locating community infrastructure to optimise community access, including proximity to other services and amenities within town or neighbourhood activity centres close to where people live, and easily reached by public transport and active travel such as walking or bike riding • Reducing barriers to access public buildings and spaces for people with a disability.
Timing of infrastructure to align better with community need/development.	As the City of Whittlesea has, and is expected to continue to experience unprecedented growth, the LTCIP puts measures in place to provide temporary infrastructure solutions to align with service need. As per Page 19 of the LTCIP, temporary spaces, such as pop-ups, will provide short-term solutions to address gaps in infrastructure provision, to test diverse types of space and uses and to activate town and neighbourhood centres in emerging communities. An example of this in practice is the activation of a temporary library at Mernda Town Centre, put in place to address immediate service need until a permanent library facility is built.
Support for Neighbourhood House infrastructure.	The 'Community Activation' section of the LTCIP highlights Council's focus on creating facilities and spaces to best meet the needs for informal gathering and social/wellbeing activities. As per Page 31, the LTCIP commits to the following priorities for action: • Review Council's relevant community infrastructure strategies, policies and guidelines to ensure they provide best practice functional understanding of flexible, adaptable space design and service delivery aligned with the community infrastructure principles. • Deliver new multipurpose community centres in the northern growth areas that provide complementary services, recreation, leisure and cultural experiences on a single site, including investigating the scope of selected community centres to deliver neighbourhood house services in partnership with a local service provider. • In consultation with local stakeholders, review and implement community hall, neighbourhood house and community centre renewal, taking into consideration: facility condition and fitness for purpose; compliance; emerging community needs; opportunities for optimisation and expansion, as well as service co-location and integration.

	The LTCIP's infrastructure priorities identify new and existing sites for feasibility review. Any additional sites identified and approved as part of the above priority actions will be updated within the LTCIP as part of its annual review.

Connected Community Strategy

2023 – 2033

City of Whittlesea

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

The City of Whittlesea recognises the rich Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities heritage of this country and acknowledges the Wurundjeri Willum Clan and the Taungurung People as the Traditional Owners of this place.

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The City of Whittlesea offer various language services to help you communicate with us.

Phone: 9217 2170
National Relay Service: 133 677
(ask for 9217 2170)

Connect with us in your preferred language

Interpreter

Free telephone interpreter service
131 450

Executive Summary

"In 2040 the City of Whittlesea is a place that opens its arms to every resident, where all walks of life are celebrated and supported. Our community is compassionate and welcoming. We are healthy and can easily access the support services we need. People of all backgrounds, ages and abilities feel that they are an essential part of the community. We work together, making our community a better place for all."

Whittlesea 2040: A place for all

The Connected Community Strategy plays a pivotal role directing alignment of priority areas for action and implementation of the outcomes we want to achieve over the life of the Strategy.

The Strategy is informed by extensive research and community engagement to make sure it reflects the needs and views of our community and will guide Council's work and future partnerships with the community.

1. The Connected Community Strategy aligns with Whittlesea 2040 and the Community Plan by articulating the Connected Community key directions of:

A socially cohesive community

A health and safe community

A participating community

2. Discusses the challenges and opportunities facing our municipality, including:

Responsive services and infrastructure provision

Recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic

Partnering to prevent and respond to family violence

Rising cost of living

Celebrating cultural diversity

Enhancing community safety

Increasing community participation

3. Identifies 8 key focus areas that respond to the needs and aspirations of the community:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities

Arts, Culture and Events

Multicultural Communities

Access, Inclusion and Discrimination

Physical and Mental Health

Life Stages

Community Safety

Community Participation

4. Creates a strategic direction for the Connected Community Strategy implementation over the next 10 years by:

Identifying priority areas of action under each of the 8 focus areas

Focusing on the outcomes we are seeking to achieve

5. Outlines how we will monitor implementation of the Strategy to ensure we continue to respond to our changing community needs

How we engaged

Whittlesea 2040 community consultation:

more than 4,000 people participated through submissions, workshops and forums; and online, paper-based and in-person activities

Let's Talk: Shaping the Community Plan 2021-25:

the consultation program included community surveys, online and face-to-face events, pop-up stalls and targeted focus groups

2021 Household survey

surveyed households across the municipality about a range of topics, including their housing, health and wellbeing, employment and community participation

Council workshops:

staff participated in internal stakeholder workshops to establish outcomes to be achieved in delivering the Connected Community Strategy.

Community priorities focus groups:

community members from a diversity of age groups, genders, abilities, cultural backgrounds, suburbs and household structures participated in a series of focus groups to shape the direction of the Connected Community Strategy

Draft 2023-2024 Budget and Community Plan Action Plan

pop-ups throughout the municipality and Engage Whittlesea platform, to obtain input from the community on our future budget spend

Planning for a Place for All Engagement:

captured community views to assist in finalisation of the draft Connected Community Strategy through community based pop-ups and the Engage Whittlesea platform

A collaborative approach

Achievement of the outcomes and commitments outlined in the Strategy rely on Council's collaboration with our community and stakeholders, including community service providers, other levels of government and special interest groups. In referring to "our approach", Council acknowledges the need to work closely with our partners to achieve the best outcomes for our community.

How we plan – an integrated people focused approach

The Connected Community Strategy is one of seven strategies that outlines Council's commitments, the outcomes we strive for and the actions we will deliver for our community.

The seven strategies are known as Council's Integrated Planning Framework. Each strategy expands on our long-term 20-year community vision, Whittlesea 2040: A place for all and our Community Plan 2021–2025, to provide our community with more information on Council's priorities and our overall strategic direction.

Using this Strategy

Our approach to creating a connected community is provided in three parts:

Connected Community Strategy 2023-2033 – Outlines Council's overall strategic direction across the 8 focus areas.

Connected Community Action Plan – Commencing in 2024, an action plan will be developed every two years. This will outline actions Council will take in line with the priorities in the Connected Community Strategy.

Additional plans and supporting documents – Additional plans will be developed to support detailed planning for specific focus areas.

An equity approach

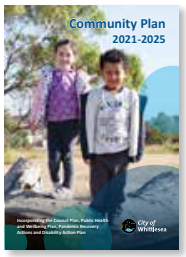
The principle of equity is consistent with a social justice and human rights approach which highlights the importance of equality, democracy, participation, transparency, accountability and inclusion. The City of Whittlesea is bound by the Victorian Charter of Human Rights.

For Council, taking an equity approach means that some population groups, geographical areas and social issues need to receive a greater share of Council resources, services or attention through policy because they are unfairly disadvantaged or experience significant barriers to participation in that service or program.

Providing this helps to achieve equality in the community – where everyone has what they need, and there are no barriers to participation.

Level 1: Vision
Council's overaching vision

Whittlesea 2040



Community Plan

Level 2: Strategy
Strategic direction and action plan

Connected Community Strategy

Connected Community Action Plan

Connected Community Strategy links to other Council strategies

Liveable neighbourhoods

- Advocate for well-connected public transport
- Improve access to safe and attractive streetscapes, public spaces and quality local parks
- Design walkable and accessible neighbourhoods to enable community connection
- Support a climate resilient built environment

Community infrastructure

- Plan for responsive services and facilities

Reconciliation

- Recognition of Traditional Owners
- Cultural awareness programs

Strong Local Economy

- Support education, training pathways and lifelong learning
- Improve economic participation for target groups
- Support libraries as spaces to grow and develop

High Performing Organisation

- Establish Council as an effective community service provider
- Equitable and inclusive recruitment policies
- Alignment with gender equality, child safety legislation and Charter of Human Rights obligations
- Meaningful engagement to involve the community in Council decision-making

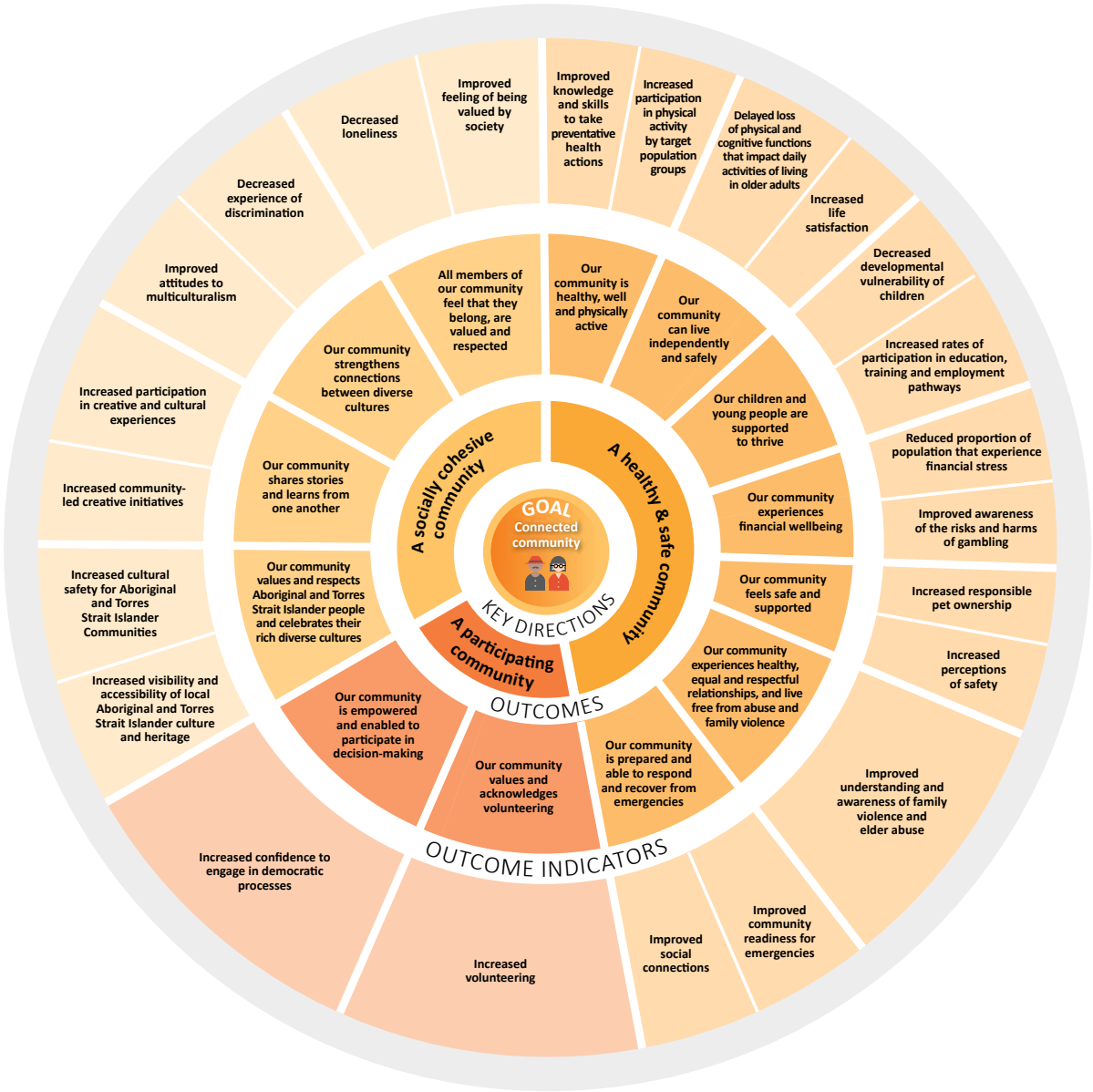
Sustainable Environment

- Support good health and wellbeing in a changing climate
- Improve access to better and safer public open spaces
- Support the community to achieve food security
- Empower the community to take action to create a sustainable environment and value and protect the Green Wedge

Our strategic direction

In developing the Strategy, Council has incorporated the goals and aspirations set out in Whittlesea 2040 and the key directions established in the Community Plan 2021-2025. Shared community outcomes have been identified under each key direction to progress the Strategy and provide a focus towards strengthening social connections and building community.

The following diagram articulates the strategic outcomes we want to achieve and the outcome indicators that will support us to monitor our success.



A connected community

" In 2040 the City of Whittlesea is a place that opens its arms to every resident, where all walks of life are celebrated and supported. Our community is compassionate and welcoming. We are healthy and can easily access the support services we need. People of all backgrounds, ages and abilities feel that they are an essential part of the community. We work together, making our community a better place for all."

Whittlesea 2040: A place for all

The following table lists the outcomes that have been established under each Key Direction for the Strategy which will provide benefits to our local community.

Key direction 1:
A socially cohesive community

Outcomes

- All members of our community feel that they belong, are valued and respected
- Our community strengthens connections between diverse cultures
- Our community shares stories and learns from one another
- Our community values and respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and celebrates their rich diverse cultures

Key direction 2:
A healthy and safe community

Outcomes

- Our community is healthy, well and physically active
- Our community can live independently and safely
- Our children and young people are supported to thrive
- Our community experiences financial wellbeing
- Our community feels safe and supported
- Our community experiences healthy, equal and respectful relationships, and live free from abuse and family violence
- Our community is prepared and able to respond and recover from emergencies

Key direction 3:
A participating community

Outcomes

- Our community is empowered and enabled to participate in decision-making
- Our community values and acknowledges volunteering

The City of Whittlesea Community

The City of Whittlesea is one of Melbourne's largest and fastest growing municipalities, covering a land area of 489 square kilometres. It has established urban areas across Bundoora, Epping, Lalor, Mill Park and Thomastown, growth precincts in Mernda, Doreen, South Morang, Epping North, Wollert and Donnybrook and rural areas that are characterised by farming and historic township communities, including Whittlesea Township.

Our highest population growth over the next 20 years will be in Epping North, Wollert and Donnybrook. The established areas will continue to grow, especially Mernda, Doreen, Epping Central (Epping), Plenty Valley Town Centre (South Morang), Thomastown, Lalor and University Hill (Bundoora). Approximately 70 per cent of the municipality is rural, with the other 30 per cent being urban, comprising houses, shops and factories.

The City of Whittlesea has a diverse population with a significant percentage of people born overseas and a higher proportion of non-English languages spoken at home compared to the wider Victorian population. The major differences in ancestries and languages spoken at home reflect the area's cultural diversity, with Italian and Macedonian being prominent ancestries and Macedonian, Arabic, Punjabi and Italian being widely spoken languages.

Population forecasts assume that from 2021 to 2041 the population of Whittlesea municipality will increase by **55.60%** forcast.id 2023

Population forecast for 2023 is 244,124 and is forecast to grow to **360,692 by 2041** forcast.id 2023

33,808 children aged 0-9; forecast to increase **70% by 2041**
2021 Census

45,645 young people aged 10-25 living in Whittlesea; forecast to increase by **62% by 2041**
2021 Census

Largest household structure is couples with children
2021 Census

37.6% of residents were born overseas
2021 Census

42.8% households have a mortgage
2021 Census

Median age of residents is **35**
2021 Census

21.2% of the population is aged between 0 and 15
2021 Census

41% of the population of the City of Whittlesea is couples with children
2021 Census

63% of the population participate in the workforce
2021 Census

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population 2,270 people, the second **largest in Metropolitan Melbourne** 2021 Census

45.1% of residents speak a language other than English at home
2021 Census

Place-based approach

The City of Whittlesea has made significant progress in achieving positive outcomes by placing a strong emphasis on local communities.

Our approach involves understanding and addressing the unique aspirations and needs of each local community within our municipality, with the goal of directly addressing these when delivering initiatives and creating a place for all.

Our key priorities are to:

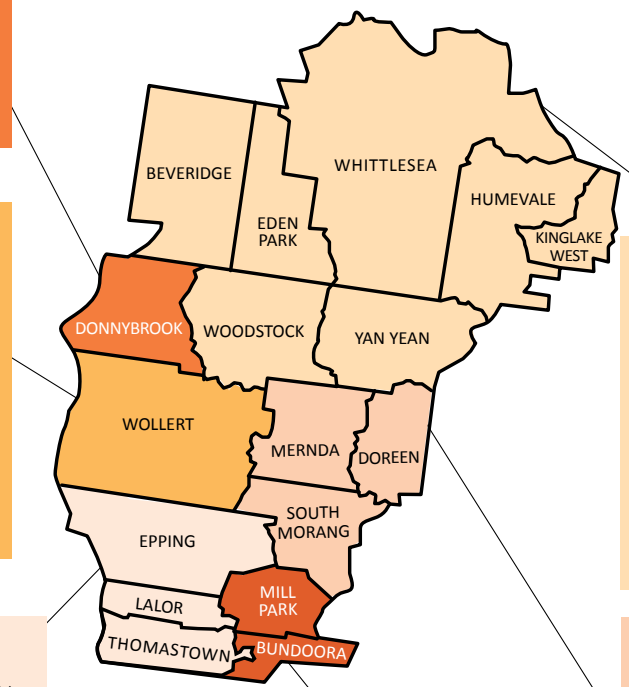
- Recognise and appreciate the distinct characteristics of our communities
- Embrace and celebrate the rich diversity of the municipality
- Work in partnership and collaboration with various stakeholders, including residents, community groups and organisations, to coordinate our services, programs and infrastructure planning.

Adopting a localised approach allows Council to facilitate equal opportunities for community members to participate and engage within their local areas, fostering strong social connections and building resilience within our communities.

Some examples of our Place-based approach are:

- The Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework which responds to the distinct needs and aspirations of this established community. The Framework focus on welcoming places and spaces that allow the community to gather and celebrate culture and local identity.
- Love Where you Live, campaign offer the opportunity for Council and the community to work together to celebrate the unique strengths of local communities across the municipally
- Local Area Networks E-news, provide an overview of current activities and programs run by various groups and organisations, including Council, in each local area
- Understanding fire risk on the urban fringe areas of Wollert, Mernda, Doreen and Donnybrook.

- Population 2,100
- 50% Female, 50% Male
- Higher age bracket 26-39-year-olds
- 53% speak language other than English
- 19 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people
- Rapid residential growth with increase across all age ranges expected in the next 20 years



- Population 42,701
- 50% Female, 50% Male
- 61% speak language other than English
- 249 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people
- Higher proportion of people in the younger age groups (0–17 years) and a lower proportion of people in the older age groups (60+ years).
- In the next 20 years residents will increase across all age groups, with the greatest growth amongst those aged 26-39 years.
- Rapid residential growth

- Population 9,742
- 51% Female, 49% Male
- 12% speak language other than English
- 137 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people
- Lower proportion of people in the younger age groups (0–17 years) and a higher proportion of people in the older age groups (60+ years)
- In the next 20 years residents will increase across all age groups, with the greatest growth amongst 75+

- Population 57,690
- 50% Female, 50% Male
- Higher age bracket: 26-39 years
- 59% speak language other than English
- Lower proportion of people in the younger age groups (0–17 years) and a higher proportion of people in the older age groups (60+)
- 576 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people
- In the next 20 years it is expected that the number of residents will increase across all age ranges, with the greatest rate of increase occurring amongst 18–64 year olds

- Population 41,641
- 50% Female, 50% Male
- Higher age bracket: 26–39 years, 54–64 years
- 43% speak language other than English
- 379 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people
- Lower proportion of people in the younger age groups (0–17 years) and a higher proportion of people in the older age groups (60+ years)
- In the next 20 years residents will increase across all age groups, with the greatest growth amongst 18-64 year olds

- Population 75,519
- 51% Female, 49% Male
- 31% speak language other than English
- 879 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people
- Higher proportion of people in the younger age groups (0–17 years) and a lower proportion of people in the older age groups (60+ years)
- In the next 20 years residents will increase across all age groups, except 50-64 year olds, with the greatest growth amongst 75+

Note: population figures are based upon current and projected population (2023 & 2040)
Data referenced on this page was sourced from the 2021 Census and Forecast ID.

Opportunities and challenges

The City of Whittlesea is committed to building welcoming, healthy and connected communities. Being part of a community has a positive effect on mental health and emotional wellbeing and provides a sense of belonging and social connectedness. Informed by community needs and aspirations, we will work to respond to opportunities and challenges. We strive to build on the priorities and values of our community and on our strengths and achievements.[1]

Responsive services and infrastructure provision

The City of Whittlesea's demographic and geographic diversity, which includes established, rural and growth communities, requires a nuanced response to service and infrastructure delivery. Timely and appropriate access to high quality services and infrastructure is needed to address barriers to participation and access to support for communities across the municipality.

Recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the community have been significant. Social, emotional and health impacts are still evident, which means that the way people participate and connect in the community has changed. It is important to adapt how we work with the community to respond to these changes, particularly regarding the way Council provides opportunities for social connections, recreation and physical activities.

Partnering to prevent and respond to family violence

Family violence rates in the municipality remain high and are one of the most common types of crime in the municipality. Council has a unique opportunity to partner with local community and family services to respond appropriately to affected community members, as well as to prevent family violence through promoting gender equality and respect in the community.

Rising cost of living

Increasing costs of living requires a considered response to support members of our community who are experiencing financial challenges, including rental and mortgage stress and access to health services. It is important that Council reduces as many barriers to participation as possible, particularly for our most vulnerable community members.

Celebrating cultural diversity

The City of Whittlesea has a rich culture and heritage. This is characterised by our multicultural community where almost half of our residents speak a language other than English at home. We also have the second largest Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population in metropolitan Melbourne. However, racism and discrimination are part of the lives of many in the community and are leading to a higher likelihood of emotional distress, depression and anxiety by affected communities[2]. Providing opportunities to support and celebrate contemporary cultural and community heritage while connecting with traditions and the past, helps to foster a sense of shared identity.

Enhancing Community Safety

Crime rates across the municipality are trending down, however many residents, particularly women, still feel unsafe at night.[3] Council will continue to seek opportunities for improving safety and perceptions of safety for our community through activating public spaces and places, supporting community vibrancy, and helping people to feel safe and supported.

Increasing Community Participation

The capacity of our community to participate and influence local decision-making and engage in activities such as volunteering has decreased in recent years.[4] Council is committed to empower all people living, working, studying and doing business within the City of Whittlesea to have their voices heard and considered in decision-making that influences the future of our city and the delivery of our services.

[1] W2040

[2] Whittlesea anti-racism community project, Victoria University, 2022

[3] City of Whittlesea Household Survey 2021

[4] City of Whittlesea Connected Communities Background Research Report, 2023

Key Focus Areas

Council recognises that communities are strengthened by their connections with others and the importance of aligning strategic outcomes with the needs and aspirations of our community. Informed by an understanding of our community and research on the challenges and opportunities related to achieving a connected community, this Strategy has eight key focus areas.

Arts, Culture and Events
Participation in arts and culture can improve our health and social connection and economic participation. A creative community provides opportunities for connection by sharing stories that increase understanding between different groups.

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Communities
The local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are made up of many different and distinct groups, each with their own cultures, languages, beliefs, protocols and practices. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples live in urban, regional and remote areas and are present in all communities, not necessarily on their traditional Countries.

Multicultural Communities
Multicultural communities are characterised by people of different races, ethnicities and nationalities living together in the same community. Having a diversity of cultures and backgrounds allows for different perspectives and new ideas.

Community Participation
A participating community can take many forms, including involvement in democratic processes and volunteering. Participation incommunity life leads to a healthier, more informed and more connected community.

Access, Inclusion and Discrimination
An inclusive and accessible community supports people of all backgrounds and abilities and reduces vulnerability to marginalisation, isolation and discrimination.

Community Safety
Community safety creates a sense of security for all people who live, work and play in our community. Feeling safe improves levels of social connection and trust.

Physical and Mental Health
Taking care of physical health is closely linked to improving mental wellbeing. Physical and mental health can each be improved through exercise, recreational activities, healthy eating, connection with others and nature, and access to health services.

Life Stages
Life stages are the different phases that individuals pass through in their lifetime. It is important to promote and respond to the specific needs of all people in the community, stages of life.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities

We will be respectful of Aboriginal communities, acknowledging and embracing their history, culture, heritage and the talents Aboriginal people bring to our community and our business – City of Whittlesea Aboriginal Inclusion Charter 2020

- Aboriginal Communities and Torres Strait Islander people live across the City of Whittlesea and have a culture that is holistic in approach, this includes a strong spiritual connection to land, waters and Country.
- Building better relationships between the wider Whittlesea community and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will ensure that they are supported to live, work, learn and play in safe environments that promote their cultural identity, free from discrimination.
- The number of residents identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander has doubled from 2011 to 2021 in the Whittlesea municipality and its neighbouring local government areas. This is a greater rate of increase than recorded across the Greater Melbourne area and Victoria.
- Racism is widely experienced by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

City of Whittlesea Data

Aboriginal and/Torres Strait Islander population in the City of Whittlesea has grown by 37.8% from 2016 to 2021

Census of Population and Housing 2016/2021

Younger age profile of under 10 years of age, larger proportion of 18-year olds, fewer older adults, 50 years or over

Census 2021

102% increase in residents identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders

Census 2021

46.5% of adults in Whittlesea report feelings of being valued by society, compared with 51.6% for Victoria

Victorian Population Health Survey 2020

What have we done so far?

- Planned for future construction of the Aboriginal Gathering Place in South Morang which will be a welcoming, inclusive and culturally safe space where Aboriginal people can enjoy a sense of belonging, with access to programs and services that strengthen culture and enhance wellbeing
- Adopted an Aboriginal Inclusion Charter which will support the process of reconciliation between Council and Aboriginal people living, working or visiting the City of Whittlesea
- Implemented a new Child Safe Policy, improving culturally safe environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
- Reviewed the Maternal and Child Health service to improve cultural safety for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- Developed Aboriginal online community hub on Engage Whittlesea that identifies projects that Council is working on to support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Our priorities for action

Building respect

Council is committed to reconciliation and supporting opportunities for improved cultural, social and health outcomes for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Council will promote build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the community, allowing for self-determination and equity by providing opportunities in areas of socio-economic participation and cultural development free from discrimination.

Improving health and wellbeing

Council will lead and support initiatives and activities that build better relationships between the wider Whittlesea community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, increasing opportunities to develop and implement culturally responsive programs for families, young people and children, and Elders.

Celebration and acknowledgement of culture

Council is committed to continuing to support our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to live, work, learn and play in safe environments that respect and promote their cultural identity.

Council will work towards increasing the visibility of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and culture by building awareness through events and education.

Arts, Culture and Events

When people are drawn into something from a place of fun, then barriers are reduced, and people are open to other experiences – Community Consultation June 2023

- Arts, cultural activities and events encourage social cohesion by creating avenues for cultural awareness and community connection.
- Participation in activities and events helps people from all backgrounds feel included and welcome in our community.
- Arts, cultural activities and events provide links to support services, foster safe spaces and create opportunities for shared enjoyment and fun.
- Participating in arts, cultural activities and events works in many ways to strengthen our sense of community and support us on every level: physical, mental, emotional and social. The benefits are many and the provision of free and/or low-cost activities is important to encourage participation by all.
- Celebrating contemporary cultural and community heritage and connecting with traditions and the past through public art, community festivals and participation in local heritage programs and groups, helps to foster a sense of shared identity and belonging.

City of Whittlesea Data

86% of residents feel that it is important to have access to artistic, cultural and lifestyle community events

Community Research Sivlerlining Strategy 2021

44% of people participate in community-based arts and culture activities

City of Whittlesea Household Survey 2021

Whittlesea residents who participate in arts or cultural activities are almost 10% more likely to report very good general health than those who have not participated

City of Whittlesea Household Survey 2021

What have we done so far?

- Developed the Whittlesea Arts Hub online portal providing information on a diverse arts program, including exhibitions, festivals and performances
- Delivered an annual program of mural commissions that has enhanced the vibrancy of place
- Worked with communities and local artists to increase creative participation in Council events, providing a prominent platform for community members at key events
- Delivered arts programs and events with a place-based approach, ensuring local characteristics are celebrated and recognised
- Utilised the City of Whittlesea's key cultural facilities, Plenty Ranges Arts and Convention Centre and Ziebell's Farmhouse Museum and Heritage Garden as hubs for community connection.

Our priorities for action

Enhancing opportunities for participation and community delivery of arts, creative and cultural activities

Council will support the delivery of free and low-cost locally based and municipal-wide arts and creative activities, programs and events that encourage participation and engagement.

Council will also enhance the delivery of, and participation in, creative and cultural experiences, by strengthening avenues of support that enable our community to deliver their own art, culture and heritage activities.

Enhancing Council's cultural infrastructure as hubs of community connection and creativity

A place-based approach will be central in increasing access to the arts and cultural expression opportunities for our community, supporting community-led initiatives and delivering programs that contribute to neighbourhood vibrancy.

Council will promote and strengthen community access to arts and cultural spaces and places.

Multicultural Communities

We need to educate one another on culture, to discourage racism and encourage acceptance of each other – Community Consultation June 2023

- City of Whittlesea has a diverse, growing multicultural population from 114 countries.
- A multicultural community allows us to look beyond ourselves. It gives people different experiences of diversity, inclusion and culture.
- A connected multicultural community enhances opportunities for work, education, friendship, understanding and compassion.
- Community connections across cultures help people to feel safe and supported in their lives. They also help people to proudly stay connected with their culture.

City of Whittlesea Data

37.6% of people in City of Whittlesea were born overseas
Census 2021

Almost half of all local residents (more than 86,000 residents) spoke a language other than English at home
Census 2021

13.6% of people in Whittlesea speak English not well or not at all
Census 2021

City of Whittlesea residents come from 114 countries, speak more than 93 languages and follow more than 40 faiths
(2021, Census, compiled by .id)

59% of culturally and linguistically diverse residents have experienced racism
City of Whittlesea Anti-racism community Project, Vic Uni,2022

34% of culturally and linguistically diverse residents have difficulty or are not able to access health or social support services
City of Whittlesea Household Survey 2021

What have we done so far?

- Celebrated various cultural dates of significance, such as Refugee Week, to inform the community about different cultures and promote acceptance and harmony
- Delivered place-based programs to build the capacity of our multicultural communities, liaising with community members, community groups and faith leaders to increase skills, improve access to interpreting and translation support and build confidence to be actively involved in decision-making
- Provided information sessions for multicultural groups on a broad range of topics, such as parent visa information sessions and heart health sessions
- Established the International Student Information Hub to provide easy access to support and information for international students
- Partnered with Belgravia Leisure to offer concessions at leisure centres for people seeking asylum
- Implemented a swimming program for culturally and linguistically diverse women to improve swimming skills
- Delivered the Program for Refugee Immunisation Monitoring and Education (PRIME) which increases the ability of refugees and people seeking asylum to receive catch-up immunisation, information and support.

Our priorities for action

Celebrating diversity and creating connections and understanding between cultures

Council will work with the community to provide welcoming places for people to come together, creating opportunities to celebrate and acknowledge our diverse heritage and culture.

Fostering cultural safety through partnerships and a community-wide approach

Council will bring together communities, organisations and service providers to address racism and cultural safety, empower communities and improve support for those in the community who experience racism.

Enhancing access to inclusive and culturally appropriate services and facilities

Council is committed to improving the cultural responsiveness of planning and equitable access to health and community services for our multicultural communities.

Access, Inclusion and Discrimination

Recognition of the needs of diverse minority groups is important
– Community Consultation June 2023

- Access, inclusion and freedom from discrimination support people to have safe, healthy and connected lives. They allow people to feel a sense of belonging and to feel valued and respected.
- The health and safety of all community members depends upon timely and equitable access to services and infrastructure.
- Feeling included and connected is essential for physical and mental wellbeing. Social isolation and mental ill-health can occur when people are not included in community life.
- Creating a community free from discrimination is important, where the unjust or prejudicial treatment of people, based on age, race, ability, colour, immigrant status, sex, gender or other qualities, is challenged and addressed.
- In the City of Whittlesea there are people for whom access, inclusion and freedom from discrimination are a significant issue.
- There is an increase in the demand for services, social connections and support for vulnerable members of our community.

City of Whittlesea Data

Almost 60% of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and multicultural residents, have experienced racism

City of Whittlesea Anti-racism community Project, Vic Uni,2022

21% of Whittlesea residents have a permanent or long-term disability

City of Whittlesea Household Survey 2021

62% of Whittlesea residents said 'Yes, definitely' in response to whether multiculturalism makes life in their area better

Tolerance of diversity VPHS, 2021

63% of women are in the lowest and medium-lowest income quartiles compared with 43% of men

Census 2021

6.3% of the population in City of Whittlesea reported needing help in their day-to-day lives due to disability

Census 2021

In Victoria

34.2% of LGBTIQ+ adults experienced discrimination or were treated unfairly by others compared to less than half that proportion in heterosexual, non-LGBTIQ+ adults (15.6%)

Victorian Agency for Health and Information 2017

What have we done so far?

- Gained Rainbow Tick accreditation for Council's Youth Service, which ensures that our youth programs are safe and inclusive for the LGBTIQ+ community
- Supported the Whittlesea Disability Network (WDN), including the establishment of a new WDN online hub
- Engaged with and supported community initiatives and events that raise awareness and celebrate inclusion for all people, regardless of gender, sex or sexual orientation

Our priorities for action

Embedding gender equality

Council is committed to advancing gender equality across our community. Gender equality supports our community to be inclusive, respectful, fair and safe for people of all genders. We seek to ensure that all people have the same rights, opportunities and responsibilities, and that everyone's contributions and efforts will be valued equally regardless of gender.

Council will enhance the delivery of gender equity initiatives within the community, through grants, events and partnerships.

Continuing to provide equitable access to council services, facilities and programs

Council recognises the importance of equitable access and equal opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their circumstances or abilities.

Council will strengthen approaches to the planning and development of inclusive and safe spaces, services, activities and events for all members of the community.

Supporting and sustaining freedom from discrimination

Council will work to support and improve our community's understanding of what discrimination is, the impact that discriminatory behaviour can have on the health of those affected and focus on opportunities to better address discrimination, so that all residents can feel safe and supported.

[5] Whittlesea Anti-Racism Community Project Report - Whittlesea Community Connections

Physical and Mental Health

There is a need for Council to promote local health services, information and activities – Community Consultation June 2023

- Physical and mental health are interconnected. Taking care of physical health is closely linked to improving mental wellbeing and vice versa.
- Exercise has been shown to increase wellbeing as well as reduce the symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- Mental health is both influenced by and can influence community connections. When people are socially connected, they are more likely to make healthy choices.
- Regular physical activity is one of the most important things we can do for our health. Inclusive sporting opportunities contribute to positive physical and mental health and create a sense of belonging.
- The ability to meet everyday living expenses creates a sense of wellbeing, whilst financial hardship impacts our mental health, raising levels of distress, anxiety and depression.
- Community experience of gambling harm can lead to financial hardship for some households, along with impaired relationships, social life, employment and poor mental health.[6]
- Travelling outside the region for work and study causes time and other pressures, which directly influence wellbeing.

City of Whittlesea Data

The most common long-term health condition is mental health. Just under one -in-10 Whittlesea residents report a mental health condition

Census 2021

The incidence of a self-reported mental health condition is notably higher amongst females than males

City of Whittlesea Household Survey 2021

41% of residents meet physical activity guidelines

City of Whittlesea Household Survey 2021

Ranked the sixth highest among Victorian local government areas for poker machine losses

VLGA 2023

Ranked 12th of 79 Victorian local government areas for homelessness. Of all people experiencing homelessness those aged 12-24 years are at most risk

Census 2021

In 2020 10% of Whittlesea adults ran out of money to buy food

Vic Health Survey 2020

Fifth most socio-economically disadvantaged of Victoria's 31 metropolitan municipalities

Census 2021

What have we done so far?

- In partnership with government and non-government agencies, planned for the development and construction of a First Response Youth Service in South Morang. This will provide housing and support services for young people
- Supported the establishment of the Whittlesea Mental Health and Wellbeing Local Service for adults and older adults, which supports people aged 26 and over to get mental health and wellbeing treatment, care and support closer to home
- Endorsed a new Community Grants Framework to ensure more funds are available to more people in the City of Whittlesea to support local programs, projects and activities
- Built and upgraded a range of community centres, sporting and leisure facilities to provide our community with opportunities to participate in physical activity and connect socially
- Advocated for poker machine reforms to reduce the impact of gambling harm on our community
- Established a Financial Hardship Policy that aids those in our community experiencing financial difficulties.

Our priorities for action

Adapting opportunities for physical activity in response to changes in participation

Council will facilitate, advocate and plan for the delivery of spaces, programs and activities that increase community participation in formal and informal physical activities, ensuring communities are inclusive, active, healthy and connected.

Working with partners to support mental wellbeing

Council will continue to work with our partners in the community services sector. Connecting people to services, monitor service gaps, creating opportunities for collaboration and advocating for additional investment in mental health services, addressing homelessness and gambling harm prevention.

Life Stages

We need to respond to the different needs across life stages - having spaces and opportunities for everyone to connect and share skills and experiences
– Community Consultation June 2023

- Life stages are the different phases that individuals pass through in their lifetime: infancy, childhood, adolescence and adulthood.
- Creating multigenerational and flexible spaces, programs and activities where children, youth, adults and older adults can interact, assists in building community participation and connections.
- Young families with mortgages are particularly susceptible to increasing costs of living pressures and family/work commitments.
- A life stage approach recognises that a person's capacity fluctuates throughout their life and an integrated range of interventions may be required.
- The number of young children with a disability in the municipality has increased significantly requiring the delivery of targeted support services.
- Young people in growth areas can face increased social isolation and require spaces, programs and activities to foster social connection and wellbeing.
- As people age and are no longer working there is an increased risk of social isolation and loneliness impacting physical and mental health.
- The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the social and emotional development of children and young people is an ongoing concern.[7]

City of Whittlesea Data

All age groups are forecast to grow in number over the next 20 years with the greatest proportion occurring amongst 75+ year olds
Census 2021

One-fifth of Whittlesea's population are young people aged 10-25 years
Census 2021

Just under a third of older adults are aged 50+
Census 2021

26–49-year-olds are our largest population group
Census 2021

Young people missed critical socialisation development years due to COVID-19 lockdowns
aced 2021

7.4% of children in their first year of school are developmentally on track for social competence
aedc 2021

What have we done so far?

- Partnered with Headspace National and Mind Australia to open a Headspace service at Plenty Valley Westfield to support young people's mental health
- Supported residents to transition to the National Aged Care and disability systems
- Continued the business transformation of the City of Whittlesea aged care services in response to aged care reforms
- Provided sector support for Commonwealth Home Support Program providers to prepare for aged care reforms
- Completed the Mernda Social Support Centre and Council, with partner organisations, will provide services to older people
- Delivered the Bringing Up Kids Expo which brings together family support agencies to provide information on services, programs and events available to the City of Whittlesea community
- Implemented the Best Start Best Life program, including increased hours for 3 and 4-year-old kindergartens.

Our priorities for action

Enhancing intergenerational connections

Enhancing opportunities for our community to live well by encouraging intergenerational activities and relationships between young and older people have long-term mutual benefits.

Council will facilitate ways for people in the community to connect, learn and teach new skills across all stages of life.

Provide services and facilities for all life stages

Council is committed to ensuring that all community voices are heard across the life stage journey and that all residents be given the opportunity to access relevant Council services.

Council will maintain strong partnerships to enhance collaborative planning for intergenerational services and facilities where all ages and stages of life are valued, supported and connected.

Supporting older adults to live safely, independently and participate in community

Council's proactive approach to positive ageing through the planning and delivery of spaces, programs and activities provides connection with others and supports physical and mental wellbeing.

Council will work with our partners and provide high quality and responsive aged care services in line with aged care reforms so that older adults can live safely and independently.

Supporting families, children and young people to thrive

Council will support and enhance avenues for children and young people to engage in programs that enhance their social and emotional wellbeing and deliver programs and services that promote positive wellbeing, development and community connections for families, children and young people.

Community Safety

We need to connect with neighbours and locals to feel safer
– Community Consultation June 2023

- Ensuring a safe environment to live, work and play builds and strengthens communities and leads to better physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- Family violence is a significant safety and health issue in our municipality and has a considerable impact on individuals and on the community.
- A resilient community is one where strong community connections can minimise the impacts of disasters and build safer communities.
- Nuisance animals can have an impact on the safety of our communities and require close management to prevent damage to the environment and wildlife.

City of Whittlesea Data

In 2021, 77% of family members affected by family violence were female

Vic Gov, Crimestatistics 2022

26.15% of residents reported they felt "somewhat unsafe" or "very unsafe" in the municipality at night

City of Whittlesea Household Survey 2021

30.44% of women feel somewhat or very unsafe at night; 6.98% of women feel somewhat safe or very safe at night; 21.61% of men feel somewhat or very unsafe at night

City of Whittlesea Household Survey 2021

75.66% of residents know what types of emergency risks or hazards can occur in the community

City of Whittlesea, Preparing for an emergency survey 2022

Libraries are increasingly recognised by users as a hub for community activities and connections, providing a safe space that welcomes people from all walks of life

Background Research Report 2022

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What have we done so far?

- Partnered with Whittlesea Community Connections to deliver the Whittlesea CALD Communities Family Violence Project that supports culturally and linguistically diverse communities, newly arrived migrants, refugees and asylum seekers to break the cycle of family violence and empower those communities to respond to the challenges of preventing violence against women
- Partnered with the Men's Project at Jesuit Social Services to deliver the Modelling Respect and Equality (MoRE) project, an innovative training program to address the harmful gender stereotypes thatare linked to violence against women and help participants to become active role models for other men and boys
- Partnered with Monash University XYX Lab to deliver the Your Ground Project to identify public places where people do not feel safe
- Partnered with Neighbourhood Watch public awareness program, Remove It, Lock It or Lose It, to reduce thefts from vehicles
- Reviewed the Community Local Law and delivered the Community Local Law and Safer Communities Road Show
- Introduced the 24-hour Cat Confinement Law to help protect our wildlife
- Piloted person-centred emergency preparedness training, as part of the Resilient Communities Project, and launched new video series to help residents understand and prepare for emergencies
- Facilitated the review and update of the Municipal Fire Management Sub-Plan and the Municipal Storm and Flood Management Sub-Plan
- Prepared for the establishment of the Community Sub-Committee of the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC)
- Prepared the Climate Change Action Plan 2022 -2032 that outlines Council's role in supporting the community to respond to the impacts of climate change.

Our priorities for action

Improving perceptions of safety

Council will respond to perceived and actual safety concerns by collaborating with local police and relevant agencies to implement initiatives that provide a safer environment for our community.

Prevent family violence for all our community

Council will promote gender equality through partnering with our community in prevention awareness raising programs and working with our community partners to prevent and respond to family violence.

Our Maternal and Child Health service will provide a response to parents experiencing family violence, while promotion of equality and respect in our sporting environments remains a key priority.

Improving preparedness and resilience to emergencies

In partnership with emergency services and relief agencies, Council will support our community to be more connected, prepared and safe, and more resilient to emergency incidents, climate change and natural disasters through increased access to information and education.

Promoting responsible pet ownership

Council will promote responsible pet ownership to reduce the adverse impact of nuisance animals on the community, improving safety around animals, protecting both our wildlife and the environment.

Community Participation

Building confidence in people, giving them the ability to speak up, have their say and put forward ideas – Community Consultation June 2023

- Participating in community life strengthens community connections and helps to build strong and resilient communities.
- Participation by the community in both political and non-political ways increases the capacity of individuals and communities to build connections and influence matters affecting their lives.
- Participation through volunteering assists in building strong and resilient communities by providing opportunities for individuals to support those in need, connect with others and learn new skills.
- Supporting organisations to find ways to make volunteering easier increases vital volunteer support in the community, which leads to a healthier and more connected community.

City of Whittlesea Data

7.6% of the Whittlesea community volunteer

Census 2021

Digital inclusion in Whittlesea is improving faster than the national average and performing well against other LGAs

Aust Digital Inclusion Index 2022

35% of residents have participated in local decision-making opportunities

City of Whittlesea Household Survey 2021

What have we done so far?

- Enhanced the *Engage City of Whittlesea Hub*, providing an online platform for our community to have a say about the future of our municipality
- Delivered an inclusive Community Leadership Program, supporting individuals to develop leadership skills
- Funded Whittlesea Community Connections to build the volunteering capacity of community service organisations
- Established the Youth Advisory Committee to bring issues of importance to local young people to Council
- Delivered the "Love Where We Live" campaigns to promote community participation in improvements in their local area
- Reviewed our community grant guidelines to improve access to funding for community groups and individuals.

Our priorities for action

Enabling participation

Council will enhance the provision of resources, information and education about activities and programs available in our community that support social connections.

Participation in governance and democracy

Council is committed to building the capacity of local and diverse community members to participate in decision-making through leadership programs and community development opportunities.

Valuing and facilitating volunteering

Council will work with our partners to support and promote opportunities for participation in volunteering across the community.

Making it happen

The Strategy will be delivered through implementation of a Connected Community Action Plan. Which will be developed every two years. The first Action Plan will be developed upon endorsement of the Strategy by Council.

The Action Plan will clearly outline the actions Council is committed to delivering and how we will track our performance over time.

The Action Plan will also help to facilitate and strengthen our partnerships and collaborations with key stakeholders.

Gender Impact Assessment Statement

In the development of the Strategy consideration has been given to the impact of gender and other characteristics such as culture, Aboriginality, age and disability on community connection, participation and safety. The action plan (to be developed) will include specific actions to address inequality, including key gendered inequalities and/or barriers.

Monitoring progress

Council has prepared an evaluation framework to monitor the trends and performance of our work to foster a connected community.

The outcome: indicators listed below offer a snap shot of the desired changes we aim to achieve overtime. Measures are being developed to evaluate our progress achieving the outcomes outline in the Strategy.

Council will continue to monitor the priority indicators and will work with other levels of government, as well as partners in the private and non-for-profit sectors and our broader community, to make positive improvement to these indicators.

The Strategy will be reviewed in 2028 to update demographic profiles where needed and update challenges and opportunities in response to changing community needs and aspirations.

Key direction 1:

A socially cohesive community

Outcome Indicators for each of these Key Directions

- Improved feeling of being valued by society
- Decreased loneliness
- Decreased experience of discrimination
- Improved attitudes to multiculturalism
- Increased participation in creative and cultural experiences
- Increased community-led creative initiatives
- Increased cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities
- Increased visibility and accessibility of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage

Key direction 2:

A healthy and safe community

- Improved knowledge and skills to take preventative health actions
- Increased participation in physical activity by target population groups
- Delayed loss of physical and cognitive functions that impact daily activities of living in older adults
- Increased life satisfaction
- Decreased developmental vulnerability of children
- Increased rates of participation in education, training and employment pathways
- Reduced proportion of population that experience financial stress
- Improved awareness of the risks and harms of gambling
- Increased responsible pet ownership
- Increased perceptions of safety
- Improved understanding and awareness of family violence and elder abuse
- Improved community readiness for emergencies
- Improved social connections

Key direction 3:

A participating community

- Increased confidence to engage in democratic processes
- Increased volunteering

Glossary

Accessibility – Is the quality of being able to be used by people of all abilities, commonly referring to the built environment, modes of communication and technology.

A human rights and social justice approach – "Social justice and human rights both highlight the importance of equality, democracy, participation, transparency, accountability and inclusion. And both place the concept of "justice" front and centre in efforts to forge a more stable and equitable world." (UN)

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity – Encompasses a range of aspects including a person's country of birth, their ancestry, where their parents were born, what language/s they speak, and their religious affiliation.[i]

Community participation – Refers to how individuals and groups involve themselves in their community in both political and non-political ways. This includes volunteering, joining community groups and participating in local decision-making processes.

Digital Inclusion Index – Measures digital inclusion across three areas of Access, Affordability and Digital Ability.[8]

Disability – A permanent or long-term impairment, not related to ageing, that causes substantially reduced capacity in at least one area of daily life (for instance, around self-care, self-management, mobility, communication).

Discrimination – The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of ethnicity, age, sex, or disability or other attributes protected under law.

Elder abuse – Has been defined by the World Health Organisation as "a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person". Elder abuse can take various forms, including financial, physical, psychological, emotional and sexual abuse, or neglect. [ii]

Financial hardship – A person or household experiences financial hardship when they have difficulty meeting everyday living expenses (e.g. food, housing, transport, utilities and telephone bills, insurance, healthcare, education, leisure or recreation activities), managing debts and/or raising funds in an emergency.

Genderequity – Entails the provision of fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities based on gender. It is not about the equal delivery of services, or distribution of resources – it is about recognising diversity and disadvantage and directing resources and services towards those most in need, to ensure equal outcomes for all. Gender equity acknowledges that women and men have different access to resources, power, responsibilities and life experiences and that different strategies are often necessary to address disadvantages and achieve equal outcomes for women and men, girls and boys.

Gender equality – Is the outcome reached through gender equity – it means equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for women, men and trans and gender diverse people. Equality does not mean that women, men and trans and gender diverse people will become the same. Rather, it means that the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of all people will not depend on their gender and that all people's contributions and efforts will be valued equally, regardless of gender.

Inclusion – Occurs when people feel, and are, valued and respected regardless of their personal characteristics or circumstance.

IDAHOBIT – Is the International Day Against Homophobia Biphobia and Transphobia, also known as International Day Against LGBTQIA+ Discrimination.

LGBTQIA+ – Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Intersex Asexual+

NDIS – National Disability Insurance Scheme

Outcome indicators – Specify what changes we need to see to achieve the outcomes statements; they set the direction of change. Outcome indicators reflect the key drivers and influences on progress towards an outcome.

Racism – Is the process by which systems and policies, actions and attitudes create inequitable opportunities and outcomes for people based on race. Racism is more than just prejudice in thought or action. It occurs when this prejudice – whether individual or institutional – is accompanied by the power to discriminate against, oppress or limit the rights of others.[iii]

Social cohesion – Refers to positive and happy social relationships - it is the bond or 'glue' that binds and connects people.

Social isolation – Is seen as the state of having minimal contact with others. It differs from loneliness, which is a subjective state of negative feelings about having a lower level of social contact than desired.[iv]

Connected Community Strategy 2023-2033 / 33

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[iii] What is Racism? | Australian Human Rights Commission accessed 2/7/2023

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[iv] Home - Australian Digital Inclusion Index

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Connect with us in your
preferred language:

Free telephone interpreter service
131 450

City of Whittlesea

Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy 2023-2033

City of Whittlesea

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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COVER IMAGE

Gumnut Playground and
Shared Cup Cafe, Donnybrook

Executive Summary

"In 2040 the City of Whittlesea is well-planned and beautiful. Our neighbourhoods and town centres are convenient and vibrant places to live, work and play. Everything we need is close by. We have a variety of quality housing that suits our life stages and circumstances. Every resident is able to get where they need to go with ease and can leave the car at home."

Whittlesea 2040: A place for all

The Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy 2023-2033 (the Strategy) outlines the City of Whittlesea's approach to creating and maintaining liveable neighbourhoods that are attractive and well-planned with open spaces and town centres that are convenient and vibrant places for all.

The Strategy outlines how Council will work towards creating neighbourhoods over the next 10 years. A review will be conducted after five years and a two-year Liveable Neighbourhoods Action Plan will be developed to set out Council's commitments to deliver on the Strategy.

The Strategy aligns and contributes to the Liveable Neighbourhoods key directions in Council's vision *Whittlesea 2040: A place for all:*

Key direction 1:
Smart, connected transport network

Key direction 2
Well-designed neighbourhoods and vibrant town centres

Key direction 3
Housing for diverse needs

The Strategy has been prepared to support and implement state and local priorities for liveable neighbourhoods in our municipality.

The City of Whittlesea is establishing a **place-based approach** to planning, service and infrastructure delivery that is responsive to the distinct needs and aspirations of local neighbourhoods.

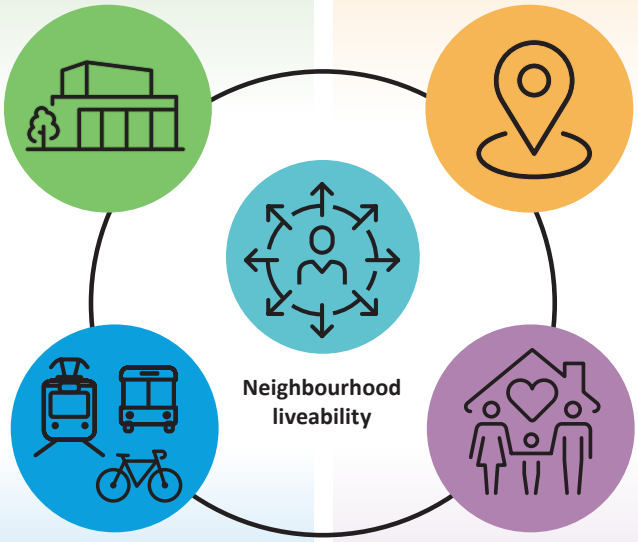
Plan Melbourne is a metropolitan strategy that guides the growth of metro Melbourne for the next 35 years. One of the principles is Living Locally – 20-minute neighbourhoods, which is all about giving people the ability to meet most of their daily needs close to home.

Public space and infrastructure

- Local parks and playgrounds for recreation and connection
- Green streets and open spaces to support walking & cycling
- Sport and recreation facilities for health and wellbeing
- Community infrastructure close to home
- Safe and accessible open spaces for all

Activity centres

- Community focal points, with services and facilities close to home
- Safe, inclusive, accessible and sustainable places for all
- Reflect the neighbourhood character and local community
- Local employment opportunities



Integrated transport

- Reduced car dependence and greater transport choice
- Improved walkability for health and sustainability
- Safe cycling networks
- Transport networks linking places people want to go

Housing

- Affordable, accessible, secure housing options for all
- Housing diversity – density in the right places
- Ability to age in place
- Well-designed and sustainable housing that respects the local context

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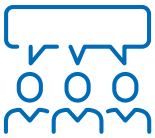
How we engaged

The Strategy is informed by extensive community engagement undertaken for this project as well as other recent, relevant Council projects, including the following:



Whittlesea 2040 **community consultation**

More than 4,000 people participated

Through submissions, workshops and forums; online, paper-based and in-person activities

Community Plan 2021-25
Let's Talk Shaping the Community Plan 2021-25 consultation program

Included community surveys, online and face-to-face events, pop-up stalls and targeted focus groups

Draft 2023-2024 Budget and Community Plan Action Plan

Pop-ups throughout the municipality and Engage Whittlesea platform, to obtain input from the community on our future budget spend

2021 Household survey

Surveyed households across the municipality about a range of topics, including their housing, health and wellbeing, employment and community participation

Community Focus Groups

were held for the Connected Community Strategy, Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy and the City of Whittlesea's Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan

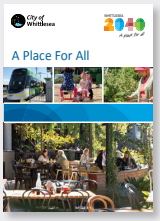
In June and October 2023, members from a diversity of age groups, genders, abilities, cultural backgrounds, suburbs and household structures, participated in focus group sessions that asked people about how we can improve the liveability of our neighbourhoods.

Community Engagement for the Strategy

Over 186 people engaged in community consultation for this Strategy at pop-ups and through the Engage Whittlesea platform.

How we plan – an integrated people-focused approach

Level 1: Vision
Council's overaching vision



Whittlesea 2040

Community Plan

Level 2: Strategy
Strategic direction and action plan

Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy 2023-2033

Liveable Neighbourhoods Action Plan

The Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy is one of seven strategies that outlines Council's commitments, the outcomes we strive for and the actions we will deliver for our community.

The seven strategies are known as Council's Integrated Planning Framework. Each strategy expands on our long-term 20-year community vision, *Whittlesea 2040: A place for all* and our Community Plan 2021–2025, to provide our community with more information on Council's priorities and our overall strategic direction.

Using this strategy

Our approach to creating liveable neighbourhoods is provided in three parts:

Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy 2023-2033
Outlines Council's overall strategic direction across four areas related to liveable neighbourhoods: public space and infrastructure; activity centres; integrated transport; and housing.

Liveable Neighbourhoods Action Plan
Commencing in 2024, Liveable Neighbourhoods Action Plans will be developed every two years. They will outline actions Council will take in line with the priorities in the Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy.

Additional plans and supporting documents
Additional plans will be developed to provide detailed planning in areas such as open space, integrated transport and housing diversity.

Equity at the heart of 2040

Equity and inclusion sit at the heart of our 2040 vision of ***a place for all***. Actions arising from this strategy will consider the experiences and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people within the LGBTIQ community, people with disabilities, and those of different genders, ages, cultural, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds.

The City of Whittlesea is legislated to consider the differing needs of people of all genders and promote gender equality in the way we design and maintain our neighbourhoods and legislated responsibility to remove barriers for people with disability in order that all community members can participate in public life.

Action plans arising from this strategy will include specific actions to promote gender equality.

Liveable Neighbourhoods links in other strategies

Connected community

- Plan for delivery of community programs and services to meet the needs of all of our community
- Activate places and spaces for recreation, arts, culture and social activities
- Improve perceptions of community safety in public spaces, including for people with disabilities and their carers, women, girls and gender diverse people.

Community infrastructure

- Plan for necessary services and facilities.

Reconciliation

- Acknowledge and celebrate the Aboriginal cultural heritage of our municipality
- Protect and celebrate sites of Aboriginal cultural heritage significance.

Strong Local Economy

- Increase occupancy rates in activity centres
- Attract external investment in our municipality
- Increase local employment opportunities.

Sustainable Environment

- Increase energy efficiency of our buildings and use of renewable energy systems
- Increase green cover and shade in public spaces
- Promote uptake of sustainable modes of transport
- Protect and enhance waterways, reserves, parks, and gardens.

High performing organisation

- Deliver our place-based approach to infrastructure planning
- Establish Council as an effective community service provider
- Deliver and maintain infrastructure assets
- Manage development contributions system to contribute to funding of new local infrastructure.

The neighbourhoods we want

The outcomes below describe the vision for implementing the key directions for liveable neighbourhoods set out in *Whittlesea 2040*:

Key direction 1: Smart, connected transport network

- Our community has sustainable options to easily travel where they need to go

Key direction 2: Well-designed neighbourhoods and vibrant town centres

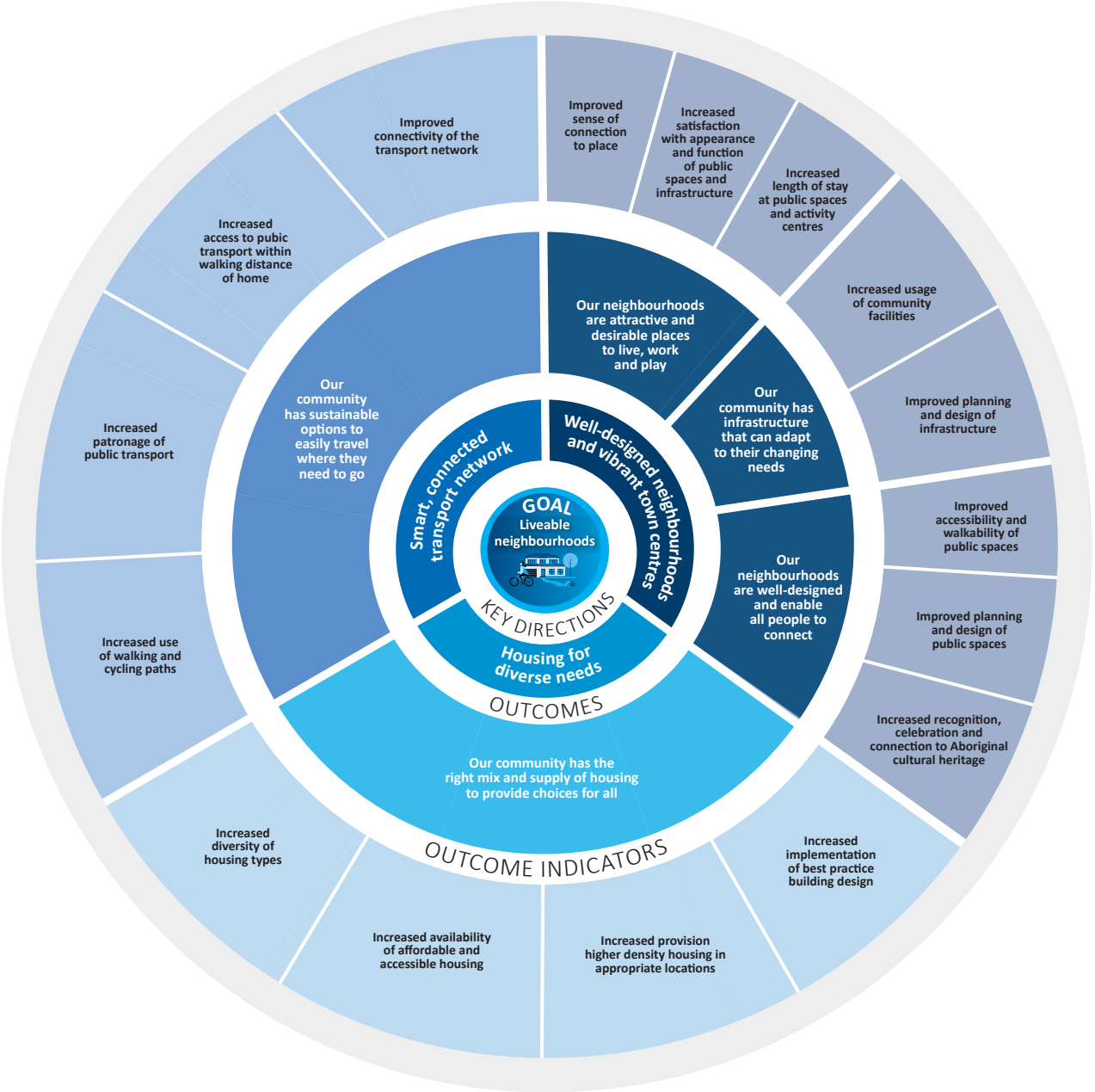
- Our neighbourhoods are attractive and desirable places to live, work and play
- Our community has infrastructure that can adapt to their changing needs
- Our neighbourhoods are well-designed and enable all people to connect

Key direction 3: Housing for diverse needs

- Our community has the right mix and supply of housing to provide choices for all

Our strategic direction

This strategy builds on the vision for liveable neighbourhoods in *Whittlesea 2040* to create a strategic direction for its implementation over the next 10 years.



Place-based approach

The City of Whittlesea has made significant progress in achieving positive outcomes by placing a strong emphasis on local communities. Our approach involves understanding and addressing the specific aspirations and needs of each community within our municipality, with the goal of creating a place for all.

One of our key priorities is to recognise and appreciate the distinct characteristics that exist across our region. We firmly believe in embracing and celebrating the rich diversity found within our municipality through a localised lens. By doing so, we can ensure that we accurately capture and value the unique qualities that make each community special.

This Strategy enables planning for the things that our community needs, taking into consideration the needs of each neighbourhood.

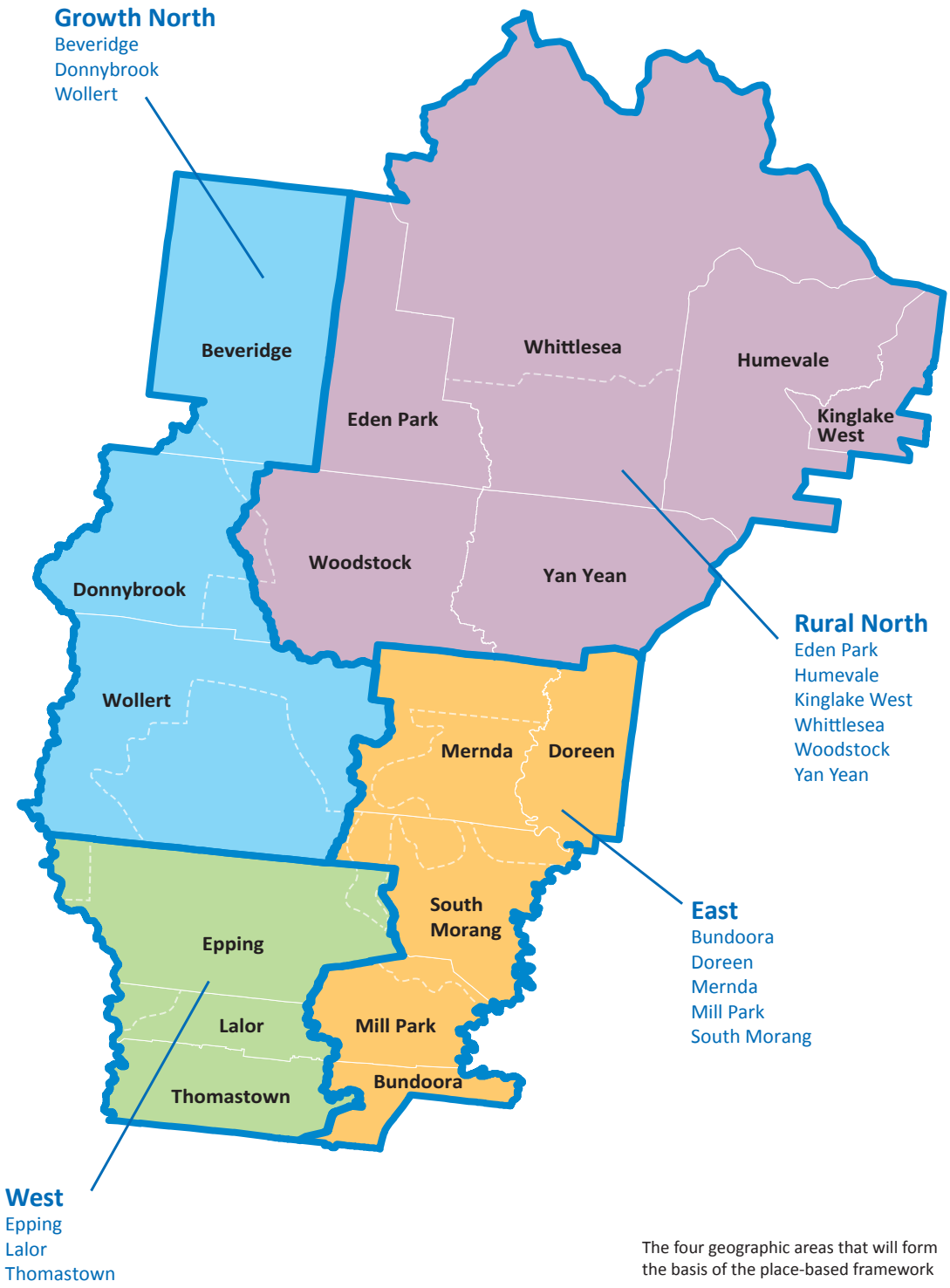
While the needs of our rural, greenfield and established area communities must be balanced, we also need to think about things like the age profile and cultural background of neighbourhoods when planning our community centres, open spaces and sports reserves, as well as all the other infrastructure that helps our communities function.

Adopting a localised approach also allows the Council to facilitate equal opportunities for community members to participate and engage within their local areas. We strongly believe in fostering social connections and building resilience within our communities. By focusing on local initiatives, we can create an environment that enables individuals to connect, participate, and thrive.

Some recent examples of implementation of the place-based approach include:

- The *Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework 2023*, which identifies a series of improvements for these suburbs based on community priorities and the unique features of these places
- The updated *Epping Central Structure Plan* was completed with community involvement at each state to create a vibrant and active activity centre that meets regional and local community needs.
- The *Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master Plan*, which was co-designed with the community and local traders, who also had an active role in shaping the future of the Alexander Avenue shopping precinct.

To genuinely reflect the unique and distinct areas in the municipality, and deliver on this Framework when planning and delivering, a Geographic Framework has been defined to articulate the boundaries focusing on the following areas and suburbs where possible.



The four geographic areas that will form the basis of the place-based framework

Our city's neighbourhoods

The City of Whittlesea is located on the lands of the Wurundjeri and Taungurung people in Melbourne's northern suburbs, about 20 kilometres from the Melbourne Central Business District.

It is one of Melbourne's largest municipalities, covering an area of 489 square kilometres. The population is diverse with more than 35 per cent of residents born overseas and the second largest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in metropolitan Melbourne.

Our population has grown by more than 70,000 people over the past decade and is expected to grow by another 150,000 by 2040. It is one of the fastest growing nationally and has been identified by the Victorian Government as a growth area of state significance.

The municipality includes established areas across Bundoora, Epping, Lalor, Mill Park, South Morang, Mernda and Doreen, growth areas in Wollert, Donnybrook and Beveridge and rural areas, characterised by farming and historic township communities, including the Whittlesea Township.

The City of Whittlesea:

- Has access to major transportation corridors, including the Hume Freeway and Metropolitan Ring Road, and is connected to the city by the Mernda train line and the Route 86 tram line to Bundoora
- Has one metropolitan activity centre – Epping Central (including Epping Plaza) – as well as the Lockerbie metropolitan activity centre located across the municipalities of Hume, Whittlesea and Mitchell
- Has three major activity centres – the existing South Morang activity centre (including Westfield Plenty Valley), the Mernda activity centre and the future Wollert town centre
- Has a higher-than-average number of people under 25 years of age and a lower proportion of the population in older age groups
- Has a culturally and linguistically diverse population, with migrants from more than 114 countries, speaking more than 93 languages at home and following more than 40 faiths
- Has a higher-than-average population of people with a disability who require support to live independently in the community.

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City of Whittlesea profile

24.7%*
of our population is under 18 years of age

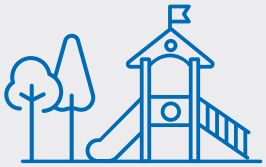
63%*
of residents travel outside the municipality for work

60%*
of households own two or more cars

50,000*
new dwellings will be required by 2040

5%**
of housing sales are affordable to low-income households

87%**
of rentals are affordable to low-income households



50%#
of residents said parks and playgrounds are important to them

147^
existing Council-run community facilities, including sports and leisure precincts, kindergartens, libraries, and community centres

* Calculated based on ABS Census of Population and Housing 2021
** ABS Census of Population and Housing 2021
\# City of Whittlesea, *Community Priorities Survey*, 2022
^ City of Whittlesea, *Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan 2023-2033*

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Challenges facing our neighbourhoods

Climate change

Our buildings and public spaces need to adapt to the changing climate to keep our community safe and well. By reducing the urban heat island effect through good design and increased urban greening, we can help our community adapt to the changing climate.

Moving on from COVID

While we are still assessing the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on our community, we know that things will be different. Some impacts are proving to be short-term, with a return to 'normal' already evident, while others will cause long-term changes to the way we live. What we do know is there is a new appreciation for 'living locally' and the ability for people to access services and facilities close to home. Also, the capacity for some people to work from home is changing our travel needs and preferences.

Rapid population growth

Like other municipalities experiencing rapid population growth, having the resources available to deliver the services, spaces and places needed to service all our community needs is challenging, particularly for new suburbs where there is little existing infrastructure.

More than ever, our public spaces and infrastructure need to perform even more roles to meet the needs of all of our community. For example, our local parks need to cater to all ages and abilities – and even dogs!

This growth also puts development pressure on the Whittlesea Green Wedge, which is highly valued for its landscape and amenity values.

Demographic and geographic diversity

Planning for the future needs of our community is complicated by the great diversity in geographies – encompassing established, growth and rural areas – and the demographic make-up of our community.

Balancing the evolving needs of each sector of our community means projects and budgets need to be carefully allocated to ensure everyone in our community has access to the things they need.

Travel to work options

A high proportion of residents travel out of the municipality for work, putting pressure on the transport network. This is compounded by the lack of reliable public transport options and a high degree of car dependence, with impacts on the health and wellbeing of our community.

Housing density and diversity

We need to increase the supply and diversity of housing in the right locations. We need higher density housing around activity centres and train stations to make best use of these locations, and deliver a greater range of housing types between detached dwellings and high rises.

Municipal overview

Donnybrook

Forecast Population

2021	2041
5,210	48,123

98% of dwellings are separate house

2% of dwellings are medium/ high density

Wollert

Forecast Population

2021	2041
26,924	60,730

93% of dwellings are separate house

7% of dwellings are medium/ high density

Epping

Forecast Population

2021	2041
35,389	48,323

83% of dwellings are separate house

17% of dwellings are medium/ high density

Thomastown

Forecast Population

2021	2041
21,201	28,273

83% of dwellings are separate house

17% of dwellings are medium/ high density

Lalor

Forecast Population

2021	2041
24,002	27,886

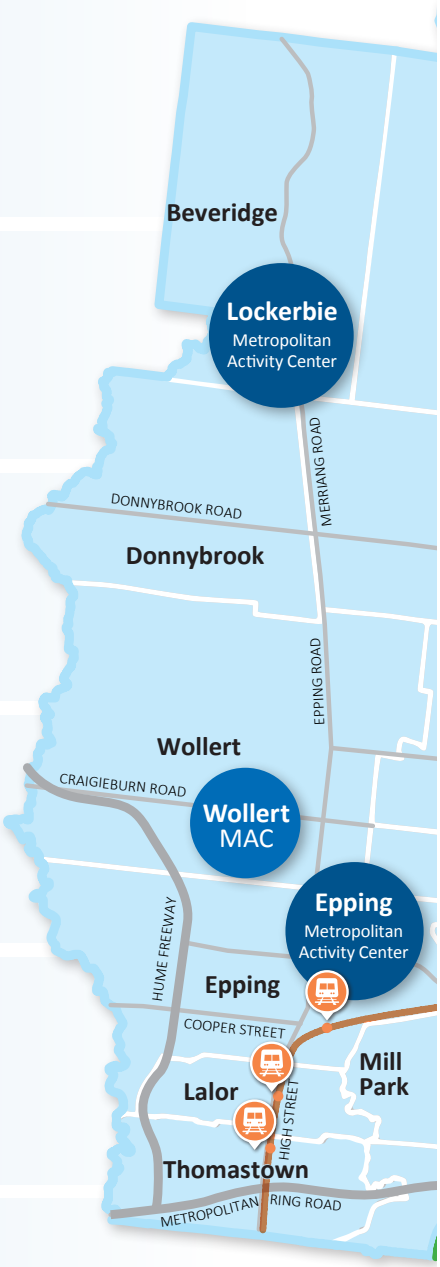
Bundoora

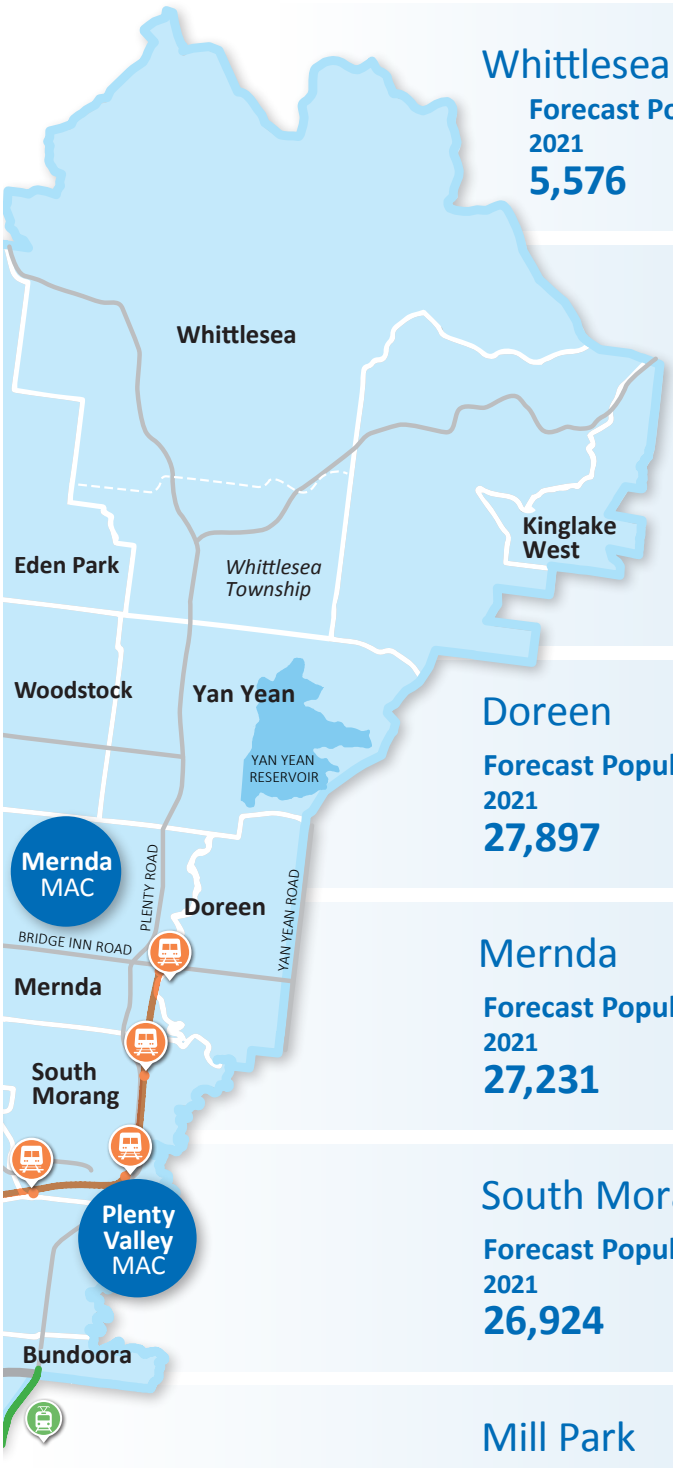
Forecast Population

2021	2041
14,399	19,139

70% of dwellings are separate house

30% of dwellings are medium/ high density





Whittlesea township

Forecast Population

2021	2041
5,576	6,387

86% of dwellings are separate house

14% of dwellings are medium/ high density

Rural North

(Eden Park, Whittlsea, Yan Yean and Kinglake West)

Forecast Population

2021	2041
3,177	3,351

100% of dwellings are separate house

Doreen

Forecast Population

2021	2041
27,897	27,985

94% of dwellings are separate house

6% of dwellings are medium/ high density

Mernda

Forecast Population

2021	2041
27,231	31,542

90% of dwellings are separate house

10% of dwellings are medium/ high density

South Morang

Forecast Population

2021	2041
26,924	60,730

77% of dwellings are separate house

23% of dwellings are medium/ high density

Mill Park

Forecast Population

2021	2041
28,332	30,390

90% of dwellings are separate house

10% of dwellings are medium/ high density

MAC denotes Major Activity Centre

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Key focus areas

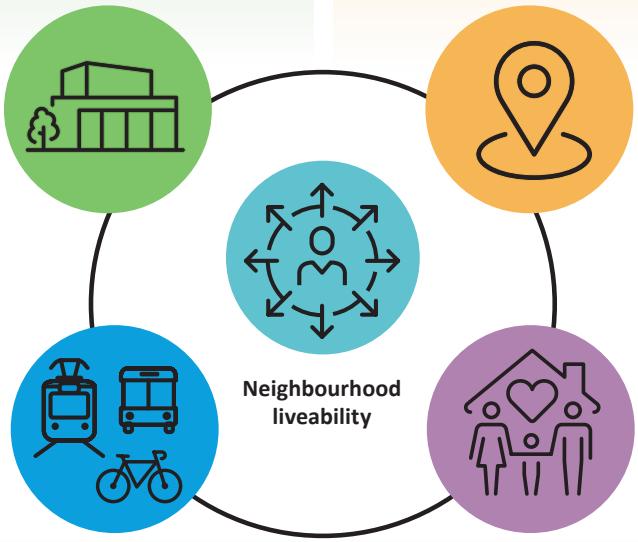
Our neighbourhoods comprise a range of elements that contribute to their liveability. This Strategy covers four key focus areas related to neighbourhood liveability.

Public space and infrastructure[1]

Public spaces and infrastructure are the fabric of local neighbourhoods that support local living. They contribute to the identity of a neighbourhood and can have a significant impact on liveability, social cohesiveness, sense of connection to place and community health and wellbeing. Having well-designed, safe public spaces and infrastructure close to home means people have the places and spaces they need to live, work and play.

Activity centres

Activity centres serve as a hub for local jobs and shopping needs, local health and civic and professional services, and often as both the economic and social core of a neighbourhood. A thriving local centre is one that is well-designed, accessible, comfortable and a destination of choice for living, working and recreation. Communities should be supported by a variety of activity centres that provide access to a range of day-to-day services.



Integrated transport[2]

The ability for people to get where they need to go by a range of well-connected transport options is key to liveability, sustainability, health and wellbeing. Being able to choose the best mode of transport – car, public transport, walking or cycling – for each trip can save time and money, and support a sense of community and connection if people are able to reduce car use.

Housing

Access to secure, accessible, and affordable housing is a fundamental building block in people's health and wellbeing. Planning for a diversity of housing options is important to support the needs of community members of all abilities and at all life stages. Higher housing density in the right locations also makes local services and infrastructure viable and means neighbourhoods are more walkable.

[1] *Public space is any area that is freely accessible to the public, including parks, streets and communal open spaces. Infrastructure includes facilities* and transport networks needed for the functioning of a community, for example local roads, community centres and sports facilities.

[2] *Integrated transport is the combining of different modes of transport to maximise ease and efficiency for the user in terms of time, cost, comfort, safety, accessibility and convenience.*

Public space and infrastructure

'We're lucky to have the Plenty Gorge Parklands – people travel long distances to go walking there.'

- Community quote, focus group consultation, June 2023

Why is planning for and maintaining public space and infrastructure important?

- Our population is growing rapidly, placing increased demand on the delivery of public space and infrastructure to support people in their day-to-day needs
- The open space network enables our community to enjoy both formal and informal recreation activities, essential to their health and wellbeing
- Canopy trees and green links improve the comfort and amenity of our public spaces and promote walking and cycling
- Maintaining our public spaces and infrastructure is important to our community's sense of pride in their neighbourhood and enjoyment of places that are important to them
- Planning for public space and infrastructure across our established areas, growth areas and rural areas presents different challenges and needs to be balanced to ensure everyone has the ability to access the things they need
- Our community's diverse needs will change as the demographic and age profile changes over time, so we need to plan to be flexible and adaptable
- Community facilities and infrastructure were one of the highest priorities for respondents to the 2021 Household Survey.

Some facts

Within the municipality our community has access to nearly 5,500 hectares of public open space, including parks, conservation areas, streetscapes, and road verges comprising:

More than 600 open spaces
totalling more than 1,200 hectares

Four major community parks

Two water play facilities

Over 240 playgrounds

Over 40 public exercise and fitness parks

10 public skate and BMX facilities

10 off-leash dog parks

Council runs:

More than 50 sport and leisure precincts

20 maternal and child health centres and 42 kindergartens

Six library services

29 community facilities

What have we done so far?

- A Community Infrastructure Plan will guide ongoing investment in and delivery of community infrastructure for the City of Whittlesea for the next 10 years
- Completed planning for the **Quarry Hills Regional Parkland**, which will expand to create 1,088 hectares of green open space for communities in and around Mernda, Wollert, Epping and South Morang
- Completed a number of comprehensive master plans, including **Whittlesea Park** (Whittlesea Township), **Whittlesea Public Gardens** (Lalor), N**orris Bank Reserve** (Bundoora), and **Redleap Recreation Reserve** (Mill Park) to guide the delivery of major park upgrades at these locations
- Opened the **Mernda Social Support Centre**, which provides older residents and their carers with vital support services. Priority access to services will be given to certain priority groups within our community
- Established the **Mernda Town Centre community library**, which will provide residents with easy access to programs and resources until a permanent library is built in the town centre precinct in the future
- Planned for a new **Kirrip Community Centre library hub**, located in the foyer of the De Rossi Boulevard facility in Wollert East, which will provide the fast-growing population with new educational and social development opportunities
- Completed a number of projects with the support of, or funding partnership with, State Government, including:
  - Upgrade to Whittlesesa Public Gardens play space and public amenities, including a new learn-to-ride area and picnic shelters
  - Upgrade to Norris Bank Reserve play space and public amenities including upgraded picnic facilities, water play space, and a beginner's skate/scooter loop
  - Upgrade of Mill Park Reserve play space to an all abilities play space with water play and Changing Places facility.

Our priorities for action

Timely infrastructure delivery

Facilitate timely and coordinated delivery of public space and infrastructure to ensure our communities are not isolated from essential infrastructure and services.

Continue to advocate to state government and relevant authorities to ensure timely delivery of essential infrastructure.

Integrated open space planning and delivery

A refreshed Open Space Plan for the municipality will ensure our community enjoys a high-quality open space network. The plan will address existing open spaces and the public open spaces vested in Council as a requirement of development. This will include a framework for how we engage with Traditional Owners in the development and management of our open spaces in the future.

Reserve master planning and delivery

Regional park plans and reserve master plans are developed and used to inform the delivery of capital works, community infrastructure, and sporting infrastructure in our open spaces.

Open Space Activation

We will ensure that the community is aware of the range of open spaces, by facilitation activation programs and events.

Delivery of Community Infrastructure

Delivery community infrastructure in line with community need. This includes the delivery of the Aboriginal Gathering Place in the Quarry Hills Regional Parkland in South Morang, which will create a welcoming, inclusive and culturally safe space for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Delivery of active recreation infrastructure

Deliver indoor and outdoor active space infrastructure in line with community need. This includes the Regional Aquatic and Sports Centre, to be located on Plenty Road at Mernda that will provide regional-level indoor and outdoor sports, leisure, and aquatic facilities.

Activity centres

'Aurora town centre is a great shopping strip, that is also accessible. There's also the community centre and my favourite coffee shop there.'

- Community quote, focus group consultation, June 2023

Why are activity centres important?

- Activity centres serve as a hub for local shopping needs, local health and civic and professional services, and often as both the economic and social core of a neighbourhood
- Well-designed and vibrant activity centres make it easier for people to live locally, saving time on travel and creating opportunities to connect with others
- Activity centres provide an opportunity for local employment and higher-density living, so that more people have easy access to services and facilities and make public transport, walking and cycling more viable
- Activity centres create opportunities to reflect the local community through their design and the shops and services offered.

Some facts

We have more than 60 activity centres ranging from the state and regional scale Metropolitan Activity Centres (Epping) and Major Activity Centres to large and small neighbourhood activity centres, and convenience stores:

People spend up to 40 per cent more in neighbourhoods where they can easily walk to the local shops

Activity centres provide opportunities for local employment

Activity centres are areas with a high diversity of uses

including retail, professional services, community centres, education and residential, which contributes to their central role in neighbourhoods

What have we done so far?

- Ongoing delivery of the Town Centre Revitalisation Program to improve the functionality, attractiveness and vibrancy of key neighbourhood activity centre streetscapes across the municipality (including Rochdale Square in Lalor and Gorge Road Shops in South Morang)
- Prepared a Neighbourhood Design Manual that aims to improve private development outcomes through clear, concise, visual guidance for Council and the community
- Completed detailed planning for established areas including the Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework, Plenty Valley Town Centre, Whittlesea Township Plan and Epping Structure Plan Refresh to ensure these activity centres are in line with community needs.

Our priorities for action

Stronger place-based planning

Council is committed to a place-based approach for its services and planning. Council will improve its place coordination and precinct scale planning for key areas of change or importance.

Strategic land use planning

Continue planning and implementation of strategic land use plans for activity centres, including the Cloverton Metropolitan Activity Centre, Wollert major town centre, Plenty Valley, Epping Central and Mernda Town Centre.

Connecting people to activity centres

Council will provide stronger guidance, requirements and policy related to the planning of activity centres and their connecting street and walking networks, as well as traffic planning that prioritises walking and cycling.

Plan for 20-minute neighbourhoods

Plan for a distribution of activity centres, including neighbourhood, local, major and metropolitan activity centres, that enable people to access services and facilities within a short trip from home.

Integrated transport

'We need better-connected path networks so that we can get places more directly.'

- Community quote, focus group consultation, June 2023

Why is an integrated transport network important?

- We know our residents spend a lot of time travelling to work, with a large proportion of our residents traveling outside the municipality for work
- Our rapidly growing population means that infrastructure and service delivery struggle to keep pace with the change in our growth areas
- Gaps in our transport networks make getting around, particularly by walking, cycling, and public transport, difficult
- Climate change and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are influencing travel behaviours, with people changing how and when they travel, particularly for work.

Some facts

Our community has told us a lot about their travel choices and preferences over the past few years:

Nearly 30 per cent of Whittlesea residents spend more than an hour a day travelling to and from work
According to the 2021 Household Survey

7.5 per cent of the population are spending more than two hours commuting each day
According to the 2021 Household Survey

More than 62 per cent of people use a car as a primary mode of travel
According to Census 2022

Less than 15 per cent of our community walk daily or cycle weekly
From the 2021 Household Survey

Nearly 50 per cent of people reported using public transport less often compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic
From the Public Transport Survey

Council maintains over 1,400 kilometres of local roads

What have we done so far?

- Delivered a refresh of the **Walking and Cycling Plan 2022**
- Contributed to the development of a new **Northern Trails Strategy 2022** as part of a consortium of councils to guide the development and advocate for the expansion of the trails network
- Successfully **Advocated to State Government** for improvements to the development and expansion of road, rail, bus and tram infrastructure and services including the Mernda Rail extension, Plenty Road, Yan Yean Road, Bridge Inn Road, Epping Road and Childs Road upgrades.
- Developed a **Northern Region Transport Strategy** as part of the Northern Councils Alliance to advocate for a collaborative list of transport priorities for the northern metropolitan region. This includes an **Electric Vehicle Transition Plan** to help our communities transition to lower carbon lifestyles
- Delivered shared path projects including Yan Yean Pipe Track and Hendersons Creek Trail with funding support from the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
- Delivered the Findon Road extension project, completing the link between Epping Road and Plenty Road

Our priorities for action

Integrated transport planning

Council will update and deliver a new Integrated Transport Plan for the municipality to ensure all members of our community are able to meet their daily transport requirements, with a focus on safe, connected and convenient transport options. The plan will set out Council's commitments for transport infrastructure delivery over a ten-year period.

Movement and place planning

Council will develop a Movement and Place framework and Network Review to ensure planning and delivery of our transport networks not only considers how our community get where they need to go, but that our streets are places for people to live, work and enjoy.

Planning partnerships

Partner with universities and advocacy groups to identify actions to reduce private car use in local, daily trips.

Improved wayfinding and information to support accessibility

Council will continue to implement actions that support all people to easily get where they need to go, including through the provision of accessible, high-quality wayfinding signage.

Support for walking and cycling

Council will continue to implement the endorsed Walking and Cycling Plan 2022 and Northern Trails 2022. This will include delivery of identified priority projects including Yan Yean Pipe Track and Edgars Creek Trail, as well as planning and investigative work to support the potential Whittlesea – Mernda Shared Trail and High Street Shared Path.

Council will also continue to address gaps in the footpath and shared user path network within the municipality to support greater participation in local walking and cycling.

Continued advocacy for transport projects

Council will advocate for transport projects including Wollert Rail, better bus services, Outer Metropolitan Ring, Epping Road, Bridge Inn Road, Findon Road duplication, Craigieburn Road, Donnybrook Road and electrification of the rail line to Wallan.

Behaviour change programs

Council will deliver behaviour change programs to increase participation in walking and cycling, improving health, environment and transport outcomes for our community.

Housing

'We need a better mix of high density and low density housing.'

- Community quote, focus group consultation, June 2023

Why are housing choices important?

- We have a rapidly growing and changing population and we need the right mix of housing types to meet people's needs, now and in the future
- As household size declines, increased availability of well-located medium and higher density housing within the established areas will be important
- Urban renewal needs to be better supported and higher density development encouraged in key areas that are well serviced, while our established areas continue to be places where our community wants to live
- There is a growing trend for people wanting to live in townhouses or in apartments in locations that are close to family, friends or shops.

Some facts

Recent information shows that access to secure, accessible, and affordable housing is important to our community, but is not necessarily as available as it should be:

There is an urgent need for 3,606 additional affordable homes in our municipality

30.4 per cent of rental households and 15.3 per cent of households with a mortgage were in housing stress
in 2021

Almost no house sales and only two per cent of rentals were affordable to households on very low incomes
in December 2022

Only five per cent of house sales were affordable to households on low incomes
in December 2022

More than 85 per cent of rentals were affordable to households on low incomes
in December 2022

People rated the importance of access to affordable housing as 8.4 out of 10

What have we done so far?

- Implemented the **Housing Diversity Strategy 2013** to guide housing growth in our established areas
- Facilitated delivery of more than 150 social housing homes through the **New Epping** development – providing safe and secure homes for Victorians on the housing wait list
- Facilitated development of Hope Street Youth and Family Services to accommodate and support 10 young people aged 16 - 25 years and their children who are without a home or at risk of being homeless
- Established a long-term vision for the Whittlesea Township through the **Whittlesea Township Plan** to ensure it retains its unique country feel.

Our priorities for action

Getting housing density right

Council will ensure appropriate densities are achieved around town centres, open spaces and public transport hubs to support economic viability and ensure accessible, walkable, and vibrant neighbourhoods.

Social and affordable housing options

Council will investigate opportunities to increase the supply of social and affordable housing as part of new developments and on Council-owned land.

Improved housing for all

Council will continue to investigate and advocate for opportunities to improve the quality, sustainability, and accessibility of building design.

Making it happen

The Strategy will be reviewed in 2029 to reassess the needs and aspirations for the City of Whittlesea.

A Liveable Neighbourhoods Action Plan will be developed every two years. It will clearly outline the actions Council is committed to delivering and how we will track our performance over time.

The Action Plan will also help to facilitate and strengthen our partnerships and collaborations with key stakeholders.

The first Action Plan will be developed once this strategy is finalised.

Monitoring progress

Council has prepared an evaluation framework to monitor trends and performance of our work to promote liveable neighbourhoods.

The outcome indicators below will help us to track progress towards the outcomes identified in this Strategy:

Council will continue to monitor these indicators and will work with other levels of government as well as partners in the private and non-for-profit sectors and our broader community to influence these indicators for the better.

Key direction 1:
Smart, connected transport network

- Improved connectivity of the road network
- Increased patronage of public transport
- Improved access to public transport within walking distance of home
- Increased use of walking and cycling paths

Key direction 2:
Well-designed neighbourhoods and vibrant town centres

- Improved sense of connection to place
- Increased satisfaction with the appearance and function of public spaces and infrastructure
- Increased length of stay at public spaces and activity centres
- Increased usage of community facilities
- Improved planning and design of infrastructure
- Improved accessibility and walkability of public spaces
- Increased planning and design of public spaces
- Increased recognition, celebration and connection to Aboriginal cultural heritage

Key direction 3:
Housing for diverse needs

- Increased diversity of housing types
- Increased availability of affordable and accessible housing
- Increased provision of higher density housing in appropriate locations
- Increased implementation of best practice building design

Glossary

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander – is used in preference to 'Indigenous', 'First Nations', and 'Koori'.

Aboriginal cultural heritage – refers to the knowledge and lore, practices and people, objects and places that are valued, culturally meaningful and connected to identity and Country.

Accessible housing – housing that is designed or modified to enable independent living for people of all ages and abilities.

Activity centres – areas that provide a focus for services, employment, housing, transport and social interaction. They range in size and intensity of use from smaller neighbourhood centres to major suburban centres and larger metropolitan centres.

Affordable housing – housing that is appropriate for the needs of a range of very low to moderate income households, and priced (whether mortgage repayments or rent) so these households are able to meet their other essential basic living costs.

Built environment – the places in which we live that have been built by people, for example buildings and streets.

Climate change – long-term change in global or regional climate patterns attributed largely to the increased levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, particularly carbon dioxide, produced by the use of fossil fuels.

Community facilities – buildings provided by government or non-government organisations for accommodating a range of community support services, programs and activities. This includes facilities for education and learning; early years health and community services; community arts and culture; sport, recreation and leisure; justice; voluntary and faith and emergency services. For example: kindergarten and libraries.

Green Wedge – non-urban land that is described in a metropolitan fringe planning scheme as being outside an urban growth boundary.

Green Wedge Management Plan – a strategy outlining the vision, objectives and actions for the sustainable management and development of Green Wedge areas.

Growth area – areas on the fringe of metropolitan Melbourne designated for transition from rural to urban uses.

High density housing – residential development that comprises housing with shared entrances, open space and other amenities and typically includes flats and apartments.

Housing density – the number of dwellings in an urban area divided by the area of the residential land they occupy, expressed as dwellings per hectare

Housing stress – typically described as lower-income households that spend more than 30 per cent of gross income on housing costs.

Infrastructure – facilities and transport networks (e.g. buildings, roads, and utilities) needed for the functioning of a community. Infrastructure can be provided by the private sector (local roads, childcare, shopping centres), or by Government (kindergartens, schools, railways).

Integrated transport – the combining of different modes of transport to maximise ease and efficiency for the user in terms of time, cost, comfort, safety, accessibility and convenience.

Local town centre – town centres that are an important community focal point and have a mix of uses to meet local needs. Accessible to a viable user population by walking, cycling and by local bus services and public transport links to one or more principal or major town centres. This should be of sufficient size to accommodate a supermarket.

Major activity centres – suburban centres that provide access to a wide range of goods and services. They have different attributes and provide different functions, with some serving larger subregional catchments. Plan Melbourne identifies 121 major activity centres, including South Morang (Plenty Valley), Mernda and Wollert in the City of Whittlesea.

Medium density housing – residential development that comprises two or more dwellings per lot, that generally have separate ground level entrances and private open space, typically including units, townhouses, and terraces.

Metropolitan activity centres – higher-order centres with diverse employment options, services and housing stock, supported by good transport connections. Epping is an existing metropolitan activity centre under Plan Melbourne and Lockerbie is a planned future centre to be located adjacent to the City of Whittlesea.

Neighbourhood – sub-section of an urban area in which people spend most of their time. This is typically the area where people can meet their most common needs e.g. education, grocery shopping, and recreation and usually not interrupted by barriers such as major roads or railway lines.

Open space – land that provides outdoor recreation, leisure and/or environmental benefits and/or visual amenity. Types of open space include local parks, regional parks, conservation reserves, waterways, and easements.

Public space – all areas freely accessible to the public, including open space, plazas, streets and laneways.

Public transport – forms of mass transport that are available to the public. In metropolitan Melbourne these include buses, trams and trains.

Sense of connection to place – Peoples' perception and experience of a place. Indicates how connected people feel to a place.

Social housing – non-profit housing owned and managed for the primary purpose of meeting social objectives such as affordable rents, responsible management, security of tenure and good location in relation to employment services. The term encompasses public housing and includes housing owned or managed by housing associations and community housing.

Streetscapes – the elements of a street that combine to form a street's character and amenity, including the road, adjoining buildings, paths, street furniture, lighting, and vegetation.

Universal design – the design of buildings, products or environments to make them accessible to people, regardless of age, disability or other factors.

Walkability – the extent to which the built environment supports walking for transport and for recreation, where the walking environment is safe, connected, accessible and pleasant.

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[i] Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, *Identifying and valuing the economic benefits of 20-minute neighbourhoods: Higher density mixed use and walkability dimensions*, October 2019

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Phone: 9217 2170
National Relay Service: 133 677
(ask for 9217 2170)

For help with this strategy in your preferred language contact:

Free telephone interpreter service
131 450

City of Whittlesea

Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan 2024-2033

City of Whittlesea

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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Executive summary

In 2040 the City of Whittlesea is a place for all. Our facilities and spaces are welcoming, inclusive and safe. Our community infrastructure provides local opportunities to create social connections and interactions and access to services and activities that support our health, wellbeing and lifelong learning.

***The Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan* has been developed to guide Council's ongoing investment in community infrastructure, defined as the buildings and spaces Council has a responsibility for that support the delivery of community services, programs, organised activities, sport and recreation. Taking a long-term outlook, the Plan uses evidence-based analysis and prioritisation, with a focus on equitable and timely community infrastructure provision, supporting our long-term community vision, Whittlesea 2040: *A place for all*.**

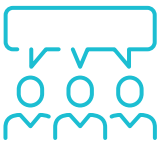
In developing the *Community Infrastructure Plan* a planning methodology and prioritisation approach was established to guide Council's community infrastructure investment.

- Decision-making is based on robust evidence, with a strong focus on community engagement and service-based reviews that prioritise the delivery of community spaces and places according to local community need
- Community infrastructure principles set out the underlying philosophy that guides the prioritisation, planning, design, operation and activation of community infrastructure
- Place-based planning ensures the distinct needs and aspirations of local areas can be considered holistically.

Recognising the substantial investment required to accommodate the needs of a growing and changing population, Council's role in providing community infrastructure is focused on maximising the capability, capacity and utilisation of existing community infrastructure. Where a substantial renovation or rebuild is required, or it is necessary to build new community infrastructure, Council will work in partnership with community service providers, other local councils, state and federal government and other relevant stakeholders to deliver and operate community infrastructure and maximise utilisation.

A key desired result of the *Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan* is balancing the need for a long-term understanding of the community infrastructure priorities to address current and future community needs and aspirations, while providing the flexibility to respond to changing circumstances. Consequently, the Plan outlines strategic and capital delivery actions expected to commence in the next 10 years, subject to review as part of the annual budget process taking into consideration: ongoing investigation of the condition and capacity of our assets, evolving service requirements, changing community needs and state and federal government policy changes influencing funding for, and provision of, services and infrastructure.

How we engaged



Whittlesea 2040 community consultation

More than 4,000 people participated

through submissions, workshops and forums online, paper-based and in-person activities.

Community Plan 2021–25

Let's Talk: Shaping the Community Plan 2021–25 consultation program that included community surveys, online and face-to-face events, pop-up stalls and targeted focus groups.

Infrastructure and service needs community consultation 2023

About 400 people

representing community members, local business and community organisations participated in workshops, focus groups, in-depth telephone interviews and surveys.

2021 Household Survey

1,545 people completed the household survey

including questions about participation in sport and recreation, leisure arts and cultural activities, and access to services and facilities.

Community focus groups 2023

Shaped the key directions for Council's goals; Connected Community and Liveable Neighbourhoods, as well as dedicated sessions for the *Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan*.

Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan staff consultation 2023

Council stakeholder meetings and workshops identified potential projects and refined priorities.

"We desperately need a sports and aquatic centre with a swimming pool… and a good big gym!"

"Open community gardens in high-density areas."

How we plan

An integrated and people-focused approach

The *Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan* is one of seven strategies that outlines Council's commitments, the outcomes we strive for and the actions we will deliver for our community.

The seven strategies are known as Council's Integrated Planning Framework. Each strategy expands on our long-term 20-year community vision, Whittlesea 2040: *A place for all*, and our *Community Plan 2021–2025*, to provide our community with more information about Council's priorities and our overall strategic direction.

Achievement of the outcomes and commitments outlined in the *Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan* rely on Council's collaboration with our community, community service providers, other levels of government, special interest groups and other relevant stakeholders. In referring to "our approach", Council acknowledges the need to work closely with these partners to achieve the best outcomes for our community.

Equity at the heart of 2040

Equity and inclusion sit at the heart of our Whittlesea 2040 vision of a place for all. Actions arising from this Plan will consider the experiences and needs of Aboriginal people, people within the LGBTIQ community and those of different genders, abilities, ages and cultural, socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds,

Council is legislated to consider the differing needs of people of all genders and promote gender equality in the way we plan and build our infrastructure in the municipality and has a responsibility to remove barriers for people with disability in order that all community members can participate in public life.

Capital projects and strategic actions arising from the *Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan* will include specific consideration of gender equality.

Connected community

- Provide friendly and welcoming spaces and places
- Facilitate increased physical activity
- Provide access to health and support services
- Support community groups to meet and flourish
- Provide spaces which can adapt to offer relief and recovery in case of emergency events

Liveable neighbourhoods

- Ensure community infrastructure is accessible by well-connected public transport, walking and cycling paths and trails
- Improve access to attractive public spaces and quality local facilities, parks and amenities
- Provide infrastructure that can adapt to changing community needs

Reconciliation

- Deliver an Aboriginal Gathering Place that supports self-determination, inclusion and participation
- Built spaces for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Strong Local Economy

- Support education, training pathways and lifelong learning through the delivery of suitable facilities
- Support libraries as spaces to grow and develop

High performing organisation

- Take a place-based approach to planning, development and delivery of community infrastructure
- Facilitate partnerships and collaboration to address community infrastructure needs
- Help balance community needs with available resources

Sustainable environment

- Provide zero greenhouse emissions and climate resilient community infrastructure

Place-based planning

***The Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan* takes a place-based approach that is responsive to the distinct needs and aspirations of local communities.**

The City of Whittlesea has made significant progress in achieving positive outcomes by placing a strong emphasis on local communities. Our approach involves understanding and addressing the specific aspirations and needs of each community within our municipality, with the goal of directly addressing these when delivering initiatives and creating a place for all.

Our key priorities are to recognise and appreciate the distinct characteristics across our municipality; embrace and celebrate the rich diversity; work in partnership and collaboration with various stakeholders, including residents, community groups and organisations to coordinate our services, programs, and infrastructure planning. Adopting a localised approach allows Council to facilitate equal opportunities for community members to participate and engage within their local areas, fostering strong social connections and building resilience within our communities.

Examples of recent City of Whittlesea placed-based initiatives include:

- The Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework which responds to the distinct needs and aspirations of this established community. The Framework focus on welcoming places and spaces that allow the community to gather and celebrate culture and local identity.
- Love Where you live, campaign offer the opportunity for Council and the community to work together to celebrate the unique strengths of local communities across the municipally
- Local Area Networks E-news, provide an overview of current activities and programs run by various groups and organisations, including Council, in each local area
- Understanding fire risk on the urban fringe areas of Wollert, Mernda, Dorren and Donnybrook
- Kindergartens on School Sites – The Best Start, Best Life reform from the State government has placed immense pressure on kindergarten provision throughout the City of Whittlesea. Utilising a place based approach to respond to the pressures, Council has partnered with the Department of Education in their planning and delivery of kindergartens on school sites. This has enabled the delivery of additional kindergarten facilities in Lalor, Wollert, Donnybrook and Epping.
- Olivine Place – Café and community space. In response to the enormous challenges that new communities on the urban fringe face, Council partnered with land developer Mirvac to deliver Olivine Place. A community café, with multipurpose spaces that are currently utilised by playgroups, Maternal and Child Health and Adult Education program delivery. This pilot project of the Growth Area Social Planning tool enabled early activation and access to essential services for the Donnybrook community.

8 / City of Whittlesea

Providing community infrastructure for a diverse and growing community

The City of Whittlesea is the fifth most populous local government area in Victoria and the fifth fastest growing in the last 10 years.

By 2041 the population is estimated to grow by more than 55.6 per cent from 231,808 in 2021 to 360,691 people, which is about 6,444 new residents per year.[1]

Like other municipalities experiencing rapid population growth, having the resources available to deliver the services, spaces and places to service community needs is challenging, as is finding the balance between addressing significant increased demand for community infrastructure in new suburbs with expansion and renewal of existing facilities to accommodate growth in established areas.

Infrastructure implications of population growth

Between 2021 and 2041 an additional

9,998 children aged 4 and under
will require access to services including **Maternal and Child Health, childhood immunisation and early childhood education and care.[2]**

More than 70 additional kindergarten rooms
will be needed to meet demand for **3- and 4-year-old kindergarten**.[3]

The number of young people aged between 12 and 24 years will increase by more than 44 per cent,
significantly increasing demand for **library services, sport and leisure facilities** and welcoming spaces to collaborate, study and socialise.[4]

Residents aged 50 years and over are forecast to increase by 29 per cent, with the 70+ population anticipated to grow by more than 136 per cent.[5]

This will create substantial increases in demand for **health and wellbeing services and social activity opportunities**, including informal recreation especially in more established areas such as Thomastown, Lalor, Mill Park and Epping.

There is significant cultural and linguistic diversity (CALD) in the City of Whittlesea, with **more than half of the population speaking a language other than English at home, and 37.6 per cent of the population born overseas.[6]**

The CALD profile of each suburb within the City of Whittlesea is uniquely diverse, strengthening the need for tailored delivery of services and infrastructure that will continue to play a significant role in creating social connections and **facilitating a welcoming environment for new migrant residents**.

Residents identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doubled between 2011 and 2021, with more than half of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25 years or under.[7]

Creating welcoming, inclusive and culturally safe spaces where all Aboriginal people have a sense of belonging and can strengthen culture is a priority for Council.

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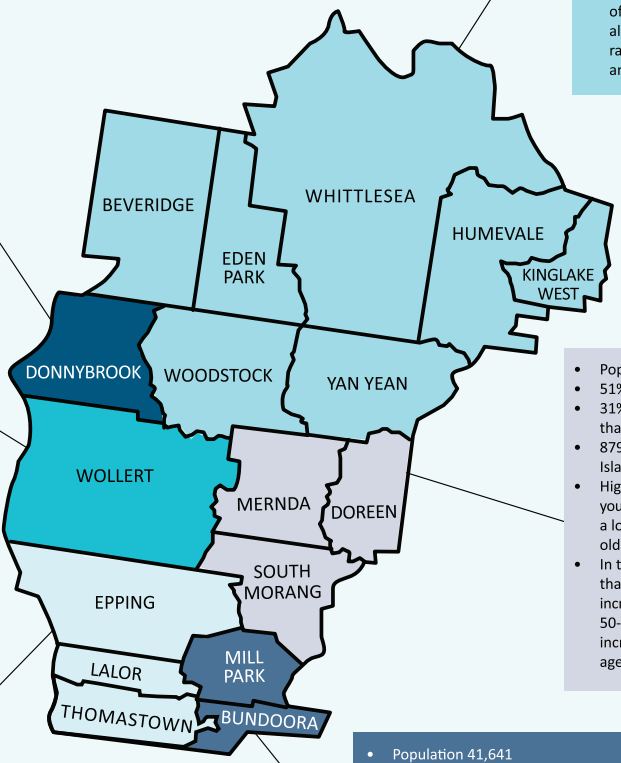
Current and projected population (2023 & 2040)

- Population 9,742
- 51% Female, 49% Male
- 12% speak language other than English
- 137 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people
- Lower proportion of people in the younger age groups (0-17 years) and a higher proportion of people in the older age groups (60+ years)
- It is expected that the number of residents will increase across all age ranges, with the greatest rate of increase occurring amongst those aged 75+ years

- Population 2,100
- 50% Female, 50% Male
- Higher age bracket 26-39-year-olds
- 53% speak language other than English
- 19 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people
- Rapid residential growth with increase across all age ranges expected in the next 20 years



- Population 42,701
- 50% Female,
- 50% Male
- 61% speak language other than English
- 249 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people
- Higher proportion of people in the younger age groups (0-17 years) and a lower proportion of people in the older age groups (60+ years).
- In the next 20 years it is expected that the number of residents will increase across all age ranges, with the greatest rate of increase occurring amongst those aged 26-39years
- Rapid residential growth

- Population 75,519
- 51% Female,49% Male
- 31% speak language other than English
- 879 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people
- Higher proportion of people in the younger age groups (0-17 years) and a lower proportion of people in the older age groups (60+ years)
- In the next 20 years it is expected that the number of residents will increase across all age ranges except 50-64, with the greatest rate of increase occurring amongst those aged 75+ years

- Population 57,690
- 50% Female, 50% Male
- Higher age bracket: 26-39 years
- 59% speak language other than English
- Lower proportion of people in the younger age groups (0-17 years) and a higher proportion of people in the older age groups (60+)
- In the next 20 years it is expected that the number of residents will increase across all age ranges, with the greatest rate of increase occurring amongst 18–64 year olds
- 576 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people

- Population 41,641
- 50% Female, 50% Male
- Higher age bracket: 26–39 years, 54–64 years
- 43% speak language other than English
- 379 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people
- Lower proportion of people in the younger age groups (0-17 years) and a higher proportion of people in the older age groups (60+ years)
- In the next 20 years it is expected that the number of residents will increase across all age ranges except 50–64-year-olds, and the greatest rate of increase is forecast to occur amongst those aged 75+ years

Data referenced on this page was sourced from the 2021 Census and Forecast ID.
Population figures are based on current and projected population (2023-2040).

City of Whittlesea
Laurimar
Community Activity Centre
110 Hazel Glen Drive, Doreen

Benefits of community infrastructure

Development of the *Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan* starts with listening to what the community has told us about the importance of community infrastructure and its timely provision.

What is community infrastructure?

For the purposes of this Plan, community infrastructure is defined as the buildings and spaces Council has responsibility for that support the delivery of community services, programs, organised activities, sport and recreation. This includes community centres, halls, neighbourhood houses, kindergartens, Maternal and Child Health centres, libraries, performing arts spaces and sports and leisure facilities, including sports grounds, stadiums, courts, pavilions and aquatic and leisure centres.

Out of scope

Parks and playgrounds, public toilets, council offices and transport infrastructure, including roads, car parks and footpaths, are not included in the scope of this document.

Community facilities in the City of Whittlesea...

1. Provide spaces that are **welcoming, accessible, safe and inclusive** for all
2. Help create **social connections and interactions**
3. **Create a sense of place and connect residents** to their neighbourhood
4. Deliver local access to **lifelong learning**
5. **Foster individual and family health and wellbeing** through locally accessible services and activities
6. Provide local access to **early education** services and supports
7. Provide environments that encourage **increased physical activity** for all ages and abilities
8. Provide **adaptable and multi-functional spaces** that enable community groups to thrive
9. Provide facilities that **help build resiliency** and ensure we are **prepared for climate change and hard-to-predict events** such as natural disasters and pandemics.

LIBRARY
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Community infrastructure context in the City of Whittlesea

Council's role in community infrastructure delivery

Investment in the delivery, maintenance and operation of community infrastructure by Council includes more than 140 community facilities and sporting precincts, providing an array of recreation, culture, life-long learning, social and leisure opportunities across the City of Whittlesea. While Council's investment in community infrastructure is substantial, it is not the sole provider of infrastructure.

In line with the *Whittlesea 2040 Strategy,* Council predominantly plays one of three roles in supporting community infrastructure delivery:

Council's focus as a **provider** is to deliver community facilities to address the gaps in community need that are not being met by local business or other providers. As part of this role, Council has the responsibility to deliver community infrastructure identified in precinct structure plans prepared to guide the development of new growth areas. This community infrastructure is partly funded using developer contributions levied from these areas.

Facilitating partnerships to deliver new infrastructure and shared utilisation of facilities such as community access to school gyms is critical, particularly in growth corridors experiencing rapid population expansion.

Advocacy is also crucial. Additional funding from federal and state governments is needed to enable timely delivery of regional community infrastructure and for the expansion of health and wellbeing services and supports. The *Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan* will help guide Council's community infrastructure advocacy priorities.

Community infrastructure quick facts

The Spring Street Hall in Thomastown is the oldest community centre in our municipality, built in **1924**

Our 3 aquatic centres had more than **900,000 visits in the last 12 months**

Council took more than **6,500 bookings** in the **first six months of 2022** and our **community centres** are used for around **62,870 hours per year**

Council continues to make significant capital investments in community infrastructure. **In the last 10 years** Council has been involved in the delivery of **9 new kindergartens, 2 kindergarten room extensions on existing facilities, 9 new community centres, 1 new council services hub, 5 new sporting precincts** and **new sporting infrastructure on a further 6 recreation reserves**.

Highlights from 2023 include:

- The Mernda Social Support Centre located next to the Mernda Village Community Centre is providing day respite and social support services for older residents living in the municipality's rapidly growing northern suburbs.
- Three new kindergartens on school sites in Epping, Lalor and Wollert
- The Whittlesea Service Hub is enabling residents in the north to connect with Council closer to home.

Shifting practice in design, activation and delivery

In the past, community facilities were mostly built to deliver a single service. This is evident in the established southern parts of the municipality, including Lalor and Thomastown, where there are many stand-alone community facilities including kindergartens, Maternal and Child Health centres, libraries and community halls.

In recent years, the trend has moved to delivering larger facilities that can accommodate a range of services. This approach has many benefits. It is cost effective, maximises efficient land use and provides the flexibility to adapt to changing community needs over time. Additionally, it enables community members to travel to a single destination to access multiple services. When service model planning and facility design occur at the same time, this can support and encourage seamless service delivery and service integration. This approach is important for improving health and wellbeing outcomes, with increasing recognition that strengthening links between service providers can better address the complex needs and issues faced by many community members.

Traditional planning for community infrastructure has relied on benchmarking – a standard to guide the level, scale and quantity of diverse types of community infrastructure for a given population expressed as a ratio. For example, one multipurpose room per 1,400 people. Disregarding the challenge in finding agreed benchmarks for service provision, this approach can be helpful in setting aside sufficient land for community infrastructure, such as open spaces, community centres and schools when planning for new precincts and suburbs. It does not, however, account for the distinct characteristics of the local community, nor the Victorian rate cap that continues to have a significant ongoing impact on Council's ability to keep pace with the service delivery and infrastructure requirements of our growing community.

Given the resourcing challenges faced by Councils, the recognition of the benefits of seamless service delivery and service integration, and the differing needs and characteristics of our local communities, Council has undertaken a service-led approach to infrastructure planning.

How we make decisions about community infrastructure

Decision-making in relation to the prioritisation, investment, design and delivery of community infrastructure is based on robust evidence, with a strong focus on community engagement and service-based reviews that prioritise the delivery of community spaces and places according to local community need.

The consistent application of guiding principles supports the identification of infrastructure priorities and informs the design and location of community infrastructure and how we operate and activate community facilities.

Place-based planning ensures the distinct needs and aspirations of local areas can be considered holistically, taking into account opportunities to optimise utilisation of existing community infrastructure.

The community infrastructure planning process is developed and implemented in a way that allows for responsive planning over time and includes regular review to respond to changing circumstances.

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Community infrastructure principles

The following community infrastructure principles set out the underlying philosophy that guides the prioritisation, planning, design, operation and activation of community infrastructure.

The community infrastructure principles have been developed considering community and stakeholder feedback, and our integrated people-focused, social, environmental and economic planning approach.

Service led

- Community infrastructure planning is service led – informed by community needs and our responding service delivery model.

Local responses

- Community infrastructure provision considers the distinct characteristics of the local community and involves community in the design and development process
- Temporary spaces such as pop-ups provide short-term solutions to address gaps in infrastructure provision, to test diverse types of space and uses and to activate town and neighbourhood centres in emerging communities.

Sustainable

- Reducing Council's carbon footprint through designing and building facilities to be resource efficient, easy to maintain and long-lasting.

Optimised investment

- Seeking opportunities for optimised, integrated and changing use of existing community facilities, as well as investing in new infrastructure.

Collaboration and partnership driven

- Designing and resourcing hubs to encourage collaboration and service integration
- Council, partner and community-driven activation of community facilities
- A partnership approach to funding and/or delivery of community infrastructure.

Flexible and multipurpose

- Creating multipurpose community hubs that provide complementary services, recreation, leisure and cultural experiences on a single site or in close proximity
- Integration between indoor and outdoor spaces to create operational synergies and support the activation of open spaces
- Space flexibility and adaptability aiding increased utilisation and easier adaption as community needs change and evolve.

Welcoming, safe, inclusive and accessible

- A focus on equity, inclusion, cultural safety and accessibility in how spaces are designed and integrate into local neighbourhoods so they are places where all community members can connect and participate
- Locating community infrastructure to optimise community access, including proximity to other services and amenities within town or neighbourhood activity centres close to where people live, and easily reached by public transport and active travel such as walking or bike riding
- Reducing barriers to access public buildings and spaces for people with a disability.

The community infrastructure planning process

Step 1: Community need

This step identifies the community facilities and spaces required to deliver services and activities to address current and future community needs and expectations.

Service teams complete a service and infrastructure plan.

1.1 Service Model

The service delivery model is determined taking into account:

- Community needs and aspirations
- Utilisation and participation data
- Desired provision by local area
- Barriers to participation and access
- Population growth and trends
- Local, state and federal policy

1.2 Supply and demand analysis

The shortfall/surplus of facilities is reviewed taking into account already planned for community infrastructure delivery and known opportunities for shared provision or collaboration. Capacity of existing facilities to meet current and future demand for programs, activities and services also reviewed.

1.3 Infrastructure priorities

Community infrastructure requirements by service are identified for the short, medium and longer term.

Step 2: Place-based planning

A place-based lens is applied to identify potential community infrastructure projects to address localised community needs.

Consideration is given to the existing community infrastructure available in the local area to determine if service needs can be met in new ways.

Optimisation: Opportunities are explored to optimise operation and management of existing facilities to accommodate additional demand for community services and activities.

Upgrade and refurbishment: Consideration is given to current building condition, capacity and capability to determine if facility enhancements such as building upgrades or expansions to increase utilisation or meet legislated – or desired – service standards are feasible.

Major building works: When an existing facility has reached end of life or is no longer fit for purpose to meet service demands or community expectations, the feasibility of a substantial renovation or rebuild on-site is considered.

A partnership approach: Collaboration opportunities to meet local community service and infrastructure needs are explored.

New build: In primarily growth areas that have no infrastructure, new community facilities are planned for and delivered, where possible in partnership with local providers or other government agencies.

Step 3: Project prioritisation

Potential community infrastructure projects are ranked using prioritisation criteria aligned with Council's community infrastructure principles.

The below criteria is applied to inform which projects should be prioritised and to ensure limited resources are invested to derive the greatest community benefit.

Community impact: The measurable positive impact to the community the infrastructure and associated services and activities will provide.

Place equity: If the project enhances equity of service and infrastructure provision for the local community or for the municipality.

Accessibility: The location of the facility in relation to the people, services and programs it needs to accommodate. For example, easily accessible by public transport, or located close to where people who will use the service live.

Integration: The degree to which the project supports service integration, co-location or a local network of community infrastructure.

Financial viability: The potential to access funding, land, works-in-kind or other resources to contribute to the project planning and delivery, including developer contributions.

Partnerships: The involvement of one or more partner organisations in the delivery, management or activation.

Project preparedness: Site availability, access and readiness to deliver the project, e.g. road access and power to site.

Risks: The level of risk associated with the project including cost escalations, changing regulations and labour/material availability.

Regular review

Steps 1, 2 and 3 culminate in a final prioritised list of community infrastructure projects that are reviewed annually.

Community infrastructure priorities are reviewed yearly as part of Council's budget process.
In addition, priorities may change taking into account the following:

- Ongoing investigation of the condition, capacity and capability of our assets
- Evolving service requirements
- Changing community needs
- State and Federal government policy changes influencing funding for and provision of services and infrastructure
- Service and infrastructure gaps met by local businesses and community organisations
- Grants and other funding opportunities

McLeans Road Kindergarten

Service planning

The first step in developing the *Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan* involved undertaking detailed planning for future services and infrastructure needs across the many services that the community use in the City of Whittlesea.

Starting with an understanding of the unique social characteristics of a local area and community needs and aspirations, Council then investigated usage patterns including barriers to access, emerging trends, policy changes and best practice service delivery to develop a service delivery model.

This model informed the type and location of spaces and places required for each service. Analysis of the capacity of existing facilities used for that service, as well as planned infrastructure investment, determined the likely shortfall/surplus of facilities available and the resulting infrastructure priorities.

The following is a summary of the community infrastructure and service provision needs and infrastructure priorities by service area. These include strategic actions that will be undertaken in the short term to optimise use of community facilities, seek out partnerships and other forms of investment and increase our understanding of opportunities and barriers to access. These actions will continue to inform our community infrastructure investment.

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Children and family services

Council's role in supporting children and families in the City of Whittlesea is diverse, including delivery of universal and enhanced Maternal and Child Health services; immunisations; facilitating and supporting playgroups; providing training, education and support for parents and educators, operating a kindergarten central application system to allocate kindergarten places and the contract management of kindergarten provision in Council facilities.

Additionally, Council makes substantial investment in the planning, provision and maintenance of infrastructure to support the delivery of early years services.

Key reforms being driven by the Victorian Government will have a significant impact upon the provision of kindergarten and Maternal and Child Health services over the next decade. The increase in kindergarten hours (15 hours for 3-year-old kindergarten by 2029 and 30 hours for 4-year-old kindergarten/pre-prep by 2032), and the subsidising of kindergarten to make it free for all families as part of the *Best Start, Best Life* initiative is placing significant pressure on the sector, both in relation to infrastructure provision and workforce planning. Furthermore, expansion of the Maternal and Child Health Key Age and Stage model from 6.45 hours to 8 hours per child over the next four years, combined with policies targeting improved childhood immunisation rates have heightened pressure on Maternal and Child Health immunisation and universal access provision.

These Victorian Government reforms, combined with rapid population growth, workforce shortages, more children and families presenting to local services with additional and complex needs and increased infrastructure costs, has created multi-faceted pressure within the sector. In response to these pressures Council will continue to roll out infrastructure in partnership with the Department of Education. It will also facilitate access by allied health and family support services to spaces in community infrastructure to encourage those services to have and maintain a presence in communities.

Our priorities for action

- In 2024 Council will develop an options paper and implementation plan to provide strategies and recommendations on future service modelling, delivery and infrastructure to inform Council's response and delivery of the *Best Start, Best Life* kindergarten reform
- Investigate the feasibility of expansion/renewal of single room kindergartens and potential integration with other early years services in established areas, as well as considering the location of future consulting suites for Maternal and Child Health to ensure a joined-up model
- Respond to population growth and the roll out of kindergarten reform and Maternal and Child Health services by providing some capacity in new, planned for community centres in the northern growth areas (balancing demand for early years infrastructure with wider community needs)
- Work in partnership with the Victorian Government to ensure adequate provision of early years facilities to accommodate increased demand for kindergarten, through delivery of new community centres, expansion of existing kindergarten services and delivery on school sites
- Undertake a review of Maternal and Child Health consulting spaces in South Morang, Mernda and Doreen to determine where services should remain and opportunities to provide access to consulting spaces for other service providers.

The number of children aged 4 and under will grow by 57% between 2021 and 2041.[8]

57% ↑

[8] Forecast ID (2023), City of Whittlesea Population and age structure, https://forecast.id.com.au/whittlesea/population-age-structure

GLOBE

Youth services

Council's approach to supporting young people aged 10 to 25 years and their families is to take an early intervention, preventative and strength-based activities approach that responds to locally identified community needs.

This includes a strong focus on collaboration and partnerships to ensure young people and families can access additional support and resources from specialist services when required.

In terms of trends, the City of Whittlesea has one of the highest levels of community mental health contacts per capita, most prevalent in people aged 18 to 24 years. This is heightened in new and emerging communities, which are at a higher risk of health concerns due to a lack of services and facilities, and the absence of strong social connections. This, combined with the multiple negative effects the COVID-19 pandemic had on young people, has increased the pressure on already limited youth support services operating in the City of Whittlesea.

Council is the lead tenant and provides overarching support for the Edge youth facility. Located in the Westfield Plenty Valley shopping centre, the Edge operates as a co-located services space with youth mental health service providers. Functionality of the space is limited as the configuration makes it difficult for programs and activities to occur at the same time clinical mental health services are offered. In addition to the Edge, place-based service delivery occurs in a multitude of spaces across the community according to local need, and where young people already gather including schools, libraries, community centres, parks, leisure centres and shopping centres. Increasingly, event and program delivery are constrained by and often tailored to suit the infrastructure available, and there is a need for youth-focused, multi-use spaces suitable for a variety of activities.

Victoria's Youth Strategy 2022-2027 highlights the importance of providing support to young people and recognises the critical role youth hubs play. A priority in the Strategy is to partner with local government and the community sector to provide local youth hubs, co-designed with young people, in priority areas across the state. The City of Whittlesea has been identified as a priority location and Council is currently partnering with the Victorian Government and other partners to explore opportunities to meet demand for youth focused spaces.

Our priorities for action

- Following completion of the *Youth Service Model and Infrastructure Response*, identify the spaces and infrastructure required to support the needs of young people living, studying or working in the City of Whittlesea
- Continue to partner with the Victorian Government and other stakeholders to explore opportunities to meet demand for youth-focused spaces
- Consider options to create a family services hub that includes access to allied health and parenting support services and a separate but interconnected middle years/youth space to service emerging communities in the north of the municipality.

The City of Whittlesea has one of the highest levels of community mental health contacts per capita, most prevalent in people aged 18-24 years.[9]

[9] Bell,T., Stretton, A., Mendoza, J & Salvador-Carulla, L (2018) EMPHN Integrated Mental Health and AOD Service Atlas (East & North East) Final report. ConNetica, Sunshine Coast Qld.

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Ageing well

Council predominantly supports older adults from 50 years of age who live in the City of Whittlesea in two key focus areas – supporting older adults 65 and over with ageing in place assistance (personal care, meals, domestic assistance) and promoting positive ageing through a combination of place-based and centre-based services.

The Australian Government aged care reforms, as a result of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, have fundamentally changed how support and care are funded and provided for older people. The Victorian Government's Ageing Well in Victoria and research via *'Ageing is everyone's business'* report identified issues of loneliness and isolation in older people. Policy reforms, combined with rapid population growth of people over 50 will significantly increase demand for ageing well services in the next 10 to 20 years.

Council acknowledges that although we are one in the vast array of community, government and commercial organisations that support older members of the community, increased service and facility provision by Council will be crucial in meeting demand. Delivering new and upgraded multipurpose facilities with an 'age-friendly' lens will support activity preferences, demand for health and wellbeing opportunities and desire for more multigenerational activities, encouraging our community to age well. To meet the growing demand for services, Council will consider the delivery of new ageing well hubs in the north and south of the municipality, and potential expansion of services in the central area to continue to partner with other aged care providers and community groups for co-location of complementary health and wellbeing services.

Our priorities for action

- Evaluate the Mernda Social Support Centre model to ascertain learnings and applicability to other Council community centres
- In the long term, investigate the feasibility of delivering wellness hubs designed to support partnership approaches with other aged care providers and community groups for co-location of a range of complementary health and wellbeing services. (Potential sites include the Barry Road Community Centre in Lalor, expansion of the Mernda Social Support Centre and a planned for community centre in the north of the municipality).

72 seniors clubs use our community facilities.

Centre Office

Community Activation

Community activation is guided by the key directions within the Connected Communities goal for Council's *Whittlesea 2040* vision *A Place for All*.

Council works with people in their local community to develop capacity that fosters community wellbeing through supporting community-led initiatives; linking residents into activities and services; and working with community groups and partner organisations to deliver a program of events and activities. Delivery occurs both in council-owned facilities and local parks, as well as non-Council-owned places such as faith-based group facilities, scout halls and schools.

Council also undertakes the management and operation of Council-owned community centres, halls and community pavilions. These are available for hire by local groups with some facilities also available for social functions. In addition to operating one local neighbourhood house, Council supports other neighbourhood house providers, the majority of whom operate from Council-owned facilities.

Local governments are identified as the lead agency for relief and recovery at the local level in the Victorian Government *Emergency Management Manual Victoria*, as such selected community centres and halls strategically placed throughout the municipality support evacuation as relief centres.

Similar to all service areas, the demands of population growth, COVID-19 impacts and the high portion of the City of Whittlesea population born overseas continues to influence the future provision of community meeting and activity spaces in the City of Whittlesea. There is changing and growing demand for and use of community facilities as established groups decline, and new groups seek opportunities to connect and run programs and activities. There is also growing demand for programmed activities and increased and diversified low-cost and no-cost programming will continue to support and encourage re-engagement from participants who have not returned after COVID-19 lockdowns, those keen to re-connect and welcome new residents.

Our priorities for action

- Complete a community halls evaluation to better understand the challenges and opportunities for uses in community halls across the eastern suburbs and recommend sites for renewal
- Explore models for activation of Council-owned community facilities
- Review Council's relevant community infrastructure strategies, policies and guidelines to ensure they provide best practice functional understanding of flexible, adaptable space design and service delivery aligned with the community infrastructure principles
- Review and define Council's position and approach to community facilities available for hire including halls, community centres and sporting infrastructure considering access, allocation and fees and charges
- Evaluate the success of the Whittlesea Service Hub and conduct regular needs analysis and benchmarking of our growing community to determine if and where additional council service hubs are required to support our community
- Deliver new multipurpose community centres in the northern growth areas that provide complementary services, recreation, leisure and cultural experiences on a single site, including investigating the scope of selected community centres to deliver neighbourhood house services in partnership with a local service provider
- In consultation with local stakeholders, review and implement community hall, neighbourhood house and community centre renewal, taking into consideration: facility condition and fitness for purpose; compliance; emerging community needs; opportunities for optimisation and expansion, as well as service co-location and integration.

37.6% of the population was born overseas. Providing culturally safe spaces and amenities and activity programming plays an important part in making new residents feel welcome and creating a sense of belonging.[10]

[10] Profile ID (2023), City of Whittlesea, Birthplace, https://profile.id.com.au/whittlesea/birthplace

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Libraries

Local libraries are an important universal service that provide free, safe and accessible places and resources to support community development, lifelong learning and a distinct sense of place.

The purpose of libraries is evolving and they have become much more than a place to borrow books. Libraries provide a range of recreational, educational, social, information and employment-related benefits for community members of all ages, interests and backgrounds. This includes involvement in programs and services, accessing computers and other technology, interacting with staff and undertaking informal recreation.

The City of Whittlesea Library Service is delivered on behalf of Council by Yarra Plenty Regional Library Corporation (YPRL). Under the *Local Government Act 2020*, existing regional library corporations, including YPRL, must be wound up by 2031 and transition to a new corporate entity. Council's review of the model has recommended the City of Whittlesea commit to a shared-service model for library service delivery. This model will support integration with the *City of Whittlesea Community Plan*, broader Council services and operations, as well as ensure adaptation to changing community need.

Provision of library services is not evenly distributed across the municipality. Council will ensure local access to library services through a network of library services. In the short-term this includes expanded access through inclusion of community library hubs in newer community centres and libraries on short-term leases, supplemented by mobile library coverage to test and evaluate temporary solutions to meet the needs of growth communities. In the longer-term it will include renewing ageing library infrastructure to create modern library spaces and planning for additional library services in a co-located way that enables community members to access multiple services in the single location.

Our priorities for action

- Increase access to library services through a network of library provision, including increased mobile library coverage, additional community library hubs, mini-branch libraries and branch libraries

82% ↑

In a 2006 library poll, less than half (47%) of library users believed libraries were a hub for community activities and connections. In 2022 that figure leapt to 82%.[11]

[11] Victorian Public Library Census (2022), Inside our public libraries, https://www.slv.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/Public%20Libraries%20Survey.pdf

BarryPlant

Sport and leisure

Council is responsible for the delivery and maintenance of sport and leisure facilities including sports grounds, stadiums, indoor and outdoor courts, pavilions, golf courses and aquatic and leisure centres.

These facilities create opportunities for the community to be physically active, improve health and wellbeing and connect with others. Council's focus as a provider of sport and leisure infrastructure is to address the gaps in community need that are not being met by local businesses or community organisations, prioritising local competition and training. Infrastructure that supports higher levels of elite performance is usually funded by state and federal governments as they support participants from a wider catchment, beyond the municipality.

Population growth is increasing demand for both formal and informal sport and leisure facilities, while an expanding ageing population will influence the mix of activity preferences. For example, population growth is increasing demand for soccer in the north of the municipality, while the growing older population is creating demand for new age-friendly sports such as walking football.

Other trends influencing sport and leisure include smart technology changing the way people choose to engage in physical activity, in part overcoming barriers to access including time constraints, lack of transport and participation costs. A growing number of women and girls are playing traditionally male-dominated sports, including Australian Rules Football, increasing demand for access to playing fields and changerooms. A new policy enacted by the Victorian Government's - Fair Access Policy Roadmap prioritises the access to, and use of, community sports infrastructure for women and girls with eligibility for infrastructure funding for councils and clubs linked to gender equitable access and use policies.

Council is moving away from delivery of single sports grounds to promote club sustainability and co-location of facilities for formal and informal sports participation and wider community use. Multi-use sports precincts are identified in multiple growth suburbs, whilst infrastructure renewal in the established areas will be focused on fair access for all and optimising utilisation of existing access. Furthering partnerships with schools and retaining open space are also key features in ensuring community sport and leisure needs can continue to be met in the long-term.

Council's Leisure Centres are very well utilised with more than 900,000 visits a year across Mill Park Leisure, Thomastown Recreation and Aquatic Centre and Whittlesea Swim Centre, and a membership base which is more than 10,000 members. The Regional Aquatic and Sports Centre planned for Mernda will address a significant demand for indoor and outdoor courts, aquatic and health and wellbeing facilities to the north of the municipality.

Our priorities for action

- Speaking directly to schools, partner with Sport and Recreation Victoria and the Department of Education to develop a standardised Joint User Agreement policy to benefit schools and communities through the provision of increased access to meeting and activity spaces
- Develop operation and management guidelines to improve community access and experience of using sporting pavilions and facilities outside of traditional sporting times
- Develop an allocation policy to ensure equitable access to sport and leisure facilities for women and girls and provide a welcoming 'place for all'
- Update the Sports Infrastructure Renewal Manual to incorporate fair access principles and pavilion upgrade priority program
- Deliver new local sporting precincts, where possible adjacent to other community facilities, designed for both shared use by sports with similar requirements and the co-location of formal and informal sports participation
- Ongoing review to improve/upgrade/renew ageing sport and leisure infrastructure to ensure facilities remain fit for purpose and to increase capacity where desired and feasible
- Deliver Stages 1 and 2 of the Regional Aquatic and Sports Centre at Mernda – a regional level indoor and outdoor sports, leisure and aquatic facility. Continue to seek co-investment for Stage 3.

In 2022 47 clubs with a total of 11,240 players used our sport and leisure infrastructure on a regular basis.

Arts and culture

Arts and cultural activities can play a key role in fostering a connected and cohesive community through supporting social cohesion, helping to understand different perspectives and cultures and creating social connections.

Council plays a significant role in delivering, funding, hosting, supporting and promoting arts and culture in the community through the activation of Plenty Ranges Arts and Convention Centre (PRACC), an extensive program of festivals and events, arts and engagement programs and public art exhibitions.

The Australian Government National Cultural Policy Revive: *a place for every story, a story for every place* is a five-year plan that commenced in 2023 to renew and revive Australia's arts, entertainment and cultural sector. Similar to Revive, the Victorian Government policy *Creative State 2025* outlines a four-year plan to restore economic prosperity and social wellbeing via effective creative industries planning. These policies, the impacts of COVID-19 and the evolving landscape of the arts industry, continues to shape Council's response in supporting the ongoing transformation of the arts industry.

The key asset response identified to support the arts is the transition of PRACC to a new operating model (Creative Industries Hub) to increase precinct vibrancy and drive utilisation across all spaces. Proposed plans include a new gallery space. Additionally, the long-term scope of planned for community centres in the north to host dedicated arts and culture spaces will be explored, considering identified community need, existing provision of infrastructure (such as school theatres and private studios), customisation for local need, and partnership opportunities with state and federal funding bodies and philanthropic organisations to ensure a financially sustainable service delivery model.

Our priorities for action

- Ensure new and renewed libraries and community centres have the flexibility to support place-based arts and cultural programming. For example, public art installations, hosting of events and festivals and walls suitable for displaying visual arts exhibitions
- Implement a new operating model for the Plenty Ranges Arts and Convention Centre to increase utilisation and precinct vibrancy and investigate options to house a gallery within the centre
- In the long-term investigate the feasibility of dedicated arts and cultural spaces in the north of the municipality.

31% of people who participated in some form of arts activity showed higher instances of self-reporting their general health as very good, compared to 23% of those who had not participated.[12]

[12] Metropolis Research, City of Whittlesea Annual Household Survey Report 2021

EPPING COMMUNITY SERVICES HUB
EPPING COMMUNITY SERVICES HUB
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Human services

Council has a role to protect, improve and promote public health and wellbeing within the community.

Some of the ways it does this is by advocating for provision of services and infrastructure and working in partnership with local organisations to facilitate collaborative responses to specific service gaps, unmet demand and emerging issues. Council's commitment to our role is highlighted in the delivery of the Epping Community Services Hub. The hub attracts a diverse range of not-for-profit service providers and service types to the municipality and co-locates them in a Council-owned and managed premises. The operational model of the hub fosters collaboration and strengthens network links between local service providers, with improved outcomes for community. Additional consultation rooms and meeting spaces are also available via some of Council's community centres. For example, Kirrip Community Centre in Wollert offers two for-hire consult rooms for services and allied health professionals.

Engagement with Hub stakeholders and findings of the *City of Whittlesea 2023 Human Service Needs Analysis*, undertaken by services working in the municipality, have identified an increased need for support services relating to: ongoing issues of mental health exacerbated by COVID-19; cost of living pressures; increased family violence; a current lack of culturally safe services and population growth – intensified in new suburbs to the north.

Advocating for additional health and wellbeing services, and an integrated community services hub in the north of the municipality, are key focus areas for the Council in supporting community need for human services over the next 20 years.

Our priorities for action

- Optimise use of existing resources through facilitating access to Council-owned buildings or consult rooms and meeting spaces in Council-owned community centres
- In the long-term investigate the feasibility of delivering a community services hub in the north of the municipality in partnership with local health and wellbeing service providers, to encourage service delivery and collaboration in the north of the municipality
- Advocate to increase provision of community transport to facilitate improved access to health and wellbeing services.

34% of culturally and linguistically diverse residents have difficulty or are not able to access health or social support services.[13]

[13] City of Whittlesea, 2023, Connected Communities Strategy.

Aboriginal services

The City of Whittlesea has the second largest Aboriginal community in metropolitan Melbourne.

Consultation with our local Aboriginal community has identified Aboriginal people living in the City of Whittlesea have limited local access to culturally appropriate services that respond to their immediate and long-term cultural needs. Plans are underway to deliver an Aboriginal Gathering Place in the Quarry Hills Regional Parkland in South Morang. This will be the first of its kind delivered in the City of Whittlesea and follows the success of similar Gathering Places located across Victoria. Co-designed with the Whittlesea Aboriginal Gathering Place Advisory Group, the Gathering Place will support and facilitate a variety of cultural activities and programs that incorporate art, music, language and storytelling that strengthen culture and enhance wellbeing.

Our priorities for action

- Build an Aboriginal Gathering Place in the Quarry Hills Regional Parkland in South Morang.

In 2021, our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population was 2,270 people.[14]

[14] Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 Census, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people QuickStats, https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA27070

Galada
Community Centre

Community infrastructure priorities

Once commmunity facilities and spaces required to meet community needs were determined a place-based lens was applied to identify potential community infrastructure projects.

This approach, the second step in the community infrastructure planning process, ensured collaborative and coordinated planning focusing on distinct local community needs and aspirations.

Consideratation was given to provision at both a regional level – that is, those services and facilities that cater to the broader population, including in other municipalities – as well as a local level.

For the purpose of this plan, six geographical areas were used. These areas were chosen based on local transport patterns and to account for differences between current and future growth and established areas within the municipality.

All place-based projects were then further assessed using a number of prioritisation criteria aligned with the community infrastructure principles. This third step has resulted in a list of prioritised community infrastructure projects.

This section outlines the priority capital project actions Council will focus on delivering over the next 10 years. It includes investment in the delivery of new, upgraded or expanded community infrastructure. It does not include routine maintenance and renewal to ensure our community infrastructure remains compliant and fit for purpose. This is considered in Council's Asset Plan.

- **Short-term actions (2024 – 2028)** are underway or expected to commence in the next five years.
- **Medium- and long-term actions (2029 – 2033)** are expected to commence in the next five to 10 years.

Projects expected to commence later than 10 years have not been included in the *Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan* and will continue to be considered as part of future long-term planning.

The Plan will be reviewed as part of the annual budget process taking into consideration ongoing investigation of the condition and capacity of our assets, evolving service requirements, changing community needs and state and federal government policy changes influencing funding for, and provision of, services and infrastructure.

A list of Council owned and or / operated community infrastructure and proposed projects is provided in Appendix 1.

Regional level community infrastructure

While the *Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan* adopts a localised, place-based approach to planning, some community infrastructure services a broader population. Regional level community facilities are built for and used by people across the municipality and beyond. Examples of regional infrastructure include large performing arts facilities, regional parks and competition level sporting infrastructure that supports elite performance.

Within the City of Whittlesea, the Plenty Ranges Arts and Convention Centre has local audiences for events including school productions and dance recitals, while well-known performers attract audiences from across Victoria. Epping Soccer Stadium is a professional soccer facility based in Epping, which has regularly been used by local, national and international football teams as a training and match venue. In addition to providing for local clubs and school athletics competitions, the Meadowglen International Athletics Stadium offers an international standard athletics facility that hosts district and state competitions.

As regional infrastructure draws a wide catchment, provision of regional level facilities takes into account the planning and delivery of regional infrastructure in neighbouring municipalities. It also requires working closely with other municipalities, and advocating to state and federal government to invest in regional community infrastructure to provide the facilities and services that enhance conditions for economic growth, liveability and sustainability, benefiting our rapidly expanding, diverse population.

Following are the priority regional level capital projects that are underway or expected to commence within the next 10 years.

Regional				
Site	**Action**	**Suburb**	**Short Term***	**Medium – Long Term****
Regional Aquatic and Sports Centre at Mernda	Stage design and delivery of the Regional Aquatic and Sports Centre at Mernda	Mernda	✓	
Aboriginal Gathering Place	Complete design and build an Aboriginal Gathering Place in the Quarry Hills Regional Parkland in South Morang	South Morang	✓	
Plenty Ranges Arts and Convention Centre	Implement a new operating model for the Plenty Ranges Arts and Convention Centre to increase utilisation and precinct vibrancy and investigate options to house a gallery within the centre	South Morang	✓	
Epping Central	Continue to progress planning for the long-term development of Epping Central, designated as a metropolitan activity centre	Epping	✓	
Cloverton (Kalkallo)	Contribute to Cloverton master planning and service provision considerations as a combined initiative between Hume City Council, Mitchell Shire and City of Whittlesea	Cloverton (Hume)		✓

*Has already commenced or is expected to commence in the next five years (2024–2028)
**Is expected to commence in the next five to 10 years (2029–2033)

Donnybrook

High population growth is driving a significant increase in demand for additional community facilities and services

The emerging community of Donnybrook is anticipated to experience population growth of more than 40,000 people between 2023 and 2040. The area has limited access to services, activities and infrastructure, with inadequate provision of major roads and public transport making it difficult for residents to utilise community facilities in neighbouring areas. While a partnership with a local developer has been invaluable in enabling early provision of services, including Maternal and Child Health, pop-up library and gathering space from Olivine Place, as the population has grown, so too has demand. In addition to a shortage of consulting spaces for Maternal and Child Health, meeting spaces are sought after for use by community groups and council program activation.

Considered planning is required to ensure the considerable number of community facilities and sporting precincts identified in Precinct Structure Plans are optimised and have the adaptability to accommodate growing and changing needs for services, programs and activities. This includes finding a balance between significant demand for early years services and meeting the diverse needs of the wider community, including the older population aged 50 and over.

The Eucalyptus Parade kindergarten service, located on a school site, combined with two kindergarten rooms (built as part of the Patterson Drive Community Centre) and a planned 'kinder on school site' to open in 2024 will meet short-term demand for kindergarten services. In the medium- and long-term, substantial additional kindergarten programming will be required to meet increased demand for three- and four-year-old kindergarten resulting from population growth and the Victorian Government *Best Start, Best Life* early years reform. A partnership approach is required to ensure sufficient resources are available to accommodate growing demand for both early years services and sport and leisure activities, and to attract health and wellbeing services to the north.

Following are the priority capital projects that are underway or expected to commence within the next 10 years in Donnybrook.

Donnybrook				
Site	**Action**	**Suburb**	**Short Term***	**Medium – Long Term****
Donnybrook Primary School Kindergarten	Work in partnership with the Victorian Government to deliver a kindergarten on school site	Donnybrook	✓	
Olivine Place	Investigate options for future community service provision – and corresponding infrastructure – from Olivine Place	Donnybrook	✓	
Patterson Drive Community Centre	Complete construction of community centre including kindergarten, MCH consulting rooms, community spaces and community library hub	Donnybrook	✓	
Darebin Creek Community Centre	Investigate preferred service delivery options and design and construction options for a new community centre	Donnybrook	✓	
Family services hub and youth space	Review opportunities to create a family services hub that includes access to allied health and parenting support services and a separate but interconnected middle years/ youth space (site TBC)	Donnybrook	✓	
Shenstone Park Community Centre and Neighbourhood House	Investigate preferred service delivery and design and construction options for a new community centre taking into consideration potential integration of community centre and community pavilion to service adjacent sports reserve	Donnybrook	✓	
Donnybrook Farmhouse Community Centre	Investigate preferred service delivery and design and construction options of a new community centre	Donnybrook		✓
Olivine Sports Reserve	Work in partnership with developer to complete delivery of oval playing fields and community pavilion	Donnybrook	✓	
Shenstone Park Sporting Precinct	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Donnybrook	✓	
Darebin Creek Sports Reserve	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Donnybrook		✓

*Has already commenced or is expected to commence in the next five years (2024–2028)
**Is expected to commence in the next five to 10 years (2029–2033)

Donnybrook

KEY: Existing | Existing (upgrade) | New build

1. **Darebin Creek Community Centre** (service delivery mix TBD)
2. **Darebin Creek Sports Reserve** (sporting infrastructure, pavilion)
3. **Donnybrook Farmhouse Community Centre** (service delivery mix TBD)
4. **Donnybrook Primary School Kindergarten** (Kindergarten)
5. **Eucalyptus Parade Kindergarten** (kindergarten)
6. **Olivine Place** (MCH, library, community spaces)
7. **Olivine Sports Reserve** (ovals, pavilion)
8. **Patterson Drive Community Centre** (MCH, kindergarten, library, community space)
9. **Shenstone Park Community Centre** (service delivery mix TBD)
10. **Shenstone Park Sporting Precinct** (sporting infrastructure, pavilion)
11. **Family Services Hub and Youth Space** (family support, youth services)

Whittlesea township and surrounding rural area

Small and moderately growing population with a large and increasing proportion of people aged 50 years and over

The current population of Whittlesea Township and surrounding rural area is 8,761. While minimal growth is anticipated, the population is ageing, increasing demand for already highly utilised community meeting and activity spaces, as well as accessible health and wellbeing services.

Services and infrastructure for this rural community are predominantly located in the Whittlesea Township. For a small community, the area is well serviced for sport and leisure infrastructure. It has a variety of well-utilised local facilities including sports courts (tennis and basketball/netball), ovals (cricket and football), BMX and skate park facilities, as well as the Whittlesea Swim Centre. Two golf courses, located in the surrounding rural areas of Humevale and Yan Yean service both the local as well as regional population.

The Whittlesea Community Activity Centre is a highly activated hub in the Whittlesea Township including branch library, Maternal and Child Health consulting rooms, early learning centre and meeting and activity spaces. The Whittlesea Community House hosts a diverse program of classes and activities. Both facilities are ageing and at utilisation capacity. Kindergarten provision from the early learning centre located in the Whittlesea Community Activity Centre and nearby Whittlesea Preschool is meeting current demand for early education. In the medium-term, additional kindergarten programming will be required to meet increased demand for three- and four-year-old kindergarten resulting from the Victorian Government *Best Start, Best Life* early years reform.

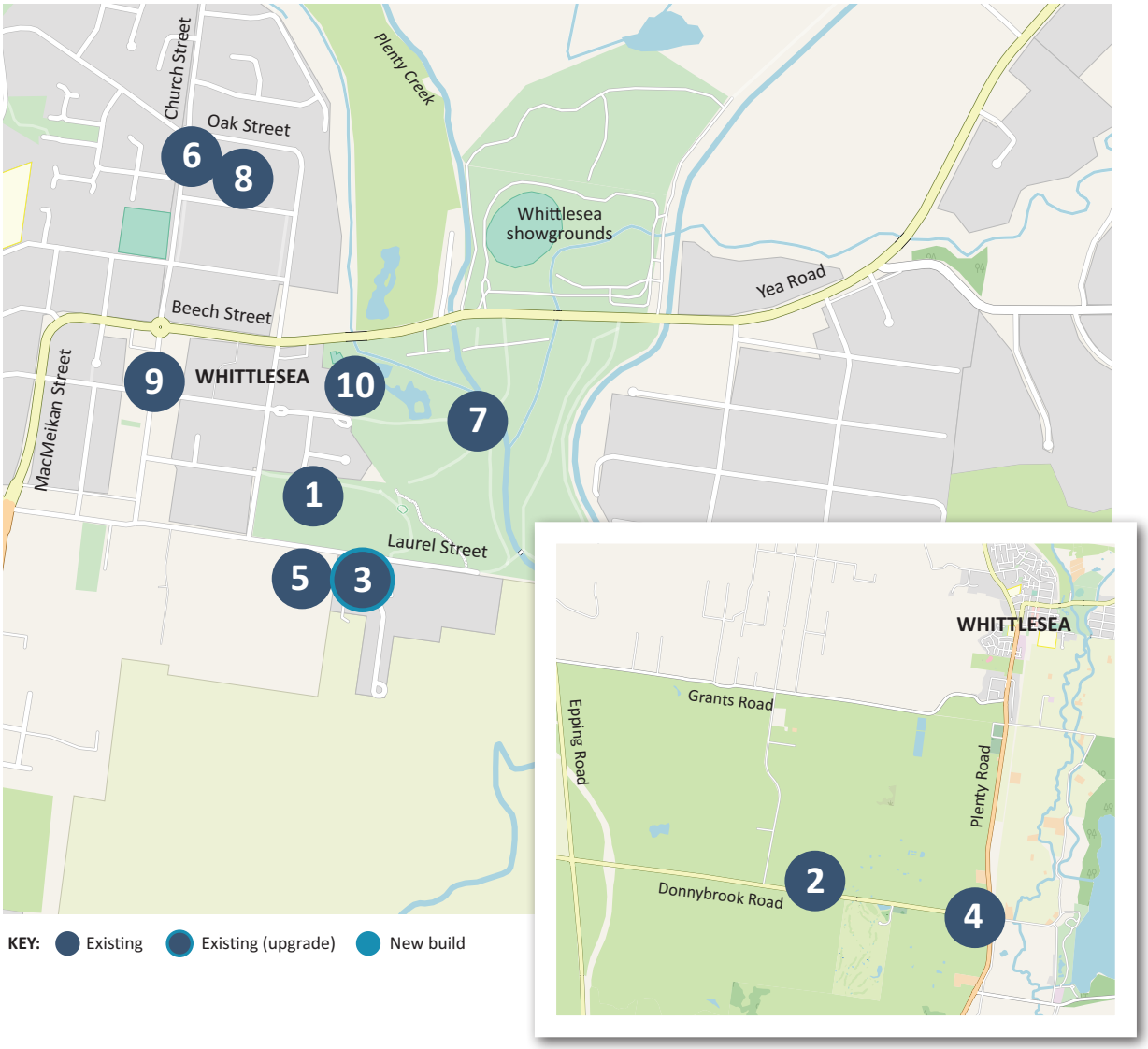
The newly opened Whittlesea Service Hub is responding to local need in enabling residents in the north to connect with Council closer to home, while the preferred location for delivery of courts to meet demand for outdoor netball is currently being investigated.

Following are the priority capital projects that are underway or expected to commence within the next 10 years in the Whittlesea Township.

Whittlesea township and surrounding rural area				
Site	**Action**	**Suburb**	**Short Term***	**Medium – Long Term****
Whittlesea Park	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Whittlesea	✓	
Laurel St Modulars	Refurbishment of existing modular buildings to support delivery of kindergarten reform	Whittlesea		✓
Whittlesea netball courts	Undertake masterplan for provision of netball courts (site TBC)	Whittlesea		✓

*Has already commenced or is expected to commence in the next five years (2024–2028)
**Is expected to commence in the next five to 10 years (2029–2033)

Whittlesea township and surrounding rural area



1. **AF Walker Recreation Reserve (including Whittlesea Tennis Club)** (sport & leisure)
2. **Growling Frog Golf Course** (sport & leisure)
3. **Laurel St Modulars** (kindergarten)
4. **TH Hurrey Reserve** (sport & leisure)
5. **Whittlesea Community Centre** (kinder, MCH, community space, library)
6. **Whittlesea Community House** (neighbourhood house)
7. **Whittlesea Park** (sport & leisure)
8. **Whittlesea Preschool** (kindergarten)
9. **Whittlesea Service Hub** (civic services)
10. **Whittlesea Swim Centre** (community space)

Wollert

The current population of 31,300 is projected to grow rapidly, driving increased demand for services and facilities

A substantial population increase has occurred in Wollert over the last 20 years, a trend set to continue with the number of people living in the area predicted to grow by more than 35,000 people, to 66,928 people by 2040.

In recent years Council has delivered new multi-purpose community centres with a strong focus on the provision of early years services. This is fulfilling current demand for spaces for community activation, as well as kindergarten and Maternal Child Health services. The inclusion of a kindergarten on a newly opened primary school site and private childcare centres in Wollert are also responding to increasing demand for kindergarten services in the short-term. The soon-to-be operational community library hub in the Kirrip Community Centre will address a gap in library services for the Wollert community in the short-term.

Tennis courts, located in Tuttle Recreation Reserve are the only existing sport and leisure infrastructure for Wollert. Investment in new sporting facilities has not kept up with rapid population growth and this is placing excessive demand on infrastructure to the south, in particular established soccer clubs in Epping.

Population growth will increase demand for local access to spaces and places to play a diverse range of sport, to exercise and stay active and to meet and build social connection. Population growth combined with kindergarten reform will increase demand for co-located and integrated provision of early years services including kindergarten, Maternal and Child Health, playgroups and family support services. In the longer-term a branch library will be required to meet increased demand for library services.

Considered planning is required to ensure sites identified in Precinct Structure Plans for community use are optimised and have the adaptability to accommodate growing and changing needs for services, programs and activities. Additionally, a partnership approach is required to ensure sufficient resources are available to accommodate growing demand for services.

Following are the priority capital projects that are underway or expected to commence within the next 10 years in Wollert.

Wollert				
Site	**Action**	**Suburb**	**Short Term***	**Medium – Long Term****
Edgars Creek Sports Reserve	Design and construction of outdoor rectangular courts, oval playing field and community pavilion	Wollert	✓	
Sports Reserve (Alkira Boulevard)	Design and construction of rectangular playing fields and community pavilion	Wollert	✓	
North Wollert Sports Reserve	Design and construction of rectangular playing fields and a community pavilion	Wollert		✓
Sports Reserve (Baltrum Drive)	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Wollert		✓
Kirrip Community Library Hub	Internal refurbishment to establish a community library hub in the Kirrip Community Centre	Wollert	✓	
West Wollert Community Centre	Investigate preferred service delivery options, design and construction of a new community centre	Wollert	✓	
Baltrum Drive Community Centre	Investigate preferred service delivery options, design and construction of a new community centre	Wollert		✓
North Wollert Community Centre	Investigate preferred service delivery options, design and construction of a new community centre taking into consideration potential integration of community centre and community pavilion to service adjacent sports reserve	Wollert		✓
East Wollert Centre	Determine need for infrastructure to support early years/alternate use on this site based on Kinder Reform Options recommendations	Wollert		✓
Wollert Central Primary School Kindergarten	Work in partnership with the Victorian Government to deliver a kindergarten on school site	Wollert	✓	

*Has already commenced or is expected to commence in the next five years (2024–2028)
**Is expected to commence in the next five to 10 years (2029–2033)

Wollert

KEY: Existing | Existing (upgrade) | New build

1. **Baltrum Drive Community Centre** (service delivery mix TBD)
2. **Barrawang Primary School Kindergarten** (kindergarten)
3. **East Wollert Centre** (service delivery mix TBD)
4. **Edgars Creek Secondary College Oval** (sport & leisure)
5. **Edgars Creek Sports Reserve** (sport & leisure)
6. **Ganbu Gulinj Commmunity Centre** (kindergarten, MCH, community space)
7. **Kirrip Community Centre** (kindergarten, MCH, library, community spaces)
8. **Korin Korin Child and Family Centre** (kindergarten, MCH)
9. **North Wollert Community Centre** (service delivery mix TBD)
10. **North Wollert Sports Reserve** (sport & leisure)
11. **Sports Reserve (Alkira Boulevard)** (sport & leisure)
12. **Sports Reserve (Baltrum Drive)** (sport & leisure)
13. **Tuttle Recreation Reserve** (sport & leisure)
14. **West Wollert Community Centre** (service delivery mix TBD)
15. **Wollert Central Primary School Kindergarten** (kindergarten)
16. **Wollert Community Centre** (community space)

South Morang, Mernda and Doreen

Continued moderate growth with a significant increase in the older population

Major growth occurred in the central east suburbs of South Morang, Mernda and Doreen in the early 2000s and this area is currently home to more than 79,500 people. Moderate growth is projected between now and 2040 with a significant increase of residents aged 50 and over.

The central east has good access to early years education and services to meet current demand. In addition to nine kindergarten programs, operating mostly from multi-purpose community centres, several private childcare providers in the area offer funded kindergarten programs. Additional kindergarten programming will, however, be required to accommodate additional hours of three- and four-year-old kindergarten resulting from the Victorian Government *Best Start, Best Life* early years reform. As the population has aged, a reduction in demand for Maternal and Child Health services (currently operating from seven sites) provides an opportunity for consulting suites to be used by other health and service providers.

Although there are seven community hubs in the area, three of these have an early years' focus and additional spaces for community groups to meet is sought after, including increased capacity for youth service programming and activities. A mobile service has been servicing the central suburbs with stops in Epping, Doreen and Mernda. A soon-to-open mini-branch library operating from retail space in the Mernda Town Centre will create a physical space and provide additional room for community to gather. In the medium-term, a larger branch library will be built adjacent to the Mernda Town Centre. The additional floor space will mean an expansion of library services and increased opportunities for programming and activities.

While there is local access to ovals, tennis courts, indoor courts and BMX, the supply of sporting and leisure infrastructure is insufficient to meet demand. Rectangular playing fields as well as aquatic, health and fitness facilities and additional courts are required to address the current and future shortfall. Delivery of sport and leisure infrastructure to be built as part of the Regional Aquatic and Sports Centre will serve a dual purpose of servicing the population across the municipality, as well as meet the need for local facilities.

Following are the priority capital projects that are underway or expected to commence within the next 10 years in South Morang, Mernda and Doreen.

South Morang, Mernda and Doreen

South Morang, Mernda and Doreen				
Site	**Action**	**Suburb**	**Short Term***	**Medium – Long Term****
Mernda mini-branch library	Deliver a mini-branch library in retail space in the Mernda Town Centre shopping centre to provide services until construction of permanent Mernda branch library is complete	Mernda	✓	
Mernda Library	Investigate preferred service delivery options, design and construction of a permanent branch library	Mernda	✓	
Mernda Recreation Reserve	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Mernda	✓	
Hillsview Recreation Reserve	Deliver infrastructure improvements to provide female friendly facilities	South Morang	✓	
Hawkestowe Reserve	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	South Morang	✓	
Ashley Park Sporting Reserve	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Doreen	✓	
Doreen Recreation Reserve	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Doreen	✓	

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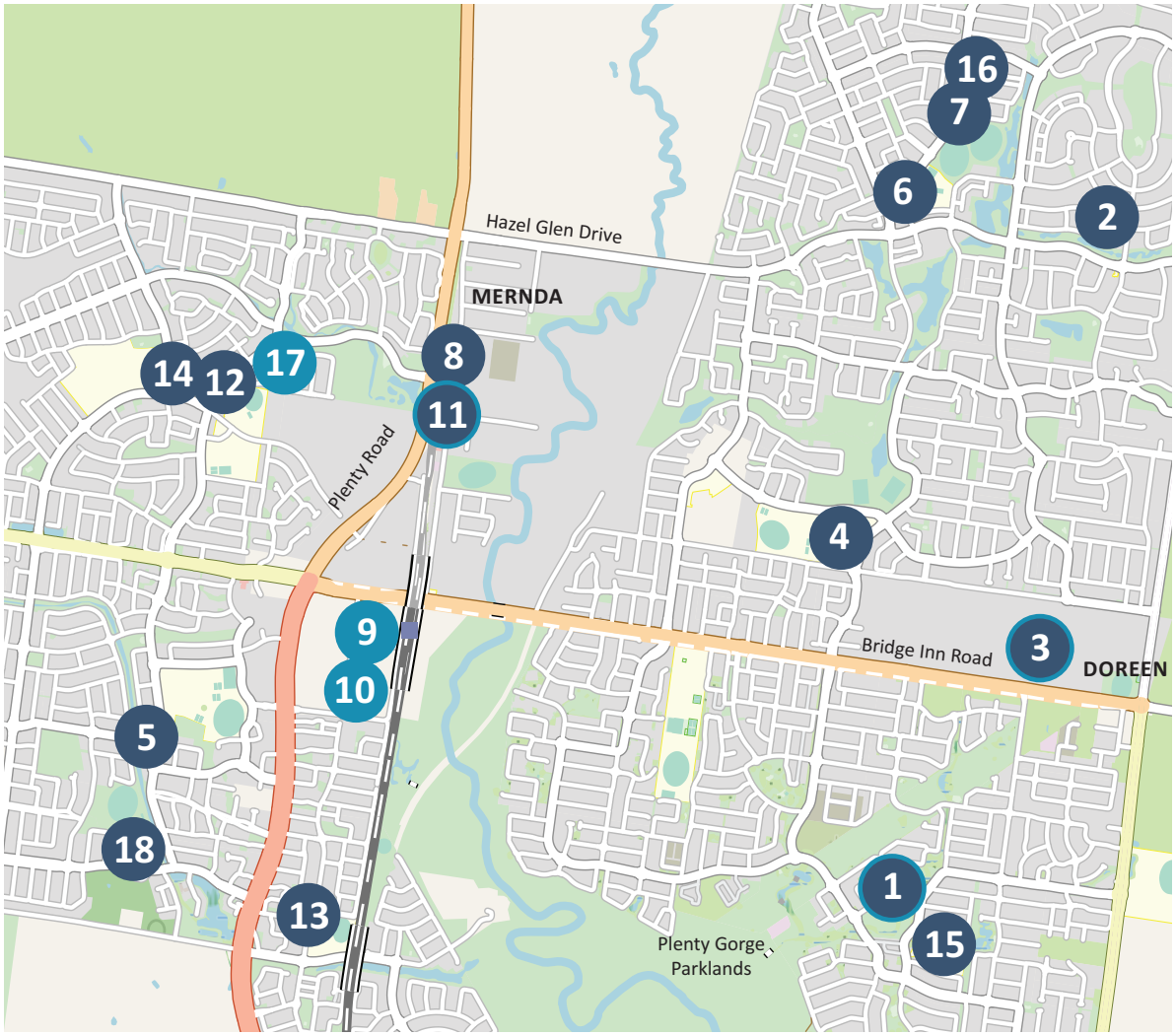
**Is expected to commence in the next five to 10 years (2029–2033)

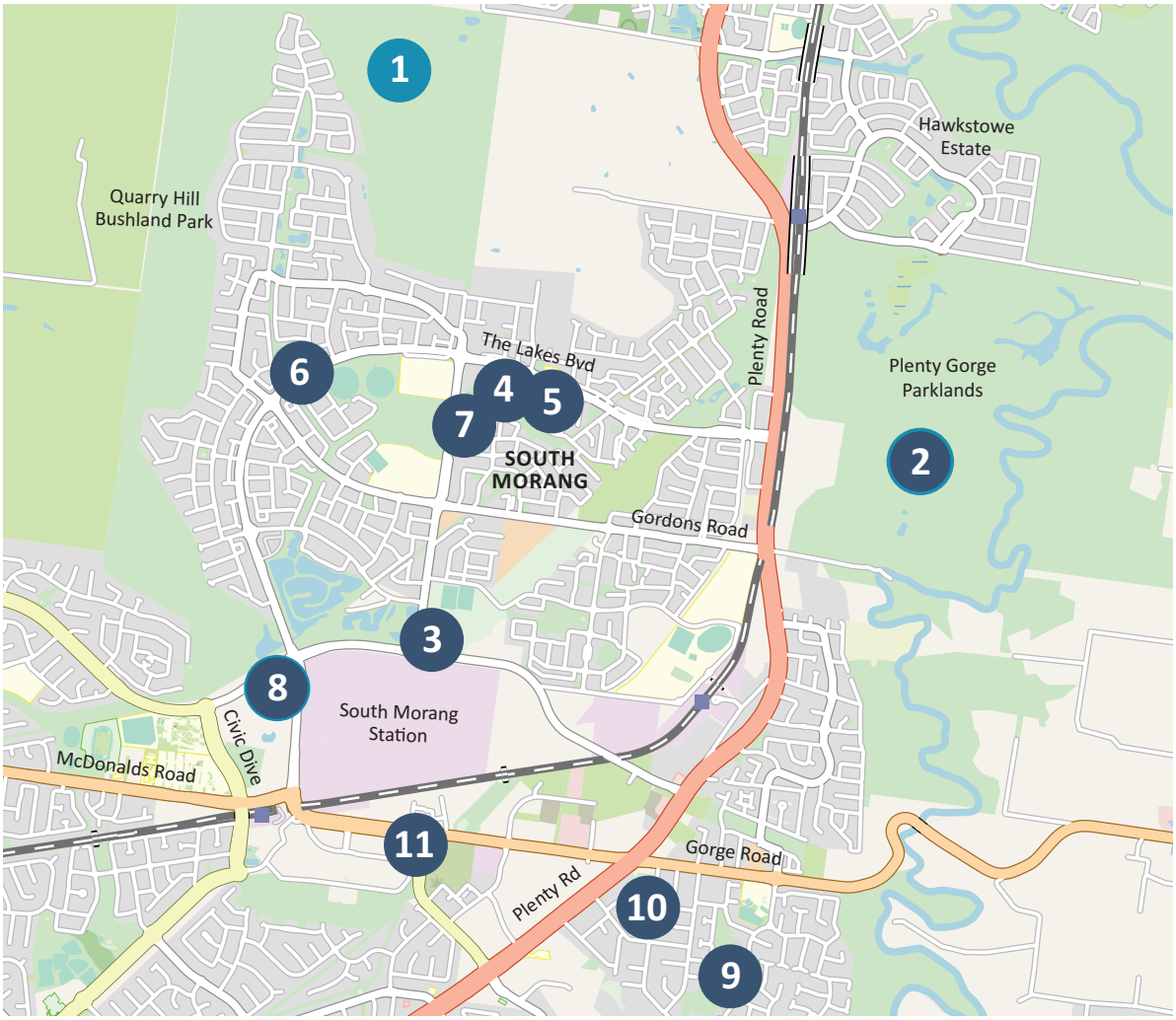
Mernda and Doreen



KEY: Existing | Existing (upgrade) | New build

1. **Ashley Park** (sport & leisure)
2. **Brookwood Community Centre** (community space)
3. **Doreen Recreation Reserve** (sport & leisure)
4. **Hazel Glen Child and Family Centre** (kindergarten, MCH, community space)
5. **Jindi Family and Community Centre** (kindergarten, MCH, community space)
6. **Laurimer Community Centre** (community space)
7. **Laurimer Recreation Reserve** (sport & leisure)
8. **Mernda Community House** (neighbourhood house)
9. **Mernda Library** (library)
10. **Mernda mini branch library** (library)
11. **Mernda Recreation Reserve** (sport & leisure)
12. **Mernda Social Support Service** (Ageing well)
13. **Mernda South YMCA Early Learning Centre** (kindergarten, MCH)
14. **Mernda Village Community Activity Centre** (kindergarten, MCH, community space)
15. **Orchard Road Community and Early Learning Centre** (kindergarten, MCH, community space)
16. **Painted Hills Recreation Reserve & community Pavilion** (sport & leisure, community space)
17. **Regional Aquatic and Sports Centre at Mernda** (sport & leisure)
18. **Waterview recreation reserve** (sport & leisure)

South Morang



KEY: Existing | Existing (upgrade) | New build

1. **Aboriginal Gathering Place**
2. **Hawkestowe Reserve** (sport & leisure)
3. **Hillsview Recreation Reserve** (sport & leisure)
4. **Mill Park Lakes MCH** (MCH)
5. **Mill Park Lakes Preschool** (kindergarten)
6. **Mill Park Lakes Recreation Reserve** (sport & leisure)
7. **Mill Park Lakes Tennis Club** (sport & leisure)
8. **Plenty Ranges Arts and Convention Centre** (arts & culture)
9. **Riverside Community Activity Centre** (community space)
10. **South Morang Preschool - Reid St** (kindergarten)
11. **The Edge** (youth services)

Mill Park and Bundoora

Population growth in this established part of the municipality will continue steadily over the next 20 years

In contrast to rapidly expanding populations in the north, growth in the south-eastern suburbs of Mill Park and Bundoora will be slower, with an additional 6,083 residents anticipated by 2040.

Community infrastructure is characterised by ageing, often single purpose facilities. While service provision is generally adequate there is increased demand for services and support that facilitate ageing well and additional spaces are sought to support large community group activities.

The two community centres and neighbourhood house are used extensively and have limited capacity to accommodate additional demand, including for large meeting spaces. The recently refurbished Mill Park Library is well used with programs attracting large audiences.

Provision of early years infrastructure is sufficient for now, but additional kindergarten programming will be required to meet population growth and increased demand for three- and four-year-old kindergarten resulting from the Victorian Government *Best Start, Best Life* early years reform. The considerable number of single room kindergartens will be challenged in how they can implement this reform. There is an opportunity to look closely at these sites to identify whether they remain fit for purpose, whether there are opportunities for consolidating to fewer sites, or whether they can be expanded to support future demand for kindergarten.

Across the south east there are several sport and leisure facilities that provide for a variety of sports including bowling, tennis, basketball, aquatic and gym fitness, football, cricket, soccer, netball, softball/baseball, skate and gymnastics. Most of these facilities are ageing and will require upgrade or renewal over the next two decades to remain fit for purpose.

Following are the priority capital projects that are underway or expected to commence within the next 10 years in Mill Park and Bundoora.

Mill Park and Bundoora				
Site	**Action**	**Suburb**	**Short Term***	**Medium – Long Term****
Stables Kindergarten	Redevelop and expand kindergarten	Mill Park	✓	
WA Smith and Sycamore Reserve	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Mill Park / Lalor	✓	
Dr Harry Jenkins Reserve	Undertake tennis courts renewal to support equitable access	Mill Park	✓	
Redleap Recreation Reserve	Upgrade oval playing field	Mill Park	✓	
Norris Bank Reserve	Undertake tennis court redevelopment	Bundoora	✓	

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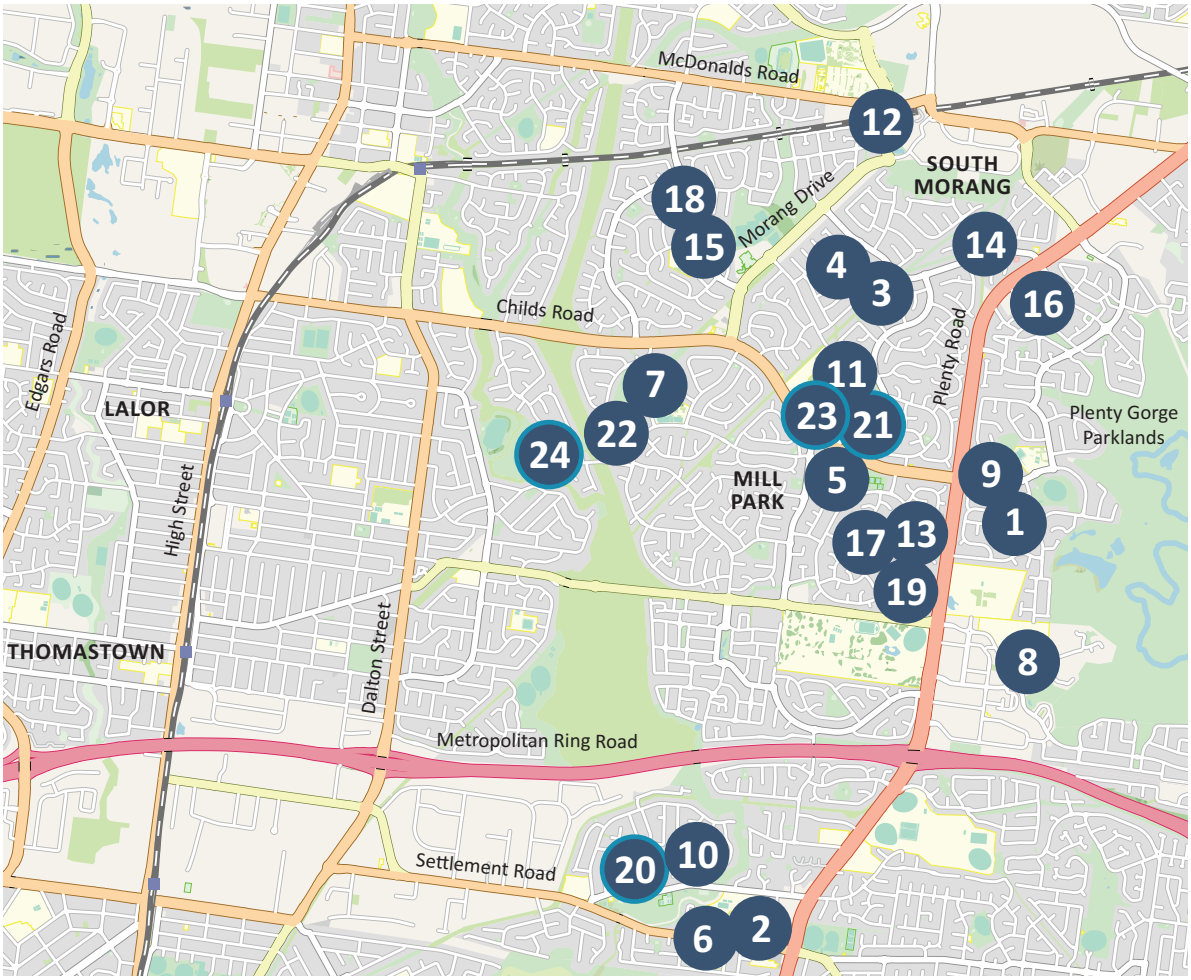
**Is expected to commence in the next five to 10 years (2029–2033)

Mill Park and Bundoora



KEY: Existing | Existing (upgrade) | New build

1. **Blossom Park Kindergarten** (kindergarten)
2. **Bundoora MCH Centre** (MCH)
3. **Centenary Drive Kindergarten** (kindergarten)
4. **Centenary Drive MCH** (MCH)
5. **Dr Harry Jenkins Reserve & Mill Park Tennis** (sport & leisure)
6. **Edward Street Preschool** (kindergarten)
7. **Findon Recreation Reserve** (sport & leisure)
8. **Janefield Community Centre** (community space)
9. **Kelynack Recreation Reserve** (sport & leisure)
10. **McLeans Road Kindergarten** (kindergarten)
11. **Mill Park Basketball Stadium** (sport & leisure)
12. **Mill Park Children's Centre** (MCH, human services)
13. **Mill Park Drive MCH** (MCH)
14. **Mill Park Heights Childcare Centre and Kindergarten** (kindergarten)
15. **Mill Park Leisure** (sport & leisure)
16. **Mill Park Library** (library)
17. **Mill Park Preschool** (kindergarten)
18. **Mill Park Recreation Reserve** (sport & leisure)
19. **Miller Community Centre** (community space)
20. **Norris Bank Reserve** (sport & leisure)
21. **Redleap Recreation Reserve** (sport & leisure)
22. **Roycroft Kindergarten** (kindergarten)
23. **Stables Kindergarten** (kindergarten)
24. **WA Smith and Sycamore Reserve** (sport & leisure)

Lalor, Thomastown and Epping

The large population of more than 76,000 will continue to grow, placing pressure on existing services and infrastructure

The established south-west area of Lalor, Thomastown and Epping will increase by over 19,000 people between 2023 and 2040 to 95,614.

There are many community facilities that include spaces for community activation including two library branches and a click and collect library service operating from the Galada Community Centre in the north of Epping, three halls, six community centres, two neighbourhood houses, a senior citizens centre, men's shed and community pavilions. With the exception of some recent community infrastructure delivered to service growing community in the north of Epping, infrastructure is ageing, several facilities have limited capacity to support increased use and some groups currently miss out on access. There is also unmet demand for spaces suitable for Men's Sheds and Community Sheds in the area and increased demand for services and supports that facilitate ageing well.

Provision of early years infrastructure is extensive. In addition to four Maternal and Child Health facilities and 17 kindergarten programs operating mostly from stand-alone facilities, several private childcare providers in the area (predominantly in Epping) and two kindergarten programs operate on school sites with more planned, including one to be delivered and operated by the Victorian Government under the *Best Start, Best Life* early years reform. Additional kindergarten programming will be required to meet population growth and increased demand for three- and four-year-old kindergarten resulting from the Victorian Government Best Start, Best Life early years reform, and the considerable number of single room kindergartens will be challenged in how they can implement this reform. There is an opportunity to look closely at these sites to identify whether they remain fit for purpose, whether there are opportunities for consolidating to fewer sites or whether they can be expanded to support future demand for kindergarten.

Across the south-west there are 25 sites that provide sport and leisure infrastructure catering for diverse sport and leisure activities, including tennis, soccer, gymnastics, bocce, cricket, football, athletics, skating, tennis, swimming and gym fitness. These facilities are sufficient to meet both current needs and to service the growing population in Lalor and Thomastown. However, many of these facilities are ageing and will require upgrade or renewal over the next two decades to remain fit for purpose.

There is a growing need for youth-focused, multi-use spaces suitable for a variety of activities, including creative arts spaces, general programming spaces and quiet spaces for generalist support and specialist service provision. Council is partnering with the Victorian Government and other partners to explore opportunities for meeting this demand.

Following are the priority capital projects that are underway or expected to commence within the next 10 years in Lalor, Thomastown and Epping.

Lalor, Thomastown and Epping

Lalor, Thomastown and Epping				
Site	**Action**	**Suburb**	**Short Term***	**Medium – Long Term****
Whittlesea Public Gardens	Complete second stage of the Whittlesea Public Gardens redevelopment including skate park, rock climbing wall and basketball court	Lalor	✓	
Huskisson Reserve	Construct six new courts and community pavilion	Lalor	✓	
Partridge Recreation Reserve	Convert one existing rectangular field to synthetic surface and install new sports lighting to support synthetic field use	Lalor	✓	
Lalor Recreation Reserve	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Lalor	✓	
V R Michael Reserve	Undertake site masterplan to improve site condition and facilities	Lalor	✓	
Epping Recreation Reserve	Construct new netball courts, as well as renew existing tennis court surfaces.	Epping	✓	
Harvest Home Road Recreation Reserve	Complete replacement of the synthetic soccer pitch	Epping	✓	
HR Uren Recreation Reserve	Upgrade existing community pavilion	Thomastown	✓	
Sports Reserve (Cerridwen St)	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Epping		✓
Epping Regional Rec Reserve	Undertake a feasibility study to assess site conditions, service demand and sport and leisure infrastructure requirements	Epping		✓
Thomastown Recreation and Aquatic Centre	Undertake renewal works including sustainability upgrades	Thomastown	✓	
Lalor Library and Conference Room, Lalor Neighbourhood House, May Road Senior Citizens Centre, French Street Hall	Undertake masterplan of the May Street precinct in Lalor to investigate opportunities to upgrade and integrate facilities, enhance access and utilisation, unlock public realm potential, and improve perceptions of safety	Lalor	✓	
Epping Memorial Hall	Complete a community halls evaluation to better understand the challenges and opportunities for uses in community halls across the eastern suburbs and recommend sites for renewal. Undertake a masterplan of the site as part of broader consideration of the Memorial Avenue precinct.	Epping	✓	
Bubup Wilam Aboriginal Child and Family Centre	Complete facility extension and upgrade works	Thomastown	✓	
Boori Children's Service and Derby Meadows Preschool	Design and construction of an integrated kindergarten and Maternal and Child Health facility	Epping	✓	
Dalton Road Preschool and Dalton Road Maternal and Child Health Centre	Design and construction of an integrated kindergarten and Maternal and Child Health facility	Thomastown	✓	

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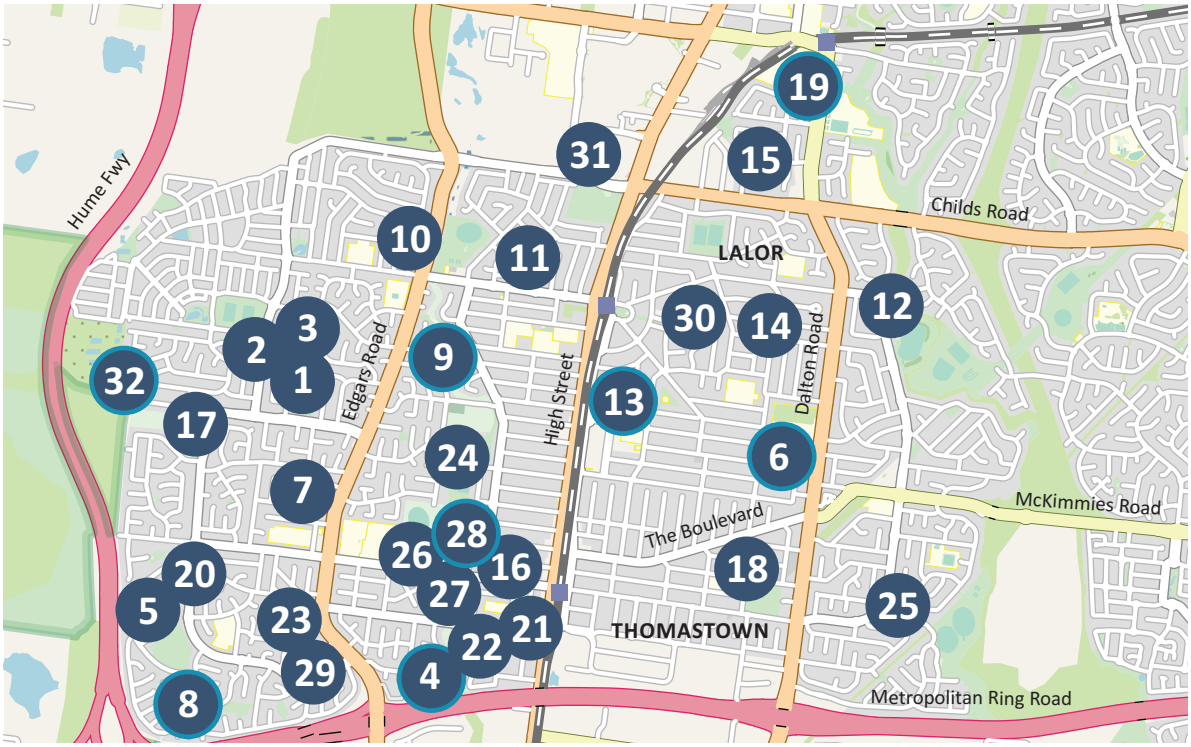
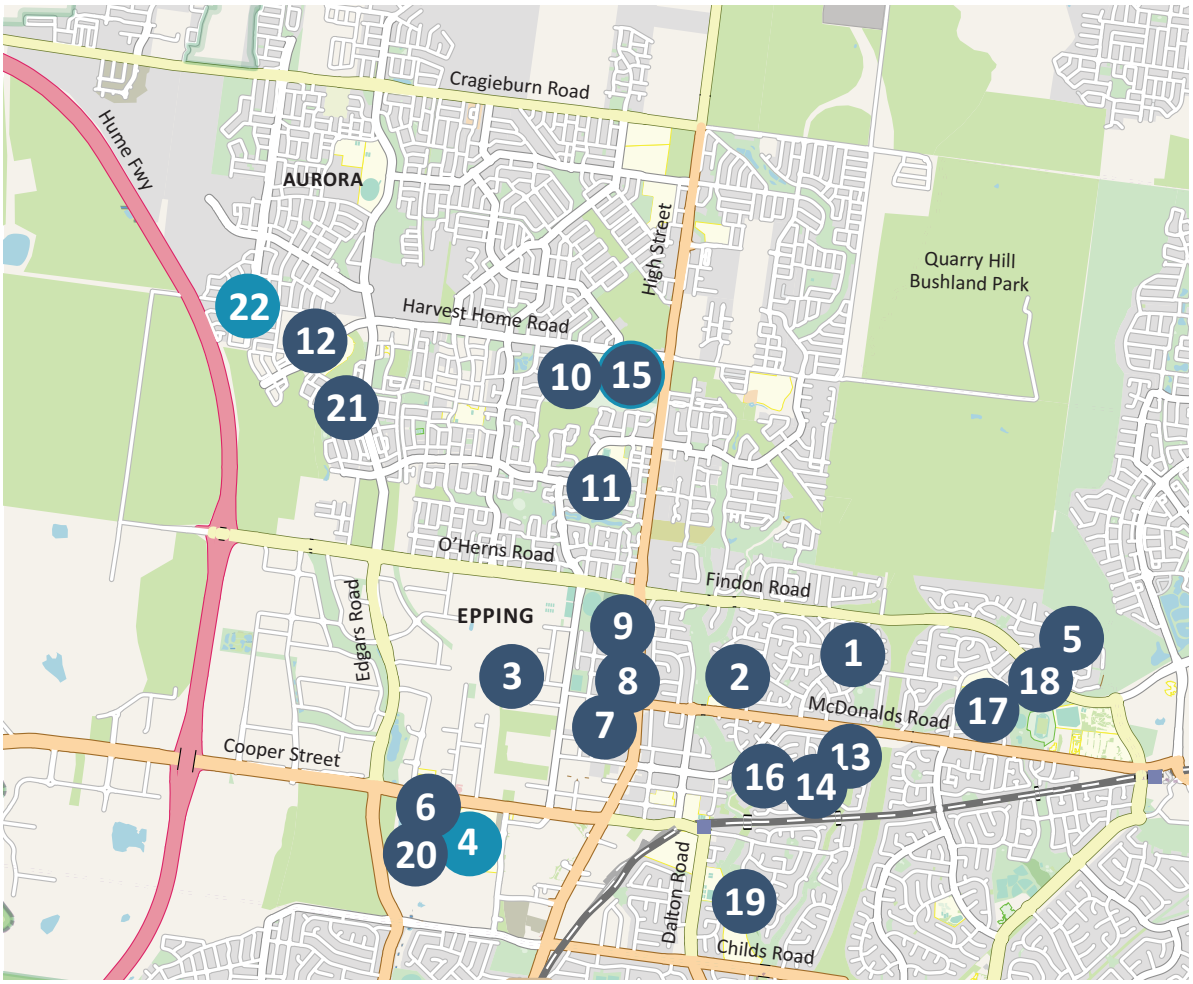
Lalor and Thomastown



KEY: Existing · Existing (upgrade) · New build

1. **Barry Road Community Centre** (community space, ageing well)
2. **Barry Road Preschool** (kindergarten)
3. **Barry Road Tennis Club** (sport & leisure)
4. **Bubup Wilam Aboriginal Child and Family Centre** (kindergarten)
5. **Carrington Children's Centre** (playgroups)
6. **Dalton Road Preschool and Dalton Road MCH** (kindergarten, MCH)
7. **Harbard Street Kindergarten** (kindergarten)
8. **HR Uren Recreation Reserve** (sport & leisure)
9. **Huskisson Reserve** (sport & leisure)
10. **Jacaranda Preschool - Kingsway Drive** (kindergarten)
11. **Jacaranda Preschool - Nebel St** (kindergarten)
12. **Lalor East Preschool** (kindergarten)
13. **Lalor Library and Neighbourhood House, May Road Senior Citizens Centre, French Street Hall** (community spaces, library, neighbourhood house)
14. **Lalor Primary School Kindergarten** (kindergarten)
15. **Lalor Recreation Reserve** (sport & leisure)
16. **Main Street Recreation Reserve** (sport & leisure)
17. **Mosaic Recreation Reserve** (sport & leisure)
18. **Nick Ascenzo Community Centre** (community space)
19. **Partridge Recreation Reserve** (sport & leisure)
20. **RGC Cook Community Pavilion & Reserve** (sport & leisure, community space)
21. **Spring St Hall** (community space)
22. **Spring St Kindergarten** (kindergarten)
23. **Thomastown Childcare Centre** (childcare, kindergarten)
24. **Thomas St Recreation Reserve** (sport & leisure)
25. **Thomastown East Recreation Reserve** (sport & leisure)
26. **Thomastown Library** (library, MCH)
27. **Thomastown Neighbourhood Centre** (neighbourhood house)
28. **Thomastown Recreation and Aquatic Centre** (sport & leisure)
29. **Thomastown West Kindergarten** (kindergarten)
30. **Vasey Park Preschool** (kindergarten)
31. **VR Michael Reserve** (sport & leisure)
32. **Whittlesea Public Gardens** (sport & leisure)

Epping



KEY: Existing | Existing (upgrade) | New build

1. **Boori Children's Centre and Derby Meadows Preschool** (kindergarten, MC, plagroup)
2. **Darebin Creek Parklands** (sport & leisure)
3. **Duffy St Recreation Reserve** (sport & leisure)
4. **Epping Central** (community space, library, arts & culture)
5. **Epping Community Centre & Epping North Preschool** (community space, kindergarten)
6. **Epping Community Services Hub** (human services)
7. **Epping Memorial Hall** (community space)
8. **Epping Preschool** (kindergarten)
9. **Epping Recreation Reserve** (sport & leisure)
10. **Epping Soccer stadium** (sport & leisure)
11. **Epping Views Family and Community Centre** (children & families, community space)
12. **Galada Community Centre** (children & families, community space, library)
13. **Greenbrook Community House** (neighbourhood house)
14. **Greenbrook Kindergarten** (kindergarten)
15. **Harvest Home Road Recreation Reserve** (sport & leisure)
16. **Lowalde Recreation Reserve** (sport & leisure)
17. **Meadow Glen International Athletics Reserve** (sport & leisure)
18. **Meadowglen Primary School Kindergarten** (kindergarten)
19. **Oakbrook Kindergarten** (kindergarten)
20. **Pacific Epping MCH** (MCH)
21. **Prism Park** (sport & leisure)
22. **Sports Reserve (Cerridwen Street)** (sport & leisure)

Appendix 1

Community infrastructure

The following is a list of Council owned and or/operated community infrastructure and proposed projects:

Site	Action	Suburb	Timeline
Aboriginal Gathering Place	Complete design and build an Aboriginal Gathering Place in the Quarry Hills Regional Parkland in South Morang	South Morang	short-term
AF Walker Recreation Reserve (including Whittlesea Tennis Club)	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Whittlesea	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Ageing Well Hub – north	Investigate the feasibility of delivering wellness hubs designed to support partnership approaches with other aged care providers and community groups for co-location of a range of complementary health and wellbeing services. (Potential sites include the Barry Road Community Centre in Lalor, expansion of the Mernda Social Support Centre and a planned for community centre in the north of the municipality)	Donnybrook	beyond 10 years
Ashley Park Sporting Reserve	Undertake site masterplan and commence design of rectangular fields and community pavilion	Doreen	short-term
Baltrum Drive Community Centre	Investigate preferred service delivery options and design and construction options of a new community centre	Wollert	medium/long-term
Barrawang Primary School (Kindergarten)	Consider infrastructure improvements to the kindergarten on the school site as part of Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal program	Wollert	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Barry Road Community Centre	In the long term, investigate the feasibility of delivering wellness hubs designed to support partnership approaches with other aged care providers and community groups for co-location of a range of complementary health and wellbeing services, considering Barry Rd Community Centre as a potential site to support community in the South of the municipality	Thomastown	beyond 10 years
Barry Road Preschool	Consider kindergarten provision as part of the options paper to inform Council's response and delivery of the Best Start, Best Life early years reform	Thomastown	short-term
Barry Road Tennis Club	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Thomastown	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program

Site	Action	Suburb	Timeline
Blossom Park Kindergarten	Consider kindergarten provision as part of the options paper to inform Council's response and delivery of the Best Start, Best Life early years reform	Mill Park	short-term
Boori Children's Service and Derby Meadows Preschool	Design and construction of an integrated kindergarten and Maternal and Child Health facility	Epping	short-term
Brookwood Community Centre	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Doreen	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Bubup Wilam Aboriginal Child and Family Centre	Complete facility extension and upgrade works	Thomastown	short-term
Bundoora MCH Centre	Leased facility. Consider internal improvements as part of Council's routine maintenance and renewal program	Bundoora	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Carrington Children's Centre	Consider kindergarten provision as part of the options paper to inform Council's response and delivery of the Best Start, Best Life early years reform	Thomastown	short-term
Centenary Drive Kindergarten and maternal and child health centre	Consider kindergarten and Maternal and Child Health provision as part of the options paper to inform Council's response and delivery of the Best Start, Best Life early years reform	Mill Park	short-term
Community Services Hub	In the long-term investigate the feasibility of delivering a community services hub in the north of the municipality in partnership with local health and wellbeing service providers, to encourage service delivery and collaboration in the north of the municipality	Donnybrook / Wollert	beyond 10 years
Dalton Road Preschool and Dalton Road Maternal and Child Health	Design and construction of an integrated kindergarten and Maternal and Child Health facility	Thomastown	short-term
Darebin Creek Community Centre	Investigate preferred service delivery options and design and construction options for a new community centre	Donnybrook	short-term
Darebin Creek Parklands skate facility	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Epping	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Darebin Creek Sports Reserve	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Donnybrook	medium/long-term
Donnybrook Farmhouse Community Centre	Investigate preferred service delivery and design and construction options of a new community centre	Donnybrook	medium/long-term

Site	Action	Suburb	Timeline
Donnybrook Farmhouse Sports Reserve	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Donnybrook	beyond 10 years
Donnybrook Primary School (Kindergarten)	Work in partnership with the Victorian Government to deliver a kindergarten on school site	Donnybrook	short-term
Doreen Recreation Reserve	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Doreen	short term
Dr Harry Jenkins Reserve	Undertake tennis courts renewal to support equitable access	Mill Park	short-term
Duffy St Recreation Reserve	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Epping	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
East Wollert Centre	Determine need for infrastructure to support early years/alternate use on this site, based on Kinder Reform Options recommendations	Wollert	medium/long-term
East Wollert Sports Reserve	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Wollert	beyond 10 years
Edgars Creek Secondary College oval	Continue to maintain the oval surface and upgrade infrastructure improvements in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Wollert	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Edgars Creek Sports Reserve	Design and construction of outdoor rectangular courts, oval playing field and community pavilion	Wollert	short-term
Edward Street Preschool	Consider kindergarten provision as part of the options paper to inform Council's response and delivery of the Best Start, Best Life early years reform	Bundoora	short-term
English St Community Centre	Investigate preferred service delivery options for this site	Donnybrook	beyond 10 years
Epping Central Health and Wellbeing Community Hub / Epping Central Information Learning and Cultural Hub	Continue to progress planning for the long-term development of Epping Central, designated as a metropolitan activity centre	Epping	short-term
Epping Community Centre (contains Epping North Preschool)	Consider infrastructure improvements as part of Council's routine maintenance and renewal program Consider kindergarten provision as part of the options paper to inform Council's response and delivery of the Best Start, Best Life early years reform	Epping	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program

Site	Action	Suburb	Timeline
Epping Community Services Hub	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Epping	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Epping Memorial Hall	Complete a community halls evaluation to better understand the challenges and opportunities for uses in community halls across the eastern suburbs and recommend sites for renewal Undertake a masterplan of the site as part of broader consideration of the Memorial Avenue precinct	Epping	short-term
Epping North Community Centre (Aurora Estate)	Investigate preferred service delivery options and design and construction options of a new community centre	Epping	beyond 10 years
Epping North West Community Centre	Investigate preferred service delivery options and design and construction options of a new community centre	Wollert	beyond 10 years
Epping North West Sports Reserve	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Wollert	beyond 10 years
Epping Preschool	Consider kindergarten provision as part of the options paper to inform Council's response and delivery of the Best Start, Best Life early years reform	Epping	short-term
Epping Recreation Reserve	Construct new netball courts, as well as renew existing tennis court surfaces	Epping	short-term
Epping Regional Recreation Reserve	Undertake a feasibility study to assess site conditions and sport and leisure infrastructure requirements	Wollert	medium/long-term
Epping soccer stadium	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Epping	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Epping Views Family and Community Centre	Consider infrastructure improvements as part of Council's routine maintenance and renewal program	Epping	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Epping West ovals	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Epping	beyond 10 years
Eucalyptus Parade Kindergarten	Consider infrastructure improvements to the kindergarten on the school site as part of Council's maintenance and renewal program	Donnybrook	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program

Site	Action	Suburb	Timeline
Family services hub and youth space	Review opportunities to create a family services hub that includes access to allied health and parenting support services and a separate but interconnected middle years/youth space (site TBC)	Donnybrook	short-term
Findon Recreation Reserve	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Mill Park	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
French St Hall	Undertake masterplan of the May Street precinct in Lalor to investigate opportunities to upgrade and integrate facilities, enhance access and utilisation, unlock public realm potential, and improve perceptions of safety	Lalor	short-term
Galada Community Centre	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Epping	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Ganbu Gulinj Commmunity Centre	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Wollert	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Greenbrook Community House	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Epping	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Greenbrook Kindergarten	Consider kindergarten provision as part of the options paper to inform Council's response and delivery of the Best Start, Best Life early years reform	Epping	short-term
Growling Frog Golf Course	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Yan Yean	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Harbard Street Kindergarten	Consider kindergarten provision as part of the options paper to inform Council's response and delivery of the Best Start, Best Life early years reform.	Thomastown	short-term
Harvest Home Road Recreation Reserve	Complete replacement of the synthetic soccer pitch	Epping	short-term
Hawkestowe Reserve	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	South Morang	short-term
Hayes Hill Reserve	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Donnybrook	beyond 10 years

Site	Action	Suburb	Timeline
Hazel Glen Child and Family Centre	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Doreen	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Hillsview Recreation Reserve	Deliver infrastructure improvements to provide female friendly facilities	South Morang	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
HR Uren Recreation Reserve	Upgrade existing community pavilion and provide lighting to the synthetic pitch	Thomastown	short-term
Huskisson Reserve	Construct six new courts and community pavilion	Lalor	short-term
Jacaranda Preschool – Kingsway Drive	Consider kindergarten provision as part of the options paper to inform Council's response and delivery of the Best Start, Best Life early years reform	Lalor	short-term
Jacaranda Preschool – Nebel St	Consider kindergarten provision as part of the options paper to inform Council's response and delivery of the Best Start, Best Life early years reform	Lalor	short-term
Janefield Community Centre	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Bundoora	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Jindi Family and Community Centre	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Mernda	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Kelynack Recreation Reserve	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Mill Park	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Kirrip Community Centre and community library hub	Internal refurbishment to establish a community library hub in the Kirrip Community Centre	Wollert	short-term
Korin Korin Child and Family Centre	Consider kindergarten provision as part of the options paper to inform Council's response and delivery of the Best Start, Best Life early years reform	Wollert	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Koukora Drive Community Centre	Investigate preferred service delivery options and design and construction options of a new community centre	Donnybrook	beyond 10 years
Koukora Drive Sporting precinct	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Donnybrook	beyond 10 years
Lalor East Preschool	Consider kindergarten provision as part of the options paper to inform Council's response and delivery of the Best Start, Best Life early years reform	Lalor	short-term

Site	Action	Suburb	Timeline
Lalor Library and conference room	Undertake masterplan of the May Road precinct in Lalor to investigate opportunities to upgrade and integrate facilities, enhance access and utilisation, unlock public realm potential, and improve perceptions of safety	Lalor	short-term
Lalor neighbourhood house	Undertake masterplan of the May Street precinct in Lalor to investigate opportunities to upgrade and integrate facilities, enhance access and utilisation, unlock public realm potential, and improve perceptions of safety	Lalor	short-term
Lalor Primary School (Kindergarten)	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Lalor	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Lalor Recreation Reserve	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Lalor	short term
Laurel St Kindergarten Modulars	Refurbishment of existing modular buildings to support delivery of kindergarten reform	Whittlesea	medium/long-term
Laurimer Community Centre	Complete a community halls evaluation to better understand the challenges and opportunities for uses in community halls across the eastern suburbs and recommend sites for renewal	Doreen	short-term
Laurimer Recreation Reserve	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Doreen	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Lockerbie East Community Centre	Investigate preferred service delivery options and design and construction options of a new community centre	Donnybrook	beyond 10 years
Lockerbie East Sports Reserve	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Donnybrook	beyond 10 years
Lowalde Recreation Reserve	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Epping	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Main Street Recreation Reserve	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Thomastown	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
May Road Senior Citizens Centre	Undertake masterplan of the May Road precinct in Lalor to investigate opportunities to upgrade and integrate facilities, enhance access and utilisation, unlock public realm potential, and improve perceptions of safety	Lalor	short-term

Site	Action	Suburb	Timeline
McLeans Road Kindergarten	Consider kindergarten provision as part of the options paper to inform Council's response and delivery of the Best Start, Best Life early years reform	Bundoora	short-term
Meadow Glen International Athletics Reserve	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Epping	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Meadowglen Primary School Kindergarten	Consider infrastructure improvements to the kindergarten on the school site as part of Council's routine maintenance and renewal program	Epping	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Mernda Community House	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Mernda	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Mernda Library	Investigate preferred service delivery options, design and construction of a permanent branch library	Mernda	short-term
Mernda mini-branch library	Deliver a mini-branch library in retail space in the Mernda Town Centre shopping centre to provide services until construction of permanent Mernda branch library is complete	Mernda	short-term
Mernda Recreation Reserve	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Mernda	short-term
Mernda Social Support Centre	Evaluate the Mernda Social Support Centre model to ascertain learnings and applicability to other Council community centres and consider long-term expansion	Mernda	short-term
Mernda South YMCA Early Learning Centre	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Mernda	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Mernda Village Community Activity Centre	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Mernda	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Mill Park Basketball Stadium	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Mill Park	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Mill Park Children's Centre	Consider kindergarten provision as part of the options paper to inform Council's response and delivery of the Best Start, Best Life early years reform	Mill Park	short-term
Mill Park Drive MCH	Investigate the feasibility of integrating Maternal and Child Health services with the adjacent Mill Park Preschool (located within the Miller Community Centre) as part of the options paper to inform Council's response and delivery of the Best Start, Best Life kindergarten reforms	Mill Park	short-term

Site	Action	Suburb	Timeline
Mill Park Heights Childcare Centre and Kindergarten	Consider kindergarten provision as part of the options paper to inform Council's response and delivery of the Best Start, Best Life early years reform	Mill Park	short-term
Mill Park Lakes MCH	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	South Morang	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Mill Park Lakes Preschool	Consider kindergarten provision as part of the options paper to inform Council's response and delivery of the Best Start, Best Life early years reform	South Morang	short-term
Mill Park Lakes Recreation Reserve	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	South Morang	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Mill Park Lakes Tennis Club	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	South Morang	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Mill Park Leisure	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Mill Park	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Mill Park Library	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Mill Park	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Mill Park Preschool	Consider kindergarten provision as part of the options paper to inform Council's response and delivery of the Best Start, Best Life early years reform	Mill Park	short-term
Mill Park Recreation Reserve	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Mill Park	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Mill Park Tennis Club	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	South Morang	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Miller Community Centre	Investigate the feasibility of integrating Maternal and Child Health services with the adjacent Mill Park Preschool (located within the Miller Community Centre) as part of the options paper to inform Council's response and delivery of the Best Start, Best Life kindergarten reforms	Mill Park	short-term
Mosaic Recreation Reserve	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Lalor	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program

Site	Action	Suburb	Timeline
Nick Ascenzo Community Centre	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure n line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Thomastown	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Norris Bank Reserve	Upgrade tennis infrastructure in line with Council's renewal program	Bundoora	short-term
North Wollert Community Centre	Investigate preferred service delivery options, design and construction of a new community centre taking into consideration potential integration of community centre and community pavilion to service adjacent sports reserve	Wollert	medium/long-term
North Wollert Sports Reserve	Design and construction of rectangular playing fields and a community pavilion	Wollert	medium/long-term
Oakbrook Kindergarten	Consider kindergarten provision as part of the options paper to inform Council's response and delivery of the Best Start, Best Life early years reform	Epping	short-term
Olivine Place	Investigate options for future community service provision – and corresponding infrastructure – from Olivine Place	Donnybrook	short-term
Olivine Sports Reserve	Work in partnership with developer to complete delivery of oval playing fields and community pavilion	Donnybrook	short-term
Orchard Road Community and Early Learning Centre	Consulting rooms leased for Council provision of Maternal and Child Health services	Doreen	
Pacific Epping MCH	Consulting rooms leased for Council provision of Maternal and Child Health services	Epping	
Painted Hills Community Pavilion and Recreation Reserve	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Doreen	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Patridge Recreation Reserve	Convert one existing rectangular field to synthetic surface and install new sports lighting to support synthetic field use	Lalor	short-term
Patterson Drive Community Centre	Complete construction of community centre including kindergarten, MCH consulting rooms, community spaces and community library hub	Donnybrook	short-term
Plenty Ranges Arts and Convention Centre	Implement a new operating model for the Plenty Ranges Arts and Convention Centre to increase utilisation and precinct vibrancy and investigate options to house a gallery within the centre	South Morang	short-term
Prism Park	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Epping	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program

Site	Action	Suburb	Timeline
Quarry Hills Central Multipurpose Sports Reserve	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	South Morang	beyond 10 years
Quarry Hills Community Centre	Investigate preferred service delivery options and design and construction options of a new community centre	South Morang	beyond 10 years
Redleap Recreation Reserve	Upgrade oval playing field	Mill Park	short-term
Regional Sports and Aquatic Facility	Deliver Stages 1 and 2 of the Regional Aquatic and Sports Centre at Mernda – a regional level indoor and outdoor sports, leisure and aquatic facility Continue to seek co-investment for Stage 3	Mernda	short-term
RGC Cook Community Pavillion & Reserve	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Thomastown	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Riverside Community Activity Centre	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	South Morang	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Roycroft Kindergarten	Consider kindergarten provision as part of the options paper to inform Council's response and delivery of the Best Start, Best Life early years reform	Mill Park	short-term
Shenstone Park Community Centre and Shenstone Park Neighbourhood House	Investigate preferred service delivery and design and construction options for a new community centre taking into consideration potential integration of community centre and community pavilion to service adjacent sports reserve	Donnybrook	short-term
Shenstone Park Sporting Precinct	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Donnybrook	short-term
South Morang Preschool – Reid St	Develop an options paper and implementation plan to provide strategies and recommendations on future service modelling, delivery and infrastructure to inform Council's response and delivery of the Best Start, Best Life kindergarten reform. This will include investigating the feasibility of expansion/renewal of existing stand-alone kindergartens	South Morang	short-term
Sports Reserve (Alkira Boulevard, Wollert)	Design and construction of rectangular playing fields and community pavilion	Wollert	short-term
Sports Reserve (Baltrum Drive)	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Wollert	medium/long-term

Site	Action	Suburb	Timeline
Sports Reserve (Cerridwen Street, Epping)	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Epping	medium/long-term
Sports Reserve (corner Epping and Cragieburn Rd)	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Wollert	beyond 10 years
Spring St Hall	Complete a community halls evaluation to better understand the challenges and opportunities for uses in community halls across the eastern suburbs and recommend sites for renewal	Thomastown	short-term
Spring St Kindergarten	Consider kindergarten provision as part of the options paper to inform Council's response and delivery of the Best Start, Best Life early years reform	Thomastown	short-term
Stables Kindergarten	Redevelop and expand kindergarten	Mill Park	short-term
TH Hurrey Reserve	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Yan Yean	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
The Edge – City of Whittlesea Youth Services	Following completion of the Youth Service Model and Infrastructure Response, identify the spaces and infrastructure required to support the needs of young people living, studying or working in the City of Whittlesea	South Morang	short-term
Thomas St Recreation Reserve	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Thomastown	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Thomastown Childcare Centre	Consider kindergarten provision as part of the options paper to inform Council's response and delivery of the Best Start, Best Life early years reform	Thomastown	
Thomastown East Recreation Reserve	Consider infrastructure improvements as part of Council's routine maintenance and renewal program	Thomastown	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Thomastown Library (includes Main St MCH Centre and Thomastown Neighbourhood Centre)	In the long-term undertake renewal of Thomastown Library to maintain compliance and meet fit-for-purpose requirements	Thomastown	beyond 10 years
Thomastown Recreation and Aquatic Centre	Undertake renewal works including sustainability upgrades	Thomastown	short-term
Thomastown West Kindergarten	Consider kindergarten provision as part of the options paper to inform Council's response and delivery of the Best Start, Best Life early years reform	Thomastown	short-term

Site	Action	Suburb	Timeline
Tuttle Recreation Reserve	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Wollert	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Vasey Park Preschool	Consider kindergarten provision as part of the options paper to inform Council's response and delivery of the Best Start, Best Life early years reform	Lalor	short-term
VR Michael Reserve	Undertake site masterplan to improve site condition and facilities	Lalor	short-term
WA Smith and Sycamore Reserve	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Mill Park / Lalor	short-term
Waterview Recreation Reserve	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Mernda	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
West Wollert Community Centre	Investigate preferred service delivery options, design and construction of a new community centre	Wollert	short-term
Westgarth Heritage and Lutheran Church and Ziebells Farm	Consider development of a Masterplan for the Westgarthtown Pinoneer Precinct in consultation key stakeholders In consultation with Heritage Victoria, consider improvements to infrastructure of Ziebell's Farmhouse Museum Investigate a stronger integration and relationship between Ziebell's Farmhouse Museum and the Westgarthtown Pioneer Precinct Reserve in consultation with key stakeholders	Thomastown	beyond 10 years
Whittlesea Community Centre (includes library) & Early Learning Centre including Laurel St Preschool	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Whittlesea	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Whittlesea Community House	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Whittlesea	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Whittlesea Netball Courts	Undertake masterplan for provision of netball courts (site TBC)	Whittlesea	medium/long-term
Whittlesea Park	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Whittlesea	short-term

Site	Action	Suburb	Timeline
Whittlesea Preschool	Consider kindergarten provision as part of the options paper to inform Council's response and delivery of the Best Start, Best Life early years reform	Whittlesea	short-term
Whittlesea Public Gardens	Complete second stage of the Whittlesea Public Gardens redevelopment including skate park, rock climbing wall and basketball court	Lalor	short-term
Whittlesea Service Hub	Evaluate the success of the Council Service Hub in Whittlesea and conduct regular needs analysis and benchmarking of our growing community to determine if and where additional council service hubs are required to support our community	Whittlesea	short-term
Whittlesea Swim Centre	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Whittlesea	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Wollert Central Primary School Kindergarten	Work in partnership with the Victorian Government to deliver a kindergarten on school site	Wollert	short-term
Wollert Community Centre	Continue to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in line with Council's ongoing maintenance and renewal programs	Wollert	subject to Council's maintenance and renewal program
Wollert Major Town Centre	Investigate preferred service delivery options and design and construction options of a new community centre and outdoor active space	Wollert	beyond 10 years
Wollert MTC Indoor Leisure Centre	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Wollert	beyond 10 years
Wollert MTC Performing Arts Space	In the long-term investigate the feasibility of dedicated arts and cultural spaces in the north of the municipality	Wollert	beyond 10 years
Wollert Regional Recreation Reserve (Wollert Multipurpose-sports reserve)	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Wollert	beyond 10 years
Woodlands Community Centre	Investigate preferred service delivery options and design and construction options of a new community centre	Donnybrook	beyond 10 years
Woodlands Sports Reserve	Undertake site masterplan to review site conditions and confirm project scope, including sport and leisure infrastructure provision	Donnybrook	beyond 10 years

RADCOOL

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131 450

City of Whittlesea

5.3 Contract 2023-100 Construction of Plenty Road and Everton Drive Signalise Intersection

Director/Executive Manager: Director Infrastructure & Environment

Report Author: Coordinator Civil Engineering Delivery

In Attendance: Manager Capital Delivery
Unit Manager Engineering Design & Construction
Coordinator Civil Engineering Delivery

This attachment has been designated as confidential in accordance with sections 66(5) and 3(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* on the grounds that it contains private commercial information, being information provided by a business, commercial or financial undertaking that—
(i) relates to trade secrets; or
(ii) if released, would unreasonably expose the business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage.

In particular the attachment contains information regarding tender amounts submitted by tenderers and tender evaluation scoring prepared by Council officers. The release of this information could reasonably be

Executive Summary

It is proposed that contract number 2023-100 for the Construction of Plenty Road and Everton Drive Signalised Intersection, Mernda is awarded to Bild Infrastructure Pty Ltd for the lump sum price of $5,847,373.55 (excluding GST).

This report summarises the evaluation of the six tender submissions received for the Construction of Plenty Road and Everton Drive Signalised Intersection, Mernda.

The tender evaluation panel advises that:

- Six tenders were received.
- The recommended tender is the highest ranked tenderer. The highest ranked tenderer has demonstrated the required capability, capacity, qualification and represents best value for council to deliver this project.
- Collaborative tendering was not undertaken in relation to this procurement because it is not listed in the Northern Councils Alliance consolidated contract register and this contract relates to a unique need for the City of Whittlesea.

Recommendation

THAT Council:

1. **Accept the tender submitted by Bild Infrastructure Pty Ltd for the following contract:**

   Number: **2023-100**

   Title: **Construction of Plenty Road and Everton Drive Signalised Intersection, Mernda**

   Cost: **A lump sum of $5,847,373.55 (excluding GST) subject to the following conditions:**

   a) **Tenderer to provide proof of currency of insurance cover and contract security as required in the tender documents.**

   b) **Price variations to be in accordance with the provisions as set out in the tender documents.**

2. **Approve the funding arrangements detailed in the confidential attachment.**
3. **Delegates to the Chief Executive Officer authority to sign and execute the contract on behalf of Council.**

Background / Key Information

The purpose of this contract is for the construction of the Plenty Road and Everton Drive Signalised Intersection, Mernda including associated public lighting, landscape and utility services works.

Tenders for the contract closed on 19 September 2023. The tendered prices and a summary of the evaluation are detailed in the confidential attachment.

No member of the Tender Evaluation Panel declared any conflict of interest in relation to this tender evaluation.

A Tender Probity and Evaluation Plan was designed specifically for this tender process and it was authorised prior to this tender being advertised. All tenders received were evaluated in accordance with that plan. The evaluation involved scoring of conforming and competitive tenders according to these pre-determined criteria and weightings:

- Price 60%
- Capability 15%
- Capacity 15%
- Sustainability 10%

The weightings reflect the relative importance of each element to this particular contract. They were determined as being most appropriate after considering numerous factors including (but not restricted to) the time, quality, risk and contract management requirements which were likely to have the most impact on the achievement of best value.

Only tenders that were conforming and competitive were fully scored. Tender submissions that were evaluated as non-conforming or not sufficiently competitive were set aside from further evaluation. In cases where this occurred the reasons for that outcome are detailed in the confidential attachment.

The evaluation outcome was as follows:

Tenderer	Conforming	Competitive	Score	Rank
Tenderer A	Yes	No	N/A	N/A
Tenderer B: Bild Infrastructure Pty Ltd	Yes	Yes	94.1	1
Tenderer C	Yes	Yes	87.2	2
Tenderer D	Yes	Yes	82.7	3
Tenderer E	Yes	Yes	77.6	4
Tenderer F	Yes	No	N/A	N/A

Refer to the confidential attachment for further details of the evaluation of all tenders. confidential.

Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

Liveable Neighbourhoods
Our City is well-planned and beautiful, and our neighbourhoods and town centres are convenient and vibrant places to live, work and play.

The delivery of this project will align with Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025

Considerations of *Local Government Act (2020)* Principles

Financial Implications
Sufficient funding for this contract is available in the budget for the Signalised intersection - Plenty Rd and Everton Drive, Mernda.

Community Consultation and Engagement
In accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020*, consideration was given as to whether there were any opportunities to collaborate with other Councils and public bodies or to use any existing collaborative procurement arrangements. However, this contract relates to a unique need for the City of Whittlesea therefore collaboration with other Councils and public bodies or the use of any existing collaborative procurement arrangements could not be considered

Community consultation and engagement was not required in relation to the subject matter of this report as it relates to commercial arrangements and contractual obligations that are

Other Principles for Consideration as per the *Local Government Act (2020)*

Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles

(a) Council decisions are to be made and actions taken in accordance with the relevant law.

Public Transparency Principles

(a) Council decision making processes must be transparent except when the Council is dealing with information that is confidential by virtue of the *Local Government Act* or any other Act.

Council Policy Considerations

Environmental Sustainability Considerations (including Climate Emergency)
Environmental benefit outcomes under this project include the provision for use of sustainable construction materials such as recycled crushed concrete for road pavement base, crumbed rubber asphalt and LED light for public lighting. Travel time savings will also contribute to better environmental outcomes.

Social, Cultural and Health
The delivery of this project will provide safe and direct access from Plenty Road to existing Mernda Primary School and the future Regional Aquatic and Sport Centre, Mernda which will be a key facility for the local and regional community in promoting a healthy lifestyle also enhance social gathering to support connected community.

Economic
The delivery of this project will provide safe connection from existing Everton Drive and the future Station Lane to Plenty Everton which in general will reduce significantly the travel time and petrol cost saving for local residents in the area to access the existing Mernda Primary School, Mernda Village shopping centre and future Regional Aquatic and Sport Centre from Plenty Road.

Legal, Resource and Strategic Risk Implications
No implications.

Implementation Strategy

Communication
Prior to commencement of the works and in the course of construction, notification to surrounding residents, road users and the general public will be provided in timely manner. Notification will be in the form of a letter drop to local residents, Variable Message Boards erected in the vicinity of the site and information on Council's website and social media channels.

Critical Dates
The contract term is expected to commence in December 2023 for a duration of approximately 12 months.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

Attachments

Attachments:

1. CONFIDENTIAL REDACTED - Tender Contract 2023-100 Construction of Plenty Road and Everton Drive Signalise Intersection, Evaluation Summary [**5.3.1** - 5 pages]

5.4 Community Engagement Policy

Director/Executive Manager: Executive Manager Public Affairs

Report Author: Unit Manager Community Engagement

In Attendance: Manager Communications & Engagement
Unit Manager Community Engagement

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to seek endorsement of an update to Council's Community Engagement Policy following a four-week period of community consultation.

The City of Whittlesea is committed to ensuring the voices of its community are heard and considered in Council decision-making. This revised Community Engagement Policy will replace the previous A Voice for All Community Engagement Policy that was adopted on 1 March 2021 to adhere to the requirements of the Local Government Act 2020 (Vic).

The Policy has been updated following an internal review as well as benchmarking best practice community engagement in the public sector.

The updated Policy was shared with the community and feedback encouraged during a four-week period of community consultation from 2-29 October 2023.

Officers' Recommendation

THAT Council:

1. **Adopts the Community Engagement Policy at Attachment 1.**
2. **Notes the Engagement Summary Report – Community Engagement Policy at Attachment 2.**

Background / Key Information

Community Consultation

The draft policy was shared with the community at eight community-based pop-ups, on the Engage Whittlesea digital platform and through broad internal consultation. Feedback on the draft policy was captured from 160 people, the majority of these (139) from in-person consultation activities.

Overall, 94% of participants in the community engagement indicated their support of the draft policy with the remaining 6% indicating they weren't sure. Additional comments provided predominately related to topics already addressed in the policy, however a few minor amendments were made to the draft following consultation including re-alphabetising the definitions lists, small language tweaks, particularly around gender diversity, rewording the child safe statement and the inclusion of a statement that indicated information collected during consultations may be used to inform other projects.

Key differences to previously adopted Policy (A Voice For All, 2021)

While the updated policy is not substantially different in intent to the original, it seeks to reflect the maturation of the engagement function at the City of Whittlesea in recent years including:

- a clearer focus on clarifying expectations and articulating Council's commitment to the engagement principles as outlined in the Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)
- being clear with the community around their level of influence; community feedback is considered in decision-making but not the only deciding factor
- transparency around circumstances where engagement may be limited or not appropriate
- ensuring all relevant legislation is referred to clearly.

It also outlines Council's focus areas for this iteration of the policy including:

- further developing our consultation practices with under-represented cohorts
- continuing to evolve our journey towards more deliberative practices.

Applications of Policy

This Policy applies to all City of Whittlesea Administrators/Councillors, Council Officers, contractors, external consultants, volunteers or any other persons engaged by Council to deliver community engagement activities.

This Policy does not replace statutory processes relating to permit applications and planning scheme amendments governed by the Planning and Environment Act 1987 and associated regulations. Nor does it apply to other council processes such as service requests or complaints.

Next review of Policy

The Policy is proposed to be reviewed in 2025 and updated in 2027.

Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

Connected Communities

We work to foster and inclusive, healthy, safe and welcoming community where all ways of life are celebrated and supported.

High Performing Organisation

We engage effectively with the community, to deliver efficient and effective services and initiatives, and to make decisions in the best interest of our community and deliver value to our community.

Considerations of *Local Government Act (2020)* Principles

Financial Management

The predominant cost of the delivery of the engagement program to be delivered under this policy is officer time which is covered in Council's operational budget. The use of tailored methodology may require some equipment or hiring costs and as we move towards deliberative practice there may be further budget implications which will be included as part of project budgets.

Community Consultation and Engagement

In accordance with *the Local Government Act 2020* (Vic) Council undertook a comprehensive engagement process on the draft Community Engagement Policy to seek community feedback. The engagement program deployed a diverse range of tools and tactics including community-based pop-ups at a range of locations including citizenship ceremonies, festivals and events, libraries and community centres and an online survey. Consultation also took place with key stakeholder groups. We received feedback from 160 people with 94% of participants supportive of the draft policy.

Other Principles for Consideration as per the *Local Government Act (2020)*

Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles

(a) Council decisions are to be made and actions taken in accordance with the relevant law.

(b) Priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations.

(d) The municipal community is to be engaged in strategic planning and strategic decision making.

(e) Innovation and continuous improvement is to be pursued.
(i) The transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.

Public Transparency Principles

(a) Council decision making processes must be transparent except when the Council is dealing with information that is confidential by virtue of the *Local Government Act* or any other Act.
(b) Council information must be publicly available unless—
  (i) the information is confidential by virtue of the *Local Government Act* or any other Act; or
  (ii) public availability of the information would be contrary to the public interest.
(c) Council information must be understandable and accessible to members of the municipal community.
(d) Public awareness of the availability of Council information must be facilitated.

Council Policy Considerations

Environmental Sustainability Considerations (including Climate Emergency)

No implications.

Social, Cultural and Health

No implications.

Economic

No implications.

Legal, Resource and Strategic Risk Implications

No implications.

Implementation Strategy

Communication

Once adopted the updated Community Engagement Policy will be published on Council's website and the Engage Whittlesea digital platform.

Critical Dates

N/A

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

Attachments

1. Community Engagement Policy 2023-2027 [**5.4.1** - 12 pages]
2. Engagement Summary Report - Community Engagement Policy [**5.4.2** - 11 pages]

Community Engagement Policy 2023-2027

Policy statement

The City of Whittlesea is committed to providing a structured and transparent framework for purposeful, genuine and meaningful community engagement. This policy sets out how Council will provide opportunities for our diverse community to share ideas, opinions and feedback about activities, projects and issues that are important to them.

Council commits to engage in a deliberative, proactive and flexible way to ensure the voices of its community are heard and considered in Council decision-making.

Purpose

The purpose of the Community Engagement Policy 2023-2027 is to:

a) **promote inclusive decision-making** by ensuring community members have the opportunity to have their say on matters and decisions that impact their life
b) **build trust** between the community and the City of Whittlesea whereby opinions are sought, valued and considered and used to shape the future of the City
c) **contribute to exemplary governance** with informed and responsible decisions informed by community input
d) **remain transparent** by being clear on why, when and how we engage our community and how feedback is used to inform the decisions of Council
e) **foster community connection and collaboration** by involving and consulting with community
f) **promote civic participation** and foster a sense of ownership and shared responsibility
g) **promote accountability and support inclusivity** by outlining how Council will provide a range of tailored engagement opportunities for our diverse community
h) **ensure legislative compliance** with the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic).

Scope

This Policy applies to all City of Whittlesea Councillors, Council Officers, contractors, external consultants, project partners, volunteers or any other persons engaged by Council to deliver community engagement activities.

Council will use community feedback to inform decision-making alongside other factors including research, best-practice, specialist technical advice, legislation, risk, safety, budget implications, best value and planning.

As defined in the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic) the Council is the decision maker on matters of policy and governance. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) ensures the effective and efficient management of the day-to-day operations of the Council and is responsible for overseeing the implementation of Council decisions.

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This policy does not replace legislative requirements and statutory processes including those relating to permit applications and planning scheme amendments governed by the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and associated Regulations. Nor does it apply to other council processes such as service requests or complaints.

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040

The Community Engagement Policy 2023-2027 primarily guides Council's work toward the following Goal as outlined in *Whittlesea 2040: A place for all:* ***High Performing Organisation***

This Policy enables the City of Whittlesea to meaningfully engage with community on impactful projects, services and plans, and incorporate outcomes into planning and decision-making as projects unfold.

Additionally, this Policy is informed by:

- *Local Government Act 2020*
- *Local Government Act 1989*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*
- *Disability Act 2006*
- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*
- *Planning and Environment Act 1987*
- *Road Management Act 2004*
- *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*
- *Subordinate Legislation Act 1994*
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*
- *Gender Equality Act 2020*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Public Administration Act 2004*
- *Child Safe Standards, Victorian Commission for Children and Young People*

Overarching Governance Principles

The development of this Policy considered the *Local Government Act 2020's* Overarching Governance Principles and the following were applied:

Lawful	☒	**Community engagement**	☒	**Financially viable**	☐
Best community outcome	☒	**Innovation & improvement**	☒	**Consistent with government plans**	☐
Sustainable	☐	**Collaboration with government bodies**	☐	**Transparent**	☒

Lawful: This Policy has been developed in accordance with the requirement for local governments to develop a Community Engagement Policy per the *Local Government Act 2020.*

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Best community outcome: This Policy ensures that decision-making at the City of Whittlesea is informed by the interests of our diverse community, and that steps are taken to proactively ensure all representative voices are heard.

Community engagement: This Policy informs a best-practice approach to all community engagements with the City of Whittlesea community, to ensure all Council decisions are made in the interest of community.

Innovation & improvement: This Policy and related processes will be reviewed periodically with a focus on continuous improvement and innovation to ensure they remain relevant with legislation and community priorities.

Transparent: Council is accountable for the decisions it has been entrusted to make. This Policy ensures that Council is clear on why and how we engage our community to inform these decisions.

Gender Equality, Human Rights and Child Safe Compliance The City of Whittlesea commits to actively seeking representation from all diverse groups within the municipality. Inclusive stakeholder engagement recognises the diversity within each community and of individuals. It also recognises that intersectionality can further exacerbate barriers to public participation and engagement.

Applying a gender lens to stakeholder engagement means taking time to actively seek out the knowledge, perspectives and experiences of women, men and gender diverse groups on all policies, programs and services, not just initiatives targeted at them. It is about creating a more empowering space for all members of the community to take part.

As a Child Safe organisation, we seek to include the voices of children and young people in our organisational activities and actively seek to understand what makes them feel safe, and provide them with opportunities to contribute to decisions that impact them. You can read the City of Whittlesea's Child Safe Commitment Statement, Child Safe Policy and Code on our website at www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/childsafety

All City of Whittlesea policies comply with the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities, Gender Equality Act, Climate Change Act* and the *Child Safe Standards*.

DefinitionsAct means the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic)

Chief Executive Officer	means the person appointed by Council to be its Chief Executive Officer (CEO); or any person acting in that position.
City	means the City of Whittlesea
Collaborate	means to partner with the community in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and identification of preferred solutions
Community	means the people who live, work, visit, study, or do business in the City of Whittlesea

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Community Engagement	(also known as stakeholder engagement, public participation or community consultation) means a planned process with the specific purpose of encouraging active participation from the community in decisions that impact them or are of interest to them
Consult	means obtaining public feedback and analysis, alternatives and/or decisions
Consultation	means the planned engagement process of seeking feedback or advice on a specific project or topic
Council	means the City of Whittlesea, or City, being a body corporate constituted as a municipal Council under *the Local Government Act 2020* (Vic)
Council officer	means the Chief Executive Officer and staff of Council appointed by the Chief Executive Officer
Councillors	means the individuals holding the office of a member of Whittlesea Council or an appointed Administrator
Deliberation	means careful and comprehensive consideration or discussion and movement toward consensus
Deliberative engagement	means a well-planned engagement process that encourages the community to critically test, weigh up and consider a range of information, perspectives, inputs and evidence to reach a consensus or make recommendations
Diverse communities	means individuals or groups who live, work, play, visit, study or invest in our City. Often defined by specific geographic locations, or those with common interests, practices, affiliations or identities.
Empower	means to place final decision making in the hands of the public
Gender equality	means the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women, men, transgender and gender-diverse people. Equality does not mean that women, men, transgender and gender-diverse people will become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on their gender
IAP2 Spectrum of Engagement	means the International Association of Public Participation engagement spectrum that ranges from proving information to inform the community (low level of influence on a project/decision) through to collaborating with and empowering the community in decision-making (high level of influence on a project/decision)
Inform	means providing the community with information to assist them understanding he problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions

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Intersectionality	means the interconnected social categorisations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group
Involve	means working directly with the community throughout the engagement process to ensure their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered
Mayor	means the councillor elected to the Office of Mayor of the City, Deputy Mayor acting in the role of Mayor or any person appointed by Council to be acting as Mayor, or an appointed Chair of a panel of Administrators
Stakeholder	means an individual or group that has an interest in or may be impacted by a project decision or who can influence the decision-making

Our commitment to engage

The *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic) articulates Council's responsibility to conduct community engagement. The Act states that Councils must adopt and maintain a community engagement policy.

The City of Whittlesea will identify individuals and groups who may be impacted or interested in the project or decision and encourage participation in the engagement.
The City of Whittlesea will endeavour to reduce physical, social and cultural barriers to participation in community engagement activities that may include Aboriginality, age, ability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation and other attributes.

In accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic) Council must specifically engage on the following:

- Community Vision
- Council Plan
- Financial Plan
- Asset Plan
- Making a Local Law
- Acquiring or selling land, or leases in prescribed circumstances.

The City of Whittlesea may also engage with the community when:

- a proposed change to Council activities or strategic direction may significantly impact the community in terms of the economy, lifestyle, environment, wellbeing or amenity of the municipality
- when developing new or reviewing existing policies or strategies
- introducing a new service, discontinuing an existing service or substantially changing or reviewing a service that may significantly affect how services are provided
- planning and development of major projects and capital works, including public buildings, town centres, parks or other infrastructure

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- urban development/redevelopment proposals, such as structure plans, that may significantly alter the existing amenity or characteristics of a geographic area.

In addition to formal engagement, Council invites our community to engage with us at any time and in any way that is appropriate, respectful and constructive.

What is Community Engagement?

Community engagement is a planned process that provides a range of opportunities for public involvement in Council's decision-making, relationship building and community strengthening

Community engagement has the specific purpose of encouraging active participation from the community in decisions that impact them or are of interest to them. Engagement can take many forms including:

- sharing information, educating the community and providing updates
- seeking community perceptions, opinions, feedback and ideas
- collaborating with key stakeholders to address specific local issues.

When community engagement may be limited

There are times when Council's level of engagement with the community and key stakeholders may be limited. In some circumstances, Council may only be able to inform the community and stakeholders of Council's decisions and actions.

This may occur when:

a) Council is not the lead agency
b) an immediate resolution is required
c) specialist or technical expertise is required
d) there are no negotiables or opportunities to influence the decision
e) an initiative involves confidential or commercial information
f) there are clear and defined legislative responsibilities that must be met
g) developing or reviewing internal policies and procedures
h) there is a risk to public safety.

The spectrum of engagement

Council's approach to community engagement is guided by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Engagement, which is recognised as the best practice tool for community engagement.

The IAP2 Spectrum identifies five levels of engagement with corresponding goals and actions. It makes clear the role of the community in decision-making at each level.

	Inform Low level of public engagement		**Involve** Mid level of public engagement		**Empower** High level of public engagement
	Inform	**Consult**	**Involve**	**Collaborate**	**Empower**
Goal	One-way communication to provide balanced and objective information to assist understanding about something that is going to happen or has already happened.	Two-way communication process aimed at obtaining feedback on ideas, alternatives and proposals to inform our decision-making.	Participatory process designed to help identify issues and views to ensure that concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.	Working together to develop an understanding of all issues and interests to work out alternatives and identify preferred collective solutions.	To build the capacity of the community to lead their own plans for change.
Role of community and/or stakeholders	**Listen**	**Contribute**	**Participate**	**Partner**	**Lead**
Our promise to the public	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Engagement type	**Consultative**		**Deliberative**		
Examples when this engagement level may be appropriate	• Naming of an asset • In the event of an emergency • Undertaking a playground redevelopment		• Seeking input from Advisory Committees on key initiatives, strategies and plans • Facilitated discussions on developing community vision key directions • Development of the Community Vision, Council Plan, Financial Plan and Asset Plan		
Possible methods in the City of Whittlesea	• Advertisements • Fact sheets • Newsletter • Public Notices • Social media • Websites	• Focus groups • Public exhibition • Surveys	• Workshops • Advisory committees	• Consensus building • Facilitated workshops	• Community panel • Deliberative workshops • Deliberative focus groups

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Council undertakes a range of community engagement activities and engagement can occur at multiple stages across a project.

The two main types of community engagement are:

Consultative or participatory engagement

This has a lower level of influence, generally aligning with the 'Inform' or 'Consult' range of the IAP2 spectrum. Participation at this level usually includes a broad range of community members and stakeholders and occurs when views, opinions or ideas are invited on a specific project, draft policy, plan or document.

Examples of consultative engagement practices include:

- surveys
- polls
- ideas boards
- listening posts and pop-up stalls
- formal submissions.

Deliberative engagement

This practice has the highest level of influence, generally aligning with the 'Involve', 'Collaborate' or 'Empower' range of the IAP2 spectrum. It encourages community members to critically test, weigh up and consider a range of information, perspectives, inputs and evidence to make a recommendation or reach consensus if needed.

Deliberation can be scaled to suit a project based on its scope, complexity or impact and may require independent facilitation to ensure a fair and equitable process.

Examples of a deliberative practice includes:

- working with committees, advisory groups or reference groups over time
- panels of community members
- focus groups and workshops.

Principles and commitments

The City of Whittlesea is committed to the community engagement principles outlined in section 56 (a) to (e) of the *Local Government Act 2020*. These principles emphasise the importance of accessibility, inclusivity, transparency, timeliness, accountability and continuous improvement.

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Community Engagement Principle	Our commitment
A community engagement process must have a clearly defined objective and scope	• All community engagements are planned in line with this policy and identify the purpose, scope and objectives of the project/decision • Council will clearly inform participants and the community what they can and cannot influence, how they can participate, and what opportunity there is for them to influence a decision
Participants in community engagement must have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation	• Council will provide the community with objective, relevant and timely information that provides all necessary information for community to participate meaningfully in the engagement • Information will be presented in plain language that is easily understood • Council will make use of accessible formats and information in other languages where appropriate to support participation in the community engagement • Council will use a variety of traditional and digital communication channels to inform about the opportunity to engage • All relevant information will be made available on Council's Engage Whittlesea platform, which is translatable into several languages spoken by the City of Whittlesea's diverse community
Participants in community engagement must be representative of the persons and groups affected by the matter that is the subject of the community engagement	• Council will identify individuals and groups who may be impacted by or interested in the project or decision and encourage participation in the engagement • Council will use different engagement methods to ensure it hears from key stakeholders and our community at a time and in a way that suits them • Council will undertake activities that seek to hear from a representative cross-section of the community • Council will utilise existing networks and groups to increase inclusiveness and reach • Where appropriate Council will partner with other organisations to maximise collective effort, impact and the opportunity to engage with the community

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Community Engagement Principle	Our commitment
Participants in community engagement are entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement	• Council will design engagement opportunities that are inclusive and accessible and make reasonable adjustments where necessary to remove barriers to participation • Council will provide sufficient time to provide feedback to ensure those impacted can participate in a meaningful way • For community who may experience barriers to participation, additional resources may be considered • Council will work with participants to reduce physical, social and cultural barriers to their participation. • Consideration will be given to time, location and methodology such as face-to-face or online engagement activities
Participants in community engagement are informed of the ways in which the community engagement process will influence Council decision making	• Council will identify the appropriate level of engagement as outlined in this policy • Council will advise key stakeholders and the community how community input will be considered as part of Council's decision-making • Council will communicate how and when the decision will be made and identify other factors that will influence the decision-making process • Council will report back to the community in a timely manner to share what we heard and how that community feedback informed the decision-making process

Block out periods

Council will endeavour to avoid carrying out formal consultation around key dates such as Christmas/New Year, long weekends and school holidays, where possible unless it allows specific groups more opportunity to participate.

Elections

In the lead up to Council elections, community engagement will be guided by Council's *Election Period Policy.*

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Roles and responsibilities

Community engagement is part of Council's core business and is the responsibility of all Council business areas and employees. Our specific roles and responsibilities are outlined in the table below.

Role	Responsibilities
Mayor and Councillors	Champion the commitment and principles of engagement through leadership, modelling best-practice and decision-making.
CEO and Executive Leadership Team	Stewardship of a culture that fosters best-practice engagement and modelling the principles through leadership, process and implementation of this policy.
Council officers	Ensure their community engagement planning and delivery is consistent with this policy as appropriate to their role and function.
Community Engagement Team	Oversee adherence to the Community Engagement Policy 2023-2027 and support the development and delivery of Council's community engagement program practice through the provision of advice, training and mentoring, resources and tools. The team is responsible for building organisational capacity and knowledge in community engagement.
Community members	Constructively participate in engagement processes by sharing local knowledge, values and perceptions while being respectful of the engagement process, Councillors, Council Officers and the ideas and opinions of other community members. The City of Whittlesea is committed to being accessible and responsive to all those willing to participate in community engagement activities. However, any unreasonable customer/community conduct, which may negatively impact on our staff's safety and wellbeing will be responded to in alignment with Council's *Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Guidelines*.

Beyond planned engagement

Council welcomes community feedback at any time and will always respect, gather and be receptive to community input via our customer channels and community interactions.

Insights and information captured through community engagement activities will be used to improve our understanding of the current experience of our community and may be used to help inform Council's progress toward its vision and goals.

How was the policy developed?

First adopted by Council in 2021, the *A Voice For All* Community Engagement Policy 2021 was refreshed in 2023.

Since the Policy's inception Council has continued to foster community participation and has shaped the update of this policy in line with ongoing community feedback.

The policy was updated following an internal review as well as benchmarking best practice community engagement in the public sector.

Date of Adoption	Next Review Date	Directorate Responsible
<XX Month 20XX>	December 2025	Executive Services

The draft Community Engagement Policy 2023-2027 was released for community feedback before being adopted by Council.

Privacy statement

As part of our engagement process Council may at times collect demographic data. We are committed to the responsible collection and handling of personal information, consistent with the principles in the Privacy and Data Protection Act. If you believe we have handled your personal information inappropriately, please contact the Information Privacy Officer on 03 9217 2170 or email privacy@whittlesea.vic.gov.au.

Date of Adoption	Next Review Date	Directorate Responsible
<XX Month 20XX>	December 2025	Executive Services

Community Engagement Policy
Engagement Summary

November 2023

Introduction

Under the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act), Councils are required to have a Community Engagement Policy that is used to guide genuine and meaningful community engagement.

Our first Community Engagement Policy: A Voice for All was adopted by Council in March 2021 and was committed to be reviewed in 2023. The Policy is being updated to support the maturity of the function at the City of Whittlesea following an internal review as well as benchmarking best practice community engagement in the public sector.

The draft updated policy, while acknowledging the many forms of broad community engagement, such as Coffee with Council, speaks to the more formal community engagement as required under the Act. Presented on Council's new policy template it focuses on clarifying expectations and highlighting Council's commitment to the engagement principles as spelled out in the Act.

Council is committed to providing a structured and transparent framework for purposeful, genuine and meaningful community engagement. This policy sets out how Council will provide opportunities for our diverse community to share ideas, opinions and feedback about activities, projects and issues that are important to them.

Council commits to engage in a deliberative, proactive and flexible way to ensure the voices of its community are heard and considered in Council decision-making.

The key differences of the updated policy include:

- **our commitment to legislated engagement principles**; a clearer focus on clarifying expectations and articulating our commitment to the engagement principles as outlined in the Local Government Act
- **clarity on our community's level of influence**; community feedback will inform decision-making alongside other factors including research, best practice, legislations, risk, budget and specialist technical advice
- **ensuring we remain transparent**; Council will clearly inform participants and the community what they can and cannot influence, how they can participate, and what opportunity there is for them to influence a decision
- **ensuring legislative compliance**; the updated policy ensures all relevant legislation is referenced.

How we engaged you

Council presented the draft updated Community Engagement Policy to the community for feedback between 2 October and 29 October 2023.

Along with the draft Policy, Council highlighted the four key differences of the updated policy with participants online and at seven community-based pop-ups and asked them whether they supported the updated policy using 'yes', 'no' or 'not sure' options.

Participants were able to provide any further feedback/comments.

What we asked

To gain further insight from the community on their engagement and communication preferences, participants were asked a further two questions:

1. What would be your preferred method to engage with Council to share insights and feedback? Multiple choice answer selection was used which offered the below options:
    - online through the Engage Whittlesea platform
    - at a community-based pop-up
    - participate in a Community Focus Group to allow for more in-depth discussion
    - attend a project information drop-in session
    - email
    - at a presentation delivered to the group/club I am a part of
    - other (please specify).

2. How would you prefer to be informed of community consultations? Multiple choice answer selection was used which offered the below options:
    - register as a member for the Engage Whittlesea platform and receive notifications
    - email
    - social media
    - local Scoop bi-monthly print newsletter
    - poster/ flyer in local community centre or library
    - through my local Community Development Officer
    - project specific on-site engagement
    - project specific letter/ flyer in the post (if possible)
    - other (please specify).

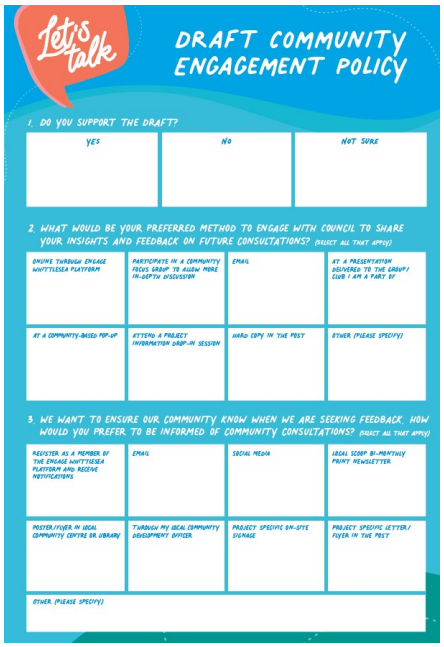
Online participants were asked an additional question as below:
At what location would you like to see a community-based pop up? Multiple choice answer selection was used which offered the below options:

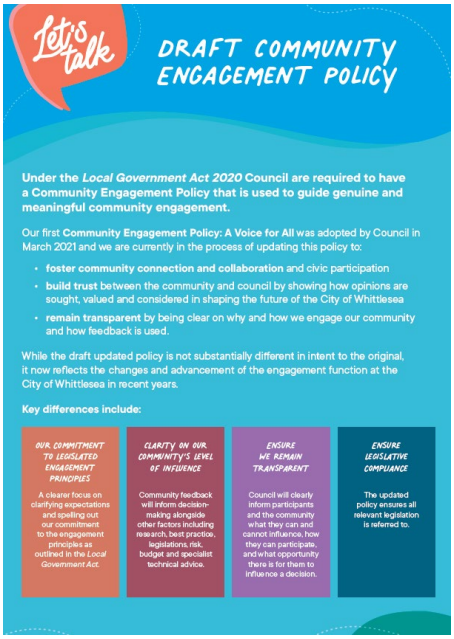
- shopping centres
- library
- community centre
- church/ temple
- parks/ playgrounds
- other.

Making our engagement accessible

The Engage Whittlesea platform utilises an accessibility add-on ensuring that it is as accessible as possible for all users. The platform also has an in-built translation tool so that the information provided can be translated into the audience's preferred language to ensure it is understood.

Bi-lingual staff attended targeted community-based pop-up sessions to support in person communication.





Above: information board and dot board activity used at the community-based pop-ups.

Stakeholders consulted

Key stakeholders and the wider community were informed of the consultation through a range of channels including electronic direct mail, social media and flyers. Key stakeholders were emailed by relevant Council Officers to highlight the proposed changes and seek feedback on the policy update and provided with a link to the project Engage page where the draft policy could be accessed, and feedback shared.

Targeted stakeholders included:

- Council registered community and CALD groups
- Advisory groups and networks including:
  - Whittlesea Disability Network
  - Whittlesea Interfaith Network
  - Whittlesea Reconciliation Group
  - Youth Advisory Committee
  - Community Leadership Program participants
  - members of the recent Community Priorities community focus group.

Eight community-based pop-ups were held in high foot traffic locations. These were:

- Citizenship Ceremonies at Civic Centre on 9 October from 11am – 12.30pm and 2pm – 3.30pm
- Lalor Library on 11 October from 9.30am - 11.30am
- Mernda Village Community Activity Centre on 12 October from 10.30am - 12.30pm
- Community Forum at Galada Community Centre on 17 October from 6.15pm - 7.15pm
- Mill Park Library on 23 October from 11.30am - 1.30pm
- Kirrip Community Centre on 24 October from 10am – 12pm
- Diwali Festival South Morang on Saturday 28 October from 12pm – 5pm
- Citizenship Ceremonies at Civic Centre on 2 November from 11am – 12.30pm and 2pm – 3.30pm

Above: Project team engaging at the Mernda Village Community Activity Centre.

Participation

A total of 156 contributions were made during the community engagement period. A snapshot of consultation activities and community participation is below:

8 community-based pop-ups

139 in-person contributions

291 visitors to the project Engage page

17 digital contributions

Draft documents downloaded 35 times

55% Female, 45% Male,

44% aged 35 - 54
28% aged over 66 years

4% person living with a disability

74% CALD community members

What we heard

When asked if they were supportive, 94% of participants indicated they support the draft Community Engagement Policy. (Full results below with a breakdown of what was heard at each community-based pop-up available in Appendix 2).

(94%)
Yes

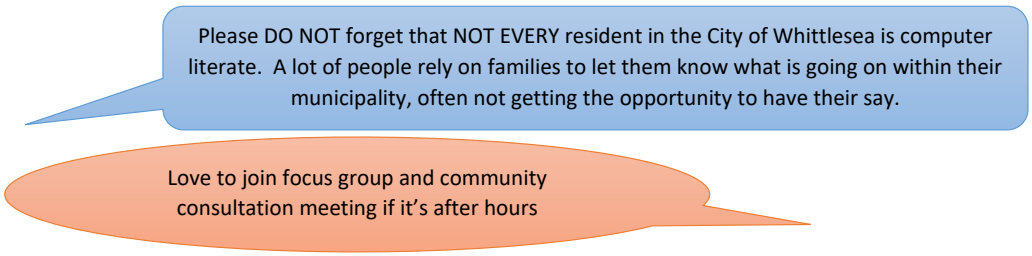
(6%)
Not Sure

(0%)
No

Additional comments
Participants had the opportunity to provide additional comments with six people taking advantage of this opportunity (four online and two in person).

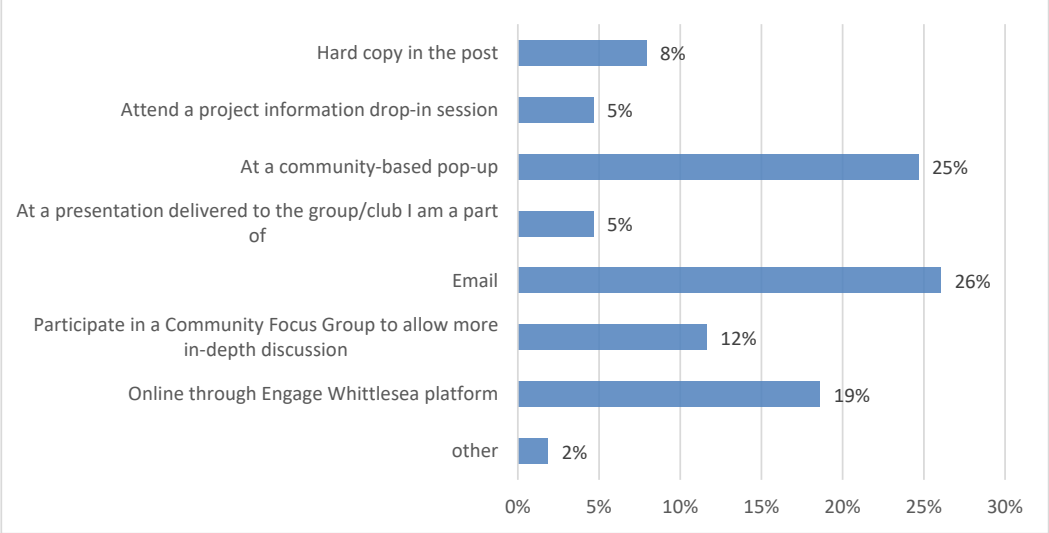
The main themes of the comments were:

- how feedback has shaped a project outcome should be shared back with the community
- customer service turnaround time for enquiries
- need to offer digital and non-digital engagement opportunities as not everyone is computer literate.

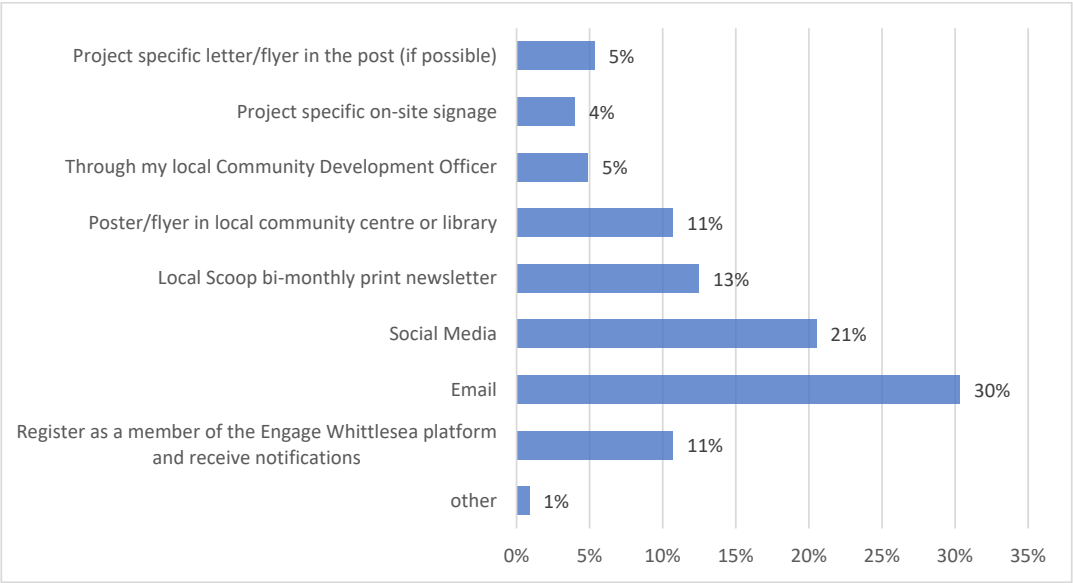


The additional comments received from six community members did not result in any amendments to the policy as the comments related to specific projects or were already addressed in the policy. Refer to Appendix 1 to see how the comment themes captured are addressed in the Policy.

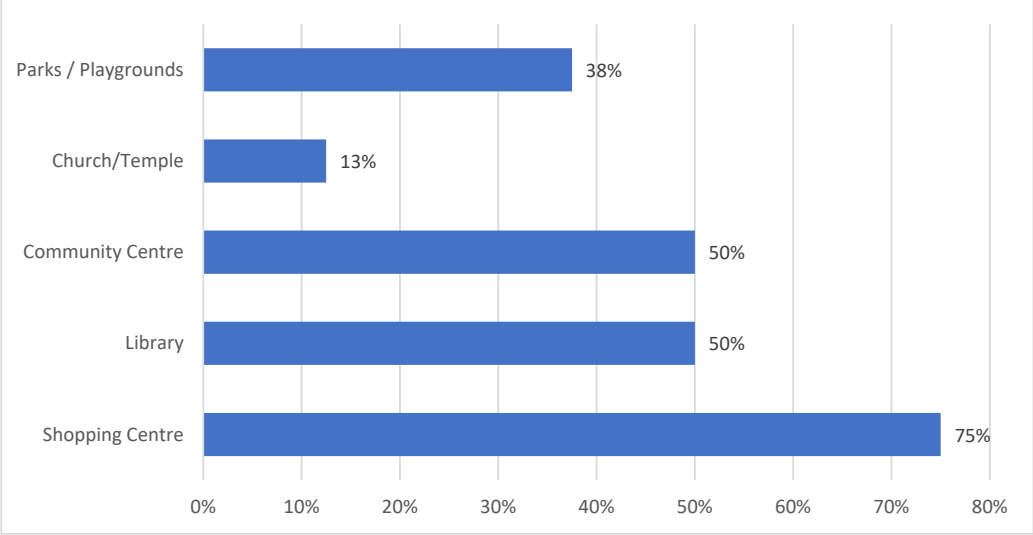
How people like to be engaged
Participants indicated their preferred method to engage with Council to share insights and feedback was via email (26%), at a community-based pop-up (25%) and online through the Engage Whittlesea platform (18%). Below are the full results captured for this question.



When asked how they prefer to be informed of community consultations, the communications channels most appealing were email (31%), social media (21%) and in Local Scoop bi-monthly print newsletter (13%). Below are the full results captured for this question.



Those that participated in the engagement online were asked to indicate where they'd like to see community-pop-ups held and were able to select more than one of the available responses. Majority of participants (75%) indicated shopping centres were the preferred location, followed by libraries (50%) and community centres (50%). Below are the full results captured for this question.



Next steps

The revised draft Community Engagement Policy will be presented to Council for adoption on 19 December 2023. Once adopted the updated policy will be shared with the community. This will be shared through digital communications, direct contact with stakeholders, and updates on the project Engage page.

Appendix 1

Feedback captured during community consultation generally related to specific projects or what was suggested was already covered in the policy. Below are the main themes captured and how these are addressed in the policy.

- **How feedback has shaped a project outcome should be shared back with community**
  A key principle of the Community Engagement Policy is informing participants in community engagement of the ways in which the community engagement process will influence Council decision making. We are committed to reporting back to the community in a timely manner to share what we heard and how that community feedback informed the decision-making process. An engagement summary report will be shared following each community engagement that will present what was captured through the consultation. Subsequent project communications will highlight how feedback was used to shape the project.
- **Turnaround time from customer service**
  Timelines for general customer service enquiries fall outside of the Community Engagement Policy. As part of the Community Engagement Policy Council is committed to communicating how and when a decision will be made. Each community engagement will have a clear timeline that is communicated to participants.
- **Need to offer digital and non-digital engagement opportunities as not everyone is computer literate**
  A key principle of the Community Engagement Policy is participants having access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation. Council is committed to presenting information in plain language and will make use of accessible formats and information in other languages where appropriate to support participation in community engagement. We will use a variety of traditional and digital communication channels to inform our community about the opportunity to engage.

  Another key principle of the Community Engagement Policy is participants being entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement. Council will use different engagement methods to ensure it hears from key stakeholders and our community at a time and in a way that suits them.

  We will design engagement opportunities that are inclusive and accessible and make reasonable adjustments where necessary to remove barriers to participation. We will provide sufficient time to provide feedback to ensure those impacted can participate in a meaningful way.

Appendix 2

Below is the breakdown of the feedback captured at each community-based pop-up and through the project Engage page.

Do you support the updated Community Engagement Policy?

Location	Yes	No	Not Sure	Total
Citizenship Ceremony October	10	0	0	10
Lalor Library	13	0	1	14
Mernda CAC	17	0	0	17
Community Forum Galada CC	14	0	0	14
Mill Park Library	17	0	0	17
Kirrip CC	8	0	0	8
Diwali Festival	45	0	2	47
Citizenship Ceremony November	12	0	0	12
Online	11	0	6	17
Total	**147**	**0**	**9**	**156**

How would you prefer to engage with Council to share insights and feedback?

Option	Citizenship ceremony	Lalor Library	MVCAC	Comm Forum	Mill Park Library	Kirrip	Diwali	Citizenship ceremony	ONLINE	TOTAL
online engage platform	1	2	2	2	3	4	9	8	9	40
focus group	1	0	0	2	1	1	10	2	8	25
email	2	1	6	5	2	0	26	1	13	56
presentation at club/group	1	2	1	2	2	0	1	0	1	10
at pop ups	2	7	8	11	6	2	6	3	8	53
project drop in session	1	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	4	10
hard copy in post	1	1	0	1	2	0	7	0	5	17
other	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	4
Total	**10**	**14**	**17**	**25**	**17**	**8**	**62**	**14**	**48**	**215**

How would you prefer to be informed of community consultations?

Option	Citizenship ceremony	Lalor Library	MVCAC	Community Forum	Mill Park Library	Kirrip	Diwali	Citizenship ceremony	ONLINE	TOTAL
register engage page	2	3	0	4	1	3	1	2	8	24
email	1	2	10	3	4	0	26	6	16	68
social media	1	0	2	5	5	5	13	7	8	46
local scoop	3	2	1	5	5	0	7	1	4	28
poster in comm facility	1	4	3	5	2	0	7	0	2	24
through Community Development Officer	1	0	0	5	0	0	3	0	2	11
project specific on-site signage	0	1	0	1	0	0	3	0	4	9
project specific letter in mail	1	2	1	1	0	0	2	0	5	12
other	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	**10**	**14**	**17**	**31**	**17**	**8**	**62**	**16**	**49**	**224**

At what location would you like to see a community-based pop up? (Online only)

- Shopping centres 75%
- Library 50%
- Community Centre 50%
- Church/ Temple 12.5%
- Parks/ Playgrounds 37.5%
- Other 0%

5.5 Council Policies for Rescission

Director/Executive Manager: Executive Manager Strategy & Insights

Report Author: Unit Manager Corporate Planning & Improvement

Executive Summary

Under the endorsed Integrated Planning Framework (IPF), Council policies, plans and strategies are consolidated to minimise Council's policy landscape and ensure greater efficiency in service planning and delivery.

The purpose of this report is to rescind 22 Council policies which have been identified as no longer relevant to Council's function. Upon review, they were found to be (a) reflected in the Connected Community, Liveable Neighbourhoods, Strong Local Economy, or Sustainable Environment Strategies, (b) better retained internally as corporate policies, or (c) covered by other existing Policies, Guidelines or legislation.

Officers' Recommendation

THAT Council rescind the following policies and strategies as they are:

1. **Reflected in the Connected Communities, Liveable Neighbourhoods, Sustainable Environment or Strong Local Economy Strategies:**
    - **Arts Policy**
    - **Asylum Seeker Policy**
    - **Community Building Policy**
    - **Community Building Strategy**
    - **Community Safety Crime Prevention Policy**
    - **Community Transport Policy**
    - **Community Volunteering Policy**
    - **Lifelong Learning Policy**
    - **Positive Ageing Policy**
    - **Preventing Alcohol Related Harm Policy**
    - **Thriving Children, Young People & Families Strategy**
2. **Operational in nature and to be retained internally as Corporate policies or guidelines:**
    - **Animal Registration and Refund Policy**
    - **Early Activation of New Communities Policy**
    - **Roadside Management Strategy**
3. **Superseded and covered by existing policies, plans, guidelines and or legislation:**
    - **Clothing Recycling Bin Policy**
    - **Domestic Animal Welfare Support Policy (effective from 30 April 2024)**
    - **Early Years Policy**

- **Library Strategy for Mernda and Epping North Final Report 2015-2016**
- **Meals on Wheels Volunteers Policy**
- **Public Question Time Policy**
- **Street Activities Policy (effective from 30 June 2024)**
- **Street Numbering Policy**

Background / Key Information

Council has embarked on a journey to consolidate its policies, strategies and plans under the IPF, a streamlined framework for planning. The aim of the IPF is to eliminate duplication of work, and focus planning on community outcomes. Additionally, the IPF seeks to maintain a smaller number of endorsed documents which more clearly articulate to the community Council's long-term vision and short-to-medium-term priorities under its five overarching goals:

- Connected Community
- Liveable Neighbourhoods
- Strong Local Economy
- Sustainable Environment
- High Performing Organisation.

In developing five strategies (one for each goal) and several supporting plans under the IPF, Council covers many policy stances and strategies from existing policies and plans, allowing older documents to be rescinded.

In April 2023, the Executive Leadership Team resolved to review all new Council-endorsed and corporate (internal) policies every four years, except for policies:

- which are mandated by external legislation (e.g. through the *Local Government Act 2020*) to have a differing review period; or
- where Council has strong reason to review a policy more frequently e.g. pandemic response and other emergencies.

Given this direction, several older policies and strategy documents are outdated and in need of review. This has prompted a large-scale review of existing policies to determine whether they are current, need to be updated to reflect current legislation, or are obsolete and able to be rescinded. 22 Council endorsed policy and strategy documents are obsolete through this process but have not been rescinded yet. Additional policies and plans will become obsolete as the IPF continues to roll out, prompting further rescissions as upcoming strategies and plans are finalised.

Table 1 lists Council policies and strategies identified for rescission. For each policy, a rationale for rescinding the policy is stated, along with the new context where the policy position can now be found.

Policy Name	Date of Council endorsement	Rationale for rescission	New location
Animal Registration and Refund Policy	2 Apr 2019	The Animal Registration and Refund Policy is operational. It details how Council will set its animal registration fees and when refunds will apply. It is recommended the policy be retained internally as a corporate policy.	Corporate policy of the same name
Arts Policy	17 Nov 2015	A review of the Arts Policy deemed that the policy is no longer relevant; endorsed in 2015, it has been superseded by the Whittlesea 2040 goals. High level direction regarding arts and culture are reflected in the Connected Community Strategy.	Connected Community Strategy, Key Focus Area Arts, Culture and Events
Arts Policy	17 Nov 2015	A review of the Arts Policy deemed that the policy is no longer relevant; endorsed in 2015, it has been superseded by the Whittlesea 2040 goals. High level direction regarding arts and culture are reflected in the Connected Community Strategy.	Connected Community Strategy, Key Focus Area Arts, Culture and Events
Clothing Recycling Bin Policy	15 Jul 2014	Council's strategic direction regarding clothing recycling stations is adequately covered by the Rethinking Waste Plan, endorsed by Council in 2021. The Clothing Recycling Bin Policy largely covers process and operational guidelines for the placement and collection of clothes recycling bins throughout the municipality. Under the IPF, operations where possible will be retained internally at directorate and/or department level. Day to day management of these bins is managed through permit conditions.	Rethinking Waste Plan 2021-2030, Primary Theme: Recover

Policy Name	Date of Council endorsement	Rationale for rescission	New location
Community Building Policy Community Building Strategy	1 Oct 2019 1 October 2019	Council's policy stances regarding community building and connections are now reflected in the Connected Community Strategy as well as in Whittlesea 2040, superseding the Community Building Policy and Strategy.	Whittlesea 2040, Goal 1 Connected Community (all key directions); Connected Community Strategy (all key directions and themes)
Community Safety Crime Prevention Policy	30 Aug 2016	Council priorities to bolster community safety are reflected in the Connected Community Strategy. Future strategic directions to support community safety may be presented in additional plans supporting the Connected Community Strategy moving forward.	Connected Community Strategy, Key Focus Area Safety
Community Transport Policy	19 Sep 2017	Council priorities relevant to community transport are reflected in the Connected Community Strategy and Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy. Future strategic directions to support community transport may be presented in additional plans supporting these two strategies moving forward.	Connected Community Strategy, Key Focus Areas Community Participation, Life Stages and Physical and Mental Health; Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy, Key Focus Area Integrated Transport
Community Volunteering Policy	6 Mar 2018	Council priorities to bolster community volunteering and civic participation are reflected in the Connected Community Strategy.	Connected Community Strategy, Key Focus Area Community Participation
Domestic Animal Welfare	3 Sep 2019	The Domestic Animal Welfare Support Policy details the pet-related assistance that Whittlesea, Merri-bek and	To be developed as a Corporate Policy (with Merri-bek and Darebin

Policy Name	Date of Council endorsement	Rationale for rescission	New location
Support Policy		Darebin will provide to people who are experiencing or leaving family violence. A replacement policy will be prepared by the three councils which will update the existing policy given the wat djerring Animal Facility is now under Council management. This policy will be an internal corporate policy and is anticipated to be endorsed in April 2024 after consulting with Darebin and Merri-bek Councils. As a result, it is recommended that Council endorse an expiry date effective 30 April 2024 for this policy.	City Councils); rescission effective 30 April 2024.
Early Activation of New Communities Policy	18 Jul 2018	The Early Activation of New Communities Policy details operations in advocating for community spaces, services, and programs in new developments. It is recommended that the policy is rescinded as it contains largely operational processes to be retained internally, with early activation assessments typically made on a case-by-case basis.	Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy, Key Focus Area Public Space and Infrastructure
Early Years Policy	18 Apr 2017	A review of the Early Years Policy has deemed the policy obsolete following the Victorian Government's early years reform.	Obsolete due to State Government reform
Library Strategy for Mernda and Epping North Final Report 2015-2016	7 Jun 2016	The Library Strategy for Mernda and Epping North and associated Reports have been deemed obsolete following the development of the Library	Library Services Plan

Policy Name	Date of Council endorsement	Rationale for rescission	New location
		Service Review and Library Service Plan. The Library Services Plan covers future planning for library services beyond 2023.	
Lifelong Learning Policy	18 Jul 2017	The Lifelong Learning Policy details Council's commitment to learning and development opportunities at all stages of life. Council priorities for lifelong learning are now reflected in Whittlesea 2040 as well as the previously endorsed Strong Local Economy Strategy.	Whittlesea 2040, Strong Local Economy Strategy Key Direction 3.2 Education opportunities for all
Meals on Wheels Volunteers Policy	1995	The Meals on Wheels Policy comprises a single comment regarding vehicle access for volunteers of the Meals on Wheels program. Relevant operations regarding volunteers have been maintained internally and through corporate policies for several years.	Volunteers Policy and Code of Practice - Corporate policy.
Positive Ageing Policy	9 Aug 2016	The Positive Ageing Policy provides additional policy context for plans and strategies which are no longer relevant or have since been rescinded by Council. Relevant information from the Policy is detailed in the Connected Community Strategy.	Connected Community Strategy, Key Focus Areas Life Stages, Community Safety, and Physical and Mental Health
Preventing Alcohol Related Harm Policy	9 Aug 2016	Council priorities to bolster community safety (including alcohol-related harm) are reflected in the Connected Community Strategy.	Connected Community Strategy, Key Focus Areas Community Safety and Physical and Mental Health

Policy Name	Date of Council endorsement	Rationale for rescission	New location
Public Question Time Policy	2014 – Amended policy endorsed 6 Oct 2020	The Public Question Time Policy details operational guidelines for Public Question Time during scheduled Council Meetings. Under the IPF, operations where possible will be retained internally at directorate and/or department level. Further guidance and processes regarding Public Question Time as relevant to community are detailed in the 2023 Governance Rules.	Governance Rules under Community Participation, pg.16
Roadside Management Strategy	16 Sep 2014	The Roadside Management Strategy details processes and operations for management and protection of vegetation and other environmental heritage values on roadsides. The substantive content outlined in the Strategy was reviewed for relevance in 2022. In alignment with the IPF, the reviewed content (now titled Roadside Environmental Guidelines) will be retained internally at a directorate level.	Retained internally as a Corporate Policy part of Roadside Environmental Guidelines
Street Activities Policy	3 Mar 2020	An internal review of the Street Activities Policy has determined that substantive content is adequately covered by City of Whittlesea's Community Local Law (endorsed 21 November 2023). It is deemed that the Street Activities Policy is no longer required at the time the Community Local Law goes into effect, by 30 June 2024. As a	Municipal Local Law, as part of Street parties, festivals or events, pg 24

Policy Name	Date of Council endorsement	Rationale for rescission	New location
		result, it is recommended that Council endorse an expiry date of 30 June 2024 for this policy. Under the IPF, operations where possible will be retained internally at directorate and/or department level. Additional guidance and processes for staff will be retained internally.	
Street Numbering Policy	2009	Review of the Street Numbering Policy has determined that the topic is covered adequately by existing legislation, noting that there is no Council discretion for street numbering. As a result, a policy is no longer required.	Regulated in https://www.land.vic.gov.au/
Thriving Children, Young People & Families Strategy	3 Mar 2020	The Thriving Children, Young People & Families Strategy has been deemed obsolete as it does not incorporate the Victorian Government's early years reform. Officers are currently conducting investigation to inform Council's future position in the early years space. Further direction for the implementation of this reform at Council will be detailed in the inaugural Connected Community Action Plan in 2024.	Connected Community Strategy, Key Focus Area Life Stages

Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

High Performing Organisation

We engage effectively with the community, to deliver efficient and effective services and initiatives, and to make decisions in the best interest of our community and deliver value to our community.

Maintaining a current portfolio of policies supports operational efficiency and transparency of Council operations.

Considerations of *Local Government Act (2020)* Principles

Financial Management

The consolidation of Council's policy landscape will allow policy management to be more efficient and sustainable long-term, with positive resource allocation implications. There are otherwise no direct financial implications associated with the report.

Community Consultation and Engagement

Owners of each policy and strategy internally (managers, unit managers and directors) have been consulted to ensure that rescission of the above documents is both aligned with the IPF and sustainable for Council as an organisation.

The key community-facing strategies developed under the IPF cover many of Council's policy stances and have been informed by feedback from the City of Whittlesea community over several engagement touchpoints. These include specific consultation periods for each strategy:

- Strong Local Economy Strategy: January – February 2022
- Sustainable Environment Strategy: October 2022
- Connected Community Strategy: September - October 2023
- Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy: September - October 2023
- Long-Term Community Infrastructure Plan: September - October 2023

Other Principles for Consideration as per the *Local Government Act (2020)*

Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles

(a) Council decisions are to be made and actions taken in accordance with the relevant law.

(b) Priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations.

(i) The transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.

Public Transparency Principles

(a) Council decision making processes must be transparent except when the Council is dealing with information that is confidential by virtue of the *Local Government Act* or any other Act.

(d) Public awareness of the availability of Council information must be facilitated.

Council Policy Considerations

Environmental Sustainability Considerations (including Climate Emergency)
No implications.

Social, Cultural and Health
No implications.

Economic
No implications.

Legal, Resource and Strategic Risk Implications
No implications.

Implementation Strategy

Communication
Updates to the Policy and Strategy list are communicated frequently with staff via several communication channels. Council-endorsed policies are made available on Council's website. The streamlining of policies and strategies under the IPF is communicated to community through the consultation periods and endorsement processes for each strategy (and supporting plans under each strategy, where applicable).

Critical Dates
The Integrated Planning Framework will be finalised by March 2024 to allow a smooth transition to an elected Council. Additional policy reviews and rescissions may be brought to Council at future Council Meetings in alignment with IPF plans as they are developed.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

Attachments

No attachments.

5.6 Unconfirmed Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee

Director/Executive Manager: Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

Report Author: Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

Executive Summary

On 15 November 2023, the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC), an independent advisory committee of Council, held their quarterly scheduled meeting to consider reports relating to such matters as:

- Council's strategic risk profile.
- Directorate risk profiles.
- Procurement and significant contracts & projects.
- Internal audit scopes and status of actions arising from audits.
- Compliance and governance matters as outlined in the ARC annual work plan.

For transparency and in line with the ARC Charter, a copy of the 15 November 2023 unconfirmed meeting minutes is provided at **Attachment 1** for Council to note.

Officers' Recommendation

THAT Council note the 15 November 2023 unconfirmed minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee at Attachment 1 to this report.

Background / Key Information

The Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) is established under section 53 of the *Local Government Act 2020* as an independent advisory committee with no delegated or decision-making powers, however ARC can provide advice on matters presented at its meetings. ARC acts in the capacity of monitoring, reviewing and advising on issues within its Charter scope of responsibility, including monitoring Council's governance obligations to our community.

The unconfirmed minutes at Attachment A provides detailed information of the agenda items ARC members considered and provided advice on at its 15 November committee meeting.

Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

High Performing Organisation
We engage effectively with the community, to deliver efficient and effective services and initiatives, and to make decisions in the best interest of our community and deliver value to our community.

The establishment of the Audit and Risk Committee and the reports it receives for consideration and oversight is Council's commitment to the implementation of good governance practices.

Considerations of *Local Government Act (2020)* Principles

Financial Management
The cost associated with the Audit and Risk Committee external members is included in the current budget.

There are no costs associated with tabling the Audit & Risk Committee unconfirmed minutes.

Community Consultation and Engagement
No community consultation and engagement is required for the publication of the unconfirmed ARC minutes.

Other Principles for Consideration as per the *Local Government Act (2020)*

Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles
(i) The transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.

Public Transparency Principles

(b) Council information must be publicly available unless— (i) the information is confidential by virtue of the *Local Government Act* or any other Act; or (ii) public availability of the information would be contrary to the public interest.

(c) Council information must be understandable and accessible to members of the municipal community.

Council Policy Considerations

Environmental Sustainability Considerations (including Climate Emergency)

No implications.

Social, Cultural and Health

No implications.

Economic

No implications.

Legal, Resource and Strategic Risk Implications

The Audit and Risk Committee assists Council in the monitoring and oversight of risk, compliance and governance.

Implementation Strategy

Communication

Not required

Critical Dates

The Audit and Risk Committee Charter specifies the unconfirmed minutes are provided to the Council as early as possible after the meeting is conducted.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

Attachments

1. Minutes ARC 15 November 2023 [**5.6.1** - 23 pages]

City of Whittlesea

Minutes

AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE

Wednesday 15 November 2023 at 9:00 am

Council Chamber at Civic Centre,
25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang

Attendees

Present:

Independent:
Geoff Harry, Chairperson
Jen Johanson
Bruce Potgieter
Dr Marco Bini

Administrators:
Lydia Wilson, Chair of Council
Christian Zahra AM, Administrator

Council Officers:
Craig Lloyd, Chief Executive Officer
Sarah Renner, Director Customer & Corporate Services
Frank Joyce, Executive Manager Strategy & Insights
Jacinta Stevens, Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO
Aaron Gerard, Chief Financial Officer

Externals in attendance:
Richard Wilson, Director - Pitcher Partners

Apologies
Graham Noriskin, Partner - Pitcher Partners
Jordan McFadden, Manager - Pitcher Partners

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1 In-Camera Discussion

The meeting commenced at 9:00am with attendance by members of the Audit & Risk Committee only.

In-camera session with the CEO and Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO commenced at 9:15am.

All other officers and externals listed in attendance joined the meeting at 9:30am.

Introduction

Following the in-camera discussion, the Chairperson Geoff Harry commenced the open section of the meeting by welcoming all those in attendance.

Statement to Acknowledge Traditional Owners

The Chair read the following Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners Statement:

"On behalf of the City of Whittlesea, I 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.

I would also like to personally acknowledge Elders past, present and emerging."

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest

The Chair asked does any member of the committee have a conflict of interest to declare in regard to any matter on our agenda today?

Nil

The Chair then asked whether any member wished to highlight any changes in their personal interests since our last meeting on 12 September which may give rise to a perception of conflict of interest in relation to any agenda item today?

The following changes were mentioned:

- Geoff Harry – Agriculture Victoria Services role as independent Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee has now extended to include Board membership.
- Jen Johanson – no longer a member of the University of Melbourne ARC.
- Dr Marco Bini – his employment title has now changed to Senior Legal Business, Partner, Data Privacy & Compliance.

UNCONFIRMED

2 Previous Meeting

2.1 Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Meeting

Responsible Officer: Executive Manager Strategy & Insights

Author: Corporate Assurance Advisor

Purpose

To provide the Audit and Risk Committee with the previous meeting minutes from review and confirmation.

Matters Discussed

The Minutes of the previous meetings held on 5 September 2023 and 12 September 2023 were confirmed subject to the minor amendment to the 12 September minutes. Both Minutes were reported to the 17 October 2023 Scheduled Council Meeting.

Committee Resolution

THAT subject to the minor amendment to the 12 September 2023 minutes, the 5 September 2023 and 12 September 2023 Audit & Risk Committee meeting minutes be confirmed as a correct record.

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2.2 Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

Responsible Officer: Executive Manager Strategy & Insights

Author: Corporate Assurance Advisor

Purpose

To provide the Audit and Risk Committee with progress on matters raised at previous meetings.

Matters Discussed

The Committee discussed the status of action items in the 'matters arising from previous meetings register' report.

Committee Resolution

The Committee noted the progress of actions raised in previous meetings as outlined in the matters arising report.

UNCONFIRMED

3 Audit & Risk Committee Work Plan

3.1 Progress of Annual Work Plan

Responsible Officer: Executive Manager Strategy & Insights

Author: Nicole North-Vanner, Corporate Assurance Advisor

Purpose

To enable the Audit and Risk Committee to set and monitor progress of its Annual Work Plan (AWP).

Matters Discussed

No discussion required on this matter.

Committee Resolution

The Committee noted the status of the Annual Work Plan.

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4 CEO's Update

4.1 CEO Update

Responsible Officer: Chief Executive Officer

Author: Madeleine Knowles, EA to CEO

In Attendance: Craig Lloyd, Chief Executive Officer
Jacinta Stevens, Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

This attachment has been designated as confidential in accordance with sections 66(5) and 3(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* on the grounds that it contains legal privileged information, being information to which legal professional privilege or client legal privilege applies. In particular, the attachment contains information regarding potential regulatory proceedings.

Matters Discussed

The Committee noted the report as read and noted the comment in the report which said the CEO did not wish to cease the practice of receiving this report from his executive team on a quarterly basis. The Committee indicated that it was a misunderstanding of what the Committee had suggested.

The Committee had suggested that the questionnaire could benefit from some revision. It was an observation as a means of providing feedback on potential process improvements.

Committee Resolution

The Committee noted:

1. **The CEO report and the results of the responses to the CEO questionnaire by members of the Executive Leadership Team.**
2. **There were no significant matters identified in the report requiring the Committee's attention.**

UNCONFIRMED

5 Risk Management

5.1 Risk Management Report - Quarter Ending 30 September 2023

Responsible Officer: Executive Manager Strategy & Insights

Author: Brett Davidson, Unit Manager Risk

In Attendance: Brett Davidson, Unit Manager Risk

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update the Audit and Risk Committee on the status of risk management activities being undertaken during the reporting period ending 30 September 2023.

Matters Discussed

The Committee discussed and noted the:

- Service Risk Reviews with all departments were completed in July and August
- Strategic Risk Reviews were completed in September
- Health, Safety & Welfare
- Emergency Management Update
- Status of Treatment Plans
- Disruption to critical IT systems
- Scope of work and procedures
- Acknowledge a lot of work has gone into this area

The Chair indicated that the Committee wishes to obtain management insights as to the effectiveness of risk management and also the trends that management observes in regard to trends. These insights will inform the Committee as to how Council is performing in regard to the broader risk management issues.

Key Action/s	Responsible Officer
Consider adding more value to future Committee reports around management insights and trends observed to inform the Committee how Council is performing regarding broader risk management issues.	UMR

Committee Resolution

The Committee noted:

1.a) The Outcomes of the 13 strategic risks reviewed since the last meeting.

1.b) The Outcomes of the service risks reviewed since the last meeting.

1.c) The Status of the risk treatment plans as at 30 September 2023.

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1.d) The Emergency preparedness activities being undertaken.

2. More insightful commentary to be considered for inclusion in the next report.

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5.2 Presentations on Directorate Risk Profiles

Responsible Officer: Executive Manager Strategy & Insights

Author: Brett Davidson, Unit Manager Risk

In Attendance: Frank Joyce, Executive Manager Strategy & Insights
Jacinta Stevens, Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO
Janine Morgan, Executive Manager Public Affairs
Brett Davidson, Unit Manager Risk

Matters Discussed

The risk profiles for the Executive Services Directorate were presented to the Committee. The Executive Services Directorate consists of three departments:

1. Office of Council & CEO
2. Public Affairs
3. Strategy & Insights

Office of Council & CEO

Emerging Risks:

1. Resources required with the competing priorities around post-election mandatory requirements and the induction requirement, ie. Council Plan, Asset Management Plan, documents that need to be reviewed that are mandatory.

Management Strategies:

1. Sub-working groups have been established as we work towards the return of elected Council.
2. Workshops with newly inducted Councillors.
3. Councillor Induction program will be flexible depending on availability of Councillors.

Public Affairs

Emerging Risk:

1. Engaging with under-represented cohorts, under the Local Government Act we have a legislative requirement to engage with our community to ensure their voices are heard.
2. Psychosocial hazards on social media and face-to-face engagement.

Management Strategies:

1. Updated Community Engagement Policy.
2. Commitment to making it easy for residents to engage with us.
3. Strengthening our networks into the community.
4. Training and awareness for staff and the best way to engage with different cohorts.
5. Safe systems of work, community pop ups, etc.

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6. Monitor high risk social media posts.
7. Social Media Framework.
8. Ensuring the Customer Service Team have appropriate training to deal with calls received, eg. currently attending suicide awareness training.

Strategy & Insights

Emerging Risk:

1) Attraction and retention of specialist staff.
2) Data integration and use.

Management Strategy:

1) Invested in training to support sucession planning.
2) Work done to ensure a strong culture is developed within the team.
3) Great Workplace for All.
4) Just moved to new Power BI data app and licenses.
5) Invested in capability across the organisation.

Key Action/s	**Responsible Officer**
The new template is useful and should be used as a basis going forward.	UMR

Committee Resolution

The Committee:

1. **Noted the presentation and thanked officers for providing their insights on the work of the Executive Services Directorate.**
2. **Observed that the new template is useful and should be used as a basis going forward.**

UNCONFIRMED

5.3 Fraud and Corruption Systems and Fraud Awareness

Responsible Officer: Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

Author: Nicole North-Vanner, Corporate Assurance Advisor

Purpose

The Audit and Risk Committee annually monitors Council's commitment to providing fraud and corruption prevention awareness training to minimise the risk of fraud and corruption events.

Matters Discussed

The report was taken as read. The Fraud and Corruption System has been developed in accordance with the Fraud and Corruption Standard. Report has also been reviewed by internal auditors and feedback taken onboard.

The Committee discussed:

- Awareness of staff in relation to fraud. Council has processes in place to ensure all staff undertake fraud training during induction.
- The need for more face-to-face training at the depot.
- The document referenced matters related to fraud but omitted references to corruption. Recommended that references to corruption be included.
- Disclosing conflicts during recruitment process has improved. Council to consider improvements around capturing staff secondary employment, i.e. specialist staff conducting work outside of normal working hours and being complained about to IBAC.

Key Action/s	Responsible Officer
Note that feedback and useful suggestions provided for inclusion in paper.	EMOCCEO
Consider including a contents page at front of document with some plain terminology that if you require further information, this document can be used as a guide.	EMOCCEO

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Committee Resolution

The Committee noted:

1. **The Fraud and Corruption Control System.**
2. **The outcomes of the June 2023 Fraud and Corruption Awareness survey and actions being undertaken to improve awareness and understanding across the organisation.**
3. **Feedback and useful suggestions have been provided for officer consideration.**

UNCONFIRMED

6 Financial and Performance Reporting

6.1 Review Corporate Performance Report

Responsible Officer: Director Customer & Corporate Services

Author: Aaron Gerrard, Chief Financial Officer

In Attendance: Aaron Gerrard, Chief Financial Officer

Purpose

The Corporate Performance Report for the quarter ended 30 September 2023 was presented to Audit and Risk Committee for information.

Matters Discussed

Report taken as read. Discussion points included:

- Community Plan Action Plan.
- Council is committed to good governance in preparation for the return of elected Council.
- Capital Works.
- Financial Performance.
- Rate Revenue.
- Financial Hardship.

Committee Resolution

The Committee noted the Corporate Performance Report for the period ended 30 September 2023.

UNCONFIRMED

7 Systems of Internal Control

7.1 Developer Contributions

Responsible Officer: Director Planning & Development

Author: Liam Wilkinson, Unit Manager Strategic Planning

In Attendance: George Saisanas, Manager Strategic Futures
Matthew Barresi, Coordinator Development Contributions & Infrastructure
Ella Edwards, Senior Development Contributions

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the annual update to the Audit and Risk Committee on the management of Developer Contributions at the City of Whittlesea. The last update was provided in November 2022.

Matters Discussed

Report taken as read. Matters highlighted and discussion points included:

- Operational update, including key achievements.
- Council's responsibility to annually report to the Minister for Planning on the contributions collected and expended in the previous financial year.
- As a high growth large metropolitan Council, strong controls over Developer Contribution schemes are essential.
- Based on experience in other locations, Council has very strong controls in place.

Key Action/s	Responsible Officer
For future reports consider including the strategic risk perspective. This report has some good information provided but think about the activities and numbers that makes this whole space better for Whittlesea, including trends.	MSF

Committee Resolution

The Committee noted:

1. **The Update on Development Contributions report.**
2. **The next annual update on Development Contributions Plan Management is to be provided to the Audit and Risk Committee in November 2024.**

UNCONFIRMED

7.2 Significant Contracts and Projects

Responsible Officer: Director Customer & Corporate Services

Author: George Alabakov, Unit Manager Procurement

In Attendance: Aaron Gerard, Chief Financial Officer
George Alabakov, Unit Manager Procurement

Purpose

This report provides an annual update of the control and management of Significant Contracts and Projects.

Matters Discussed

Report taken as read. Brief overview provided by Officer.

There was active discussion on this report and the Committee commended the management team on the report and analysis provided. The Committee provided feedback to officers, including suggestions as to how future reports could be more informative.

Key Action/s	Responsible Officer
Additional information requested included the monetary value of contracts for the entire contract period, duration of contract periods and estimated total life of contracts.	UMP

Committee Resolution

The Committee noted the current process and controls in place for managing Council's major contracts.

UNCONFIRMED

8 Internal Assurance

8.1 Assurance Plan Progress

Responsible Officer: Executive Manager Strategy & Insights

Author: Nicole North-Vanner, Corporate Assurance Advisor

Purpose

This report provided the Audit and Risk Committee with an update on the progress of the 2023-2024 Internal Assurance Plan (Plan), and the progress of actions to mitigate assurance findings.

Matters Discussed

Report noted. No further discussions.

Committee Resolution

The Committee noted:

1. **Progress of the 2023-2024 Internal Assurance Plan with the commencement of the Acquisitions of Bindts Road project and scoping of Administrator Expenses' Compliance and Processes.**
2. **That action items arising from completed assurance reviews are on track for implementation in accordance with their planned timelines.**

UNCONFIRMED

9 Internal Audit

9.1 Progress of Internal Audit Plan Delivery and Progress of Actions

Responsible Officer: Executive Manager Strategy & Insights

Author: Nicole North-Vanner, Corporate Assurance Advisor

External in Attendance: Richard Wilson, Pitcher Partners

Purpose

This report provides the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) with an update on the progress of the Internal Audit Program since the last meeting and the implementation of actions arising from internal audit findings.

Matters Discussed

Report taken as read. Pitcher Partners, Council's Internal Auditors, responded to questions and provided an overview of the below topics:

- Parks Maintenance Contract internal audit.
- Payroll Internal Audit scope.
- Special Rates and Charges audit.
- Council currently looking at replacement for payroll system.

Committee Resolution

The Committee:

1. **Noted the commencement of the Parks Maintenance Contract and the Payroll internal audit reviews in accordance with the approved Internal Audit Plan.**
2. **Endorsed the removal of the Property Operations/Land Use and Acquisitions review from the Internal Audit Plan, noting that Management will instead engage a consultant to complete a broader review including benchmarking best practice, resourcing and master planning for the service.**
3. **Reviewed and approved the Payroll Internal Audit scope.**
4. **Noted the commencement of the management initiated Internal Audit of Special Rates and Charges.**
5. **Noted the implementation of nine agreed action items arising from previous internal audit review outcomes.**

UNCONFIRMED

10 External Audit

No reports.

11 Compliance

11.1 Key Personnel Expenses

Responsible Officer: Executive Manager Governance & Strategy

Author: Nicole North-Vanner, Corporate Assurance Advisor

Purpose

That the Audit and Risk Committee continue to have oversight and monitor Council's fraud and corruption risk through key functions including the Key Personnel Expenses report (Expenses Report).

Matters Discussed

Executive Manager Strategy & Insights advised that the report on CEO expenditure is provided for noting and pointed out that it is not a matter that the Committee is required to review. There was no further discussion on this report.

Committee Resolution

The Committee noted:

1. **The report of key personnel expenses incurred for the period 1 July to 30 September 2023.**
2. **Reimbursements outlined within the expenses table of this report were reported in accordance with section 40(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.**

UNCONFIRMED

11.2 Procurement Annual Report

Responsible Officer: Aaron Gerard, Chief Financial Officer

Author: George Alabakov, Unit Manager Procurement

In Attendance: George Alabakov, Unit Manager Procurement

Purpose

This report provides an update on the actual performance against the Procurement Performance Indicators for the period 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023.

Matters Discussed

Report taken as read. Brief overview provided by officer.

Key Action/s	Responsible Officer
For future reports consider providing comparative data i.e. year on year data trend for both the City of Whittlesea against the Northern Council Alliance (NCA).	UMP

Committee Resolution

The Committee noted the Procurement Key Performance Indicators report for the period 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023.

UNCONFIRMED

12 Governance

12.1 Management Responses to Integrity Body Reports

Responsible Officer: Executive Manager Strategy & Insights

Author: Nicole North-Vanner, Internal Assurance & Governance Advisor

Purpose

This report provides the Audit and Risk Committee with a summary of relevant published integrity body materials identified in the last quarter, and how they have been or will be assessed against strategic risk controls to develop treatment plans where required.

Matters Discussed

Report taken as read.

Committee Resolution

The Committee noted the materials identified in the Integrity Agency Examinations report and Council's planned gap analysis and risk assessment.

UNCONFIRMED

13 Other Matters

Matters Discussed

- Location of February 2024 meeting to be advised due to Council Chamber refurbishments.
- From February 2024 Council will have a Youth Council in place which will include a Youth Mayor and a Youth Deputy Mayor. 58 applicants applied for positions on the Youth Council. A suggestion was for the Youth Mayor and Youth Deputy Mayor to meet Audit & Risk Committee members.
- A number of Councils have breached the *Local Government Act* by not getting annual reports endorsed by Council within the required reporting time frame.
- Budget for 2024-25 to be adopted in May 2024.
- Additional time may be required for the February Committee meeting based on the number of agenda items.
- The Chair advised this was Frank Joyce's last meeting with the Audit and Risk Committee and recognised his substantial commitment and contribution over an extended period. On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked Frank for his support of the Committee and its work.

Close of Meeting

Meeting closed at 11:40 am.

UNCONFIRMED

5.7 Informal Meetings of Administrators

Director/Executive Manager: Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

Report Author: Coordinator Governance Administration

Executive Summary

Chapter 5 of the Council Governance Rules requires a summary of the matters discussed at a meeting of Councillors (Administrators) that:

- is scheduled or planned for the purpose of discussing the business of Council or briefing Councillors (Administrators);
- is attended by at least one member of Council staff; and
- is not a Council meeting or Delegated Committee meeting;

are tabled at the next convenient Council meeting and recorded in the minutes of that Council meeting.

The attached record of Informal Meetings of Councillors (Administrators) **(Attachment 1 & 2)** is reported to Council in accordance with this requirement.

Officers' Recommendation

THAT Council resolve to receive and note the record of Informal Meetings of Administrators.

Attachments

1. Record of Attendance 28 November 2023 [**5.7.1** - 2 pages]
2. Record of Attendance 5 December 2023 [**5.7.2** - 2 pages]

SUMMARY OF ATTENDANCE AT INFORMAL MEETINGS OF ADMINISTRATORS

MEETING DETAILS:	**Title:**	Council Briefing
	Date:	28 November 2023
	Location:	Civic CEO Office (Hybrid Meeting)
PRESENT:	**Administrators**	Chair Administrator Wilson (hybrid) Administrator Duncan (hybrid) Administrator Zahra (hybrid)
	Council Staff:	Craig Lloyd, CEO Debbie Wood, Director Infrastructure and Environment Agata Chmielewski, Director Community Wellbeing Sarah Renner, Director Customer & Corporate Services Janine Morgan, Executive Manager Public Affairs (hybrid) Jacinta Stevens, Ex Manager Office of Council & CEO Frank Joyce, Executive Manager Strategy & Insights (item 2.4) Aaron Gerrard, Chief Financial Officer (item 2.2) Amanda Dodd, Manager Sustainable Environment (item 2.2) Simone Chetwynd-Brown, Unit Manager Resource Recovery (item 2.2) (hybrid) Adis Cindrak, Unit Manager Financial Development (item 2.2) Jason Cahill, Senior Urban Designer (item 2.3) Tim D'Agostino, Unit Manager Urban Design & Placemaking (item 2.3) Alessandra San Vicente, Senior Corporate Planner (item 2.4) Anthony Traill, Manager Priority Projects (item 2.5)
	External Attendees:	Representatives from Cox Architecture and DCWC (item 2.5) (hybrid)
APOLOGIES:		Emma Appleton, Director Planning & Development

The Meeting commenced at 12.01pm

MATTERS CONSIDERED		DISCLOSURES AND COMMENTS
1	Council Meeting Forward Plan	No disclosures were made.
2.1	CD/DX Program & Digital Roadmap Update	No disclosures were made.
2.2	2024-25 Opex Budget Waste Charge	No disclosures were made.
2.3	Place Framework 2.0	No disclosures were made.
2.4	Rescinding Council Policies	No disclosures were made.
2.5	RASC Concept Design	No disclosures were made.

The Meeting concluded at 1.57pm

RECORD COMPLETED BY:	**Officer Name**:	Jacinta Stevens
	Officer Title:	Executive Manager, Office of Council & CEO

SUMMARY OF ATTENDANCE AT INFORMAL MEETINGS OF ADMINISTRATORS

	Location:	Civic CEO Office (Hybrid Meeting)
PRESENT:	**Administrators**	Chair Administrator Wilson (hybrid) Administrator Duncan (hybrid) Administrator Zahra (hybrid)
	Council Staff:	Craig Lloyd, CEO Debbie Wood, Director Infrastructure and Environment Agata Chmielewski, Director Community Wellbeing Jordan Glancy, A/Director Customer & Corporate Services Emma Appleton, Director Planning & Development Janine Morgan, Executive Manager Public Affairs Jacinta Stevens, Ex Manager Office of Council & CEO (hybrid) Frank Joyce, Executive Manager Strategy & Insights Annette Dodson, Social Planning & Project Officer (2.1) Joanne Kyrkilis, Manager Community & Place (2.1) Stephen McKay, A/Manager Strategic Projects (2.2) Pamela Trigilia, Community Infrastructure Coordinator (2.2) Katherine Smith, Coordinator Planning Policy & Implementation (2.3) George Saisanas, Manager Strategic Futures (2.3 & 2.5) Kirsten Richmond, Unit Manager Community Engagement (2.4) Sarah Oldman, Manager Communications & Engagement (2.4) Nick Robinson, Strategic Planner (2.5) Michael Hobbs, Coordinator Parks & City Forest Maintenance Planning (2.6) Debbie Blandford, A/Manager Maintenance & Operations (2.6) (hybrid) Gemmy Timotius, Coordinator Civil Engineering Delivery (2.7) Maurice Serruto, Unit Manager Engineering Design & Construction (2.7) Wayne Brooker, Coordinator West Community Hubs (2.8) Andrew George, A/Manager Active & Creative Communities (2.8)
	External Attendees:	

APOLOGIES:		Sarah Renner, Director Customer & Corporate Services

The Meeting commenced at 10.03am

MATTERS CONSIDERED		DISCLOSURES AND COMMENTS
1	Council Meeting Forward Plan	No disclosures were made.
2.1	Connected Community Strategy	No disclosures were made.
2.2	Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan	No disclosures were made.
2.3	Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy	No disclosures were made.
2.4	Community Engagement Policy	No disclosures were made.
2.5	Proposed Amendment C275	No disclosures were made.
2.6	Garden Bed Contract Variation	No disclosures were made.
2.7	Construction of Plenty Rd & Everton Drive Signalise Intersection	No disclosures were made.
2.8	Growling Frog Lease Extension	No disclosures were made.
2.9	Update, Administrator Priorities	No disclosures were made.
3.1	2024-25 Federal Pre-Budget Submission	No disclosures were made.

The Meeting concluded at 12.08pm

RECORD COMPLETED BY:	**Officer Name**:	Jacinta Stevens
	Officer Title:	Executive Manager, Office of Council & CEO

6 Notices of Motion

No Notices of Motion

7 Urgent Business

No Urgent Business

8 Reports from Council Representatives and CEO Update

9 Confidential Business

9.1.0 Close Meeting to the Public

Under section 66(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020* a meeting considering confidential information may be closed to the public. Pursuant to sections 3(1) and 66(5) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Recommendation

THAT the Chair of Council recommends that the meeting be closed to the public for the purpose of considering details relating to the following confidential matters in accordance with Section 66(2)(a) of the *Local Government Act 2020* as detailed.

9.1.1 Growling Frog Lease Extension

9.1.2 2023-1 Garden Bed Contract Variation

10 Closure