

Agenda

Youth Council Meeting
Monday 1 December 2025 at 6pm

Council Chamber,
25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang

Youth Councillors

Youth Cr Kaynat Virk

Youth Mayor

Youth Cr Emily Tricarico

Deputy Youth Mayor

Youth Cr Osama Akkad

Youth Cr Angelica Banquil

Youth Cr Bavleen Kaur

Youth Cr Mustafa Khraim

Youth Cr Zachary Melvaine

Youth Cr Angela Rolevska

Youth Cr Tanya Sharma

Youth Cr Sandy Tran

Youth Cr Elly Watson

Youth Cr Sophie Winter

Officers

Agata Chmielewski

Director Community Wellbeing

Bobbie-Lea Bright

Unit Manager Compliance & Governance

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1 Opening

1.1 Meeting Opening and Introductions

The Youth Mayor will open the meeting and welcome everyone in attendance.

1.2 Apologies/Absent

1.3 Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners Statement

The Chair 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 personally acknowledge Elders past, present and emerging.”

1.4 Youth Council Charter

The Chair will read the following statement:

“We the members of the City of Whittlesea Youth Council, commit to advocating for and being the voice of the youth within our municipality. We ensure a safe space for all, to engage in constructive collaboration on matters affecting young people. We aim to empower and foster community connectedness in our youth so they feel valued and supported to achieve their aspirations.”

1.5 Acknowledgements

2 Declarations of Conflict of Interest

3 Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Meeting/s

Recommendation

THAT the Youth Council confirm the Minutes of the Youth Council Meeting held on 6 October 2025, as circulated.

4 Officers' Reports

4.1 Community Priorities 2026 community consultation

Director/Executive Manager: Executive Manager Public Affairs

Report Author: Unit Manager Community Engagement

In Attendance: Manager EPMO & Change
Unit Manager Community Engagement

Brief Overview

Each year, Council develops an annual Budget that sets out how we invest in services and infrastructure to meet the needs of our rapidly growing community. This financial year Council has an operating budget of \$347m. We need to know what services and assets our community value to help us shape key documents that will guide Council's activities over the next 5-10 years.

To help shape the 2026–27 Budget and other long-term plans, we invited community members to tell us what services and priorities matter most to them — now and for the future.

This engagement will guide several key Council documents, including the **2026–27 Budget**, **Community Action Plan 2026–27**, and **Economic Growth Strategy 2026–36**.

Between 1 September to 5 October, Council delivered the first phase of our Community Priorities community engagement, a broad consultation to hear from people who live, work, study or visit the City of Whittlesea. Engagement included both online and in-person activities to ensure everyone had a chance to participate.

Who we heard from

We heard from 1,052 people, with 870 captured at in-person engagement activities.

Feedback was captured from a wide cross-section of our diverse community as below:

Gender	63% female, 32% male, 3% non-binary
Age	All age groups represented – largest: over 65 (27%), 36–45 (21%), 46–55 (15%)
Suburbs	Participants from 15 suburbs; strongest participation from Epping, Doreen, and Mernda
Cultural diversity	35% spoke a language other than English at home
People with disability/carers	11%

LGBTIQA+	4%
First Peoples	2%

What we heard

Community feedback highlighted strong, consistent themes about what people value most and where they would like to see investment.

Top five priorities:

1. **Community Safety** – lighting in public spaces, crime prevention, and local law enforcement.
2. **Roads, Public Transport and Footpaths** – local road maintenance, traffic management, walking and cycling paths, and better transport options.
3. **Ageing Well Services** – positive ageing programs, home support, and social connection opportunities.
4. **Community Facilities** – libraries, sporting and aquatic centres, and community activity spaces.
5. **Community Wellbeing** – mental health support, inclusion, connection, and cost-of-living support.

Other key themes:

- **Parks and open space:** maintenance, biodiversity, more shade, and accessible amenities.
- **Sustainable environment:** reducing waste, tree planting, and education about recycling and climate action.
- **Youth:** more free and inclusive activities, mental health support, and safe social spaces.
- **Local business and jobs:** more local employment opportunities, small business support, and vibrant retail areas.
- **Family and children:** accessible kindergartens, playgroups, and play spaces.

Top priorities for youth participants

As part of the consultation, we heard from 96 people aged under 25 years. The top priorities for this group were:

1. **Arts, culture and events** – festivals, events, community arts, municipal art exhibitions and public art.
2. **Youth** – youth leadership, mental health and wellbeing and social recreation.
3. **Family and Children** – MCH services, kindergarten, supported playgroup, family day care, training and education.
4. **Local employment and support for local business** – business support, investment attraction, visitor economy, retail precincts and local employment opportunities.

5. **Community safety** – lighting in public spaces, crime prevention and local law enforcement.

Other key themes:

- Parks, playgrounds and paths.
- Spaces for youth to meet - Community Centres, Festivals and arts events.
- Education, information and resources - about future path employment, mental health and many other important topics for youth.
- Youth are feeling isolated and experiencing loneliness and the above should be focussed on more than social media strategies.

Next steps – Phase 2

In phase two we share the top five priorities identified through the first phase of consultation and ask participants if they agree with the priorities we've presented. Consultation is predominantly online, but also at key Council events including Bundoora Beats and Carols.

We are seeking input of the Youth Council as part of this wider community engagement process to ensure their voice is considered. Feedback from the session will be presented and considered as part of the wider community consultation that is active at engage.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/priorities2026.

Officers' Recommendation

THAT the Youth Council Provide feedback during the meeting to assist in developing key documents including the Budget 2026-27, Community Action Plan 2026-27 and other plans and projects.

Attachments

Nil

4.2 Youth Engagement Feedback Workshop

Director/Executive Manager: Executive Manager Public Affairs

Report Author: Unit Manager Community Engagement

In Attendance: Unit Manager Community Engagement

Brief Overview

This presentation aims to gather feedback and insights from the Youth Council on how we can better engage with young people.

Officers' Recommendation

THAT the Youth Council provide feedback on how Council can better engage with young people within the municipality.

Attachments

Nil

4.3 Economic Growth Strategy Discussion Papers

Director/Executive Manager: Director Planning & Development

Report Author: Industry Development Officer (Agri-Food)

In Attendance: Manager Economic Development
Unit Manager Investment Attraction & Business Growth
Unit Manager Business Engagement & Support
Industry Development Officer (Agri-Food)

External Attendees: Associate Director, Urbis Pty Ltd
Research Analyst, Urbis Pty Ltd

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report and presentation (**attachment 1**) is to provide an update on the Economic Growth Strategy 2026-2036 and seek feedback from the Youth Council as part of the discussion paper consultation.

The City of Whittlesea is developing the Economic Growth Strategy 2026–2036. This plan will guide how our local economy grows and changes over the next 10 years. It builds on the Strong Local Economy Strategy 2022–2026 and supports Goal 3 of Whittlesea 2040: A Place for All - which is all about creating a thriving, inclusive economy with more local jobs, better education and training, and strong business growth. We also want a community that is connected and resilient.

Phase One is now complete, following extensive pre-consultation led by Urbis Pty Ltd (Urbis). Urbis also conducted an analysis on how other councils approach economic development. Feedback was summarised in a report delivered on 30 September 2025.

A series of themed discussion papers have been developed, highlighting key opportunities, challenges, examples from other regions and posing three ambitious questions to help imagine the future of the City of Whittlesea:

- Unlocking Business Growth and Innovation
- Building Jobs, Skills and Training
- Driving Investment, Infrastructure and Industry Forward
- Growing Economies through Culture and Connection

During the Youth Council session Urbis will be seeking feedback on the discussion papers to gather their perspectives and insights (attachment 2). The Youth Council's feedback will provide valuable input on priorities for young people in areas such as employment, skills development, innovation, and community connection.

This contribution, along with feedback from other stakeholders, will help shape a background paper that pulls together data, trends and community input. The background paper will form the foundation for the final Economic Growth Strategy 2026-2036, ensuring it is evidence-based, locally relevant, and aligned with the City of Whittlesea's long-term vision.

Officers' Recommendation

THAT the Youth Council provide feedback to help shape a background paper that will guide the development of the Economic Growth Strategy 2026-2036.

Background / Key Information

Background

In 2022, the Strong Local Economy Strategy 2022–2026 was endorsed after consultation with the community, businesses, and education providers. It was guided by Whittlesea 2040: A Place for All, the city's long-term vision.

Developing the Next Strategy

With the current strategy ending on 30 June 2026, a new 10-year strategy will be developed, the Economic Growth Strategy 2026-2036. The aim is to position the City of Whittlesea as a key contributor to the state and federal economy. This strategy is being developed with Urbis and will follow five phases:

- Phase 1: Pre-consultation with key stakeholders (complete)
- Phase 2: Discussion papers and consultation (in progress)
- Phase 3: Draft Strategy development (Jan-May 2026)
- Phase 4: Community consultation on the draft (May/Jun 2026)
- Phase 5: Final endorsement (Aug/Sept 2026)

Phase 1 Summary

- 67 stakeholders engaged through focus groups and interviews, including the Youth Council.
- Key strengths: multicultural community, strong small business sector, strategic location, growing population.
- Challenges: transport reliance, rising costs and skills gaps.
- Future trends: tech change, automation, rising living costs, competition from other regions.

Phase 2

Four discussion papers have been developed:

- Unlocking Business Growth and Innovation.
- Building Jobs, Skills and Training.
- Driving Investment, Infrastructure and Industry Forward.
- Growing Economies through Culture and Connection.

These papers explore opportunities, challenges, and important questions to shape the City of Whittlesea's future economy and were released for public consultation on 13 November 2025.

During the Youth Council session Urbis will be seeking feedback on the discussion papers to gather their perspectives and insights (attachment 2).

The Youth Council's feedback will provide valuable input on priorities for young people in areas such as employment, skills development, innovation, and community connection.

Implementation Strategy

Communication

Consultation with key stakeholders on the Discussion Papers commenced on 13 November 2025 to ensure the themes, opportunities and challenges presented are captured accurately. The community will be proactively engaged through broader questioning.

Contributions from the Youth Council, along with feedback from other stakeholders, will help shape a background paper that pulls together data, trends and community input. The background paper will form the foundation for the draft Economic Growth Strategy 2026-2036, ensuring it is evidence-based, locally relevant, and aligned with the City of Whittlesea's long-term vision. The draft Economic Growth Strategy 2026-2036 will be presented to the Youth Council in June 2026.

Critical Dates:

Dates	Activity
November – December 2025	Phase Two <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted consultation on discussion papers (13 November – 4 December) Background report completed (22 December)
January – May 2026	Phase Three <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft strategy developed Draft strategy presented to Council meeting
May – June 2026	Phase Four <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft Strategy consultation Youth Council engaged 1 June 2026
August – September 2026	Phase Five <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final Strategy endorsed

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. Attachment 1 - 251201 Youth Council Economic Growth Strategy Discussion Paper
[**4.3.1** - 7 pages]
2. Attachment 2 - ESG Discussion Papers - All [**4.3.2** - 8 pages]

Economic Growth Strategy 2026-2036

Enhancing a Strong Local Economy

Discussion Papers
1 December 2025



Purpose



The purpose of this presentation is to provide a brief progress update and consult with you on the four discussion papers that have been developed



These discussion papers cover four key areas: business growth and innovation, jobs and skills, investment and infrastructure and culture and connection



The Youth Council's feedback will provide valuable input on priorities for young people in areas such as employment, skills development, innovation, and community connection.

Strategy Process Timeline



1. Pre-Consultation

- Targeted consultation with key stakeholders
- Stakeholder consultation report

2. Discussion Papers

- Present at Council Briefing
- Propose ideas to test through consultation
- Public and targeted consultation (including Youth Council)
- Background Paper

← WE ARE HERE

3. Draft Strategy Development

- Councillor workshop
- Draft Strategy developed
- Council Briefing/Meeting to approve draft strategy for consultation

4. Draft Strategy Consultation

- Public and targeted consultation (including Youth Council)
- Draft strategy updated to reflect consultation report findings
- Consultation report

5. Final Strategy

- Council Briefing/Meeting to endorse final strategy
- Public launch

Key Dates





City of Whittlesea – Economic Growth Strategy Development 2026–2036

*Stage 2 consultation on
discussion papers*

November 2025

Economic Growth Strategy Discussion Papers

Council has used the feedback and ideas received in the first round of consultation to develop four discussion papers. These discussion papers are intended to inform the direction and contents of the draft Economic Growth Strategy, which will be shared for public feedback in 2026. The discussion papers will be open for public feedback for 3 weeks.

THEME 01

Driving Investment, Infrastructure and Industry Forward

- Harnessing national investment and connectivity for local impact
- Manufacturing the future
- Building the northern knowledge corridor
- Tapping into the digital transformation of industry and services
- Activating culture, nature and identity for economic impact

THEME 02

Growing Economies Through Culture and Connection

- Leverage events and festivals to drive visitor spend
- Activate public spaces to strengthen town centre vitality
- Build a coordinated creative infrastructure plan
- Strengthen the night-time economy
- Promote cultural and natural assets as economic drivers

THEME 03

Unlocking Business Growth and Innovation

- Scale innovation through population growth and infrastructure
- Activate local entrepreneurship and innovation networks
- Position cultural diversity as a gateway to global markets
- Build a digitally enabled, climate-ready business community
- Promote local procurement and investment attraction

THEME 04

Building Jobs, Skills and Training for the Future

- Leverage major projects to drive skills development in construction, trades and key industries
- Align skills pipelines with priority growth sectors
- Activate diverse, local talent
- Harness digital transformation and AI literacy
- Strengthen collaboration between industry, government and education providers

Youth Council

What we heard from you last time:

- A lack of transport options is a key barrier for young people in the City of Whittlesea and makes it much harder to find a job.
- Finding an entry level job is very difficult, and often requires you to have connections referring you to a vacancy.
- The area needs more spaces where young people are able to hang out outside of their homes or schools. These should be safe, walkable and low cost or free.
- It would be useful to have a City of Whittlesea jobs board, rather than relying on services like Seek, Indeed or LinkedIn.
- There is an increasing need for mental health support in the community, particularly related to increasing rates of loneliness.

Today's discussion questions:

- Do you feel that the main themes identified in the four discussion papers accurately reflect the key issues facing youth in the LGA? Why or why not?
- Do you think the priorities in the discussion papers match what youth in the LGA need right now? Is there anything you would change?
- Is there anything important that is missing from the discussion papers?
- Which themes or priorities do you think are most important for the City of Whittlesea to focus on, and why?
- Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Building jobs, skills and training for the future



Discussion paper

We're planning for the City of Whittlesea's economic future, and we know that skills and training will be central to unlocking inclusive growth and industry transformation. This paper explores how strategic partnerships, inclusive training models, and industry-aligned pathways can unlock local talent. A draft strategy will be shared for public feedback in 2026 – but we'd love to hear your thoughts now on the ideas and opportunities ahead.

Positioning the City of Whittlesea for industry-led skills growth

Leverage major projects to drive skills development in construction, trades and key industries

Australia's infrastructure boom is creating new business and employment opportunities. The City of Whittlesea is well positioned to benefit from major projects in the area that are driving demand for skilled workers and services across construction, trades, transport, healthcare, clean energy and advanced manufacturing.

Opportunities:

- National priorities in freight and health infrastructure align with strategic precincts including the Beveridge Intermodal Precinct, Epping Health Precinct and Cooper Street Employment Precinct, offering significant potential for construction and trade-based employment.
- Industry demand is growing for skilled workers in areas across construction, trades, healthcare, clean energy and advanced manufacturing.
- Education and training providers are increasingly looking to partner with local communities and major projects to deliver hands-on, real world learning experiences that help residents build pathways into construction and trade careers.

Align skills pipelines with priority growth sectors

State and federal governments are focusing on fast growing industries like advanced manufacturing, clean energy, digital services and health technologies. The City of Whittlesea is well placed to align local training

with these areas to help prepare our community for future jobs.

Opportunities

- National and state investment in priority industries like robotics, clean energy and digital technology is increasing demand for specialised skills.
- Universities and training providers are offering more flexible, short courses to help people gain skills in these areas.
- Information from employers and job market trends is helping shape training programs to better match real world needs.

Activate diverse, local talent

State-wide efforts to build a more inclusive workforce are creating opportunities for the City of Whittlesea to support its diverse communities. By providing culturally safe training to businesses, welcoming workplaces can be fostered and meaningful employment pathways opened for residents from all backgrounds.

Opportunities:

- Interest is growing among governments and community organisations in training programs that are led by local communities and create culturally safe environments.
- Flexible work and learning models are being scaled nationally to support women, carers and under-represented groups.
- The City of Whittlesea's diverse population presents a unique opportunity to build a more inclusive and skilled workforce, while helping broaden access to talent and create fairer job opportunities for residents.

Harness digital transformation and AI literacy

Digital skills are now a national priority, with federal and state governments investing heavily in technology upgrades. The City of Whittlesea has an opportunity to position itself as a leader by supporting local learning in areas like AI, cybersecurity and digital tools.

Opportunities:

- Federal and state programs are funding digital skills training and smart region pilots.
- Small to medium enterprises are increasingly seeking tailored support to adopt emerging technologies and remain competitive.
- Education providers are integrating digital technologies and AI into core training programs and business support services.

Strengthen collaboration between industry, government and education providers

Across Australia, there is growing interest in workforce planning that meets local needs. The City of Whittlesea is well-placed to support this by bringing together businesses, education providers, government, employment services and the community to ensure training aligns with real job opportunities.

Opportunities:

- National programs now support employers to help shape training courses and work with local partners to build skills in their communities.
- New data tools and job market insights are helping training providers quickly adapt to changing workforce needs.
- Universities and TAFEs are working closely with local councils to design training programs that better support local jobs and industries.

THE FACTS



23% of residents have a Bachelor or higher degree^{1a}



62% of residents drive to work while only **4%** use public transport^{1a}



63% of residents travel outside the City of Whittlesea for work^{1a}



Globally, job opportunities in AI-exposed industries increased by **10%** from 2024 to 2025²



In 2025, there were **3,335** students enrolled at Melbourne Polytechnic's Epping campus^{3a}, **8,705** students enrolled at RMIT University's Bundoora campus^{4a} and **24,000** enrolled at La Trobe University's Bundoora campus^{5b}

Data sources:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2021
- PwC Australia 2025
- Melbourne Polytechnic
- RMIT University
- La Trobe University
- a. City of Whittlesea
b. City of Darebin

Barriers to skills alignment

Skills mismatch and workforce gaps

Rapid industry change is outpacing education delivery, leaving gaps between what employers need and what graduates offer.

- Local growth industries such as advanced manufacturing, logistics, healthcare and digital services report shortages in trades, robotics, IT and soft skills.
- Education providers often find it challenging to keep training programs up to date with emerging technologies.
- Businesses are increasingly experiencing delays in growth and innovation due to a shortage of job-ready talent, especially in fast changing industries.

Limited local access to jobs and training

Geographic and transport barriers are limiting residents' ability to access nearby employment and education opportunities.

- Local economic activity is constrained as residents spend income and time outside the municipality.
- Northern suburbs lack accessible training hubs, especially in growth areas.
- Poor east-west transport connectivity makes it harder for businesses to recruit locally.

Barriers to participation

Young people, women, First Peoples and migrant communities face systemic barriers to participation in training and employment.

- Limited childcare and inflexible work arrangements restrict workforce entry.
- Cultural safety, language barriers and challenges in recognising overseas qualifications reduce engagement with mainstream training programs.
- Skilled workers remain disconnected from emerging career pathways, limiting access to new opportunities and industry growth.

Gaps in collaboration between key groups

Greater coordination between education providers, industry and government could significantly strengthen the impact of training initiatives.

- Many programs run independently, which can limit opportunities to work together and reach more residents.
- Businesses aren't always involved in shaping what or how training is delivered.
- Residents and local businesses may find it hard to understand or access the full range of available support and training options.

Employer demand outstripping supply

Key sectors are growing faster than the local workforce can supply, creating urgent skills shortages.

- Advanced manufacturing, logistics, healthcare and digital services are expanding rapidly with major projects underway that may face delays or underperformance due to skills shortages.
- Employers report difficulty sourcing skilled workers locally, especially in specialised roles.
- Residents may miss out on high-value job opportunities due to lack of targeted training.

Global insights that inspire local action

Across Australia and internationally, governments have shown how innovative training programs, strong industry partnerships and targeted investment in skills can help communities adapt to change and thrive. Valuable insights can be gained to shape the future for the City of Whittlesea.

SkillsFuture Initiative, Singapore

Singapore's lifelong learning model shows how modular, employer-led training can build a resilient workforce with industry-aligned skills and training.

- Citizens receive credits to pursue industry-relevant training throughout their lives, supporting continuous upskilling.
- Government-industry collaboration ensures training remains aligned with evolving economic needs.
- SkillsFuture demonstrates that lifelong learning systems can equip residents with adaptable, industry-relevant skills that evolve with economic demands.

Partnership with Amazon, City of Casey (VIC)

Strategic investment in logistics infrastructure can drive local employment and catalyse workforce development.

- Amazon's fulfilment centre created 500 jobs and introduced specialised logistics training through on-the-job learning.
- The project attracted further investment and strengthened the region's industrial capabilities.
- Casey's partnership with Amazon shows how aligning infrastructure with workforce development can deliver immediate jobs and long-term industry growth.

ACE-UP College-Employer Partnerships, USA

Co-designed training programs between colleges and employers ensure education aligns with labour market needs.

- Curricula are shaped by real-time labour market data and employer input, improving relevance and responsiveness.
- Regular engagement with industry supports inclusive and equitable workforce development.
- ACE-UP proves that employer-led education models can close skills gaps and create more inclusive pathways into emerging industries.

Imagining the City of Whittlesea's future:

- How can we better connect local training and workforce development with growing and emerging industries to position the City of Whittlesea as a national leader in shaping a thriving, innovative and resilient economy?
- How can we start preparing now with education providers to ensure our community has the skills needed for major projects like the Beveridge Intermodal Precinct, transport infrastructure, data centres and other emerging industries, while also creating hands-on learning experiences that lead to long-term careers?
- In what ways can we work with education providers to activate the City of Whittlesea's diverse community through inclusive and flexible training that prepares residents for future jobs and closes participation gaps?



HAVE YOUR SAY

For more information and to tell us what matters to you, visit engage.whittlesea.vic.gov.au

Scan the QR code to have your say!



Free telephone
interpreter service
131 450

Arabic خدمة الترجمة الشفوية المجانية
Chinese Simplified 免费电话传译服务
Chinese Traditional 免費電話傳譯服務
Greek Δωρεάν τηλεφωνική υπηρεσία διερμυνώντων
Italian Servizio di interpretariato telefonico gratuito

Macedonian Бесплатна телефонска услуга за преведување
Persian/Farsi خدمات مترجم شفاهی تلفنی رایگان
Punjabi ਮੁਫਤ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਦੁਆਰਾ ਸੇਵਾ
Turkish Ücretsiz telefonla tercümanlık hizmeti
Vietnamese Dịch vụ thông dịch qua điện thoại miễn phí



**City of
Whittlesea**

Driving investment, infrastructure and industry forward

Discussion paper



We're planning for the City of Whittlesea's economic future and are poised to become a leading destination for investment, industry and inclusive growth. This paper explores the strategic advantages of our location, and the bold steps needed to unlock its full economic potential over the next ten years. A draft strategy will be shared for public feedback in 2026 – but we'd love to hear your thoughts now on the ideas and opportunities ahead.

Unlocking investment for economic growth

Harnessing national investment and connectivity for local impact

Major infrastructure projects, such as the Beveridge Intermodal Precinct, strategically located in the City of Whittlesea, are unlocking new corridors for investment across Victoria and interstate. Leveraging its location and assets can attract high-value industries and long-term economic development.

Opportunities:

- Federal and state infrastructure investment is accelerating the development of transport, logistics and energy corridors across Victoria, creating new platforms for regional economic growth.
- The expansion of national freight and logistics networks, including intermodal hubs like Beveridge Intermodal Precinct, is reshaping supply chains and enabling new distribution and export capabilities.
- Melbourne's northern growth is generating demand for coordinated land use, transport upgrades and investment attraction – positioning the region at the centre of a high-growth corridor.

Manufacturing the future

Australia's shift toward clean manufacturing and circular economy practices is reshaping industrial sectors, and the City of Whittlesea is well positioned to attract investment and innovation in sustainable production.

Opportunities:

- National and global demand for cleantech and circular economy solutions is driving investment in sustainable manufacturing and resource recovery.
- Industry transformation in food, beverage and logistics is creating new markets for advanced processing and environmentally responsible production.
- Government incentives and policy shifts are supporting the growth of low-emissions industries, creating momentum for clean manufacturing hubs.

Building the northern knowledge corridor

Major health infrastructure projects and growing demand for skilled professionals are creating new opportunities for Whittlesea to become a centre for health, education and research.

Opportunities:

- Significant investment in public and private health infrastructure is driving demand for clinical and allied health professionals across Melbourne's growing northern corridor.
- National health workforce shortages are prompting investment in training pipelines and education partnerships.
- Universities and research institutions are seeking new locations to expand their reach, particularly in growth regions like Melbourne's north.
- Prioritising and supporting investment into Epping MAC as the new city centre and Cloverton in the north.

Tapping into the digital transformation of industry and services

Digital disruption is reshaping every sector, and the City of Whittlesea can harness this momentum to support a tech-enabled economy that encourages innovation, resilience and inclusion.

Opportunities:

- National investment in broadband, mobile coverage and smart city infrastructure is creating new foundations for digital innovation.
- The rise of AI, automation and remote work is transforming business models and creating demand for digitally skilled workers.
- Small to medium enterprises and startups are increasingly seeking digitally connected locations with access to co-working spaces and tech support.

Activating culture, nature and identity for economic impact

Growing interest in eco-tourism, cultural experiences and placemaking presents an opportunity for the City of Whittlesea to activate its natural and cultural assets as economic drivers.

Opportunities:

- Tourism trends are shifting toward nature-based and culturally immersive experiences, increasing demand for destinations that offer environmental connection, cultural storytelling and community-led experiences.
- National recognition of First Peoples' heritage is driving investment in cultural infrastructure and community-led tourism.
- Placemaking and creative industries are being embraced as tools for economic development and social cohesion across Australia.

THE FACTS



43% increase in population to more than 361,800 residents by 2040^{1a}



\$5 billion in exports^{3a}



16,345 residents are employed in the Health Care and Social Assistance sector^{4a}



23% increase in building approval values from 2021 to 2040^{5a}

Data sources:

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Region Population Growth 2024, Place Info 2025
2. National Institute of Economic and Industry Research 2024
3. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2021
4. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Building Approvals, Australia 2025
- a. City of Whittlesea

Barriers to strategic advantage

Strained infrastructure and transport challenges

The surge in population growth has placed significant pressure on transport networks and industrial capacity.

- Road networks are under increasing pressure, with congestion affecting freight movement, commuter travel and emergency response times.
- Public transport connectivity remains hindered, particularly in growth areas, limiting access to jobs, education and services.
- Inconsistent access to utilities such as power, water and broadband in industrial zones is deterring investment and slowing business operations.

Digital connectivity gaps

Digital infrastructure has not kept pace with growth, which can limit productivity and access to essential services.

- Telecommunications black spots and unreliable internet persist in semi-rural and newly developed areas, limiting access to education, healthcare and remote work opportunities.
- Poor connectivity reduces business competitiveness, particularly for small to medium enterprises and startups that rely on digital tools, cloud services and online platforms to operate and grow.

Regional competition and identity

Neighbouring local government areas are actively attracting investment through branding and incentives, and the City of Whittlesea needs to position its economic identity.

- Competing local government areas are offering streamlined approvals, targeted incentives and bold branding strategies, raising the bar for regional investment attraction and requiring a sharper, more distinctive value proposition.
- A unified brand or strategic positioning can enable the region to stand out in a crowded investment landscape.
- Varying messaging and lack of coordinated promotion can dilute the region's appeal, making it harder to attract anchor tenants, cluster development and catalytic investment.
- Promoting the unique strengths, such as cultural diversity, strategic location or emerging industry clusters, may result in faster economic growth and increased competitiveness.

Global insights: models that inspire local action

Across Australia and globally, local councils have successfully leveraged their unique strengths to drive economic growth, attract investment and boost innovation. Valuable insights can be gained to shape the future for the City of Whittlesea.

Long-term planning for sustainability, Freiburg (Germany)

Freiburg's integrated approach to infrastructure and environmental planning has created a thriving, future-ready economy.

- The city invested early in renewable energy, green buildings and public transport to support both environmental and economic outcomes.
- Long-term planning to deliver civic infrastructure first has built investor confidence and improved liveability across the region.
- Freiburg's success shows that aligning infrastructure with sustainability goals can unlock long-term economic resilience and community wellbeing.

Jurong Innovation District, Singapore

Singapore's Jurong Innovation District shows how clustering advanced manufacturing, education and research can drive innovation and skilled employment.

- The district integrates high-tech industry with tertiary education and research institutions to support talent development.
- Strategic infrastructure investment has created a globally competitive innovation hub.
- Jurong demonstrates that co-locating industry and education accelerates innovation and strengthens the pipeline of skilled talent for emerging industries.

Turbine Precinct, Sunshine Coast (QLD)

The Turbine Precinct demonstrates how regional collaboration can accelerate growth in priority sectors like food and beverage manufacturing.

- The precinct brings together producers, researchers and entrepreneurs to drive innovation and export capability.
- Shared infrastructure and support services reduce barriers to entry and scale.
- The Turbine Precinct proves that collaborative environments can fast-track regional industry growth and global competitiveness.

Imagining the City of Whittlesea's future:

- How might the City of Whittlesea coordinate investment across freight, energy, and transport infrastructure to evolve into Australia's most connected logistics and clean manufacturing corridor?
- How can opportunities be built upon in the emerging health and research precinct in Epping?
- In what ways could the City of Whittlesea's cultural, natural, and digital assets be activated to position the region as a globally recognised destination for eco-tourism, creative industries and smart city innovation?



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**City of
Whittlesea**

Growing economies through culture and connection



Discussion paper

We're planning for the City of Whittlesea's economic future, and we know that social cohesion and cultural vibrancy are not just social outcomes — they are economic assets. This paper explores how public spaces, cultural infrastructure and creative activation can drive foot traffic and support local businesses. A draft strategy will be shared for public feedback in 2026 — but we'd love to hear your thoughts now on the ideas and opportunities ahead.

Harnessing culture and place for economic impact

Leverage events and festivals to drive visitor spend

Multicultural events are a growing driver of regional tourism and local economic activity, and the City of Whittlesea is well positioned to lead in this space.

Opportunities:

- The City of Whittlesea's cultural diversity aligns with rising demand for inclusive, authentic experiences across Victoria.
- The success of multicultural festivals in other local government areas demonstrates strong visitor appeal and business engagement potential.
- Increased interest from sponsors and state-level support for cultural programming creates favourable conditions for growth.

Activate public spaces to strengthen town centre vitality

The shift toward walkable, mixed-use centres and precinct high amenity presents a timely opportunity to transform the City of Whittlesea's public spaces into economic engines.

Opportunities:

- State and federal investment in placemaking and liveability can be leveraged to support local activation.
- Consumer preferences for vibrant, localised experiences support the case for concentrated precinct development.
- Funding availability for public realm improvements and creative installations enhances delivery potential.

Build a coordinated creative infrastructure plan

Creative industries are expanding rapidly, and the City of Whittlesea can harness this momentum by developing a strategic framework for cultural infrastructure.

Opportunities:

- Victorian and national funding programs for creative precincts offer a platform for investment and growth.
- Demand for affordable, accessible creative workspaces is increasing across metropolitan regions.
- Cultural exports and creative entrepreneurship are emerging as high-value sectors with strong economic potential.

Strengthen the night-time economy

The night-time economy is gaining traction as a key contributor to urban vibrancy, safety and extended business activity.

Opportunities:

- State-level strategies promoting after-dark activation.
- Increase night-time engagement to shape precinct development.
- Improving transport and safety helps people feel safer, makes places easier to reach, and encourages more people to join in.

Promote cultural and natural assets as economic drivers

Nature-based and cultural tourism are growing sectors, and the City of Whittlesea's unique assets offer a compelling foundation for destination development.

Opportunities:

- Tourism bodies are actively supporting visitor economy initiatives, including nature and culture-based experiences.
- Digital platforms enable low-cost promotion and itinerary planning, increasing reach and engagement.
- Changing travel preferences favour local, immersive experiences.
- Greater awareness and connection of the Aboriginal Gathering place.

THE FACTS



40% of residents were born overseas with **47%** speaking a language other than English at home^{1a}



There are more than **60** activity centres in the City of Whittlesea²



Across Victoria people spend up to **40%** more in neighbourhoods where they can easily walk to the local shops^{2b}



In FY24-25, night-time spend was **\$560m**^{3a}

Data sources:

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2021
 2. Department of Transport and Planning
 3. Council iQ 2024-2025
- a. City of Whittlesea
b. Victoria

Barriers to economic activation

Transport and connectivity gaps reduce foot traffic

Limited transport infrastructure is restricting access to town centres, events and services, weakening local economic activity.

- Poor east-west connectivity and car dependency reduce participation in local events and economic activity, especially in growth areas.
- Limited transport options for those without private vehicles such as young people, older adults and migrant communities creates barriers to accessing town centres, events and services, decreasing overall foot traffic and community engagement.
- Precincts with poor transport connections struggle to draw consistent foot traffic, limiting opportunities for investment and activation, and weakening the performance of retail and hospitality businesses.

Low digital literacy and access limits business visibility

Digital exclusion is undermining business competitiveness and community participation in the local economy.

- Broadband hasn't grown as fast as the number of people, which makes it harder for the municipality to grow its digital economy.
- Many residents face barriers to accessing or using digital tools and may result in residents missing out on local opportunities and services.
- Local businesses without digital capability struggle to attract customers, engage online and compete with non-local providers.

Dispersed activation dilutes economic impact

Scattered events and infrastructure investments fail to build the critical mass needed to drive sustained economic outcomes.

- Activation efforts across multiple locations lack strategic focus, reducing visibility and return on investment.
- Precincts miss out on clustering benefits that support foot traffic, business growth and vibrancy.
- Without concentrated activation, it is difficult to build strong brand identity of precincts and town centres.

Rising cost of living reduces discretionary spend

Financial pressures are limiting household spending on local dining, retail and events, impacting business viability.

- Families are cutting back on discretionary spending, reducing participation in community and economic activity.
- Retail and hospitality sectors face declining revenue and foot traffic, especially in lower-income areas.
- Reduced local spend weakens the case for precinct activation and investment, which may result in declining community engagement and vibrancy.

Fragmented cultural infrastructure limits growth

Limited coordination in creative infrastructure may be constraining the City of Whittlesea's ability to fully realise its cultural and economic potential.

- Creative spaces and programs currently operate with limited connection, funding and strategic alignment, which may be affecting the growth of the creative industries.
- Local creatives face ongoing challenges accessing affordable, fit-for-purpose venues, indicating a need to strengthen infrastructure that supports collaboration and showcasing.
- Cultural tourism, creative entrepreneurship and export activity are not yet fully leveraged, which may be limiting the development of a strong cultural brand and identity for the City of Whittlesea.

Global insights that inspire local action

Across Australia and internationally, governments have shown how cultural events, creative programs and place-based initiatives can strengthen community connections, celebrate local identity and boost economic activity. Valuable insights can be gained to shape the future for the City of Whittlesea.

Creative Enterprise Zones program, London (England)

London's CEZ model shows how targeted investment in creative precincts can drive local employment, activate underused spaces, and build inclusive economic identity.

- Dedicated funding and infrastructure have supported artists, makers and cultural organisations to thrive in place-based zones.
- CEZs have successfully transformed underutilised areas into vibrant hubs for collaboration, wellbeing and entrepreneurship.
- London's CEZs show that investing in creative industries can revitalise neighbourhoods and foster inclusive economic growth.

Lunar New Year, City of Parramatta (NSW)

Parramatta's Lunar New Year festival demonstrates how multicultural events can generate significant economic and social returns through inclusive programming.

- The event attracts over 10,000 visitors annually, showcasing the power of cultural celebration to drive foot traffic and local spend.
- It provides platforms for small businesses, artists and community groups to engage new audiences and build visibility.
- Parramatta's success highlights how cultural festivals can strengthen community identity while boosting local economies.

Youth UpRising, California (USA)

Youth UpRising illustrates how culturally responsive, place-based initiatives can unlock economic potential and strengthen community resilience.

- The program integrates education, job training, health services and creative arts to support diverse youth in East Oakland.
- It has reduced violence, increased employment and empowered young people to shape their local economy.
- Youth UpRising proves that holistic, youth-led models can drive social change and create lasting economic impact.

Imagining the City of Whittlesea's future:

- How might we lead Victoria in activating culture and place to support economic growth—drawing on our diversity, creative industries, and public spaces to spark investment and community vibrancy?
- What could help transform our town centres into thriving cultural and economic destinations – through coordinated activation, inclusive programming and strong local partnerships?
- In what ways can we position the City of Whittlesea as Victoria's most vibrant and connected municipality—celebrated for its cultural diversity, walkable precincts and immersive visitor experiences?



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**City of
Whittlesea**

Unlocking business growth and innovation



Discussion paper

We're planning for the City of Whittlesea's economic future, and ready to lead the next wave of business growth, innovation and resilience. This paper explores the bold ideas, emerging trends and transformative opportunities that will shape our economy over the next ten years. A draft strategy will be shared for public feedback in 2026 — but we'd love to hear your thoughts now on the possibilities and opportunities ahead.

Building a future-focused innovation economy

Scale innovation through population growth and infrastructure

Australia's infrastructure investment and urban growth presents new opportunities for innovation. The City of Whittlesea can take advantage of this growth, attract investment and support industry growth by proactively facilitating the development of key precincts.

Opportunities:

- National infrastructure strategies are prioritising mixed-use innovation precincts that bring together housing, employment and advanced industries.
- Urban centres worldwide are leveraging population growth to create precincts that increase clean technology, which attract anchor tenants in health and logistics sectors.
- Federal and state governments are investing in employment hubs that support long-term economic transformation in growth regions.

Activate local entrepreneurship and innovation networks

Inclusive businesses and creative industries are growing around the world and changing local economies. By supporting emerging businesses, fostering a culture of creativity and collaboration, the City of Whittlesea can empower local entrepreneurs and drive sustainable growth across the region.

Opportunities:

- Investment in co-working hubs, maker spaces and pop-up activations to startups and creative enterprise is growing.
- International and national trends show growing support for migrant, First Peoples and youth entrepreneurship through targeted programs, delivered online via digital platforms.
- The global shift toward social enterprise and purpose-driven business models is creating new opportunities within local communities.

Position cultural diversity as a gateway to global markets

Cultural industries and migrant communities are helping to grow global trade and innovation. The City of Whittlesea's diverse population provides a strong advantage in connecting with international markets.

Opportunities:

- Multicultural cities are growing export-ready sectors in food, fashion, media and technology by supporting cultural entrepreneurship.
- Leveraging migrant networks to build international trade relationships, attract talent and foster inclusive innovation.
- International development agencies and trade bodies are increasingly recognising cultural diversity as a key asset in economic development and global engagement.

Build a digitally enabled, climate-ready business community

Digital change and climate resilience are now key to staying competitive worldwide. The City of Whittlesea can take the lead by aligning with national and global efforts to build these skills.

Opportunities:

- Governments are funding AI, cybersecurity and clean technology adoption across small businesses to drive innovation and resilience.
- Approaches that help to protect the climate are being supported through grants, toolkits and pilot programs in cities worldwide.
- Global markets are demanding low-carbon, digitally enabled supply chains, creating new expectations and opportunities for local businesses.

Promote local procurement and investment attraction

Inclusive procurement and regional branding are gaining traction globally, and the City of Whittlesea can use these trends to retain local value and attract strategic investment.

Opportunities:

- Governments are leveraging social procurement practices to support First Peoples' businesses, social enterprises, sustainable businesses and local suppliers.
- Investment attraction is increasingly driven by coordinated branding, easy-to-use digital tools and cross-municipality collaboration.
- International investors are seeking regions with clear value propositions, strategic infrastructure and clear economic identities.

THE FACTS



22,808

local businesses^{1a}



85,195

local jobs^{2a}



\$12.2bn

Gross Regional Product (GRP)^{2a}



13,405

new jobs created from 2018–2024^{2a}

Data sources:

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries and Exits 2024
2. National Institute of Economic and Industry Research 2024

a. City of Whittlesea

Barriers to unlocking business growth

Service access barriers and network gaps

Infrastructure development has lagged behind population expansion, limiting access to essential services and reducing the competitiveness of key employment precincts.

- Industrial areas face delays in power upgrades, while telecommunication black spots and unreliable internet hinder digital operations.
- Inadequate public transport and road congestion reduce access to jobs, training and commercial hubs.
- These gaps weaken investor confidence and restrict the sectors to grow.

Financial pressures and business resilience

Rising operational costs and economic uncertainty are placing pressure on local businesses, particularly small and home-based enterprises.

- Energy, insurance, rent and wage increases can affect profit margins and limit continued investment.
- Rising costs from inflation and global supply chain challenges are encouraging businesses and consumers to adjust their spending and sourcing strategies.
- Without targeted support, some businesses risk stagnation or closure, reducing local employment and innovation.

Digital capability and cybersecurity risks

As industries digitise, many local businesses are struggling to keep pace with technology adoption and cyber resilience.

- Limited digital literacy and access to training hinder uptake of e-commerce, AI and cloud-based tools.
- Small and multicultural businesses are particularly vulnerable to cyber threats and digital exclusion.
- These gaps reduce competitiveness, market reach and the ability to adapt to changing consumer behaviours.

Limited access to affordable innovation spaces

The demand for flexible, affordable workspaces is growing, but supply remains limited across the municipality.

- Startups, sole traders and creative enterprises face barriers to accessing co-working, maker and incubation spaces.
- Underutilised buildings and precincts remain disconnected from innovation ecosystems.
- A lack of inclusive, strategically located co-working hubs can result in missed entrepreneurship and collaboration opportunities.

Procurement practice and regional coordination

Local procurement and regional branding are yet to be fully leveraged, which may be limiting the City of Whittlesea's ability to retain economic value and attract investment.

- Procurement processes can provide better support for local suppliers, social enterprises and First Peoples' businesses – these processes can strengthen inclusive economic development.
- While regional cross-municipal border collaboration is strong, a clear regional identity and positioning of collective strategic advantages could attract further investment.
- Regional collaboration for delivery of infrastructure and public agencies adopting a more commercial mindset may enable increased private sector investment.

Global insights that inspire local action

Across Australia and internationally, governments have shown how strategic leadership, targeted investment and collaboration can unlock economic potential and strengthen business engagement. Valuable insights can be gained to shape the future for the City of Whittlesea.

Strategic sector focus, City of Moreton Bay (QLD)

Moreton Bay has shown how a bold focus on high-value sectors can attract investment, create jobs and build regional identity.

- The city prioritised advanced manufacturing and agribusiness, aligning land use, infrastructure and workforce planning to support growth.
- Dedicated investment in sector-specific precincts helped attract anchor tenants and catalyse local supply chains.
- Moreton Bay's approach demonstrates that targeted sector strategies can transform regional economies and attract long-term private investment.

Global Tampa Bay, USA

Tampa Bay demonstrates how cross-municipality collaboration can elevate a region's economic profile and attract global investment.

- Local governments worked together to promote shared infrastructure, talent and export opportunities under a unified regional brand.
- The collaboration enabled coordinated investor engagement and stronger advocacy at the state and federal level.
- Tampa Bay's success shows that unified regional branding and collaboration can unlock greater visibility and investment opportunities.

Partnerships for sustainable cities, Europe

European cities are using international partnerships to share knowledge, attract investment and co-develop sustainable economic solutions.

- Programs like Partnerships for Sustainable Cities support peer-to-peer learning and joint innovation between local governments.
- These partnerships have helped cities build resilience, improve governance and accelerate climate-smart economic development.
- The European experience highlights that global city partnerships can fast-track sustainability outcomes and strengthen local innovation capacity.

Imagining the City of Whittlesea's future:

- How might we harness the City of Whittlesea's infrastructure, population growth, and sector strengths to unlock business innovation and attract anchor industries and emerging markets?
- What would it take to transform the City of Whittlesea into a nationally recognised hub for inclusive entrepreneurship—supported by vibrant innovation spaces, digital capability, and purpose-driven enterprise?
- In what ways can we position the City of Whittlesea as a global-facing economy—powered by cultural diversity, climate-smart business models, regional identity and strategic trade relationships?



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**City of
Whittlesea**

4.4 Youth Hub Location

Director/Executive Manager: Director Community Wellbeing

Report Author: EA to Director to Community Wellbeing

Brief Overview

This Presentation aims to gather feedback from Youth Council regarding potential locations for a Youth Hub.

Officers' Recommendation

THAT the Youth Council provide feedback on potential locations for a Youth Hub within City of Whittlesea.

Attachments

Nil

5 Notices of Motion

No Notices of Motion

6 General / Urgent Business

7 Closure