



Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy 2023-2033



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**

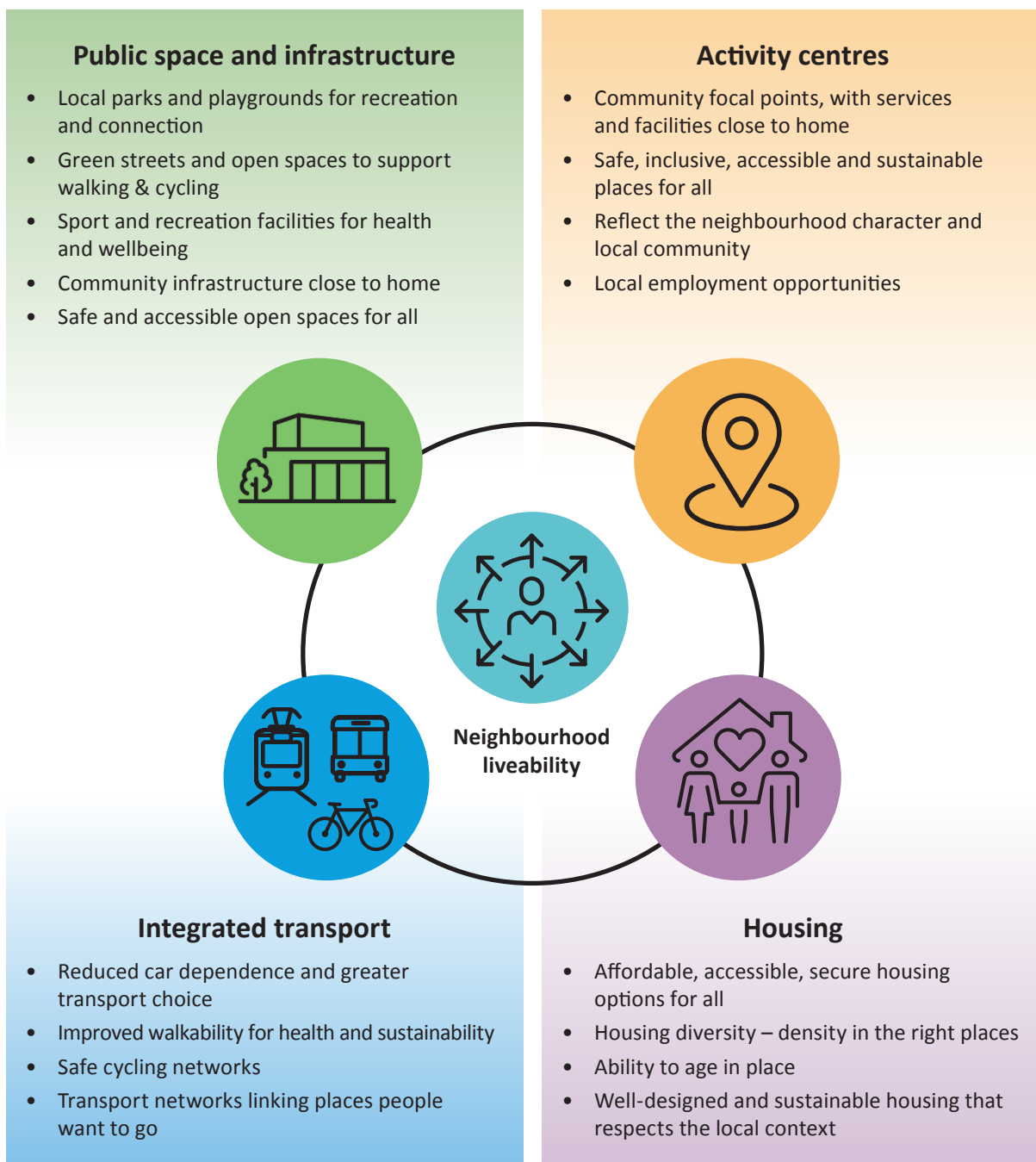


**Key direction 3
Housing for
diverse needs**

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.

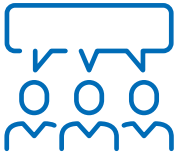
Plan Melbourne is a metropolitan strategy that guides the growth of metro Melbourne for the next 35 years. One of the principles is Living Locally – 20-minute neighbourhoods, which is all about giving people the ability to meet most of their daily needs close to home.





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.

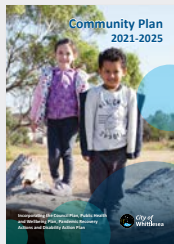
How we plan – an integrated people-focused approach

Level 1: Vision

Council’s overarching 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



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

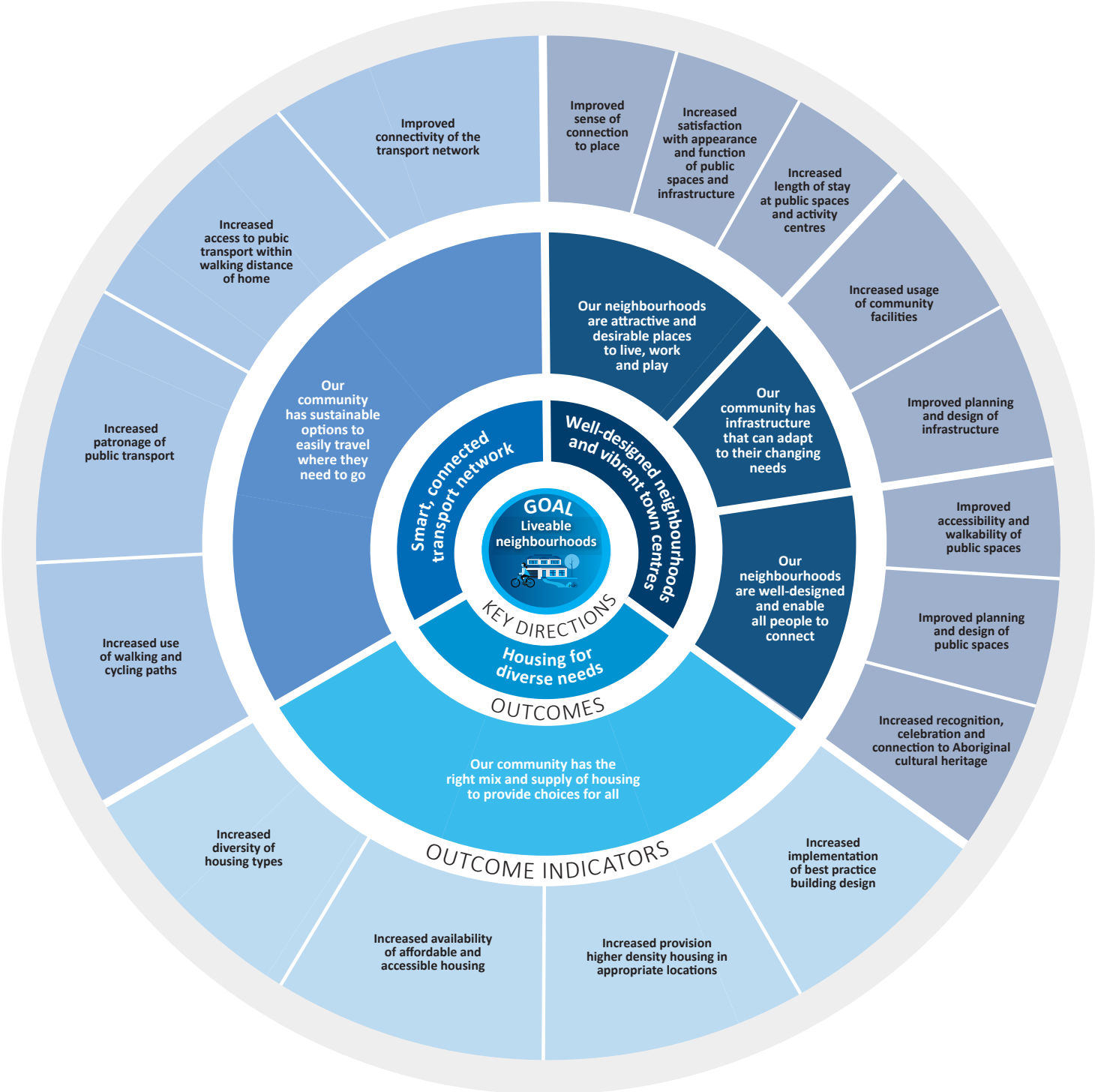


Key direction 3: Housing for diverse needs

- 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.

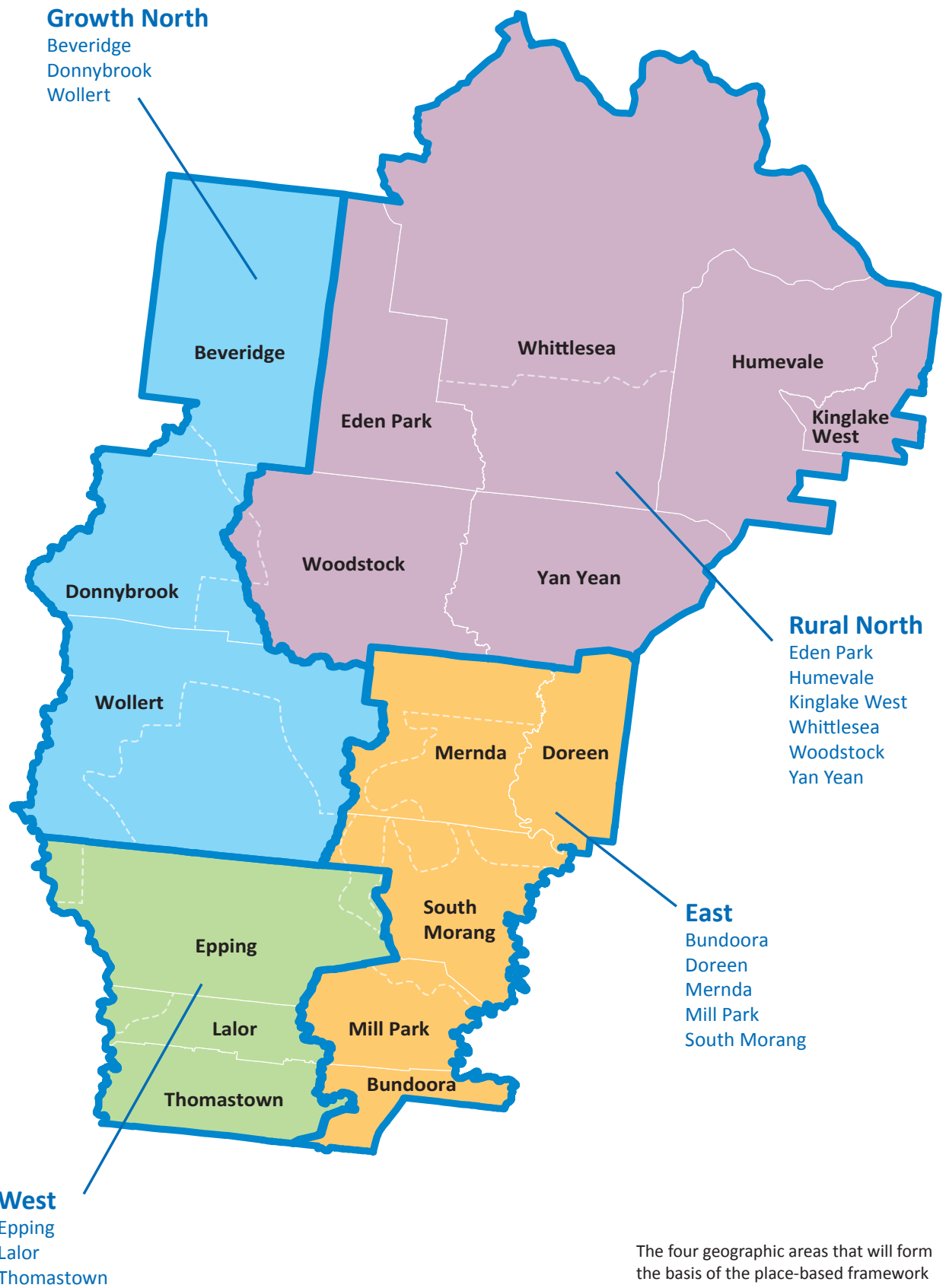
Adopting a localised approach also allows the Council to facilitate equal opportunities for community members to participate and engage within their local areas. We strongly believe in fostering social connections and building resilience within our communities. By focusing on local initiatives, we can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



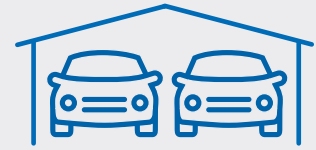
City of Whittlesea profile



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*



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 **5,210** 2041 **48,123**

98%
 of dwellings are
 separate house



2%
 of dwellings
 are medium/
 high density

Wollert

Forecast Population
 2021 **26,924** 2041 **60,730**

93%
 of dwellings are
 separate house



7%
 of dwellings
 are medium/
 high density

Epping

Forecast Population
 2021 **35,389** 2041 **48,323**

83%
 of dwellings are
 separate house

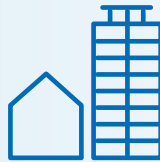


17%
 of dwellings
 are medium/
 high density

Thomastown

Forecast Population
 2021 **21,201** 2041 **28,273**

83%
 of dwellings are
 separate house



17%
 of dwellings
 are medium/
 high density

Lalor

Forecast Population
 2021 **24,002** 2041 **27,886**



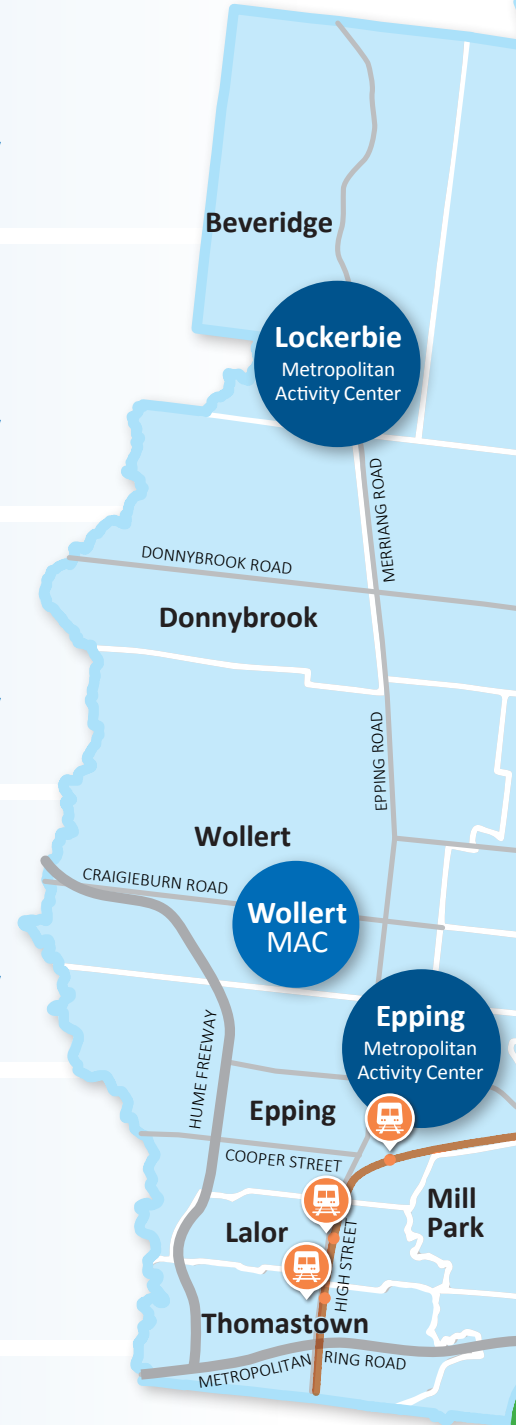
Bundoora

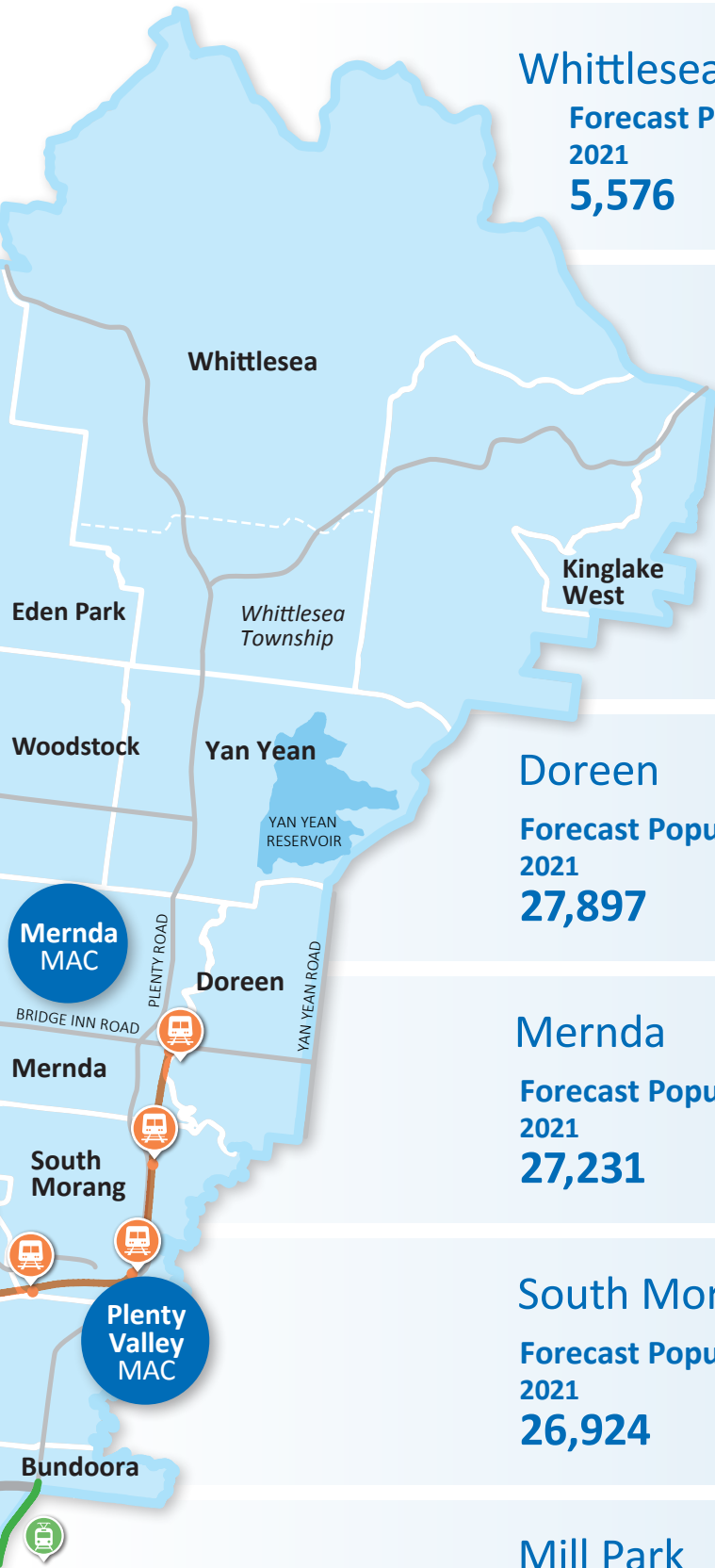
Forecast Population
 2021 **14,399** 2041 **19,139**

70%
 of dwellings are
 separate house



30%
 of dwellings
 are medium/
 high density



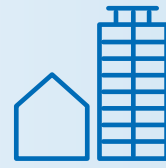


Whittlesea township

Forecast Population

2021 **5,576** 2041 **6,387**

86%
of dwellings are
separate house



14%
of dwellings
are medium/
high density

Rural North

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

Forecast Population

2021 **3,177** 2041 **3,351**

100%
of dwellings are
separate house

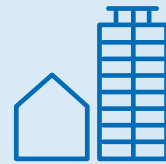


Doreen

Forecast Population

2021 **27,897** 2041 **27,985**

94%
of dwellings are
separate house



6%
of dwellings
are medium/
high density

Mernda

Forecast Population

2021 **27,231** 2041 **31,542**

90%
of dwellings are
separate house



10%
of dwellings
are medium/
high density

South Morang

Forecast Population

2021 **26,924** 2041 **60,730**

77%
of dwellings are
separate house



23%
of dwellings
are medium/
high density

Mill Park

Forecast Population

2021 **28,332** 2041 **30,390**

90%
of dwellings are
separate house



10%
of dwellings
are medium/
high density

Train Line/Station

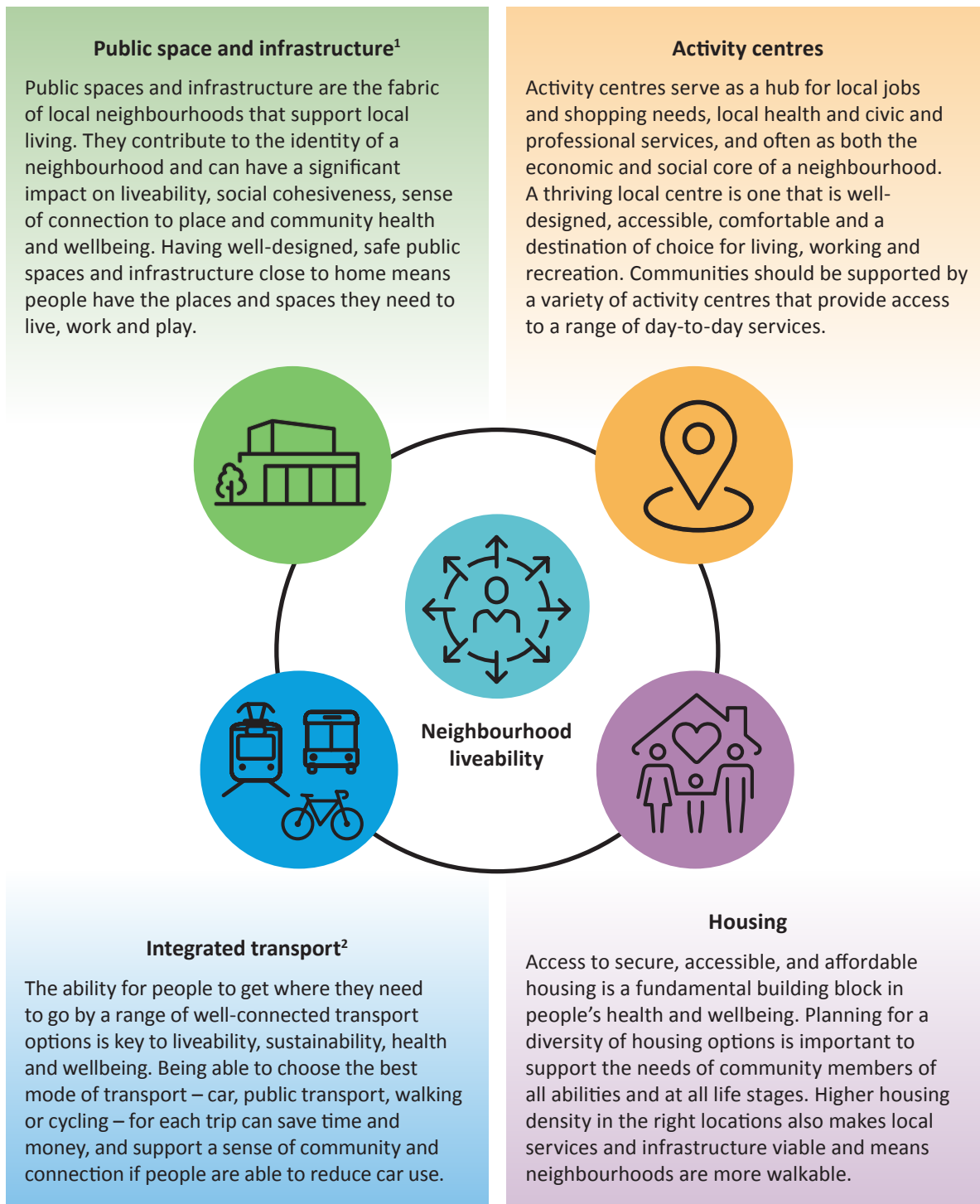
Tram Line

MAC denotes Major Activity Centre



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.



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), **Norris 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 Whittlesea 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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