

WHITEHORSE CITY COUNCIL

Integrated Council Plan

2025-2029



WHITEHORSE
CITY COUNCIL



Whitehorse City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land on which Whitehorse City Council is situated and we pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

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Message from the Mayor

On behalf of Whitehorse City Council, I am proud to present our *Integrated Council Plan 2025–2029*.

Our Integrated Council Plan is a shared roadmap for the future and will guide our program of work for the next 4 years. It represents a new direction for Council as we embrace change and seek to create a resilient and future-ready organisation.

Through the implementation of our Integrated Council Plan, we aim to create a city where everyone can live, work, learn and thrive. The Plan builds on the foundations of the Whitehorse 2040 Community Vision, developed by our Community Panel in 2020, and the work we have achieved together over the past 4 years. This Plan integrates the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, a first for Whitehorse, ensuring community health and wellbeing is a key part of our strategic approach.

The Councillors and I have listened to our community and have worked together to shape a fresh, dynamic and practical vision for the future of Whitehorse. Drawing on our knowledge, passion and commitment, the Plan reflects what we have heard from the community and delivers on these priorities in a responsible and sustainable way.

Every 4 years we review the Plan, including our long-term goals, and the actions we will take to get there. This Plan will guide and support our aspiration to be a vibrant, connected and resilient city where everyone belongs.



Our Plan is built around 5 new Strategic Directions:

- **Community:** We aim to foster a connected, inclusive, safe and active community where everyone feels a sense of belonging.
- **Built:** We aspire to develop safe, accessible and attractive public spaces and infrastructure that meet community needs and adapt to growth.
- **Economy:** We are prioritising a resilient and dynamic economy, with support for local businesses, diverse opportunities, and job and investment attraction.
- **Natural:** We are committed to protecting natural areas, promoting environmental sustainability, building climate resilience and managing waste responsibly.
- **Governance:** Strong governance will be achieved through transparent, accountable management and the efficient and financially sustainable delivery of valuable core services.

We will continue to engage meaningfully with our community to ensure our services, programs and infrastructure meet their evolving needs.

On behalf of my fellow Councillors, I thank the community for their continued engagement and support. We look forward to working in partnership to create a future where Whitehorse continues to be a place we are all proud to call home.

Cr Andrew Davenport
Mayor, Whitehorse City Council
For the year 2024–2025

Where are we

Nestled just 15 kilometres east of Melbourne's central business district, the City of Whitehorse spans 64 square kilometres of vibrant urban landscape. Our thriving municipality is home to more than 183,462 residents, creating a dynamic community at the doorstep of Victoria's capital.

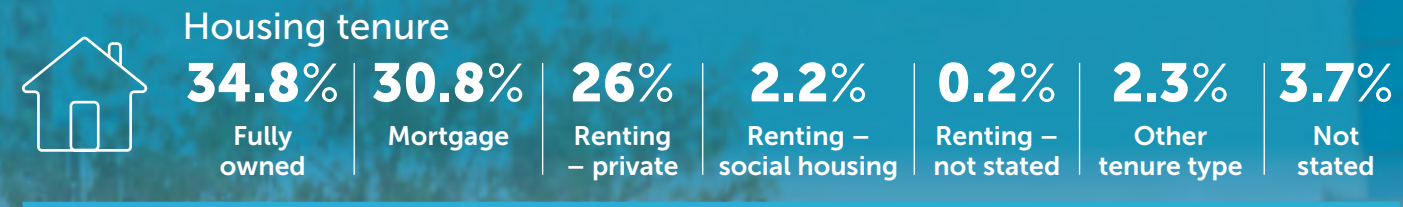
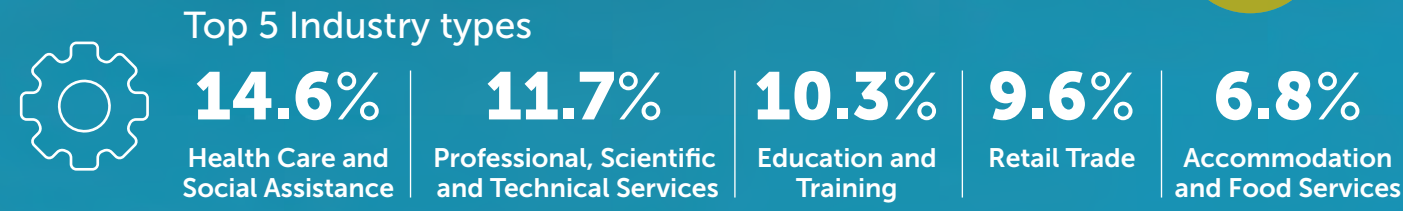
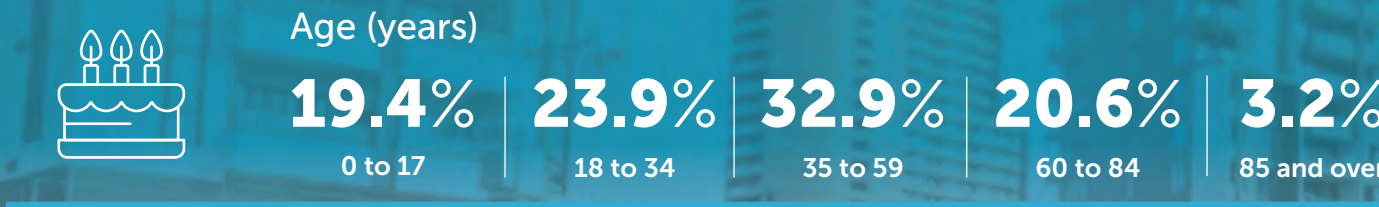
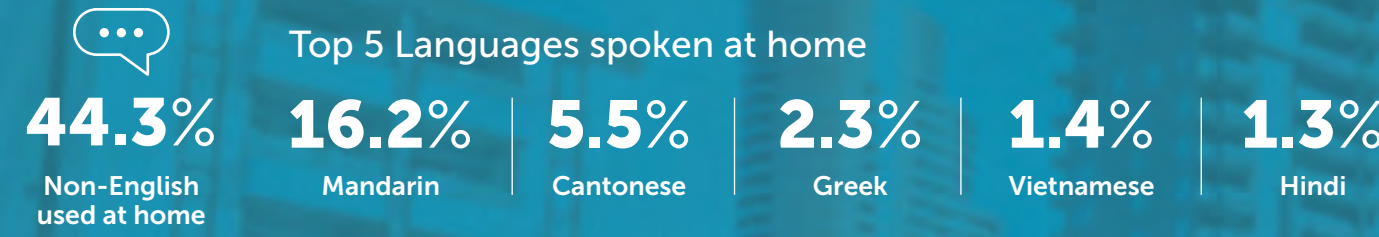
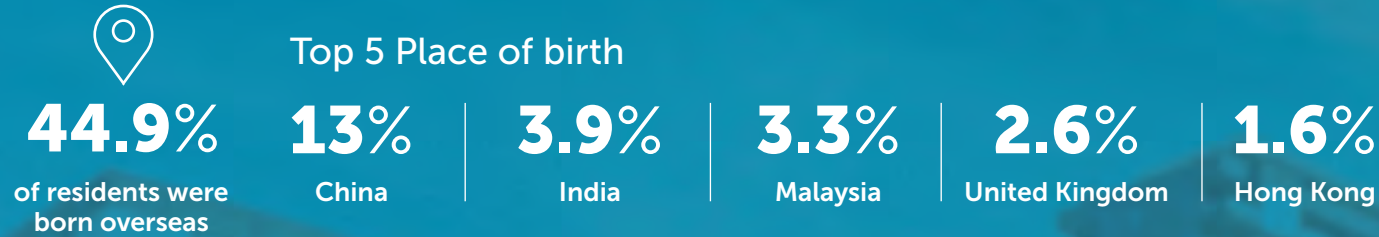
Whitehorse boasts one of Melbourne's most culturally diverse communities, with nearly half of its residents (44.9%) born overseas according to the 2021 census. The multicultural character of Whitehorse is evident in everyday life, with 44.3% of residents speaking languages other than English. Walking through Whitehorse, you might hear conversations in Mandarin, Cantonese, Greek, Vietnamese or Hindi, which are the city's most common languages.

Whitehorse City Council delivers high-quality services, including community services, environmental initiatives, customer service, health and wellbeing services, as well as planning and building activities.

Council manages more than 705 hectares of open space, creating an urban oasis within metropolitan Melbourne. Residents enjoy access to bushland reserves, well-maintained parks, formal gardens, and an extensive network of recreational trails. Council's commitment to preserving tree-lined streetscapes has fostered a pleasant urban environment where nature and city life coexist.



Our community – population overview



Whitehorse boasts one of Melbourne's most culturally diverse communities.



Data is from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population & Housing 2021, Victorian Population Health Survey 2023 and National Institute of Economic & Industry Research 2024.

Health and wellbeing



Council services for the community

Council delivers more than 100 legislated and non-legislated services for the Whitehorse community. Each community-facing service is supported by a range of internal corporate Council services that are enablers of community service delivery.

Active transport and road safety	Facilities for community meeting spaces	Placemaking
Advocacy	Festivals and events	Positive ageing
Animal management	Food and health business registrations and regulation	Property and leasing
Arts and culture programs	Gender equity and violence against women program	Road and footpath management
Asset protection	Graffiti removal and prevention	School crossing supervision
Building permits and services	Heritage programs, historical societies	Sports fields
Business networking opportunities	Immunisation	Sports pavilions
Business support and education	Infrastructure planning and facility management	Street lighting and signage
Childcare	Land use planning including permits	Street sweeping
City cleansing and city maintenance	Leisure facilities	Sustainable transport planning
Community grant program	Libraries	Traffic management
Community halls	Local laws education and enforcement	Tree management and maintenance
Community hubs / houses	Maternal and child health	Volunteering programs and opportunities
Community publications	Municipal health partnerships	Waste, green waste and recycling – kerbside bins
Community safety and crime prevention programs	On-call kerbside hard waste	Watts & Harrow Streets car parks
Customer service	Parking management	Whitehorse Recycling and Waste Centre
Drain management	Parks, gardens and playgrounds	Youth services
Environmental sustainability education and initiatives		Pet registration and education

Data is from the Victorian Population Health Survey 2023, Australian Urban Observatory, 2021, Victorian Population Health Survey 2023 and the Crime Statistics Agency, June 2024.

The City of Whitehorse is divided into 11 wards consisting of 1 elected representative for each ward.

Who we are

Elected by the community, Whitehorse City Council is the decision-making body that sets the strategic direction of the municipality, in response to the needs of the people living, working, studying and playing in the municipality.

The current group of Councillors was elected to Council in 2024 for a 4-year term. Together, they are responsible for developing policy, identifying service standards and monitoring performance in response to the priorities expressed by the local community. The Mayor of Whitehorse is elected by the Councillors to serve as the principal ambassador for the City for a 12-month term.



Wattle Ward
Mayor Cr Andrew Davenport
Andrew.Davenport@whitehorse.vic.gov.au



Simpson Ward
Deputy Mayor Cr Prue Cutts
Prue.Cutts@whitehorse.vic.gov.au



Cootamundra Ward
Cr Kieran Simpson
Kieran.Simpson@whitehorse.vic.gov.au



Lake Ward
Cr Hayley Weller
Hayley.Weller@whitehorse.vic.gov.au



Mahoneys Ward
Cr Jason Martin
Jason.Martin@whitehorse.vic.gov.au



Sparks Ward
Cr Peter Allan
Peter.Allan@whitehorse.vic.gov.au



Eley Ward
Cr Daniel Griffiths
Daniel.Griffiths@whitehorse.vic.gov.au



Terrara Ward
Cr Jarrod Gunn
Jarrod.Gunn@whitehorse.vic.gov.au



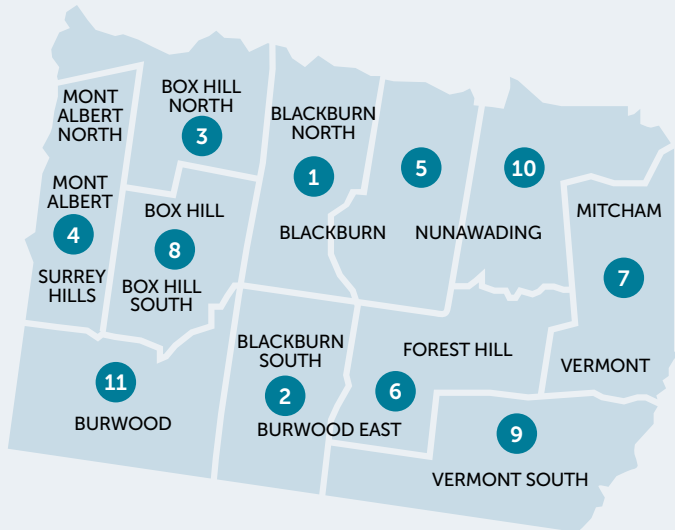
Elgar Ward
Cr Blair Barker
Blair.Barker@whitehorse.vic.gov.au



Walker Ward
Cr Ben Stennett
Ben.Stennett@whitehorse.vic.gov.au



Kingsley Ward
Cr Kirsten Langford
Kirsten.Langford@whitehorse.vic.gov.au



11 Wards

- 1

Cootamundra Ward
- 2

Eley Ward
- 3

Elgar Ward
- 4

Kingsley Ward
- 5

Lake Ward
- 6

Mahoneys Ward

7

Simpson Ward

8

Sparks Ward

9

Terrara Ward

10

Walker Ward

11

Wattle Ward

Role of Council

As per the *Local Government Act 2020*, the role of a Council is to provide good governance for its municipal community. This means acting in the best interests of the community by making decisions that promote social, economic and environmental sustainability.

Key roles and responsibilities of Council

1. Strategic leadership

- Develop and adopt a Council Plan that sets long-term goals.
- Ensure financial and resource planning aligns with community needs.

2. Policy development and decision-making

- Make local laws and policies that reflect community priorities.
- Oversee service delivery and infrastructure management.

3. Community engagement

- Foster meaningful engagement with residents.
- Ensure transparency in decision-making processes.

4. Advocacy

- Represent community interests to other levels of government.
- Seek funding and partnerships to support local initiatives.

5. Stewardship of resources

- Ensure Council's financial sustainability.
- Efficiently manage public assets and services.

6. Accountability and transparency

- Report to the community on performance and governance.
- Uphold the principle of ethical conduct.

Executive Leadership Team

- CEO

Simon McMillan
- Director Community Services

Lisa Letic
- Director Infrastructure

Steven White
- Director Corporate Services

Stuart Cann
- Director Planning

Jeff Green
- Executive Manager Transformation

Siobhan Sullivan

Council serves to ensure its municipality runs effectively, sustainably and in line with the needs and expectations of its community. Council provides numerous services to the Whitehorse community, along with the delivery of key projects and programs to maintain and enhance the City.

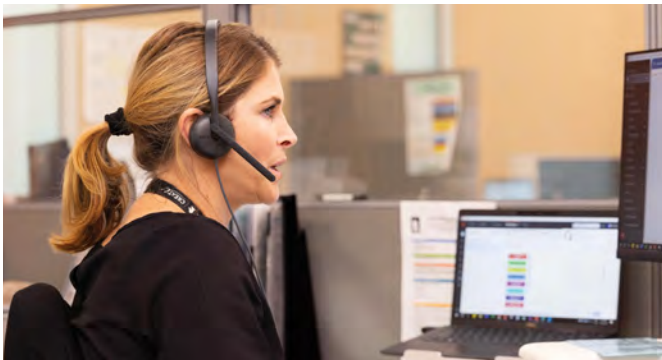


A connected, inclusive, safe and active community where everyone feels a sense of belonging.

Council transformation

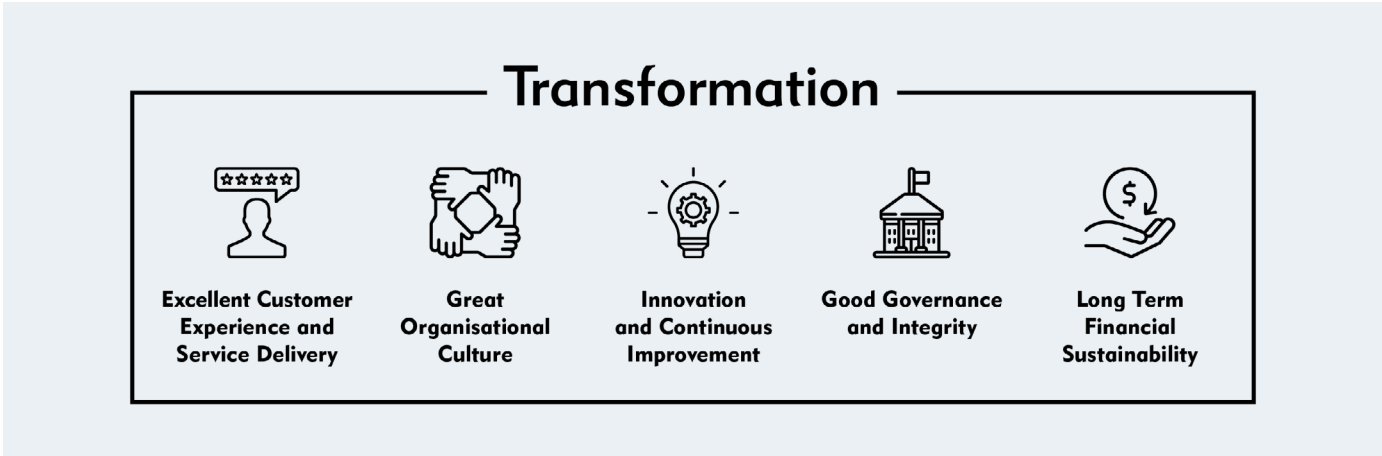


The Whitehorse community is changing and growing, which means Council needs to adapt and respond. Council is transforming to ensure it continues to meet the needs and expectations of our community.



The transformation program is designed to achieve 5 objectives (outlined in the figure below) by creating sustainable changes through:

- balancing investment decision-making with long-term financial sustainability
- systematically reviewing all of Council's services over time
- expanding our Continuous Improvement Program and approach to delivering sustained financial and customer benefits
- investing in technology and systems to improve customer experience
- building and sustaining a great organisational culture that puts community at the heart of what we do





Whitehorse Manningham Libraries

Whitehorse Manningham Libraries (WML) is a shared service collaboration between Whitehorse City Council and Manningham City Council for the delivery of public library services across the 2 municipalities.

WML offers welcoming, inclusive spaces along with diverse collections, information and programs designed to inspire imagination, support lifelong learning, foster connection and promote community wellbeing at every stage of life. Services are provided through 8 library branches, 4 in each municipality, as well as through outreach initiatives and digital platforms.

In partnership with member councils and a range of organisations, WML connects communities with resources, services and programs that contribute to community resilience, social cohesion and improved outcomes in learning, health and wellbeing.

More information about Whitehorse Manningham Libraries is available at wml.vic.gov.au



Eastern Region Group of Councils

Comprising the Mayors, Deputy Mayors and CEOs of Knox, Manningham, Maroondah, Whitehorse and Yarra Ranges, the Eastern Region Group of Councils (ERG) is a catalyst for collaboration on regional priorities through advocacy, integrated planning, shared services and joint procurement. The group continues to strengthen each year, building stronger relationships across member councils and with stakeholders to benefit the region's communities.

Council actively collaborates with local government peak bodies, industry groups, issue-based groups and regionally to improve community outcomes.

As a member of the ERG we can amplify our Council's voice and impact, be more efficient and effective, and improve community access to infrastructure and services across the region.

Whitehorse City Council participates fully in priority projects to address the common challenges detailed in the ERG Strategic Plan.

We are committed to working with ERG members to undertake the foundational work required to develop opportunities for shared services, joint procurement and the shared use of community infrastructure.

More information about the ERG is available at easternregiongroup.org.au



An integrated approach

Integrating the Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP)

The *Local Government Act 2020* requires a Council Plan to describe the strategic direction of Council, including its strategic objectives and strategies, for at least the next 4 financial years. The *Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* (Vic) requires Council to prepare a MPHWP every 4 years. It is a municipal-wide plan that will be delivered in partnership with community stakeholders and health service providers.

For the first time, Council is combining these 2 important plans into a single document for 2025-2029: the Integrated Council Plan. This approach ensures that community health and wellbeing are embedded across all of Council's priorities and decision making. Integration is allowable under section 27 of the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*.

The key expectation of councils in undertaking integrated planning is that the outcomes of public feedback are considered and that all parts of the plan are linked and interdependent. This helps guide how resources are used, supports decision making, and ensures we can track our progress and be transparent and accountable.

Some additional legislative requirements specific to the MPHWP include developing local health priorities, responding to climate change and supporting the prevention of family violence, all of which are delivered through partnership work.

Benefits of integrating these 2 plans include:

- elevating the importance and impact of community health and wellbeing
- streamlining planning and reporting processes and artifacts (bringing efficiency and community benefits)
- elevating partnership work within the community



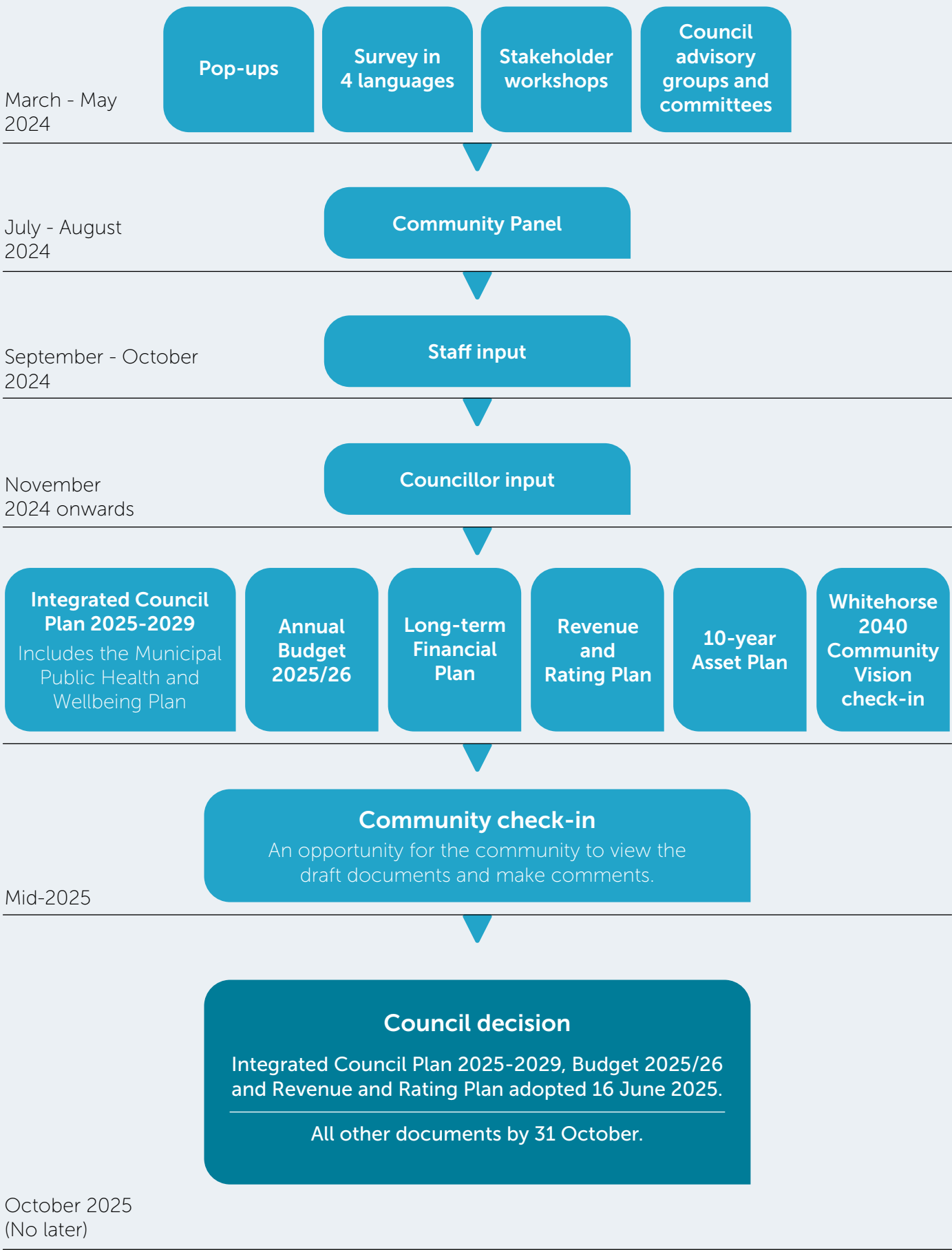
A key improvement of this 2025-2029 Plan is the development of 2 annual action plans that will supplement and help deliver on the strategic directions set out in the broader Integrated Council Plan. These 2 plans, the Council Plan Annual Action Plan and the MPHWP Annual Action Plan, will be developed each year over the 4-year period and resourced through the annual budget.

The MPHWP Action Plan will focus on highlighting initiatives delivered in partnership with community and health service providers. The MPHWP Steering Committee, consisting of these partners, helps to monitor progress of the plan. Any linkage through the Integrated Council Plan strategic hierarchy is indicated with a heart icon ♥.

This approach provides a more adaptable and responsive way for Council to take action, plan the annual budget, and track progress towards long-term strategic directions and the Community Vision.



Shaping Whitehorse process map



Shaping Whitehorse



Shaping Whitehorse is the name for the community engagement process used to help shape the 2025-2029 key strategic plans.

This process included both broad and deliberative community engagement and plays an important legislative role in helping Council review and create key strategic documents, such as:

- The Whitehorse 2040 Community Vision
- Integrated Council Plan 2025-2029, including the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan
- Budget 2025/26
- Revenue and Rating Plan
- Long-term Financial Plan
- 10-year Asset Plan

These plans affect everybody in Whitehorse and guide the day-to-day and long-term decisions of Council. Shaping Whitehorse is Council's commitment to make sure the community has a real say in how these key strategic documents are created and reviewed.

The Shaping Whitehorse community engagement was split into 2 key stages: broad community engagement followed by the formation of a Community Panel.

The process sought to capture diverse and broad feedback from our community, which would then be refined into a set of recommendations by the Community Panel.

Broad community engagement involved 7 weeks of broad community engagement from Monday 18 March to Sunday 5 May 2024.

- Approximately 1431 people provided input
- 10 community pop-up engagements
- More than 170 participants across numerous stakeholder workshops and sessions
- Survey produced in 4 languages
- 429 survey responses
- 4500+ YourSay Shaping Whitehorse project website clicks

The **Shaping Whitehorse Community Panel** consisted of community members who broadly represented the wider Whitehorse community. The Panel's role was to review the Stage 1 broad community feedback as well as other research to develop recommendations to help inform Council's key plans for the next 4 years.

- 36 community panel members
- Representation from every suburb in Whitehorse
- 47% female and 53% male
- 44% 18 to 49 years and 56% 50+ years
- 50% of the panel were born outside Australia
- 4 business owners





Whitehorse Community Vision 2040

Whitehorse is a resilient community where everyone belongs. We are dynamic. We learn, grow and thrive.



Our Vision Statement

“Whitehorse is a resilient community where everyone belongs. We are active citizens who value our natural environment, history and diversity. We embrace sustainability and innovation. We are dynamic. We learn, grow and thrive.”

The Whitehorse 2040 Community Vision was originally developed by the community in 2021 – people who work, live, study or own a business across Whitehorse – to reflect the community’s aspirations and priorities for the next 20 years. The Vision was developed with the Shaping Whitehorse Community Panel. The extensive process comprised a broad community engagement. The results of this went to a deliberative panel that demographically represented the community of Whitehorse.

Our 2024 Shaping Whitehorse community engagement showed Council that the community felt that the Vision still represented the aspirations for the future, with an overwhelming majority of responses (74%) indicating it did.

The overarching Vision Statement is underpinned by themes and key priorities to achieve our desired long-term future:

- Theme 1: Diverse and Inclusive Community
- Theme 2: Movement and Public Spaces
- Theme 3: Innovation and Creativity
- Theme 4: Employment, Education and Skill Development
- Theme 5: Sustainable Climate and Environmental Care
- Theme 6: Whitehorse is an Empowered and Collaborative Community
- Theme 7: Health and Wellbeing

When creating the Integrated Council Plan 2025-2029, we made sure to connect the Whitehorse 2040 Community Vision to our new Strategic Directions. This helps both the Council and the community clearly see how we are working together to achieve the Vision.

WHITEHORSE 2040
COMMUNITY VISION

Health and wellbeing strategies



At Whitehorse City Council, we care about the health and wellbeing of our community. Previous Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans (MPHWP) were created as a standalone document. However, this time around it is incorporated into our Council Plan, ensuring that public health and wellbeing remain a priority in everything we do.

Our Whitehorse Integrated Council Plan 2025-2029 reflects our dedication to enhancing community health and wellbeing. By integrating the MPHWP with the Council Plan, we strengthen our commitment to working alongside our community and key stakeholders to support a healthier, happier Whitehorse.

To shape our MPHWP, we draw on a range of valuable insights and directives.

Valuable insights and directives



Health and wellbeing strategy process

Through this process, which is described more fully in Appendix 4 and Appendix 5, we have identified 5 key focus strategies for the next 4 years. The data listed below supports the need for these focus areas.

Strategy 1 ♥ Foster social connections and a sense of belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Between 2024 and 2041, the number of people aged over 65 in Whitehorse will increase by approximately 6920 people.New migrants and refugees face well-known language and cultural barriers to social inclusion.More than 1 in 6 people with disability experience social isolation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">36% of LGBTQ+ Victorians have faced social exclusion.The prevalence of loneliness was twice as high among young adults than older people in Victoria in 2023: 32% of 18 to 24-year-olds compared with 16% of people 65 or older.
Strategy 2 ♥ Support community initiatives to promote health and prevent disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Carers have the lowest wellbeing of any group and are 40% more likely to suffer from a chronic health condition.Only 5.5% of Whitehorse residents meet the Australian guidelines for daily vegetable intake.66% of people in Whitehorse do not obtain sufficient exercise for good health.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">17.9% of 15 to 17-year-olds and 38.0% of 18 to 24-year-olds have used vaping devices.Between 2016 and 2050, the prevalence of dementia in Whitehorse is expected to almost double from 3767 to 7444 people.
Strategy 3 ♥ Prevent and respond to family violence (including elder abuse)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">In Whitehorse, 1524 incidents of family violence were recorded in 2023/2024. 71% of victims were female compared with 29% males. 353 people sought assistance from Homelessness Services and 105 presented to emergency departments because of family violence. 601 people accessed specialist family violence services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">It is estimated that Australian children are present in between 36% and 59% of family violence incidents.In Australia in the past year, around 1 in 6 (15%) of older people living in the community had experienced elder abuse.
Strategy 4 ♥ Partner to enhance mental health and build resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">In Whitehorse in 2023, 15% of adults reported high or very high levels of psychological distress, 20% were lonely and 17% had sought professional help for a mental health-related problem in the last year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Young females aged 18 to 24 years experienced the highest psychological distress levels of any age group or sex in 2023 at 41.6% (high or very high).In the Shaping Whitehorse community survey (n=346), 24% of people continue to experience negative impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic.
Strategy 5 ♥ Partner with the community to achieve positive environmental and health outcomes that reduce climate change impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Climate change due to greenhouse gas emissions is causing a rise in average global temperatures and disruption of ecosystems. Whitehorse faces climate hazards such as extreme heat and higher intensity rainfall.It is predicted that Whitehorse will experience temperatures greater than 35°C, on average, 16 days per year by 2050 (compared to 11 days/year now).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">People aged 65 and over are the most hospitalised group for heat-related injuries.Males in the age groups 25 to 44 and 45 to 64 years are twice as likely than females to be hospitalised due to extreme heat.

♥ Denotes a linkage to the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing focus areas



We recognise that achieving these goals requires collaboration. That is why we are committed to working closely with our community, other levels of government and local partners. Together we can address broader challenges and implement evidence-based initiatives that make a real difference.

In 2025, Council is hosting a newly formed MPHWP Steering Committee: a new strategic group to meet twice yearly and guide the implementation of collaborative health and wellbeing initiatives for Whitehorse. Membership will include organisations we will partner with to implement the MPHWP.

Each year, our MPHWP Annual Action Plan outlines how organisations and stakeholders contribute to these health and wellbeing priorities. By working together, we can create a thriving, connected and resilient Whitehorse community.

Measures to prevent and respond to family violence

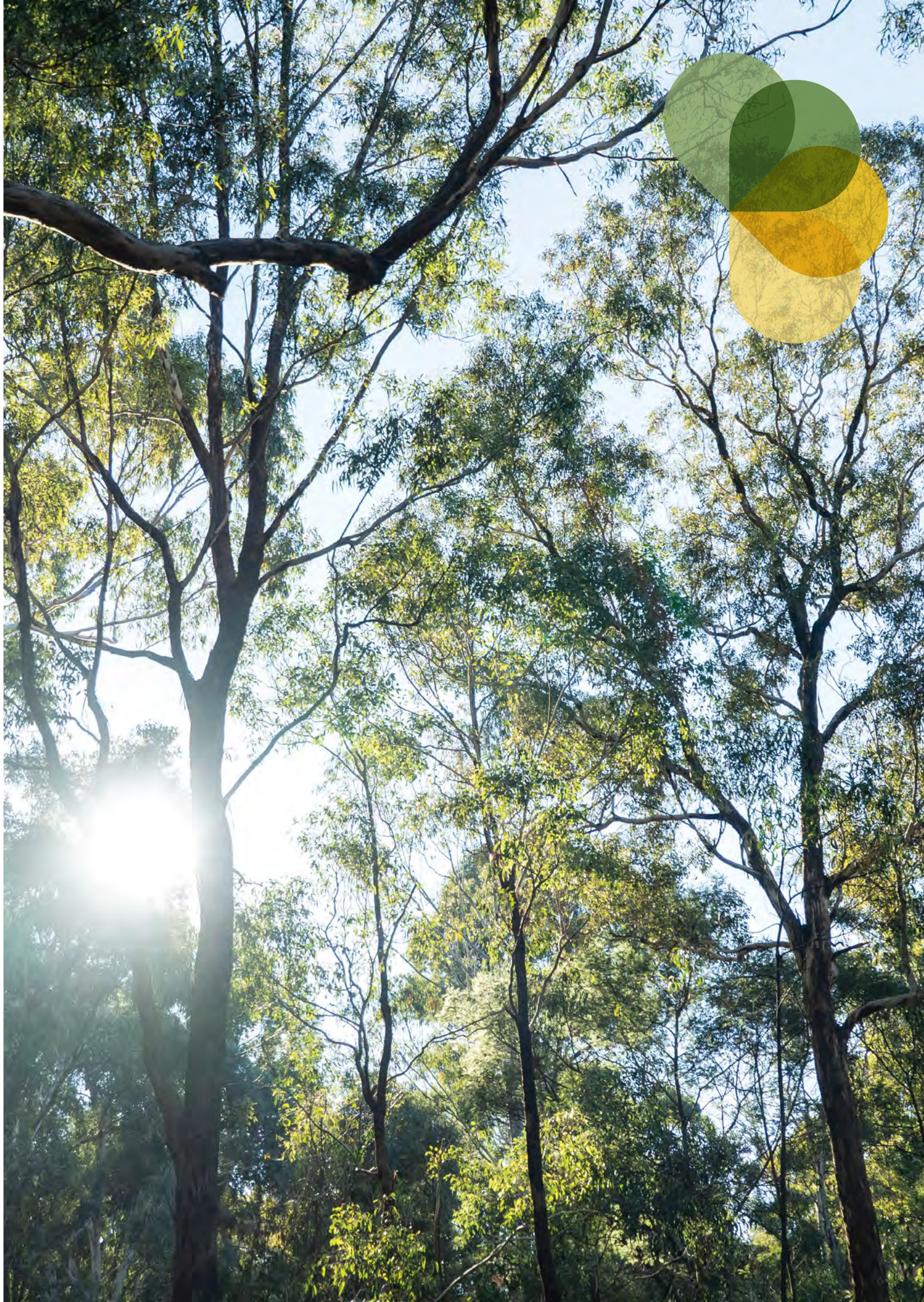
At Whitehorse City Council, we are committed to creating a safe and supportive community for everyone. In line with the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*, we take important steps to help prevent family violence, support those affected, and report on our efforts to the Department of Health every 2 years.

Violence against women, including family violence and elder abuse, is preventable. As a workplace, service provider, connector and community leader, Council has an important role to play in prevention as well as response.

Working together with our community, we will act at all levels, from individual and relationship to organisational and society as a whole, to foster awareness, collaboration and meaningful change so that Whitehorse is safer, more equal and respectful for everyone.

For 2025-2029 our focus will be to:

- partner in the regional prevention strategy (Together for Equality and Respect)
- participate in the Regional Family Violence Partnership
- educate Council staff to respond to family violence including customer services and outdoor workers
- inform Council staff of Council's Family Violence Resources Kit, supports and entitlements for leave
- train Maternal Child Health (MCH) services in Multi-Agency Referral and Assessment Management (MARAM) framework and practice to respond to clients at risk or experiencing family violence
- lead local prevention and health promotion initiatives, for example in community settings, in collaboration with regional or Victorian projects
- implement a whole-of-service gender equality framework in MCH and in future, Early Years services
- fund community organisations through the Community Grants Program to deliver prevention initiatives
- support regional initiatives to increase access for young people who experience family violence
- strategically engage with multicultural communities
- implement requirements of the *Gender Equality Act*, that is, the Council Gender Equality Action Plan and Gender Impact Assessments
- apply a gender lens to policies, programs, communications and services
- apply a gender lens to planning of facilities and open space, as well as in urban design



Climate change and health



Council is committed to climate action to drive better outcomes for the community and to fulfil Council’s obligations under the *Local Government Act*, which include:

- prioritise achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations
- promoting climate change mitigation and planning for climate change risks.

In addition, the *Victorian Climate Change Act 2017* requires local governments to consider climate change, and the *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* requires local governments to have regard to climate change when preparing municipal public health and wellbeing plans.

Taking action on climate change is not just good for the environment; it also benefits our mental and physical health. Simple changes, such as eating more fresh and local produce, reducing packaged foods, driving less, spending time in nature and choosing to walk or cycle more often, can all contribute to a healthier, more sustainable lifestyle.

At Whitehorse City Council, we recognise the important role we play in addressing climate change and that by working together as a community, we can create a healthier future for our people and our planet. Council’s adopted Climate Response Strategy 2023-2030 and Climate Response Plan 2023-2026 outline our response and aligns with the Objectives of the MPHWP.

CASE STUDY Healthy me, healthy planet

Whitehorse Manningham Libraries and Whitehorse City Council joined forces with Deakin University’s Health Nature Sustainability Research Group in 2021-2022. The aim was to design, deliver and evaluate ‘Healthy me, healthy planet’, an evidence-informed program promoting the health co-benefits of climate action. Evaluation found the program enhanced participants’ health and wellbeing and their environmental knowledge and attitudes. It increased participants’ confidence to make healthy lifestyle changes and motivation to promote the health co-benefits of climate action. It also showed that libraries are effective venues for health promotion due to their trusted, supportive position and strong community networks.

Reference: *State of Victoria (2024). Tackling climate change and its impacts on health through municipal public health and wellbeing planning – Guidance for local government 2024, Department of Health, Melbourne. Page 40. Access at Tackling climate change and its impacts on health through municipal public health and wellbeing planning: Guidance for local government.*

How climate change is affecting our community

Climate change is already having an impact on our municipality. Some of the biggest challenges for our community’s health include:

- more heat-related health impacts
- loss of biodiversity due to decreased habitat quality and availability
- increased pressure on emergency services
- less green space and declining vegetation
- sports fields becoming too dry or too wet, making them unuseable
- disruptions to food production and supply chains

Looking ahead, extreme heat days (above 35°C) in Whitehorse are predicted to rise from 11 to 16 days per year by 2050.

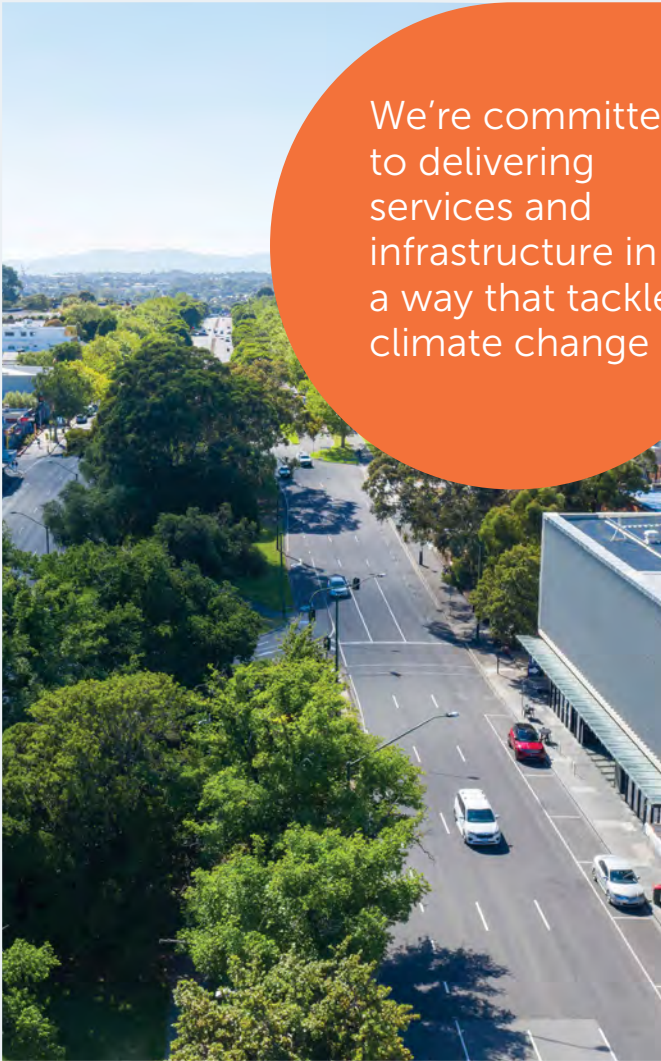
This is especially concerning because Whitehorse has a higher proportion of older residents than the Victorian average, and older people are more vulnerable to extreme heat. Plus, where you live matters: denser residential and industrial areas tend to get much hotter, making it even more important to increase greenery and reduce hard surfaces to help keep everyone cool and healthy.

Whitehorse Climate Response Strategy 2023-2030

To combat the loss of vegetation and large shade trees on private land due to development, we’re continuing to expand our urban forest on public land and improve plant and wildlife biodiversity across the municipality.

We are committed to delivering services and infrastructure in a way that tackles climate change and keeps Whitehorse resilient. That means making sure our assets can withstand changing conditions while also supporting and empowering our community to take action. We will work together with residents, businesses and other stakeholders to create meaningful change. We will continue advocating for strong climate action at the state and federal levels.

Our community has shown strong support for climate action. In response, Council declared a Climate Emergency on 12 September 2022, joining more than 100 Australian councils that have done the same.



We’re committed to delivering services and infrastructure in a way that tackles climate change

How to read this document

This document refers to 5 key documents: the Community Vision, the Integrated Council Plan which includes the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, and the Annual Action Plans for both the Council Plan and the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP).

Community Vision

Whitehorse 2024 – Describes the community’s aspirational vision for the future of the municipality.

Vision Statement – The community’s ‘call to action’ guiding all Council planning.



10 YEAR PLAN

Integrated Council Plan

Council Plan

The Council Plan outlines how Council will deliver actions and initiatives for the community that help us get closer to realising the Community Vision.

Process

- **Strategic Directions** – Council’s desired medium to long-term future.
- **Objectives** – Where we want to be in 4 years, and help us to set goals aligned to our strategic direction.
- **Strategies** – How Council will progress towards the Objectives.
- **Major Initiatives** – Are important projects that will deliver on Council’s Objectives and Strategies.
- **Indicators** – Council’s progress towards achieving the Objectives.

Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan

The Health and Wellbeing Plan outlines how Council will protect, improve and promote public health and wellbeing within the municipality.

Partnerships

The Health and Wellbeing Plan is integrated into the Council Plan as both seek to deliver similar outcomes for our community and strengthen our commitment to work alongside our community and key stakeholders to support a healthier, happier Whitehorse.

The ♥ symbol throughout this plan denotes which strategies Council will deliver in partnership to address our City’s health and wellbeing.

4 YEAR PLAN

Annual Action Plans

Council Plan Action Plan

The 12-month action plan, created each year for the 4 years, lists the priority projects Council will deliver in response to the Objectives and Strategies. Where an action also contributes to a Major Initiative, it will be identified with this symbol

MPHWP Action Plan

The 12-month action plan, created each year for the 4 years, lists the priority projects Council will deliver in partnership with health and wellbeing partners to make progress towards the identified Objectives and Strategies that have a heart symbol ♥.

1 YEAR PLAN

Council Plan 2025–2029 – Our priorities

Whitehorse City Council’s Council Plan 2025-2029 fulfils the legislative requirements under section 90 of the *Local Government Act 2020*. It integrates the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan under section 26 of the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic)*, subject to the Secretary of Health’s approval under section 27 of the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic)*. Our detailed plan below describes the Objectives, Strategies and Major Initiatives we are aiming to deliver over the next 4 years in response to the Community Vision.

Plan on a page

The table below provides a high-level summary of the 5 Strategic Directions and Objectives of Council for the next 4 years. The sections following the table explain each objective in more detail.



Strategic Directions	Objectives – In 4 years, we aspire to have:
	Community <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ An involved and connected community ♥▪ A community that fosters social inclusion, cohesion and respect▪ A healthy and active community ♥▪ A community where people feel safe
	Built <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Safe and accessible public places▪ Community facilities and shared spaces that are well used▪ Sustainable planning and infrastructure to respond to population change▪ A desirable and well-presented City
	Economy <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ A thriving local economy▪ Local businesses supported through change▪ Diverse education, employment and volunteering opportunities▪ A City that attracts investment and jobs
	Natural <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Enhanced and protected natural and green spaces▪ An environmentally sustainable and climate resilient City ♥▪ A Council that responsibly and sustainably manages waste
	Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ An open, transparent, accountable and responsible Council▪ A Council that delivers core services that are fit for purpose and good value▪ A Council that actively engages with the community for genuine feedback and input▪ A Council that is well governed, efficient and financially sustainable

♥ Denotes a linkage to the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing focus areas



Strategic Direction 1

Community

Community is about making sure people can easily meet and connect with others and feel they belong. It's about being active, having fun, making people feel welcome and respected.

We foster these connections through recognising our shared experiences and unique differences. Our community thrives when people feel safe, healthy, and valued. Through partnerships and thoughtful initiatives, we build connection, promote wellbeing, and create the foundation for a city where everyone can participate, contribute, and find their place.



Objectives and Strategies

These are our strategic priorities for 2025-2029.

Objective 1.1: **An involved and connected community** ♥

Strategies:

- Facilitate opportunities for groups and individuals to connect
- Provide festivals, events and programs
- Foster social connections and a sense of belonging ♥
- Provide accessible information about community services, activities and programs

Objective 1.2: **A community that fosters social inclusion, cohesion and respect**

Strategies:

- Provide welcoming and inclusive spaces for our community
- Deliver initiatives to promote respect and promote the value of community diversity

Objective 1.3: **A healthy and active community** ♥

Strategies:

- Support community initiatives to promote health and prevent disease ♥
- Prevent and respond to family violence (including elder abuse) ♥
- Partner to enhance mental health and build resilience ♥

Objective 1.4: **A community where people feel safe**

Strategies:

- Partner with local agencies to improve perceptions of community safety
- Deliver assets to support a safer community



How we will monitor our progress

Strategic indicators

- Maintain or increase satisfaction with community and cultural activities
- Maintain or increase satisfaction with Arts and Libraries
- Maintain or increase participation in and attendance at Council-run programs and events
- Increased social inclusion, cohesion and respect through participation in Council programs
- Maintain the provision of development workshops for sports clubs
- Improve health and wellbeing through Council-run programs
- Maintain or increase participation in Maternal and Child Health Services
- Maintain or increase sport and recreation participation
- Maintain or increase proactive patrols initiated by Authorised Officers
- Improve perceptions and feelings of safety within the community

Major Initiative focus area

- Enhance safety and perceptions of community safety in public places



What our community said through Shaping Whitehorse

The community values sports, events, festivals and open spaces as ways to connect with one another.

Residents want Council to help strengthen these connections by bringing different community groups together and ensuring everyone, especially those born overseas, feels included and has opportunities for cultural exchange.

Easy access to information about community services and activities is also essential for fostering a more inclusive and connected community.

♥ Denotes a linkage to the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing focus areas



Strategic Direction 2

Built

The spaces we create shape how we live, move, and interact. Our built environment reflects our values of accessibility, safety, and sustainability. Through thoughtful design, we craft public spaces that invite activity and connection while providing infrastructure that makes daily movement easier for everyone. We focus on doing the basics well, like fixing roads, filling potholes, and maintaining footpaths, while preserving important open spaces where everyone can feel safe.

We look beyond today, planning for growing populations and changing needs, creating versatile facilities that serve multiple purposes, are highly used and adapt over time. The character of our neighbourhoods, the functionality of our shared spaces, and the resilience of our infrastructure all contribute to a city that works for its people now and into the future.



Objectives and Strategies

These are our strategic priorities for 2025-2029.

Objective 2.1: **Safe and accessible public places**

Strategies:

- Plan for and provide safe and easy-to-access public spaces through better design
- Plan for and deliver transport infrastructure that supports safe and active transport uptake
- Promote local opportunities to encourage active transport throughout the City

Objective 2.2: **Well-used community facilities and shared spaces**

Strategies:

- Plan for and deliver spaces to support a range of activities
- Plan for and provide suitable and accessible recreation spaces for all

Objective 2.3: **Sustainable planning and infrastructure to respond to population change**

Strategies:

- Advocate and plan for open spaces to meet increasing demand
- Plan and advocate for future infrastructure that meets community need
- Plan for emergency management and safety for an increased population and greater density living
- Improve waterway management and minimise the impacts of flooding

Objective 2.4: **A desirable and well-presented City**

Strategies:

- Deliver works that maintain and improve the look and feel of our City
- Deliver programs and services to the community that support a clean City

How we will monitor our progress

Strategic indicators

- Maintain or increase satisfaction with recreational facilities
- Maintain and increase the amount of new and improved public lighting
- Maintain or increase compliance with Council’s Road Management Plan
- Maintain or improve condition of Council’s path and cycleway infrastructure
- Maintain or increase utilisation of Council-run sport/leisure facilities
- Maintain or increase utilisation of Council-run arts facilities
- Maintain or improve Council planning decisions upheld at Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)
- Maintain or improve local road condition
- Continue to deliver the annual Capital Works Program
- Maintain or decrease in time taken to decide planning applications
- Maintain or increase satisfaction with appearance of public places
- Maintain or improve responsiveness to dumped rubbish requests
- Maintain or increase satisfaction with appearance of local roads

Major Initiative focus area

- Plan and advocate for sustainable population growth
- Uplift public infrastructure and open spaces to meet community needs
- Facilitate active transport options across the City

What our community said through Shaping Whitehorse

The community values open green spaces and safe, accessible travel – whether by car, foot or bike – along with opportunities for active transport.

Residents are feeling the effects of increased development, including congestion and wear on roads and pathways. They prioritise well-maintained roads, footpaths and bike paths to ensure safe and active transportation.

Safe, well-kept community facilities are also essential to support Whitehorse’s diverse activities. Ensuring fair access for all groups will help maximise their use and benefit the entire community.





Strategic Direction 3

Economy

A thriving economy creates opportunity, fosters innovation, and builds prosperity. Local businesses and industry form the backbone of our economic landscape; they create jobs, provide essential services, and give our area its unique character. We understand that economic health requires both stability and adaptability, supporting established businesses while nurturing new ventures and encouraging investments.

Through education, employment pathways, and strategic investment, we contribute to an economy that's resilient to change and accessible to everyone. When we strengthen our local economy, we create a community where people can live, work, study, volunteer and fulfil their aspirations close to home. This is how we position ourselves to thrive in tomorrow's economy.



Objectives and Strategies

These are our strategic priorities for 2025-2029.

Objective 3.1: A thriving local economy

Strategies:

- Provide support and enable partnership opportunities for businesses and business associations
- Enable and support the creation of clean, safe and welcoming places to shop, access services, do business, exchange and visit, and promote the benefits of shopping and supporting local
- Plan for a strong tourist and visitor economy

Objective 3.2: Local businesses supported through change

Strategies:

- Provide innovative and responsive support to local businesses to navigate disruption
- Work collaboratively with, and advocate to, the State Government for local business and groups affected by disruption

Objective 3.3: Diverse education, employment and volunteering opportunities

Strategies:

- Support and partner with local organisations to promote local education, employment and volunteering opportunities
- Promote lifelong learning through our libraries and community spaces

Objective 3.4: A City that attracts investment and jobs

Strategies:

- Facilitate strategic investment in activity centres, industrial and commercial areas
- Support placemaking and activation
- Advocate to attract jobs and investment in Whitehorse



How we will monitor our progress

Strategic indicators

- Maintain or increase engagement with local businesses and trader groups
- Maintain or increase support for businesses through economic development events
- Maintain or increase the proportion of goods and services purchased locally
- Maintain or increase support offered to businesses experiencing change
- Maintain or increase volunteers at Council
- Maintain or increase work experience opportunities offered by Council
- Maintain or increase an active Library Service
- Increase promotion, uptake and satisfaction of Council's Business Permit Assist service

Major Initiative focus area

- Support investment and development of local business and industry
- Improve local employment opportunities and pathways



What our community said through Shaping Whitehorse

The Whitehorse community values its libraries and wants more free programs, especially for young people and families, to help people connect in these spaces.

Residents are eager to support local retail businesses but believe improvements in their appearance and variety of offerings are needed. They also see a role for Council in promoting local assets and encouraging community involvement through volunteering and lifelong learning opportunities.



Strategic Direction 4

Natural

Our natural spaces provide more than beauty. They sustain life, clean our air, cool our streets, and nourish our wellbeing. We recognise that healthy ecosystems and biodiversity are essential partners in creating a liveable city, which becomes increasingly important with a growing population.

Trees, waterways, parks, and wildlife corridors form a green network that supports both nature and people. We face environmental challenges that require both immediate action and long-term planning. By protecting and enhancing our natural environment, we create a more climate resilient, sustainable city where both community and nature can flourish together for generations to come.



Objectives and Strategies

These are our strategic priorities for 2025-2029.

Objective 4.1: **Enhanced and protected natural and green spaces**

- Strategies:
- Plan for and use existing corridors and wildlife paths to connect open space
 - Deliver bushland conservation and plant more trees and plants
 - Improve parks, open space, and waterways for community and wildlife (urban forest)
 - Provide well-maintained open space, encouraging community involvement and connection

Objective 4.2: **An environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient City ♡**

- Strategies:
- Take local action to address current and future climate challenges
 - Partner with the community to achieve positive environmental and health outcomes that reduce climate change impacts ♡
 - Plan for and deliver sustainable and climate-resilient infrastructure

Objective 4.3: **A Council that responsibly and sustainably manages waste**

- Strategies:
- Work with partners to increase resource recovery and reduce waste to landfill
 - Educate the community and deliver programs about the circular economy principles of reduce, reuse, repair and recycle



How we will monitor our progress

Strategic indicators

- Increase number of plants and trees planted
- Maintain or increase survival rate of trees planted by Council
- Maintain and increase public open space
- Maintain or increase satisfaction for environmental sustainability
- Increase kerbside collection waste diverted from landfill
- Maintain or increase satisfaction with waste management

Major Initiative focus area

- Expand and improve urban green infrastructure across the City
- Advance environmental sustainability and cleanliness initiatives



What our community said through Shaping Whitehorse



The Whitehorse community deeply values its local environment, especially trees, and wants Council to take stronger action on sustainable waste management.

Residents strongly support protecting trees and enhancing green spaces, recognising their benefits for both the environment and community wellbeing. They expect Council to improve recycling and waste management efforts. Additionally, they appreciate initiatives such as regular park clean-ups, which help foster a sense of responsibility and connection to nature.

♡ Denotes a linkage to the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing focus areas



Strategic Direction 5

Governance

Good governance is the foundation that supports everything we do as a Council. It means making decisions openly, managing resources wisely, and always being accountable to the community we serve. We understand that effective governance requires both listening and acting. Hearing diverse community voices and translating that feedback into meaningful outcomes.

Services that are accessible, adaptable, and deliver real value reflect our commitment to continuous improvement. Through responsible and sustainable financial management and strong advocacy, we secure the resources for today and the future needed to fulfil community priorities. Good governance isn't just about following rules. It's about earning trust through actions that consistently put community interest first.



Objectives and Strategies

These are our strategic priorities for 2025-2029.

Objective 5.1: **An open, transparent, accountable and responsible Council**

- Strategies:
- Deliver clear and transparent reporting and communications

Objective 5.2: **A Council that delivers core services that are fit for purpose and good value**

- Strategies:
- Improve internal processes to enhance customer experience
 - Provide easy access to Council services
 - Evaluate Council services to meet the changing needs of the community

Objective 5.3: **A Council that actively engages with the community for genuine feedback and input**

- Strategies:
- Provide tailored approaches to community engagement to listen and respond to a variety of community voices
 - Provide updates to the community on how their feedback has contributed to Council decisions (close the loop)

Objective 5.4: **A Council that is well governed, efficient and financially sustainable**

- Strategies:
- Continuously improve the way Council operates
 - Advocate for sustainable and equitable funding that supports community priorities

How we will monitor our progress

Strategic indicators

- Reduce Council decisions made at meetings closed to the public
- Maintain or increase satisfaction with informing the community
- Maintain or increase the number of service reviews completed
- Maintain or increase satisfaction with Council’s value for money
- Maintain or increase satisfaction with customer service
- Maintain or increase satisfaction with community consultation and engagement
- Maintain or increase satisfaction with Council decisions
- Maintain or increase community engagement contribution
- Maintain or increase Councillor attendance at Council meetings
- Increase financial benefits from the Transformation Program
- Maintain or reduce number of Victorian Auditor-General’s Office financial sustainability indicators assessed as high risk
- Maintain or increase the number and value of reportable benefits delivered to the community through transformative initiatives

Major Initiative focus area

- Enable transparency and responsible Council governance
- Deliver core services that provide value and adapt to changing community needs



What our community said through Shaping Whitehorse

The community wants to collaborate with Council and have more opportunities to be consulted, especially for marginalised groups. They also want to know how their input influences decisions.

Whitehorse residents are passionate about their community and want their ideas to be genuinely heard and considered. They regularly share feedback through surveys and engagements.

When it comes to Council operations, residents strongly advocate for greater transparency, better communication and more meaningful engagement. They want clear evidence of how their feedback is used and expect Council to “close the loop” by reporting back on consultation outcomes.

Key priorities also include improving customer service accessibility and timeliness, ensuring information reaches all community members, including new arrivals.



Monitoring and reporting



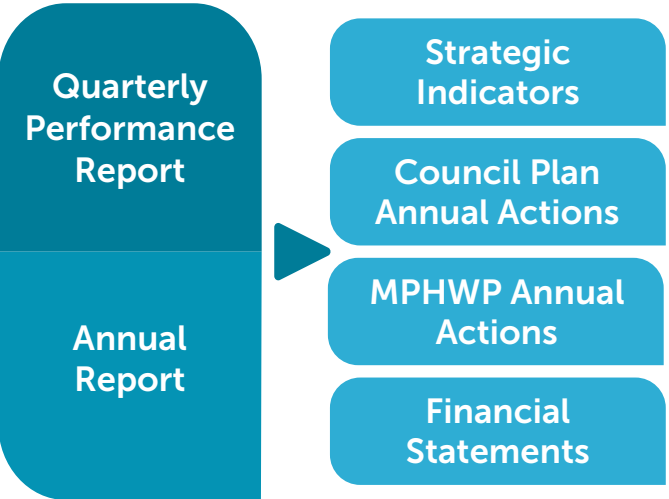
To facilitate transparency and accountability, the actions listed in the Council Plan Action Plan and the MPHWP Action Plan will be reported back to the community on a quarterly basis in the Whitehorse Quarterly Performance Report (QPR).

Strategic Indicators will be reported on in the Quarter 2 QPR and in the Annual Report. While the Annual Report is prepared at the conclusion of each financial year and available online after formal Council adoption, each QPR is made available on Council’s website after being presented to Council for each quarter of the financial year.

You can find all of Council’s Quarterly Performance Reports here:
www.whitehorse.vic.gov.au/performance-reports

To support the development and evaluation of the MPHWP Action Plan, Council has established a MPHWP Steering Committee that will meet twice yearly and guide the implementation of collaborative health and wellbeing initiatives for Whitehorse specifically for the MPHWP Action Plan. Membership includes Whitehorse officers and organisations we partner with to implement the MPHWP.

Integrated Council Plan:
monitoring and reporting



Note: The Quarterly Performance Report and Annual Report both contain reporting information on more areas than those listed above.

Appendix

Integrated Council Plan 2025-2029



How this plan was developed

Whitehorse City Council engagement policy

The Local Government Act 2020 specifies that a Council must adopt and maintain a community engagement policy that gives effect to the following community engagement principles:

- a community engagement process must have a clearly defined objective and scope
- participants in community engagement must have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation
- participants in community engagement must be representative of the persons and groups affected by the matter that is the subject of the community engagement
- participants in community engagement are entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement
- participants in community engagement are informed of the ways in which the community engagement process will influence Council decision making

The Act specifies that the community vision, council plan, financial plan and asset plan must be developed or reviewed in accordance with its deliberative engagement practices.

Council values everyone’s participation and wants to hear different opinions, thoughts and views so that Council can make informed decisions that impact the community. This policy sets out Council’s commitment and approach to engagement including legislative requirements.

Community engagement is about harnessing a range and diversity of views and opinions, experience and expertise within our community to help Council make better, more informed decisions.

Deliberative engagement

Deliberative engagement is a particular approach to involving people in decision making.

It is different from other forms of engagement in that it is about giving participants time to consider and discuss an issue in depth before they come to a considered view. Deliberation is one form of ‘high influence’ community engagement. The expectation is that Council will implement the recommendations to the greatest extent possible. However, it does not replace or take away from the decision-making powers of elected representatives.

Council will undertake deliberative engagement:

1. where it is a legislative requirement (including Community Vision, Council Plan, Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, Long Term Financial Plan and Asset Plan)
2. where Council resolves that it wants its decision making on a matter or initiative to be informed by this model of community engagement
3. where the matter has a certain level of complexity and/or significance to the community

Shaping Whitehorse engagement consultation process

The diagram on page 16 describes the process Council has undertaken to deliver the Shaping Whitehorse Community Engagement Program. This program provided valuable input from the community, staff and Councillors to help inform the development of Council’s key strategic documents, including:

- Integrated Council Plan 2025-2029, including the Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan
- Budget 2025/26
- Revenue and Rating Plan
- Long-Term Financial Plan
- 10-Year Asset Plan
- Whitehorse 2040 Community Vision check-in

The Shaping Whitehorse Community Engagement Program ran from March 2024 to June 2025, in line with the *Local Government Act 2020* and Council’s Engagement Policy. It included 6 key stages designed to ensure local priorities, perspectives and needs were heard and reflected in the strategic plans.

You can find out more on the Shaping Whitehorse project webpage, including the Shaping Whitehorse Broad Engagement Findings Report (July 2024) and the Panel Recommendations Report (September 2024). Visit: www.yoursay.whitehorse.vic.gov.au/shaping-whitehorse

Stage 1 Broad engagement

Stage 1 of the engagement process ran from Monday 18 March to Sunday 5 May 2024. The primary objectives were to gather stakeholder and community feedback on:

- priorities for the next 4 years across 5 themes – A strong and connected community; Suitable buildings and spaces; Local business, jobs and learning; A healthy natural environment; and How Council works
- managing and prioritising community assets
- health and wellbeing challenges and improvement opportunities
- whether the Whitehorse 2040 Vision still reflects community aspirations

To achieve broad reach and participation, comprehensive community engagement was undertaken. This included a variety of methods including:

- online and hard copy surveys available in English, Simplified Chinese, Greek and Vietnamese
- 10 pop-ups at various locations vacross Whitehorse

- stakeholder workshops and interviews conducted with external organisations, staff, and local health and wellbeing service providers
- interactive sessions with existing community groups, including advisory committees and community forums
- written submissions received from residents or resident groups
- Council staff information sessions

Promotion of the engagement activities was extensive in this stage, including website project pages, social and digital media posts (including WeChat in Mandarin/Cantonese), Google Ads, articles in *Whitehorse News* (hard copy and e-newsletters), YourSay newsletters, dedicated email marketing, community development newsletters and signage and displays at various community locations.

The engagement in Stage 1 reached more than 1400 stakeholders from the Whitehorse community, including residents and special interest groups. Findings from Stage 1 are presented in the Stage 1 findings report and were used to inform the next stage of the Shaping Whitehorse process.

Stage 2 Shaping Whitehorse Community Panel

Stage 2 involved the formation of the Shaping Whitehorse Community Panel, a group of community members selected to represent the wider Whitehorse community. Of the 133 residents and business owners who applied, 48 were initially appointed and 36 completed the panel process. Panel members were appointed through independent stratified sampling to broadly reflect the community’s demographics, including age, gender, suburb, birthplace and business ownership.

Deliberative engagement approach

The Panel was asked to respond to a specific ‘remit’: “What should Council prioritise for 2025-2029 to best meet community needs, stay financially sustainable and continue to work towards the community’s 2040 Vision?”

The Panel’s 2 main goals were to review the Whitehorse 2040 Community Vision and focus on key areas of importance identified through Stage 1 feedback to help inform the Integrated Council Plan 2025-2029, Budget, Financial Plan and Asset Plan.

Panel process and inputs

- The Panel met 4 times; 3 times in-person and once online.
- Members received a range of information including a panel handbook, reports (including the Stage 1 engagement findings), pre-recorded and live presentations, copies of Council’s current strategic documents, fact sheets and responses to their questions.
- Sessions involved brainstorming, ideas generation, Q&A, group discussions, and deliberation on priorities and trade-offs.

The Panel developed and voted on recommendations. A supermajority of 80% or above was required from Panel members to be considered an official recommendation.

Outcomes and recommendations

- The Whitehorse 2040 Community Vision remained valid; no changes required.
- 24 recommendations were developed to inform Council’s development of the 2025-2029 Council Plan, with 21 recommendations across the 5 Strategic Directions and 3 specifically relating to Health and Wellbeing priorities.
- 2 additional recommendations were made to improve the Guiding Principles for Sustainable Financial and Asset Management Decisions.

The Panel’s recommendations reflect broad community sentiment and informed the design of Council’s key strategic and resource plans, including the Integrated Council Plan 2025-2029. Council has committed to reporting back to the Panel on how their recommendations were considered.

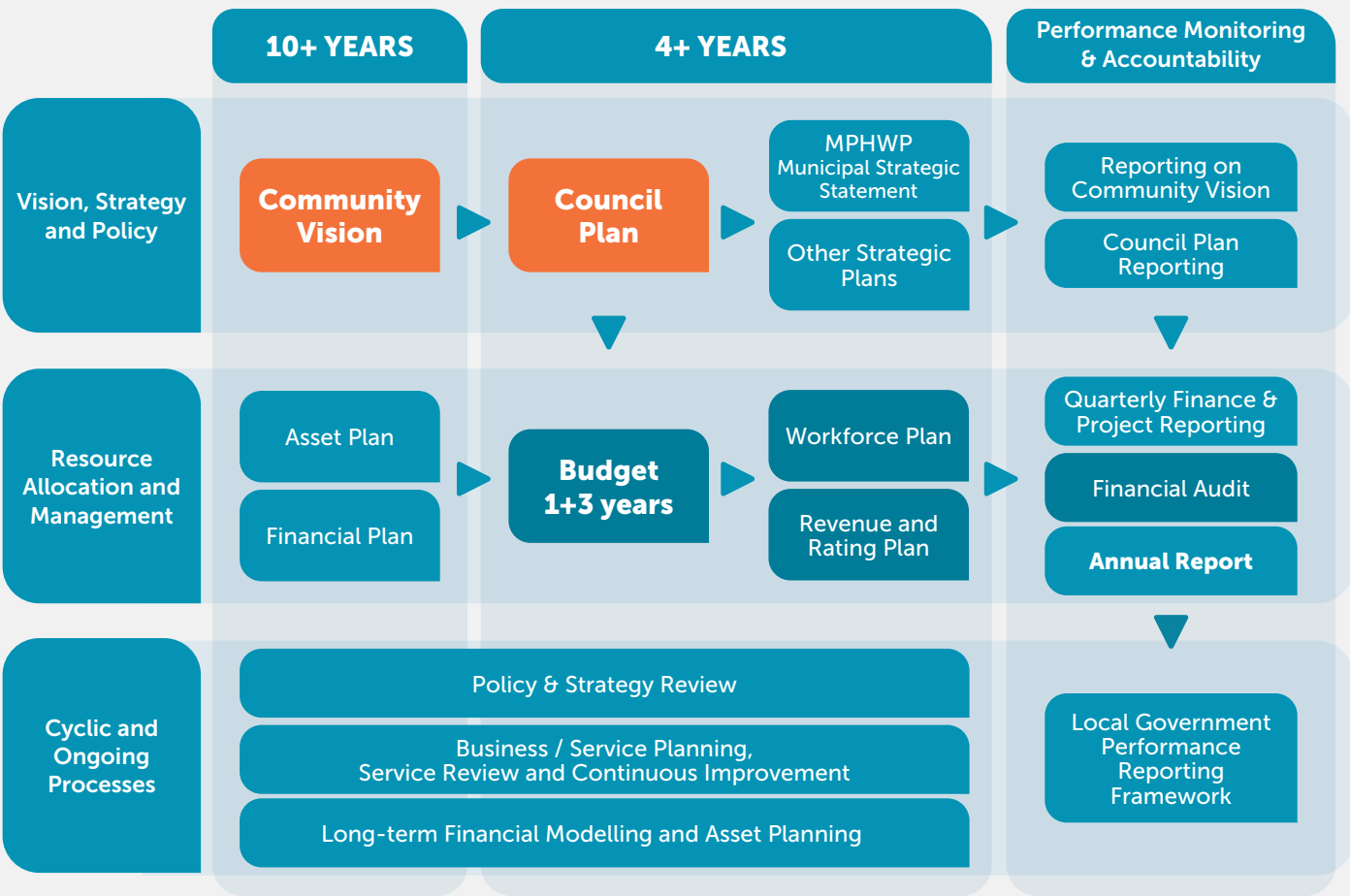
Appendix 2

Our regulatory framework

Strategic Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework

The *Local Government Act 2020* details a principles-based approach to planning and financial management. When creating Council’s key strategic documents, budgets and annual reports, the Act sets out strategic planning principles for Victorian councils, emphasising a flexible, integrated approach to planning, monitoring and performance reporting.

Each of Council’s key strategic documents and reports have different deadlines for development, review and approval. However, they are all connected, with community engagement playing a central role. To help understand these relationships, the diagram below illustrates the key strategic documents within Council’s Integrated Strategic Planning and Reporting Framework (ISPRF). In addition to this framework, Council also has obligations to be responsive to United Nations commitments and a broad range of federal and state legislation and policy.



For a full list of our policies and strategies, visit our website:
www.whitehorse.vic.gov.au/about-council/what-we-do/publications/policies-strategies-plans

Development of health and wellbeing partnership strategies

Overview

Councils are required to develop a Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan every 4 years. Because it is a municipal-wide plan, the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 requires that Council must:

- section 26(2)(c) provide for the involvement of people in the local community in the development, implementation and evaluation of the public health and wellbeing plan.
- section 26(2)(d) specify how the Council will work in partnership with the Department and other agencies undertaking public health initiatives, projects and programs to accomplish the goals and strategies identified in the public health and wellbeing plan.

Whitehorse City Council has ensured the involvement of our broad community and the organisations we will be working with to achieve the MPHWP objectives (goals and strategies) through:

- broad community engagement and Community Panel deliberation as part of Shaping Whitehorse
- engaging partners and stakeholders in community needs and priority identification

The steps Council has undertaken and the outcomes of these processes are described below.

Key steps

1. Community engagement

Stage 1 of the Shaping Whitehorse program gave the community the opportunity to provide input to ensure local priorities and needs were heard and reflected through the strategic plans under development. It involved 7 weeks of broad community engagement from Monday 18 March to Sunday 5 May 2024. Approximately 1431 people provided input including feedback about health and wellbeing around a range of topics.

Engagement topic	
▪ Internet access	▪ Experiences of racism
▪ Asking for help from neighbours	▪ Awareness of support services
▪ Sense of belonging in local community	▪ Contributing to Council decision making
▪ Recognition of First Nations people	▪ Ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic
▪ Awareness of what’s happening in neighbourhood	▪ Council understanding of the needs of the community
▪ Access to Council support and services	▪ Experiences of volunteering
▪ Main health and wellbeing challenges in the community	

Shaping Whitehorse identified 2 major themes around health and wellbeing and the relationship between them – **social needs** and the **natural environment**.

Details of findings are available on the Shaping Whitehorse webpage: yoursay.whitehorse.vic.gov.au/shaping-whitehorse

2. Municipal profile and Victorian priorities

Council prepared a municipal Health and Wellbeing Profile 2024, which enabled us to assess where our community health challenges aligned with the Victorian Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-2027 priorities, as well as areas that were of particular significance to Whitehorse. See Appendix 5.

From this assessment we identified 11 draft health and wellbeing priorities for Whitehorse under consideration for the 2025-2029 Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP).

3. Partner/stakeholder engagement

In March 2024, we held Health and Wellbeing Partnership workshops (and interviews for those unable to attend workshops) with local health and wellbeing providers to explore these priority areas further. A total of 33 people participated representing 25 local organisations.

Partnership Workshops	Interviews
▪ Avenue Neighbourhood House	▪ Victoria Police
▪ Bennettswood Neighbourhood House	▪ Network of Inner East Community Houses
▪ Blackburn North Neighbourhood House	▪ Eastern Community Legal Centre
▪ Box Hill South Neighbourhood House	▪ Centre for Holistic Health
▪ Burke and Beyond	▪ Women’s Health East
▪ EACH	▪ Eastern Health
▪ Eastern Alcohol and Drug Service	▪ Crossways
▪ Eastern Health	▪ Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network
▪ Family Access Network	
▪ Health Ability	
▪ Migrant Information Centre East Melbourne	
▪ Nadrasca	
▪ North East Public Health Unit	
▪ Scope Australia	
▪ Sexual Health Victoria	
▪ Turning Point	
▪ Whitehorse Manningham Libraries	

A further 40 people attended the Interfaith Forum in early May 2024, adding the perspectives of diverse communities in Whitehorse and nominating priority areas of focus.

From the workshops, forum and interviews we identified what the priority focus areas for collaboration could be for the next 4 years and potential strategies to address them.

4. Community deliberation

The Shaping Whitehorse Deliberative Panel in August 2024 considered the outcomes of these partnership discussions, alongside the findings of Council’s broad community engagement, to inform recommendations to Council for the Integrated Council Plan 2025-2029 that includes the MPHWP. The key health and wellbeing issues arising from Panel recommendations were:

- community connections, loneliness
- youth development
- intergenerational approach
- benefits of volunteering
- financial literacy to assist with cost of living
- ageing population challenges
- impacts of major projects
- link between open space and physical and mental wellbeing
- access to information for services, volunteering opportunities and health and wellbeing information

5. Priority identification

We analysed and distilled all these important inputs into 8 priority areas for health and wellbeing. We called these Key Strategic Partnership (KSP) opportunities.

1. Cost-of-living pressures (including financial literacy and affordable housing)
2. Social isolation and inclusion, loneliness
3. Resilience and overall wellbeing (mental health)
4. Access to fresh food
5. Youth development and mental wellbeing (employment, volunteering, social media, anxiety, harms from vaping and AOD)
6. Access to, and increasing, physical activity
7. Family violence including elder abuse (legislative must do)
8. Tackling climate change and health impacts (legislative must consider) and addressing climate change justice

The second stage of sector engagement as a part of the development of Whitehorse’s Integrated Council Plan involved a follow-up workshop in November 2024 to look at Health and Wellbeing Partnership Priorities. The aim was to narrow down and locate the 4 to 5 key areas of partnership to best improve the health and wellbeing of Whitehorse over the next 4 years.

19 representatives of 12 organisations participated in the workshop. 16 additional people were registered and did not attend on the day.

Partnership Priorities Workshop

- Alkira
- Burke and Beyond
- Eastern Health
- Family Access Network
- Headspace
- healthAbility
- Mind
- Mitcham Community House
- Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network
- North East Public Health Unit
- Victoria Police
- Whitehorse Manningham Libraries

In the Partnership Priorities Workshop, we narrowed the 8 KSPs down to 4 areas where Council and partners together could make the most impact over the next 4 years:

1. Social isolation, inclusion and loneliness
2. Family violence
3. Resilience and overall wellbeing
4. Youth development (mental wellbeing, vaping)

6. Council review and adoption

The draft Integrated Council Plan 2025-2029 Objectives and Strategies (include the MPHWP) were reviewed by Council in February 2025, with some changes to the MPHWP Key Health and Wellbeing Strategies to now read:

1. Foster social connections and a sense of belonging
2. Support community initiatives to promote health and prevent disease
3. Prevent and respond to family violence (including elder abuse)
4. Partner to enhance mental health and build resilience
5. Partner with the community to achieve positive environmental, health and climate change outcomes

These Objectives and Strategies, along with identification of Major Initiatives and key actions, were supported by Council in March 2025. Following on was a period of community feedback with adoption of the Integrated Council Plan and associated action plans by Council on 16 June 2025.

Following on from the workshop, the Integrated Council Plan Project Working Group reviewed the identified priorities for partnership efforts in light of other proposed strategies of the Integrated Council Plan (Council’s strategies) and developed 5 Key Health and Wellbeing Strategies:

1. Foster social connections and a sense of belonging
2. Support community initiatives to promote health and prevent disease (e.g. loneliness, nutritious food access, active living, vaping)
3. Prevent and respond to family violence (including elder abuse)
4. Enhance mental health and build resilience
5. Activate the community to achieve positive environmental, health, waste and climate change outcomes

(Consideration of gender impact assessment findings and identification of population cohorts will be undertaken during development of the annual action plan.)

Alignment with Victorian Health and Wellbeing Plan priorities 2023-2027

In the first phase of development of health and wellbeing key strategies for Whitehorse, we considered the priorities of the Victorian Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-2027 and what the local health data documented in the Whitehorse Health and Wellbeing Profile 2024 told us. 11 priority areas emerged for Whitehorse.

Aligned Victorian priority	Our focus*
1. Reducing harm from tobacco and e-cigarette use	Vaping/e-cigarettes
2. Improving wellbeing (mental health)	Gambling, loneliness, dementia, neurodiversity, disengagement, anxiety/ depression, caring
3. Increasing healthy eating	Vegetable intake, food security (access to fresh food)
4. Increasing active living	Daily exercise, sedentary jobs
5. Reducing harm from alcohol and drug use	Alcohol, pharmaceuticals
6. Tackling climate change and its impact on health	Heatwaves, air quality, new threats
7. Preventing all forms of violence	Family violence
8. Reducing injury	Falls in the home
Other local priorities	
9. Access to affordable housing	Social housing, rental stress
10. Discrimination due to age, race, gender, sexual identity, ability	Social cohesion, gender equality
11. Social inclusion and connection	Digital access, engagement in local community, inclusive employment

*Different approaches are used to address whole population or specific cohorts of people – including, for example, age or gender as well as the needs of groups that experience discrimination or disadvantage (people on low incomes, unemployed, people with a disability, the LGBTIQ+ community, people of CALD backgrounds, carers).

For further detail about Whitehorse City Council’s alignment with the Victorian Health and Wellbeing Priority Areas 2023-2027, search ‘**Areas of Alignment with Victorian Health and Wellbeing Priority Areas 2023-2027**’ on Council’s website. This supplement will be published alongside the Integrated Council Plan 2025-2029.

Glossary

Annual Report: A report on the activities of Council over the previous financial year. The report includes a report of operations, audited financial statements and an audited performance statement.

Budget: Documents the financial and non-financial resources required by Council to implement the key directions and priority actions identified in the Council Plan.

Community engagement: A purposeful, inclusive two-way process that actively involves community members in decisions or actions that may impact them. Council adopted principles regarding community engagement are outlined in the Community Engagement Policy.

Community Vision: Description of the long-term aspirations of the community. The Whitehorse 2040 Community Vision represents the strategic direction of Council as required by section 90 of the Local Government Act 2020.

Executive Leadership Team: A team comprising of the Chief Executive Officer, four Directors, and an Executive Manager, responsible for overseeing and managing the operations of Council, and strategic and policy issues.

Council: The role of a Council is to provide good governance and manage a variety of services and assets for the benefit and wellbeing of the municipal community.

Council Plan: A four-year plan which provides the medium-term framework for Council operations by outlining: the strategic direction of Council (Community Vision); objectives for achieving the strategic direction; strategies for achieving the objectives; indicators for monitoring the achievement and progress of the objectives; and a description of Council’s major initiatives for service, infrastructure and amenity.

Councillor: A member of the community elected in accordance with the Local Government Act 2020 to represent the residents of a ward within the municipality, as a member of Council.

Deliberative engagement: A form of community engagement that provides participants times to consider and discuss an issue in depth before they come to a considered view.

Indicators: Performance measures that assist Council to monitor progress toward achievement of the objectives and the strategic directions.

Local Government Act 2020: Victorian Government legislation that outlines the intention for Councils to provide a democratic and efficient system of local government in Victoria. It provides Councils with the authority to meet the needs of their communities and provides the basis for an accountable system of local governance in Victoria.

Major Initiatives: An initiative or investment of a large scale likely to impact on a significant proportion of the Whitehorse Community.

Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan: a Strategic Plan which represents efforts Council will take in partnership with other organisations and advocacy networks over the next four years to improve the health and wellbeing of the municipality.

Municipality: A geographical area that is delineated for the purpose of local government.

Objectives: Identifies Council’s goals to work towards in the Council Plan to achieve the strategic direction in the Whitehorse 2040 Community Vision

Strategic Direction: Identifies key theme areas for Council to focus on to achieve the Whitehorse 2040 Community Vision.

Strategies: Highlights Council’s 4-year approach to meet the objectives in the Council Plan.

Wards: A geographical area which provides a fair and equitable division of a local government area.



Contacting Council

Postal address:

Whitehorse City Council
Locked Bag 2
Nunawading Delivery Centre 3131

ABN: 39 549 568 822

Telephone: 9262 6333

Fax: 9262 6490

NRS: 133 677 then quote 9262 6333
(Service for deaf or hearing impaired people)

TIS: 131 450
(Telephone Interpreter Service. Call and ask
to be connected to Whitehorse City Council)

Email: customer.service@whitehorse.vic.gov.au

Website: whitehorse.vic.gov.au

Service centres:

Whitehorse Civic Centre
379-397 Whitehorse Road, Nunawading 3131

Box Hill Town Hall Service Centre
Box Hill Town Hall
1022 Whitehorse Road, Box Hill 3128



**WHITEHORSE
CITY COUNCIL**