Appendix 3:
Supporting evidence



City of Whittlesea

Whittlesea 2040
A place for all

Every age and every stage themes

1. As I get older, I want to maintain my independence. How will you support me in this?

The community told us…

- You value at home services including domestic assistance, delivered meals and personal care
- You want more support services to enable safe and independent living
- You want programs that improve mental wellbeing and social connection such as seniors' clubs
- You want to be more aware of available programs and services offered by Council and other service providers

The data tells us…

Australia is experiencing a demographic shift, with the proportion of people aged 65 and over steadily increasing. This is largely driven by longer life expectancy, which has risen to about 81 years for men and 85 years for women[1]. This national trend is evident in the City of Whittlesea, with the population of residents aged 65 and over forecast to grow by over 70 per cent (estimated an additional 24,000 people) between 2025 and 2040[2]. In 2040, this will be around 16% of the population, consistent with the current percentage of Australia aged over 65.

Research shows that living independently within one's own community enhances wellbeing by allowing older adults to stay connected to familiar environments and social networks, maintain autonomy, and engage in meaningful daily activities that support mental, physical, and cognitive health. Over 1300 residents currently in Council's 'Let Everyone Participate' program, which provides a range of free physical and social activities for residents over 50.

More than 2,600 clients currently receive support from Council through the Commonwealth Home Support Program, helping them to age safely and independently at home. Services include domestic assistance, personal care, meal delivery and home maintenance.

2. I'm a parent or carer. How will you help children thrive through different life stages?

The community told us…

- Kindergarten and Maternal Child Health services are important to you
- You value programs that support youth leadership and personal development including the Young Women's Leadership Program and teen Mental Health First Aid
- You want more information and education on issues families are dealing with including cyber safety and managing kids screen time

[1] AIHW, Life Expectancy, 2025 - Deaths in Australia, Life expectancy - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare AIHW, Life Expectancy, 2025 - Deaths in Australia, Life expectancy - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (accessed 15/05/2025)

[2] Population Forecasts by .id and Place Info Pty age population forecasts, 2024.

- You are reasonably satisfied with local amenities including libraries parks, gardens and trails and sports and recreation facilities

The data tells us…

On average, 8 to 9 babies are born each day in the City of Whittlesea, and households with children are the most common household type[3]. By 2040, the number of households with young children (aged 0-11) is expected to grow by 10,000 compared to today[4].

Around 10 percent of young children in the City of Whittlesea are considered developmentally vulnerable when starting school, similar to the Victorian average. Research shows that for young children to develop well, it is important they have a nurturing and supportive environment, access to quality early education, positive relationships with caregivers, adequate nutrition, regular physical activity, and opportunities for play and exploration to build their cognitive, emotional, and social skills. To support early childhood education, Council currently owns and maintains 44 sessional kindergartens across the municipality and delivers Family Day Care for around 100 children. There are over 40 community playgroups in the City of Whittlesea and parents and carers are supported through parenting sessions delivered by Council.

There are currently over 40,000 young people aged 12-24 living in the City of Whittlesea, increasing to over 60,000 by 2040[5]. Young people in growth areas have comparatively higher rates of social isolation, loneliness and disengagement from education, which is evident in the City of Whittlesea, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic. Young people flourish when they have access to safe public spaces, affordable housing, mental health and wellbeing support, opportunities for meaningful social connection, access to quality education and pathways to training and employment. Council's EDGE facility in South Morang provides support services for young people through external agencies.

3. I will have different transportation needs across my lifetime. How will you help me get around easily?

The community told us…

- You appreciate when local roads and paths are regularly maintained and updated
- You would like to see more lighting added to shared used paths to increase safety
- You want Council to advocate for additional bus services, especially in growth areas
- Less than half of families are satisfied with their commute to work or school

The data tells us…

[3] ABS, Census of Housing and Population, 2021
[4] Population Forecasts by .id and Place Info Pty age population forecasts, 2024
[5] Population Forecasts by .id and Place Info Pty age population forecasts, 2024

Motor vehicles are the main mode of transport for residents in the City of Whittlesea. Over 60% of households have two or more motor vehicles[6]. In 2024, 5% of residents reported walking or cycling to work and 26% walking or cycling to school or study[7].

More than 60% of City of Whittlesea residents travel outside the municipality for work[8]. Nearly 30% of working residents spend more than an hour getting to and from work and over 7% spend more than two hours commuting.[9]

While train accessibility has increased slightly for City of Whittlesea residents, the proportion of households within 400 metres of any type of public transport stop has remained steady at about from 65% between 2018 and 2024.[10]

Residents in the municipality have increasingly diverse transport needs. Over 6% report requiring assistance with daily activities due to disability; more parents are navigating the municipality with young children; the older population is growing; the proportion of electric vehicles is rising; and there is a growing demand for transport options that do not depend on private cars.

4. I want to protect the environment and be ready for a changing climate. How will you support our community and neighbourhood to be green and sustainable?

The community told us…

- You want to see more urban greening in the City of Whittlesea to help increase shade canopy
- You want to see more community education programs that focus on preparing for climate change and supporting biodiversity
- You love spending time in nature, surrounded by trees and wildlife like kangaroos and birds
- You see addressing climate change as an important priority for your health and wellbeing

The data tells us…

Climate change is being increasingly recognised as a critical global issue, with the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as heatwaves, droughts, floods, and storms on the rise, impacting the environment and communities in many ways.

Data shows that at a local level, climate change can be reduced through sustainable practices such as using renewable energy, reducing energy consumption, minimising waste and using sustainable transportation. Greenhouse gas emissions from the City of Whittlesea decreased by over 15 per cent between 2018/19 and 2022/23.

Green spaces and trees contribute to climate change reduction by soaking up greenhouse gases, keep neighbourhood's cooler, and boosting the overall health of the environment, making areas better able to handle climate challenges. There are over 5,000 hectares of green spaces in the City of

[6] ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021. Compiled and presented by .id
[7] City of Whittlesea, Community Insights Study, Wave 1.1, 2024
[8] ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021. Compiled and presented by .id
[9] City of Whittlesea, Community Insights Study, Wave 1.1, 2024
[10] AUO, Liveability Index 2018 and 2024.

Whittlesea, however, the municipality has about 11% tree cover (tree shade) in urban areas and 38% in rural areas[11]. This contributes to higher than average temperatures in the City of Whittlesea compared with Melbourne overall.[12]

5. I want our streets, neighbourhoods and waterways to be clean. How will you manage waste and encourage people to do the right thing?

The community told us…

- Recycling matters most, followed by tackling dumped rubbish, hard waste collections, and waste education
- You would like to see more maintenance to clean up public toilets and remove graffiti
- You would like more education and awareness programs on your how to dispose of waste and recycling properly
- You would like more access to hard waste collections

Your satisfaction with waste management was about 70%[13]

The data tells us…

Council collected 45,000 tonnes of waste for landfill in 2023-24. Additionally, Council collected 18,000 tonnes of recycling, and 19,000 tonnes of food and garden waste, 2,400 tonnes of hard waste, 1,740 tonnes of bundled branches, and 1,155 tonnes of e-waste in 2023-24. The total amount would fill about 35 Olympic swimming pools.

The percentage kerbside waste diverted from landfill has increased from 42.9% in 2020 to 44.5% in 2024. Council worked with Visy to install four reverse container deposit vending machines within the community, which have collected more than 1.5 million containers. Additionally, we undertake compliance and enforcement for illegal waste dumping in our municipality.

6. I like being physically active and enjoy the outdoors. How will I be able to do this locally?

The community told us…

- you love our parks and would like to see continued maintenance and renewal of existing parks and playgrounds
- you appreciate the variety of sporting and aquatic facilities Council provide, but feel there should be more
- you would like more dog and pet friendly spaces
- you love the workout/fitness equipment that has been added to existing parks/playgrounds

[11] Greening Whittlesea City Forest Strategy 2020-2040, p19
[12] Greening Whittlesea City Forest Strategy 2020-2040
[13] LGV CSS Survey 2024

- you have highlighted being physically and socially active as a priority for your health and wellbeing

The data tells us…

Around a third of City of Whittlesea residents meet global physical activity guidelines, which is slightly below the Victorian average[14]. Almost half of the women aged 25-34 in the municipality meet the recommended activity level, compared to 66% of men in the same age bracket.

In 2024, 86% of residents reported engaging in 1 to 10 hours of moderate physical activity each week, while 86% also participated in 1 to 10 hours of vigorous activity. Furthermore, nearly half of residents visited sports and recreation facilities at least twice a week[15].

When asked about participation in physical activity for recreation and leisure, 45% of males reported undertaking vigorous physical activity for at least 10 minutes at a time, compared with only 36% of females.[16]

A high proportion of residents reported that they understand how certain behaviours can positively impact their future health, including getting adequate sleep, having a balanced diet, reducing smoking/vaping, regulating alcohol/drug consumption and getting regular exercise. Some health conditions such as Arthritis, Cancer and Heart Disease, have lower rates of incidence in City of Whittlesea compared with the average of all LGAs in the North East Public Health area[17]. However, the City of Whittlesea has comparatively higher rates of obesity, diabetes, and kidney disease[18].

There are over 5,000 hectares of public open space across the municipality, including 1,500 local parks, four major community parks, 41 exercise and fitness parks, 10 off-leash dog parks and 10 public skate parks and BMX facilities. In addition, Council manages more than 50 sports and leisure facilities.

7. I want to feel physically, culturally and psychologically safe in my community. What will you do to keep me free from harm and promote responsible and respectful behaviour?

The community told us…

- you would like to see more lighting in public spaces
- you would like more programs that promote prevention of violence against women
- you love that Council have school crossing supervisors to keep families and children safe in our community
- most residents feel safe during the day but less than half feel safe after dark

[14] Population Profile of the NEPHU Catchment Area 2025
[15] City of Whittlesea, Community Insights Study, Wave 1.2, 2024
[16] City of Whittlesea, Community Insights Study, Wave 1.2, 2024
[17] Population Profile of the NEPHU Catchment Area 2025, p209
[18] Population Profile of the NEPHU Catchment Area 2025, p209

- walking and cycling paths, local parks, and public transport are the places people feel most unsafe after dark[19]
- you support Council programs that prevent all forms of violence in our community
- you support increasing services that enable people with a disability to live safely and independently in the community
- you support events and initiatives that promote mental wellbeing and strengthen social connections
- you see improving mental wellbeing and social connection, preventing all forms of violence, increasing active living, increasing healthy living, reducing homelessness and improving financial wellbeing as your top six health and wellbeing priorities (in order); followed by reducing harm from alcohol, gambling and smoking /e-cigarettes
- you are concerned about social and demographic challenges facing the community include crime and personal safety (particularly family violence), the ageing population, high levels of loneliness and isolation and high demand for mental health services within the community[18]

The data tells us…

The data tells us that although the number of offences has risen, the offence rate is lower than neighbouring areas

- There were 14,962[20] offences in 2024 in City of Whittlesea. This is up from 12,923 in 2023
- **The offence rate[19] per 100,000 residents by category were** is follows:
  - "Crimes against the person" 993 compared to Hume 1,238
  - "Drug offences" 336 compared to Hume 431
  - "Property and deception offences" 3,321 compared to Hume 4,196
  - "Public order and security offences" 239 compared to Hume 391

Family violence is rising with 1,149 reported family violence incidents per 100,000 in 2024. This is a 6.8% increase in the rate of incidents compared to 2022-23.

Community perception of safety appears to have been impacted by media and news coverage. 21% told us they feel unsafe during the day on walking & cycling paths[18] and 63% told us they feel unsafe after dark on walking & cycling paths[18]

8. I'm proud to live here. How will you ensure my neighbourhood meets our diverse housing needs, is functional and well-designed?

The community told us…

- you want the community to understand the need for diverse and affordable housing and have access to more of it locally

[19] Community Insights Wave 1.2 July 2024
[20] Crime Statistics Agency - Recorded Crime Stats & Offender Inscidents (up to June 2024)

- you would like to see a vibrant events program across different areas of the City of Whittlesea
- you love our community activity centres and believe they could be used more for a greater variety of activities
- most residents feel proud to live in their neighbourhood and many feel connected to their community
- some trust their neighbours and see a strong sense of community, while others feel there's room to grow
- people are generally happy with local amenities like libraries, parks, gardens, trails, and sports facilities

The data tells us…

Well-designed neighbourhoods help people live healthier, happier lives. Safe streets, local parks, nearby services, and places to walk or ride make it easier to stay active, connect with others and feel part of the community. Having amenities such as shops, schools and health services close by saves time and money on travel, encourages walking, and helps people of all ages be active and independent.

Vibrant town centres are attractive places for people to work, study shop and play. When well-planned they have more usage and longer dwell times. Our municipality includes over 60 town centres (or activity centres) ranging from the state and regional scale of Metropolitan Activity Centres (Epping) and Major Activity Centres to Large and Small Neighbourhood Activity Centres, and convenience stores.

In 2024, 62%[21] of residents reported that they are proud to live in their neighbourhood while 52% feel that they are part of the community. Additionally, there is a high level of trust with 46% residents that most people in their neighbourhood can be trusted, while 40% felt that people in their neighbourhood have a strong sense of community.

The housing crisis has highlighted the need for affordable housing. It is estimated that there is currently a shortage of 4,400[22] affordable homes in the municipality.

The municipality has low numbers of homeless people. However, it is increasing with 21923 more people reported as homeless in 2021 compared to 2019.

In the 12 months to December 2024, only 1% of houses for sale and only 0.2% of rentals were affordable to households on very low incomes. Those on low incomes were only marginally better off in the buyers' market with 8% of houses for sale. However, 48.5% of rentals were affordable to households on low incomes.

Separate houses (85%) are the dominant house type in the City of Whittlesea. Medium-density dwellings account for just 13%[24] of stock. However, Bundoora is the suburb with the highest proportion of medium-density dwellings at 30%, followed by South Morang at 23%. Donnybrook has the lowest proportion of high-density housing, at just under 2%

[21] Community Insights Survey Wave 1.3 (October 2024)
[22] Figures published by .id using data sourced from 2021 ABS Census and Homelessness figures
[23] ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2021 and 2016. Compiled and presented by .id (informed decisions).
[24] ABS Census 2021

Residents are very reliant on private vehicles with 63.5% of employed people drove to work, while less than 5% caught public transport[25].

Around 80%[26] of our residents have access to a bus stop within 400 metres of their residence, but only 13%[24] have access to a train station with 800 metres (even with the Mernda Rail Extension Project). Tram route 86 connects RMIT, and Uni Hill, Bundoora with municipalities and suburbs to the south through to the Melbourne CBD, with a similarly low proportion of households having close access to tram stops in the City of Whittlesea.

The Walking & Cycling Plan identifies that only 14.9% of residents walk on a daily basis, with 49.6% choosing to not walk at all.

9. I'm a business owner. How will you support the local economy and help businesses create local employment opportunities?

The community told us…

- you want Council to support local business and employment
- you would like to see more retail hubs, including a vibrant night-time economy, to better support local businesses and boost the local community
- you would like to see a growth in tourism providing a boost to the local economy
- you like that Council offers learning programs at community centres
- you love libraries and would like there to be more
- you want more employment opportunities other than fast food restaurants for youth

The data tells us…

In 2024, nearly 23,000 businesses were registered in the City of Whittlesea, a 35% increase since 2016. The most common business sectors include transport, construction, and professional services. The municipality also supports nearly 82,000 local jobs, with healthcare, construction and retail being the largest employers.

Local industries experiencing the strongest recent growth include healthcare, construction, transport and warehousing, and education and training. Demand is expected to stay high for healthcare and education services, housing construction, and to rise for transport and logistics workers, driven by key developments like the Melbourne Wholesale Market and the Beveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal.

Despite a growing number of businesses and jobs, more than 60% of City of Whittlesea residents currently travel outside the municipality for work. Around half of local workers are employed by small businesses with fewer than 20 employees, many of which only employ the owner/s. Compared to the Hume, Casey and Wyndham growth areas, the City of Whittlesea has seen fewer new employing businesses each year and slower growth in small businesses of 1–4 employees and larger

[25] ABS Census 2021
[26] Australian Urban Observatory

businesses with 200+ employees. As of the December 2024 quarter, the City's unemployment rate was 4.4%, slightly higher than the Victorian average of 4.3%.[27]

Compared to the Victorian average, the City of Whittlesea has a lower proportion of residents with university degrees, a similar proportion with diplomas and a higher percentage with vocational qualifications. In 2021, 9% of residents were enrolled in either university or vocational education.[28]

10. I love being part of my community – meeting people, getting involved and exploring different neighbourhoods. How will you help me stay connected, feel welcome and enhance my health and wellbeing?

The community told us…

- you support Council programs that improve mental wellbeing and social connection
- you love that Council offers a community grants program that support community groups
- you support inclusive and accessible services including Aboriginal Services, multicultural, disability and LGBTIQA+
- you see improving mental wellbeing and social connection as the highest health and wellbeing priority

The data tells us…

Research shows that strong social connections help people feel supported, improve mental health, and create friendlier, more connected neighbourhoods. However, social isolation and loneliness are on the rise in Australia, affecting people of all ages. Recent data indicates that the frequency of social contact has been declining across all age groups, and of particular note is the 15–24 age group, which has been experiencing a continuous increase in social isolation since around 2008. Across Australia, a quarter of males aged 15-24 reported feeling socially isolated and 17% of females in 2022.[29]

In 2024, three quarters of residents in the City of Whittlesea reported that they connected with family and friends at least once per week. In the same survey, City of Whittlesea residents reported their participation in community groups, with the highest participation in sports groups (20%), followed by religious groups (9%), multicultural groups (4%) and special interest groups (3%)[30]. Nearly two-thirds of residents felt very attached to their neighbourhood, and 59% said their neighbourhood felt very special to them. While many residents feel connected, 32% reported feeling lonely in the past week and almost 1 in 5 sought mental health support during the previous year[31].

[27] ABS, Labour force survey catalogue number 6202.0 and Department of Employment Small Area Labour markets. Compiled and presented by .id, 2024
[28] ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021
[29] AIHW analysis of Household and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) data, waves 1–22, 2022.
[30] City of Whittlesea, Community Insights Study, Wave 1.2, 2024
[31] City of Whittlesea, Community Insights Study, Wave 1.3, 2024

11. I want to contribute to Council decisions and stay up to date. How will you keep me informed, seek my views and make it easy for me to engage with Council?

The community told us…

- you like to know what the level of influence is when providing feedback on projects
- your preferred method to engage with Council to share insights and feedback is via email or community-based pop-ups
- you like that you have the option to use the website as well as come into Council offices when you need information

The data tells us…

The way people want to engage with local government is changing, with a growing preference for flexible, accessible and digital ways to participate that fit into their daily lives.

In 2024, around 415,000 people visited the City of Whittlesea website, Council's customer service team handled over 150,000 phone calls and assisted more than 12,000 people in person. Additionally, residents shared their views on over 50 Council projects via our community engagement. These included:

- 4,213 contributions made in person
- 138 community-based pop-ups
- 21 Citizenship ceremonies
- 7 Community Focus Groups
- 2 Internal Focus Groups
- 2 Reference Groups
- 1 Community Forum
- 74,959 visits to the Engage Whittlesea website
- 4,756 contributions made on the Engage Whittlesea website

The community are feeling more informed. In the 2021 household survey, very few people said that they had engaged directly with government (7%). Over the last 12 months (as at 2024), residents participated in Council activities through doing surveys (11%), contacted a Council administrator (11%), visited a Council pop-up stall (4%) or attended an information session run by Council (2%)[32]. In 2024, 1 in 5 City of Whittlesea residents perceived the opportunities to inform Council decision making were good or excellent.

[32] City of Whittlesea Community Insights Study, Wave 1.2

12. As a ratepayer, I expect Council to operate efficiently and effectively. What will you do to ensure resources are being used wisely?

The community told us…

- Council offers a broad range of essential services that are a part of our daily life
- Many residents are surprised of the breadth of services available outside of those relevant to their current life stage
- You feel that Council assets such as roads, buildings, stormwater pipes, pathways, parks, sporting fields and recreation facilities meet the diverse and changing needs of the community
- You feel that infrastructure decisions consider environmental, social and financial sustainability

The data tells us…

Technology has advanced faster than ever over the past 10 years, changing how people live, work and interact with services like those provided by Council. Through adoption of new technology, Council has enhanced its efficiency by automating routine tasks, improving data collection and analysis and enabling faster, more transparent service delivery.

As an example, following the implementation of the customer service platform, Council can more accurately track the time it takes to resolve issues and identify and improve the processes across the organisation. There has been a significant reduction in the average resolution time of 8.6 days since the deployment of the new customer service platform. In the period November 2024 to May 2025, 102,781 cases were resolved at an average of 13.65 days. In the year prior there were 132,561 cases resolved at an average of 22.37 days. It is expected that this will improve further as new features are implemented and new processes are adopted.

Under the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework (LGPRF), all councils in Victoria are required to measure and report on their performance and costs across 59 service areas, such as roads, planning, animal management and waste services. In the 2023/24 financial year, the cost per resident of City of Whittlesea services compared to the Interface Councils (Cardinia, Casey, Hume, Melton, Mitchell, Mornington Peninsula, Nillumbik, Wyndham, Yarra Ranges) was lower for most services, except for food safety, road resealing and statutory planning. Overall, City of Whittlesea's cost per resident was $270 lower than the Interface Council average.

Health and wellbeing priority areas

1. Advance gender equality and prevention of gendered violence

The community told us…

Family violence and related deaths are preventable~~,~~ and every person is entitled to feel safe in their community.

The data tells us…

- Gender inequity is the main cause of family violence, with social norms and behaviors contributing to unequal gender power relationships
- Men are the main perpetrators of family violence against women
- Between 2023–2024, reports of family violence increased by **9.5%** and **181** emergency department visits related to family violence
- **194 incidents of stalking, harassment, and threats involved female residents**, compared to **103 incidents** involving **male residents**.
- The three most common abuse types recorded between 2023-2024 were verbal abuse (**38.6%**), emotional abuse (**28.4%**) and physical abuse (**15.8%)**.

Everyone deserves equal opportunities, no matter their gender – ensuring community can live safely and well in the community. Preventing gender-based violence brings economic, social and health benefits for everyone and is a responsibility for us all to share.

2. Help reduce the negative health impacts of climate change

The community told us…

Urgent action is needed to address climate change, to protect the environment and ensure a fair and sustainable future for young people.

The data tells us…

- Temperatures are expected to rise by **2–3°C** by 2050, with nearly twice as many extremely hot days as the number experienced in the 1990s
- Whittlesea has low tree cover (only 11% in urban areas) compared to more than 20% in other areas.
- Not having enough green spaces makes it harder to stay cool during hot weather.
- Women face higher risks during and after extreme climate events and other natural disasters, including increased risk of family violence and decreased job and income security

Climate change presents serious risks to our health including heat stress, respiratory problems and mental illness. We need to support the community to be better prepared for extreme climate events and to protect their health and wellbeing.

3. A - Improving wellbeing and social connection – mental health

The community told us…

Social interaction and strong connections are essential for good mental health and contribute to high levels of wellbeing across the community.

The data tells us…

High levels of social connection create strong and resilient communities, bringing a sense of belonging and purpose to our lives and reducing the negative impacts of isolation and loneliness on our relationships, work and physical health.

- In 2023, **18.5%** of residents asked for help with mental health issues.
- **22.4%** of residents reported high or very high psychological distress, up from **16.5%** in 2017.
- Women face more mental health challenges than men, including anxiety, mood disorders, PTSD, self-harm, and eating disorders, and higher risk of hospitalizations due to mental illness.
- A range of factors can increase a person's risk of experiencing mental illness, including their age, chronic illness and cultural isolation.

3. B - Address and reduce the negative impacts of gambling

The community told us…

Gambling harm is a serious but preventable issue, that reduces the health and wellbeing of our community and must be addressed.

The data tells us…

Gambling harm can cause individuals, families and the broader community harm in the form of financial problems, damaged relationships, job loss, social isolation, and poor mental health.

- Pokies (electronic gaming machines) cause the most gambling harm, both serious and preventable.
- In 2023–24, Whittlesea residents lost **$139 million** on pokies - the **third highest loss** in Victoria
- A person's risk of gambling harm can be impacted by where they live, their income, culture, family life, and mental health.

4. Make it easier for everyone to access healthy, nutritious, culturally appropriate food by supporting local food programs and raising awareness about healthy eating options.

The community told us…

We need improved access to fresh, healthy, affordable, and culturally diverse foods, and greater promotion of nutritious cultural food options over fast-food establishments.

The data tells us…

Ensuring everyone has access to fresh, healthy, safe, affordable and culturally appropriate food allows people to maintain a nutrient-rich diet, essential for disease prevention. To support this, we need a robust and sustainable local food production and distribution system that promotes healthy eating options.

- **In 2022, 10%** of residents ran out of money to buy food, making it harder for them to get healthy food needed for good health
- Only **6.3%** of adult residents and **2%** of children eat enough vegetables every day, while **66.2%** of adults and **71%** of children eat enough fruit.
- **57.5%** of adult residents are overweight or obese, while **24.9%** of 3-5-year-olds and **51.5%** of 12-year-olds have decayed, missing, or filled teeth.

5. Support and promote active lifestyles by providing a range of programs and creating spaces that inspire and support people to be more physically active.

The community told us…

We need a greater range of accessible, free spaces and physical activities opportunities to meet the diverse active living needs across the community.

The data tells us…

A majority of Whittlesea residents consider regular physical exercise to be important and central to their health and wellbeing. The aim is to support this community priority through the creation of more accessible and affordable public spaces to meet the differing and diverse needs of the community.

- Only **32%** of residents meet the recommended physical activity levels, slightly below the Victorian average of **35.1%**.
- **47%** of women aged 25-34 meet the recommended activity level, compared to **66%** of men.
- The Northeastern Melbourne region has the lowest percentage of children (ages 5-13) meeting activity guidelines, at **42.9%**, compared to the Victorian average of **51.2%**.
- More active living opportunities are needed for young First Nations people, grandparents who are carers and older adults at risk of social isolation.

6. Support enhanced initiatives to prevent homelessness by supporting programs that provide stable housing and offer assistance to those at risk.

The community told us…

Without stable housing, people struggle to meet basic needs, which impacts their health, wellbeing, and ability to contribute to their community.

The data tells us…

- In 2021, **854** people in Whittlesea were homeless, ranking us twelfth in Victoria. Since 2006, homelessness has increased by **150%**.

- The main causes of homelessness include family violence, lack of affordable housing, and high living costs.
- From June 2021 to 2023, the number of employed people seeking homelessness help grew by **23%**, with **74%** of the increased demand from employed women.
- Homelessness disproportionately affect First Nations people, young people, LGBTIQA+ individuals, women over 55, and people with disabilities.

Access to secure housing supports community health and wellbeing. Homelessness can negatively impact education, personal safety, privacy and access to social support services. To address homelessness, we need early intervention and a strong, coordinated prevention approach involving all levels of government.

Priority areas for disability inclusion and equity

1. Support fair and equitable access to services and facilities

The community told us…

- There is a need to improve the accessibility of venues, facilities and amenities across the community
- There are significant gaps in essential health and human services for people with disability

The data tells us…

In 2022 – 23, 50% of disability discrimination complaints received by the Australian Human Rights Commission were about accessing goods, services and facilities.

In 2015, only 15% of complaints to the Australian Human Rights Commission were about disability discrimination. By 2022, this had grown to over half (52%) of all complaints.

Council is committed to upholding the rights of people with disability to access goods, services, and facilities.

2. Facilitate securing and sustaining meaningful employment

The community told us…

- There is a need for more work experience opportunities for students with disability
- There is a lack of sustainable work options for people with disability

The data tells us…

- In 2021, the unemployment rate amongst residents who need daily assistance due to disability is 15.1% compared to 7.2% for the municipality's broader population.
- Between 2016 – 2024, the proportion of residents with daily support needs who are not in the labour force has increased by 24.3%

Having a job and financial stability helps people stay physically and mentally healthy by improving independence, self-esteem and social connection. It's important to create fair opportunities so people with disability have access to the health and wellbeing benefits of employment.

3. Support equal participation in community life

The community told us…

You told us there is a need to create more opportunities to support people with disability to be active in the community, including:

- more information about local activities and groups
- more free and accessible public venues and spaces for people of different ages and cultural backgrounds
- more programs and activity groups
- more venues and public spaces that are accessible to people with extremely high support needs

The data tells us…

The most common social activities where people with disability face barriers are:

- socialising in someone else's home (43.2%)
- visiting a restaurant, café, bar, club (35.7%)
- participating in sports, recreation and exercise (34.3%)

Council recognises social participation is a key contributor to health and wellbeing and is well placed to work with communities to ensure social, recreational and cultural events are affordable and accessible to people with disability.

4. Drive real change in attitudes and behaviours that lead to discrimination

The community told us…

- Young people with disability regularly experience discrimination
- The Companion Card is not accepted at all major community events
- More leadership and group facilitation courses are needed for people with disability

The data tells us…

In the city of Whittlesea, people with disability continue to face discrimination with 1 in 10 Australians known to experience because of a disability including:

- 17% of young people aged 15 – 34 years
- 28% of LGBTIQ+ people

It is a crime under Commonwealth and Victorian law to discriminate against or treat unfairly a person because of a disability. Council is committed to protecting the legal rights of people with disabilities to live free from discrimination and participate fully in the community.