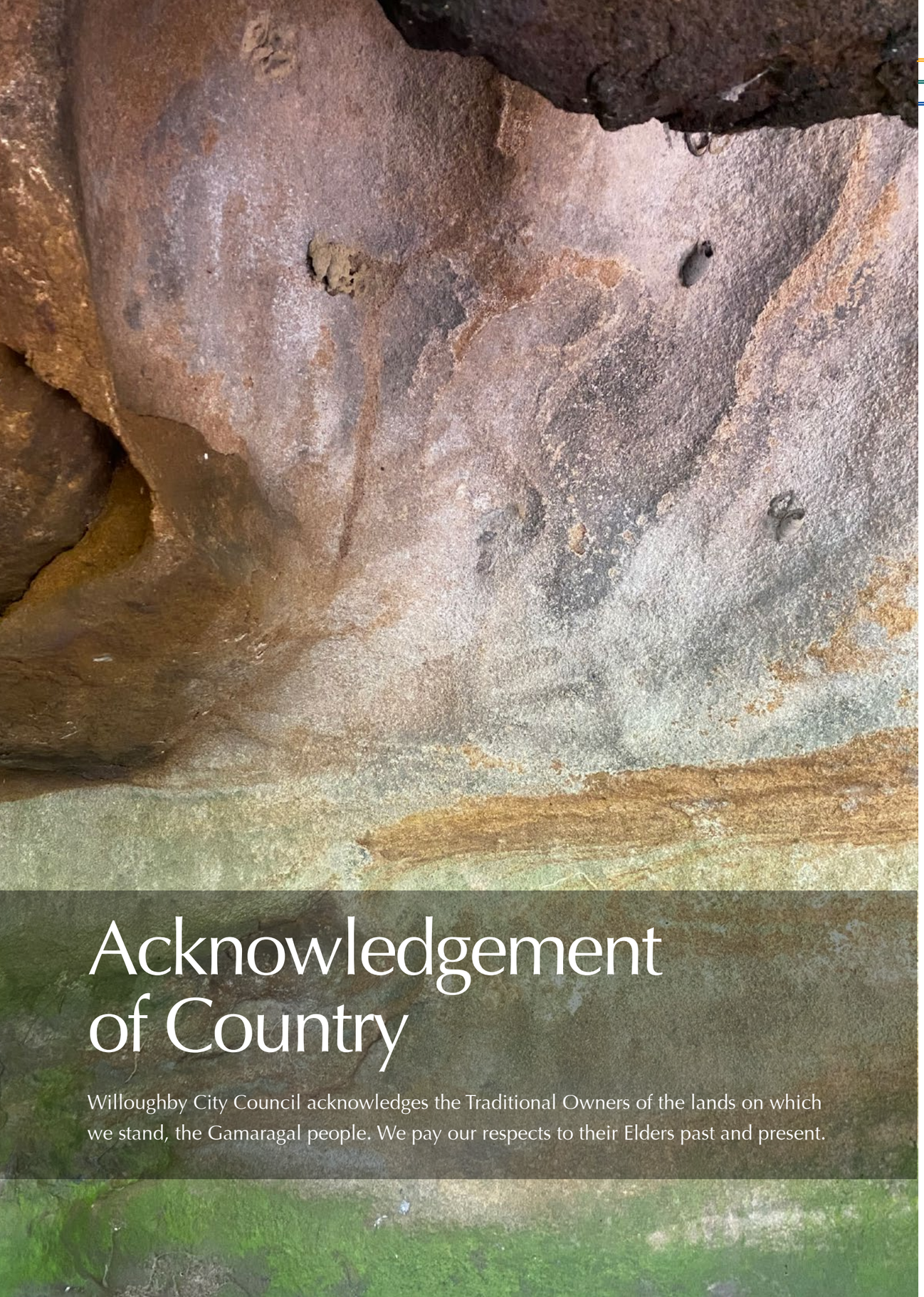
STATE OF OUR CITY REPORT

2024



WILLOUGHBY CITY COUNCIL

City of Diversity



Acknowledgement of Country

Willoughby City Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we stand, the Gamaragal people. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

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The term in review

Message from the General Manager

This inaugural State of Our City Report benchmark's Council's progress towards the targets in the Community Strategic Plan (CSP) *Our Future Willoughby 2032*, for the period 2021 to 2024.

During this time Council has continued to deliver a range of highly valued services whilst navigating substantial challenges in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, and 2022 being Sydney's wettest year on record.

As identified in our CSP, our long-term vision is that Willoughby is a City of diversity: diverse landscapes, people and businesses.

Willoughby is blessed by beautiful geography which is characterised by ridgelines and gullies which fall away to Middle Harbour to the east and Lane Cove River to the west. The natural beauty of our area is enhanced by precious bushland that is passionately maintained and rejuvenated by Council officers and our residents. In this time we have planted thousands of new trees, and removed weeds and pests from our bushland environment.

Our award-winning cultural programs have bridged community gaps by creating new and exciting connections between residents. The *Hi Neighbours Program* was recognised at the 2023 NSW Local Government Excellence Awards for reducing social isolation among residents in high-rise apartments; this was even more important to help manage the isolation caused by the impact of COVID-19.

Council's MOSAIC Multicultural Centre was also awarded the NSW Premier's Multicultural Community Medal for Local Government Business Excellence which pays tribute to organisations who work tirelessly to promote social cohesion and harmony across NSW.

Willoughby continues to cement its place as the heart of art and culture on Sydney's North Shore, including all our work at The Concourse, the Willoughby Symphony Orchestra, The Art Space, and our other festivals and events.

During this time we also commenced significant upgrade works to Naremburn and Artarmon Villages. These works are rejuvenating our local centres, supporting local businesses and providing further investment in our suburbs.

Following five years of strategic planning, in June 2023 The NSW Government approved amendments to our planning controls which created capacity for a further 6,500 new dwellings in the City of Willoughby. Council has proudly played its role supporting housing supply to accommodate Sydney's growth.

We've also started reviewing the CSP through this report, and related community engagement in mid-2024. We received feedback from over 400 people in the community and businesses on what's important to them, the challenges and their priorities for the future – this is vital input to help shape the next CSP which will extend through to 2036.

I look forward to working with our Mayor, Councillors, community and staff to set the direction for the next four years and beyond.



BOTTOM ROW L-R: Cr Roy McCullagh, Mayor Tanya Taylor, Cr Craig Campbell. SECOND ROW: Cr Anna Greco, Cr Georgie Roussac, Cr Jam Xia. THIRD ROW L-R: Cr Hugh Eriksson, Cr Robert Samuel, Cr John Moratelli. TOP ROW Cr Angelo Rozos, Cr Brendan Zhu, Cr Sarkis Mouradian, Cr Nic Wright.

Executive Summary

This report reflects on how well we have progressed against the community's aspirations and priorities in our Community Strategic Plan Our Future Willoughby 2032. While Council is only part of the picture - as Government, business, the community and other organisations also have a big part to play – this report focuses on what Council has achieved and what difference we've made. Councillors worked well with the organisation to take the lead on issues important to the community throughout their term. We also measured up well against strategic indicators, with almost all the current targets achieved, and we're on track to reach the long term ones too.

Our environment has been well protected and has healthy waterways, bushland and over 1,100 more trees. Both our own operations and the community have steadily reduced water use, carbon emissions and waste; and we've equipped thousands of people and businesses to be more sustainable.

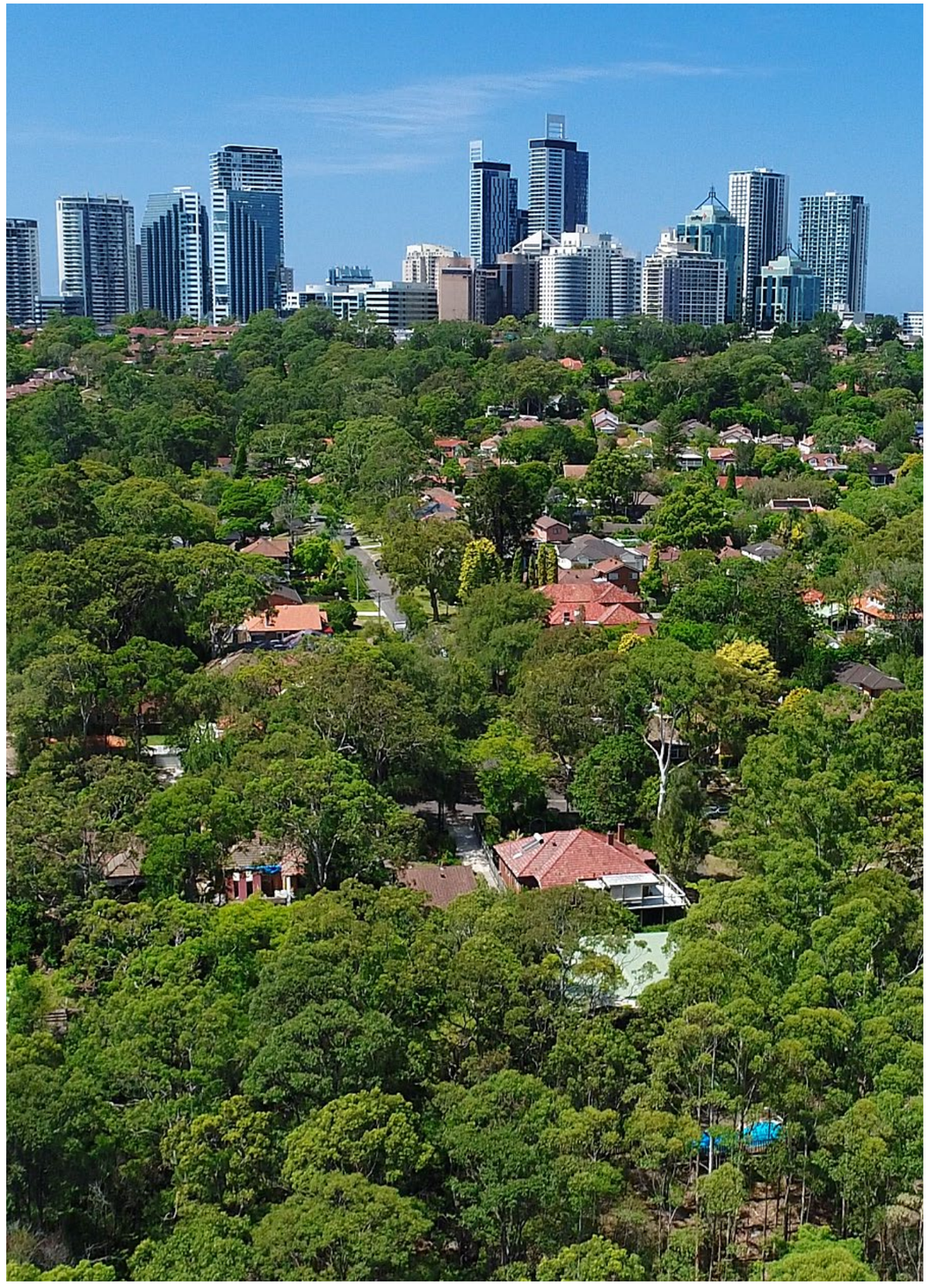
Our community is better connected and valued with our efforts in Reconciliation, 30 years of multi-cultural programs at the MOSAIC Centre, and wide-reaching community services, festivals and activities that so many people enjoy. On top of over 180 disability inclusion actions, we've also improved many paths and links for safe walking and cycling routes, and safer traffic around schools and the Hospital precinct.

Our community rates the area as highly liveable and safe, and we have continued to improve liveability by building more affordable housing units, better urban design, upgraded facilities and open space, and beautified public spaces.

Our economy steadily recovered through the Council term from the pandemic, with thousands of local businesses connected to our business support programs. Festivals and activations have brought residents and visitors back to enjoy celebrations, performance venues and retail opportunities. We've also improved streetscapes in local centres and CBD laneways to be more attractive.

We've faced-off years of challenges to our financial sustainability following the impact of COVID and related economic challenges. We worked together with the community on priorities and future options and are now on a secure footing for the ongoing delivery of quality service and infrastructure – with strong community support for a rate rise, we're also committed to generating at least $2m of efficiency savings ever year. We've driven ongoing service reviews, extensive advocacy and community engagement, and improving the customer experience.

In order to refine the CSP to create Our Future Willoughby 2036, we've tapped into what's important to our community now and for the future, and outlined proposed changes in the Appendix of this report. It is proposed that the five main Community Outcomes be retained and tuned with some minor changes to wording, facts and considerations. These will provide stronger recognition of environment and resilience concerns; community harmony, building and inclusion; changes in demographics, transport choices, housing demand and affordability; the interest in skills, employment and the local economy; and the importance of good customer experience and Council's role in shaping the future. It is also proposed to update the indicators, and better explain Council's role in contrast to that of other organisations for delivering on the outcomes.



About Willoughby

Our Vision, developed with the community in *Our Future Willoughby 2032*, is that:

Willoughby is a City of Diversity: diverse landscapes, people and businesses which underpin our liveable and prosperous City.

Our people are from across the world, with diverse languages and beliefs, and a harmony that creates rich social connections. All add vibrancy to our community, further expressed in our food and music, enriched by street activities, events and festivals. This is a growing destination for high dining, performances and symphony concerts in high quality venues; thriving commercial areas; and to explore our natural landscapes of native bushland, shores and waterways.

We recognise the past while creating new liveable places, strong communities and homes for the future. We value the local heritage from our traditional Indigenous inhabitants, and more recent times such as at Walter Burley Griffin cottages and The Castle. We live in homes that span a variety of eras and designs, from Federation-era houses to modern apartment towers. We value and enjoy our parks, open spaces and community facilities. We protect our natural environment and strive for more sustainable living, to reduce our impact and build a strong resilient community.

Willoughby City Council area covers 22km^2 in Sydney's lower north shore, encompassing 3.3 km^2 of extensive bushland along the Lane Cove River and Middle Harbour. Our population grew by 6.6% over the last 10 years from 73,072 to almost 78,000 people and is projected to reach 87,415 by 2036. We are diverse across age groups, household types, cultural origins, languages and abilities. The 2021 Census results show changes over the preceding five years - an ageing population, and less young workers and young children.

The topography shapes our land use across housing, commercial and industry. There are two significant CBDs at Chatswood and St Leonards on the North Shore train line, and our light industrial areas also provide employment and services for the northern Sydney region. Our economy's Gross Regional Product had been steadily growing from 2012 to 2019, then fluctuated since the COVID pandemic emerged in late-2019. Recent economic results of 2023 and 2024 show a modest economic recovery in the growth of local businesses and consumer spend.

CITY OF WILLOUGHBY PROFILE



Land area
22.43 km^2

Current population

77,874
2023

Projected population

87,415 (2036)

Median age

39.5 years (2022)

36.9%
of households are couples with children

Population density

3,473 **persons per square km**

Birthplace

Australia	50.5%
China	11%
UK	4%
Hong Kong	3.7%
India	3.1%
South Korea	2.1%
Japan	1.8%

Source: Australia Bureau of Statistics (ABS) compiled and prepared by profile.id

Report purpose and alignment

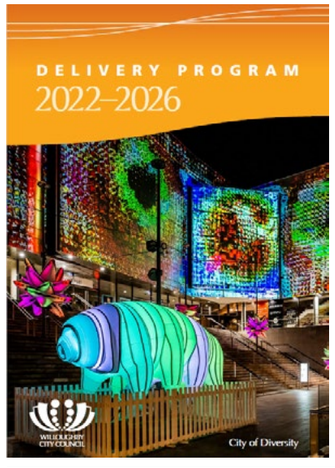
This *State of our City* Report considers progress towards our community's 10 year vision and priorities, captured in the Community Strategic Plan (CSP) *Our Future Willoughby 2032*. The CSP is a long-term plan required under Section 428(2) of the *Local Government Act 1993*, and is the overarching strategic document guiding what our community needs and aspires to.

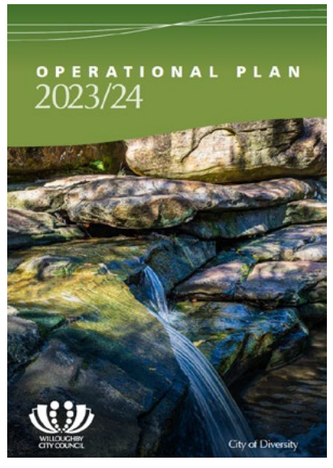
Council has a role to address many of these needs and sets out its practical plans and projects in its 4-year *Delivery Program* and annual *Operational Plan*, with achievements reported in the *Annual Report*.

This *State of our City* Report considers progress during 2021-2024 towards the higher level CSP outcomes for our community. It spans the three-year term of the Council elected on 4 December 2021, delayed by COVID restrictions. The report is organised around the CSP's five 'Community Outcomes' and related CSP priorities. Each section outlines Council's achievements and acknowledges other key bodies that had a vital role to play, as local government is only part of the picture. The desired outcomes are also advanced by the State and Federal Government, business, visitors, not-for-profits, interest and community groups, and the wider community.



State of our City Report
(this report)





Annual Report

A city that is green

A City that is connected, inclusive and resilient

A City that is liveable

A City that is prosperous and vibrant

A City that is effective and accountable

Progress indicators were chosen for each outcome, based on relevance, data reliability and frequency. The baseline year for each is chosen based on available data sets and our long term targets. Results are the latest available at the time of publishing. Each result is rated for a statistically significant change from the baseline, towards its target.

The final section of the report considers aspects to help fine tune the CSP for the coming decade:

- Community priorities and aspirations
- Emerging trends and challenges
- Shifts in Council, regional or State priorities

The CSP will be revised in line with these insights, then publicly exhibited, and adopted in early 2025.





COMMUNITY OUTCOMES AND PRIORITIES – Our Future Willoughby 2032

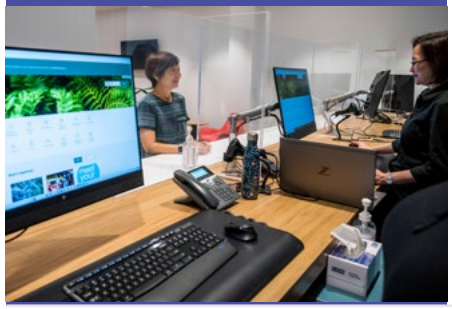
OUTCOME 1 A City that is green	OUTCOME 2 A City that is connected, inclusive and resilient	OUTCOME 3 A City that is liveable	OUTCOME 4 A City that is prosperous and vibrant	OUTCOME 5 A City that is effective and accountable
1.1 Create and enhance green spaces, urban tree canopy cover and greening	2.1 Enhance transport choices and connections throughout the City	3.1 Foster feelings of inclusion, safety, and cleanliness	4.1 Facilitate the development of all businesses	5.1 Be honest, transparent, and accountable in all that we do
1.2 Promote sustainable lifestyles and practices	2.2 Respect and celebrate our indigenous and non-indigenous history and heritage	3.2 Create recreation spaces for all	4.2 Build and support a night-time economy	5.2 Demonstrate leadership and advocacy for local priorities
1.3 Enhance, protect and respect waterways, bushland, wildlife, and ecological systems	2.3 Celebrate and encourage our diversity	3.3 Promote an active and healthy lifestyle	4.3 Create memorable food destinations	5.3 Balance the creation of new public assets with the upgrade of existing public assets
1.4 Reduce use of energy, water and natural resources and maximise reuse of waste	2.4 Manage parking and reduce traffic congestion	3.4 Create desirable places to be and enjoy	4.4 Attract visitors and promote local destination-based tourism	5.4 Anticipate and respond to changing community and customer needs
1.5 Reduce carbon and greenhouse gas emissions	2.5 Create neighbourhoods that connect people from all types of households and families	3.5 Balance population growth and development with quality of life	4.5 Diversify our economy including creative and innovative industries	5.5 Make it easy for citizens to engage and participate in decision making
	2.6 Foster a digitally enabled community	3.6 Activate local spaces in creative ways	4.6 Facilitate the viability and vibrancy of our CBD and village centres	5.6 Ensure value for money and financial sustainability
	2.7 Promote accessible services and facilities for the community	3.7 Promote housing choice and affordability		5.7 Deliver excellent customer service
	2.8 Increase community resilience to shocks and stresses			

PROGRESS TOWARDS COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

Highlights

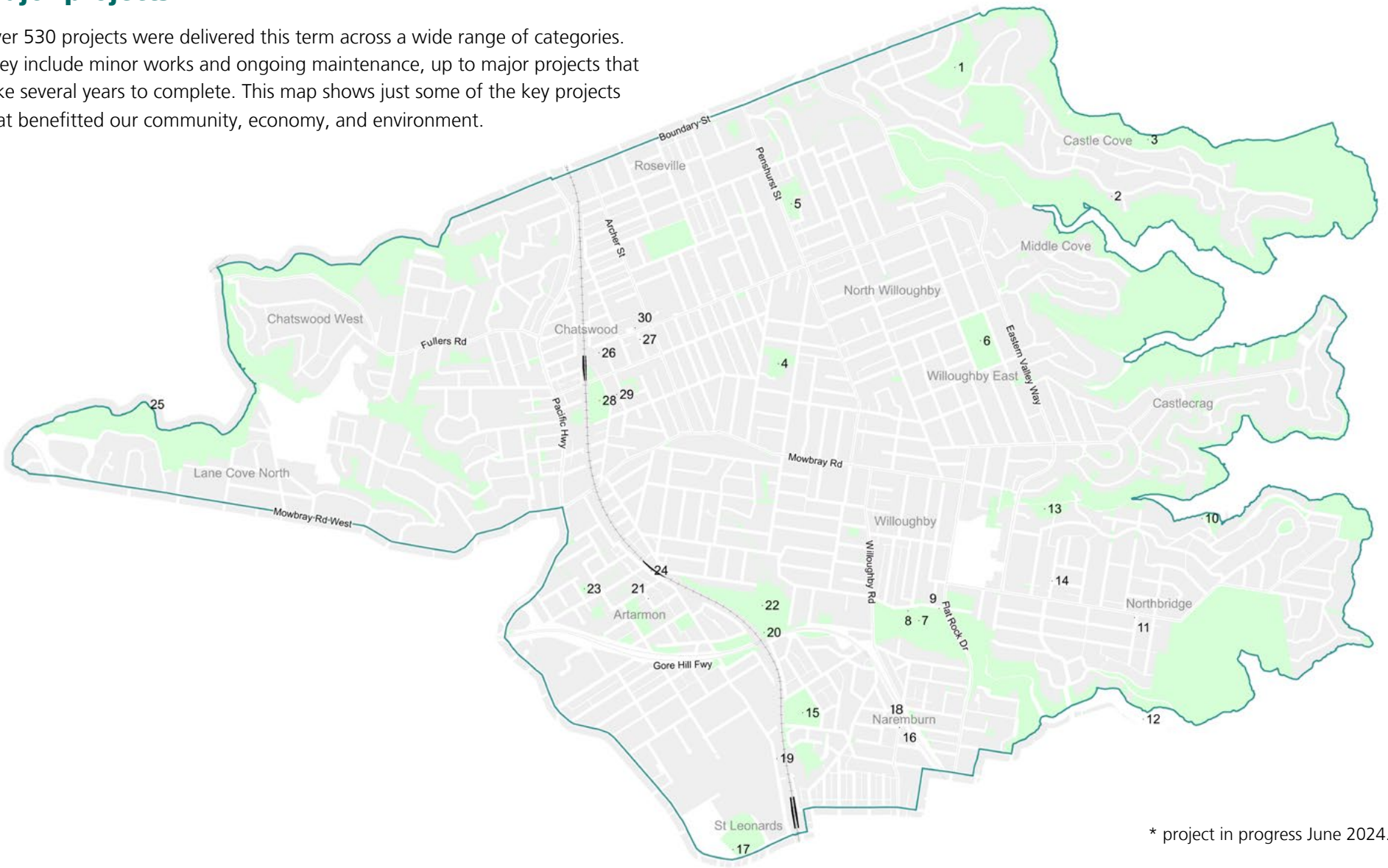
Below are listed the highlights of progress towards each of the community outcomes over the last 3 years, including indicators, strategic and operational achievements, capital works and key services. You will find the details in the following chapters.

CSP Community Outcome	Results	Major achievements 2021-2024
A city that is green 	**100% of targets met or long-term targets approached**	• 2 key strategies adopted and 18 Reserve action plans revised. • Planted 1,187 trees for our Green Grid and started a tree asset inventory. • Protected waterway and bushland health with pollution traps and restoration works. • *Live Well in Willoughby* educated 15,000+ people in sustainability. 97% committed to make changes. • Community reduced its water use, carbon emissions and waste. • Council powered by 100% renewable electricity; reduced emissions by 87% across electricity, gas, liquid fuels, and waste. • Successfully completed a food waste trial for residents in units. • **Key delivery teams**: Environment, Design and Infrastructure, Property and Facilities.
A City that is connected, inclusive and resilient 	**57% of targets met.** **The pandemic and cost of living continue to affect transport choices and community use of services/ facilities**	• 4 key strategies and plans adopted, including *Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan* 5 award-winning programs and 30 years of MOSAIC Centre celebrated. • COVID support to community and around $460,000 in community grants. • 4 cultural festivals each year. • Digital literacy and library resources grown. • 17,000m^2 of footpath and 137,000m^2 of roadworks. • More shared paths, cycleways, and better pedestrian safety at 10 school sites and Hospital precinct. • Disability inclusion improved by over 180 actions across Council programs, events, information, facilities, and services. • 12 EV parking stations installed by Council. • **Key delivery teams**: Community Life, Arts and Culture, Libraries, Planning, Design and Infrastructure, Works Services, Information Services, Environment.

CSP Community Outcome	Results	Major achievements 2021-2024
A City that is liveable 	**100% of targets met**	• 10 key strategies and plans adopted. • Willoughby rates highly as liveable and safe with good recreation opportunities. • Better design excellence requirements and improved urban design tools. • Total 52 dwellings in Council's affordable housing stock. • Upgraded The Concourse, Dougherty Community Centre, and 16 parks, playgrounds, sports fields. • Upgrading Willoughby Leisure Centre commenced. • Beautified laneways, hoardings and cleansed public areas and streets. • Kept community safe with inspections and enforcement at thousands of premises. • **Key delivery teams**: Planning, Design and Infrastructure, Property and Facilities, Public Spaces and Leisure, Community Life, Culture and Leisure, Safe City.
A City that is prosperous and vibrant 	**100% of targets met or long-term targets approached**	• 3 key strategies and plans adopted. • COVID Business Support package and ongoing business programs for promotion, awards, grants, sustainability and data. • Improved Chatswood CBD laneways; streetscapes in Artarmon, Naremburn, and Northbridge; new Northbridge public square. • Annual festivals grew in attendance, built cultural connections, boosted the local economy and talent. • Local economy recovers from COVID pandemic, with $22m rise in night-time spend 2022/23. • Extra $75.8m visitor spend in 2023/24 Lunar New Year festival. • **Key delivery teams:** Economic Development, Arts and Culture, Design and Infrastructure, Safe City.
A City that is effective and accountable 	**100% of targets met**	• 7 key strategies and plans adopted. • Financially sustainable due to Council efficiencies and the community supported special rate variation. • Savings from service reviews and fitting energy efficient LEDs to 86% of streetlights. • Improving the customer experience, community engagement and toolkits. • Customer satisfaction measures exceed benchmarks, and overall satisfaction is a high 95%. • Engaged community with around 60,000 visits/year to Have Your Say platform. • Advocated on 67 matters to Government and other organisations. • Effective partnerships with neighbouring councils and Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils. • Reviewed asset conditions and Asset Management Plans to help set works priorities. • **Key delivery teams:** Customer Experience, Engagement and Communications, Information Services, Finance, Corporate Performance, People and Culture, Design and Infrastructure, Property and Facilities, Governance Risk and Compliance.

Major projects

Over 530 projects were delivered this term across a wide range of categories. They include minor works and ongoing maintenance, up to major projects that take several years to complete. This map shows just some of the key projects that benefitted our community, economy, and environment.



* project in progress June 2024.

1 Castle Cove Oval - drainage, irrigation and lighting improvements
2 Stormwater works at 8 sites, Castle Cove - pipe relining and repairs*
3 Middle Harbour - natural area management and walking tracks
4 Bales Park, North Willoughby - playground renewal and synthetic cricket wickets
5 Muston Park, Chatswood - Wisteria walk, seating, placemaking *
6 Willoughby Oval - synthetic cricket wickets
7 Bicentennial Reserve, Willoughby - netball courts resheeting*
8 Haven Amphitheatre, Willoughby - landscape improvements
9 Willoughby Leisure Centre - major upgrade to pools, facilities, energy and water systems*
10 Northbridge Baths - Renewal and repairs
11 Sailors Bay Road, Northbridge - Affordable housing development
12 Flat Rock Gully, Northbridge - stormwater restoration and upgrade*
13 Warners Park, Northbridge - Community Garden and Bowling Club works
14 Bellambi Street, Northbridge - new public square
15 Naremburn Park - Pavilion and area upgrades*
16 Naremburn local canter streetscape - landscaping, paths, furniture*
17 Gore Hill Oval - sport facility design
18 Stormwater works at 2 sites, Naremburn - improved pits and drainage*
19 Royal North Shore Hospital Precinct - traffic management works*
20 Artarmon Reserve - Pavilion and grounds upgrades*
21 Abbott Road, Artarmon - Affordable Housing design
22 Artarmon Parklands - Pavilion and park upgrades*
23 Wickham Park, Artarmon - playground renewal
24 Hampden Road, Artarmon - streetscape and traffic improvements*
25 Lane Cove River Catchment - natural area management and walking tracks
26 CBD laneways activation - Post Office Lane, Chatswood
27 CBD laneways activations - Spring Place, Mills Lane and Charlotte Lane, Chatswood
28 Chatswood Park upgrades - lighting, paths, gardens, signs
29 Dougherty Community Centre, Chatswood - upgrade
30 The Concourse, Chatswood - facade, shades, solar panels, carpark upgrade, roof repairs

A city that is green



Community aspiration: Our city will continue to innovate to find ways to meet the current and future needs of our community and environment without compromising future generations. We will continue to protect and celebrate our flourishing bushland, wildlife and waterways.

Key Council strategies/ plans:

- Our Green City Plan 2028
- Northern Sydney regional Waste Strategy 2022
- Urban bushland plan of management 2023
- Reserve action plans

Other bodies responsible/ contributing:

- NSW agencies for planning, environment
- Climate Council of Australia and C40 network
- Resilient Sydney
- Sydney Water
- Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils
- Providers of energy, water and waste management
- local environmental groups and volunteers

Our progress

CSP Priority 1.1: Create and enhance green spaces, urban tree canopy cover and greening

Our urban tree canopy extension program saw 1,187 trees planted in the last three years to enhance amenity, improve urban biodiversity and combat the urban heat island effect. Our current tree canopy covers 36% of our LGA and we are working towards a 40% target by 2036.

Tree plantings by Council	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Number of trees planted	573*	367**	247

* Includes 180 trees funded as offsets by Sydney Metro collaboration project

** Includes 186 trees funded as offsets by Sydney Metro collaboration project

A Tree Asset Inventory is currently mapping vegetation using AI, to aid decision making and prioritise actions to increase tree canopy. We are also now finalising a study with the University of Western Sydney to reduce urban heat. Streetscapes have been enhanced with additional plantings to provide shade and reduce urban heat at local centres in Artarmon and Naremburn, with more planned for Edward and Penshurst Streets in Willoughby. We have added over 30,000 individual street trees to Council's asset management database in recognition of the value of tree canopy, as vital infrastructure to maintain quality of life and reduce climate impacts such as extreme heat.

CSP Priority 1.2: Promote sustainable lifestyles and practices and CSP Priority 1.4: Reduce use of energy, water, natural resources and maximise waste reuse

Council continues to proactively educate and support the community on lifestyle practices that are more sustainable and environmentally friendly through practical workshops and comprehensive digital and printed communication assets.

Our key program is *Live Well in Willoughby*, which covers the 5 aspects of energy efficiency, home and lifestyle, active travel, food and garden, and nature. In 2022/23 over 8,000 residents attended 137 sessions, and in 2023/24 over 7,400 participated in 145 activities. In 2024 we launched a popular webinar series on sustainable home building and design.

Live Well in Willoughby is highly successful at driving improvements, with 97% of participants stating they would change their behaviours as a result. Over the last 4-5 years the community has continued to reduce their water use, waste to landfill, and carbon emissions as shown in the Results table at the end of this section.

Combined regional efforts are improving waste outcomes, through Council's membership in the Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (NSROC) and Northern Sydney Community Recycling Centre. We have participated in several joint projects to increase our capacity to capture recyclable material. Community use of the Community Recycling Centre in Waltham Street Artarmon has steadily increased, showing a growing interest to reduce and recycle their waste.

Other progress includes:

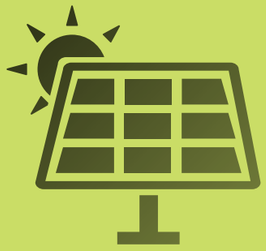
- **Food waste:** Planning, research and trials on food waste has advanced our ability to capture business and residential food waste for composting. This will help us meet the NSW Government mandate for a food organics service by 1 July 2030.
- **Bulky waste:** Our community education has led to a 33% reduction in the clean-up bulky waste being sent to landfill (reduced from our baseline figure in 2017/18).
- **Construction waste:** though this makes up over 30% of all waste going into landfill, most of it (75%) is now clean, excavated material including concrete, bricks and timber which is being recycled.
- **Plastics ban**: Council has continued its ban since 2018 on single-use plastics from all Council operations and community events.

SUSTAINABILITY GAINS

Community small-scale solar panel system installations

1,501

installations from 2021-2023



Council's energy use

100%

renewable energy used by Council since 2021

Lighting upgrades

88%

of streetlights upgraded to efficient LEDs during the term



Urban environment

7 community gardens established



Waste

Weekly collections of general waste, recycling and green waste for over

32,400

households

An average of

50%

of household waste diverted from landfill



CSP Priority 1.3: Enhance, protect and respect waterways, bushland, wildlife, and ecological systems

Protecting biodiversity:

We are committed to enhancing, protecting, and respecting our bushland and wildlife. After community consultation, Council adopted in 2023 the *Urban Bushland Plan of Management*. We also have 30 *Reserve Action Plans* for managing over 330 hectares of bushland, 18 of which were adopted or revised during this term. These drive ongoing programs in bushland regeneration, feral animal control, and community education.

We also investigated large-scale tree vandalism with 265 trees and shrubs killed on public land along Willowie Road Castle Cove in August 2023. A reward of up to $10,000 is offered for any information leading to a successful prosecution for this damage, and we have sought harsher penalties from the NSW Government for deliberate damage to trees. We are also working with the Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils to better protect our urban tree canopy using planning tools, compliance and enforcement.

Our community's interest in nature and wildlife is met with annual education programs such as the *Tree Festival* with a series of activities to celebrate, value and protect our biodiversity. Native tube stock trees and shrubs are planted by local residents each year. Almost 2,000 visitors attended the *Fauna Fair* in 2022 alone, engaging our residents with native wildlife.

Valuing our catchments and water:

Council actively manages our catchments to protect our waterways. Waterway health is monitored at 10 sites and despite the increasing pressure of urbanisation we have managed to avoid an overall decline in water quality since 2017. Ongoing activities to achieve this outcome include managing invasive pest species, regeneration, stabilising creek banks and community education.

We also install water sensitive urban design solutions where possible, to reduce damaging peak flows causing erosion in our waterways as well as to filter out pollutants from stormwater. This has included biofiltration gardens at the Willis Recreation and Sports Centre; Willoughby Leisure Centre; Lanceley Place, Artarmon; Artarmon village centre; and Endeavour Street, Chatswood.

Since 2021 Council has been meeting its target of using less than 120,000 kilolitres/year. We have identified leaks and anomalies; installed water-efficient solutions; and enhanced our drought resilience. Rainwater harvesting systems are now reducing our use of potable water for irrigation at Bales Park, Warners Park, Beauchamp Park, and Artarmon Community Gardens.

A 5-year upgrade program for Willoughby Leisure Centre has included switching to a UV water filtration system, which saves both water and energy (around 90 tonnes/year of carbon emissions). We de-gasified the Centre to allow for heat-pump hot water systems. Plans are also underway to install five rainwater tanks to harvest water for use in the centre's toilets. This will annually save one million litres of potable water and over $14,000.

Potable water consumption	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Council water use (kilolitres)	113,907	113,273	116,839
Community water use (kilolitres/person)	110	108	100

(2023/24 data not available at the time of publishing)

LAND MANAGEMENT

Council manages over

330ha

of bushland and

255ha

of urban tree canopy

As well as

20km

of harbour foreshore



Council planted

1,187*

trees from

2021 to

2024



*Includes 366 trees funded as offsets by Sydney Metro collaboration project.
Source: Environment Unit

CSP Priority 1.5: Reduce carbon and greenhouse gas emissions

Council is part of the *Cities Race to Zero*, a joint program with local councils to reduce community and Council emissions. Given the increasing electrification of the grid and increased EV ownership, community emissions have decreased some 50% from the baseline year of 2017/18.

Council reduced its carbon emissions, with 100% renewable electricity for all Council-owned sites and removing gas use at the Willoughby Leisure Centre has resulted in a 90% drop in Council gas use. Great gains were made in 2022/23 when Council-wide emissions from our electricity, gas and waste generation fell; thus total emissions fell to 997 tonnes, a decrease of 79% on the previous year's 4,725 tonnes. Overall, Council emissions have dropped 87% against the 2008/09 baseline of 7,500 tonnes, a great achievement.

Other ongoing energy efficient measures over the last three years include:

- 88% of streetlights (3,044) were upgraded to LED with Ausgrid in residential areas and main streets.
- Solar Bulk Buy Program enabled 110 households to install solar panels, with an average capacity of 9 kW peak, to reduce energy costs and emissions.
- Electrification of Council's fleet with 5 EVs and 24 hybrid vehicles.
- Installed 12 public electric vehicle charging bays for community use, powered by 100% renewable energy.

Results

Results are good for waterway health, water use, and emissions by Council. The canopy cover result does not reflect over 600 additional trees planted since 2022 – it will improve further as the almost 1,700 trees planted mature. Waste diversion from landfill is making steady gains, with further improvement expected in coming years from ongoing community education and the introduction of a new food organics service.

Indicator (data source details)	Baseline (and year)	Target	Latest result (and year)	Rating
% Canopy cover (Source 2016: Resilient Sydney LGA platform. 2022: Department of Planning)	37% (2016)	Increase to 40% by 2036[L]	35% ^ (2022)	→
Waterway health in 10 creek/stream sites (% of sites rated Grade C or better) (Source: Sydney Water Health Report card for Willoughby LGA)	90% (2017/18)	No net decline by 2028[G]	90% (2022/23)	✓
Potable water consumption (kL total and per capita) (Source: Resilient Sydney LGA platform/ Sydney Water, Willoughby LGA result)	9,178,230 kL = 116 kL/capita (2017/18)	Decrease to maximum 110kL/ capita[G]	7,408,094 kL = 95 kL/ capita (2022/23)	✓
Emissions by Willoughby Council (t CO2-e of scope 1&2) (Source: Resilient Sydney LGA platform)	7,500 (2008/09)	Decrease by 50% by 2028[G]	975 (2023/24)	✓
Total emissions (t CO2-e) (Source: Resilient Sydney LGA platform, Willoughby LGA result)	1,072,255 (2017/18)	Net-zero by 2050[N]	529,200 (2022/23)	→
% Residential waste diverted from landfill (Source: Council data)	45% (2019/20)	80% by 2030[W]	51% (2023/24)	→

Key:
^ not a statistically significant difference to the baseline
L Target from Willoughby's Local Strategic Planning Statement to 2036
G Target from Willoughby's Our Green City Plan 2028
N Target from NSW Government's Net Zero Plan
W Target from NSW Government's Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041

✓ Target met → Progressing toward long term target

A City that is connected, inclusive and resilient



Outcome: We are a City connected through people, transport, technology, and history. We celebrate diversity, provide opportunities to care and connect, and promote transport connections and choices. We aspire to be a smart city supported by digital literacy and technology.

Key Council strategies/ plans:

- Integrated Transport Strategy 2036
- Resilient Willoughby Strategy and Action Plan 2021
- Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan 2024
- Willoughby Youth Action Plan 2024-2027
- Willoughby Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2022-2026
- Volunteer Strategy 2024-2028
- Library Strategy 2024-2028

Other bodies responsible/ contributing:

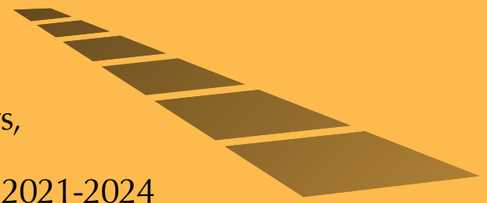
- NSW agencies for health, education, library, community services, transport, infrastructure
- Private bus operators
- Bike North and Cycling NSW
- Pedestrian Council of Australia
- NBN Co. and communications providers
- Aboriginal Heritage Office
- Resilient Cities Network
- Emergency service organisations
- Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils
- Volunteers and community groups
- Not-for-profit organisations

PATHWAYS

Willoughby manages over

508,000m² of pathways,

with over **17,000m²** repaired from 2021-2024



Our Progress

In the lead up to the Council term, ongoing COVID-19 restrictions interrupted community gatherings, connections, volunteering, and the use of public transport. Like most of Greater Sydney, many people were working from home, unemployment rose and there was an exodus to the regions – around 3,300 people left the City of Willoughby. Since then, the last 3 years have been characterised by rebuilding community connections, services and events, with many residents still working from home for part of the week.

CSP Priority 2.1: Enhance transport choices and connections throughout the City

17,000m² of footpath works were undertaken, though works were quite limited in 2021/22 by COVID restrictions, labour shortages and supply chain issues.

Footpath works	2021/ 22	2022/ 23	2023/ 24	Total
Area of work (m²)	3,000	9,500	4,500	17,000

Our cycling network was extended by several shared paths:

- Completed the 3.5km shared pathway on Pacific Highway connecting Chatswood (via Frank Channon Walk) to St Leonards (Herbert Street).
- Completed a pedestrian and bicycle path in Artarmon linking Broadcast Way with Herbert Street, in partnership with the NSW Government ($1 million grant in 23/24). This involved works to paths, intersections, traffic control signals and landscaping.
- Completed two concept designs for shared paths on the eastern side of the Pacific Highway between Mowbray Road Willoughby and Boundary Street Roseville and Smith St.in Chatswood.
- Awarded a $6 million grant from the NSW Government's *Get NSW Active Program* towards the construction of stage 1 of the Chatswood to St Leonards Cycleway via the Artarmon Village. The funding will become available on 2024/25, and is a significant win for Willoughby, as the single biggest grant for any project in this NSW program. Council is currently in detailed design for the project after being successful for a $1million dollar grant as part of the NSW program.

We have also been improving safety around many schools, by installing 12 raised Wombat pedestrian crossings, with funding of $1.95 million from the State and Federal governments. This award-winning program, the *School Children Safety Wombat Crossing Program*, has improved pedestrian safety adjacent to schools or on routes used by school children to walk to school. The elevated speed humps and 25km/h speed limit signs ensure vehicles slow down and stop for all pedestrians including school children.

CSP Priority 2.2: Respect and celebrate our indigenous and non-indigenous history and heritage

and

CSP Priority 2.3: Celebrate and encourage our diversity

In 2021 Council committed to a path of reconciliation in collaboration with Reconciliation Australia and the local community including the Aboriginal Heritage Office and Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council. We strengthened our *Acknowledgement of Country*, updated protocols and adopted our *Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)*. The RAP has since also been endorsed by Reconciliation Australia.



Each year Willoughby holds events, activities and exhibitions which reflect the diversity of our community and provide opportunities for residents and visitors to build social connections. *Emerge, Lunar New Year, Gaimariagal* and *Culture Bites festivals* all bring the community together to celebrate our diverse and rich culture through art and craft, food, dance, and performance. See *A city that is Prosperous and Vibrant* section for more details.

In an effort to draw residents and visitors after lockdowns, Council created *Culture Bites* in 2021. Popular from the outset it showcases theatre, comedy, music, dance, children's shows, and visual arts events at The Concourse. Now a permanent feature on our event calendar, it grows bigger and more popular every year.

Our award-winning MOSAIC Centre has been providing services to Willoughby's culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community for more than 30 years. In 2022 it was relocated to the newly refurbished Dougherty Community Centre where it continues to provide more than 50 multicultural counselling and referral services, language lessons, technology for seniors and leisure activities run by volunteers. It also provides a place for community groups to meet.

We've been proactively managing our built heritage, and undertaken a review of our heritage items, conservation areas, and potential areas. This is awaiting NSW Government approval to progress to public exhibition. We also:

- Updated our *Development Control Plan* to strengthen heritage controls
- Provide a free heritage advisory service for property owners
- Provide an extensive local heritage collection in Chatswood Library about the history, people and places that make up Willoughby.

CSP Priority 2.4: Manage parking and reduce traffic congestion

In the last 3 years, we have repaired or upgraded 137,000m² of our 211 km of sealed roads:

Local roadworks	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Total
Roadworks (m2)	50,000	50,000	37,000	137,000

Following community consultation, 40km/h speed zones were implemented within, and surrounding, the Royal North Shore Hospital grounds. This speed reduction recognises a high pedestrian activity area near the Transport Interchange, Gore Hill Oval, and St Leonards TAFE.

We manage parking and enforcement across 4 parking stations (858 spaces), on-street paid parking (850 spaces) and resident parking schemes. During the term, two parking stations were upgraded with number plate recognition capability and better payment facilities. We also revised the required parking provision for new development in Chatswood and St Leonards to leverage the new Metro services and minimise the traffic impacts of growth in these locations.

We continue to invest in EV-charging stations in parking locations, with 12 installed by Council to date. We are working with the private sector to investigate, fund, and install more of the smarter parking options in the CBD.

In 2023, we ran a pilot project with Willoughby Public School to increase students' active travel rates. Despite 87% of families living in a 1.5km radius of the school, only 45% of students were walking or riding to school. Together, we set a target to increase active travel rates by 15% which would take up to 150 cars off roads around the school at peak times. We worked together to map safe routes, educate students on safe crossing skills, and monitor travel patterns. By late 2023, 55% of students were walking or riding to school, and their target for late 2024 is to reach 60%.

Road infrastructure

211km
of sealed roads with around **45,000m²** maintained annually



379km
of kerbs and gutters

70
bridges



Safety and law enforcement

Daily **Safe City Officer** patrols covering hotspots including schools, parking across

1,708
spaces



Parking infrastructure

4 parking stations with

868
spaces, plus

850
on-street parking spaces



Source: Willoughby City Council (Assets)

The students were highly involved and keen to continue building an active travel culture at their school. Other project partners were the Bicycle Network, Observatory Hill Environmental Education Centre and School Infrastructure NSW. The state government is planning to adopt the curriculum-based methodology developed by Council at Willoughby PS and scale it up for implementation at other primary schools across Sydney and beyond.

CSP Priority 2.5: Create neighbourhoods that connect people from all types of households and families

Designed for CALD groups our *Inspire to Lead* program delivered a series of six workshops and cultural exchange tours to develop leadership skills in individuals. It fosters relationships between the leaders and Council, and across communities. The annual Seniors Festival program provides over 35 free and discounted activities for our older residents to participate, join community groups and connect with each other.

Our *Hi Neighbours program*, established in 2022, aims to reduce social isolation in Willoughby's apartment residents. This award-winning program has connected more than 500 residents across Chatswood apartment sites through community events such as BBQs, kids' activities, cultural celebrations, movie nights and walking groups. In 2023 the program won a Highly Commended Award for Community Development.



Young people comprise 15% of our community, so we developed a five-year *Youth Action Plan* to ensure their needs are understood and met. Activities include student exchanges in partnership with Gwydir Shire Council; Willoughby Youth Action Group; Senior student study support and meetup. We also partner with neighbouring councils for National Youth Week events. *Mates, Dates and Everything in-between* provides training in podcasting, with topics on youth-related issues. We also help provide a safe and supportive community for our young LGBTIQ, and in conjunction with QSpace, held regular catchups and events at Chatswood Library.

CSP Priority 2.6: Foster a digitally enabled community

Digital connections and infrastructure support a smart city that provides real-time information to people seeking to navigate our City and access its services. During 2022/23 we upgraded the parking system at The Concourse, with a License Plate Recognition system for easier entry and payment; upgraded the parking guidance system; and installed additional digital signage.

Chatswood Library has a large stick of digital resources from e-books to films and music. We have expanded our digital literacy topics to incorporate newer technologies including generative AI.

Digital literacy workshops and activities included an award-winning inter-generational digital literacy program in partnership with the eSafety Commission, older residents and students from St Pius X, Chatswood. In 2022/23 this won an award for Innovation in Outreach Services from the NSW Public Libraries' Association.

As part of the Council's CONNECT project, we delivered system and process efficiencies to improve community access to Council services and information, including a more effective system for online customer requests (see CSP Priority 5.7 for more on CONNECT). We've been improving our systems in the background with better cyber-security to protect our residents' information, with significant security-related upgrades and solutions driven by our *Cyber Security Strategy*. A draft *Digital Strategy* is being developed, which will provide a roadmap for leveraging technology, to further improve our services and enhance the quality of life of our residents.

CSP Priority 2.7: Promote accessible services and facilities for the community

The *Willoughby Disability Inclusion Action Plan* (DIAP) is helping to overcome the physical and systemic barriers faced by people with disability. A variety of actions improve peoples' independence, dignity, and equitable opportunities for social and economic inclusion.

Our proactive programs include active events for youth, seniors, and apartment dwellers; art exhibitions; webinars and training of Home Support volunteers. Our support services include Meals on Wheels, transport, and social groups; and library services have inclusive programs, resources, and decodable readers. Our dedicated webpage details disability services including NDIS, Carers Gateway, employment services, support and social services and accessible open spaces.

Council has an Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee, and some 20% of our Youth Action Group identify as having a disability – these are important voices that shape Council programs. We advocate for our disabled community through the Lower North Shore Disability Interagency Forums, Northern Sydney Dementia Alliance, and with local businesses in our Better Business Partnership. Our staff are trained in disability inclusion and mental health first aid. We have also improved our practices to be more inclusive and provide for disability across tenders, website and communications, elections, job recruitment, and work, health, and safety.



Some of the physical improvements across the area include:

- Making all events accessible: ramps to grassed areas, clear signage, seated and wheelchair accessible spaces, more disabled toilets, lifts from carpark to green spaces.
- A sensory garden in the Dougherty Centre, Chatswood.
- Market Garden Community Garden built two accessible raised garden beds.
- MOSAIC Multicultural Centre was relocated to the more accessible Dougherty Community Centre; and a stair lift added to access the Annex room.
- Device charging points in the Dougherty Centre, Chatswood library and Customer Service.

Accessibility improvements have been made to many footpaths, kerb ramps and bus stops, as well as providing more public benches in parks, and rest stops across our area. We have upgraded accessibility at 133 more bus stops in the last three years, in a partnership program with Transport for NSW. The changes meet Australian Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport, and requirements of the *Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)*. A *Mobility Parking Study and Design* was undertaken in 2023 and is helping us to improve parking accessibility.

Our *Missing Links program* also identified incomplete walking routes that need improving to smoother and safer footpaths to get around. We have spent $164,000 on these works to benefit pedestrians and people with mobility aids. This includes construction of new footpaths, widening of existing paths at key locations and improving connections throughout the local government area.

CSP Priority 2.8: Increase community resilience to shocks and stresses

The Council term started with the community recovering from a pandemic, severe weather events and the Black Summer bushfires. In 2021/22 we continued during COVID restrictions with community support services to the vulnerable in our community, such as Meals on Wheels, linen services, transporting

seniors to medical appointments, and wellness phone calls.

Our annual *Grants for the Community Program* provided $459,189 to the community over the last 3 years. This supported priority projects with benefits to:

- Community recovery from the COVID19 pandemic.
- Increased resilience to deal with future shocks and stresses.
- Enhanced community connectedness.
- Access to high quality entertainment and events.

During COVID-19 restrictions, we increased our digital resources, online programs and click and collect services to meet an increased demand for library resources and programs. Since then, our community's library usage and visitation has increased every year.

Willoughby's inter-generational *Digital Literacy Program* brings together students from St Pius X College with residents aged 55+ to grow their digital skills so they can always be connected online – this program won an Innovation Award.

In 2021 we adopted our *Resilient Willoughby Strategy and Action Plan* to help our community to overcome shocks, such as extreme weather events, and stresses including financial, social, housing and transport. Many are joint actions with partner agencies, Resilient Sydney, neighbouring councils, schools, emergency responders and community support groups.

Priority actions included education of vulnerable members of the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) community to be better prepared for emergencies – a joint program with Resilient Sydney, Red Cross, and neighbouring councils. We refined planning controls to provide for more affordable housing for key workers; and developed a *Hi Neighbours Tool Kit* for apartment dwellers to foster social inclusion and connections. We also undertook the *Resilient Willoughby Schools Active Travel Pilot Program* at Willoughby Public School, which is extending to other areas.

An Urban Heat Benchmark Study prepared for Council by the University of Western Sydney is informing our strategic planning, development control and urban greening programs. This will help to conserve and extend our urban canopy in vulnerable areas and reduce the impact on people of extreme heat events. Our street greening program has already created greener, cooler routes to local centres such as Artarmon and Naremburn. In 2023 we secured $800,000 in state government grants for the $1.3 million Edward and Penshurst Street South streetscape improvement project in South Willoughby – to transform this hot, wide car-dominated corridor into a green, cool, pedestrian and cycle-friendly avenue.

Awards

Hi Neighbours Program – 2023 NSW Local Government Excellence Awards. Program promoting neighbour connections and reducing social isolation among high rise apartment residents

Digital Literacy Program – won 2023 Innovation in Outreach Services Award from NSW Public Libraries' Association. For an inter-generational digital literacy program, run in partnership with the eSafety Commissions and local school St Pius

MOSAIC Multicultural Centre – 2023 Premier's Multicultural Community Medal for Local Government Business. MOSAIC offers a diverse range of services to meet the needs of community groups and culturally oriented social groups.

School Children Safety Wombat Crossing Program – 2023 Highly Commended for Excellence in Road Safety Engineering from the Institute of Public Works Engineers Australasian Conference.

Results

Results indicate there was a significant effect of the global pandemic, though many are from over a year ago and may have recovered further since. By 2022/23 car use is higher (by 12,000 trips/year), and active travel has dropped (by 90,000 trips/year) likely due to increased work and study from home, and a preference for car travel once social distancing became the norm.

More people were having problems accessing services and facilities, which may reflect cost of living pressures and avoidance of facility fees, and the restricted availability of some facilities during ongoing works or COVID impacts e.g. Willoughby Leisure Centre, Artarmon Parklands, The Concourse etc. Census figures show that volunteer numbers reduced by 5% during COVID in 2021, similar to other Sydney councils, but Willoughby Council's 2024 data shows that volunteer hours supporting Council programs has now recovered and far exceeds previous levels and the target.

Indicator (data source details)	Baseline (and year)	Target	Latest result (and year)	Rating
Number of resident's journeys that do not use a vehicle (public transport, walk, cycle etc). (Source: Household Travel survey)	241,000 = 39% (2018/19)	Increase[I]	151,000 = 30% (2022/23)	X
Number of resident's journeys by vehicle as driver or passenger (Source: Household Travel survey)	227,000 = 61% (2018/19)	Decrease	239,000 = 70% (2022/23)	X
Number of disability inclusion initiatives implemented (cumulative) (Source: Council's annual DIAP reports)	20 (2018/19)	Increase[D]	186 (2023/24)	✓
% residents who provided help to neighbours or friends during the year (Source: Willoughby Wellbeing survey)	85% (2019)	Maintain/ increase	87% (2023)	✓
Number of volunteer hours provided on Council programs (Source: Council data)	8,205 (2016)	18,000[V]	28,984 (2023/24)	✓
% of residents who feel part of their local neighbourhood community (Source: Willoughby Wellbeing survey)	69% (2019)	Maintain/ increase	67%^ (2023)	✓
% of residents that have problems accessing at least 1 Council service/ facility (Source: Willoughby Wellbeing survey)	24% (2019)	Decrease	35% (2023)	X

Key:
^ not a statistically significant difference to the baseline
I Target from Integrated Transport Strategy
D Target from Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2022-26
V Target from Volunteer Strategy 2024-2028
✓ Target met X Target not met

A City that is liveable



Community aspiration: We are a City that is safe, engaging, vibrant and supported by great urban design. There are lively village centres and a strong CBD that we celebrate and promote. The community can access services, facilities, and spaces for healthy and active lifestyles..

Key Council strategies/ plans:

- Housing Strategy 2036
- Affordable Housing Strategy 2020-2026
- Local Strategic Planning Statement to 2036
- Local Environmental Plan and related tools
- Sports Facilities Plan of Management 2020
- Synthetic Sportsground Management Plan 2023
- Public Spaces and Recreation Strategy 2024
- Generic Parks Plan of Management 2024

Other bodies responsible/ contributing:

- NSW agencies for planning, environment, infrastructure, sport
- Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils
- Community housing providers
- Local sports and recreation clubs and volunteers

Our Progress

In recent years, our community has faced significant challenges as COVID lockdowns and restrictions isolated people for extended periods, cancelled events, and curtailed some Council services. We kept outdoor services running which are vital to our city – managing waste, street cleansing, parks, ovals, and bush reserves, as well as many walking trails whose popularity has soared since. Once restrictions eased, we reopened services and events in a COVID-safe way to again encourage public gatherings.

Results in the table at the end of this section show that the area continues to be rated highly as a desirable and safe place to live, with a low and falling crime rate, and increasing availability of social and affordable housing. There is also a good level of satisfaction with the local opportunities to participate in sport and recreation.

CSP Priority 3.1: Foster feelings of inclusion, safety, and cleanliness

Several Chatswood Laneways were beautified including Post Office Lane, Charlotte Lane, and Spring Place. Council also trialled 'creative hoardings' by installing art on building site hoardings at Willoughby Leisure Centre and Artarmon Pavilion. This was well received as a creative way to beautify areas being disrupted by building activity.

Our compliance programs helped keep our community safe by inspecting, educating, and enforcing standards each year for:

- 600+ food businesses and 170 cooling towers.
- 80+ skin penetration, hair, and beauty premises.
- Litter, illegal dumping and unattended vehicles.
- Building sites environmental controls.
- Companion animals.
- Swimming pools.
- Fire safety.

Council also has an extensive ongoing program of street sweeping and cleansing of paths, public areas, and shopping centres. In 2023/24 plans were developed and approved to increase funding and service levels to clean and maintain these outdoor areas, as well as parks, gardens, and other open spaces. Our revised *Compliance and Enforcement Policy* will also strengthen our regulation and enforcement of public health and safety, pollution, weed control and tree preservation.

CSP Priority 3.2: Create recreation spaces for all and CSP Priority 3.3: Promote an active and healthy lifestyle

We provide 455 hectares of open space for our community, with diverse opportunities for active and passive recreation.

Park and playground projects completed over the past term include:

- Playground renewals at Bales and Wickham Parks.
- New shade sail at Gore Hill Park playground.
- New picnic and barbecue areas at Muston Park, Thomson Park, Northbridge Baths.
- New pathway lights at Cleland Park, and solar lights at Naremburn Park's circuit path
- Upgrade of Beauchamp Park garden beds.
- Completion of the major Chatswood Park Masterplan project.
- Construction of the community garden and picnic area at Warners Park and steps.
- Improved Northbridge Baths with an additional entry from the car park, upgraded picnic area, new walkway tiles and an additional barbecue.

Improvements to other sports facilities included:

- New drainage systems and turf at Castle Cove, OH Reid and Alan Hyslop Ovals, to support high demand for sports such as rugby, soccer, and cricket.
- Female-friendly improvements to the sports amenities buildings at Naremburn Reserve and Chatswood Oval in 2023.
- Synthetic oval re-surfacing of Thomson Park in 2023/24.
- Re-sheeting of netball courts and a new irrigation tank at Bicentennial Reserve.
- New court and carpark lights and re-sheeting at Bonds Corner courts.
- Cricket net upgrades at Artarmon Reserve and Naremburn Park.

We commenced a major upgrade of the 30-year-old Willoughby Leisure Centre over several years. This will provide pools for swimming, rehabilitation, and therapy; a new spa and sauna; and family change room. With a sustainability focus, the project will reduce water and energy use, emissions, and operating costs. Solutions include installation of two roof top solar photo-voltaic systems, improved water filtration and insulation. The project is expected to be completed in 2025.

In 2024 Council adopted its *Public Spaces and Recreation Strategy* to address evolving recreation needs. Its place-making approach involves the community more in designing, planning, and managing recreation and leisure spaces in the future. Other plans completed include various *Landscape Plans*, and the *Synthetic Sportsground Management Plan 2023*.

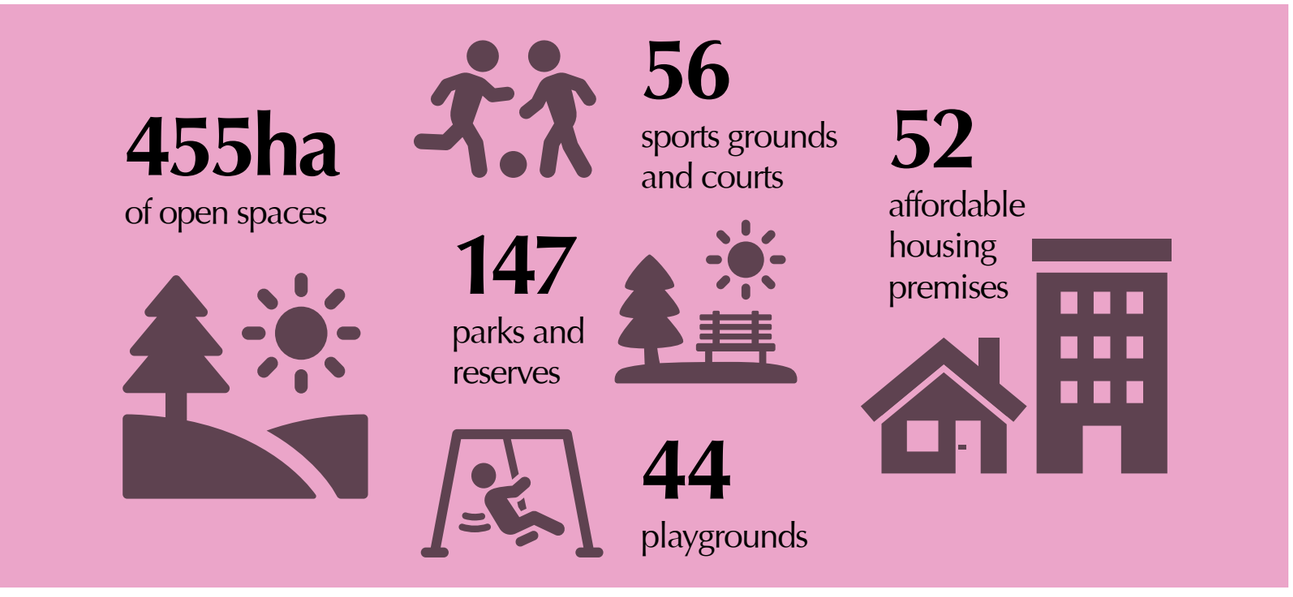
CSP Priority 3.4: Create desirable places to be and enjoy

The Concourse is the cultural home of the North Shore, housing a performing arts centre, conferencing facilities and Chatswood Library. The building's façade was upgraded to reduce the fire risk, and has transformed it into a stunning building, which comes alive with light shows and dynamic art. A smaller performance space, The Lounge, was created inside the complex. We also upgraded performance areas at The Haven Amphitheatre in Castlecrag.

Council developed the *Northbridge Bowling Club Masterplan* in 2021, and since then has been working with the community to transform it into the Warners Park Community Centre. The almost 5-hectare site has been transformed into a multiuse facility including a community centre, community garden, playground, walking tracks and BBQ. The Warners Park Community Garden now meets fortnightly to bring keen gardeners together.

The Dougherty Community Centre in Chatswood hosts a range of regular lifestyle, cultural and hobby classes, as well as being available for hire for meetings or seminars. The centre was upgraded in 2022 to improve accessibility and provide a new home for the MOSAIC Multicultural Centre. The upgrade was funded by an Australian Government grant.

Major improvements in Artarmon Parklands were designed, approved and commenced. This will create a new precinct including a playground, gardens and picnic areas, new ramps and disabled access path, as well as repurposing the former Bowling Clubhouse into a new Pavilion. The Pavilion will be fully accessible, with a community room, kitchen, all-weather community pavilion, new bathrooms, and include water and energy efficient technologies.



CSP Priority 3.5: Balance population growth and development with quality of life
and CSP Priority 3.7: Promote housing choice and affordability

Since September 2020, Council has been implementing its *Affordable Housing Strategy* for key workers on low to moderate incomes, such as retail workers, nurses, school teachers, and emergency services staff. Following design and approvals, an additional 17 dwellings were completed in the last two years, creating a total portfolio of 52 affordable dwellings at sites in Northbridge, Eastern Valley Way and the former Channel 9 site in Willoughby, with more to come in Abbott Road Artarmon. These are managed by community housing providers and rented at 20% below the median weekly rent.

Our *Local Environment Plan* and *Development Control Plan* were updated in 2023 in line with legislation, to improve urban liveability and housing choice whilst supporting population growth. The changes will also encourage more affordable housing, focus dense housing near transport hubs, and preserve our natural and built assets. Better urban design will also result from the new *Public Domain Technical Manual* to support the *Chatswood CBD Planning and Urban Design Strategy 2036*, as well as the new *Northbridge Local Centre Public Domain Plan*.

In December 2023 the NSW State Government announced it would be changing the planning legislation to override Council limitations to the type and amount of development allowed in its low-density suburbs, and in areas surrounding local centres and selected transport nodes. Our strong advocacy to the Government resulted in improved outcomes, with the area of change around Roseville station reduced, and the changes proposed around St Leonards limited to one site within our area. Our proactive planning for growth means that we can meet the NSW Government's new housing target of 3,400 dwellings by 2029, within current zonings and Development Approvals, We will also continue to advocate for careful, strategic growth that is sensitive to local needs and opportunities.

During the term we adopted a revised *Community Participation Plan* to guide community consultation on planning and development matters. We also revised and exhibited the *Compliance and Enforcement Policy*, to improve our effective regulation of development, building and other matters – this enables Council to investigate building complaints in the first instance instead of forwarding to a private certifier. This is an improved outcome for our community, in the wake of State Governmanet changes allowing councils to have this oversight. In 2023/24 alone we did 121 critical Mandatory Stage inspections of construction sites with Council as Principal Certifier, a higher volume than expected due to steady levels of construction activity throughout the year.

CSP Priority 3.6: Activate local spaces in creative ways

Some of our projects creatively improve an area's safety and appeal, to draw more people in to frequent it. In 2022, Council closed a section of Bellambi Street Northbridge as part of a trial to create a pedestrian-only public space, in line with the *Northbridge Public Domain Masterplan*. The initiative was granted $442,200 under the NSW Government's *Shared Spaces Program*. This resulted in permanent closure to create a new town square, improving pedestrian safety and access, and providing a popular space for events.

Creative activations in our parks included:

- **Bales Park** – Delivered a park activation in January 2024 where 20 local children helped paint the playground tunnel.
- **Muston Park** – Undertook a co-design workshop with local residents in March 2024 to identify three future park activations including tai chi classes and a nature walk to commence in August 2024.
- **OH Reid Reserve** – Undertook a co-design workshop with local residents in May 2024 to identify three future park activations for delivery in late 2024.

Results

The City of Willoughby rates well with our community as a liveable and safe area to live, work and play. Low crime rates continue to fall, residents feel safer, and our stock of social and affordable housing continues to grow.

Indicator (data source details)	Baseline (and year)	Target	Latest result (and year)	Rating
% of residents living and working in Willoughby* (Source: Employment self-containment, ABS Census)	26.9% (2016*)	Maintain/ increase	27.7%^ (2021*)	✓
Appeal of Willoughby LGA as a place to live (Source: Willoughby Community Perception Survey)	93% (2018)	Maintain/ increase	91%^ (2022)	✓
Perception of Willoughby as safe (Source: Willoughby Community Perception Survey)	97% (2020)	Maintain/ increase	96%^ (2022)	✓
Low crime rate (crimes/100,000 people) (Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research)	6,362 (2018)	Maintain/ decrease	5,994 (2023)	✓
% of residents who feel safe in public places in the Willoughby area (Source: Willoughby Wellbeing survey)	80% (2019)	Maintain/ increase	90% (2023)	✓
% of residents satisfied with opportunities to participate in sport and recreation locally (Source: Willoughby Wellbeing survey)	62% (2019)	Maintain/ increase	60%^ (2023)	✓
No. households renting social housing * (Source: ABS Census)	471 (2016*)	Increase	501 (2021*)	✓
No. affordable housing dwellings managed by Council (Source: Council data)	37 (2016)	Increase to 70 by 2026[A]	52 (2024)	→

Key:
* based on Census result every 5-years
^ not a statistically significant difference to the baseline
A Target from Affordable Housing Strategy 2020-2026

✓ Target met → Progressing toward long term target

A City that is prosperous and vibrant



Community aspiration: The City has a robust economy where businesses want to be located, where they can grow and thrive in high quality businesses premises, employing highly skilled and motivated staff with access to the highest quality facilities, recreational activities and food and drink options. A place that attracts businesses and visitors from around the world in sectors that lead in creativity and innovation. It is the location of choice in the North Shore of Sydney.

Key Council strategies/ plans:

- Economic Development Strategy 2022
- Night Time Economy Strategy 2022-2028
- Chatswood CBD Planning and Urban Design Strategy 2036
- St Leonards Strategy 2020
- Local Centres Strategy 2019

Other bodies responsible/ contributing:

- NSW Planning and Environment
- NSW Department of Industry
- Destination NSW
- Chamber of Commerce
- Businesses and major employers
- TAFE and universities
- Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils

Our Progress

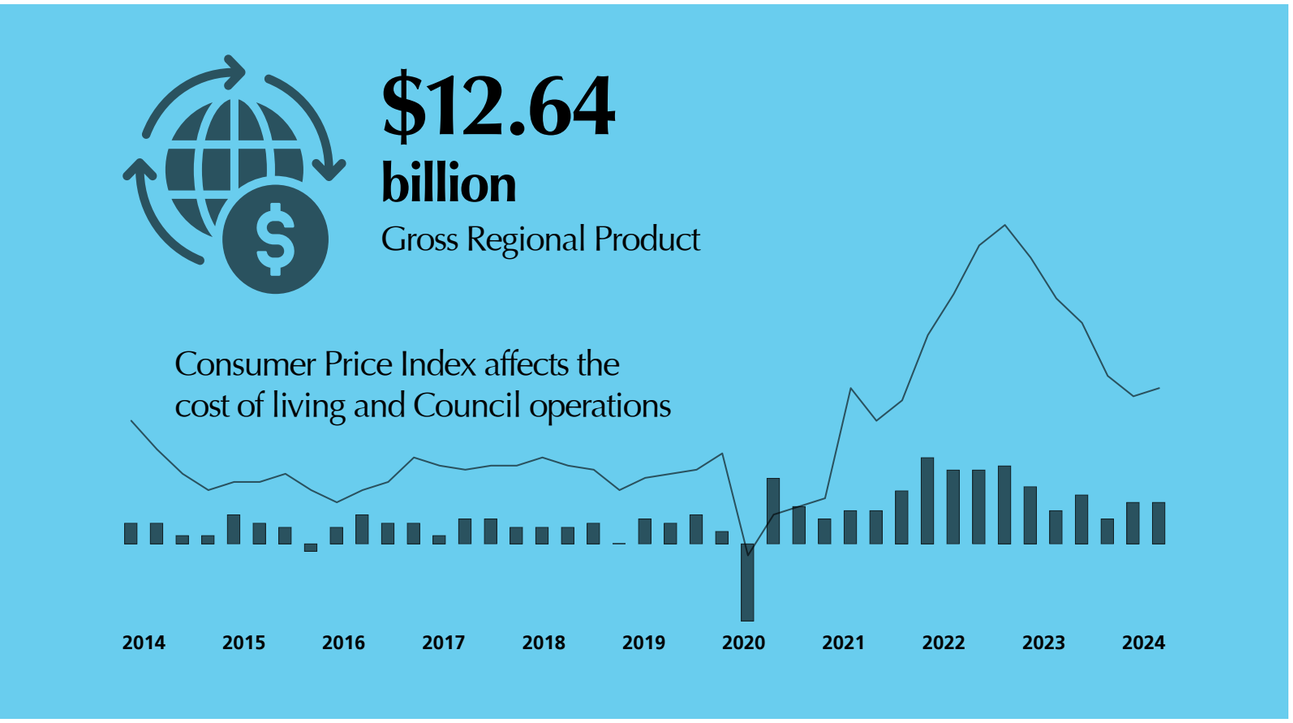
Prior to the term, the COVID pandemic had a significant impact on local businesses, with repeated lockdowns and restrictions over nearly two years. Following the lifting of restrictions, the local economy responded steadily to reach pre-COVID levels, which have largely been sustained even with the more recent cost of living impacts of macro-economic policy settings. By 2023 there were increasing numbers of local businesses, jobs and employed residents.

CSP Priority 3.1: Facilitate the development of all businesses

Willoughby started the term with a strong focus on recovery for the local economy and Council's finances, following generous support provided in our *Economic Recovery Plan* and *Business Support Package*. During 2021/22 we engaged with the business community to develop our *Economic Development Strategy*, which has since helped the local economy recover from late 2022 onwards.

Council has various programs to help local businesses:

- **Support Local** campaign of promotion to attract visitors to Chatswood CBD and local centres; supported by our commitment to pay local business invoices within 7 days.
- **Business Connect** which links businesses to NSW Government services, business events and workshops, including networking and sustainability workshops.
- Willoughby's annual Community Grants have also been streamlined and extended to include categories for local businesses.
- **Better Business Partnership** with free independent advice to local businesses on sustainability solutions – a joint program with Ku-ring-gai and North Sydney councils.
- Business sector groups established to help support and develop key business sectors.
- Frequent business events providing information and workshops to assist with training and business development.



Census data showed some significant changes across our local industry sectors from 2016 to 2021, reflecting our changing demographics and possibly some COVID-related pressures. Job growth in the health and social assistance sector reflects our ageing population and an increased focus on personal health - this has implications for the sites, facilities and connectivity needed by a growing sector. A decline in jobs in the information, telecommunications and media sectors reflects the relocation of news media outlets to other locations. Our *Industrial Lands Strategy* sets out a plan through to 2036 for dedicated business areas vital for our area's economic vitality, and to provide local jobs. It caters for the changing nature of business, manufacturing, and innovation.

CSP Priority 3.2: Build and support a night-time economy and CSP Priority 3.3: Create memorable food destinations

In 2023 we engaged with the local community to develop our *Night Time Economy Strategy* which aims for a vibrant night time economy, based around Chatswood being the cultural hub of the North Shore. A place where locals and visitors know that during the night time they will find new and exciting events and activities, open dining, meeting, and entertainment venues, as well as retail and other services available, ensuring that they come back again and again.

The Concourse is a key attractor for visitors to the Chatswood CBD and together with the Zenith Theatre and the recently opened The Lounge at The Concourse ensure that the Chatswood CBD is the major cultural precinct for the North Shore.

To further increase visitors into the CBD, Council, in 2024, extended the Mall Markets to operate on a Saturday in addition to the existing days of Thursday and Friday. In September 2022 Westfield Chatswood hosted the *Chatswood Food Trail*, with funding from the NSW Government, celebrating the area's well-known culinary landscape. It featured giant food installations, live cooking demonstrations, celebrity chef appearances and roaming live entertainment to draw many visitors for a feast for the senses.

The general economic recovery was matched with a $22 million increase in the night-time consumer spend in Chatswood from 2022 to 2023 (latest available figures).

CSP Priority 3.4: Attract visitors and promote local destination-based tourism and CSP Priority 3.5: Diversify our economy including creative and innovative industries

Council recognises the value of bringing people to the area as a destination for events and festivals such as *Gaimariagal, Lunar New Year* and *Emerge*. The *Emerge Festival* is a series of around 50 events, entertainment, and markets in spring to bring people out again after the winter huddle. It continues to grow in popularity, bringing $4.2 million more visitor spending in 2023 than in 2022. The annual *Lunar New Year* festival attracts people from around Sydney and beyond to enjoy the festivities and help stimulate the local economy - bringing an additional $10.2 million in 2022/23, and $75.8 million in 2023/24 in visitor spending across dining, entertainment, retail and travel. Our festivals have been particularly important following COVID to rebuild our community spirit for celebration and enjoyment.

The Concourse itself hosts a range of entertainment throughout the year including music, comedy, dance, and theatre, attracting people from well beyond our city. Those attending The Concourse and the Incinerator art space numbered a modest 9,148 in 2021/22 due to COVID restrictions, then showed strong recovery to 19,900 people in 2022/23. This continues to grow, with 22,000 visitors to our art spaces in 2023/24.

Performers can gain great experience in our local and smaller venues and are in turn supported by sound and stage crews and front of house staff, helping grow the expertise of our local creative industry for careers in events and entertainment. In April 2024, Council opened The Lounge at The Concourse, which is a smaller theatre which fledgling artists a chance to perform in a smaller venue as they start out.

In 2022 we launched *Culture Bites* as the flagship cultural program as an alternative to Vivid Sydney Chatswood. This ensured we could extend the time events were able to run, thus supporting more artists, performances, and activities. *Culture Bites*is now an annual program of innovative cultural activities, and includes theatre, music, art, and

children's shows with a mix of free and ticketed events. Improved feedback through our Culture Counts survey platform helps us to plan better for what our audiences appreciate.

In the 2023 program, our *Roaming Gnomes* activation was funded by the NSW Government's CBD Revitalisation Program. It helped businesses recover post-COVID by injecting $8.5 million into the local economy.

Council also commissions public art installations, including *Rainbow Accordion* in 2023 by artist Amigo & Amigo, installed on the Lower Podium of The Concourse. This provided a stunning light and sound experience *Culture Bites* patrons, complemented by the *Unashamed* multimedia exhibition curated by Paul McDonald, which invited the audience into the experiences of local LGBTIQ artists.

We also support the Willoughby Symphony Orchestra, which performs international-standard orchestral music, dance, theatre, and family-oriented productions. It also provides an important middle step to aspiring career musicians. All our programs are supported by an improved booking system - performers and patrons alike appreciate the easy-to-use and secure site.

CSP Priority 3.6: Facilitate the viability and vibrancy of our CBD and village centres

A key part of our *Economic Development Strategy* is creating attractive and safe places and streetscapes to draw in people, who in turn become customers of local businesses and events. Over the past term, Council has improved localities such as:

- **Chatswood CBD:** redesigned and upgraded Chatswood Laneways, including Spring Place, Mills Lane, Post Office Lane, and Charlotte Lane.
- **Artarmon:** Undertaken a streetscape transformations Wilkes Avenue and more recently along Hampden Road.
- **Naremburn:** Following extensive community engagement, the streetscape at the village centre has been upgraded and redesigned created more community space and access to the business area
- **Northbridge:** streetscape improvements at Woonona and Sailor's Bay Roads.

In an effort to encourage to improve public spaces in Northbridge, Council trialled a closure of Bellambi Street, funded by the NSW Government's *Shared Spaces Program*. This closure started in November 2022 and was made permanent in April 2023, creating a permanent 350m^2 public square for community events with additional planting and seating.

Local businesses are also benefitting from a growing number of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points. Council has installed 12 EV charging stations around the city and is working with commercial operators to find more locations. In 2023 Council hosted an EV showcase, attracting visitors interested in EVs to Chatswood Mall.

Awards

Willoughby Symphony Orchestra – Finalist in 2020 APRA AMCOS Art Award.

Results

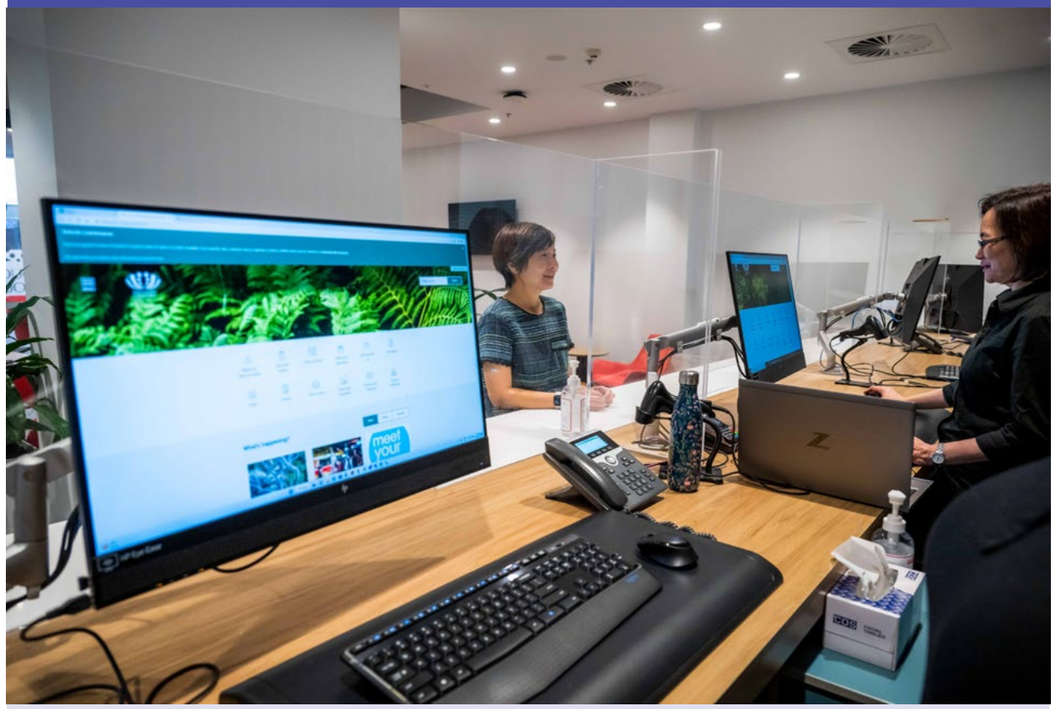
Overall, the economic indicators below show that the local economy has withstood the impact of a global pandemic and recovered to pre-COVID levels or better. Satisfaction with our vibrant arts and community events continues to be high.

Indicator (data source details)	Baseline (and year)	Target	Latest result (and year)	Rating
Gross Regional Product ($billion) (Source: NIEIR (National Institute for Economic and Industry Research)	$12.52b (2018/19^P)	$15b by 2028^E	$12.64b (2022/23)	➔
Night-time consumer spend in Chatswood CBD 6pm-6am (Source: Spendmapp by Geografia)	$346.2m (2022^P)	Increase^E	$368.1m (2023)	✓
Local businesses (Source: NIEIR)	12,471 (2020[1])	16,000 by 2028^E	13,012 (2023)	➔
Local jobs (Source: NIEIR)	70,661 (2016*)	90,000 by 2028^E	71,925 (2023)	➔
Employed residents (Source: NIEIR)	41,285 (2016*)	50,000 by 2028^E	43,113 (2023)	➔
Employment self-containment: resident workers employed locally (Source: Census)	26.9% (2016*)	increase/ maintain	27.7% (2021*)	✓
% customer satisfaction with arts and community events run by Council (Source: Council data)	90% (2022/23[1])	80%	85% (2023/24)	✓

Key:
1 Baseline year is the first available year of data
* Baseline and/or result drawn from Census data
P Baseline year pre or post COVID to avoid the effect of restrictions on the year's data
E Target is from our Economic Development Strategy 2022-2028

✓ Target met ➔ Progressing toward long term target

A City that is effective and accountable



Community aspiration: The City is governed by an ethical Council that is open, transparent, and accountable, and a strong advocate for our community and environment. It is led by informed representatives who encourage meaningful engagement of stakeholders in making decisions.

Key Council strategies/ plans:

- Resourcing Strategy 2022-2032
- Community Engagement Strategy 2023
- Community Participation Plan 2024
- Customer Experience Strategy 2023-2025
- Social Media Policy 2024
- Media Policy 2024
- Compliance and Enforcement Policy 2024

Other bodies responsible/ contributing:

- Department of Premier and Cabinet - Office of Local Government
- NSW Ombudsman, NSW Treasury and NSW Auditor-General
- Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils
- Peak local government associations
- Resident and community groups/ associations

Our progress

CSP Priority 5.1: Be honest, transparent, and accountable in all that we do

and

CSP Priority 5.6: Ensure value for money and financial sustainability

The COVID pandemic had a significant impact on the financial position of businesses, the community and Council. We provided extended fee relief to support our community and local businesses, which had a significant $21 million impact on our finances, further exacerbated by high inflation forcing up costs by 12.1% over 2 years. Financial pressures continued, with State Government caps on rate increases; cost shifting of the Emergency Services Levy; mandatory employee cost increases; and the cessation of our $3 million/year Infrastructure Levy income.

We continually sought savings and efficiencies across our services, especially where there may be under-utilised or loss-making services. One example is a review of the Loop Bus service, which had extremely low patronage of 2-3 people per bus - due to its very low patronage. Our corporate technology CONNECT project has resulted in significant efficiency and productivity gains across management of procurement, human resources, payroll, records and documents, contracts, works and assets (see Priority 5.7 below for more on CONNECT).

With our financial sustainability still at risk, we extensively consulted our community in 2023 on four future rating options, and feedback showed strong support for a rate increase. In February 2024, we applied to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for a 15% rate increase, comprised of the 5% rate cap and 10% Special Rate Variation (SRV), which was approved in May 2024. This also galvanises our commitment to a $2 million efficiency target each year. This rate increase, starting in 2024/25, will help restore our financial sustainability – resulting in ongoing budget surpluses, strengthening our reserves for community projects and asset renewal, and providing a buffer for future financial challenges, extreme weather and growth. Our 10-year *Long Term Financial Plan 2024-2034* has been revised to reflect the improved outlook.

CSP Priority 5.4: Anticipate and respond to changing community and customer needs

We continually look to tune our services to respond to community needs. A few examples include:

- Providing more efficient and user-friendly online services.
- Equipping our staff for more effective community engagement and customer service.
- Beautified laneways, streetscapes and secured more funding to maintain public spaces.
- Providing more value and variety in our festivals by moving away from the costly Vivid Festival, to providing the longer-duration Culture Bites which engages more people.
- Reviewing and upgrading the sports and leisure facilities we provide, and planning for a new indoor sports facility.

The demand for childcare fell during COVID restrictions and this reduced demand has continued, as working from home for several days a week is now the norm for many people. With many other childcare operators in the area, the scale of Council's service was reviewed, to consider if some funding could be focussed onto more core services. The 2023 service review of Children's Services resulted in the consolidation of Out of School Hours services at Chatswood, Bales Park Pavilion at North Willoughby and Artarmon Kids Cottage. Exploration of a suitable external provider of a long day care centre at Council's Devonshire Street Children's Centre has also continued.

In 2024 we established a new Service Review Framework, to help drive excellent customer service and material improvements to our services. Each year several services are selected for a review, to ensure we are providing value for money; the best delivery model; and to enhance service quality and accessibility. Our aim is to meet current and future service needs, through consistent and responsive services that our customers trust.

CSP Priority 5.2: Demonstrate leadership and advocacy for local priorities

Council has consistently advocated for our local community, with representations and submissions on wide-ranging topics. Advocacy over the last three years has been extensive to the NSW Government (46 matters), Federal Government (8 matters) and other bodies (13 matters) such as industry associations:

Target body	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Total
State government	8	15	23	46
Federal government	3	4	1	8
Other bodies	2	5	6	13
Total	13	24	30	67

We have made submissions during NSW Government consultations on rates reform, the Western Harbour Tunnel, Warringah Freeway upgrade, Northern Beaches Link Tunnel, Bus Industry Taskforce and the Royal North Shore Hospital Masterplan. We have also advocated for safe active travel with better connectivity of cycleways and walking paths, e-bike infrastructure, and legislation. Other examples include submissions to NSW Parliamentary inquiries into housing and planning reforms and to proposed changes to the State Environmental Planning Policies to ensure that increased housing does not impact on our heritage, green space and liveability.

Collaborating with other councils on issues and solutions brings significant benefits. We have been working with the North Sydney, Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, Hunters Hill, and Ryde councils on waste management. This has included streamlining procurement and management of a joint contract for municipal solid waste processing and disposal. Our membership of the Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils is also vital to collaboration and advocacy to governments, as many issues we face are shared with our neighbouring councils. Together with numerous surrounding councils we support the Aboriginal Heritage Office; and collaborate with Ku-ring-gai and North Sydney councils on the *Better Business Partnership.*

CSP Priority 5.3: Balance the creation of new public assets with upgrading existing assets

Managing over $2 billion of our local public assets is core business to Council to provide and maintain, upgrade, or retire obsolete assets. Our asset conditions and planning are captured in our *Asset Management Strategy* and associated plans, as part of our 10-year *Resourcing Strategy*.

We develop our works priorities based on these and other plans such as masterplans, new standards or requirements we need to meet, and available funding including grants. These form the building blocks for our four-year program of works in our *Delivery Program* and annual *Operational Plan*. Our program of works further considers community and business needs; safety; sustainability; cost-benefit; and a placemaking approach for well-functioning spaces and precincts.

Some key improvements to assets and places during the term have included:

- Upgrades to 16 parks, playgrounds, and sports fields.
- The Concourse: new façade and solar panels, lighting, carpark upgrade, roof repairs.
- 5 major streetscape projects in Artarmon, Naremburn, and Northbridge.
- Abbott Road Artarmon redesign for affordable housing.
- New shared paths on the Pacific Highway between Chatswood and St Leonards.
- Designed a new 2.5 km shared path from Mowbray Road to Boundary Street.
- Royal North Shore Hospital designated as a high pedestrian activity area and installed gateways, traffic calming devices and a pedestrian crossing.
- Worked with Ausgrid to replace 86% of streetlights (2,623) with energy-efficient LEDs.
- Upgraded four Chatswood laneways into attractive, flexible urban spaces.
- Commenced a major upgrade of Willoughby Leisure Centre due for completion by 2026.
- Commenced Artarmon Parklands new pavilion and park facilities, due for completion in 2026.
- Refurbishment of Council offices at Victor Street, Chatswood.

CSP Priority 5.5: Make it easy for citizens to engage and participate in decision-making

We recognise that residents of varying abilities and backgrounds prefer different ways to engage with Council. This was particularly challenging during the COVID restrictions of 2020-22 when little or no face-to-face engagement could be conducted, so a variety of other methods were used online. In response, our 2022 community survey showed a good 70% community satisfaction with 'opportunities to contribute to Council's decision making', which had increased by 24% to not only meet its target but exceed the 64% benchmark for metropolitan councils.

In 2023 we revised our *Community Engagement Strategy* to better cater for how our community wants to engage with us; it includes a new toolkit and training for staff. Some key staff have undergone extensive training in community engagement in 2024, and now form a core group of Community Engagement Champions across our services. We also revised our *Social Media Policy*, and *Public Participation Plan* for statutory planning matters.

Each year, 30 to 40 projects are presented on the *Have Your Say Willoughby* online platform for community engagement, and promotes related workshops, drop-in sessions, or other face-to-face engagement. Engagement opportunities are promoted in a monthly e-newsletter to 8,800 subscribers, drawing in around 60,000 visits a year to the platform, and feedback and submissions from thousands of people.

We also tapped into committed residents on the seven Advisory Committees established during the term - on access and inclusion, transport, built and cultural heritage, sustainability, bushland and natural heritage, cultural and creative arts, and some specific reserves. Committee members are valued for their expertise and valuable input; providing advice on strategic issues, policies, implementing programs, and how to influence community awareness and behaviour.

CSP Priority 5.7: Deliver excellent customer service

Council rated well against community satisfaction targets in a 2022 survey, with satisfaction levels above metropolitan council benchmarks for overall services provided, service quality and communications. Since then, we've made some significant practical and strategic improvements. In April 2022 we opened a new customer service centre in Victor Street Chatswood, with a new service desk, office and upgraded lift lobby. The new ground floor location simplifies access to customer services, particularly for people with a disability or mobility challenges.

In 2022 we adopted the *Customer Experience Strategy 2023–2025* which aims to improve the customer's experience (CX) through exceptional customer service. Our services have many contact points with the community, so we're better equipping all staff to further improve interactions and customer satisfaction. Around 400 staff have been trained in the CX induction program, and over 70 key staff competed specialised training. A core of 20 staff have stepped up as Customer Success Champions to help design and test new initiatives, participate in key projects and help capacity-build teams for excellent customer service. Significant work has also provided insights into customer needs, to help make data-driven decisions and streamline processes.

Our corporate technology project, CONNECT, has been achieving system and process efficiencies, and improving community access to Council services and information. Some of the changes completed or in progress include:

- Improvements to the customer request management system and a customer portal.
- Integrated record management with task automation and powerful search functionality.
- Time-savings for bulk document management.
- Improved financial processes such as cash receipting, end-of-financial-year reporting, rates and accounts receivable.
- Streamlined processes for staff recruitment and training management.
- Improved systems for planning, property and asset rating, property and land management.



Results

The Council rates well as an effective and accountable council. Residents are now much more interested and satisfied with engagement on our plans and decisions. Community satisfaction is above the benchmarks of metropolitan councils for our overall services provided, service quality, communications, and involvement in decision-making.

Indicator (data source details)	Baseline (and year)	Target	Latest result (and year)	Rating
% of residents satisfied with opportunities to contribute to decision-making (Source: Willoughby Community Perception Survey)	46% (2018)	Maintain/ increase	70% (2022)	✓
Community engagement: number of Have Your Say registrants (Source: Council data)	4,176 (2020)	Increase[C]	8,848 (2023)	✓
% of residents satisfied with level of communication (Source: Willoughby Community Perception Survey)	88% (2018)	Maintain/ increase	86%^ (2022)	✓
% of residents satisfied that Council is providing a quality service (Source: Willoughby Community Perception Survey)	73% (2018)	Maintain/ increase	86% (2022)	✓
Overall community satisfaction (Source: Willoughby Community Perception Survey)	71% (2018)	Maintain/ increase	95% (2022)	✓
Meet all local government financial and asset benchmark ratios (Source: Willoughby Council Annual Financial Statements)	100% (2017/18)	100%[L]	100%* (2023/24)	✓

Key:
^ not a statistically significant difference to the baseline
* based on financial estimates – final audited results not available at the time of publishing
C Target from Community Engagement Strategy
L Target from Long Term Financial Plan
✓ Target met

APPENDIX
Review of the Community Strategic Plan

This State of our City report needs to consider where we have come from, future challenges and where we are headed, to understand how to tune the CSP for the future. Each term of Council can decide how its CSP review is conducted and the depth of change required, if any, for a revised CSP covering at least the next 10 years.

Willoughby's CSP has captured the community aspirations, emerging trends and issues since the first iteration the *Willoughby City Strategy* was developed in 2005. With a review required every term, these aspects have helped shape each subsequent CSP, and consequently, Council's priorities across its services and infrastructure. In 2021/22 we undertook extensive community engagement and trend analysis to develop *Our Future Willoughby 2032*. This section considers any further shifts over the past two years, including:

- CSP Workshop with Council Managers in May 2024
- Feedback from over 400 people in July-August 2024 on what they value, current challenges, and their priorities for the future.
- Reflections from Councillors in August 2024.
- Analysis of community feedback from three surveys; shifts in Government, regional or community priorities; and new or intensified trends and challenges.

These have been used to propose changes for the CSP, listed below, and followed by the analysis of all the considerations that these changes are based on.

Proposed changes

HORIZON:

Extend the new CSP to cover 11 years from 2025 to 2036, as this aligns with a key Census year for population projections, and our long term plans on transport, landuse and housing through to 2036.

ROLES:

Better explain scope of control for Council and list other bodies also responsible for achieving the CSP Community Outcomes. Include a matrix in the CSP showing the alignment of each Outcome to key Council strategies and plans, as well as regional and State plans.

PLANNING PROCESS:

Describe the plan's process more clearly for readability i.e. underlying principles; and the sequence of development, implementation, reporting and review.

INDICATORS:

Update CSP indicators and targets as needed to align with key strategies of Council, all of which have been developed together with the community - especially new or long-term targets on the environment, transport, community, and economy. This would improve the strategic alignment from the CSP through to all the key supporting strategies.

STRENGTHEN CSP OUTCOMES:

Revise the CSP in line with the findings of this section, to then workshop with Councillors prior to public exhibition. Changes are summarised here in response to considerations in the following sections, and will be made in the appropriate layer (CSP vision, aspiration, priority, considerations, facts or indicators). Many will be a minimal change to a word or phrase. The proposed changes are

- **Green:**
  - Consideration that trees, natural areas and walking trails aid wellbeing and resilience, and that addressing urban heat is important to our community.
  - Recognise in the 'facts and considerations' the priority our community places on addressing waste, climate change and emissions, water and energy use, and protecting the environment from development and tree loss. Acknowledge they are focussed on sustainability solutions and keen for support and guidance.

- **Connected and inclusive:**
  - Remove 'resilience' from the outcome's title only, as it is broadly relevant to most Outcomes. In the 'facts and considerations' include data on preparedness.
  - Strengthen the Priority 2.8 to 'Increase community, resilience and preparedness for shocks and stresses'.
  - Address the desire for a friendly, harmonious community with access to good community services, facilities, community centres and community-building opportunities. Include the importance of Reconciliation and celebration of First Nations peoples.
  - Acknowledge shifting demographics and expected population growth; with less working-aged people and young families, and more seniors and lone person households, with a strong community concern to address social isolation. Recognise that our youth in particular feel the pressures of costs of living, education and housing; and anxiety for their future, including climate change.
  - Expand Priority 2.7 on accessible services and facilities to include information and/or networks.
  - Recognise the importance to the community of reliable and accessible public transport with efficient hubs; and safe routes and infrastructure for active travel. Acknowledge that people want to simplify travel and reduce its impacts – i.e. reduce car dependency and congestion yet have access to parking; and increase opportunities for car share and EV charging.

- **Liveable:**
  - Provide some clarity on where 'inclusive' and 'accessible' should be used in in this and other CSP Outcomes.
  - Include a focus on activities and services for all ages – healthy lifestyles and recreation options; access to health and personal care services; activity centres and care accommodation for seniors and mobility-challenged people.
  - Acknowledge shifting demographics and expected population growth, with new pressures from the State Government for more dwellings. Respond to State Government changes to planning legislation, to ensure they deliver the quality of development that aligns with the community's vision for vibrant and liveable places.
  - Acknowledge the high concern on housing cost and supply; the aspirations for diverse housing choices that are more affordable and available; and include the quality of 'flexibility' to help improve access to empty, shared or secondary dwellings. These are especially issues for the mental health, resilience and future of our youth.

- **Prosperous and vibrant:**
  - Include education and skills as important to our community, including lifelong learning. Address aspirations for employment, job security and a manageable cost of living; yet their need for preparedness for economic challenges.
  - Acknowledge the attraction of centres for convenience, jobs and transport; that the nature of retail will change online and in commercial centres; and to look for synergies to benefit businesses, residents and visitors alike.
  - Change Priority 5.7 to focus on developing key employment sectors rather than just creative and innovative industries.
  - Recognise arts and cultural activities and venues as keys to creating vibrancy.

- **Effective and accountable needs little change:**
  - Strengthen priority 5.7 on customer 'service' to focus on the outcome i.e. the customer 'experience'. Consider expanding 5.7 to take account of needs for good online services, cybersecurity and business continuity.
  - Align the aspirational statement on stewardship more closely to the Local Government Act's guiding principles i.e. change to 'We will consider and advocate for the current and future needs of our diverse community, environment, local economy, sustainable development outcomes and financial sustainability'.

The following sections outlines the key considerations that have informed the proposed changes above.

Considerations – Community aspirations and priorities

Council works hard to provide residents and businesses with excellent services, facilities and programs and we regularly ask our community about their satisfaction and wellbeing. Our most recent *Community Perception Survey* of 609 people in 2022 recorded high overall satisfaction with Council (96%), and with our consultation and engagement (88%). Results that significantly changed since the 2020 survey were:

- More people value the natural environment and parks as the best thing about the area (32% up from 24%)
- More people want improvements to traffic flow/congestion, public transport, community facilities, sustainability initiatives and green/open spaces.

Their top priorities for the next 10 years have shifted, with the following top responses, in order:

- 18% traffic flow/congestion
- 17% managing development/ avoid over-development
- 13% public transport
- 11% other planning issues
- 8% playgrounds/parklands
- 7% retaining green/open spaces and 7% parking spaces

(Source: Willoughby Council Community Perception Survey Report 2022)

Our 2023 *Community Wellbeing survey* of 627 people showed that while personal wellbeing and quality of life are high and stable, there were some significant changes since the 2021 survey. These seem to reflect post-COVID economic pressures, and an increased interest to connect to others or contribute to the local community:

- A decline for some people in standard of living, future security, access to sports and recreation, and feeling safe in public places
- More have sacrificed spending due to housing costs (38% up from 22%)
- More are considering moving out of the area (40% up from 34%)
- More are having difficulty accessing services and facilities (35% up from 26%) primarily due to issues of time, location, or transport
- More said there is cultural harmony (85% up from 76%)
- More volunteer their help to organisations (63% up from 55%)
- More participate in social groups for sport, special interest, or ethnicity

Source: Willoughby Council Community Wellbeing survey 2023

In mid-2024 we heard from 405 people on the CSP review. Key results resonate strongly with the earlier *Perception survey* (2022) and *Wellbeing survey* (2023). In summary:

What you most value about the Willoughby area?

1. Local centres and CBD for convenience, jobs and transport
2. Community friendliness
3. Council facilities and services
4. Spacious, green and quiet suburbs
5. Recreation opportunities in parks, playgrounds, sports facilities
6. Natural environment and walking trails

Priorities for the next 4 years

1. Managing development
2. Housing
3. Community
4. Transport
5. Education

What are the major challenges for our community?

1. Housing cost and availability
2. Increased car dependency and transport congestion
3. Balance development with protecting the area
4. Inflation pressures on local businesses, employment and job security
5. Social isolation and/or mental health
6. More extreme weather events

Priorities for the next 10 years

1. Environment
2. Housing and development
3. Community
4. Transport and traffic
5. Facilities
6. Safety

Source: Our Future Willoughby Community Engagement Report 2024

The top community priorities in this feedback should be considered in developing the *Delivery Program*. All elements above are addressed by the CSP's content, and do not warrant significant change to the CSP itself, though some tuning may be warranted in these CSP outcomes:

- **Green:** acknowledge natural areas and walking trails as important to people's wellbeing and resilience; and manage natural systems to reduce the severity of natural hazards.
- **Connected, inclusive and resilient:** the desire for a friendly, harmonious community; supportive of lifelong health; good public transport and to reduce car dependency.
- **Liveable:** a concern that high rise growth be contained, and that development does not compromise liveability or qualities the community most values about the area, including parks, playgrounds, sports and open spaces. They also aspire to housing choices that are diverse, more affordable and available; and options for active lifestyles at all ages.
- **Prosperous and vibrant:** address aspirations for employment, job security, education and skills, and a manageable cost of living. Acknowledge the attraction of centres for convenience and transport.

Considerations – Trends and challenges

Some common themes arose from the trends and challenges, which are valuable considerations for revising the CSP. Each theme below shows a panel indicating the CSP Outcomes that it is relevant to.

Pressures on green spaces and recreation

Relevant CSP Outcomes:	Green	Connected, inclusive, resilient	Liveable	Prosperous and vibrant	Effective and accountable

Our community placed the environment as its top priority for the next 10 years, with the most urgent environmental concerns being climate change, tree cover and urban heat (*Our Future Willoughby Community Engagement Report 2024*).. They feel that the natural environment and green spaces are vital for liveability. Of our CALD seniors, 54% were concerned about the pressures on our native animals, and they want a healthy natural environment. Within 10 years they aspire to see greener streets, better parks (with gym equipment), playgrounds and sports facilities.

During COVID restrictions with many closed facilities and sport activity, there was increased pressure on local parks and public spaces for recreation - this increased demand has endured. We know from the *Perception survey 2022* and *Wellbeing Survey 2023* that of the respondents:

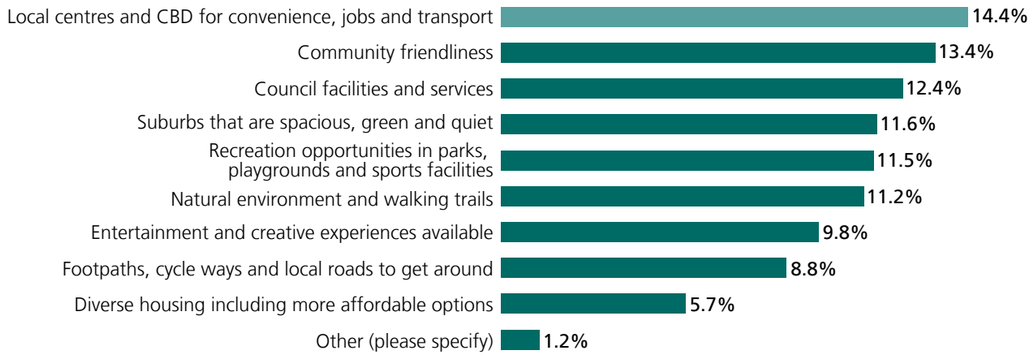
- 32% value the natural environment and parks as the best feature of the area.
- More people are now active in sporting groups than in 2021.

The community has also told us that among the top things they value most about the area are spacious green suburbs, recreation opportunities, walking trails and the natural environment:

Council is increasing funding in 2024/25 to protect and increase our area's tree canopy to address rising urban heat, liveability, and wildlife habitat; aiming to achieve 40% tree canopy cover by 2036 (partly supported by the NSW *Greening our City* program). It is also important that we continue responsible bushland management; working with private landholders on tree retention; and advocating for harsher penalties for public tree vandalism following the loss of 265 trees in 2023.

The major upgrade at Willoughby Leisure Centre and proposed indoor sports complex at Gore Hill will be good news to residents needing more sport and leisure opportunities. Our new *Public Spaces and Recreation Strategy* will address current and future needs as our population grows, driving the need to enhance our open spaces and look for opportunities to create more by repurposing other sites. Council also continues to advocate to the NSW Government and surrounding councils to protect and fund regional-scale recreation sites.

Q1 What are the main qualities or aspects you value most about the City of Willoughby (choose up to 5)



Source: Our Future Willoughby Community Engagement Report 2024

Community appetite for sustainability and emissions reduction

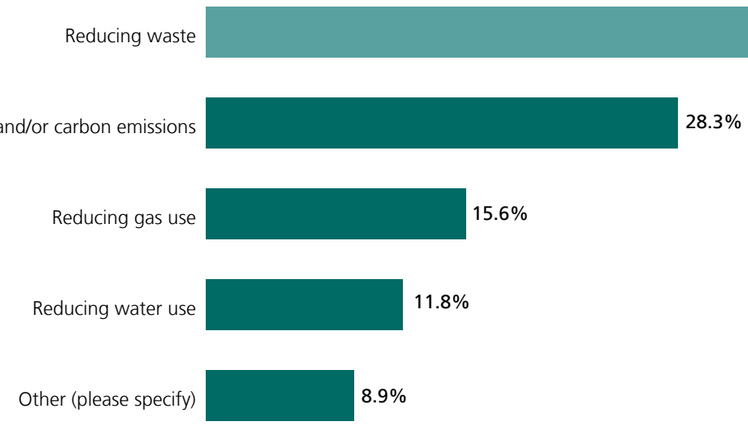
Relevant CSP Outcomes:	Green	Connected, inclusive, resilient	Liveable	Prosperous and vibrant	Effective and accountable

In 2020 our community said that the stressor of greatest concern to them is climate change *(Source: Willoughby Community Perception and Resilience Survey, 2020)*. In mid-2024 our community listed the environment as its top priority to focus on for the next 10 years. They listed climate change as the first, and reducing waste as the second, most urgent environmental concern to address. Waste reduction was also the most cited solution that respondents wanted Council's help with, closely followed reducing energy and water use:

There was also a high interest in Council providing sustainability solutions such as incentives, better recycling options, free assessments, and guidance. With the costs of living and inflation being of high concern to the community and business, sustainability solutions are of growing interest, shown by increasing participation in our *Live Well in Willoughby* and *Better Business Partnership* programs.

Willoughby's Green City Plan drives these programs, as well as reducing Council's own energy, gas,

Q8 What aspects could Council help you with, to reduce your resource use, for a more sustainable lifestyle or business?



Source: Our Future Willoughby Community Engagement Report 2024

water, and carbon emissions – this plan and its targets will be reviewed in coming years to be in tune with the community's growing appetite to reduce consumption, emissions, and utility costs. The NSW Government's *Net Zero Plan 2020-2030* responds to the growing community uptake of sustainability solutions and low emission products and services; and will drive more uptake in utility, waste, transport, industry, and finance sectors.

Our partnership with neighbouring councils through the *Northern Sydney Regional Waste Strategy 2022* is proving vital to continue driving better waste management and recovery. Our joint efforts have resulted in a successful trial for a future food organic collection and developing solutions to meet the mandated target for NSW councils to recover 80% across all waste streams by 2030. Our community is telling us that they support us working towards these improved outcomes.

Resilience to acute shocks

Relevant CSP Outcomes:	Green	Connected, inclusive, resilient	Liveable	Prosperous and vibrant	Effective and accountable

In 2020 our community's shocks of highest concern were related to recent events – the Black Summer bushfires, COVID, the state of the Australian economy, recent storms and floods, and extreme heat, in that order. *(Source: Willoughby Community Perception and Resilience Survey, 2020)*.

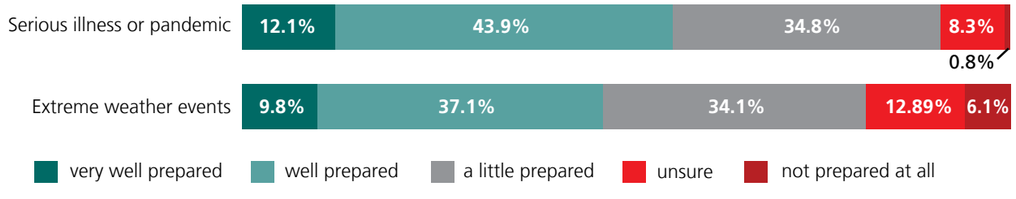
In mid-2024 residents told us about key challenges and their preparedness for shocks. While results may have been affected by the global impact of a digital outage in July 2024, the main challenges for our community included, in order:

- 6th: more extreme weather events (though CALD seniors rated this lower)
- 8th: cyber-attacks and identity protection
- 10th: infectious illness/access to health services (CALD seniors rated this higher)

While 47-56% feel prepared for weather and health crises, others need more support:

2024 Survey result: How well prepared do you feel to respond to these shocks

Q7 How well prepared do you feel to respond to these potential shocks or stresses in your life?



Source: Our Future Willoughby Community Engagement Report 2024

Eastern Australia is experiencing more extreme weather events – high temperatures, severe bushfires, more intense storms yet less rainfall overall – affecting health and damaging infrastructure. Our asset planning is using more accurate modelling, and more robust infrastructure to withstand damage and ensure service continuity. Sydney's water and energy supplies are also under increasing pressure from climate change, so a focus on efficiency and potential local solutions is important for a resilient future.

The COVID pandemic impacted community health, mobility, connection, services, and job security. Health services struggled, and the support services of Council and other bodies proved vital for vulnerable residents. Preparedness is a growing need. The risk of similar pandemics is increasing, with 2% likelihood a year, and a lifetime likelihood up to 44% in future (Source: BA Williams et. al. (2023) *Outlook of pandemic preparedness in a post-COVID-19 world*. Nature).

There can be significant financial, social and health impacts on our community from acute shocks, so we are focussing on building community resilience and recovery. We work closely with other councils and agencies through the joint ***Resilient Sydney Strategy***, NSW *State Disaster Mitigation Plan*, and are looking to prepare a local scale ***Disaster Adaptation Plan*** required of all councils.

It is recommended that 'resilience' be removed from the title of the CSP outcome of 'Connected, inclusive and resilient', as building resilience is also vital to other CSP outcomes across the environment, liveability, economy and civic leadership. CSP Priority 2.8 should however be retained as it focuses on the community's capacity, and should be strengthened to also address preparedness.

Shifts in demographics and social connection

Relevant CSP Outcomes:	Green	Connected, inclusive, resilient	Liveable	Prosperous and vibrant	Effective and accountable

Our population grew by 6.6% over the last 10 years from 73,072 to almost 78,000 people. We are diverse across age groups, household types, cultural origins, languages and abilities. Census results also show some significant changes between 2016 and 2021, including an ageing population, and less young workers and young children. Families with older children seem to be on the rise, as they are perhaps more established in their career, income, and high schools. The future population size has various estimates from 87,415 people by 2036 (*Source: Willoughby Community Profile*) to 89,235 by 2041 (*Source: NSW Planning Population Projections*).

Over the next 10 years, people aged 65 and older will increase from 14% of the population to 17%, and working-aged people will decrease by almost 1%. We will also see a large increase in the number of 'lone person households', and thus more risk of social isolation.

Engagement in mid-2024 provided these insights to our community:

- Community friendliness is the 2nd most important thing they value in the area
- Social isolation is one of the top 5 challenges for our community. Over 60% of CALD seniors were also concerned about this
- Community services is one of the top 3 priorities for Council in the next 4-10 years
- Community safety is one of the top 6 priorities for Council in the next 10 years
- 50% of our CALD seniors are interested in more opportunities for lifelong learning.

In interviews and CALD workshops, some of their top values were cultural diversity, community harmony and safety. While our CALD seniors felt safe when out and about, they have definite concerns about crime, violence and break-ins, and their top wish for the future is a diverse and safe community. They all supported more seniors' activities, events, and subsidies; a seniors day care centre; more carers to support their independence; and more aged care places when they need it. (*Source: Our Future Willoughby Community Engagement Report 2024*).

Council has been providing a valuable role to cater for the social needs and services for individuals, community and cultural groups, vulnerable residents, and all age groups. The MOSAIC programs have had an ongoing successful role in multi-cultural community-building and offer peer-to-peer support and services where needed. We are also committed to Reconciliation and look forward to working more closely with our First Nations residents.

There is an ongoing need to extend inclusion and capacity-building of people with a disability through various programs, advocacy networks, forums, events, information, and accessibility works. The appetite for digital literacy is also growing amongst our seniors and those less mobile, to keep connected, participate in Library Services, and engage in lifelong learning opportunities.

Note that two CSP outcomes cover 'accessible', 'inclusion' and 'inclusive', and their priority statements may need to be better articulated for clarity. These are 'A city that is liveable' and 'A city that is connected, inclusive and resilient'.

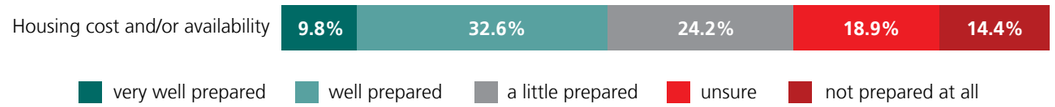
Housing pressures and liveability

Relevant CSP Outcomes:	Green	Connected, inclusive, resilient	Liveable	Prosperous and vibrant	Effective and accountable

In 2020 our community said that 3rd highest stressor of greatest concern is the cost of housing (*Source: Willoughby Community Perception and Resilience Survey, 2020*). Further, the *Community Wellbeing Survey 2023* found that the cost of housing is impacting more residents, with 38% sacrificing other spending, 40% considering moving out of the area, and the standard of living and future security for some declining over 2 years. In mid-2024 the community also told us:

- The top challenge for our community is housing cost and availability
- The 3rd challenge is balancing development with protecting the area
- The priorities for the next 4-10 years are the environment, housing and development
- They want high rise development offset with more community space, parks and playgrounds
- 85% of CALD seniors saw the cost of housing as major challenge for our community, and 73% were concerned about the risk of development changing the area.
- 57% of people are poorly prepared for the stress of housing cost or availability:

Q7 How well prepared do you feel to respond to these potential shocks or stresses in your life?



Source: Our Future Willoughby Community Engagement Report 2024

The current housing shortage led to high median housing prices and rents. Combined with a preference to work close to home, this tended to push out people on low and moderate incomes including essential workers. A trend for bigger houses with less people was evident pre-COVID, now exacerbated by the need for work/study space in many homes. Building and renovating costs rose and led to a building crisis with runaway inflation, trade shortages and supply chain issues. High immigration increased housing demand, and tourism grew more short-term/ holiday rentals, intensifying the housing shortage. Domestic violence and homelessness also rose.

In June 2023 Council made amendments to its Local Environmental Plan (LEP), including rezonings which cater for an additional 6,500 dwellings. In early 2024 the NSW Government set a new housing target for Willoughby of 3,400 extra dwellings by 2029 - this won't drive dramatic change as it will be met by the current zonings and development approvals.

State initiatives also allow Council to approve high density buildings close to transport hubs, with less carparking to reduce car dependency. The NSW Government's *Transport Oriented Development* program identified St Leonards and Crows Nest as locations where additional housing and employment could be facilitated around the new Metro Station. Mechanisms to improve access to existing housing stock also need to be better addressed by State and Federal government e.g. to encourage co-living in single person houses; incentives to create secondary dwellings; or to downsize and free up houses for families needing larger dwellings.

Willoughby has proactively planned for transport-oriented development in its LEP, however as the population grows in those locations, it will increase demand on our local infrastructure and services and that of neighbouring Lane Cove and North Sydney Councils which also manage these locations. Council's planning rules will help stimulate more diverse and affordable housing, and improve liveability and sustainability in new builds. Council could also consider adaptive uses in the CBD areas close to transport hubs. We'll also need to plan for growth implications, and seek opportunities to leverage growth to deliver improvements such as new public spaces, affordable housing, and improved pedestrian infrastructure.

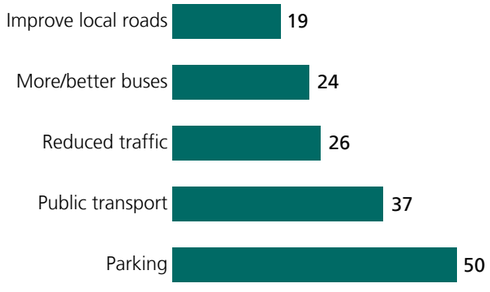
Transport pressures and opportunities

Relevant CSP Outcomes:	Green	**Connected, inclusive, resilient**	Liveable	Prosperous and vibrant	Effective and accountable

In 2020 our community said that 4th highest stressor of greatest concern is transport stress (*Source: Willoughby Community Perception and Resilience Survey, 2020*). Post-COVID, commuters have sustained their increased car dependency (extra 12,000 trips in 2022/23), aversion to public mass transport, and falling active travel rates (90,000 less trips in 2022/23). This has put additional pressure on our roads, fuel consumption and carbon emissions, partly offset by increased working from home. Community views in the *Perception survey 2022* and *Our Future Willoughby* engagement in 2024 include:

- Local centres and CBD are highly valued for their convenience, transport and jobs.
- One of the major challenges is car dependency and traffic congestion.
- CALD seniors prefer to have less traffic and better walking and cycling routes.
- Some of the top priorities for improving over the next 4-10 years are traffic flow/ congestion, public transport, and parking:

Q6 What would improve your experience of local travel?



Source: Our Future Willoughby Community Engagement Report 2024

The recent opening of the Sydney Metro in 2024 through to the North-Western suburbs, Sydney CBD and Sydenham is a game changer for residents travelling out of the area, and workers and visitors traveling in. With a target capacity of 40,000 patrons/hour, this rapid transit solution may well result in a significant shift of residents back to public transport, with 3 modes meeting at the Chatswood transport hub. Council will also work towards completing accessibility upgrades of local bus stops, for patrons with mobility issues.

Extending our active travel networks for increased walking and cycling are also a priority, with some multi-year projects in progress to link routes for safe travelling. Ensuring our transport hubs have end-of-trip facilities is also important, such as bike racks and lockers.

Future population growth over the next 10 years may again increase local car use and congestion of roads and parking, so Council advocacy for efficient transport hubs and frequent reliable services are keys to containing or eliminating such growth. Providing more car share parking and encouraging ride sharing are also important solutions for those that need to travel other routes but want to avoid the downsides of car ownership.

With a view to containing transport emissions, Council will continue to cater for more electric vehicles, working with commercial building owners to identify opportunities for EV charging stations, and with body corporates to address the barriers to installation in residential strata buildings.

Economic pressures on businesses, employment and cost of living

Relevant CSP Outcomes:	Green	Connected, inclusive, resilient	Liveable	**Prosperous and vibrant**	Effective and accountable

In 2020 our community said that 3rd and 5th highest stressors of greatest concern are work/life balance, and employment opportunities/job security (*Source: Willoughby Community Perception and Resilience Survey, 2020*).

Following COVID, the local economy was showing good recovery signs by 2023, but there are still significant knock-on effects of inflation, labour shortages and supply chain disruption. These have increased costs for businesses, Councils and residents. Engagement in mid-2024 provided these insights to our community:

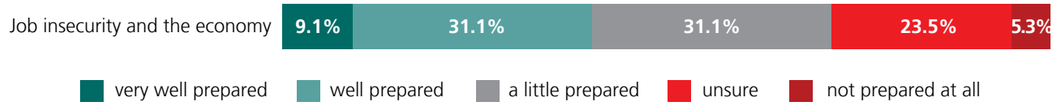
- The most highly valued quality about the area is local centres and the CBD for convenience, jobs and transport.
- The top items for a vibrant and attractive area: cultural events, festivals and activities
- The 4th greatest challenge: inflation pressures on businesses and employment
- Over 95% of CALD seniors cite the cost of living as their top challenge
- Over 80% of CALD seniors want local centres improved as their top priority
- 60% of respondents are poorly prepared for job insecurity or economic crises:

Council will continue to develop place-based initiatives to respond to our community's needs and trends. The growing trend of consumers moving to online shopping for core items, including groceries, away from in-person shopping is just one example. Consumers are also increasingly spending on experiential and personal activities, high-end retail, food and dining - our retail and business centres are evolving to reflect this change.

The refurbishment of Chatswood Chase, due for completion in late 2025, reflects the trend to high-end brands, and is likely to regenerate that part of the CBD in response to more visitors. Likewise, the Spring Quarter development will bring more foot traffic to The Concourse precinct. Linking precincts and wayfinding are essential to ensuring businesses across the City can benefit from events and attractions which bring visitors to our local area.

As the population around the CBD increases, Council will need to balance the needs of residents with concerns for noise, parking, and heavy foot traffic, against the competing needs businesses to bring visitors to the CBD and support our local economy. The Sydney Metro brings both opportunities and challenges for businesses in Chatswood – while bringing more visitors, it may also draw more residents away to the Sydney City CBD for entertainment, shopping, and recreation.

Q7 How well prepared do you feel to respond to these potential shocks or stresses in your life?



Source: Our Future Willoughby Community Engagement Report 2024

Challenges to local government's effectiveness and resourcing

Relevant CSP Outcomes:	Green	Connected, inclusive, resilient	Liveable	Prosperous and vibrant	Effective and accountable

In recent years, the financial constraints on Council have intensified, with additional costs such as:

- Additional and adapted services provided during COVID lockdowns and restrictions.
- Additional development and provision of affordable housing for key workers.
- Extreme weather events damaged local infrastructure and required large clean-ups.
- Inflation forcing the costs of materials and contracts up by 12.1% over 2 years.
- Mandatory annual staff pay increases over several years, ranging 3% to 4.5%.
- $487,000/year Emergency Services Levy and $100,000 increase in election costs.
- Increased costs of insurance, cybersecurity and meeting asset and safety standards.
- Increased expectations on councils for disaster planning, adaptation and recovery all of which require significant additional resourcing eg. preparation of Disaster Adaptation Plans.

Other pressures arose from changes to State and Federal government requirements and targets, notably in industrial relations, waste, resilience, procurement, planning and development, and additional compliance and reporting. Factors that have constrained our income include:

- Revenue losses of $20.6 million during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- IPART setting annual rates caps at just a third of inflation levels.
- Temporary Infrastructure levy ceased, reducing income by $2.96m/year.
- The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) recommended that the State Government has apply caps on increases to the Domestic Waste Levy.

With no extra resourcing provided for new requirements, we continue to advocate for Government support and seek grants and contributions to help offset other costs (11% of our income in 2024/25). In 2023 our community agreed that we needed to raise rates to ensure our financial sustainability and service continuity. IPART approved a 15% rate increase starting in 2024/25. The additional funds ensure our ongoing financial security, and enhance some services – maintaining public spaces, sports fields, parks, and our tree canopy in response to community priorities. We committed to an annual efficiency target of $2 million, and additional tracking and reporting to IPART. Rates will comprise 55% of our income in 2024/25.

Council will be developing and implementing new programs to better serve our customers, improve efficiency, and ensure robust accountable services. Greater benefits will start to be seen from 2024/25 as we setup new systems, better tools and train our staff in new approaches to:

- Online services
- Customer experience
- Community engagement
- Resilience and business continuity
- Managing major projects
- Business improvement
- Service reviews
- Risk and governance

Every 4 years we revise our CSP and *Resourcing Strategy* by considering new trends, risks, community needs and priorities, and updated modelling of what we need to cater for in the upcoming decade. We will consider how to tune our resources across finances, assets, and people for the next 10 years, so we can plan our services and projects for the next 4 years.

Our community has told us that their top priorities for the next 4-10 years include the environment, transport, housing, development, and community services (*Community Perception survey 2022* and *Our Future Willoughby survey 2024*). Our strong role in advocacy will continue to be vital as these other priorities require support and alignment with other tiers of government, not-for-profits, developers, and other industry sectors.



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