



Revitalising Coburg: Objectives

Contents

Acknowledgment of Country	04
Message from the Mayor	06
Executive summary	08
Our objectives	18
Our principles	32
Evidence and policy	46
Next steps	54

Acknowledgement of Country

Merri-bek¹ City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional custodians of the lands and waterways in the area now known as Coburg. We are grateful for their care of this Country and for the ongoing contributions of all First Nations communities to present day Coburg.

Language and Clan Groups

Coburg is situated on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung language group of the Kulin Nation. The five language groups of the Kulin Nation share mutual economic and social relationships, as well as common spiritual beliefs and creation stories. These religious beliefs formed the basis for social organisation and management of land and resources. In particular, it was the Wurundjeri-willam clan that occupied the Country that encompasses present day Coburg.

Bioregions and Geomorphology

Coburg is part of the Victorian Volcanic Plains bio-region. The volcanic plains are a unique and important region of Victoria, with distinct landscape and ecology. The bio-region used to have open grasslands, gentle slopes, shallow wetlands and large basalt deposits. Before colonisation, the landscape was a resource rich environments for the Wurundjeri People for tens of thousands of years.

Waterways

The region used to have many wetlands, lagoons, rivers and creeks, and these were an important part of the Wurundjeri peoples connection to this region. These water systems hold strong cultural associations for First Nations and have formed important places of connection for social and ceremonial gatherings, trade, initiation, marriage, and lore business for tens of thousands of years.

1 Merri-bek means 'rocky country' in Woiwurrung language.



Figure 1. Map of Wurundjeri Country



Photo from The Coburg Conversation walk by Kekoa.

Message from the Mayor



I'm excited to present Council's objectives for Revitalising Coburg, a key step on the journey to transform the heart of Coburg and one of Merri-bek's major activity centres.

Revitalising Coburg has been a long-held ambition of Merri-bek City Council. Over past decades, Council has purchased several pieces of land right in the centre of Coburg, giving Council significant influence over its future.

Council has a vision to transform this area from what, right now, can feel like a barren wasteland of carparks. We know that this land, right next to public transport, schools, shops and a range of community facilities, would be a great place to build new homes, especially social and affordable homes.

We want to build on this area's many strengths and draw on the hopes and ideas of our passionate, diverse community. That's why we've started this project by launching The Coburg Conversation in September 2023. Over 1,300 of you have taken part so far, and I want to thank you for taking the time to share your ideas, hopes and considered feedback with us at Council.

We heard about what you love about Coburg and what makes it a unique and special place. We heard about the things that frustrate you, what is missing, and your ideas about how to make it a green and people-friendly place, one that meets the needs of our community in all our diversity and genuinely feels welcoming to all. This is a challenging and ambitious project; one that will take a long time and many partners to plan and deliver to leave a legacy for future generations. It's important that we get this right.

Our Revitalising Coburg objectives are just the beginning – they set a clear path for us to follow in delivering our aspirations for this area. We now move onto the detailed planning, building the models and seeking the partnerships that can help realise our vision and ambitions for the heart of Coburg.

We look forward to continuing this exciting conversation with you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Adam Pulford". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Cr Adam Pulford
Merri-bek City Council Mayor

Executive summary

Purpose

Revitalising Coburg is Council's ambition to create transformative change in the heart of Coburg. The purpose of this document is to present the objectives and principles that will put in place the foundations for the project. In the long-term, this document will form part of a series of documents to guide Council in realising our ambitions. The objectives and principles draw on:

- Findings from the first stage of The Coburg Conversation involving over 1,300 people
- Council's existing policies, strategies and priorities, especially ones that relate to the Vibrant Spaces and Places theme of the Council Plan
- Consideration of how the Merri-bek Community Vision plays out at a local level in Coburg

Merri-bek Community Vision

The Community Vision sets the vision for Merri-bek until 2031. The vision was developed by a panel of 44 community members that summarised over 3,000 contributions from Merri-bek citizens.

“Merri-bek is our home. We respect and look after our land, air, waterways and animals. We care for our people and celebrate our diverse stories, cultures and identities. Merri-bek is enhanced by all of us supporting our local businesses, arts communities and social organisations.

We work together proactively and transparently to continue to create a vibrant, safe, healthy, resilient, innovative, regenerative community. Many faces, one Merri-bek.”¹

1 Merri-bek Community Vision

The Coburg Conversation

The first phase of The Coburg Conversation ran between September and December 2023. The program sought to understand community values and priorities about the future heart of Coburg from people with different connections to, and experiences of, central Coburg. There were many different ways to participate including an online survey, pop-up events, workshops involving local traders, targeted activities focussing on Council's Human Rights Policy priority groups, use of Council's Community Connectors and translation into community languages, engagement with First Nations communities and organisations, creative activities, children's activities, meetings with seniors groups, submissions from local groups, and more.

The engagement findings demonstrated that there was enthusiasm for the idea of change in central Coburg. There was a desire to increase the diversity of local businesses, improve the quality of facilities, amenities and services, and to increase the presence of housing, arts and culture in the precinct. There was also a perception that that area was poorly maintained, too car dominant and at times unsafe.



Figure 2. Photo walk as part of the The Coburg Conversation. Photograph by participant Nicholas Nicholaou.

Engagement headlines

In this first stage of The Coburg Conversation, we heard some clear themes from the community about their values and priorities for the future heart of Coburg (see Figure 3).

Enthusiasm about potential for change in central Coburg

Better, safer, more pleasant journeys in and around the centre

Excellence in design and sense of place



Figure 3. Engagement headlines

**A welcoming,
accessible and
multipurpose library
that is a place for
refuge, connection,
culture and life-long
learning**

**A strong desire for
trees and greenery,
and greening of
public spaces**

**The importance of
environmental
performance and
sustainability**

**Flexible public and
gathering spaces that
provide different
opportunities for
respite, play and
social connection**

**Desire for more
variety in local shops
and businesses,
including night-time
economy**

**High-quality housing
that is available to a
wide variety of
people, including
those on low incomes**



Merri-bek policies and strategies

Council produces policies, strategies and plans to guide its work. Major strategies involve in-depth community engagement and govern Council's approach to functions such as transport, open space, affordable housing, planning settings, or community development.

We already have key building blocks in place with the Coburg Structure Plan identifying the following general objectives for the Coburg Activity Centre:

- To develop the Coburg Principal Activity Centre into a vibrant and diverse pedestrian oriented higher density mixed use centre.
- For the Activity Centre to function as the prime shopping, living, employment and activity precinct in Merri-bek.
- To encourage environmentally sustainable development outcomes in the design, construction and operation of the urban form, buildings and places.
- To achieve a high quality of public realm throughout the centre.

The relationship between the objectives, principles and existing policies and strategies is demonstrated on pages 46-53.

Precinct objectives and principles

Figure 4 visualises high-level objectives and principles for revitalising the heart of Coburg. The precinct objectives establish the overarching goals, point to tangible outcomes and provide clear direction for the next stage of project planning.

The precinct principles are the guidelines that we will use to shape our decision-making and actions as the project progresses. The principles will ensure our actions are aligned with community aspirations and Merri-bek policies and strategies.

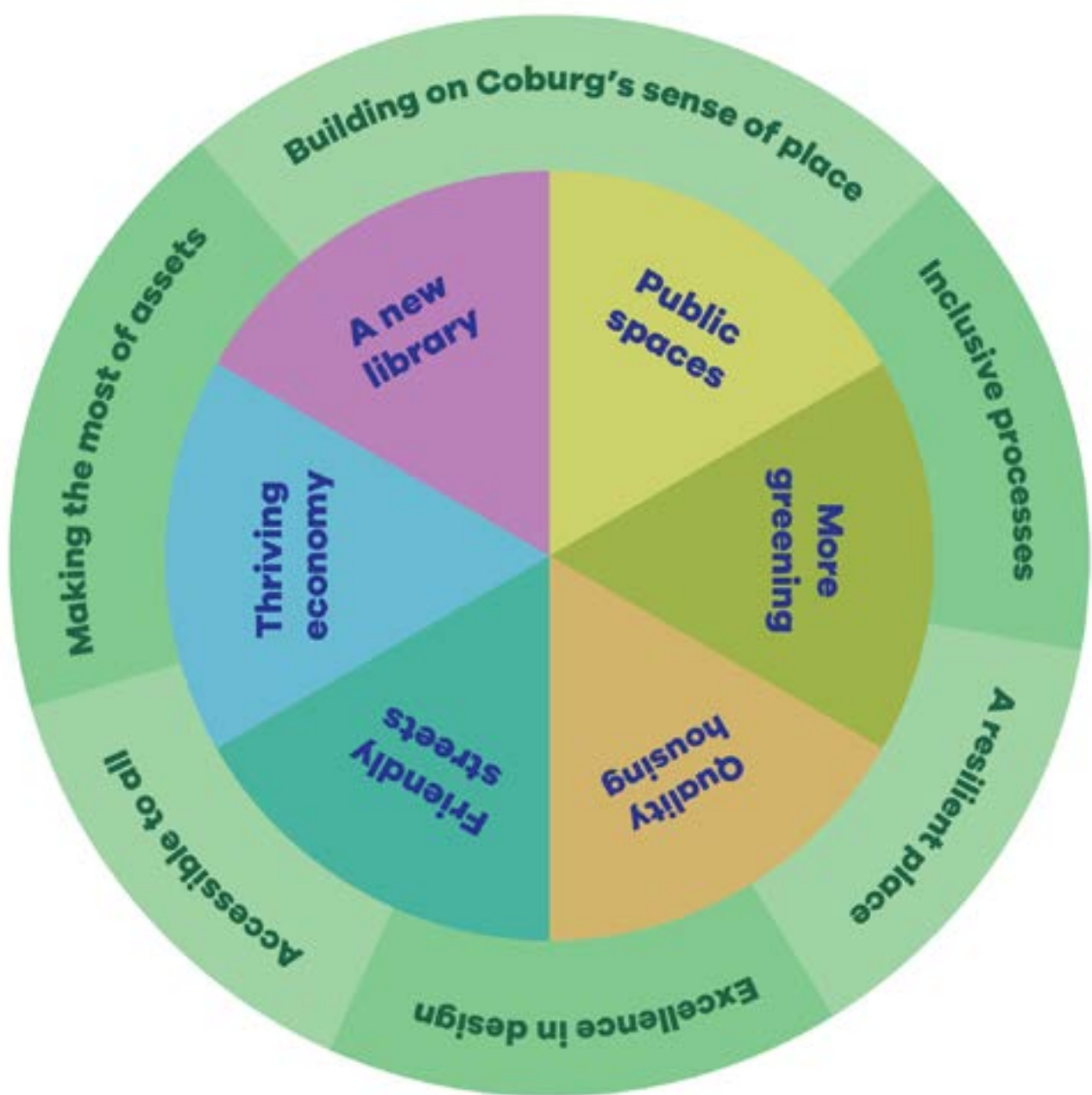
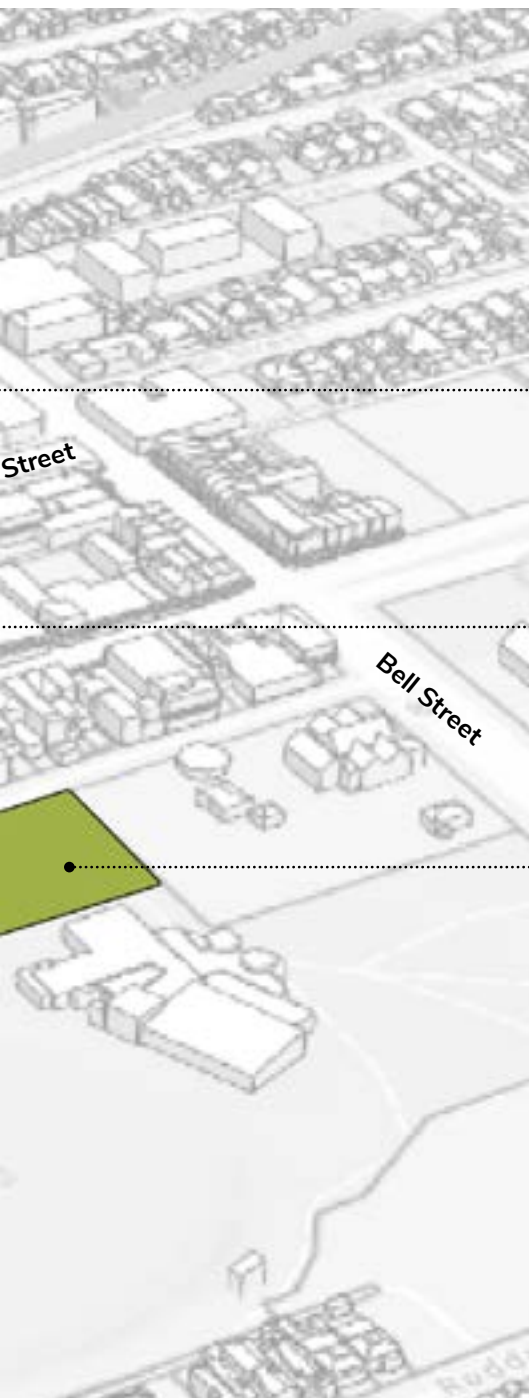


Figure 4. Precinct objectives and principles



Figure 5. Council-owned sites in central Coburg.



Waterfield St West Site
16,334m²

Waterfield St East Site
4,530m²

Russell St East Site
14,351m²

Context

Council is the owner of multiple large sites in central Coburg, which make up the program for Revitalising Coburg. The first project, the Coburg Health and Community Services Precinct on Bell Street is already underway. The Precinct will house an extensive array of healthcare facilities and social assistance programs, including GPs, aged care, childcare, and allied health services, and will support over 1,000 new construction and healthcare jobs.

Future opportunities

The next stage of Revitalising Coburg is focused on the remaining Council owned sites in central Coburg (see Figure 5 on the previous page). Each site has its own complex considerations that define what is possible for their future use. Better understanding these considerations will allow us to take a staged approach to delivering outcomes on each site. A raft of technical work is underway to understand in detail the opportunities and constraints of each site, including factors such as easements, leases, drainage, planning controls, and car parking, as well as the potential for partnerships.

These technical inputs will be considered alongside the objectives and principles to identify the best outcome for each site.



Waterfield Street West Site

The Waterfield Street West Site is an at-grade carpark, with some trees, that is directly adjacent to Coburg Station. It houses a former supermarket that is currently leased to the Coles Group with a sub-lease held by local arts organisation, Schoolhouse Studios.



Waterfield Street East Site

The Waterfield Street East Site is occupied by a Coles Supermarket. Sydney Road has an entrance to Coles as well as a number of smaller separately owned shopfronts.



Victoria Street North Site

The Victoria Street North Site is an at-grade carpark directly opposite the Coburg Library, it also includes trees, a public toilet and a small seating area.



Louisa Street Site

The Louisa Street East Site is an at-grade carpark that is directly behind the Coburg Library, it also includes trees and a small seating area.



Victoria Street South Site

The Victoria Street South Site is occupied by the Coburg Library. The library opened in 1983 after the renovation of an existing supermarket.



Russell Street East Site

The Russell Street Site is an at-grade carpark directly adjacent to Bridges Reserve and the Coburg Leisure Centre. The site includes trees, a public toilets and footpaths.



Our objectives

Our objectives establish the overarching goals, point to tangible outcomes and provide clear direction for the next stage of project planning (see Figure 6).

1. A New Library in the Heart of Coburg
2. New Inviting Public Spaces
3. More Greening and Cooling
4. High Quality Housing, Including Social and Affordable Housing
5. People Friendly Streets
6. Thriving Local Economy

Figure 6. Precinct objectives

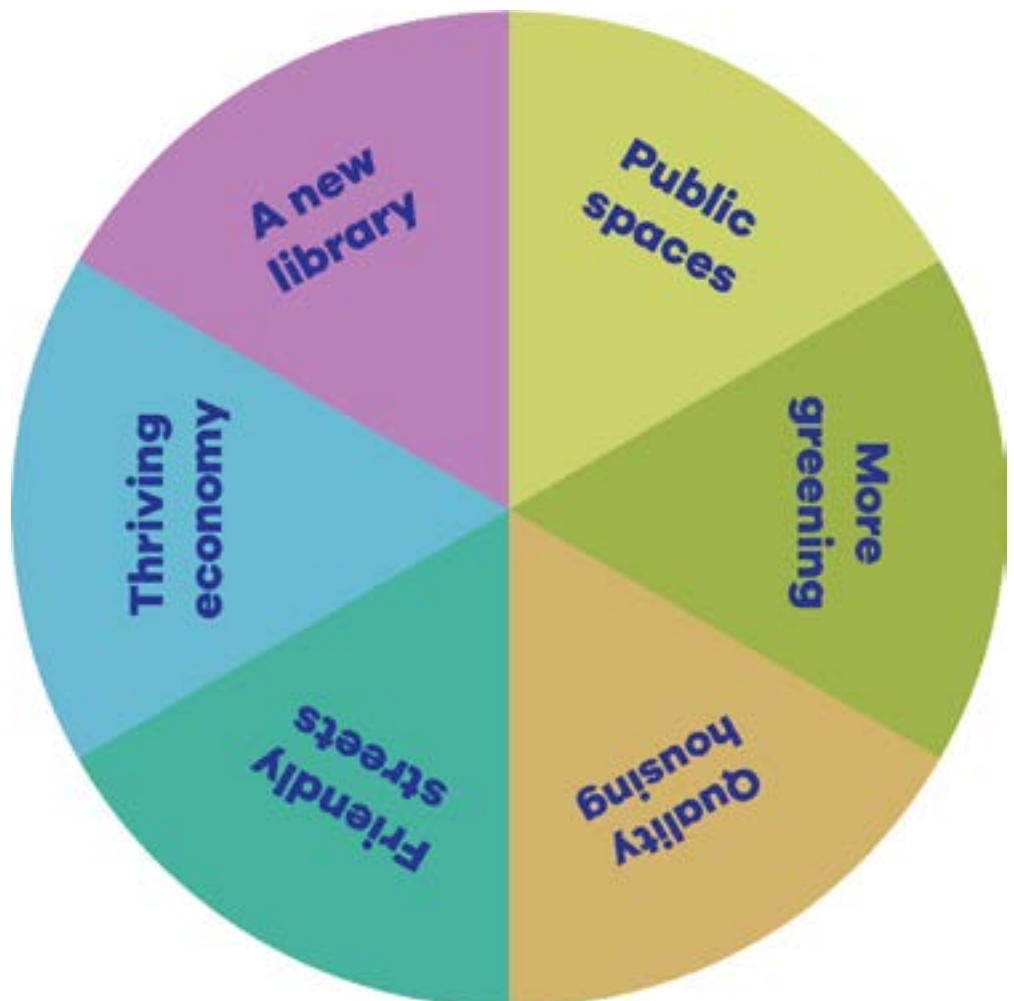


Photo from The Coburg
Conversation walk by Anna.

Objective 1

A new library in the heart of Coburg

A new leading library and cultural facility that is a place of welcome, learning, creativity and social connection for our diverse community. Climate-resilient, multifunctional and adaptable for varied experiences.

Why is it important?

The Community Infrastructure Plan 2022-2032 identified an opportunity to deliver a flagship library as part of the revitalisation of central Coburg. The Coburg Library is the largest and most central of Merri-bek's five libraries (at 985 square metres) and is the most well attended. Recent data from July to December 2023 indicates an average attendance of approximately 17,000 visitors at Coburg Library each month.¹

Both Merri-bek and Coburg are projected to experience a 24% population increase by 2036.² This increase in population will increase demand on the Coburg Library, which will need to accommodate the needs of both the current and future community.

What are the benefits?

A new fit-for purpose library will catalyse the revitalisation of Coburg and create new spaces, services and experiences for the growing Coburg community.

Reflecting community aspirations

Since the Coburg Library opened in 1983, there has been a cultural shift in the role and function of libraries as public spaces. The Coburg Conversation demonstrated that there was strong demand for a new public library that better meets the needs and aspirations of the community.

During the engagement, we heard many wonderful ideas for the library from children, young people, multicultural communities, people with disabilities, as well as countless others. Many of the aspirations for the library were shared, while others reflected the specific needs of different individuals and groups. Key themes included providing a third place which welcomes the community, expanded collections and facilities, including distinct and flexible spaces and creating connections to outdoor spaces, such as courtyards or rooftop gardens.

Improving climate resilience

A recent climate vulnerability assessment undertaken in 2023 found that the Coburg Library building has low to moderate resilience against six key climate vulnerability indicators.³ This demonstrates the need for a fit-for-purpose building that is comfortable to use all year round.

1 Libraries Visitor Data, 2024

2 Merri-bek Forecast Population, 2021

3 Climate Vulnerability Assessment, 2023



During The Coburg Conversation, many people shared their aspirations for a library that was better connected to the outdoors. Bargoonga Njanjin in Fitzroy North is a multi-storey library with a rooftop garden that incorporates planting and seating.

Figure 7. Bargoonga Njanjin Library in Fitzroy North. Source: Merri-bek City Council.

Key areas of further investigation

- Size, location and building design
- Library services and uses
- Other co-located uses
- Community needs assessment

Objective 2

New inviting public spaces

A new piazza, square or gathering space that acts as the main meeting and people watching place for Coburg, as well as other well integrated and well-maintained public spaces that provide a variety of opportunities for refuge, play, and connection to nature.

Why is it important?

We heard during The Coburg Conversation that participants wanted more flexible public and gathering spaces that provide different opportunities for respite, play and social connection. In Coburg, there are gaps in the provision of open space, with the Open Space Strategy identifying the need for multiple new local spaces, as well as the addition of a new civic space.¹ As the population continues to grow, these gaps in open space provision will only become more pronounced. There is an opportunity to deliver a high-quality public space in central Coburg that allows for cultural expression and provides a central meeting place for the community to gather.

What are the benefits?

Access to well-designed public spaces not only enhances mental and physical well-being but also promotes environmental sustainability and contributes positively to the local economy.

Better mental and physical health

Public spaces play an important role in promoting both mental and physical health and well-being. They provide places for social interaction, help to combat loneliness and promote social cohesion. Public spaces also facilitate physical activity and outdoor leisure, supporting healthier lifestyles and improving community health. Additionally, they allow people to connect to nature, supporting improved mental health and stress relief.²

Improved environmental resilience

Public spaces also play an important role in improving the environmental resilience of urban environments. The use of different types of surfaces and ways to manage stormwater helps to reduce runoff and flooding while supporting groundwater recharge. The incorporation of green elements such as trees, gardens and green infrastructure not only enhances the aesthetics of public space but also contributes to ecological resilience by supporting various plants and species.³

1 Open Space Strategy (Draft), 2023

2 Open Space for Everyone, 2021

3 Ibid



The Student Precinct at the University of Melbourne is a well used plaza that allows students to gather, socialise and study. The ampitheatre provides an outdoor space for events, with generous planting and different types of seating.

Figure 8. Student Precinct at the University of Melbourne. Source: Merri-bek City Council.

Key areas of further investigation

- Types, sizes and locations of open space
- Character and design of open space
- Water flows and water sensitive design

Objective 3

More greening and cooling

Incorporating planting into spaces, edges, streets and buildings to soften landscapes, build resilience, add shade, integrate water management throughout, and support biodiversity.

Why is it important?

We heard during The Coburg Conversation that participants wanted greener public places. With limited room for open space in our densifying neighbourhoods, incorporating planting and infrastructure into our urban environment is essential to creating liveable buildings and public spaces.

Extreme weather events are already having significant impacts on the community due to the effects of climate change. As we face a future of hotter summers and decreased water access, we have a responsibility to ensure that environmentally resilient and comfortable places are made accessible to the community.

In central Coburg, there is an opportunity to create a haven for both people and species, a place that supports biodiversity and is greener, cooler and more enjoyable for the community to spend time in.

What are the benefits?

Implementing greening and cooling strategies, such as improving stormwater management, enhancing the thermal performance of buildings, and increasing bio-diverse habitat, not only reduces energy budgets but also serves to mitigate the urban heat island effect.

Enhanced environmental performance

These measures not only help to lower temperatures in both buildings and public spaces but also improve air quality and overall community health. Additionally, these initiatives make streets and buildings more attractive, fostering a more vibrant and sustainable urban environment.¹

Improved health outcomes

There are many health benefits in providing more vegetation in urban environments. Exposure to nature improves people's ability to focus, cope with stress, generate creative ideas, and decreases volatile, anti-social behaviours.²

Places for refuge

Greener and cooler environments also provide places of refuge during hotter periods. As our climate gets warmer, extreme heat events are resulting in higher rates of illness and death in Victoria. High temperatures are more dangerous for vulnerable people, including people experiencing homelessness and the elderly.³

1 Growing Green Guide, 2014

2 Beyond Blue to Green, 2010

3 Heatwave in Victoria: an Assessment of Health Impacts, 2012



A densely planted area of open space in London's South Bank creates a shady urban forest and helps create a comfortable environment in the summer.

Figure 9. Open space in Southbank, London. Source: Merri-bek City Council.

Key areas of further investigation

- Health of existing trees
- Approaches to supporting biodiversity
- Tree canopy cover targets
- Approach to planting selection

Objective 4

New high-quality housing, Including social and affordable housing

Diverse and high-quality housing, including social and affordable housing, that targets those with the greatest need, for every age and stage of life, and that fosters a sense of community.

Why is it important?

There is a need for diverse, high-quality housing in Coburg to meet the needs of a growing population. When it comes to housing, people need to be able to access different types of housing at different stages across their lives.

There is a growing need for social and affordable housing in Merri-bek, particularly in Coburg. Since 2003, the median weekly rent has risen more than twice the rate of inflation, from \$200 to \$500. Central Coburg, with its close proximity to shops, services and public transport, is as an ideal location for social and affordable housing. Today, 4,341 households in Merri-bek (6.4%) are in need of affordable housing, 84% of which are low or very-low income.¹

What are the benefits?

Access to safe and secure housing supports diverse communities, improves quality of life and has long-term community benefits.

Access to safe and secure housing

The provision of diverse types of housing, including social and affordable housing, supports inclusion and diversity. It ensures that people have access to housing that suits their needs. Many studies have proven that a safe home improves physical and mental health, personal relationships and quality of family life, education and employment outcomes.²

Increasing vibrancy

Well-located housing allows people to access their daily needs close to their homes. It also brings new people to the neighbourhood, which increases vibrancy and increases support for local businesses. Central Coburg has excellent access to public transport, shops and services, making it an ideal location for housing.

Long-term benefits

Research shows that for every \$1 invested in affordable housing, the community benefits by \$3 due to worker retention, educational benefits, enhanced human capital, health cost savings, reduced family violence and reduced crime. Increasing affordable and social housing is an investment in both essential infrastructure and the people it supports, that has multiple benefits over the long term.³

1 City of Merri-bek housing monitor, 2024

2 City of Melbourne Affordable Housing Strategy, 2020

3 City of Melbourne Housing Needs Analysis, 2019



Well-designed housing in Copenhagen that uses high-quality materials, integrates greening and provides direct entrances to ground floor apartments.

Figure 10. Multi-storey housing in Copenhagen. Source: Merri-bek City Council.

Key areas of further investigation

- Design typologies and housing yield
- Funding models
- Partnership and delivery models
- Ratios for affordable housing types

Objective 5

People friendly streets

Safe, green, inviting, and accessible journeys that link key destinations and open space, and all types of transport to, from and within the precinct, giving clear priority to pedestrians, cyclists and those living with mobility issues.

Why is it important?

We heard during The Coburg Conversation that participants wanted better, safer, more pleasant, people-friendly streets. People-friendly streets are important as they enable people to access their everyday needs; get to the places they want to go and participate fully in society; combat inequality in the transport system; encourage physical activity and improved community health; and make all people feel safe and welcome.

Streets form an important part of the public space network, making up 70-80% of public land. For this reason, streets must support movement and place, rather than just movement alone.

What are the benefits?

People-friendly streets play an important role in improving the accessibility of the street network, strengthening the local economy, and reducing transport emissions and air pollution.

Enhanced connectivity

Prioritising different types of transport in different streets improves the accessibility and convenience of the street network. Whether wheeling, walking, cycling, driving or using public transport, people friendly streets accommodate all different types of movement. This reduces reliance on private vehicles, and improves ease of movement in the street network.

Increased footfall

People friendly streets play an important role in supporting the local economy by creating places for people to gather and linger. Vibrant streets encourage social interaction, increase economic activity and foster a sense of community. Businesses located on people friendly streets often experience increased foot traffic and customers, leading to increased sales and economic growth.

Reduced transport emissions

By prioritising sustainable forms of transport and reducing traffic congestion, people friendly streets contribute to significant reductions in transport emissions and air pollution. This decreases pollution levels and leads to a healthier urban environment.



Leicester Street is a people friendly street that has reduced traffic speeds, a bike lane and extensive planting. The footpath is separated from the street and adjacent public spaces integrate seating and bike parking.

Figure 11. Leicester Street in Carlton. Source: Merri-bek City Council.

Key areas of further investigation

- Movement and access study
- Defining approach to street design
- Planting selection
- Movement hierarchy

Objective 6

Thriving diverse local economy

A place that nurtures local business, supports jobs, meets local needs, and provides a rich and varied experience for locals and visitors, day and night.

Why is it important?

We heard during the Coburg Conversation that participants wanted more variety in local businesses, including a stronger evening economy. Diverse and thriving local businesses provide the community with both its critical 'needs' (e.g., groceries, clothing, health services, etc.) and 'wants'; thereby meeting the community's desire for varied and inviting places to shop, dine, access services, and be engaged and entertained.

A thriving local economy in central Coburg will provide the community with access to a high proportion of these needs and wants, improving their satisfaction with their neighbourhood.

What are the benefits?

A stronger local economy in central Coburg will increase local jobs, reduce loss of expenditure and reduce local traffic movements by providing shops and services within close proximity of people's homes and workplaces.

Increased local jobs

Thriving businesses help ensure there are a number and range of local jobs, providing people with incomes and livelihoods. 'Income and social status' is recognised as one of the critical determinants of health, both for individuals and for communities.¹

Reduced loss of expenditure

Meeting the needs and wants of the local community within central Coburg will reduce the need for people to travel outside of Merri-bek. This supports an increased availability of business and employment opportunities for local people.

Reduced traffic movements

Given central Coburg is well-served by public transport infrastructure, a thriving local economy in this location reduces the need for people to travel to competing centres outside of Coburg, which are sometimes inaccessible by public transport and only accessible by car.

1 Determinants of Health, 2017



Yarraville's diverse shops and businesses, and their relationship to public space, create activity day and evening

Figure 12. Ballarat Street in Yarraville. Source: Merri-bek City Council.

Key areas of further investigation

- Research into local market conditions
- Research into employment trends and projections
- Consideration of mix of retail, commercial and social enterprise uses

CHARCOAL CHICKEN



FRESH SALADS



TASTY Rooster
on charcoal

WE LA JONCA CHICKENS

COBURG OPTICAL CENTRE
OPTOMETRISTS
CONTACT LENS PRACTITIONERS
Ph: 9354 5750

CO COBURG OPTICAL
CONTACT LENS PRACTITIONERS



Our principles

Our principles are the guidelines that we will use to shape our decision-making and actions as the project progresses. The principles will ensure our actions are aligned with community aspirations and Merri-bek policies and strategies (see Figure 13).

1. Building on Coburg's Unique Sense of Place
2. Inclusive and Collaborative Processes
3. A Resilient Place
4. Excellence in Design
5. Accessible to All
6. Making the Most of Assets

Figure 13. Precinct principles



Photograph by Simon Aubor.

Principle 1

Building on Coburg's unique sense of place

Integrating elements that make First Nations culture visible, reference Coburg's rich history, and embrace its vibrant multicultural society, reflecting diverse layers of identity and belonging.

Why is it important?

Coburg is a well-loved neighbourhood and this was reflected in The Coburg Conversation. In that conversation, we heard that people found Coburg welcoming, friendly, generous and unpretentious. That it was valued as a place shaped by migrant communities, local characters, history and heritage.

People appreciated the diverse, small local businesses, clustered amenities and services and the availability of affordable fresh and cooked food. There was also an appreciation for local gathering spaces, people watching, coffee culture and the emerging local arts scene. There was a strong desire to make First Nations culture more visible in the future and to provide opportunities to express the importance of multicultural communities in shaping central Coburg.¹



Figure 14. Sweets at a local store on Sydney Road.
Photograph by Simon Aubor.

It is important that Revitalising Coburg does not replace that which is loved and valued about the area, but instead makes use of underused spaces to bring in new facilities, services, spaces and streets that build on its existing unique charms and local character.

1 The Coburg Conversation Community Engagement Report



Figure 15. People gathering for lunch in Victoria Street Mall. Photograph by Simon Aubor.

Principle 2

Inclusive of current and future communities

Continuing to listen to the diverse communities of Coburg to deeply understand needs, aspirations, and lived experience, while also considering the needs of future generations.

Why is it important?

Our diverse communities of Coburg, as experts in their own lives, have an important voice in shaping the future of central Coburg.

We know that our community is made up of a range of people who represent our diversity in cultural, language, gender, age and socio-economic backgrounds, and that they each bring their own unique perspectives to the conversations that we have with them.

As well as listening to our current communities, we must also consider the needs of the future communities of Coburg. Both those that might live in Coburg in the near future, as well as future generations.

Throughout this project, we'll be guided by ongoing conversations with the community and other key stakeholders which will allow us to understand and balance the needs of the many different people that live, work and play in Coburg.



Figure 17. As part of The Coburg Conversation, Merri-bek City Council and Schoolhouse Studios invited four artist collectives to explore what the future of libraries could be in the context of imagining the possibilities for a renewed Coburg Library. This image is from an event curated by Saluhan, a collective created to establish a network between creatives in Australia and the Phillipines. Image: Merri-bek City Council.

Principle 3

A resilient place

Climate-resilient buildings and public spaces that act as a sanctuary for the community. Design that celebrates the value and cultural significance of water, and considers how we can capture, reuse and integrate it into the precinct.



Figure 18. View of Coburg Library from Louisa Street.
Photograph by Preethi Subramaniam.

Why is it important?

Climate change is already contributing to more extreme weather events, such as floods, bushfires and heatwaves, that will only worsen in the coming decades. Council must ensure that the design of our services, buildings and public realm take into account the impacts of extreme weather events and how they will impact the community.

The impact of flooding and heatwaves are both key climate risks to be managed in central Coburg. In flood areas, flash floods can occur with little or no warning and in urban areas can pose health and safety risks, including disease, infection and injury.¹

In Australia, heatwaves result in a higher number of deaths than floods and bushfires. Heatwaves also result in other impacts such as heat-related illnesses, increases in family violence and impacts on mental health. These climate events disproportionately impact on the most at-risk in our diverse community such as older people, infants, and people with chronic health conditions.²

We will keep climate resilience central to our thinking as we develop Revitalising Coburg to ensure that we face these future challenges to the greatest possible extent.

1 Urban Flash Floods, 2024
2 Climate Risk Strategy, 2022

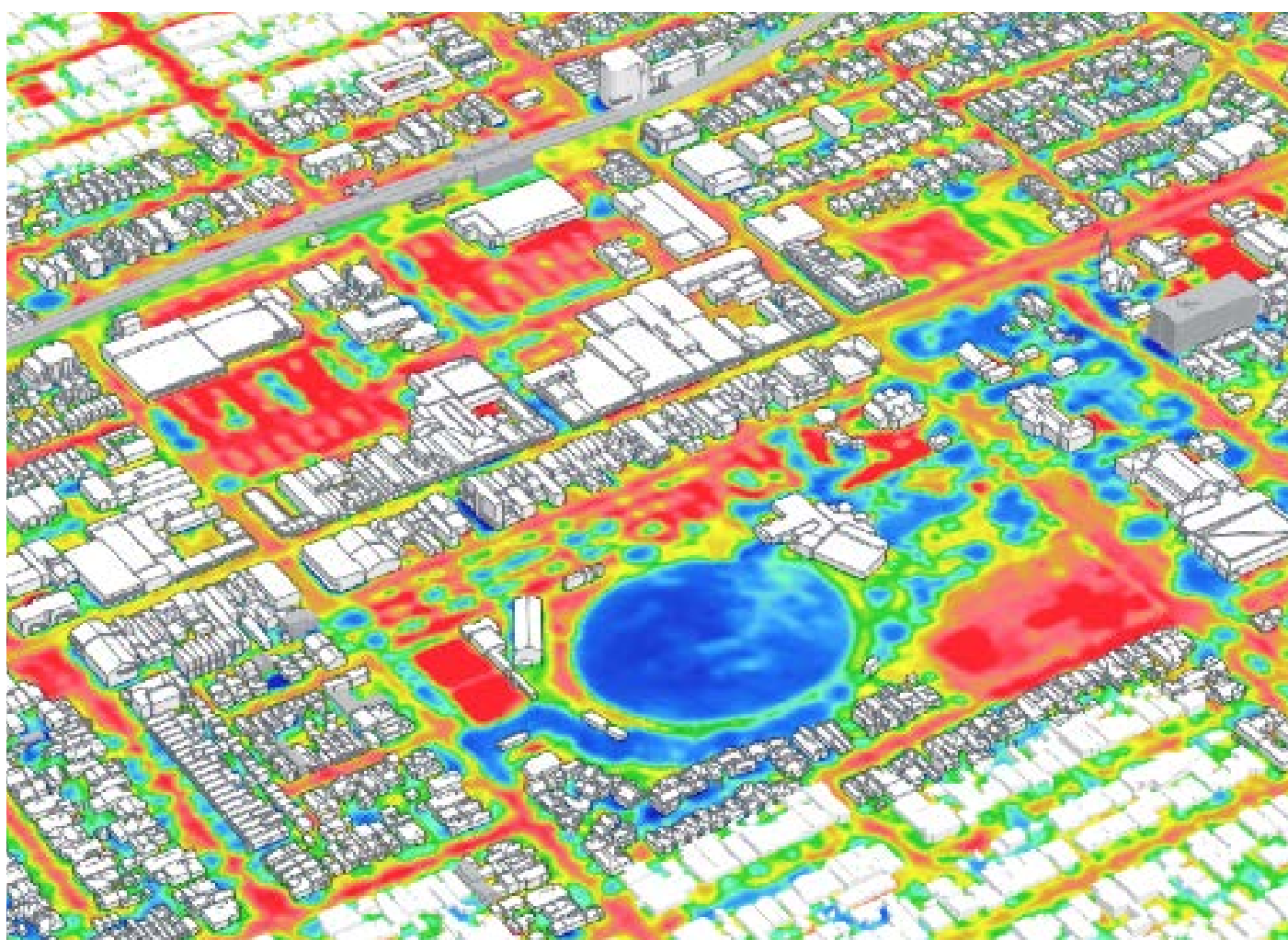


Figure 19. Daytime Thermal Imaging, February 2023. Source: Virtual Merri-bek

Principle 4

Excellence in design

Exemplary design processes that facilitate the delivery of universal and sustainable design throughout, and deliver distinctive, welcoming and loved new places within the precinct.



Figure 20. Calle de Bailen, Madrid. Source: Merri-bek City Council.

Why is it important?

The design of our buildings, public spaces and streets shape the places where we work, live and meet. The quality of design affects how spaces and places function and how they integrate with their broader environment. This has the potential to enrich people's experience of place and attract a greater number of people to spend time in the public realm. New development has the potential to improve quality of life, stimulate the economy and enhance the environment.

To achieve good design outcomes, good design needs to be at the centre of all development processes from project definition to concept design and through to construction and maintenance. A good design process is based on an understanding of place through research and analysis, and considers alternatives and options. Good design occurs because it is shaped by many different perspectives. When designing at the precinct scale, it is important to involve and engage diverse stakeholders and designers in order to create a rich and varied place.

Design has a central role to play in resolving the complexity of contemporary social, economic and environmental challenges.¹ Excellence in design will be a key driver throughout the delivery of this program, to ensure we maximise the sense of local identity, high functionality, and feeling of ease and welcome for all.

1 Adapted from Better Placed, 2017

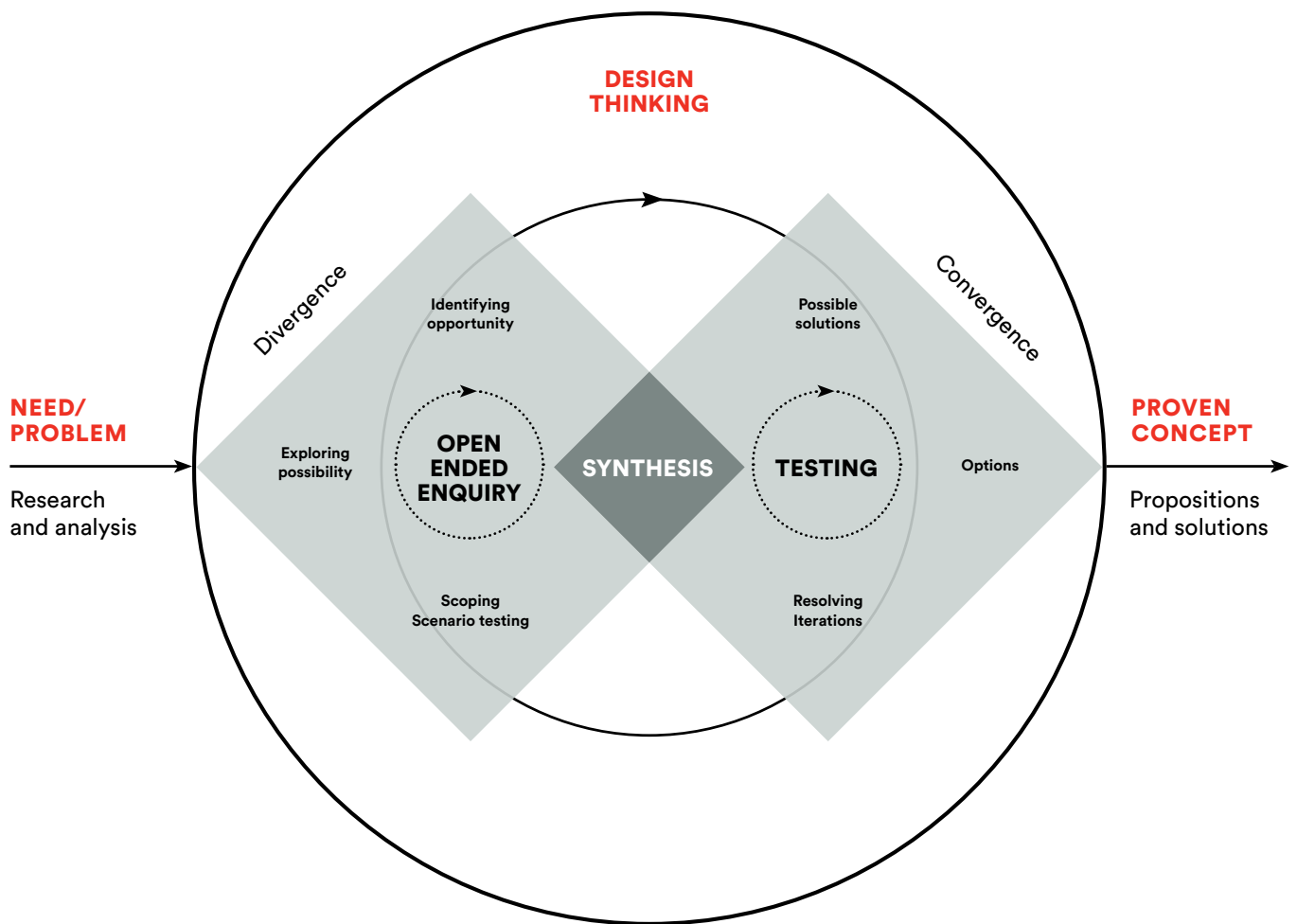


Figure 21. Design thinking. Source: Better Placed, 2017.

Principle 5

Accessible to all

Services, programs and facilities that are accessible to all people in our diverse community.



Figure 22. People walking by Schoolhouse Studios mural. Photograph by Simon Auber.

Why is it important?

Merri-bek is one community, proudly diverse. Council recognises that it has an important role in protecting and promoting human rights by ensuring that all people in our community are supported to fully participate in the life of the city.

Accessibility ensures that everyone, regardless of their abilities, can access services, programs and facilities. By making things accessible, you provide equal opportunities for participation, engagement and participation.

Making spaces, services and facilities accessible promotes inclusivity and diversity by removing barriers that might otherwise exclude certain groups of people. Council is committed to continually removing barriers to access to support our diverse communities.

Designing for accessibility leads to a better user experience for everyone. By focusing on accessibility to everyone, Coburg's existing strength of its multiculturalism and diversity of all kinds, will be further enhanced and celebrated

There are 26,574 people living in Coburg

**44% of residents had
both parents born
overseas**

**6% of people speak
another language, and
English not well or not
at all**

**138 people identify
as Aboriginal and/or
Torres Strait Islander**

**7% of people need
support in their day-
to-day lives due to
disability**

**5% of people
experience a mental
health condition**

**13% of households
have no car**

Figure 23. ABS Census Data, 2021

Principle 6

Making the most of assets

Finding better ways to use our land, deliver more community benefit, and safeguard our services into the future.

Exploration of innovative financial and delivery models with partners who share our values and vision, and who can deliver high-quality outcomes in the precinct.



Figure 24. Waterfield Street carpark. Photograph by Thomas Combe.

Why is it important?

Revitalising Coburg using Council's land is a large-scale and challenging proposition, and one that we will not be able to do alone.

Due to the complexity of the land issues in an urban area like this one, we will have to work with a wide variety of partners. This could mean State and Federal Government departments who support the delivery of community facilities or affordable housing. It could mean water authorities who own or manage drainage systems that impact what can be accommodated here.

It might mean partners who can work with us to provide and manage new housing, including social and affordable housing, or new shops like the two supermarkets that Council owns and leases to the Coles Group and new smaller cafes, bars and shops that broaden the retail offer, to deliver on the community aspirations we heard about in The Coburg Conversation.

There are many different models of who will fund, build and operate various elements of a large-scale piece of city fabric like we are seeking to create in the heart of Coburg. This principle ensures we keep an openness to explore all possible approaches, so that we maximise what can be delivered for existing and future communities, as well as ensuring our plans are feasible, deliverable and financially responsible.



- Coburg Library
- Coles Supermarket
- Schoolhouse Studios
- Carparks

Figure 25. Council-owned sites in central Coburg.



Evidence and policy

The precinct objectives and principles are underpinned by the Merri-bek and Victorian Government policies, as well as other best-practice research.

OBJECTIVE	EVIDENCE AND POLICY	YEAR	SOURCE
General	The Central Coburg Structure Plan	2006	●
	The Colours of Coburg Place Framework	2012	●
A New Library in The Heart of Coburg	Climate Vulnerability Assessment	2023	●
	Community Infrastructure Plan	2022	●
	Library Infrastructure Plan	2021	●
	Libraries Services Strategy	2019	●
	Community Needs Analysis and Infrastructure Audit	2021	●
	Sustainable Council Buildings Policy	2018	●
New Inviting Public Spaces	Open Space Strategy (Draft)	2023	●
	Open Space for Everyone	2023	○
More Greening And Cooling	Urban Forest Strategy	2017	●
	Climate Risk Strategy	2022	●
	Nature Plan	2020	●

KEY ● Merri-bek
○ Victorian Government

OBJECTIVE	EVIDENCE AND POLICY	YEAR	SOURCE
More Greening And Cooling	Urban Forest Strategy	2017	●
	Climate Risk Strategy	2022	●
	Nature Plan	2020	●
New High-Quality Housing, Including Social and Affordable Housing	Social and Affordable Housing in Central Coburg Scoping Report	2023	●
	Affordable Housing Action Plan 2022-26	2022	●
	Homelessness Strategy	2024	●
People Friendly Streets	Integrated Transport Strategy	2017	●
	Movement and Place Framework	2019	○
	Transport Accessibility Strategy (Draft)	2023	○
Thriving Diverse Local Economy	Economic Development Action Plan (Forthcoming)	2024-27	●
	Visitor Attraction Action Plan	2021-24	●
	Central Coburg Business Association Placemaking Activation Plan	2021	●

KEY ● Merri-bek
○ Victorian Government

PRINCIPLE	EVIDENCE AND POLICY	YEAR	SOURCE
Building On Coburg's Unique Sense of Place	Merri-bek Community Vision	2021-31	●
	The Coburg Conversation Engagement Report	2024	●
	Arts and Culture Strategy	2023-30	●
Inclusive Of Current and Future Communities	Community Engagement Policy	2023	●
	Human Rights Policy	2016-26	●
A Resilient Place	Climate Risk Strategy and Action Plan	2023-25	●
	Integrated Water Management Strategy	2020-25	●
	Drainage Asset Management Plan	2020	●
	Urban Heat Island Effect Action Plan	2017-26	●
Excellence In Design	Zero Carbon Merri-bek	2022	●
	Victorian Urban Design Guidelines	2017	○

KEY ● Merri-bek
○ Victorian Government

PRINCIPLE	EVIDENCE AND POLICY	YEAR	SOURCE
Accessible to All	Gender Equality Commitment	2019	●
	Disability Access and Inclusion Plan	2022-26	●
	LGBTIQA+ Action Plan	2023-26	●
	Social Cohesion Plan	2022-25	●
	Food Systems Strategy	2024-27	●
	Statement of Commitment to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities	2021	●
Making The Most of Assets	Asset Management Policy	2019	●
	10 Year Asset Plan	2023-32	●
	Strategic Property Framework	2022	●

KEY ● Merri-bek
○ Victorian Government

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Next steps

The objectives allow us to move into more detailed investigations, including spatial considerations, funding and delivery models, and partnership arrangements (see Figure 26).

The Coburg Conversation will continue as the program unfolds. Follow [The Coburg Conversation](#) on Conversations Merri-bek for updates.

Revitalising Coburg Program

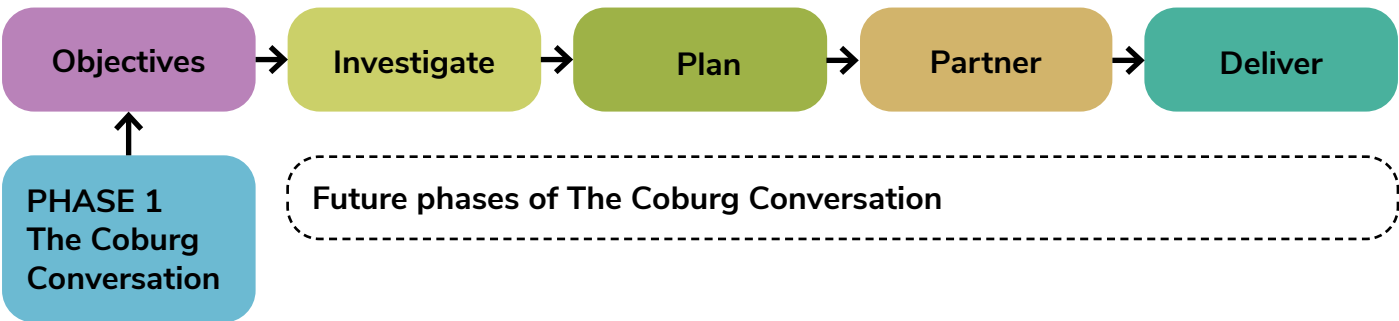


Figure 26. Next steps