

COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN 2022 Review Explanatory Paper



WILLOUGHBY
CITY COUNCIL

City of Diversity

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Introduction

Community Strategic Plans are produced by local councils to describe their community's vision and aspirations and, by doing this, help set the strategic direction for the Council when serving this community.

Willoughby City Council produced its ten-year Community Strategic Plan, known as Our Future Willoughby, in 2018. Willoughby City Council is now reviewing this plan, so it reflects emerging trends and issues since 2018.

The updated CSP has been informed by a range of targeted discussions with Council employees, NSW Government agencies and community groups. It also incorporates and builds on community feedback received over the past five years through community perception and community wellbeing surveys and range of other new policy-specific strategic documents (such as the Willoughby Housing Strategy).

At the same time as updating the CSP, the Council is creating a new four-year Delivery Program, which outlines the Council's key programs and actions, along with releasing an Operational Plan and Resourcing Strategy for 2022/23. These documents all seek to implement the updated Community Strategic Plan.

This analysis provides a summary of the key trends and issues which have been identified since 2018, including through the stakeholder engagement process. It also outlines how the Community Strategic Plan, and its companion Delivery Program, are proposed to change in response to these trends and issues.

What's Changed Since 2018

1. More extreme weather events requiring a greater focus on local resilience outcomes
2. COVID-19 has changed Willoughby's way of life
3. Reduced urban tree canopy and vegetation cover
4. Changes in government policy, in areas including waste, recycling and infrastructure contributions
5. Demographic changes, including an increasing number of single person households
6. Declining housing affordability
7. Increased community focus on the need for enhanced customer service and community engagement

New Trends and Issues

Resilience

South-eastern Australia, in which Willoughby is located, is experiencing more extreme weather events, including hotter temperatures, more bushfires and less rainfall but an increase in individual heavy rainfall events.¹ These events have environmental, financial, social and health implications for Willoughby and, unless managed, a disproportionate impact on some of Willoughby's most vulnerable people.

This situation places an expectation on Council to put in place measures to help the community to be more resilient to these extreme events. It also requires addressing pre-existing stresses such as climate change, a loss of shady urban tree canopy, housing affordability and social cohesion and connectedness. To this end, the Council is a member of Resilient Sydney, a collaboration of metropolitan councils of Greater Sydney to develop and implement the Resilient Sydney Strategy 2018 to address the city resilience challenges.

How We've Responded to This Trend

The updated Community Strategic Plan includes a new Community Priority 2.8 to "Increase community resilience to shocks and stresses". Resilience is also referenced in the amended title to Outcome 2 "A city that is connected, inclusive and resilient". It is further reinforced in the Vision through "We recognise the past while creating new liveable places, strong and resilient communities and homes for the future." and "... facilitate strong and resilient communities and natural systems adopted to shocks and stresses."

The Community Strategic Plan contains Guiding Principles for sustainability, social justice and ethical government. The principle for Ethical Government now includes "Seek to reduce the harmful effects of shocks and stresses on society, ecosystems, economies and infrastructure" and mirrors wording from LG NSW (NSW's peak local government body).

As outlined in the Delivery Program, this will be implemented through the Council's Resilience Strategy and Action Plan 2021. Council will also continue to address climate change through 100% renewable energy generation and purchase, its solar bulk buy program for residents and community education initiatives.

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to significant changes in the way that Willoughby's residents go about their daily lives and interact with their local community.

The latest Australian Bureau of Statistics research shows that the percentage of employed Australians who regularly worked from home has increased from less than 30 per cent in August 2015 to more than 40 per cent in August 2021.² Furthermore, the Productivity Commission has found that many jobs can be effectively done from home, and it appears that the number of people working from home will remain much higher than it was previously.³

¹ See <http://www.bom.gov.au/state-of-the-climate/australias-changing-climate.shtml>

² <https://www.abs.gov.au/media-centre/media-releases/more-40-cent-australians-worked-home>

³ Page 2, The Productivity Commission, Working from home, Research paper, Commonwealth of Australia 2021

This means that Willoughby residents are now far more likely to be interacting with their nearby local centres and open space areas, particularly during weekdays when they previously would have been at a distant employment location. Research has shown an increase in the amount of work done from home has stimulated some economic activity in local economic centres.⁴

In addition, COVID-19 has also more than likely led to more local residents using their cars to get to work, rather than public transport, potentially because of concerns about being infected by other public transport users.⁵ If commuters who used public transport pre-pandemic switch to using their cars, this could actually increase congestion on the roads.⁶ This situation has highlighted the need for the Council to provide active transport routes, as an alternative to car travel.

COVID-19 has also highlighted concerns about the mental health impacts of increased isolation, particularly among youth and older community members during lockdown periods.

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on Council finances. This included lower revenue from Council's service delivery due to closures of community facilities and an increase in demand for non-revenue generating services such as parks and shared paths.

These economic impacts of the pandemic as well as rising prices, continued rate pegging, labour shortages, and inflationary prices associated with disrupted goods and materials supply chains, will have an impact on resourcing the delivery of infrastructure and services to respond to our community profile.

How We've Responded to This Trend

The implementation of Council's Economic Development Strategy 2022 will support economic recovery and growth. New measures have been introduced into the Community Strategic Plan to monitor the City's economic progress. The Delivery Program seeks to strengthen support to local businesses through new economic development programs, such as the Shop Local campaign, developing a night-time economy, activating laneways in the CBD and introducing planning provisions to make the most of economic activity in local centres. Other initiatives include continuing to implement the streetscape enhancement programs for local centres including Artarmon and Naremburn (Outcome 4).

The new Culture Bites program will further activate the CBD with a range of diverse offerings that promote the area over the entire year.

In regard to active transport, the Council will deliver major shared path initiatives along the Pacific Highway from Chatswood to St Leonards, and other key commuter routes as an alternative to cars and public transport. The Vision now links public and active transport to climate change benefits in "Public transport options, connected walkways and cycle paths help minimise the impact of cars on our roads and provide us with healthier choices and reduced emissions."

The importance of local facilities is recognised in the Delivery Program through further enhancements proposed for 20 ovals, 13 parks and six playgrounds over the next four years.

The updated Community Strategic Plan Community Priority 3.1 has now been expanded to refer to the need for the Council to work to "foster feelings of inclusion", along with safety and cleanliness.

⁴ Page 55, The Productivity Commission, Working from home, Research paper, Commonwealth of Australia 2021

⁵ The Productivity Commission, Working from home, Research paper, Commonwealth of Australia 2021, page

⁶ The Productivity Commission, Working from home, Research paper, Commonwealth of Australia 2021

The COVID-19 issues relating to financial sustainability are addressed in Council’s Resourcing Strategy including the Long-Term Financial Plan.

Urban tree canopy and vegetation cover

While Willoughby’s suburbs continue to predominantly have a leafy suburban character, it is a matter of concern that there has been a decrease in tree canopy cover on residential land between 2018 and 2021.

Change in urban canopy in Willoughby LGA (hectares)	
2018:	2021:
263.96	255.28

Tree canopy cover has a number of benefits for the environmental, social and economic sustainability of the LGA, and for the health of the local population. This includes providing shade and increasing urban amenity during a warming climate, which encourages walking and cycling as well as ecological habitat.

The Council’s adopted Local Strategic Planning Statement has a target to increase the LGA’s tree canopy cover from 36% in 2016 to 40% by 2036. This is reflected in the inclusion of a new measure for tree canopy in the Community Strategic Plan.

How We’ve Responded to This Trend

The updated Community Strategic Plan’s Community Priority 1.1 now specifically refers to the need to create and enhance Willoughby’s tree canopy and greening which recognises green roofs and walls. A new measure has also been included for tree canopy cover.

As outlined in the Delivery Program, Council will seek to implement these objectives through strengthened controls in its new comprehensive land-use planning framework and other urban greening strategies, including a street tree census.

Changes in government policy

A range of new State-level policies have been developed, including in relation to resource recovery, infrastructure funding and rate pegging, which require a response in the Council’s updated Community Strategic Plan and complementary Delivery Program.

For instance, the NSW Government developed a Circular Economy Policy to maximise the value of resources and reduce waste. This has expectations for councils in the adoption of circular economy principles and actions.

The NSW Government also released its Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041 which outlines measures to reduce waste and emissions. Targets include reducing total waste generated by 10% per person by 2030 and 80% average recovery rate from all waste streams by 2030.

Delivering the strategy will involve significant changes, that require ongoing collaboration between the waste industry, businesses, households, the State government, Regions of Councils and Council. Separate collections and treatment systems for food only waste (FO) or food and green organic material (FOGO) have been mandated for the introduction by councils by 2030. Preliminary estimates indicate that it will cost councils about \$15m to introduce this with significant costs also in annual operational costs including ongoing community education.

Changes in global recycling markets, triggered by China’s new standards for recyclable material, has seen the cost of processing kerbside recyclables increase significantly.

The NSW Government is also planning changes to infrastructure contribution rules which could change the way development contribution are paid and reduce contributions paid by developers to councils towards the costs of vital community infrastructure. This will have an impact on resources available for infrastructure needed to support increased demands brought about by development.

Finally, the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal has made recommendations to the NSW Government about capping or limiting the amount of increase that can be made to the Domestic Waste Levy at the very time when additional funding is required to implement the FO/FOGO system.

An ongoing issue is that continued rate pegging limits the ability of councils to raise rate revenue, with the resultant problem that rating income is not keeping up with rising costs. This will be addressed in Council’s Resourcing Strategy, including its Long-Term Financial Plan.

How We’ve Responded to This Trend

The updated Community Strategic Plan’s Community Priority 1.4 has been strengthened to now refer to “maximising” use of waste. Targets have been included in the CSP for reducing the total waste generated by 10% per person by 2030 and 80% average recovery rate from all waste streams by 2030.

To this end, Willoughby City Council has joined with seven other councils on the North Shore to pilot Food Only collections to assist planning for the introduction of food waste recycling. FO/FOGO services are also recognised as a priority in the Council’s Delivery Program.

In relation to issues such as rate pegging and infrastructure contribution impacts, the updated Community Strategic Plan retains the existing Community Priority 5.2 to “Demonstrate leadership and advocacy for local priorities” but strengthens this by a new priority in the Delivery Program for the Council to “Advocate for community priorities and ensure financial sustainability”. The Community Strategic Plan’s Guiding Principle for Ethical Government now includes reference to “Advocacy on behalf of its residents, local area and environment.”

This new Delivery Program priority is supported by a more detailed action to “Advocate to influence decisions relating to infrastructure contribution changes, rate peg and Northern Beaches Tunnel Link and other matters as relevant.”

Demographic shifts

Population has grown 1.1% since 2018. Although population growth is expected to slow in the short term due to fewer international arrivals and a reduced birth rate, forecasts suggest Willoughby will continue to grow. Population growth places more pressure upon the natural environment and the use of virgin resources.

Willoughby LGA population forecast⁷	
Today:	2030
81,196	88,711

The population will not just grow, however; it will also change. People in Willoughby aged 65+ are likely to rise from 14% to 17% in the next 10 years. It’s been forecast that between 2020 and 2026 there will be a 0.9% increase in population under working age, a 27.8% increase in population of

⁷ .id (informed decisions), Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2016

retirement age, and a 10.1% increase in population of working age.⁸ Household composition is expected to change. By 2026 the largest forecast increase is expected in ‘Lone person households’ leading to an increasing risk of social isolation.

These demographic shifts will place significant demands on Willoughby services and infrastructure including recreation facilities.

How We’ve Responded to This Trend

Responses to population growth and changing household compositions, will include planning for population growth, an ageing population and increased lone person households across all services and programs.

The Delivery Program has a priority for the upgrade and delivery of new recreation facilities including a major upgrade of pool hall at Willoughby Leisure Centre to be completed in 2024, the construction of the Artarmon Parklands Pavilion in 2022 and progressing the Gore Hill Indoor Stadium.

Promoting social connections is strengthened in the Community Strategic Plan through the proposed amendment of the existing Community Priority 2.1 to refer to all “all types of households and families” in relation to creating that neighbourhoods that connect people.

The Delivery Plan also explicitly recognises this in the programs and gatherings offered at its neighbourhood centres through the action “Implement neighbour connection initiatives including Neighbour Day, programs at Dougherty Community Centre, Willoughby Park Centre, MOSAIC and volunteer programs.”

Inclusion is strengthened in the Community Strategic Plan by the explicit recognition of indigenous people in Community Priority 2.2 which is to “Respect and celebrate our indigenous and non-indigenous history and heritage”. Within its Delivery Program, the Council has also committed to adopt an Indigenous Strategy and Reconciliation Action Plan by June 2023 and to review and Implement the Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2022-2026 by 30 June 2026.

The digital divide and need for digital literacy is recognised in the Community Strategic Plan with the redrafting of Community Priority 2.6 “Foster a digitally enabled community”. The Delivery Program commits Council to adopting a Digital Strategy by July 2023.

New measures have been added for safety, connection to the local areas and ease of access to services and facilities.

Housing

House prices and rents have increased. The increase in the price of homes in Willoughby has not been matched by a commensurate increase in median weekly household income. Over time declining affordability will continue to prevent low and moderate income earners from entering the property market. This may force our younger population to move to more affordable areas, which could contribute to the ageing demographic of Willoughby and to reduced contact with family and friends. Relatively high rental costs also prevent existing tenants of social and community housing from moving back into the private rental market if their circumstances improve and they no longer require high subsidy social housing.

⁸ .id (informed decisions), Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2016

High median housing prices, together with the preference for working closer to home, may make it difficult for the Willoughby area to attract and retain workers on more modest incomes that are so vital to our local economy.

21% of residents as a direct result of housing costs, have unwillingly had to sacrifice spending on other things⁹

The numbers of all types of households – parents with children, couples without children, single people and others – will grow, indicating that Willoughby will need to provide diverse housing options to support changing needs.

How We've Responded to This Trend

The Community Strategic Plan has a new Community Priority 3.6 “Promote housing choice and affordability.” Council has developed its Housing Strategy for future residential development and its Affordable Housing Strategy for more affordable housing in the City which will be incorporated into the local environment plan to help meet its target. A new measure has been included for affordable housing.

The Council currently manages 37 affordable housing premises for key workers and is building two affordable housing projects at Abbott Road, Artarmon and Sailors Bay Road, Northbridge.

Customer service and community engagement

Council recorded a high level of satisfaction (96%) in the provision of services, facilities and programs with the benchmark for councils being 89%.¹⁰ All of the 38 services measured in the survey were at or above the metropolitan council benchmark. Areas for improvement were also identified; some of which are not the responsibility or the sole responsibility for Council to deliver. They included traffic and parking, balancing population growth with services and infrastructure and planning and building permits.

88% of residents satisfied with the Council's consultation and engagement compared to a Council benchmark of 85%.¹¹ However, community engagement was identified in the Community Perception Survey in 2020 as an opportunity for improvement. ‘Council Engagement’ (23%) was the top suggested Council improvement, which consisted of comments such as improved communication, provision of information, transparency and listening to residents.

How We've Responded to This Trend

A new Community Priority has been introduced into the Community Strategic Plan, namely Priority 5.7 “Deliver excellent customer service.” Council will continue its customer service training for staff across all Council services and develop Customer Experience Strategy by December 2022 with implementation to follow. A new Council Customer Service Centre will open in April 2022 on the ground floor at Victor Street making access much easier for customers.

Community Priority 5.5 has been strengthened by reinforcing engagement in decision making. In addition, the Delivery Program commits the Council to review its Community Engagement Strategy and Community Engagement Framework (policy and processes) in 2022.

⁹ Community Wellbeing Survey, Willoughby City Council, 2019

¹⁰ Willoughby City Council Community Perception Survey 2020

¹¹ Willoughby City Council Community Perception Survey 2020

Alignment to Federal, State and Regional Strategies and Plans

In the development of the Community Strategic Plan, Council is required to take into account Federal, State Government and Regional Strategies and Plans as part to ensure our plans and strategies align with and support their plans and strategies.

This review is summarised in Attachment 1.

Attachment 1 – Alignment to Federal, State and Regional Strategies and Plans

In the development of the Community Strategic Plan, Council takes into account Federal, State Government and Regional Strategies and Plans to ensure our plans and strategies align with and support their plans and strategies. That alignment is presented in the figure below.

Willoughby City Council	Relevant Federal, State and Regional Strategies and Plans
<p>Affordable Housing Strategy 2020-2026</p> <p>The purpose of the Strategy is to establish Council’s role in increasing the supply of affordable rental housing for low to moderate income households</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Premier Priorities • Greater Sydney Regional Plan and North District Plan • NSW State Infrastructure Strategy
<p>Bike Plan 2017</p> <p>The Plan identifies cycling infrastructure projects and an implementation plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Premier Priorities • Future Transport 2056 (NSW) • Greater Sydney Regional Plan and North District Plan • NSW State Infrastructure Strategy
<p>Chatswood CBD Planning and Urban Design Strategy 2026</p> <p>The Strategy guides future private and public development in Chatswood CBD</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Premier Priorities • Greater Sydney Regional Plan and North District Plan • NSW State Infrastructure Strategy • Sydney 24 Hour Economy Strategy
<p>Development Control Plan (Draft)</p> <p>The Plan specifies detailed guidelines and environmental standards for new development, which need to be considered in preparing a development application</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Premier Priorities • Greater Sydney Regional Plan and North District Plan • NSW State Infrastructure Strategy
<p>Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2017-2021</p> <p>The purpose of the Plan is to provide strategies and actions towards achieving an inclusive community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 • NSW Premier Priorities • Future Transport 2056 (NSW) • Greater Sydney Regional Plan and North District Plan • NSW Disability Inclusion Plan • NSW State Infrastructure Strategy
<p>Economic Development Strategy 2022</p> <p>The Strategy outlines the strategic approach for economic development within the City</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Government Digital Economy Strategy 2030 • Australian Government Global Innovation Strategy • NSW Premier Priorities • Greater Sydney Regional Plan and North District Plan • Innovation Strategy • NSW State Infrastructure Strategy • Sydney 24 Hour Economy Strategy
<p>Housing Strategy 2036</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Premier Priorities • Greater Sydney Regional Plan and North District Plan

Willoughby City Council	Relevant Federal, State and Regional Strategies and Plans
The Strategy guides the quantity, location and type of future residential development in the City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW State Infrastructure Strategy
<p>Industrial Lands Strategy 2036</p> <p>The Strategy recognises the important role the City’s industrial lands play in supporting the local economy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Premier Priorities • Greater Sydney Regional Plan and North District Plan • NSW State Infrastructure Strategy
<p>Integrated Transport Strategy 2036</p> <p>The Strategy identifies the strategic direction for transport in the City</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Premier Priorities • Future Transport 2056 (NSW) • Greater Sydney Regional Plan and North District Plan • NSW Climate Change Policy Framework • NSW State Infrastructure Strategy
<p>Local Centres Strategy 2036</p> <p>The purpose of the Strategy is to promote a network of thriving, attractive and distinctive village centres throughout the City. It provides the framework for future planning controls and public domain improvements for eight local centres</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Premier Priorities • Greater Sydney Regional Plan and North District Plan • NSW State Infrastructure Strategy • Sydney 24 Hour Economy Strategy
<p>Local Environmental Plan (Draft)</p> <p>The Plan provides the statutory framework for all planning, development and building within the City. It allocates land for specific purposes through zoning and development controls</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Premier Priorities • Greater Sydney Regional Plan and North District Plan • NSW State Infrastructure Strategy
<p>Local Strategic Planning Statement 2020</p> <p>The Statement sets a 20-year vision with priorities and actions for land-use planning in the City</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Premier Priorities • Greater Sydney Regional Plan and North District Plan • NSW State Infrastructure Strategy • Sydney 24 Hour Economy Strategy
<p>Night Time Economy Strategy (Draft)</p> <p>The objectives of this Strategy are to support and encourage the growth of the City’s night time economy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Premier Priorities • Greater Sydney Regional Plan and North District Plan • NSW State Infrastructure Strategy • Sydney 24 Hour Economy Strategy
<p>Open Space and Recreation Plan 2013</p> <p>The Plan provides a long term strategic direction for the future provision and management of recreational assets and services in the City</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Premier Priorities • Greater Sydney Regional Plan and North District Plan • NSW State Infrastructure Strategy
<p>Our Green City Plan 2028</p> <p>The purpose of the Plan 2028 is to protect the environment for, and with, our community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy 2021-2025 • NSW National Waste Policy and National Waste Policy Action Plan 2019

Willoughby City Council	Relevant Federal, State and Regional Strategies and Plans
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Premier Priorities • Greater Sydney Regional Plan and North District Plan • NSW Climate Change Policy Framework • NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041 • NSW State Infrastructure Strategy • Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (NSROC) Regional Waste Strategy 2017-2021
<p>Resilient Willoughby Strategy and Action Plan 2021</p> <p>The Strategy and accompanying Action Plan outlines how the City can support the community to withstand shocks and stresses most likely to impact on the people of Willoughby and proposes a range of actions to help the community overcome them</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy 2021-2025 • National Waste Policy and National Waste Policy Action Plan 2019 • NSW Premier Priorities • Greater Sydney Regional Plan and North District Plan • NSW Climate Change Policy Framework • NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041 • NSW State Infrastructure Strategy • Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (NSROC) Regional Waste Strategy 2017-2021
<p>Street Parking Strategy 2017</p> <p>The Strategy provides a framework to manage parking openly, fairly and on an evidence based approach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future Transport 2056 (NSW) • Greater Sydney Regional Plan and North District Plan • NSW State Infrastructure Strategy