

Shaping the future of your Green Wedge

Discussion Paper



Yan Yean Reservoir

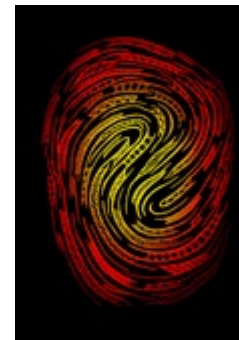


City of
Whittlesea

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Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners



The City of Whittlesea recognises the rich Aboriginal heritage of this Country and acknowledges the Wurundjeri Willum Clan as the traditional owners of this place.

Artwork created by Mandy Nicholson Wurundjeri artist, contains traditional Wurundjeri motifs and represents how we are connected to the Earth, just like our fingerprints.

Abbreviations

| | |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ABS | Australian Bureau of Statistics |
| AIATSIS | Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies |
| CoW | City of Whittlesea |
| DELWP | Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning |
| DEDJTR | Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources |
| DJPR | Departments of Jobs, Precincts and Regions |
| GWMP | Green Wedge Management Plan |
| UGB | Urban Growth Boundary |
| VCAT | Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal |

Shaping the future of your Green Wedge



Toorourrong Reservoir

Executive Summary

Over 60% of the City of Whittlesea is rural land and is currently protected from further urban development. This land which sits outside the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) is known as the **'Green Wedge'**. It is home to our beloved National Parks, forests, reservoirs and nationally significant plants and animals.

It is the green lungs of our rural and urban communities - its plants and soil clean the air we breathe, filter the water we drink, lower the temperature and reduce the risk of flood in extreme weather events.

It is the green heart that connects us - its parks, open space and landscapes are where we walk, play and relax with family, friends and neighbours.

It is the green food bowl that feeds us – its farms and markets are where we work or get our fresh local fruits and vegetables.

Above all, it is the land that nourished us and it will continue doing so for our

children and grandchildren. It is now up to us to look after this important land through good planning and land management.

What does a Green Wedge Management Plan (GWMP) do?

Like any other place, our Green Wedge is dynamic and constantly evolving. A GWMP will provide clarity and greater certainty in respect to the future of the Whittlesea Green Wedge area. It enables Council and its community to 'clearly articulate the kinds of development or activities that are likely to be supported in the Green Wedge' (DELWP 2015).

It is a State government requirement¹ that all Councils² containing Green Wedge areas must prepare a GWMP. The current Whittlesea GWMP is due for review in 2021. Council is reviewing the plan with the aim to finalise a 2022-2032 GWMP ready for implementation by June 2022.

¹ The State government's Planning Practice Note 31 - *Preparing a Green Wedge Management Plan (DEWLP 2015)* also provides a guide for the preparation of a GWMP and sets out the general requirements that should be met.

² The *Planning and Environment Act 1987* identify the 17 fringe councils including the City of Whittlesea.

Purpose of the Discussion Paper

Council are keen to understand what our community and stakeholders' value about the Whittlesea Green Wedge. This Discussion Paper has been developed for public consultation in May 2021. It aims to:

- Inform the community and other stakeholders about the Green Wedge Management Plan (GWMP) Review project and more broadly about the Whittlesea Green Wedge
- Generate and collect feedback on the identified opportunities for the sustainable management of our Green Wedge
- Inform the development of a refreshed vision and priorities for the new GWMP 2022-32.

Proposed key opportunities

The Discussion Paper proposes the following key opportunities in the context of the four overarching goals of Council's Community Plan - *Whittlesea 2040: A place for all*:

Whittlesea 2040 Goal 1: Connected Community

- Opportunity 1.1 - Support a rural community of diverse needs**
- Opportunity 1.2 - Empower community on community-led initiatives**
- Opportunity 1.3 - Connect the Green Wedge with urban neighbours**

Whittlesea 2040 Goal 2: Liveable Neighbourhoods

- Opportunity 2.1 - Protect and enhance landscape amenity and rural character**
- Opportunity 2.2 - Provide for safer settlement**
- Opportunity 2.3 - Manage sodic and dispersive soils**
- Opportunity 2.4 - Improve management of urban & rural interface including discouragement of land speculation**
- Opportunity 2.5 - Finalise and start implementation of the new Whittlesea Township Strategy**

Whittlesea 2040 Goal 3 - Strong local Economy

- Opportunity 3.1 - Support a stronger local food economy for local jobs and healthier community.**
- Opportunity 3.2 - Plan for sustainable, diverse and innovative farming practices**
- Opportunity 3.3 - Support Agritourism in the Green Wedge**
- Opportunity 3.4 - Protect and manage existing extractive industry and landfill in the Green Wedge**

Whittlesea 2040 Goal 4 - Sustainable Environment

- Opportunity 4.1 - Improve the management and protection of biodiversity**
- Opportunity 4.2 - Support local agriculture and improve water management**
- Opportunity 4.3 - Our residents and our environment benefit from a diverse, colourful, and healthy City Forest**

Have Your Say

You can help shape the future of the Green Wedge by telling us what you value about our Green Wedge and what you feel should be the key priorities. In mid-late 2021, after reviewing all the feedback received, we will come back to the community with a draft GWMP for further comment. Council will also provide a consultation report that summarises how the feedback from this current consultation has informed the development of the draft GWMP Plan.



Timeline of the Whittlesea GWMP Review



What Council has been doing to date - Implementation of the GWMP 2011-2021

The current GWMP 2011 -2021 Action Plan comprises 84 actions relating to the themes of Land, Biodiversity, Water and People. Steady progress has been achieved to date in implementing the GWMP.

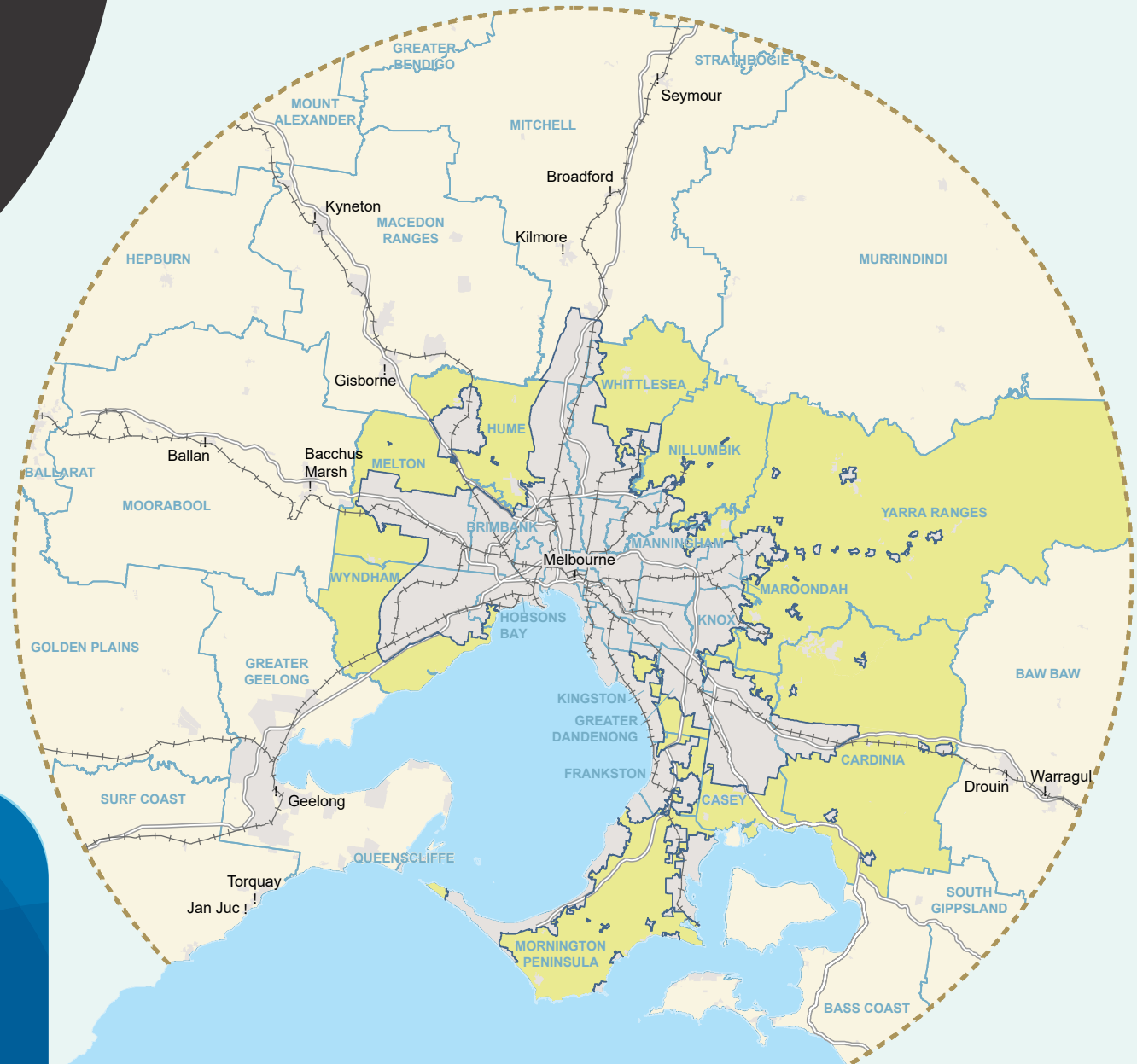
Below are some notable examples of completed actions and achievements. Refer to Appendix 1 – GWMP Implementation Progress Table for a complete summary of all the actions and their current progress.

- **Whittlesea Community Food and Farm Collective:**
A partnership between Melbourne Polytechnic, City of Whittlesea, Yarra Valley Water and Whittlesea Community Connections to develop a community farm, educational programs, volunteering opportunities and pathways to employment at Aurora Water Treatment Site in Epping North. The project will explore farming opportunities through the use of recycled water and also support Whittlesea Community Connections in supplying food to vulnerable community members.
- **Partnership between Council and Deakin University:**
A Land Capability Assessment report was produced and disseminated to the wider community. A further partnership project with Deakin University focusing on climate resilient agriculture is currently in progress.
- **Plan and implement trails within the Green Wedge:**
This includes a range of actions such as: Advocating for funding for regional trails such as the Whittlesea Rail Trail from Mernda Station to connect to Whittlesea township; Working with Parks Victoria, Nillumbik Council and other agencies to implement the Plenty River Trail from the M80 Ring Road to Bridge Inn Road by June 2023; Preparation, adoption and implementation of the Quarry Hills Parkland Master Plan.
- **Dedicated resource on safeguarding diverse values of our Green Wedge.** The appointment of an Agribusiness Officer and an Environmental Protection Officer.
- **Implementation of the increased differential farm rate of 40% to better support agribusiness from 2017.**
- **Endorsement of a new Biodiversity Strategy** which will map the biodiversity assets across the municipality, including the Green Wedge, to inform consideration of appropriate planning tools for protection.
- **Completion of the Cultural Heritage Strategy** that identifies and protects heritage places across the municipality including Council owned places within the Green Wedge.

PART 1:

Policy Context

Melbourne's Green Wedges



This section outlines the national, state and local legislative and policy framework within which the GWMP operates.

National & State Government Framework

At a national level, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (the EPBC Act) provides a legal framework to protect and manage nationally and internationally important flora, fauna, ecological communities and heritage places.

In 2002, the State Government established an Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) around Melbourne to manage outward expansion in a coordinated manner. It also identified 12 Green Wedge areas in 17 local government areas and put in place policies to protect these valued areas. This includes a legislative requirement outlined in the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* requiring that any proposed alteration of its location be ratified by both Houses of the Parliament of Victoria.

The current State government articulates its future vision and desired planning outcomes for Melbourne's Green Wedge via Plan Melbourne 2017–2050 ('Plan Melbourne') - the city's current metropolitan strategy. Above all, Plan Melbourne states the Victorian Government's intention to maintain a permanent urban growth boundary to strengthen protection and management of Melbourne's green wedges. It also articulates a vision for Green Wedges and is an important reference for policy formulation and decision-making in relation to the Green Wedges (see Appendix 2 - Plan Melbourne 2017-2050 Desired planning outcomes for green wedge and peri-urban areas).

State Government's Planning for Melbourne's Green Wedge and Agricultural Land Review (GWAL) Project

As part of the Plan Melbourne implementation, the GWAL Review is currently underway to strengthen Green Wedge planning provisions and protect agricultural land.

Post the first-round consultation in 2019, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) released a consultation paper in November 2020 that outlined the proposed changes to the legislative and policy framework. Council has made a submission to the GWAL Review which is generally supportive of the following key proposals identified in the consultation paper to:

- Further strengthen the legislative and policy framework for Green Wedge.
- Protect **all** agricultural land rather than just strategic agricultural land.
- Establish 'right to farm' legislation where the zoning supports agricultural use as a primary purpose.

In addition, Council's submission has also identified a range of matters that require further careful consideration by DELWP. A copy of Council's submission can be accessed on Council's website: [Green Wedge Management Plan - Whittlesea Council](#). The findings of the State government review are planned to be released in mid-2021. Council officers will work closely with DELWP to incorporate results from the GWAL review into the Whittlesea GWMP 2022-32.

Difference between the City of Whittlesea's GWMP Review and the State Government's GWAL Review

While the Whittlesea GWMP identifies local land use planning policy directions for our Green Wedge areas, it must operate within the overarching Victorian legislative and policy framework that will be updated by the State government GWAL review. This means that the GWMP Review project cannot change things such as the UGB or override any other policies or controls set out by the State Government. On the other hand, the State Government is proposing a wide range of changes to the State planning system in relation to the Green Wedges.

It is important to note that the State government's GWAL Review does not propose any change to the UGB. Council has been advocating for relevant changes supporting stronger protection of biodiversity conservation and agriculture land through the GWAL review process.

Local Framework

The Whittlesea Planning Scheme, the GWMP and other relevant Council strategies provide the local framework for managing land use and development in our Green Wedge.

Whittlesea Planning Scheme

The Whittlesea Planning Scheme contains both local provisions and broader state and regional provisions that apply across all relevant municipal planning schemes.

The Whittlesea Planning Scheme contains the following state and regional provisions relevant to Green Wedges:

- Clause 11.01-1R Green Wedges – Metropolitan Melbourne
- Clause 11.03-3S Peri-urban areas
- Clause 51.02 Metropolitan Green Wedge Land
-

- The Whittlesea Planning Scheme also contains the following local policies relevant to Whittlesea's Green Wedge:
- Clause 02.03 Municipal Planning Strategy
- Clause 11.01-1L Green Wedge
- Clause 12.01-1L Protection of biodiversity
- Clause 14.01-2L Sustainable agricultural land use
- Clause 15.03-1L Heritage Conservation in Whittlesea

There are three rural zones in the Whittlesea Green Wedge and all of these zones provide for the use of land for agriculture and biodiversity enhancement. A summary of rural zones in the Whittlesea Planning Scheme is included below.

Table 1. Rural zones applied in Whittlesea Green Wedge

| Zone | Description |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Rural Conservation Zone | a conservation zone that caters for rural areas with special environmental characteristics |
| Green Wedge Zone | a zone that provides for all agricultural uses and limits non rural uses to those that either support agriculture or tourism, or that are essential for urban development but cannot be located in urban areas for amenity or other reasons |
| Green Wedge A Zone | <p>a zone that provides for most (i.e. Intensive animal production is prohibited) agricultural uses and limits non rural uses to those that either support agriculture or tourism, or that are essential for urban development but cannot be located in urban areas for amenity or other reasons.</p> <p>The Zone also recognises and protects the amenity of existing rural living areas</p> |

(The table is developed based on Planning Practice Note 42 – Applying the Rural Zones)

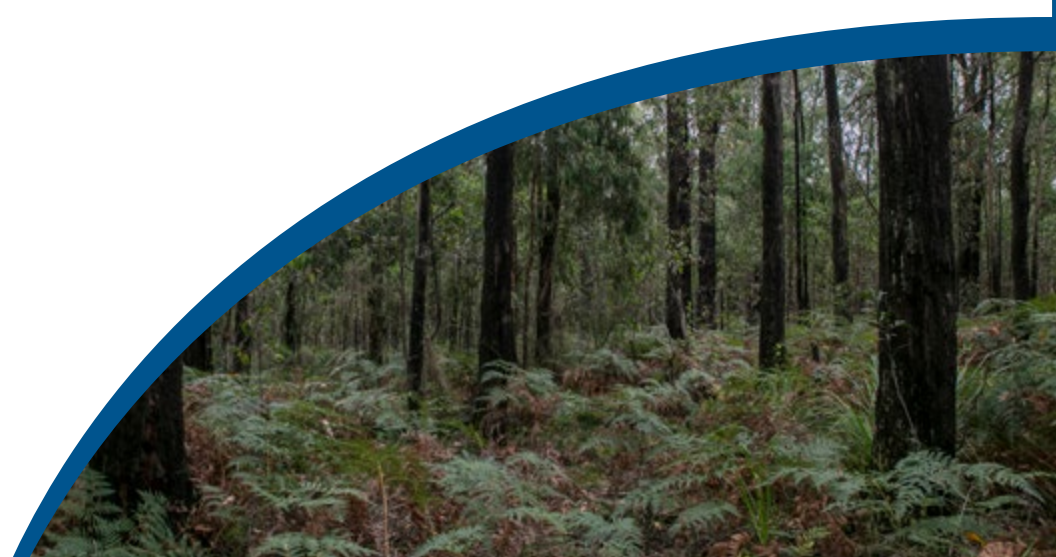
³ Note the new Council Plan 2021-2025 is being prepared at the time of writing this Discussion Paper. Findings from the consultation will inform the drafting of the new GWMP.

Other City of Whittlesea Strategies

In developing a whole of government approach for managing our Green Wedge, the new GWMP needs to recognise and complement a range of other Council strategies that all play a crucial role in facilitating ongoing rural sustainability and prosperity. The Discussion Paper notes the relevant strategies, including but not limited to:

- Whittlesea 2040: A Place for All³
- Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2019)
- Greening Whittlesea City Forest Strategy (2020-2040)
- Economic Development Strategy (2017)
- Water for All Strategy (2020)
- City of Whittlesea Open Space Strategy (2016)
- Health and Wellbeing Partnership Plan (2017-2021)
- Cultural Heritage Strategy (2019 -2025)

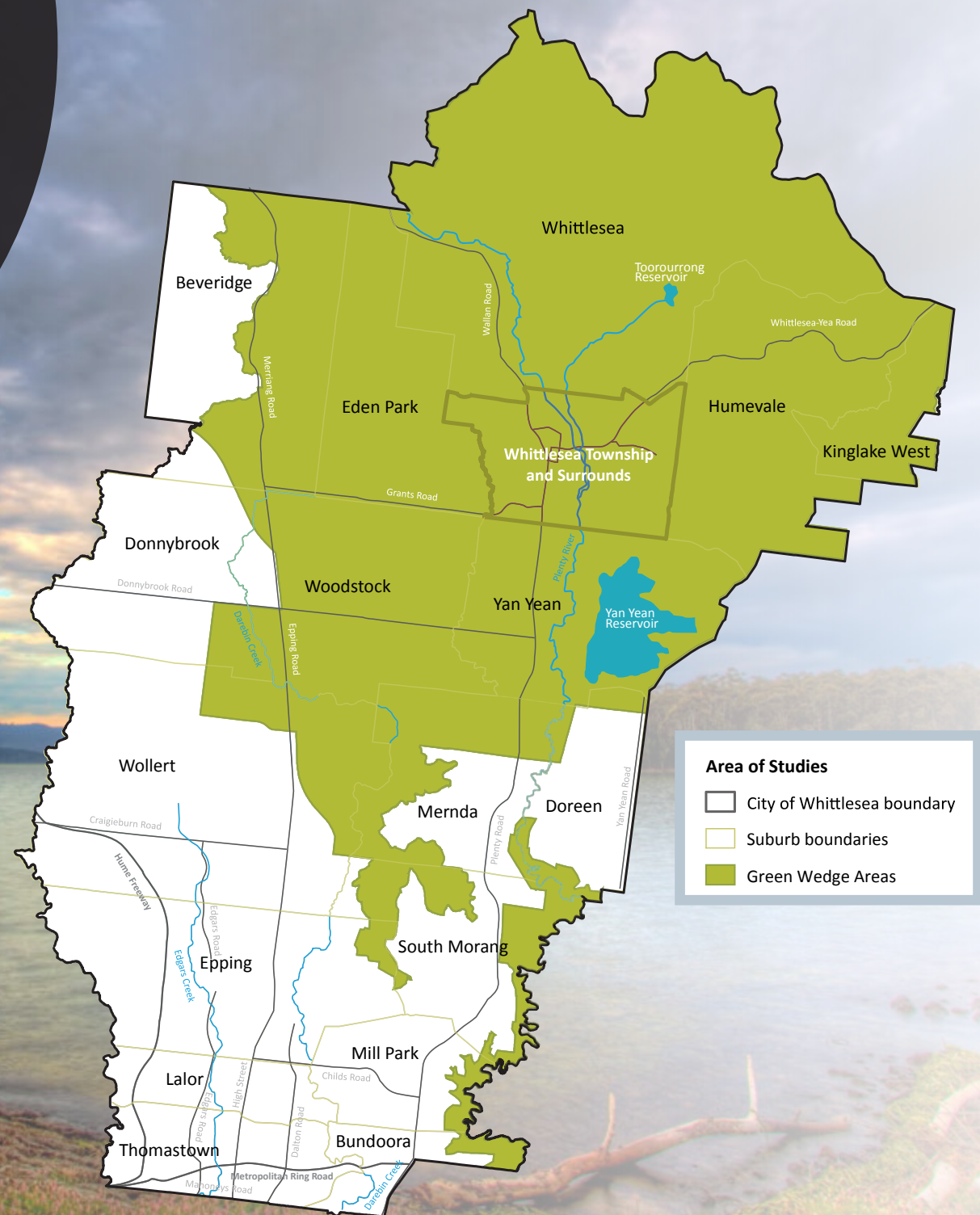
In addition, a new Investment Attraction Strategy is also being developed which will outline Council's approach to supporting and encouraging investment across the whole municipality whilst future review of Council's Economic Development Strategy may include specific actions in respect tourism and the visitor economy.



PART 2:

The Whittlesea Green Wedge

This section starts with a snapshot of our Green Wedge: the physical features of our land and its associated values, the socio-economic characteristics of our people. It is followed by a discussion about the benefits of our Green Wedge and how Council manage our Green Wedge in partnership with other individuals and organisations.



Key Features and Values

Before European settlement, the Wurundjeri Willum clan people lived on the land that now forms the Whittlesea Green Wedge. Caring for Country is a term used to describe the relationship between traditional owners and their country. Caring for Country is more than the physical management of the land, water, plants and animals, but also encompasses looking after all of the values, places, resources, stories, and cultural obligations associated with the area, as well as associated processes of spiritual renewal, connecting with ancestors, food provision and maintaining kin relations (AIATSIS 2011).

Nowadays, our Green Wedge contains two distinctly different parts: the Whittlesea Township⁴ and the rural settlements around it (Map 1. Whittlesea Green Wedge). The latter includes the localities of Eden Park, Humevale, Kinglake West, part of South Morang, Woodstock, part of Wollert, part of Donnybrook, part of Beveridge, part of Mernda, part of Doreen, part of Whittlesea and Yan Yean. The Whittlesea Green Wedge is characterised by its diverse landforms, soil types and land uses. Almost half of our Green

Wedge is public land used for closed water catchments, national parks and state forests. Other land uses and characteristics include:

- Significant flora and fauna habitats
- Agricultural activities
- Rural living and small settlements
- Recreation and tourism attractions opportunities
- Scenic landscapes
- Significant Aboriginal and European heritage places
- Extractive resources such as sand, clay, gravel and stone

The table below summarises what our community told us in 2011, 2018 and most recently in 2021 regarding what they value about our Green Wedge and more broadly the rural area⁵. The results indicate that the broader City of Whittlesea community, regardless of where they live, care about our rural area and the Green Wedge. It is also worth noting that unsurprisingly wellbeing benefit was ranked as the second most valued benefits of our Green Wedge in the March 2021 survey administered amid the pandemic.

Table 2. Green Wedge Values identified by CoW communities

| Top Green Wedge Value identified in 2011 GWMP Consultation (CoW 2011) | What our residents love about and hope for our rural area? key words from Whittlesea 2040 Council Plan Consultation (CoW 2018) | What do you value most about the ‘Green Wedge’ parts of the City of Whittlesea? 2021-2025 Council Plan Engagement (CoW 2021) |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>1. Rural vistas: Visually open, green spaces, atmosphere, peace and quiet, ‘vista of Melbourne’ providing a visual break from residential development</p> <p>2. Connection to the land: Good land stewardship, productivity of rural activities, intergenerational knowledge and experience</p> <p>3. Connection to each other: Social links between residents and government leads to wellbeing and harmony</p> <p>4. Biodiversity: Upper reaches of several water catchments, ‘lungs of Melbourne’ and conservation of a range of habitats</p> <p>5. History: Links to past and present places of significance</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- kind, friendly people- rural/country atmosphere- natural surroundings; wildlife; and beautiful views- retain our rural feel and appropriate new developments- more activation and support of rural areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Just the pure existence of natural landscapes and features like hills, trees, waterways and animals- The positive effects on my wellbeing from enjoying green natural spaces- Environmental benefits (e.g. reduced pollution in the air and water) |

⁴ Council officers are currently in the process of finalising a draft Strategy for the Whittlesea Township to guide future planning and decision making within the Township. A key action from the draft Strategy is to establish a clear Township Boundary around the Township. Subject to endorsement of the Strategy by Council and If the State Government supports this action in the form of a permanent UGB around the Township, the Whittlesea Township would then not form part of the Green Wedge as defined under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

⁵ The rural area in the Whittlesea 2040 context is slightly different to the Green Wedge boundary. The former including Beveridge, Eden Park, Humevale, Kinglake West, Whittlesea (township), Woodstock and Yan Yean.

Table 3. Whittlesea Green Wedge - Key features and values identified by GWMP 2011-2021

Biodiversity

The Whittlesea Green Wedge is home to a diverse range of native plants and animals, including native grasslands of National and State significance, River Red Gum Grassy Woodland, and forested areas such as Kinglake National Park and Mount Disappointment State Forest. Rural areas provide the majority of habitat for native species, and in some cases contain the only remaining vegetation community within the region. Healthy natural environments and the ecosystem services they support are important for the prosperity and liveability for which Melbourne is renowned.

Landscape

Significant landscapes include the flat agricultural landscape of the Plenty Valley, scattered River Red Gums and majestic Plenty Ranges that provide a scenic backdrop to the city of Melbourne. These rural and natural landscapes provide a sense of place whilst contributing to ecological values, supporting tourism and also being culturally significant. The landscape qualities of the Green Wedge are a part of Melbourne's distinctive character and appeal.

Agriculture

Areas of productive agricultural land support locally grown produce such as olives, wineries, berry farms and cheese products offered for sale at local markets. Although a part time pursuit for many residents, grazing and equestrian activities are also common. Productive agricultural land is a finite resource and plays an important role in contributing to local food supply and making Melbourne a sustainable city. In the Whittlesea Green Wedge, high value is placed on the quality of the rural landscape, contributing an essential liveability element.

Water

The Whittlesea Green Wedge supports the upper and middle catchment areas of the Plenty River, Darebin Creek and Merri Creek. This area contains several closed water supply catchments that contribute to Melbourne's water supply, and is home to the Toorourrong and Yan Yean water storage reservoirs. Waterways, wetlands and floodplains within the municipality provide valuable environmental, social and economic benefits for residents and visitors alike.



Communities & Settlements

The Green Wedge is highly valued for its liveability with many small rural settlements and areas of rural living. The township of Whittlesea is the most significant, containing around half of the rural population. Many residents are attracted to the Green Wedge by the rural lifestyle and sense of community.



Heritage

Before European settlement, the Aboriginal people of the Wurundjeri wilam clan inhabited the area. There are many sites of cultural significance throughout the Green Wedge associated with Aboriginal culture, such as scarred trees, along waterways and stony rises. Remnants of early European settlement occur on rural living lots and broadacre farms, often delineated by dry stone walls, outbuildings and historic hedgerows. These sites hold special meaning for all Melburnians and need to be sustained for future generations.



Tourism & Recreation

The Whittlesea Green Wedge supports a wide range of recreational pursuits, natural attractions and events. Key attractions range from the Country Music Festival to the Whittlesea Agricultural Show. Other attractions include farmers markets, golf courses, local farm gate products, bushwalking, camping and horse riding trails. These activities deliver important economic, social and environmental benefits to local communities and broader Melbourne.



Extractive Industry

Several extractive industry operations which were previously located within the Whittlesea Green Wedge area have been included within the new UGB, leaving only two of the current Work Authorities partly located within the Green Wedge. Extractive industries play a fundamental role in supporting Melbourne's future development and prosperity.

Biophysical conditions

The biophysical conditions are the qualities of the land including the soil, water and air.

Much of the northern area of the Whittlesea Green Wedge is hilly and susceptible to gully formation resulting from erosion. Any removal of vegetation and ground cover in these areas heightens the risk of gully formation and erosion, especially when the soils are sandy or sodic and prone to structural decline.

Based on high level soil mapping information, it is believed that Whittlesea's Green Wedge area is likely to contain sodic and dispersive soils (Jacobs 2020). The significant environmental and economic impacts of erosion are often site-specific, yet their effects are wide ranging including but not limited to:

- Increased erosion potential
- A deterioration in water quality and degradation of aquatic flora and fauna habitat,
- Failure of civil and private assets (i.e. roads, fences and sheds) due to soil movement
- Diminishing areas of productive agricultural land
- Poor ability to establish vegetative growth leading to a failure to thrive for open spaces, gardens and street trees.
- Decreased infiltration and high runoff rates

In addition, soil salinity has previously been identified as a key biophysical threat to our Green Wedge with saline soils recorded across much of our Green Wedge area. Saline soils can have a significant impact on biodiversity, farming, water quality and physical condition of rivers and streams. Similar to sodic soil, it can also degrade soil structure and cause erosion.

Community Snapshot

Our Green Wedge is home to 3.7% of the municipal population. Of those 8,855 people, 64 per cent live in the Whittlesea Township (ID Demographic Profile, 2020).

⁶ In this case, it refers to Vocational, Diploma or Advanced Diploma, Bachelor or Higher degree

How does the Green Wedge compare with 10 years ago? A comparison of population in 2021 and 2011 shows a similar trend:

- Slow population growth with an increasingly higher proportion of people who live in the Whittlesea Township.
- An ageing population overall, with a minor but steady decrease in average household size.
- A far more culturally homogenous community compared to the rest of the city.

One reverse trend worth noting is the change in the level of education of Green Wedge residents. In 2011, 42% of our Green Wedge residents had some form of qualification⁶, slightly below the municipal average at 46%. By 2016, 47% of Green Wedge residents had some form of qualification whilst the municipal average has dropped to 39%.

In comparison with the rest of the municipality, other notable features about our Green Wedge residents include:

- Highest median age and highest volunteering rate.
- Higher rate of disengaged youth – defined as 15-24-year-olds who are not in employment, looking for work or in full-time study.
- Considerably higher proportion of Technicians and Trade Workers and a slightly higher proportion of Managers or Professionals.
- A notable trend of the 14-25 and 45-59 age cohort moving out of the Green Wedge.
- Higher and growing proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders population.

Population distribution in the city of Whittlesea

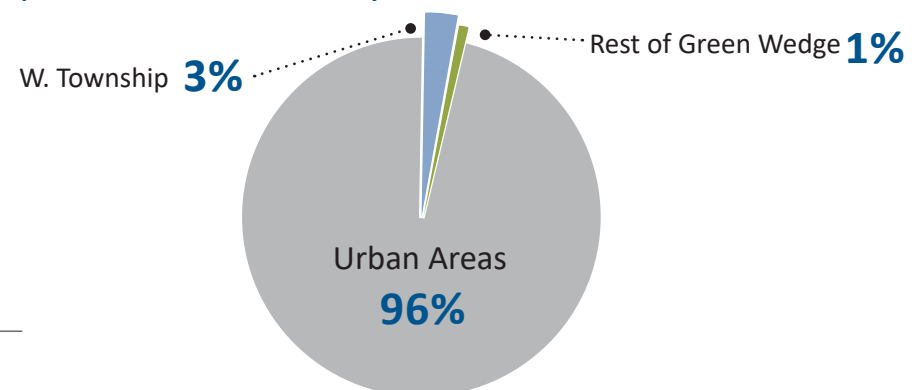
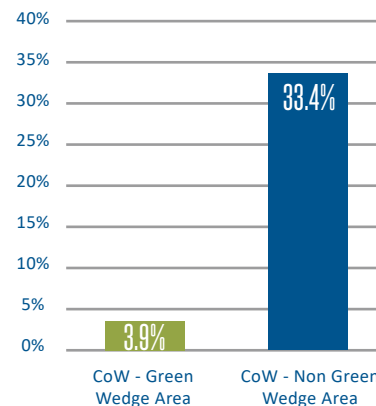


Table 4. Whittlesea Green Wedge Social- Economic Profile

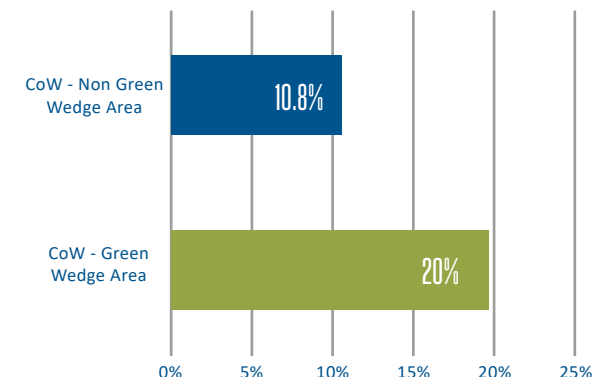
| People | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| | Median Age | Takes public transport to work | Unemployed |
| Green Wedge | 38.9 | 4.3% | 3.9% |
| Non-Green Wedge | 35.0 | 12.8% | 5.8% |
| Families and households | | | |
| | Ave. people per household | Households experiencing mortgage stress | Median weekly household income |
| Green Wedge | 2.8 | 9.1% | \$1,300 |
| Non-Green Wedge | 3 | 14.4% | 1,350 |
| Dwellings | | | |
| | Medium/ high density housing | Homes owned outright | Three or more motor vehicles per dwelling |
| Green Wedge | 5.8% | 34.1% | 28.8% |
| Non-Green Wedge | 17.4% | 26.3% | 19.5% |

Source: ID Demographic Profile <https://profile.id.com.au/Whittlesea> (2016 Census data)

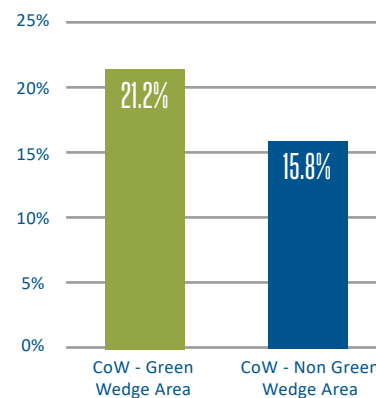
Born in non-English speaking Country



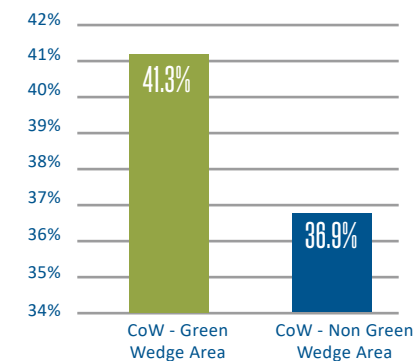
Volunteering



Lone Person Household



Houses with four or more bedrooms



It is worth noting that the data above is based on Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data which was collected before the COVID19 pandemic. The pandemic has and could continuously disrupt the trends observed in the past decade. According to the ABS, in the June 2020 quarter alone, there was a net loss of 10,484 people from capital cities to regional Australia. Greater Melbourne (including Green Wedges) went from slightly positive migration in the June 2019 quarter to a loss of almost 8,000. If extrapolated out to a year, it could translate into a net loss of 32,000 people from Melbourne per annum.⁷

A report commissioned by Council suggests that it is too early to tell how the outward migration from Greater Melbourne to regional areas might have implications for our Green Wedge area (SGS, 2021). Council would need to closely monitor the implication as part of the GWMP implementation.

Benefits of our Green Wedge

Whilst it is valued for its own sake, our Green Wedge also provides essential benefits for the health and wellbeing of our rural residents and the broader community. The range of benefits include but are not limited to:

- Protects areas of landscape amenity and environmental significance
- Reduces pollution in the air and water
- Reduces impacts from extreme climate events like flood, drought and heat
- Provides access to green and blue open space for physical and mental health
- Provides local jobs in agriculture, agri-tourism and related agribusiness.
- Provides fresh local food
- Supports the overall liveability of Melbourne

As discussed in Key Features and Values on page 10, results from the March 2021 survey suggest that while the intrinsic value of our Green Wedge continues to be recognised as the top value, wellbeing benefit for the first time is ranked as the second most valued benefit of our Green Wedge.

On the other hand, the importance of access to healthy local food has been a recurring message from our research and our community: A Food System background report (CoW, 2015, p24) indicated that there are high levels of dietary-related ill-health in our municipality. Access to affordable healthy food is a critical issue for our low- and middle-income groups. As part of the Whittlesea 2040 Consultation in 2018, our community told us that *‘ensuring safe and healthy local food options in a climate constrained future’* (Whittlesea 2040 Community Engagement Report, 2018: p58) was important to them.

In 2020 before the Covid-19 pandemic hit Melbourne, the Upper Merri Creek communities (including those in the City of Whittlesea) have been advocating for local food production. The effects of the pandemic are anticipated to only further amplify these preferences. (Upper Merri Creek Integrated Water Management Plan Partnership, 2020)

Finally, there is significant potential economic benefit of providing more local jobs via agriculture, agri-tourism and related agribusiness in our Green Wedge. According to Deloitte Access Economics (2016), the estimated existing economic contribution of food production and manufacturing in Greater Melbourne’s Green Wedge and peri urban area contributes \$2.45 billion per annum to the city’s regional economy and creates 21,001 full-time equivalent jobs. More information regarding our local agribusiness will be provided in Part 3. Agribusiness in the City of Whittlesea.

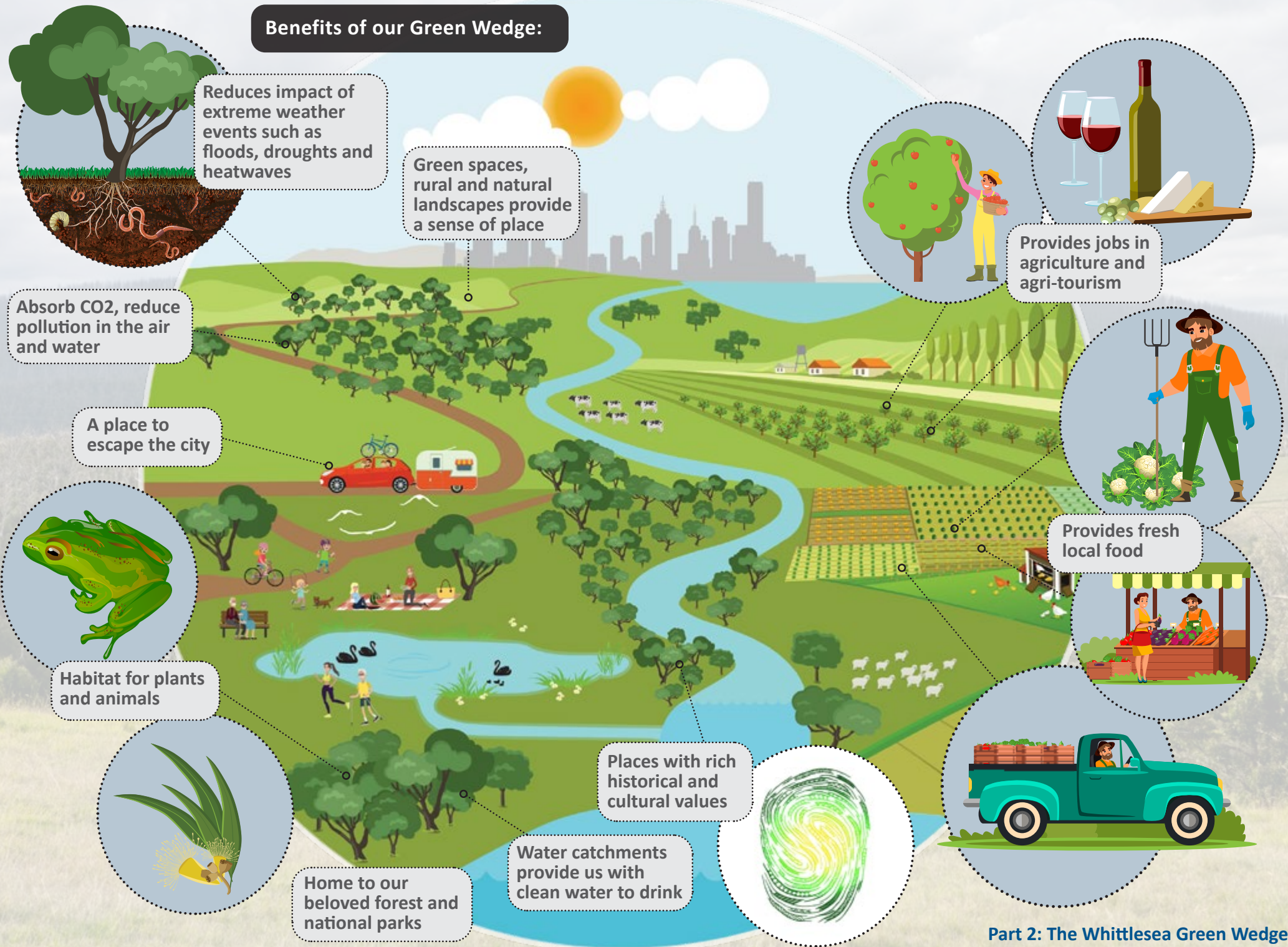


DISCUSSION:

What do you feel the top 3 benefits are of the Whittlesea Green Wedge?

⁷ Source: ABS, *Regional internal migration estimates, provisional, June 2020*, cited in *id. Blog Exodus from Melbourne to the regions during the pandemic | .id blog*

Benefits of our Green Wedge:





DISCUSSION:

What do you feel the key challenges are to properly manage our Green Wedge?

What could the City of Whittlesea do to better manage the green wedge?

How could the City of Whittlesea better support you to manage your land?

Managing Whittlesea's Green Wedge

Managing Whittlesea's Green Wedge is a shared responsibility and involves a wide range of stakeholders including:

- Traditional owners
- Private landowners, residents, local business owners.
- Government departments, power companies and service agencies such as VicRoads, Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria who manage significant land holdings, natural features, state assets or local facilities.
- Volunteers and community groups including Landcare groups, Friends of groups, Country Fire Authority, dedicated community interest groups and sporting groups such as equestrian clubs.

It is important to recognise that Council has different roles and responsibilities in the management of the Green Wedge. Increasingly, the City of Whittlesea also needs to partner with the federal and state governments, other local councils and organisations who share a common interest in managing our Green Wedge areas. Below is a summary of the various roles and responsibilities that Council has in relation to the Green Wedge:

- We provide essential community services and infrastructure (Provider)
- We advocate to state and federal governments for environmental protection, funding of community services and infrastructure projects. (Advocator)
- We support and work with local community groups, organisations and government agencies to deliver environmental protection, services and infrastructure projects the community needs (Facilitator)
- We prepare local planning policy guiding development and determine planning applications in our Green Wedge. Council also issues permits for native vegetation, septic tank, local laws, land management and so on (Regulator)



PART 3:

Agribusiness in the City of Whittlesea

Agribusiness, for the purpose of this section, includes following:

- Primary production, or farming, forestry, aquaculture and fisheries
- Manufacturing activities that process the primary products, such as milk processors, wine making, food manufacturers/processors
- Wholesaling the primary, or processed products, such as grain storage
- Agri-tourism with our rural landscapes, wineries/vineyards, harvest trails and small-scale food producers who contribute to our visitor economy



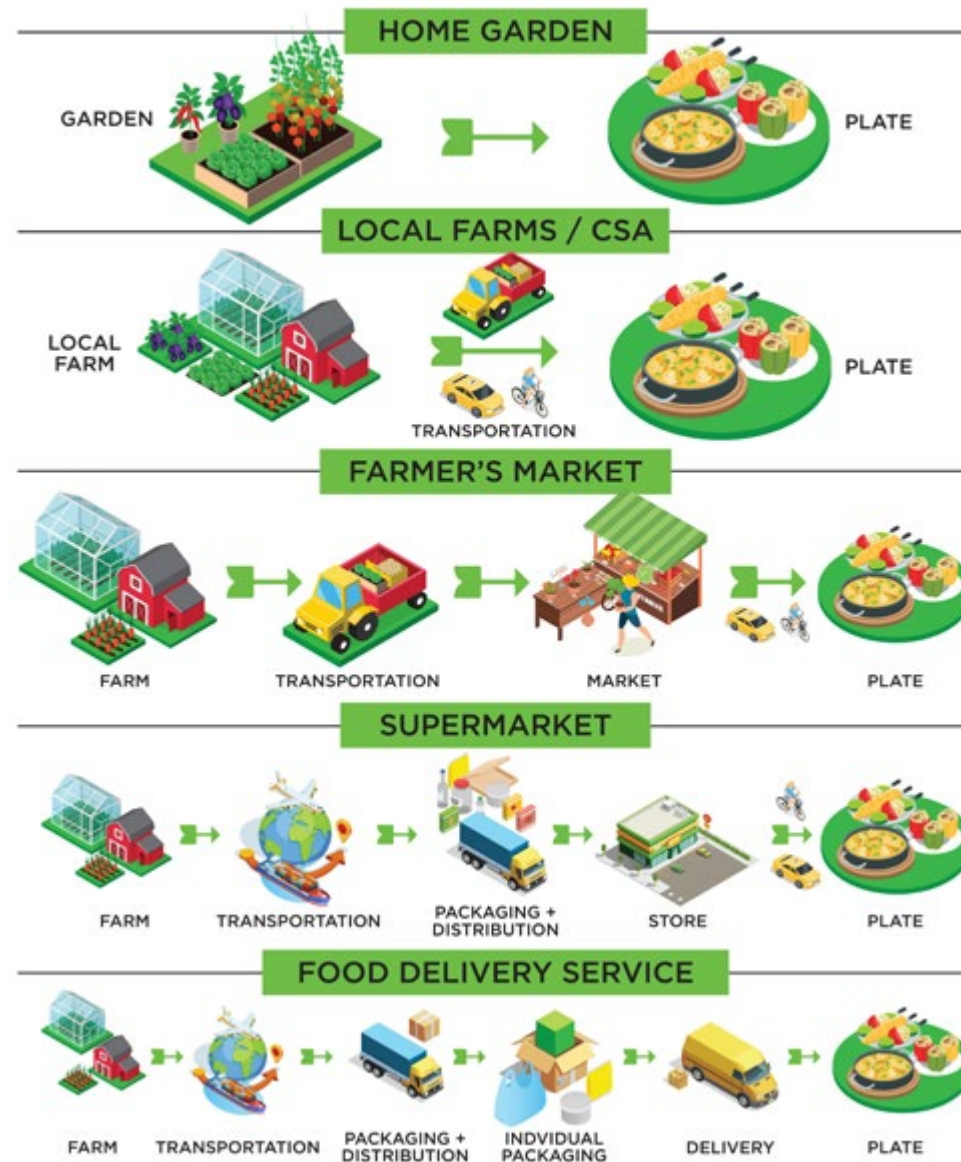
A Changing Agricultural Landscape

Historically, the City of Whittlesea was a strong, diverse agricultural region servicing Melbourne with a wide array of produce, including meat, milk, wool, grain, fruit, vegetables and eggs. Many influences including the impact of urban development have since changed the overall value and diversity of our agriculture sector.

In 2015/16, the municipality has an agricultural commodity value at around 83 million with mushrooms being the dominant agricultural commodity. In fact, about 83% of the mushrooms (value) produced in Greater Melbourne are produced in the City of Whittlesea. The other main commodity is fruits such as berries, apricots, apples, pears and peaches, comprising 0.4 percent of the total value. In addition, there remains a small amount of dairy, while poultry and egg production are experiencing renewed interest in the area.

The number of people employed in Agriculture, forestry and fishing industries has reduced steadily from 481 people in 1996 to 332 in 2011. However, the number starts to increase in 2016. In 2016, 514 local residents were employed by the agriculture, forestry and fishing industries. Amongst those working in the industry, 100 of them are GW residents (id, community profile, 2020).

SHORTEN YOUR FOOD CHAIN



© INFOGRAPHIC DESIGNED BY PICKLEWIX.COM

Table 5. 2015-2016 Agricultural Production in CoW (Source: id economic profile)

| Commodity/Production | | Value | Value % CoW Total |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Crops for Hay | | 158,799 | 0.2 |
| Eggs | | 357,045 | 0.4 |
| Livestock slaughtering (2.9%) | Cattle and calves | 2,023,819 | 2.4 |
| | Sheep and lambs | 203,444 | 0.2 |
| | Goats | 30,908 | 0.0 |
| | Poultry | 166,031 | 0.2 |
| Milk | | 182,667 | 0.2 |
| Nurseries & cut flowers | | 1,669,224 | 2.0 |
| Nuts (Almonds) ⁸ | | 2,135,128 | 2.6 |
| Other broadacre crops | | 18,004 | 0.0 |
| Fruits | | 352,140 | 0.4 |
| Vegetables (91.1%) | Mushrooms | 75,571,428 | 91.0 |
| | Other | 96,283 | 0.1 |
| Wool | | 117,646 | 0.1 |
| Agriculture - Total Value | | 83,082,568 | 100.0 |

⁸ This is due to the existence of one large nuts wholesaler in our municipality.



A Growing Local Food Economy

In addition to agricultural production, there is a substantial food manufacturing industry and a growing food retailing industry in the municipality that makes up our growing local food economy.

Data indicates that food product manufacturing is the largest manufacturing sub-sector in the City of Whittlesea. In 2015/16, the sub-sector was worth \$860.5 million. Food Retailing is another growing sector with significant specialisation in our municipality, worth \$230.3 million (total output) in 2015/16. The growth is potentially linked to the contribution of local agricultural products in local markets. (Agribusiness Profile, CoW,2018)

The same Food System background report mentioned earlier suggested that a strong local food economy has multiple positive impacts on human, economic, ecological and social health. It goes on to suggest that *‘the City of Whittlesea should continue to, and extend on, its work with the food production and manufacturing industries, and all local, state and national stakeholders, to boost employment growth and business development in agriculture, food manufacturing, food distribution and retail, taking into account the significant opportunities created by the new Melbourne Wholesale Fruit and Vegetable Market at Epping’* (CoW, 2015, p3).

Table 6. Challenges and advantages of our Agribusiness

| Challenges | Advantages |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ③ Competing land uses leads to incremental land fragmentation, rising land values and land use compatibility issues | ③ Proximity to growing urban markets, |
| ③ Changing demographics and lifestyle of our Green Wedge residents (lack of farming succession plan, lack of incentives for younger generation to choose farming as a profession) | ③ Existing strong food manufacturing sector and an increasing food retailing sector |
| ③ Climate change and land degradation | ③ Location of the Melbourne Wholesale Market in Epping. |
| ③ Rising ‘on farm’ costs (e.g. rates, water, employees, soil and crop improvements, remediation works) | ③ Access to key transport infrastructure, including the Hume Freeway, Melbourne Airport and the future Beveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal (BIFT) |
| ③ Market pressure from pricing competition as a result of the increasing dominance of a larger, more intensive farming industry | ③ Availability of recycled water and potential for other alternative water sources |
| ③ Unequal treatment of farmers in peri-urban areas as opposed to regional areas (e.g. restricted funding opportunities, lack of support from industry bodies) | ③ The presence of strong vocational and tertiary education support for the sector, including Melbourne Polytechnic’s farm-based education resources and La Trobe University’s strong agricultural programs |
| | ③ Council commitment to protect and encourage agricultural land use, including a dedicated agribusiness support resource. |
| | ③ Proximity to natural attractions |

As individuals, we can also actively contribute to our local food economy by shortening our food chain. This might involve:

- ③ Establishing and supporting local farmers markets
- ③ Growing our own food in backyard, community or school kitchen gardens,
- ③ Embracing farm gate and other direct and short value chain sales, and
- ③ Buying local and regional food

Understand our Challenges and Advantages

As part of the community consultation process to develop the current GWMP, the Green Wedge community told us that *‘Rural residents want to give living on the land a go, but it is becoming tougher’* (GWMP, 2011, p23). The same sentiment was also expressed in State Government’s consultation on their Green Wedge and Agriculture Land Review (Protecting & Supporting Melbourne’s Strategic Agricultural Land Engagement Findings Report, Capire, 2019).

Agricultural production in our municipality has been under significant pressure. Notwithstanding, our municipality also benefits from a wide range of advantages for the agricultural sector. The Table below summarises the key issues and advantages facing agriculture, and the broader agribusiness in our municipality.

PART 4:

Opportunities & Key Strategies

This section provides a summary of the key opportunities for our Green Wedge over the next decade. It will be discussed in the context of the overarching goals of Council's Community Plan ***Whittlesea 2040: A place for all:***

1. Connected Community
2. Liveable Neighbourhoods
3. Strong local Economy
4. Sustainable Environment



Whittlesea 2040

Goal 1

Connected Community

A Green Wedge Supports and Connects all

The Whittlesea Green Wedge snapshot outlined in Part 2 provides an overview of the profile of our Green Wedge community. From this snapshot we can draw some of the potential strengths and constraints to achieving the goal of a Connected Community in the context of our Green Wedge.

These are outlined in the table below:

| Strengths | Constraints |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ A stable and increasingly better qualified working age group. The proportion of working age group is projected to stabilise at around 60%. In addition, the level of qualification of our Green Wedge community has been increasing. There is opportunity to accommodate those in skilled labour by providing more local jobs, especially those 45-54 age cohort who are moving outward▪ Existing enthusiasm from volunteers. Despite the concern over rejuvenation of community groups members, there is a much higher proportion (20%) of residents in the GW doing some sort of volunteering, compared to the CoW average (12%) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Knowledge gap on how the pandemic will impact settlement patterns or housing markets in the Green Wedge▪ Lack of renewal and rejuvenation of community groups given the minor population growth and the ageing population▪ Outward migration of the 14-25 and 45-59 age cohorts▪ A gradual but steady cultural shift in a perception that the Green Wedge might be 'given over' to residential development as more city people move into rural areas, putting more value on rural living vs agricultural and conservation value, as well as expecting levels of services and facilities akin to urban areas rather than the Green Wedge |

In addition, some of the constraints identified in the current GWMP are also still relevant today:

- Limited understanding by the broader community of the role of farmers in contributing to land management, revegetation and conserving and regenerating scenic rural landscapes.
- Limited interaction with traditional landowners restricts understanding and preservation of Aboriginal heritage places. Also, a lack of understanding of how Aboriginal Caring for Country practices can be best utilised to improve the land.
- Lack of knowledge by the community of existing heritage places within the municipality

In preparing a new GWMP, it is important our rural and urban residents of all ages, needs and cultural backgrounds have an opportunity to inform the development of the new Green Wedge vision, but also in participating in any community-led initiatives identified that are vital for achieving the vision of our Green Wedge.



OPPORTUNITIES & STRATEGIES

The following opportunities and key strategies are identified to contribute to the goal of a connected communities, which include but not limited to:

Opportunity 1.1- Support a rural community of diverse needs

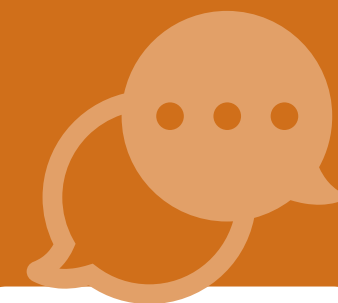
- Investigating the reasons behind the outward immigration trend occurring in the Green Wedge in order to meet the needs of our residents.
- Investigating ways to provide local education and training opportunities for the 10-24 age cohort.
- Exploring opportunities to support home business or other flexible employment opportunities that are compatible with Green Wedge values.

Opportunity 1.2- Empower community on community-led initiatives

- Supporting partnership among community groups and residents. (E.g. Ask the community what role the City of Whittlesea can play to enable the community groups to better connect with fellow residents or each other)
- Better informing and preparing the local rural residents on various aspects of rural living. (E.g. rural character/amenity, rural land capability, planning controls regarding vegetation removal, planning controls for agricultural use in Rural Conservation Zone, sustainable land management, regenerative principles, pest and weed management.)
- Exploring opportunities for Council to involve community members as local experts on land use and sustainable land management topics.

Opportunity 1.3 - Connect the Green Wedge with urban neighbours

- Enhancing the community's understanding about the diverse roles our Green Wedge plays in supporting climate resilience, health and well-being and food security.
- Developing/implementing actions to better acknowledge and celebrate heritage, in particular Aboriginal cultural heritage in our Green Wedge.⁹
- Foster a stronger connection between the Green Wedge and the rest of municipality. Some of the sub-strategies could involve:
 - Leveraging the enthusiasm from volunteers, working with schools and other youth groups in both urban and non-urban areas to rejuvenate the Green Wedge interest groups.
 - Contributing to the open space network that provides opportunities for people to connect with each other and with the natural environment. i.e. provision for complete path networks, cycling paths and removal of 'missing links' in existing networks to enable greater use of these facilities for informal activity and active travel.
 - Connecting urban residents with the Green Wedge and rural community via events. i.e. Open Farm Day that provides opportunities for the urban community to learn about the food supply chain and the value of agricultural production in our Green Wedge.



DISCUSSION:

To what extent do you agree with the opportunities and key strategies in this section?

Do you have any other ideas or things you would like to change?

⁹ It is worth noting that the City of Whittlesea has just commenced an Aboriginal Culture Study in partnership with the traditional owners towards the identification and protection of tangible and intangible Aboriginal Cultural Heritage.

Whittlesea 2040

Goal 2

Liveable Neighbourhoods

Liveable Green Wedge for Urban & Rural Communities

Liveability can be defined as the 'general quality of a place which makes it pleasant or agreeable for people to reside' (Tract Consultants & Deloitte Access Economics 2015).

Liveability could cover a wide range of things:

- a mild climate
- diverse and affordable housing
- sufficient physical infrastructure (i.e. transport and telecommunication systems) and social infrastructure like health care, education
- affordable living costs
- safety and stability
- amenity
- a clean environment
- a sense of connectiveness to family and friends
- a general sense of well-being

Some believe that many of those who choose a more rural lifestyle prioritise factors such as rural and natural landscapes, socially cohesive communities and will tolerate lower income levels, less accessible employment and inadequate infrastructure (Michael Buxon & Andrew Butt 2020). In the Whittlesea context, as indicated by the earlier discussion under Key Feature and Values, our community, regardless of where they live, care about rural character, atmosphere and ensuring that new development is appropriate. As such, the following opportunities and key strategies are proposed:

OPPORTUNITIES & STRATEGIES

Opportunity 2. 1 - Protect and enhance landscape amenity and rural character

- Further analysing and then articulating the components of the existing landscape amenity in local planning policies,
- Developing design guidelines for rural developments and using design as a tool to mitigate land-use conflicts
- Working with the State government to better define appropriate uses in the Green Wedge and setting up clear expectations regarding the design and scale/intensity of those uses. More will be discussed in the next section of the paper.

The Green Wedge and rural land character local policy in the Whittlesea Planning Scheme already identifies the need to protect landscape amenity and rural land character. The City of Whittlesea, with the guidance and support from State government, can seek to provide our rural community with more clarity, ensuring the built form and design of

development in these areas retain landforms that contribute to diverse environments and sense of place.

Based on Council's planning application data, one key strategy could be supporting the community to achieve better siting and design of outbuildings/sheds in the Green Wedge. In the past decade, over half of the statutory planning applications in our Green Wedge are related to outbuildings/sheds. This can cause problems for multiple reasons:

- Potential inconsistency with the purposes of the Green Wedge;
- The intensity of the building size and associated uses - some of those sheds are built at a scale larger than those on industrial blocks in designated industrial areas and have multiple cars and trucks entering and leaving sites via dirt roads that were not designed for heavy use.
- Erosion - some are built on structurally unstable sodic soils which create environmental issues such as tunnel erosion.

Opportunity 2.2 - Provide for safer settlement

- Discouraging the further subdivision of rural land for residential purposes, especially those in areas prone to environmental hazards such as flooding, erosion and bushfire.
- Encouraging land consolidation to rectify historically inappropriate subdivision.
- Better partnering with local community and other parties in managing environmental hazards/risks such as bushfire and erosion. For instance, stronger engagement regarding the requirement of landowners to reduce bush fire risk.
- Encouraging better management of both public and private open space, especially those located at the urban rural interface. (i.e. encourage land regeneration will not only mitigate fire and flood risk but also prevent land from future degrading, increase the region's resilience and liveability.

Due to historic subdivision, there are several pockets of rural living settlements in our Green Wedge. Rural living or rural residential development refers to the occupation of rural land primarily for lifestyle residential purpose rather than for farming¹⁰.

While rural living is not listed as a purpose of the Green Wedge Zone and Rural Conservation Zone which comprise over 50% of the land in our Green Wedge; one of the purposes of the Green Wedge A Zone, which comprises only 22% of our Green Wedge, is *'to recognise and protect the amenity of existing rural living areas.'* (WPS, Clause 35.05, Green Wedge A Zone)

However, some of these existing rural living settlements are located in areas subject to environmental risks and hazards such as bushfire, erosion and flooding which can present a risk to the community and the land itself. In the context of climate change, where extreme events might be more severe and unpredictable, it is important that we protect the existing community in our Green Wedge and prevent

further subdivision in locations that are identified as being highly susceptible to those environmental hazards. For example, Eden Park has sodic soils and as a result tunnel erosion is widespread in the area which constrains its ability to accommodate further growth. Refer to page 27 for background on the Eden Park subdivision. The issue of sodic soils specifically is covered in further detail in the next section below.

It is a State government strategy in Clause 11.01-1R Green Wedges – Metropolitan Melbourne of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme to *'Consolidate new residential development in existing settlements and in locations where planned services are available and Green Wedge values are protected.'*

In addition, the Discussion Paper identifies above strategies for consultation.

Opportunity 2.3 Manage sodic and dispersive soils

- Advocating to the State government and relevant agencies (e.g. Melbourne Water) on the importance of soil management for collaboration.
- Investigating funding mechanisms to establish detailed understanding of the distribution and severity of the sodic and dispersive soil in our Green Wedge (e.g. soil mapping).
- Improving community understanding of sodic and dispersive soil distribution and its implications.
- Support public and private landowners on soil conservation and the benefits of regeneration practices where the land is already showing the implications (e.g. reduced clearing of vegetation, topsoil removal and other disturbances to land).
- Exploring ways to better reflect and manage soil conditions via the planning scheme (e.g. suitable overlays to protect lands with fragile soil condition, advocate to DELWP on reviewing general earth works permit trigger / require Sodic and Dispersive soil management plan etc.)

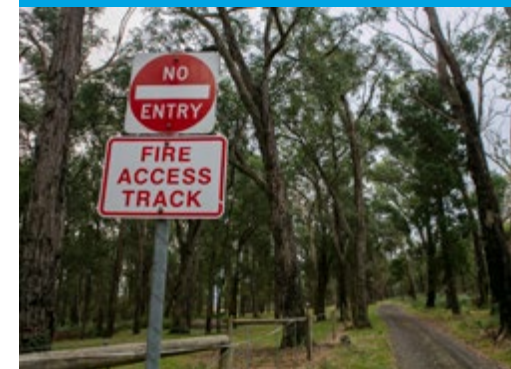


DISCUSSION:

What are the factors you value the most about the liveability of our Green Wedge?

Do you agree that we should, as a group, prioritise certain value above others to manage potential land use conflicts?

If so, what should these values be?



¹⁰ 'Rural residential development' refers to land in a rural setting, used and developed for dwellings that are not primarily associated with agriculture. Some agriculture may take place on the land however it will be ancillary to the use for a dwelling. It is likely to be carried on for 'lifestyle' reasons and is unlikely to provide a significant source of household income. Planning Practise Note 37 Rural Residential Development, DELWP, 2015

The City of Whittlesea has long recognised the environmental importance of soil conservation and has been actively working with landowners to enhance soil quality via a framework of sustainable land management. An emerging issue, however, is the management of sodic and dispersive soil that is believed to be widespread across the northern growth corridor in areas like Shenstone Park, Wollert, Donnybrook and Beveridge and in established areas such as Eden Park. Sodic and dispersive soils are soils that are prone to structural decline. It has profound impacts on not only the condition of our environmental assets, agriculture production but also on the safety of new and existing community settlements, and the viability of infrastructure delivery.

Based on high level soil mapping information, it is believed that Whittlesea's Green Wedge area is likely to contain sodic and dispersive soils (Jacobs 2020) and can have numerous implications, including but not limited to:

- Increased erosion potential
- A deterioration in water quality and degradation of aquatic flora and fauna habitat
- Failure of civil and private assets due to soil movement
- Diminishing areas of productive agricultural land
- Poor ability to establish vegetative growth leading to a failure to thrive for open spaces, gardens and street trees.
- Decreased infiltration and high runoff rates

In this regard, the above key strategies have been identified.

In the meantime, it is worth noting that the Australian Government, state and territory governments, the National Soils Advocate, research institutes and the soil community are working to develop a National Soil Strategy by June 2021. The strategy aims to address key soil priorities for Australia. For more information, please visit <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/natural-resources/soils>.

Opportunity 2.4 - Improve management of urban & rural interface including discouragement of land speculation

- Advocate for permanent and stronger protection of Green Wedge from urban encroachment.
- Better recognise and protect respective Green Wedge values and assets by appropriately applying local controls such as overlays, and better articulate

Historic subdivision of Eden Park

The subdivision of Eden Park dates to the 1880's when the subdivision was approved in London without consideration of the local topography, soil type or any other land capability factors. It turns out that this area has a range of biophysical constraints making it vulnerable to erosion including shallow skeletal soils, areas of steep topography and fine, easily mobilised soils. Eden Park now has many sites of existing gully and tunnel erosion, not only causing failure of civil and private assets (e.g. Septic tanks), but also negatively impacting the environment, including off-site impacts on the waterway system.

The area is rated as Very High to Extreme Risk on the Victoria Fire Risk Register. Eden Park last experienced a significant fire (grassfire) in 1970. The last large-scale bushfire was in 1926, so the elevated bushland areas have been unburnt for a significant period of time. (Eden Park Bushfire Erosion Mitigation Plan, CoW, 2017). If there is a bushfire event, and in the context of existing erosion damage/risk, loss of organic matter on the surface and changes to soil characteristics from high intensity fire can increase the quantity and energy of overland water flow. Both drainage and road design need to address potential deterioration in soil structure and increased overland flow. This applies to private landowners as well as public infrastructure, as culvert sizes and road maintenance requirements should also be applied to driveways and farm tracks. Farm dam embankments are also at risk of failure, particularly when built on dispersive soils and without vegetative buffers (relatively common in Eden Park).

In the late 1970's, the Eden Park Working Committee was set up to look at the subdivision layout. As a result, a Restructure Overlay (RO) was introduced into the planning scheme in the 1980's. The purpose of the RO is to reduce the large number of small lots in Eden Park that range in size from 4000sqm to 8000sqm. A permit to construct or extend a dwelling or other building in the RO may be granted for all or part of land in a restructure lot area only when the lot is restructured. The Restructure Plan continues to be the subject of enquiries by landowners and prospective purchasers. To date there have been multiple Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) decisions which have supported Council's approach to the existing Restructure Overlay.

Moving forward, Council would work with the landowners in Eden Park to identify ways to mitigate these environmental risks through sustainable land management practises and appropriate land use planning.

the preferred land uses and developments via local planning policies or rural guidelines.

- Discourage further subdivision of large properties close to the UGB boundary that are more susceptible to land banking
- Facilitate consolidation of fragmented lots for agricultural or conservation purposes.
- Apply preferred transitional use at the urban – rural interface (whether it is via lot size requirement or a permanent buffer in the form of Public Open Space such as the Quarry Hills Regional Parkland)
- Advocate for the establishment of the Grassy Eucalypt Woodland regional reserve (Refer to Page 37 Grassy Eucalypt Woodland Conservation for more information)

Council's property data indicates that the increase of land value in our Green Wedge has exacerbated over the past 5 years. Both the average and median property prices are now over \$1 million (per property). The data also indicates that the rate of value increase was higher for smaller land parcels, a trend observed more broadly in other peri-urban areas (Parson 2017). This suggests those smaller blocks may be being purchased for lifestyle and aesthetic value rather than agricultural value.

There is also an increasing trend of speculators, in the hope of future rezoning, buying up large parcels of land at a cost would place land purchases out of reach of young families, especially those who may be looking to commence farming in the region.

To address the affordability issue, above strategies has been identified which involve Council continuing to work with the state. A key opportunity lies in preventing further land

speculation especially at the urban and rural interface areas which are more susceptible to land banking.

Opportunity 2.5 – Finalise and start implementation of the new Whittlesea Township Strategy

Implementation of key strategies arising from the Township strategy which will support:

- Establishing a clear township boundary to maintain existing township character and to ensure the protection of identified environmental/landscape values and agricultural land within the Whittlesea Green Wedge.
- Directing growth towards designated township area, including the provision of diverse and affordable housing, as well as other key community infrastructure in the defined township area
- Investigating additional planning controls to ensure development respects the existing character of the residential areas
- Further support the township's role in being the social and economic centre of rural communities

The Whittlesea Township Strategy is a twenty-year plan that will be used to guide and manage future planning and decision making for the township. Following extensive community consultations, the Plan is being finalised and is expected to be considered by Council for adoption in mid-2021. The document establishes a long-term vision for the Whittlesea Township and seeks to protect the significant attributes of the township that contribute to its distinctive semi-rural character whilst building upon its opportunities.



DISCUSSION:

To what extent that you agree with the opportunities and key strategies in this section?

What are the other things you would like to add or change?



Whittlesea 2040

Goal 3

Strong local Economy

A Green Wedge supports for stronger local economy - Opportunities & Key Strategies

As the city expands, land reserved for agriculture and natural resources continue to be converted into housing and related urban land uses. In a global economic system, food and other natural resources sourced nationally and internationally has substituted for lost local production. During COVID-19, disruption to employment and food supplies has further highlighted the vulnerabilities of the global and national market system.

In the City of Whittlesea, data indicated a higher proportion of job losses (-5.8% decline) than Victoria (-5.2%) and nationally (-3.6%) (ABS,2020). It is within this context that following opportunity has been identified to support a stronger local economy for increased community resilience.

OPPORTUNITIES & STRATEGIES

Opportunity 3.1 - Support a stronger local food economy for local jobs and healthier community.

Infrastructure provision:

- Advocating for aligning road planning with relevant agricultural land strategies.
- Advocating for targeted planning and funding for rural roads other transport infrastructure, and increased access to affordable alternative water sources.
- Prioritising the maintenance of rural roads in Council budget to support agriculture, tourism and other related industries.

Skills and capacity building:

- Fostering community awareness on the importance of peri urban agriculture
- Supporting education and extension programs for farmers
- Supporting and encouraging more farm trials, investing in research and new technologies.
- Investigating innovative farming practices that are suitable for small-scale agriculture
- Facilitating opportunities for increased access to land for people wanting to farm. i.e. encourage lease/share farming/farmer incubator.
- Exploring opportunities for tourism in the rural areas from agriculture to recreational activities

Business Support, Collaboration & Branding:

- Investigate ways to promote local produce and attract agricultural investment, i.e. farmers market, agricultural production expo, explore ways to incentivise local buyers
- Explore a network approach to collaborate with different sub-sectors of the food system, other organisations who share similar vision in establishing local food economy.
- Investigate ways to support existing food industry.
- Review and improve efficacy of existing incentives such as Council rate rebate.
- Incentivising regenerative practices through more targeted land rebates and/or another schemes.
- Investigate ways to support and promote the tourism opportunities

As indicated earlier, the State government has proposed a range of reforms to strengthen the protection of Green Wedge land and agricultural land use in these areas as part of their GWAL Review. In addition to collaborating with the State government on the GWAL review, further opportunities have been identified above from an economic planning perspective.

CASE STUDY: Farm to Plate Investment Program – Vermont, U.S.

One of the most comprehensive and long-term **Farm to Plate** programs, the decade-old Program has successfully increased employment, business creation and food security for Vermont:

From 2011 to 2020, Vermont's food system economic output expanded 48%, from \$7.5 billion to \$11.3 billion. The food system added 6,560 net new jobs (11.3% increase). More than 64,000 Vermonters were directly employed by over 11,500 farms and food-related businesses. Local food purchases rose from \$114 million (5%) to \$310 million (13.9%) of the total \$2.2 billion spent on food in the state annually.

It all started in 2009 when the Vermont Legislature tasked the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund (VSJF) with administering the Farm to Plate Investment Program. The latter has the aim to “create a strategic plan for agricultural and food system development, which may be periodically reviewed and updated.”

In 2011, The Farm to Plate Network was formed to implement the first statewide Farm to Plate Strategic Plan. The Network is comprised of farms, food production businesses, specialty food producers, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, funders, capital providers, and government personnel. The network approach develops strategic conversations and action across multiple sectors and perspectives to make systemic change that no organization can accomplish alone.

In 2019, the Legislature reauthorized another ten years of the Farm to Plate Investment Program to:

1. Increase sustainable economic development and create jobs in Vermont's food and farm sector;
2. Improve soils, water, and resiliency of the working landscape in the face of climate change; and
3. Improve access to healthy local foods for all Vermonters.

The Vermont Program has inspired many Australian examples. For instance, the Murray Farm-to-plate Program which is a regional initiative funded by the NSW Government in association with the Victorian Government, Local Government partners and Murray Regional Tourism.

Source: [Vermont Agriculture and Food System Strategic Plan 2021-2030.pdf](#)
(vtfarmtoplate.com)

Network at a Glance



(Source: Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund 2021)

Opportunity 3.2 - Plan for sustainable, diverse and innovative farming practices

- Investigating and implementing local planning tools that support farming at diverse scales.
- Protecting larger agricultural lots which are increasingly becoming rare resources in our Green Wedge. A situation that would restrict our future generations' potential to have a more diverse range of agricultural activities.
- Facilitating the consolidation of agricultural lots
- Safeguard access to alternative waters¹¹
 - Advocating to State government to better manage farm dams by reviewing permit requirement, including strengthening the schedule to the zones so that earthworks for dams are specifically identified. Currently there is no specific control relating to dams Which creates ambiguity
 - Working with water agencies who manage the ground water licence to ensure all groundwater use is necessary and used efficiently.
 - Explore the use of planning tools, i.e. State Resource Overlay to identify and protect land with access to alternative water
 - Work with landowners to support land management activities to increase the water holding capacity of soils
- Investigating ways to support co-farming/share farming. (i.e. match existing landowners or farmers with new or aspiring farmers to achieve agricultural activities at either bigger or smaller scale without changing land ownership either via consolidation or subdivision
- Investigating and implementing local planning tools that support income diversification that is compatible with Green Wedge values.
 - Advocating for updated definitions in the VPP to recognise appropriate value adding activities on agricultural land. (For instance, Landowner hosts other people who live and farms on the land. Should this be considered in zoning as ancillary to primary uses and permissible)
 - Advocating for flexibility of the planning system to enable primary producers to add components to their business for greater viability
 - Providing clearer guidance in local planning policy in respect to discretionary land uses to be encouraged and those to be restricted
 - Work with State Government to guide development of renewable energy generation facilities which currently require a planning permit in Green Wedges.

- Work with State Government and advocate for provision of more diverse housing/ accommodation opportunities within the rural area that support agribusiness and/ or housing affordability (e.g. community living, accommodations for seasonal farm workers, Host farms etc)
- Support proposals that align food and fibre production with the use of recycled waste (urban and on-farm) and wastewater (urban).

In principle, Council are strongly supportive and keen to explore all options facilitating agricultural diversification, value-adding and innovation in our Green Wedge areas that is sustainable and resilient to climate change. This is due to multiple reasons:

Firstly, given the high land values and other rising costs of doing business, it is important that Council support farmers diversify income sources for business viability.

Secondly, Council acknowledge that not all farming is the same and that smaller lot sizes can be productive, depending on the farming practice (e.g. vertical farming) and commodity being produced.

Thirdly, farming practices are evolving. There are and will be, other types of value adding farm innovations. This means planning policies and regulations need to provide greater certainty and flexibility for those evolving farming approaches that will take untraditional forms.

Finally, we also note the importance of striking a balance between supporting agribusiness diversification/innovation and protecting the key environmental and landscape qualities. Both aspects have been and will continue to be, a key focus of our GWMP.

In addition to further collaborating with the State government on the GWAL Review, Council officers envisage the above key strategies. In particular, water access is important for future agriculture, especially for the production of fruit and vegetables that are water intensive. In Melbourne's Green Wedge, only 4% of the agricultural land is irrigated. However, that irrigated land makes an extraordinary contribution to Victoria's agricultural production with 86% of vegetable production and 61% of fruit production occurring there. (Sheridan et al. 2015)

Council also see an opportunity in supporting farmers to build alternative water systems that are different to dams. For instance, capturing rainfall runoff from shed and house rooves can be a reliable, efficient water source that is easily overlooked. On small properties around 8 hectares or less, it is generally more efficient to capture water from a shed roof than to create a dam that will leak, erode and evaporate a lot of water when it is mostly needed. Agriculture Victoria has provided an online '[farm dam calculator](#)' to demonstrate and compare differences.

¹¹ Alternative water is water supplied by sustainable sources that can be used to help offset the use of fresh surface water and groundwater (such as lakes and aquifers). Alternative water sources include rainwater from your roof, storm water, treated wastewater or greywater.

CASE STUDY: Innovation and Diversity in Farming

Carbon credit farming

Carbon Farming is simply farming in a way that reduces Greenhouse Gas emissions or captures and holds carbon in vegetation and soils. It can range from a single change in land management, such as introducing no-till cultivation or grazing management, to a whole-of-farm integrated plan. The benefits of Carbon Farming (along with Carbon Sequestration) include less erosion and soil loss, better soil structure and fertility, reduced soil salinity, healthier soils, vegetation and animals, increased biodiversity, buffering against drought, and greater water efficiency. It will also help drawdown emissions created in the nearby City. It's a win-win-win.

This speaks to the opportunities for farmers to benefit from the emerging carbon market, a NSW beef operation Wilmot Cattle Co has recently struck a deal with Microsoft to sell around half a million dollars worth of carbon credits. The credits come in the form of more than 40,000 tonnes of sequestered soil carbon, which the livestock operation has been able to achieve through sophisticated grazing management.

Source: <https://carbonfarmersofaustralia.com.au/carbon-farming/>; <https://www.farmonline.com.au/story/7105542/microsoft-buyscarbon-credits-from-nsw-cattle-operation/>

Solar Sharing – Farming under solar panels

Planting of vegetables or non-food crops underneath the solar arrays. This practice is also referred to as solar sharing or “agrivoltaics”. While agrivoltaic projects are still rare in Australia, there is plenty of evidence from around the world for their effectiveness.

In 2017, solar sharing projects in Japan generated about 230 MW over 330 hectares of land. In the early 2010s, experimentation started with the development of tall, light-weight solar racks, which would allow for machinery to operate beneath, and also provide intervals for sunlight to hit the ground for photosynthesis. The data collected has been used as a precursor for shading rates depending on crops.



In France, research conducted on a vineyard showed that solar panels reduced water irrigation needs between 12% and 34% (through shading) and also increased the quality of the fruit: grapes grown in this manner will generate an additional 13% of anthocyanins (the phenolic compounds that give red wine its distinctive colour) and 9% to 12 % of additional acidity. Panels were operable and could provide adequate shelter in evolving climate conditions.

(Rémi Rauline, 2021, *Sharing the sky: The case for agrivoltaics* - Renew, retrieved from <https://renew.org.au/renew-magazine/solar-batteries/sharing-the-sky-the-case-for-agrivoltaics/>)

CASE STUDY: Innovation and Diversity in Farming

Vertical farming

Vertical farming is the practice of growing crops using soilless farming techniques such as hydroponics in vertically stacked layers. It often incorporates controlled-environment agriculture, which aims to optimise plant growth with nutrients, lighting and pH. Among all the benefits, vertical farming allows farmers to produce more crops from the same square footage of growing area. Some also suggest that it allows farmers to produce crops with 70-95 percent less water than required for normal cultivation.



Source: <https://www.urbangreenfarms.com.au/vertical-farming>

Farming Cooperative – Food Next Door Program

Around 25% of land in the irrigation district of Sunraysia (Mildura) is no longer utilised for growing food as there was no one who wanted to farm it themselves.

The Food Next Door programme matches under-utilised farmland with landless farmers to support small-scale regenerative farming, growing diverse crops and engaging people from diverse backgrounds to supply food to local households. To date, 7 acres of previously unused land has been accessed and farmed, 37 farmers have been involved including 30 Burundian and Congolese farmers, 90 households subscribe to Out of the Box, 30% of income from Out of the Box is generated from food box sales.

Source: <https://farmingtogether.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Farming-Together-Case-Study-Food-Next-Door-Coop.pdf>

Opportunity 3.3 Support Agri-tourism in the Green Wedge

- Developing an Agri-tourism action plan to identify opportunities and activities.
- Reviewing of the current Economic Development Strategy to develop a Destination Plan will aim to provide further guidance as to how to capitalise on our natural resources and encourage diverse investment.
- Developing a new Investment Attraction Strategy which will outline Council's approach to encourage tourism across the whole municipality
- Investigating and implementing local planning tools that support Agri-tourism.

There is an untapped opportunity in creating thriving Agri-tourism that is attracted to natural and rural landscapes, heritage, food and wine experiences, sustainable farming practices in our Green Wedge. The background research identified following constraints:

- Limited branding recognition. The fact that 67% people visit the City of Whittlesea for relatives or friends instead of recreation purposes, considerably higher than the Victorian average at 28% (id economic profile, 2020)
- Insufficient tourism opportunities linked to the values of the Whittlesea Green Wedge. The Agri-tourism is still underdeveloped.
- Restricted pedestrian and bicycle connectivity within the municipality
- Lack of equestrian trails
- Low promotion of the diversity of parks in the Whittlesea Green Wedge

To support exiting Agri-tourism, facilitate establishment of new destinations, increase trip frequency and improve overall general experience, above key strategies are already underway.



DISCUSSION:

What do you consider are the opportunities for agri-tourism in our green wedge?

How can Council support this?

Opportunity 3.4 - Protect and manage existing extractive industry and landfill in the Green Wedge

- Protecting and managing those current working authority areas via appropriate planning tools.
- Encourage and support extractive industry and landfill operators to manage the land in a way that achieve optimal Green Wedge outcomes.
- Investigate unknown effects of quarry operations on local water system (i.e. changes to ground water quality and supply as accessed by bores on adjoining farming enterprises)
- Continue to advocate to State Government and Melbourne Water on the feasibility of utilising disused quarries for innovative uses. i.e. to creative open space for active recreation or passive green space/habitat such as wetland environment, where opportunities arise.

Victoria is growing and demand for extractive resources such as sand, clay, gravel and stone are expected to more than double 2015 levels by 2050 (DEDJTR 2018).

To ensure materials are affordable and accessible now and into the future for affordable housing and infrastructure, it is essential that high quality resources in proximity to markets remain available for extraction. Plan Melbourne and Clause 14.03 1S (Planning Policy Framework) recognise the importance of protecting and carefully planning for these vital resources. The Victorian Government's 'Helping Victoria Grow: Extractive Resources Strategy' (2018) has also identified the need to refresh Extractive Industry Interest Areas.

The extractive industry plays a significant role in our municipality in terms of both supply and demand. The City of Whittlesea ranks 7th among Top Twenty Critical Supply LGAs in the State (PWC, 2016, p44). In 2019/2020, approximately 6.3% of the State's extractives was produced in the CoW, worth approximately \$61 million in sales. More than half of Victoria's clay was produced in Whittlesea in the same period. (DJPR, 2021)

Being one of the fastest growing municipalities, Whittlesea is also considered the fourth highest LGA for extractive resource demand to 2025 and sixth to 2050.

Two of the 12 Work Authorities for Extractive Industries (i.e. quarries) in the City of Whittlesea are located in our Green Wedge and are still operating. It is important to recognise that Extractive industries and the infrastructure required to support them will need to be carefully managed so that they take account of the area's environment, landscape and cultural heritage values.

It is also important to recognise that extractive industries are a temporary land use within our Green Wedge. They require appropriate buffers during their operating life and rehabilitation at the end of their life in a way suitable to the surrounding landscape character, thereby providing a net community benefit.

In addition, one of the values of Green Wedges is to support provision of waste and resource recovery uses. The Wollert landfill site in the Whittlesea Green Wedge is identified as a State significant Waste and Resource Recovery Hub serving the metropolitan and neighbouring regions. It is well located on the urban fringe and close to major transport routes. The State Government's Metropolitan Waste and Resource Recovery Implementation Plan 2018 identified potential for the hub to expand resource recovery activities to meet the needs of the surrounding growth areas including establishing a resource recovery centre and pre-sort. It is important that urban planning allows adequate buffers and planning controls to protect the amenity of surrounding communities and prevent establishing incompatible uses that could impact on the functionality of the site over the long term.



DISCUSSION:

To what extent that you agree with the opportunities and key strategies in this section?

What are the other things you would like to add or change?

Whittlesea 2040

Goal 4

Sustainable Environment

Following extensive community consultations, Council have recently endorsed the *City of Whittlesea Biodiversity Strategy (2019-2029)*, *City of Whittlesea Water for All Strategy (2020-2030)* and the *Greening Whittlesea City Forest Strategy (2021-2040)* with the aim to safeguard our valued natural landscapes and biodiversity, ensure our municipality is resilient and climate ready, become leaders in clean and sustainable living.

In the meantime, the municipality's first climate strategy and new Net Zero Emissions Plan are also being developed in partnership with the community.

In the context of managing our Green Wedge, following opportunities are considered relevant and will be implemented by the actions plan of respective strategies:

OPPORTUNITIES & STRATEGIES

Opportunity 4.1 Improve the management and protection of biodiversity

Conservation:

- Mapping biodiversity in the Green Wedge to identify and protect the remaining conservation values of the Green Wedge
- Strengthening the planning scheme to achieve better biodiversity outcomes (including review of existing planning policy and overlay controls and/or introduction of new controls)
- Better enforcement of environmental legislation e.g. illegal native vegetation removal, requirements to manage pest plant and animal invasions.
- Identifying opportunities for greater 'greening' planting of vegetation – especially in treeless agricultural landscapes
- Continue to advocate to the State Government to secure land identified for future Grassy Eucalypt Woodland Conservation reserves
- Continue to work with rural landowners to encourage the protection and enhancement of biodiversity assets on private land

Sustainable land management:

- Facilitating public land stewardship to respond to issues including better weed control, kangaroo management, native vegetation / net gain
- Providing land management support to farmers, including weed and feral animal management
- Investigating opportunities to work with the Traditional Owners to share their knowledge of the region to achieve more sustainable land management outcomes.

The City of Whittlesea Biodiversity Strategy (2019-2029) provides directions to **improve the management and protection of biodiversity** across the Municipality now and into the future. It builds on the many efforts already underway by individuals, community groups, and government and aims to develop a coordinated approach that will allow for our natural environment to thrive as the City continues to grow. The strategy proposed a comprehensive action plan. Above are some notable strategies/actions.

Opportunity 4.2 Support local agriculture and improve water management

- Engage with rural landowners to improve flows to rural waterways and improve their management of natural floodplains
- Provide water focused community education and upskilling programs e.g. communities monitoring the health of our creeks and rivers
- Improve our public places along key waterways together, for example redesign and revitalise the concrete drain sections along Darebin and Edgars Creeks, and connect walking and cycling pathways from Yan Yean Reservoir to Plenty Gorge
- Support the extension of recycled water use for agriculture
- Develop recycled water use in agricultural and industry practices through the Whittlesea Community Farm Collective partnership project. The Farm will showcase the use of recycled water, provide volunteering, education and employment opportunities, and grow and provide fresh food to the local food relief network
- Enhance riparian vegetation and green corridors for rural waterways

Whittlesea Water for All articulates City of Whittlesea's vision, desired outcomes and recommended actions for water management within the Municipality. The outcomes of this strategy will keep our waterways clean and our priority green spaces irrigated. Council and the community will also be better prepared for floods and droughts, and it will improve our water efficiency.

Within the Green Wedge area, the strategy proposed our priority is to '*Support local agriculture and improve water management*'. Above are some notable strategies/actions.



DISCUSSION:

Do you see any further opportunities that can be added to the new GWMP?

Grassy Eucalypt Woodland Conservation

The Grassy Eucalypt Woodland (GEW) of the Victorian Volcanic Plan is a Nationally significant ecological community that is listed under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act).

In 2009, The Commonwealth Government, under the EPBC Act, approved the extension of Melbourne's urban growth boundary, subject to conditions aimed at ensuring that development occurs in a way that protects areas of environmental significance. This includes securing 1200ha of GEW Reserve in the Whittlesea green wedge.

The Whittlesea GEW investigation area is covered by an Environment Significant Overlay (ESO). However, to date no land within this reserve has been secured or acquisition processes commenced by the State.

Securing the GEW investigation area is important not only for the City of Whittlesea, but also adjoining Councils and the State of Victoria as a whole. It will:

- protect biodiversity assets and safeguard the landscape qualities for Whittlesea's green wedge
- manage the urban-rural interface by introducing a permanent and functional buffer to the urban growth areas.

Council has recently requested that the State Government make good on their commitment to secure/purchase this land, as a matter of priority.

Opportunity 4.3 Our residents and our environment benefit from a diverse, colourful, and healthy City Forest

- Work with landowners to revegetate rural areas, especially along waterways
- Protect existing trees and green cover from building and subdivision activity
- Apply incentive programs to encourage the retention and protection of green cover on private land.
- Plan and manage our city forest using up to date data and industry best practice.
- Understand community behaviours, perceptions, and barriers regarding green cover retention and protection on private land.
- Develop a communications plan aimed at increasing awareness and support for trees and greening, and to explain the benefit of greening to community well-being, environmental resilience, and economic health.
- Consult with Traditional Owners on opportunities to communicate connection to Country
- Continue to actively expand opportunities for community engagement with trees and vegetation as part of Council's new works projects, existing community programs and events, citizen science projects and public art programs, inviting and encouraging culturally diverse community and business involvement in planning and implementation of planting programs.
- Work with major non-Council landowners (private and public) to develop a portfolio of greening projects.

An integral part of our environment, trees on public and private land are important green infrastructure providing a range of benefits including improved mental and physical health and wellbeing, increased property values, and reduced heating and cooling costs. They also reduce air pollution, store carbon, slow and filter storm water run-off, and provide habitat for wildlife.

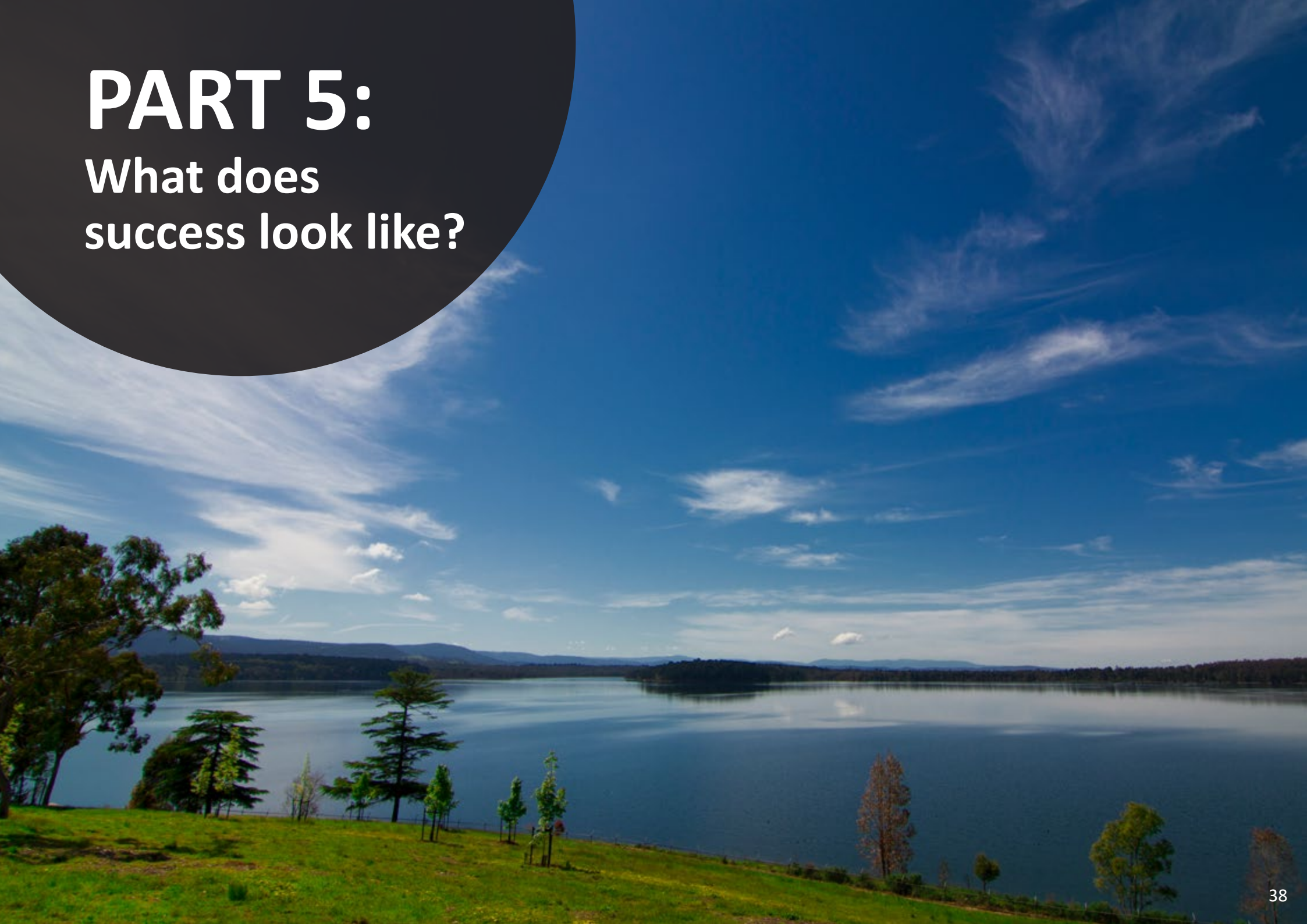
In addition, trees help the community adapt to a changing climate by cooling the air on hot summer days. Trees have a role to play both in connecting communities within liveable neighbourhoods, and in our response to changing climate conditions.

The Greening Whittlesea City Forest Strategy (2021-2040) set up a vision that 'our residents and our environment benefit from a diverse, colourful, and healthy City Forest that connect people to people, people to nature, and people to place. Notable priorities/strategies are identified above.



PART 5:

What does
success look like?



The current GWMP proposed following Vision for our Green Wedge:

"The Whittlesea Green Wedge will be an environment where the connection between its people and the land is respected and valued, and where innovative and sustainable land management practices are directed towards the enhancement and protection of productive and natural resources."

(Vision, GWMP 2011-2021)

Looking forward, what does evidence-based success look like for our Green Wedge? Does the current vision still adequately reflect our aspiration or priority?

To inform the Discussion Paper, those questions were raised to a group of internal and external technical experts¹². The result indicates that whilst the existing GWMP Vision is broadly supported, various changes to the vision were also suggested to further enhance the vision. The following themes were consistent in the responses provided:

▪ **Food production / agribusiness**

The current term 'productive resources' does not adequately describe the potential for and importance of agribusiness in the Whittlesea Green Wedge and its contribution to the economy.

▪ **Biodiversity / environmental values**

The current wording does not adequately address the importance of Biodiversity as containing significant habitat and other intrinsic values.

▪ **Resilient Community**

Consideration should be given to inclusion of wording that supports a vibrant, resilient, connected and diverse community.

▪ **Relationship to Metropolitan Melbourne**

In summary, it is felt that the use of the phrase 'enhancement and protection of productive and natural resources' does not explicitly recognise the broader range of uses and values that occur in the Whittlesea Green Wedge and the potential opportunities.



DISCUSSION:

To what level do you agree with the suggested themes?

What do you want to change or add to the vision?

What does success look like for you? What are the top 3 indicators that you connect with the most?

What do you want to add or change?

¹² The survey received responses internally from various CoW departments, and externally from the Environment Protection Authority, the Department of Transport, Agriculture Victoria, DEWLP, Catchment Management Authority, Yarra Valley Water, Nillumbik Shire Council.

In addition, the following measurements/indicators are considered useful to track the success:

| Whittlesea 2040 Goals | | Potential measurement |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Goal 1 | Connected community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More Green Wedge Community members are better supported in carrying out sustainable land management. (i.e. increase level of knowledge in sustainable land management) Increase no. of reported local day trips to our Green Wedge Increase level of satisfaction of rural residents with Council's performance Increase of no. of volunteering activities in our Green Wedge Satisfaction of traditional owners as a result of inclusion in management of their Country and possible agribusiness opportunities |
| Goal 2 | Liveable neighbourhood | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved community understanding on safety issues in relation to bushfire, flood, erosion etc. The vision and preferred land uses (scale, type, preferred location) is more clearly reflected in Whittlesea Planning Scheme Developing rural design guidelines and use design as a tool Area actively used for agriculture, and gross production of agriculture Rural land is not being lost or turned over to accommodate urban uses Community's satisfaction / pride in the area they live (e.g. perceived improved amenity of our Green Wedge) |
| Goal 3 | Strong local economy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agribusiness owners and industry have more confidence to invest in Whittlesea's Green Wedge (i.e. increased no. of Agribusinesses) A bigger and more diversified agribusiness sector (i.e. more complete value chains, increased diversity of Agribusiness industries) More local Agribusiness jobs (no. of jobs) A booming eco-tourism/visitor economy (i.e. increased value creation, increase no. of visitors) An increased number of farms/agricultural businesses that have access to recycled water for irrigation Increased investment in recycled water infrastructure and projects (either new or expanding/maintaining existing infrastructure/ initiatives) |
| Goal 4 | Sustainable environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More environmental, landscape and cultural assets are protected by the most suitable planning tools (areas of assets protected by planning tools) Amount of native vegetation retained (and restored) in the Green Wedge. Health and diversity of threatened species in the Green Wedge. Water quality in waterways in the Green Wedge. Amount of riparian vegetation along waterways in the Green Wedge. Improved soil quality |

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Glossary

Active recreation

Activities that are engaged in for the purpose of relaxation, health and wellbeing or enjoyment with the primary activity requiring physical exertion, and the primary focus on human activity.

Amenity

A collection of qualities that make spaces attractive for human occupation. The features of an area, street or building, that provide facilities and services that contribute to physical or material comfort and benefit, and are valued by users.

Agribusiness

Agribusiness, for the purpose of this Discussion Paper, includes:

- The inputs in agriculture, such as agronomists, chemical suppliers, machinery companies and transport, just to name a few;
- Primary production, or farming, forestry, aquaculture and fisheries;
- Manufacturing activities that process the primary products, such as abattoirs, milk processors, wine making, food manufacturers/processors and sawmills;
- Wholesaling the primary, or processed products, such as grain storage;
- Agri-tourism with our rural landscapes, wineries/vineyards, harvest trails and small-scale food producers who contribute to our visitor economy.

Built form

The height, volume and overall shape of a building as well as its surface appearance.

Caring for Country

Caring for Country is a term used to describe the different sustainable land management practices and initiatives that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people undertake, and the key role these practices play in continuing culture.

Green Wedge

Non-urban land that is described in a metropolitan fringe planning scheme as being outside an urban growth boundary.

Green Wedge Management Plan

A Council adopted strategy that identifies a vision, objectives and actions for the sustainable management and development of each Green Wedge area.

Land Use

The primary purpose for which the land is used or may be developed.

Land Fragmentation

In the context of agriculture, land fragmentation occurs when farmland is broken up by other uses over time. In areas affected by land fragmentation, farmers sometimes undertake agricultural production across multiple, non-contiguous properties, which can be a barrier to efficiency and productivity.

Open Space

Space open to the sky regardless of its ownership and management arrangements.

Passive recreation

Casual use of open space such as sitting, walking, reading a book, meeting people enjoying the ambience and relaxing.

Urban Growth Boundary

A line drawn around a metropolitan area, defining the limits to urban growth.

Whittlesea Planning Scheme

A legal document prepared by the City of Whittlesea and approved by the Minister for Planning. A planning scheme includes:

- State Planning Policy set by the Victorian Government and common to all planning schemes.
- Local Planning Policy tailored by each local government.
- Zones and Overlays: provisions that identify where certain uses and development can occur in the municipality, locations of significance such as heritage places, and which land use or development is 'as of right', requires a permit or is prohibited.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Plan Melbourne 2017–2050 Desired planning outcomes for green wedge and peri urban areas

Appendix 2 - Whittlesea GWMP 2011-2021 Implementation Progress Table

Appendix 3 - Shaping the future of your Green Wedge: Summary of Potential Opportunities & Strategies

Appendix 4 - City of Whittlesea Biodiversity Strategy 2019 - 2029: Opportunities to improve our biodiversity

Appendix 5 - Whittlesea Water for all Our Water Strategy 2020-2030: Vision & Priorities for Action

Appendix 6 - Greening Whittlesea City Forest Strategy: Vision and priorities for action

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