



Merri-bek
City Council

Merri-bek Council Action Plan

2026-27



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Merri-bek City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways in the area now known as Merri-bek. We pay respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging, as well as to all First Nations communities who significantly contribute to the life of the area.

About this Council Action Plan

The Council Action Plan 2026-27 supports implementation of the Council Plan 2025-2029 for the second financial year of the 4-year period. It includes the specific actions to be taken during the second financial year in the implementation of the Council Plan 2025-29.

All actions documented in the Council Action Plan 2026-27 are resourced through the 2026-27 annual budget (included in the 2026-2030 Budget).

The Council Plan outlines 5 strategic objectives, one under each theme, which together represent the strategic direction of Council over the next four years.

- **Care for nature and climate resilience;** to create a flourishing and climate resilient Merri-bek by improving wildlife and nature connectivity, greening and cooling for healthier streets and public realm, and engaging the community in meaningful climate action.
- **Healthy and inclusive communities;** To support accessible facilities, programs, services, housing that promote community wellbeing, and connection for all ages, abilities, genders, and cultures, fostering a safe, inclusive, and thriving Merri-bek community
- **Beautiful and liveable city;** Create safe, accessible streets and public spaces that support vibrant communities, active travel, rest and relaxation, and community pride, while ensuring development and growth are well managed and local character is celebrated, ensuring Merri-bek is a welcoming, liveable, and connected place for all.
- **Thriving economy and culture;** A lively and inclusive Merri-bek where the economy supports local business and industry growth, celebrates artistic and creative expression, and connects the community through vibrant cultural experiences.
- **Engaging and responsible council;** a responsive and engaged Merri-bek that prioritises excellent service, embraces engaging communication methods, advocates community needs, and continues to uphold sustainable financial management and accountable governance that builds trust and collaboration with the community.

In achieving each strategic objectives, the Council Plan 2025-29 also sets out:

- A series of strategies which outline the outcomes the plan aims to achieve and how we will meet our objectives.
- Initiatives and Priorities: which describe what councils wants to achieve through services and programs, projects, and infrastructure delivery.
- Strategic Indicators: Measures to monitor progress against the objectives; and
- Related Strategies, Plans and Policies: other strategic planning documents that will support delivery of the Council Plan.

As the Council Plan is integrated with the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP), the health and wellbeing priorities identified below are aligned with the actions outlined in this plan. These numbers indicate actions aimed at delivering positive health and wellbeing outcomes.

These areas are:

1. Improving mental wellbeing and social connection
2. Increasing active living
3. Tackling climate change and its impacts on health
4. Preventing all forms of violence and discrimination
5. Improving food systems
6. Other Areas
 - 6a) Reducing harm from tobacco and e-cigarette use
 - 6b) Increasing immunisations.

The Council Action Plan will drive accountability and turn our four-year Vision into measurable action. Progress will be reported quarterly to Council and included in the Annual Report.

Theme 1: Care for nature and climate resilience

Strategic objective: To create a flourishing and climate resilient Merri-bek by improving wildlife and nature connectivity, greening and cooling for healthier streets and public realm, and engaging the community in meaningful climate action.

Council Plan Initiatives and priorities:	Reference #	What we will do in 2026/27 Actions:	Health and Wellbeing Priority Alignment	Directorate:
1.1. Cool our city through planting and protecting canopy trees, increasing permeable surfaces, greening and beautifying our public and open spaces and optimising water capture and re-use to support plant growth.	2	Implement 'Tree for me' pilot and review outcomes to reduce impacts of urban heat and increasing heatwaves through collaborating to get more shade trees in places like schools, retirement villages and backyards.	3	Place & Environment
	80	Review and develop the Urban Forest Strategy.	3	City Infrastructure
	81	Plant and nurture suitable trees in tricky places, parks, and streets, including significant trees program.	3	City Infrastructure
1.2. Restore and renature open spaces, creek corridors and waterways that create a vibrant network of interconnected green corridors, enhance wildlife habitats, and promote biodiversity.	3	Continue to facilitate the native understorey planting trial project.	1,2,3	City Infrastructure
	4	Continue to facilitate the biodiversity and climate change resilience top-up research grant program.	1,2,3	City Infrastructure
1.3. Inspire and activate community connection and care for nature, ecological sustainability and climate resilience (including thermal comfort and UV protection) for public and private land in Merri-bek.	82	Create and deliver an annual program of nature-based activities to engage residents in learning about and valuing the natural environment.	3	City Infrastructure
1.4. Reduce potable water usage and mitigate floods impacts through stormwater harvesting and improve water quality through raingardens and onsite water treatment.	6	Continue to deliver key stormwater harvesting and wetland projects as outlined in the Integrated Water Management Action Plan.	3	Place & Environment
1.5. Work closely with Traditional Owners and local First Nations People to care for Country.	83	Support and celebrate Wurundjeri culture and land management in partnership with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural	3	City Infrastructure

Council Plan Initiatives and priorities:	Reference #	What we will do in 2026/27 Actions:	Health and Wellbeing Priority Alignment	Directorate:
		Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and community groups (e.g. Merri-Murnong Harvest Festival and Ballerdt Mooroop Cultural Site).		
1.6.Enable and engage the community to take meaningful action for resilience, a safe climate and circular economy, with a focus on vulnerable communities including First Peoples, including delivery of programs and services that improve thermal comfort, reduce energy bills, reduce carbon emissions, and reduce waste to landfill.	8	Continue to promote and support an inclusive energy transition, including solar and thermal subsidies for low-income households.	1,3	Place & Environment
	9	Continue to deliver circular economy community initiatives and prepare for roll-out of fortnightly rubbish service.	3	Place & Environment
	10	Continue to increase awareness and capacity of the Merri-bek community on heat and flood risks to support resilience building.	3	Place & Environment
1.7.Deliver climate resilient and sustainable Council-owned infrastructure, fleet, and plant that, during construction and into operations, optimise use of recycled products, maximise water efficiency, capture and re-use water, transition towards all-electric and zero emission fuels and respond to a hotter, more unpredictable future climate.	11	Complete Oak Park aquatic centre electrification and plant room renewal.	3	Community
	13	Continue to reduce emissions from Council's heavy and light commercial fleets through application of Council's Fleet Selection Policy (2024), which mandates the switch to zero emissions vehicles where these meet our operational needs.	3	City Infrastructure
	84	Deliver climate vulnerability improvements to the following Council owned facilities; Fawkner Maternal Child Health, Yooralla Community Hub and Newlands Senior Citizens Centre.	3	City Infrastructure
	85	Develop and implement a whole-of-program capital works prioritisation framework that integrates asset condition, service need, climate vulnerability, social, economic, disability, inclusion and environmental considerations.	3	City Infrastructure

Council Plan Initiatives and priorities:	Reference #	What we will do in 2026/27 Actions:	Health and Wellbeing Priority Alignment	Directorate:
1.8. Influence the delivery of more climate resilient, less carbon intensive and more nature-inclusive private developments through providing clearer guidance for environmentally responsive design, promoting, and negotiating improved outcomes through the planning permit application process and subsequent proactive enforcement of planning conditions.	15	Continue to promote the delivery of more climate resilient, less carbon intensive and more nature-inclusive private developments through providing clearer guidance for environmentally responsive design, promoting, and negotiating improved outcomes through the planning permit application process and subsequent proactive enforcement of planning conditions.	3	Place & Environment

Theme 2: Healthy and inclusive communities

Strategic objective: To support accessible facilities, programs, services, housing that promote community wellbeing, and connection for all ages, abilities, genders, and cultures, fostering a safe, inclusive, and thriving Merri-bek community.

Council Plan Initiatives and priorities:	Reference #	What we will do in 2026/27 Actions:	Health and Wellbeing Priority Alignment	Directorate:
2.1. Improve accessibility, user experience and develop underutilised spaces in our community, aquatics and leisure centres and recreational facilities.	16	Continue to Investigate possibility for renewal of Pascoe Vale Outdoor Pool	1,2,3,4	Community
	17	Continue to review progress of the 20 years Aquatic and Leisure Strategy	1,2,3,4	Community
	86	Develop the four-year Active Merri-bek Aquatics and Leisure Strategic Plan (Programs and Services)	1,2,3,4	Community
	87	Review and develop the Recreation Strategy	1,2,3,4	Community
	88	Facilitate the Brunswick Baths Gym Expansion	1,2,3,4	Community
2.2. Create supportive, accessible spaces and programs that promote youth wellbeing and social connection, empowering young people to thrive and feel connected to the community.	18	Continue to Facilitate support for the Youth Holistic Outreach Program	1,4	Community
	20	Progress the identification of scoped options to create additional free third spaces for children, young people, and families	1,4	Community
	89	Facilitate a six-month trial of a youth drop-in program in Fawkner	1,4	Community
	90	Facilitate free band programs for young people at Oxygen (Coburg).	1,4	Community

Council Plan Initiatives and priorities:	Reference #	What we will do in 2026/27 Actions:	Health and Wellbeing Priority Alignment	Directorate:
2.3. Offer a range of services for all ages and stages to support children and families, encourage participation in programs that strengthen community ties, and highlight the importance of early childhood education and health.	21	Continue to progress the development of the Brunswick Early Years Hub	1,4	Community
	91	Facilitate a family engagement program across two proposed locations	1,4	Community
2.4. Support older adults by providing accessible spaces, programs, and services that encourage independent living, promote health and activity, and encourage connections across generations to enrich their lives and wellbeing.	92	Scoping and delivering a pilot exercise program for older adults in Merri-bek	1,2,4	Community
2.5. Strengthen the local food system, increasing access to healthy, affordable food, supporting local food producers, community gardens and enterprises, and reducing food insecurity through coordinated local government policies and community partnerships.	25	Deliver programs addressing food security through local markets, referral, and voucher systems, strengthening and local procurement and logistic	5	Community
2.6. Build community pride and belonging by encouraging participation, supporting, and hosting events that bring people together that strengthen social connections and celebrate Merri-bek's diversity.	26	Develop and implement a new Social Cohesion Plan that aligns with Human Rights Policy	1,4	Community
	93	Develop and implement a new LGBTIQ+ Plan that aligns with Human Rights Policy	1,2,4	Community

Council Plan Initiatives and priorities:	Reference #	What we will do in 2026/27 Actions:	Health and Wellbeing Priority Alignment	Directorate:
2.7. Ensure Council services are inclusive, accessible, and culturally safe, promoting social participation, wellbeing, and equity by removing barriers and improving communication for diverse community needs.	27	Develop and implement a new Human Rights Policy	1,4	Community
2.8. Focus on our core services that are accessible and affordable to everyone, with special attention to mental health, lifelong education and learning services.	28	Implement the Library of Things Plan	1	Community
2.9. Advocate for and build partnerships to address the social determinants of health including socioeconomic status, education, transport, housing, climate change as well as access to mental health care, community services, emergency food and material relief.	29	Continue to deliver the Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan including Functional Zero and Assertive outreach	1,3,4	Community
	30	Continue to advocate for systemic changes to enable a socially just and climate resilient Merri-bek.	3,4	Place & Environment
	31	Build the Library Social Work Program	1,2,3,4,5,6	Community
2.10. Support programs that prevent and reduce harm from gender-based violence and other forms of discrimination and promote respectful relationships and encourage everyone to participate safely in our community.	33	Develop and Implement a Gender Equality Community Plan (incorporating family violence prevention and response) in alignment with the Human Rights Policy	1,4	Community
2.11. Maintain food, tobacco and e-cigarette, gambling, alcohol, public health and other education and compliance programs to support a healthy community.	34	Continue to deliver an annual Tobacco education program	6	Place and Environment
2.12. Work to preserve First Peoples culture by supporting Elders, empowering younger generations, promoting truth telling, recognising culture's foundational role in wellbeing.	35	Continue developing and implementing a First Peoples self-determination strategy	1,2,4	Community

Council Plan Initiatives and priorities:	Reference #	What we will do in 2026/27 Actions:	Health and Wellbeing Priority Alignment	Directorate:
2.13. Prioritise First Peoples self-determined solutions that promote culture, connection, and community strengthening, which contribute to wellbeing.	36	Continue to implement services that promote and improve access to Council's Aquatic and Leisure Centres addressing a range of barriers for Aboriginal Victorians	1,2,4	Community
2.14. Promote genuinely affordable social, quality, and sustainable housing by encouraging well-designed, sustainable developments.	37	Continue to Report the achievements of negotiated voluntary social and affordable housing outcomes through planning process in Quarterly Planning Permit Activity reporting to the Planning and Related Matters Council meeting	1,3,4	Place and Environment
2.15. Partnering with government and housing providers to develop accessible, inclusive housing, including First Peoples on Council land including in Central Coburg and other locations, as well as advocating for more public and community housing.	38	Continue to progress the plans and projects to revitalise and improve central Coburg	1,3,4	Place and Environment
2.16. Advocate for more social and affordable housing stock. Including crisis, transitional and permanent housing options through planning policy, partnerships and direct engagement with developers and by supporting local responses to homelessness.	39	Review, evaluate and renew the Merri-bek Affordable Housing Action Plan	1,3,4	Place and Environment
2.17. Support the advancement of Ballerdt Mooroop as Merri-bek's First Peoples gathering place.	40	Facilitate relationships between local First Nations peoples, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and Council to deliver Ballerdt Mooroop as requested by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.	1,3,4	Community

Theme 3: Beautiful and liveable city

Strategic objective: Create safe, accessible streets and public spaces that support vibrant communities, active travel, rest and relaxation, and community pride, while ensuring development and growth are well managed and local character is celebrated, ensuring Merri-bek is a welcoming, liveable, and connected place for all.

Council Plan Initiatives and priorities:	#	What we will do in 2026/27 Actions:	Health and Wellbeing Priority Alignment	Directorate:
3.1 Build new and revitalised local parks that promote access to open space close to home, catering for all needs and abilities.	41	Deliver additional public toilets in parks & reserves as part of the Capital Works program: - New Public Toilet - Fran Street Reserve, Glenroy - New Public Toilet - Cox Reserve, Coburg North	1,4	City Infrastructure
	42	Continue to deliver Park priorities	1,2,4	City Infrastructure
	94	Implement the “Cool Playgrounds, Safe Kids: Sun-Smart Shade for our Parks” program in alignment with the parks upgrade program	1,2,4	City Infrastructure
	95	Deliver a risky play playground at ATC Cook Reserve as part of the 2026–27 parks upgrade program.	1,2,4	City Infrastructure
3.2 Ensure clean, safe, and inviting spaces and vibrant places, promoting responsible and civic engagement and greater neighbourhood pride, usage, and social connections.	45	Commence implementation of the community engagement outcomes for the Stage 2 Pilot - Dog Walking in Merri-bek initiatives	1,2,4	City Infrastructure
	47	Continue to engage the community in the review and update of the Local Laws		City Infrastructure
	96	Deliver an awareness and education campaign for the new cat containment program	3	City Infrastructure

Council Plan Initiatives and priorities:	#	What we will do in 2026/27 Actions:	Health and Wellbeing Priority Alignment	Directorate:
	97	Implement safety improvements on Connolly Avenue	1,4	City Infrastructure
	98	Deliver new picnic tables across neighbourhood parks through the 2026–27 parks upgrade program.	1,4	City Infrastructure
3.4 Create healthy streets along our Streets for People network that facilitate active transport, improve accessibility and wayfinding, and improve safety and vibrancy of our streets.	49	Continue to deliver the Streets for People Plan priority projects	2,3,4	Place & Environment
	50	Deliver community-focused sustainable transport initiatives that improve options for people walking and riding across Merri-bek, with a key focus on school precincts and school communities.	2,3,4	Place & Environment
3.5 Integrate the Ride and Stride program with infrastructure programs to create safer ways for students to get to school using active and public transport.	51	Continue to deliver the Ride & Stride behaviour change program plus priority infrastructure upgrades around schools, to foster safe and active travel to and from school	2,3,4	Place & Environment
3.6 Expand electric vehicle charging infrastructure including in activity centres and economic development hubs to strengthen adoption of zero emission vehicles by residents and visitors alike.	52	Continue to support the expansion of the Electric Vehicle charging network across Merri-bek	3	Place & Environment
3.7 Design, approve and develop public places that and promote universal access and personal safety for all.	53	Finalise the delivery the Wheatsheaf Road Glenroy streetscape improvement project	1,2,4	Place & Environment
3.8 Facilitate high-quality built form outcomes and design innovation through built form policy and controls, planning decision-making, advocacy on state planning reform, and input to State planning decisions.	99	Prepare new Merri-bek Planning Scheme	1,3	Place and Environment

Council Plan Initiatives and priorities:	#	What we will do in 2026/27 Actions:	Health and Wellbeing Priority Alignment	Directorate:
3.9 Ensure the Merri-bek Planning Scheme provides an effective framework of local policies and controls that guide the type and location of housing growth to manage land use change, support economic and sustainability objectives, and protect natural and cultural resources.	56	Continue to ensure the review of the Merri-bek Planning Scheme leads to a framework that supports great housing, employment, and liveability in Merri-bek	3	Place and Environment

Theme 4: Thriving economy and culture

Strategic objective: A lively and inclusive Merri-bek where the economy supports local business and industry growth, celebrates artistic and creative expression, and connects the community through vibrant cultural experiences.

Council Plan Initiatives and priorities:	#	What we will do in 2026/27 Actions:	Health and Wellbeing Priority Alignment	Directorate:
4.1. Grow a socially inclusive and economically sustainable productive local economy, supporting job creation, young people, the creative industries, and innovation that offers diverse employment opportunities for the Merri-bek community.	57	Continue to develop the Brunswick Design District in partnership with RMIT University and Creative Victoria, with a focus on supporting economic opportunities and job growth in design-related businesses	1,4	Place & Environment
4.2. Invest in great public spaces and streetscapes so they are accessible, clean, safe, and appealing and support vibrant activity centres and precincts and strengthen community connections.	58	Deliver transport safety and amenity improvements across Merri-bek, guided by development of Council's first Road Safety Plan.	1	Place & Environment
	59	Complete the Belair Street, Glenroy, on-street garden bed	1,3	Place & Environment
	60	Finalised the delivery the West Street Streetscape Renewal Project	1,2,4	Place & Environment
4.3. Revitalise local shopping precincts by beautifying streetscapes, activating local community events, removing graffiti, installing public art, and improving amenity to create beautiful, accessible centres.	61	Planning and delivery of coordinated approach to public art and street murals (year 1 of Public Art Policy)	1,4	Community
	100	Facilitate the Ramadan Nights community event at Bonwick Street	1,2,4	Community
4.4. Strengthen the local economy with great business programs and actively supporting business and trader networks and associations to support small businesses and stimulate economic and community development.	62	Deliver the Merri-bek Economic Development Action Plan - Year 3 Actions	1	Place & Environment

Council Plan Initiatives and priorities:	#	What we will do in 2026/27 Actions:	Health and Wellbeing Priority Alignment	Directorate:
4.5. Facilitate the further improvement and development of key local commercial and industrial precincts to attract business investment, stimulate economic growth, research, create job opportunities, and improve community vibrancy.	61	Continue deliver priority actions from the Places for People Plan	1,2,3,4	Place & Environment
4.6 Nurture a vibrant arts culture by promoting diverse artistic activations and creating engaging experiences throughout the precincts right across Merri-bek, to celebrate creativity, attract visitors and reflect Merri-bek's unique culture and heritage.	101	Deliver program to activate Brunswick Town Hall	1,2,4	Community
4.7. Champion the growth of performing arts spaces, advocate for artists' livelihoods, and promote diverse art forms to enrich the cultural landscape and empower the creative community in Merri-bek.	66	Establish three community venues for increased performance and arts usage	1,2,4	Community
	102	Facilitate subsidised access for the Merri-bek artists to Council spaces for rehearsal, development and presentation.	1,2,4	Community
4.8. Ensure our festival program remains financially sustainable, responsive to community needs and that opportunities to engage with events and the arts are offered equitably across the municipality, catering to diverse and changing community needs.	67	Community engagement and partnership planning to develop a refreshed festival program	1,4	Community
4.9 Enhance Merri-bek's cultural landscape by supporting the production and delivery of arts programs, events, and library facilities, providing opportunities to create, learn, and connect.	68	Redesign grants program to support more opportunities to create, learn and connect	1,4	Community
	69	Planning and preparation for Fawkner Library redevelopment including interim library offering.	1	Community

Council Plan Initiatives and priorities:	#	What we will do in 2026/27 Actions:	Health and Wellbeing Priority Alignment	Directorate:
4.10. Catalyse the revitalisation of Central Coburg by finalising design and commencing construction of a new Coburg Library and Piazza.	70	Undertake a detailed design process including community engagement for the Coburg Library and Piazza development.	1	Community

Theme 5: Engaging and responsible council

Strategic objective: A responsive and engaged Merri-bek that prioritises excellent service, embraces engaging communication methods, advocates community needs, and continues to uphold sustainable financial management and accountable governance that builds trust and collaboration with the community.

Council Plan Initiatives and priorities:	#	What we will do in 2025/26 Actions:	Health and Wellbeing Priority Alignment	Directorate:
5.1. Commit to advancing equity and accessibility in Council services and facilities, ensuring that all community members, regardless of their abilities, can fully engage and participate throughout Merri-bek.	104	Develop and implement a new Disability Access and Inclusion Plan that aligns with Human Rights Policy.	1,4	Community
5.2. Prioritise enhancing customer service by improving responsiveness and effectiveness through meaningful interactions and ongoing improvements in systems and service delivery.	71	Continue to Develop Customer Experience Strategy	1	Community
	105	Improve the customer experience by transforming the digital systems Council uses to enhance service delivery and communication channels.	1	Business Transformation
5.3. Coordinate advocacy efforts to pursue funding, policy changes and projects that achieve positive community outcomes, by collaborating with community members, peak bodies, and other levels of government.	72	Continue to deliver advocacy activities that support council priorities	1,2,3,4,5,6	CEO office
5.5. Strengthen engagement through greater use of inclusive communications catering to Merri-bek's diverse audiences; and through education, targeted consultations, storytelling, and closing the loop to community.	106	Review and update the Community Engagement Policy and Accessible and Inclusive Communications Policy	1,2,3,4,5,6	Community
5.6. Prioritise sustainable, climate resilient, equitable, finance management to ensure financial sustainability and effective use of resources and robust decision making.	76	Continue to integrate climate risk into Council processes and systems, focusing on risk management, finance and asset management and capital works planning	3	Place and Environment
	77	Continue to update Merri-bek's open space and developer contribution models		Place and Environment
5.7. Co-design meaningful consultation of local place initiatives.	79	Finalise designs for the Breese Street precinct improvements and implement outcomes	3	Place and Environment