

City of Stonnington Advocacy Plan – 2024-2026

Version 1.3

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Introduction

The City of Stonnington (Stonnington) is a vibrant, diverse, and growing city well known for its shopping and lifestyle precincts, parks and gardens, leafy streets, and historical architecture. Our city and community have a strong vision and aspirations for the future, which guides everything we do. The Community Vision 2040 and Council Plan 2021-25 outline our aspirations to achieve the community’s vision to be:

- A thriving and unique place
- An inclusive and healthy community
- A people-centred and future ready city.

Key objectives and underpin these directions and help us measure success and our operating principles guide our approach and ethos.



Advocacy – What and Why?

Advocacy is promoting our priorities and issues to decision makers in Government, and partnering with like-minded Councils, businesses, peak bodies, and other strategic partners to achieve outcomes. Outcomes include influencing decisions, policies, funding, or public opinion.

We advocate to make sure our Council and our community have a voice. We can’t achieve all our goals on our own – we need to raise awareness of the challenges and opportunities in Stonnington, and promote the values and interests of our community, to seek positive policy and political outcomes and secure investment in our municipality. To achieve our aspirations for Stonnington, it is crucial that we work in strategic partnership.

Context

Stonnington is guided by its 2040 Community Vision:

‘Our community is a safe, inclusive and creative city that celebrates and embraces its vibrancy of cultures. Walking the tree lined streets, we pay respect to the influence of the Nation’s First Peoples past and living on a modern, sustainable and interconnected way of life that supports the good health and wellbeing of all.’

To achieve our Community Vision, and our Council Plan, we will need to advocate for individual projects, but also consider broader metropolitan issues and issues related to the industry of Local Government.

Local Government Industry

The industry of Local Government is at a critical inflection point. Stonnington, like all councils, is increasingly challenged to provide high-quality services and facilities to our community, in the context of the cumulative detrimental impact of the State Government’s operational and financial compliance regime. We will contribute to broader advocacy for sector reform and ensure that the cost and compliance scope creep of Local Government does not continue to inhibit our operational and financial sustainability. We will advocate for more flexibility to provide core services and infrastructure to the community.

Metro Melbourne

Stonnington is an inner Metropolitan council, and we face a number of issues which impact us in the context of our location. We’ll continue to partner with neighbouring and like-minded councils to advocate on challenges where solutions will require alignment and mutual investment. We also share key assets with our neighbouring councils – for example, KooyongKoot and the Chadstone Activity Centre.

City of Stonnington

Stonnington has a lot to offer partners, and some incredible existing strengths to leverage for our advocacy. Stonnington issues are those which impact us specifically, within our municipality and for which we will lead advocacy.

- We are in a key strategic location, close to the city and with amazing precincts and shopping strips, each with their own personality, character, and mix of businesses.
- We celebrate our local landmarks and heritage whilst also embracing modern, well-designed spaces and places. We are well known for historical architecture, leafy streets, and open space including parks and gardens.
- Community feedback is that our arts centres and libraries, recreational facilities and the appearance of our public areas are strengths compared to other Councils.
- We have a thriving and well-regarded arts and culture calendar, with events and offerings all throughout the year.
- We have incredible key sites across the municipality like Prahran Town Hall, the Prahran Market, Cabrini Hospital, Chapel off Chapel, Kooyong Lawn Tennis Club, the Stonnington Sports Centre, Malvern Valley Golf Club, Como House, and many beautiful parks and gardens, playgrounds, aquatic facilities and schools.

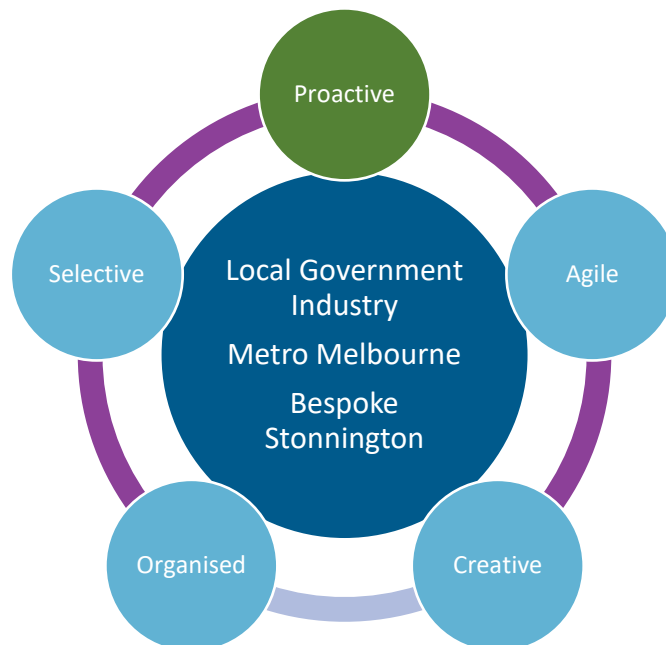
Stonnington also has many challenges, including to our financial sustainability, maintaining and investing in ageing infrastructure, project delivery difficulties stemming from economic and labour market conditions, the challenges of adapting to a changing climate especially in heritage and historical areas, and pressures on service growth and delivery with a growing population and increasing cost pressures.

We will advocate for outcomes that will prioritise the liveability of our municipality for our community.

Advocacy model

Advocacy is most effective when it's strategic, coordinated, and evidence based. To achieve long-term goals, a clear and agreed framework and plan for **proactive advocacy** is critical. But we'll also need to be agile and responsive, refocusing our short-term priorities when needed to respond to community requirements and current or unforeseen issues.

Advocacy will require strategic approaches and behaviours.



Proactive – we will be proactive in our advocacy, ensuring we engage community sentiment where we can, to anticipate and address emerging issues. We will proactively advocate for solutions in the greatest areas of risk to Council.

Organised – we will be joined-up, risk and evidence-based, and we will plan in advance for opportunities, thinking of the short to long term when we advocate.

Selective – we can't prioritise too many things at once, and we don't want to crowd each other out. We will have a few, strategic and targeted priorities which are aligned to our Council Plan and Budget.

Agile – we will pivot when needed to respond to emerging and unforeseen issues and remain flexible to change plans when needed. We will understand the trade-offs and make informed decisions about when to change our advocacy approach or priorities.

Creative – we will be creative in how we advocate, and in how we frame our messaging around issues. In an increasingly financially restricted environment, we will also have to be creative about how we solve problems.

Approach

We will use different types of advocacy depending on the desired outcome, who we are advocating to, and the type of issue being advocated for.

When advocating for outcomes, Stonnington should be:

- thoughtful and considered about the role it will take (promote, lobby, partner), based on the priority of the issue and the amount of control it has over the outcome
- clear about any financial or in-kind commitment we will make to a project or initiative
- organised; we will advocate for infrastructure investment when the initiative has co-funding or the capacity for co-funding and has a finalised business case.

Stonnington’s advocacy priorities and themes for 2024-25 can be found at [Appendix A.1](#) and the infrastructure initiatives we are seeking support for are at [Appendix A.2](#). These will be updated and endorsed by Council regularly.

	Type of advocacy	Intended outcome
Promote	Community engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand issues that matter to our community • Keep community informed of Stonnington priorities • Build trust in Stonnington and Council
	Social media and public statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep community and other stakeholders informed of our priorities • Build trust in Stonnington and Council • Increase profile of Stonnington
Lobby	Writing to and meeting with Ministers, MPs and Senators from State and Commonwealth Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support from decision makers for policy changes or funding bids • Increase profile of Stonnington • Inform decision makers of the priorities and aspirations of Stonnington • Make decision makers aware of the (positive and negative) impact of their policy decisions and commitments on Stonnington and our community • Build relationships and trust • Understand Government policy priorities so we can partner and target our advocacy accordingly
	Drafting submissions and position papers for formal or informal Government Enquiries and hearings, either solely for Stonnington or jointly with other likeminded Local Government bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support from decision makers for policy changes or funding bids • Increase profile of Stonnington • Inform decision makers of the priorities and aspirations of Stonnington • Make decision makers aware of the (positive and negative) impact of their policy decisions and commitments on Stonnington and our community • Build relationships and trust

Partner	Relationship building with peak bodies and key stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation and skills development • Achieve funding, co-funding or investment support for our community facilities, businesses, and industries • Build relationships and trust
	Partnering with Local Government advocacy groups such as M9, Municipal Association of Victoria, Australian Local Government Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise the impact of our policy development and Government lobbying • Address common or shared issues and leverage shared resources • Building economies of scale • Innovation and skills development
	Partnering with business/stakeholders/philanthropic partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve funding, co-funding or investment support for our community facilities, businesses, and industries • Build relationships and trust
	Applying for co-funded grants or other funding opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve funding, co-funding or investment support for our community facilities, businesses, and industries • Maximising the greater financial and resourcing capability of other levels of Government

Advocacy in partnership

Stonnington partners with advocacy groups, peak bodies and stakeholders to advocate on issues of importance. [Attachment A](#) outlines some critical partnerships for Stonnington, now and into the future.

We will continue to actively build our relationships with our existing networks and with new partners. This is a two-way relationship, and we will demonstrate the mutual benefit of partnerships. This will in many cases require resourcing and investment from within Stonnington.

Appendix A.1 – Priority Advocacy Agenda 2024-25

Taking into account our community’s interests and sentiment, the priorities of the Council Plan 2021-25, Council’s financial settings and draft Budget 2024-25, current risks and challenges, and partnerships with other levels of Government, the following priorities are proposed for 2024-25.

Topic	Theme	Approach	Council Plan	Ideal Outcome
Operational and financial flexibility for Councils	Local Government Industry	Lobby Promote	3.4 Fit for purpose operating model and resource management	<p>Victorian Government changes the model for the regulatory compliance and revenue flexibility of Local Government.</p> <p>The State Government must consider the cumulative detrimental impact of its operational and financial compliance regime, and ensure sensible changes are implemented that afford Local Government more flexibility to provide core services and infrastructure to the community, and which reduce the real cost of compliance with a wide range of State Government imposts and obligations.</p> <p>Key focuses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost shifting from other levels of Government • Revenue, rates and charges, statutory fees • Fines Victoria effectiveness • Planning Amendments and Housing Statement, including cost shifting impacts of Chadstone Activity Centre • 2024 Upper House Inquiry into Financial Sustainability of Councils • 2024 <i>Updates to Planning and Environment Act 1987</i>, and redevelopment of <i>Plan Melbourne</i> • Operational and regulatory/red tape review; cumulative impact of regulation on Councils. • Developing a model and associated frameworks and policies for Philanthropic and Sponsorship partnerships (see below).
Place-based investment, Housing, and achieving outcomes for our activity centres	Bespoke Stonnington/ Metro Melbourne	Partner Promote	All - but especially: 1.1 Identity and destination 1.3 Pride of place and character 1.4 Active transport and connected city	<p>Chapel Street and Prahran Town Hall masterplans are developed and endorsed, with community support and moving towards secured funding. Horace Petty and Essex Street estate redevelopments are best practice.</p> <p>Stonnington is closely consulted as a key partner on development related to the Chadstone Activity Centre to ensure fit for purpose outcomes for our community.</p> <p>The City of Stonnington has a vision to transform Chapel Street into a thriving, creative and unique cultural place that fosters a strong sense of community pride and belonging. To</p>

Topic	Theme	Approach	Council Plan	Ideal Outcome
			<p>2.3 Public and green spaces</p> <p>3.1 Community focus, connection and engagement</p>	<p>achieve this, we are developing a master plan for the street that will inform transformation projects now and into the future. We also want to transform the Prahran Town Hall into an arts and cultural hub - where artists and creative organisations come together to develop and present works and provide exciting new opportunities for the community.</p> <p>At a municipal-level, Council has effectively facilitated housing supply in Stonnington over many years in appropriate locations, in close consultation with the community. Council's expert planners work closely with our community to deliver the best outcomes and ensure redevelopment is successful in integrating with the municipality and maximising amenity benefits for current and future residents. In the context of the Chadstone Activity Centre, the advocacy position seeks a more thorough, evidence-based and integrated planning approach that involves the Council and the community in future planning to ensure greater transparency and optimal outcomes for the community.</p> <p>Key focuses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing creative and financial partnership and funding for redevelopment activities in the Prahran Town Hall and Chapel St precinct. • Stonnington appropriately consulted and engaged as key stakeholder on State Government redevelopments including Chadstone Activity Centre housing and Horace Petty/Essex Street social housing.
Waste and Net Zero	Metro Melbourne/ Bespoke Stonnington	Partner Promote	<p>2.3 Public and green spaces</p> <p>2.4 Sustainability and climate action</p>	<p>Stonnington is a regional leader on climate mitigation and adaptation and is transitioning towards a circular economy.</p> <p>Council declared a climate emergency on 20 February 2020 and has committed to undertake urgent action in partnership with all levels of Government.</p> <p>Stonnington's <i>Climate Emergency Action Plan</i> outlines the initiatives which Council will prioritise to address climate mitigation and adaptation. The <i>Stonnington Future Waste</i></p>

Topic	Theme	Approach	Council Plan	Ideal Outcome
				<p><i>Strategy</i> outlines how we will manage waste and move towards a circular system which keeps waste out of landfill. Public transport is also a sustainable travel choice aligned with Stonnington’s commitment to take action to address the climate emergency, and our <i>Public Transport Advocacy Plan</i> outlines how we will advocate for public transport projects that benefit the Stonnington community but which also complement and support State and Federal projects and initiatives.</p> <p>Key focuses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership with State Government on waste reforms, including bin reforms (FOGO and glass recycling) • Improved waste management and resource recovery, including through community education • Transition to circular economy • Transition council facilities from gas to renewable energy • Continue to implement the KooyongKoot master plan • Manage urban greening and cool our city, including by managing power lines and the tree canopy. • Continue to implement the Open Space strategy to promote biodiversity, improve health and wellbeing and mitigate the impacts of climate change. • Public transport advocacy including level crossing removals, station precinct master plans with improved walking and cycling access, tram route extensions, bus connections, public transport frequency, Chapel St tram upgrades, and accessible public transport.
Philanthropy, Sponsorships, Partnerships, and funding assistance	Bespoke Stonnington	Promote Partner	3.4 Fit for purpose operating model and resource management	<p>Stonnington attracts external investment which increases available funding for important services and infrastructure.</p> <p>In a challenging macroeconomic environment and with limited opportunities to raise revenue, Council will be increasingly reliant on funding from other bodies. Council has agreed to develop policies and a position on Philanthropy, and Sponsorships and Partnerships, including a transparent and objective framework for</p>

Topic	Theme	Approach	Council Plan	Ideal Outcome
				<p>accountability and to manage conflicts of interest.</p> <p>Philanthropy, Sponsorships and Partnerships will be intricately linked to the advocacy agenda for Stonnington. In the short-term, Stonnington will explore the creation of a philanthropic arts and culture entity separate to, but controlled by, Council.</p> <p>Stonnington will continue to promote and uplift our capability to compete for Grant funding from other levels of Government, including by undertaking proactive and appropriate advocacy with stakeholders and elected officials.</p> <p>Key focuses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase visibility and transparency of external funding opportunities and achievements across Council. • Scoping and establishment of Deductible Gift Recipient Fund and associated policies and plans. • Priority project lists aligned to election and budget cycles, and external funding opportunities.

Appendix A.2 – Priority initiatives for co-funding/partnership

Projects ready for delivery if funding secured

Project	Total cost	Contribution sought
<p><u>East Malvern Tennis Club redevelopment</u> Our project aims to transform the infrastructure and pavilion of the East Malvern Tennis Club to better serve our diverse community, with a particular focus on enhancing accessibility and safety for women and girls. Currently, the facilities pose significant challenges, especially for women with disabilities, girls, and older female members. The pavilion, built in the 1960s, lacks accessible and gender-neutral amenities, with washrooms only accessible via a set of steps. Access to certain tennis courts is hindered by hazardous terraced seating stair access without ramps, and courts 7 to 10 are only reachable via a gravel path.</p>	\$10,000,000	Contributions of varying amount are welcomed to support the staged delivery of this project.
<p><u>Northbrook (Stonnington History Centre) – Disability Access</u> Funding sought for construction of a ramp to allow DDA-compliant access to the library. Design work will be funded by Council but funding for construction is not currently available.</p>	\$190,000	\$160,000
<p><u>Floodlighting for sporting facilities</u> Stonnington has an ongoing program to upgrade floodlights at sporting facilities from non-energy efficient bulbs to LED lighting, improving safety, accessibility, access to sports grounds and environmental outcomes. Upgrades needed at following locations: 1. Malvern Cricket Ground 2. St Andrews Gardiner Tennis 3. East Malvern Tennis Club 4. Birrell Oval 5. Wadsworth</p>	Individual ovals \$100-400,000 per location, depending on scope.	Up to \$400,000.
<p><u>Brookville Kindergarten Playground Update</u> The playground is currently outdated and the existing facility does not currently comply with the new accessibility/disability regulations and standards. This funding includes landscaping and renewing the play equipment. Council has completed design work and would welcome funding to take pressure off the cost of construction work.</p>	\$320,000	\$300,000
<p><u>Mobile CCTV camera</u> Funding is sought for the purchase by council of a new mobile CCTV unit to be deployed by police alongside the fixed CCTV network, to target crimes such as anti-social behaviour, burglary, theft from and of motor vehicles, graffiti, vandalism and drug use.</p>	\$150,000-\$200,000	\$150,000-\$200,000

Projects in scoping

Project	Total cost	Contribution sought
<p><u>Sports Infrastructure and Fair Access</u></p> <p>Council has several new and premier sports facilities but also many ageing assets that are not accessible or inclusive for women, girls and gender-diverse people, and people who live with disability.</p> <p>Advocacy and partnership with the State and Federal Governments will be critical to ensure that Fair Access outcomes and objectives are achieved.</p> <p>Projects requiring funding or co-funding include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bert Healey Pavilion (design committed in 2024-25) • Ardie Park Tennis Club (design committed 25-26) • Sir Robert Menzies Pavilion (early planning work 25-26) • Central Park Pavilion (Capital works program 2031-32) 	<p>Over \$60 million across municipality to upgrade all 9 pavilions</p>	<p>Contributions of varying amount are welcomed</p>
<p><u>KooyongKoot (Gardiner's Creek) masterplan</u></p> <p>Council is seeking funding towards the \$20-25 million KooyongKoot revitalisation masterplan. The creek corridor covers 40% of Stonnington's Open Space including a sustainable transport network, leisure paths, sporting precincts, wetlands, playgrounds and planting biodiversity habitats. Scope of works include concept design, detailed design and construction over a multi-year program.</p> <p>Projects requiring funding include Shared User Path (Gardiners Creek Trail); Talbot Crescent Habitat Park; and Tooronga Park Wetland & Recreation Reserve. Additional projects will be developed as the masterplan is further advanced.</p>	<p>\$20-25 million</p>	<p>Contributions of varying amount are welcomed, as there are a large number of projects planned along KooyongKoot.</p>

Attachment A – our advocacy ecosystem

	Group	Description	Membership
Regional/Metro Melbourne	Eastern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (EAGA)	Works together on regional programs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and facilitate regional adaptation.	City of Boroondara, Glen Eira City Council, Knox City Council, Maroondah City Council, Monash City Council, City of Stonnington , Whitehorse City Council, Yarra Ranges Council
	M9 and subcommittees/working groups	Undertakes strategic, evidence-based, targeted and effective advocacy campaigns while building genuine partnerships with government representatives.	Darebin City Council, Hobson's Bay City Council, Maribyrnong City Council, City of Melbourne, Moonee Valley City Council, Moreland City Council, City of Port Phillip, City of Stonnington , City of Yarra
	Smart Cities – Eastern Melbourne	Partnership for information and data sharing, and group procurement initiatives.	Knox, Boroondara, Casey, Frankston, Maroondah, City of Stonnington
State/Local Government Industry	Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV)	Represents and advocates local government interests and provides policy and strategic advice.	79 of 79 Victorian councils (including City of Stonnington)
	Victorian Local Governance Association	Supports councils and councillors in achieving the highest standards of governance on behalf of their communities. As a peak body for local Government, acts as an advocate and partnership organisation.	49 Victorian Councils
	Public Libraries Victoria	Peak body for public libraries in Victoria, which advocates for the value of public libraries and facilitates partnership.	51 Victorian Councils (including City of Stonnington)
	FinPro – Local Government Finance Professionals	Peak body for Local Government Finance Professionals in Victoria, representing all Victorian Local Government Councils and 5 regional library corporations.	All Victorian Councils (including City of Stonnington)
National/Local Government Industry	Australian Local Government Association	National peak body for local government, representing 537 councils across the country. In structure, a federation of state and territory local government associations.	Local Government NSW, Local Government Association of Northern Territory, Local Government Association of Queensland, Local Government Association of South Australia, Local Government Association of Tasmania, Municipal Association of Victoria (City of Stonnington are a member), Western Australian Local Government Association.
Elected Officials	State Lower House members	The Victorian Legislative Assembly is the lower house of the bicameral Parliament of Victoria in Australia.	Rachel Westaway MP, Member for Prahran (Liberal Party) Hon. Michael O'Brien MP, Member for Malvern (Liberal Party)
	State Upper House members	The Victorian Legislative Council is the upper house of the bicameral Parliament of Victoria in Australia.	David Davis MP, Southern Metropolitan (Liberal Party) John Berger MP (Australian Labor Party) Georgie Crozier MP (Liberal Party) Katherine Copsey MP (Australian Greens) Ryan Batchelor MP (Australian Labor Party)
	Federal House of Representatives MPs	Stonnington sits entirely within the Federal electorate of Higgins.	Dr Michelle Ananda-Rajah MP (Australian Labor Party)
	Federal Senators	Senators are elected to represent all of Victoria, however, some have patron roles or are based in metropolitan areas adjacent to Stonnington.	Senator the Hon. Jane Hume (Liberal Party) Senator James Paterson (Liberal Party)