**City of Newcastle**

# **State of Our City Report**

**2022–2024**

A visual story map of the report is available [here](https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/711820b5d24a4fd2adf55c3c4a0a8640), highlighting our key indicators and projects. This map offers an accessible view of our progress and priorities across each theme.



Contents

[**State of our City**  1](#_Toc181860678)

[**Acknowledgement of Country** 3](#_Toc181860679)

[**Our vision** 4](#_Toc181860680)

[How we’re progressing 4](#_Toc181860681)

[**Plan on a page** 5](#_Toc181860682)

[**From vision to action** 6](#_Toc181860683)

[**The State of our City** 8](#_Toc181860684)

[**How our city is changing** 8](#_Toc181860685)

[**Liveable Newcastle** 9](#_Toc181860686)

[**Sustainable Newcastle** 17](#_Toc181860687)

[**Creative Newcastle** 22](#_Toc181860688)

[**Achieving together** 28](#_Toc181860689)

[**What’s next** 31](#_Toc181860690)

[Key findings 33](#_Toc181860691)

[Glossary 38](#_Toc181860692)

For information about this
document contact:

City of Newcastle
PO Box 489, Newcastle NSW 2300
Phone 4974 2000
newcastle.nsw.gov.au © 2024 City of Newcastle

### **Acknowledgement of Country**

City of Newcastle (CN) acknowledges with the deepest respect the Traditional Custodians of this land, a people who belong to the oldest continuing culture in the world.

We recognise their continuing connection to the land and waters and unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas.

We are grateful for the rich, diverse, living cultures of Aboriginal people. We recognise the history of truth that acknowledges the impact of invasion and colonisation on Aboriginal people and how this still resonates today.

We pay our respect to Elders, past, present and emerging, for they hold the memories, traditions, cultures and aspirations of Aboriginal people.

# **Our vision**

*Newcastle is a liveable,*

*sustainable, inclusive global city*

### How we’re progressing

*Newcastle 2040 (N2040)* is our shared community vision, guiding policies and actions for the next 15+ years. It sets the direction for growth, reflecting what we value and prioritise in Newcastle. Developed with input from diverse community members, it aims to **make Newcastle a liveable, sustainable, inclusive global city by 2040.**

We track our progress towards this vision by focusing on the themes of Liveable, Sustainable, Creative and Achieving Together. These themes work in harmony to make Newcastle a welcoming place for all.

This *State of Our City Report* *2022-2024* serves as a key accountability tool between the community and CN, mandated by section 428(2) of the *Local Government Act 1993*. Covering the council term from October 2021 to August 2024\*, it uses various indicators to evaluate progress in social, environmental, economic and civic leadership objectives within *N2040*. By detailing our achievements, challenges and future plans, the report ensures our community stays informed and engaged in shaping Newcastle’s future.

\*Due to the NSW Government’s deferral of local government elections, this report covers 3 years instead of the usual 4.

**How this report is organised**

Our key projects and trend data for *Newcastle 2040* measures are organised by theme. The final section, ‘What’s Next’, identifies trends that have emerged in our recent engagement activities and trends seen through our biennial Liveability and Wellbeing Survey. Although many measures are beyond CN’s direct control, understanding them is crucial for our advocacy efforts.

### **Plan on a page**

Our non-negotiable commitments are central to everything we do and underpin *Newcastle 2040*. They guide our actions, choices, behaviours and interactions. CN is committed to:

* Inclusion
* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culture
* Supporting local
* Our planet
* Innovation
* Social justice principles.

Read more about our commitments in the [*Newcastle 2040* document.](https://www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/about-us/our-responsibilities/newcastle-2040)

**Our key themes, priorities and objectives in achieving our vision for Newcastle**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Liveable** | * 1. **Enriched neighbourhoods and places**
		1. Great spaces
		2. Well-designed places
		3. Protected heritage places
 | * 1. **Connected and fair communities**
		1. Connected communities
		2. Inclusive communities
		3. Equitable communities
		4. Healthy communities
 | * 1. **Safe, active and linked movement across the city**
		1. Connected cycleways and pedestrian networks
		2. Road networks
		3. Managed parking
		4. Effective public transport
 | * 1. **Innovative and connected city**
		1. Emerging technologies
		2. Digital inclusion and social innovation
 |
| **Sustainable** | * 1. **Action on climate change**
		1. Towards net zero emissions
		2. Know and share our climate risk
		3. Resilient urban and natural areas
 | * 1. **Nature-based solutions**
		1. Regenerate natural systems
		2. Expand the urban forest
		3. Achieve a water-sensitive city
 | * 1. **Circular economy**
		1. Design out waste
		2. Localised supply chain and sustainable procurement
 |  |
| **Creative** | * 1. **Vibrant and creative city**
		1. Vibrant events
		2. Bold and challenging programs
		3. Tourism and visitor economy
		4. Vibrant night-time economy
 | * 1. **Opportunities in jobs, learning and innovation**
		1. Inclusive opportunities
		2. Skilled people and businesses
		3. Innovative people and businesses
 | * 1. **Celebrating culture**
		1. Nurture cultural and creative practitioners
		2. Promote Newcastle as a major arts and cultural destination
		3. Culture in everyday life
 | * 1. **City-shaping partnerships**
		1. Optimise city opportunities
		2. Advocacy and partnership
 |
| **Achieving Together** | * 1. **Inclusive and integrated planning**
		1. Financial sustainability
		2. Integrated planning and reporting
		3. Aligned and engaged workforce
 | * 1. **Trust and transparency**
		1. Genuine engagement
		2. Shared information and celebration of success
		3. Trusted customer experience
 | * 1. **Collaborative and innovative approach**
		1. Collaborative organisation
		2. Innovation and continuous improvement
		3. Data-driven decision-making and insights
 |  |

### **From vision to action**

**Introduction to Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Requirements**

Introduced in 2009, IP&R requirements ensure council planning aligns with community expectations on priorities and service levels. The IP&R framework provides a consistent, integrated approach to community planning across all NSW councils, aligning with regional and state priorities.

**Newcastle 2040**

*Newcastle 2040*, our highest-level plan, identifies the community’s main priorities and aspirations, guiding all CN strategies and plans. Developed with community input, it sets the direction for Newcastle’s future.

**Roles and responsibilities of CN**

CN operates in a complex environment with over 50 legislative responsibilities and relationships with 20+ government agencies. To achieve our vision, CN collaborates with various stakeholders, including government agencies, local businesses, educational institutions, community groups and other service providers. CN’s roles include:

* **Deliver (Control):** Providing programs and services such as waste collection, libraries, childcare, road maintenance, public spaces, recreation facilities, community support, special events and regulatory functions.
* **Partner (Influence):** Building strategic partnerships with federal and state agencies, the private sector and other stakeholders for shared responsibilities.
* **Advocate (Concern):** Advocating for the community’s needs and aspirations on issues beyond CN’s control by pushing for policy changes and actions at relevant levels.

**Evaluation and accountability**

Evaluating the quality and effectiveness of our services is crucial for accountability. Key indicators and measures help assess CN’s performance and enable evidence-based decision-making. These include:

* **Community indicators:** Measure the wellbeing of our city and community.
* **Service indicators:** Evaluate the high-level impact of CN’s service delivery.

While CN has a custodial role in initiating, preparing and delivering Newcastle 2040 on behalf of the community, it is not solely responsible for its implementation. Many of the issues and concerns facing Newcastle are complex and beyond the direct control and influence of CN, such as public transport, health, education, housing, planning, and employment.

To deliver our vision, CN works with various stakeholders and partners, including other levels of government and their affiliated agencies, local businesses and industry, educational institutions, community groups, and other service providers.

# **The State of Our City**

### **How our city is changing**

Newcastle, a proud community shaped by its heritage, continues to grow and evolve. We’ve survived earthquakes, superstorms and the closure of major industries. The Awabakal and Worimi peoples, the Traditional Custodians of this land, enrich our community with their cultural heritage.

European settlement introduced farming, coal mining and industry. While the industrial sector remains vital, our economy now thrives on the service sector, including education, healthcare and technology.

Newcastle is a hub for artists, galleries, museums, theatres and cultural enterprises. Our natural environment is diverse, featuring coastal headlands, beaches, wetlands and rainforests. Our suburbs range from heritage-lined streets in Newcastle East to leafy areas like Lambton and Kotara, and new estates in Fletcher and Minmi.

**Recent changes**

In the past 2 years, Newcastle has shown remarkable resilience and adaptability. Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and severe weather events, our community has united to rebuild and support one another.

The rising cost of living is a pressing concern. Local initiatives focus on affordability, providing financial assistance, affordable housing and community support services.

Our economy is diversifying, with significant growth in the service sector. Our creative and cultural sectors have rebounded, enriching community life and boosting tourism. Environmental sustainability projects are in progress, focusing on coastal protection, biodiversity and urban greening.

**Looking ahead**

Newcastle’s suburbs are evolving, balancing heritage preservation with modern development. Strategic planning and community resilience ensure we are building a prosperous and inclusive future. Together, we honour our rich cultural heritage, embrace our diverse environment and drive forward with innovation and compassion.

### **Liveable Newcastle**

**Where do we want to be?**

*Our neighbourhoods are safe and thriving, with diverse and equitable housing and social and urban infrastructure that supports local living. Our public places bring people together for active living and social connection. We plan for identified growth areas, ensuring that the things we want and need are nearby and easily accessible.*

*Our city is walkable, connected by safe roads and accessible parking, and options for active transport are available, enabling access to services and facilities.*

*Our community is connected and equitable, and everyone is valued. We use innovation and technology and promote health, wellbeing and equal opportunities to increase residents’ quality of life.*

**Measuring progress**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Community Indicators** | **Baseline\*** | **2021/22** | **2022/23** | **2023/24** |
| Overall quality of life in Newcastle(Source: CN Liveability and Wellbeing Survey) | 75% Satisfaction rating Residents rated their quality of life in Newcastle as very good or excellent 32% of residents stated that their quality of life has improved over the past 3 years (Jan 2022) | 75% (Jan 2022)  | N/A (Survey held biennially) | 71% (Mar 2024)30% of residents stated that their quality of life has improved over the past 3 years (Jan 2022) |
| Rental Affordability Index (Source: SGS Economics and Planning) | 99 Rental affordability index score (June 2021) | 92 (Dec 2022) | 97 (Dec 2023)Average of Q1 and Q2 only | No data available |
| Number of recorded criminal incidents for major offences (Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research) | 9,360 Major offences (Dec 2020) | 9104 (2022) | 9962 (2023) | 10,653 (2024) |
| Potentially preventable hospitalisations (Source: NSW Health Stats) | 2,009.9 per 100,000 (Hunter New England LHD June 2021)1,904.4 per 100,000 (NSW June 2021) | 1,871.7 per 100,000 (Hunter New England LHD June 2022) 1,718.8 per 100,000 (NSW June 2022) | No data available | No data available |
| Travel patterns on an average weekday for residents (Source: NSW Transport – Household Travel Survey)Mode Share %  | 56.5% Vehicle Driver 16.1% Vehicle Passenger 1.5% Train 5.7% Bus 21.3% Walk/Cycle/Other (2019/2020) | No data available | 57.5% Vehicle Driver 22.8% Vehicle Passenger 2.2% Public Transport 14.0% Walk/Cycle/Other | No data available |
| Newcastle Digital Inclusion Index score (Source: Australian Digital Inclusion Index data) | NSW Average 71.1 Newcastle 69.0 (Dec 2021) | NSW Average 71.1 Newcastle 69.0 (Dec 2021) | NSW Average 73.2 Newcastle 74.8 (Dec 2022) (+1.6) | No data available |
| **Service Indicators** | **Baseline\*** | **2021/22** | **2022/23** | **2023/24** |
| Social Infrastructure index score: % of residents that live within a designated distance (walkable) of community facilities, public transport (train stations and bus stops), recreation facilities, local centres and parks (Source: CN GIS mapped data) | 38% Within 800m: community facilities (libraries, community centres, senior citizen centres) 83% Recreation facilities (sportsgrounds, skate parks, playgrounds, pools) 56% Local centres (retail areas) 96% Parks and reserves 91% Within 400m: public transport (railway, ferry, bus, light rail) (March 2022) | 38% Within 800m: community facilities (libraries, community centres, senior citizen centres) 83% Recreation facilities (sportsgrounds, skate parks, playgrounds, pools) 56% Local centres (retail areas) 96% Parks and reserves 91% Within 400m: public transport (railway, ferry, bus, light rail) (March 2022) | No change | No change |
| Cycle-friendly and walkable city (Source: CN Liveability and Wellbeing Survey) | 59% agree/strongly agree that Newcastle is a cycle-friendly city (Strongly agree – 24%, agree – 35%) 71% agree/strongly agree that Newcastle is a walkable city (Strongly agree – 36%, agree – 35%) (Jan 2022) | 59% agree/strongly agree that Newcastle is a cycle-friendly city 71% agree/strongly agree that Newcastle is a walkable city  | N/A (Survey held biennially) | 51% agree/strongly agree that Newcastle is a cycle-friendly city66% agree/strongly agree that Newcastle is a walkable city |

\* The baseline refers to the initial set of data. By comparing future data to the baseline, CN can measure improvements, trends, or declines in performance.

**Key projects**

**Enriched neighbourhoods and places**

*Places are well planned to be meaningful, engaging and accessible to all. Sustainable, healthy and inclusive streets, open spaces, and neighbourhood centres with unique character and heritage are important. We value public places supported by planned infrastructure that bring people together for active living and social connection. Pride in the culture and heritage of our city enhances our sense of identity*.

The following is a snapshot of some of the projects completed during this period.

**Local Centres Program**

CN continued to invest in the Local Centres Program, upgrading local and neighbourhood centres throughout Newcastle. These improvements have enhanced streetscapes, access, traffic and safety. Upgrades have included better footpaths, new trees and street furniture, creating more vibrant, safe and active public places.

Projects included:

* Enhancements at Mitchell Street, Stockton, with improved public spaces, increased pedestrian and cyclist safety, and the addition of 40 new trees for more greenery
* Upgrades at Shortland Local Centre with new footpaths, safety improvements, and a vibrant community mural to reduce driver speeds and enhance pedestrian safety
* Progress on Orchardtown Road, New Lambton, introducing a 40 km/h zone, pedestrian crossings, and shared pathways to improve safety and create a more welcoming shopping environment
* A $6 million investment in road and footpath improvements along Nelson Street, Wallsend, including extensive road resurfacing, landscaping, and streetscape upgrades.

**Newcastle Ocean Baths**

CN completed Stage One upgrades at the Newcastle Ocean Baths. This stage primarily focused on enhancing safety, water quality and accessibility. The works included rebuilding the pool and lower promenade and providing a new seawater delivery system. The project also greatly improved access to the pool, improved infrastructure for maintenance, and upgraded seating, shading and public amenity, addressing feedback identified through extensive community engagement and expert engineering advice. The pool re-opened for swimming on 21 December 2023.

**Improved playgrounds**

CN improved playgrounds by completing the $2 million Wallsend Active Hub, featuring a bike pump track, climbing walls, basketball court, tennis hitting wall and fitness equipment. CN is dedicated to modernising and rejuvenating ageing facilities and replaces up to 5 of Newcastle’s 134 local playgrounds each year.

Projects included:

* Adamstown Park
* Avon Street Reserve in Mayfield
* Beresfield Pool Playground
* Coolamin Reserve in Waratah
* Harold Myers Park in Birmingham Gardens
* Islington Park
* Lambton Park
* Loch Ness Drive Park in Fletcher
* Rawson Park in Stockton
* Vera Wilson Park in Beresfield
* Waratah Park.

**Inland Pools Strategy**

CN adopted the *Inland Pools Strategy 2043* to protect and improve Newcastle’s public pools over the next 20 years. This strategy covers the maintenance and renewal of Lambton, Wallsend, Mayfield, Stockton and Beresfield pools, ensuring they meet community needs. Developed with community input, it established the Inland Pools Community Network for active involvement.

CN celebrated Lambton Pool’s 60th anniversary with a new $2.2 million grandstand. Permanent tiered seating was added at Mayfield, Stockton and Wallsend Swimming Centres, providing shaded seating for schools, sporting groups and spectators. Other enhancements included pump replacements, new lane ropes, upgraded play equipment at Beresfield, a new shade sail at Mayfield and an accessible changeroom at Wallsend, part of a $1.25 million investment to ensure all facilities are inclusive.

**Recreation upgrades**

CN’s upgrades to recreation facilities enhance quality of life for residents by providing more opportunities for physical activity, social interaction and leisure. Key projects include:

* **Adamstown Park:** A 15-year masterplan for Newcastle’s largest suburban sporting hub, including a $1.25 million upgrade to Myers Park with new sports facilities.
* **Darling Street Oval:** A $3 million upgrade featuring a new inclusive grandstand with changerooms, training rooms, media rooms and tiered seating for 340 spectators.
* **Lugar Park, Kotara:** A $1.2 million transformation adding unisex changerooms, accessible amenities, a unisex referees’ room, equipment storage, a new canteen and improved pathways.
* **Passmore Oval, Wickham:** A $2.6 million redevelopment creating dedicated female changerooms for local sports clubs.

These investments support the growth of women in sports and meet the community’s recreation needs.

**Off-leash dog park**

CN opened a second fully fenced off-leash dog park at Maryland Drive Reserve, featuring a dog bubbler, shelter, seating and shade trees. Future plans include an additional off-leash area to separate large and small dogs, more seating, landscaping and a formalised carpark. This project is guided by CN’s *Dogs in Open Space Plan*, which identified the need for more fenced dog parks for Newcastle’s 64,000 registered dogs.

**Connected and fair communities**

*Connected and fair communities value all people and embrace diversity. We are respectful of culture and work towards inclusion to achieve a sense of belonging for all. We promote health, wellbeing, digital inclusion and equal opportunities to improve quality of life.*

The following is a snapshot of some of the projects completed during this period.

**Social Strategy 2030**

Council adopted the *Social Strategy 2030*, envisioning an inclusive Newcastle. This strategy defines CN’s role in fostering connected and liveable communities, especially for vulnerable members. Recognising the complexity of social issues, CN collaborates with state and federal governments, community groups, businesses and educational institutions to enhance local services and deliver a socially just and inclusive Newcastle.

**Supporting the community sector**

* CN supported community services through networking, distributing e-news and interagency meetings.
* Events like National Carers Week, the Seniors Festival and Connections for Ageing Well reduced social isolation.
* CN launched an advocacy video to improve workplace inclusion and disability employment and the Count Us In Festival aimed to foster inclusive employment.
* The Youth Industry Partnership Program helped young people transition to further education or employment.
* CN developed 13 learning modules to help individuals and groups build skills and reconnect.
* In partnership with the Newcastle Domestic Violence Committee, CN created educational materials on coercive control and domestic violence in 7 languages.

**Housing stress and homelessness**

CN collaborated with State Government and Matthew Talbot Specialist Homelessness Service teams on a pilot project to provide rapid response and housing solutions for those sleeping rough. The Homelessness Action Project, a joint effort with Lake Macquarie City Council, focused on enhancing service hubs, capturing local needs data and developing a joint advocacy roadmap. Additionally, CN supported Home in Place by coordinating volunteers and services for the 2022 annual Hunter Homeless Connect Day, which assisted nearly 2,000 people.

**Newcastle Libraries**

CN made significant improvements in our libraries, including creating The Memory Room, a program that uses art and music therapy to foster connections and reduce social isolation for those with dementia. This initiative’s success has led to developing a toolkit to help other libraries replicate its benefits. We refurbished Wallsend Library, welcomed back post-COVID visitors, and saw a 10% increase in e-audiobook downloads, highlighting the popularity of digital formats. Additionally, CN’s Home Library Service delivered over 20,000 items to more than 200 home-bound members, achieving a 95% satisfaction rate and significantly reducing isolation.

**First Nations Creatives**

Newcastle Museum’s FIRST exhibition celebrated the talent and creativity of the city’s diverse First Nations community, showcasing the work of 16 creatives from Newcastle and the Hunter region. Featuring light projections, videos, paintings, glasswork and sculptures, the exhibition highlighted the cultural richness of First Nations art. It provided locals and visitors with an opportunity to engage with and appreciate these unique perspectives and talents, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of Indigenous art and enriching Newcastle’s cultural landscape.

**Safe, active and linked movement across the city**

*Moving across the city with ease is important to the liveability of Newcastle. Diverse transport options, active travel and safe roads play a major role in keeping us physically connected to work, leisure and services. Active transport becomes the preferred transport method for the people of Newcastle. Every time someone rides or walks to work, to university, to the beach or to the local shops instead of using a car means less congestion, less noise, less pollution and better streetscapes for people.*

The following is a snapshot of some of the projects completed during this period.

**Improved cycling infrastructure**

CN continues to progress works within our *Cycling Plan 2021–2030*, promoting active transport and enhancing cyclist safety. Recent projects include:

* **Public bike repair station:** Installed Newcastle’s first public bike repair station at Islington Park, equipped with essential tools and a bike pump.
* **Safety improvements at Chinchen and Clyde Streets:** Added new signals to benefit cyclists, students and pedestrians accessing Newcastle TAFE and Islington Public School.

These projects support our goal of creating sustainable, healthy and inclusive communities with safe, accessible cycling infrastructure.

**Road infrastructure**

CN remained committed to improving road infrastructure through significant investments in rehabilitation and resurfacing projects.

Road rehabilitation involves major reconstruction or stabilisation of roads to address underlying issues like pavement damage or drainage problems. These projects aim to extend the lifespan of roads and improve overall safety and functionality.

Significant road rehabilitation projects completed during the period included:

* **Allowah Street, Waratah West** – Pavement rehabilitation ($1.65 million)
* **Kinta Drive, Beresfield** – Pavement stabilisation ($750,000)
* **Irrawang Street, Wallsend** – Road reconstruction
* **Maryland Drive, Maryland** – Road reconstruction
* **Fogo Street, Wallsend** – Road reconstruction
* **Awabakal Drive, Maryland** – Road rehabilitation
* **Bunn Street, Wallsend** – Road repairs
* **Mordue Parade, Jesmond** – Road repairs
* **Nelson Street, Wallsend** – Road repairs
* **Croudace Road, Elermore Vale** – Rehabilitation with subsoil drainage enhancements
* **Yarrum Avenue, Beresfield** – Road pavement works
* **Bull Street, Mayfield** – Batter and footpath remediation
* **Margaret Street, Merewether** – Road and stormwater repairs
* **Fern Street, Islington** – Road reconstruction
* **City-wide laneway renewal initiatives** – Ongoing improvements across both years.

Road resurfacing is focused on renewing the surface layer of roads, which enhances the driving experience and safety by addressing wear and tear but does not involve structural changes to the road.

Resurfacing projects across the city helped improve road safety and quality:

* **2022/2023** – $12.4 million invested, resurfacing 54 streets (102 street blocks) and 3 laneways
* **2023/2024** – $10.7 million invested, resurfacing 41 streets (71 street blocks) and 3 laneways.

These projects demonstrate CN’s commitment to maintaining and enhancing Newcastle’s road network, ensuring it remains safe, reliable and efficient.

**Safety and amenity**

CN is committed to improving infrastructure, enhancing safety and ensuring accessibility for all residents. Recent projects include:

* **Former Supercars circuit upgrades:** Installation of permanent roundabouts, raised pedestrian crossings and improved signage in Newcastle’s East End and Foreshore Park to enhance safety and accessibility.
* **Cliff stabilisation at South Newcastle Beach:** Stabilised cliff face with rock bolts and sealed soft rock, ensuring public safety.
* **Memorial Drive bank stabilisation:** $5 million project to construct a retaining wall, upgrade stormwater channel, and add new footpath, kerb and guttering.
* **Throsby Creek riverwall repairs:** $350,000 investment to repair a 200m section of the riverwall, stabilising the wall and improving pedestrian access.
* **Flood improvements on University Drive:** $5 million project to replace a 100-year-old culvert with a sandstone channel and build a new pedestrian and cycleway bridge, reducing flooding and enhancing safety.

These projects highlight CN’s dedication to creating safer, more accessible and more pleasant public spaces across Newcastle.

**Innovative and connected city**

*A city that confidently harnesses innovation and technology will ensure increased quality of living for all. We consider digital infrastructure in our planning and development to future-proof our city and local centres. We utilise digital infrastructure and emerging technologies to better identify and service community needs, improve efficiency and increase city amenity.*

The following is a snapshot of some of the projects completed during this period.

CN has implemented several projects leveraging technology for improved community services and accessibility:

* **Bookable system for community halls and centres:** Introduced an online booking system for easy reservations with a live calendar, improving accessibility and providing valuable usage data.
* **Licence plate recognition technology:** Trialled new technology for parking management and safety, mounted on an EV, to detect parking violations and improve compliance.
* **Accelerated Development Applications (DAs):** Developed an Accelerated DA pathway, reducing application times by 25% with an online triaging tool and fast-tracking eligible applications within 5–15 days.
* **BindiMaps:** Adopted BindiMaps, a mobile app for vision-impaired navigation, initially trialled at Newcastle Museum and expanded to Museum Park, Civic Theatre, City Hall and Newcastle Library. The app uses Bluetooth beacons and smartphone sensors for indoor navigation.

**Sustainable Newcastle**

**Where do we want to be?**

*Our environment sustains our community, economy, health and wellbeing. It is at the heart of all that we do. Our city acts on climate change to achieve net zero emissions and build resilience in our community, infrastructure and natural areas. We protect, enhance and connect our green and blue networks, and we’re transforming our city through circular economy solutions.*

**Measuring progress**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Community Indicators** | **Baseline/Target\*** | **2021/22** | **2022/23** | **2023/24** |
| Community greenhouse gas emissions  | 2,885,000t CO2-e Waste 4%, Transport 12%, Gas 7%, Electricity 50%, IPPU (Industrial Processes and Product Use) 21%, Fugitive (Coal Mining, Oil and Natural Gas) 6% (2019/20) | 2,701,000 tonnes CO2-e | No data available | No data available |
| Community uptake of electric vehicles  | 295 EVs registered in the Newcastle LGA (2020)Electric vehicle car sales in Newcastle LGA increased to 52% of total car sales by 2030/31. | 253 EVs registered 0.2% of all registered light vehicles (147,669) in the Newcastle LGA (June 2022) | 491 EVs registered 0.3% of all registered cars in the Newcastle LGA (31 March 2023) | 648 EVs registered 0.4% of all registered light vehicles (149,538) in the Newcastle LGA (August 2023) |
| Newcastle canopy cover\* (Source: CN GIS data) | 25.98% of the entire LGA land register with the exclusion of water bodies (2018)40% tree canopy cover in LGA by 2045 | 27.96%of the entire LGA land register with the exclusion of water bodies (2021) | No data available | No data available |
| Satisfaction with our green, blue and wild spaces (Satisfied / Very satisfied)(Source: CN Satisfaction Survey)  | 63% satisfaction with parks and recreation areas; 60% satisfaction with beaches and beach facilities; 58% satisfaction with city’s wetlands and estuaries; 51% satisfaction with city’s bushland and waterways (2022) | 63% satisfaction with parks and recreation areas; 60% satisfaction with beaches and beach facilities; 58% satisfaction with city’s wetlands and estuaries; 51% satisfaction with city’s bushland and waterways  | 71% satisfaction with parks and recreation areas; 67% satisfaction with beaches and beach facilities; 56% satisfaction with city’s wetlands and estuaries; 52% satisfaction with city’s bushland and waterways  | 61% satisfaction with parks and recreation areas; 71% satisfaction with beaches and beach facilities; 53% satisfaction with city’s wetlands and estuaries; 47% satisfaction with city’s bushland and waterways  |
| Per capita or household water usage (Average dwelling consumption per connection)(Source: Hunter Water) | 139kL Annual dwelling consumption 150kL (5-year average) (2020/2021) | No data available | 130kL Annual dwelling consumption 174Kl (5-year average) | No data available |
| **Service Indicators** | **Baseline\*** | **2021/22** | **2022/23** | **2023/24** |
| Council operationalgreenhouse gas emissions(Source: CN data) | 5,098 tonnes CO2-e(2020) | 4,756 tonnesCO2-e | No data available | No data available |
| Council uptake and supportof EVs(Source: CN fleet data) | 4 full EVs(4 electricpassenger vehicles) | 4 full EVs(4 electricpassengervehicles) | 7 full EVs(4 electricpassengervehicles, 2 vans, oneelectric truck) | No data available |
| Road reserve and open space canopy cover | 19.64% Road reserve21.83% Open space(2018) | 21.73% Roadreserve25.04% Openspace(2021) | No data available | No data available |
| Proximity to natural areas(Source: CN GIS data) | 83%of LGA residentswithin 500m ofparkland 0.5ha orgreater in size | No change  | No change  | No change  |
| CN water consumption(Source: Hunter Water)(Data is weather-dependent; consumption is expected to increase during dry periods) | 342,386kL470,231kL 3-yearaverage(2020/2021) | 471,198kL | 576,766kL | No data available |
| Use of local suppliers(Source: CN data) | $73 million (36.3%)procured withsuppliers withinNewcastle LGA$45 million (22.5%)in adjoining LGAsTotal local spend$118.3 million (58.8%)(2020/2021) | $68.1 million (32%)procured withsuppliers withinNewcastle LGA$57.3m (26.9%)in adjoining LGAsTotal local spend$125.4m (58.9%) | $93.4 million (37.3%)procured withsuppliers withinNewcastle LGA$61.5m (24.6%)in adjoining LGAsTotal local spend$154.9m (61.9%) | $134.5 million (48.1%) procured with suppliers within Newcastle LGA $60.9 m (21.8%) in adjoining LGAsTotal local spend $195.4m (69.9%) |
| Municipal waste diversionfrom landfill(Source: CN data) | 40.5%Domestic recyclingrate(2020/2021) | 42%Domestic recyclingrate | 40%Domestic recyclingrate | 40% Domestic recyclingrate |

\* The baseline refers to the initial set of data. By comparing future data to the baseline, CN can measure improvements, trends, or declines in performance.

**Key projects**

**Newcastle’s environmental roadmap**

CN has adopted the *Newcastle Environment Strategy* (NES), which aims for net zero carbon emissions, renewable energy initiatives, more cycleways, connected wildlife corridors and sustainable construction materials. The 10-year roadmap focuses on climate change, nature-based solutions and the circular economy. Informed by community feedback, the NES includes transitioning CN’s vehicles to electric and expanding the urban forest, aligning with Newcastle’s environmental goals.

**Action on climate change**

*We respond to the climate emergency by committing to net zero emissions and preparing for risks from increasing temperatures, storms, coastal erosion, flooding and bushfires. Decisions we make build resilient communities, infrastructure and natural areas.*

The following is a snapshot of some of the projects completed during this period.

CN is reducing pollution and promoting sustainability through various initiatives:

* **EVs:** Transitioning our fleet to electric vehicles, building on successful trials.
* **Renewable energy:** Using 100% renewable energy in operations to cut fossil fuel use.
* **Streetlight upgrades:** Partnered with Ausgrid to replace main road streetlights with energy-efficient LEDs.
* **Energy-efficient lighting:** Upgraded lighting at Civic Theatre and City Hall, reducing energy use by 85%.
* **Solar system installation:** Installed a 100kW solar system and battery at Summerhill.
* **EV chargers:** Installed EV chargers for our fleet at Summerhill, Waratah Works depot and Dixon Park Beach, and upgraded 50kW charger at No.2 Sportsground.
* **Electric equipment trials:** Conducted trials of electric outdoor equipment, now used by Blackbutt, Natural Areas and City Greening teams.

**Nature-based solutions**

*We manage and enhance our blue, green and natural spaces for biodiversity, recreational amenity and human wellbeing through education and engagement of our local community. We strengthen our blue and green grid through sustainable, integrated management that is adaptable to current and future risks. We regenerate our natural systems and work towards zero pollution through collaboration with our community and industry partners.*

The following is a snapshot of some of the projects completed during this period.

**Supporting Stockton Beach**

CN continued efforts to restore Stockton Beach and address significant coastal erosion. We secured $21 million in NSW Government funding for mass sand nourishment, completing concept plans, environmental assessments and a detailed monitoring program. We collaborated with Worimi Registered Aboriginal Parties and the Stockton Community Liaison Group, securing $3 million for the Mitchell Street Buried Terminal Protection Structure. We also completed emergency coastal works and sand scraping, and established accessways to improve protection and access at Stockton Beach.

Under the $6.2 million *Coastal and Estuarine Risk Mitigation Program* grant, 130,000m3 of sand was placed in the surf zone at the southern end of Stockton Beach. Completed on 4 November 2023, this phase improved beach amenity and resilience to storm damage. Monitoring confirmed proper sand distribution, informing future nourishment efforts.

Next steps include finalising investigations and environmental approvals for sourcing sand from the north arm of the Hunter River and offshore borrow areas.

**Rehabilitating Ironbark Creek**

CN completed the latest stage of the award-winning rehabilitation of Ironbark Creek, focusing on 350m of creek line from Croudace Road, Elermore Vale, to Lewis Street Oval, Wallsend. This project aimed to re-naturalise the channel by replacing weeds with thousands of native plants and installing rockwork to protect the creek and surrounding assets. This environmentally friendly approach improves water flow and makes the creek and floodplain more predictable during major floods. Maintenance access for debris removal near Croudace Road was also included.

This stage, completed in June 2023, continues over a decade of successful rehabilitation work from Elermore Vale Park to Wallsend Park, contributing to a healthier local ecosystem and improving habitat for native plants, birds and animals.

**Sustainable stormwater management**

CN integrated stormwater quality improvements into several projects:

* **Tighes Hill, Waratah, Merewether and Carrington:** Installed bioswales and rain gardens.
* **Stockton:** Built 6 rain gardens and 14 infiltration pits.
* **Islington and Orchardtown Road, New Lambton:** Used permeable pavements.
* **Litchfield Park and Heaton Park:** Beautified stormwater channels with Hunter Water.

**Biodiversity corridor secured at Black Hill**

CN secured the long-term protection of a 22ha wetland and woodland area at Black Hill, forming an essential link in the biodiversity corridor between Stockton and the Watagans. The Conservation Agreement with the NSW Government ensures the preservation of high conservation value habitat and threatened species. The agreement acknowledges the cultural significance of the area to the Awabakal and Worimi people and promotes ongoing collaboration with Traditional Custodians.

**Circular economy**

*Through our transition to a circular economy, we design out waste, creating new opportunities and technologies in our local economy, promoting renewable products and sustainable infrastructure, and rethinking our use of resources as a circular flow.*

The following is a snapshot of some of the projects completed during this period.

**Our Sustainable Waste Strategy**

CN approved a 20-year waste strategy for Newcastle, engaging nearly 20,000 people in its development. This plan aims to transform Summerhill into a regional recovery hub, reducing landfill waste, increasing recycling, boosting the economy and creating jobs. New programs and infrastructure will encourage residents to manage waste sustainably.

**Reducing single-use plastics**

We continued to reduce single-use plastic across Civic Theatre and City Hall, including using polycarbonate glassware for drink purchases, allowing wash and reuse, selling cardboard cartons of water and using bio cups for café outlets, alongside a 50-cent discount for the use of a ‘Keep Cup’. The Simply Cups program has been implemented in CN’s administration building, which has resulted in approximately 2,000 disposable coffee cups being recycled since the program commenced in April 2023.

CN’s nursery is addressing the issues of single-use plastic through the purchase of virocell biodegradable plastics and by using plastic forestry tubes and trays multiple times before they are returned to the supplier for reprocessing.  We continue to reuse the woodchip from public tree pruning or removal to mulch around all new trees and gardens across the Newcastle LGA, and we continue to identify options for community reuse of tree parts, including timber and seeds.

Since the Curby soft plastics recycling program’s introduction in 2022, 6 tonnes of soft plastics, on average, have been recycled per month. The soft plastics are turned into new plastic items, such as decking, bollards, outdoor furniture and signs.

**Creative Newcastle**

**Where do we want to be?**

*Our city is vibrant, inclusive and creative. Newcastle is a destination known for its culture, heritage, entertainment and innovative ideas. We are excited about the city’s opportunities in the areas of jobs, education and the economy. Multiculturalism, Aboriginal culture, diverse communities and the arts are celebrated. Locals and visitors gather for events and cultural experiences, and to feel part of the community. Newcastle is driven by city-shaping partnerships that enhance our opportunities and attract people to live, play and invest in our city.*

**Measuring progress**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Community Indicators** | **Baseline\*** | **2021/22** | **2022/23** | **2023/24** |
| Rate of economic growth –Gross Regional Product(Source: REMPLAN) | $18.4 billion(Dec 2021) | $19 billion | $20.6 billion | $21.6 billion |
| # of domestic visitors travellingto the Hunter Region\*(Source: Destination NSW)Hunter includes Cessnock,Gloucester, Lake Macquarie,Muswellbrook, Newcastle,Pokolbin, Port Stephens andSingleton. | 8.5 million visitors | 8.2 million visitors | 11.4 million visitors | 12.3 million visitors (December 2023) |
| Employment rates by agegroup (youth specifically)(Source: ABS – Labour Force data) | 4.3%Newcastle and LakeMacquarieunemployment rate7%Youth unemployment rate(15–24 y.o.)(Dec 2022) | No data available | 2.9%Newcastle and LakeMacquarieunemployment rate6.4%Youth unemploymentrate (15–24 y.o.)(April 2023) | 2.4% Newcastle and Lake Macquarie unemployment rate2.4% Youth unemployment rate (15–24 y.o.) (June 2024) |
| Early Childhood DevelopmentIndex(Source: Australian Early Development Census) | 19.6% children vulnerablein at least one domain(Dec 2018) | 16.9% childrenvulnerable in atleast one domain(Dec 2021) | No data available | No data available |
| # of international students(Source: UON Annual Report) | 7,399International studentsenrolled at UON(Dec 2019)5,242(Dec 2021) | 5,452Internationalstudents enrolledat UoN(Dec 2022) | 6,500 International students enrolled at UoN (Dec 2023) | No data available |
| **Service Indicators** | **Baseline\*** | **2021/22** | **2022/23** | **2023/24** |
| Return on investment onevents sponsored by CN(Source: CN data) | $30 for every $1 invested(June 2022) | $30 for every $1invested(June 2022) | $36 for every $1invested(June 2023) | $31 for every $1 invested (June 2024) |
| Newcastle offers a diverserange of events and activities(Source: CN Liveability and WellbeingSurvey) | 63%Agree/Strongly agreethat Newcastle offers adiverse range of eventsand activities | 63%Agree/Stronglyagree thatNewcastle offers adiverse range ofevents andactivities | N/ASurvey held biennially | 68%Agree/Strongly |
| Value of building approvals• DAs/CDCs• SSDs(Source: CN data)(CDCs: Complying Development Certificates; SSDs: State SignificantDevelopments) | $1.10 billionin building approvalsDAs – $807.70 millionCDCs – $114.96 millionSSDs – $180.54 million(2020/2021) | $1.55 billionin buildingapprovalsDAs – $653.95millionCDCs – $113.16millionSSDs – $785.09million | $1.31 billionin building approvalsDAs – $848.56 millionCDCs – $135.71 millionSSDs – $327.28 million | $934.89 million in building approvalsDAs – $707.94 millionCDCs – $136.37 millionSSDs – $90.59 million |

\* The baseline refers to the initial set of data. By comparing future data to the baseline, CN can measure improvements, trends, or declines in performance.

**Key projects**

**Vibrant and creative city**

*We are a vibrant city, actively shaped by our culture, heritage, entertainment and bold ideas. We are a welcoming city, activated day and night with diverse offerings. We are a visitor and events destination with a rich art, culture and foodie scene and accessible nature-based and coastal experiences.*

The following is a snapshot of some of the projects completed during this period.

**Seek Off Beat**

CN launched a new campaign aimed at capturing a larger share of the leisure tourism market by promoting the city’s eclectic and unexpected attractions. Through the ‘Seek Off Beat’ campaign, Newcastle was positioned as a premier tourism destination, highlighting both quirky and signature experiences.

The new tagline encouraged visitors to look beyond traditional perceptions of the city and uncover its vibrant mix of culture, history and coastal charm. With a focus on increasing day and overnight visits, CN maintained its colourful brand while showcasing the city’s unique and diverse tourism offerings.

**New Annual**

CN launched the 10-day New Annual cultural festival, celebrating art, culture and creativity. In 2022, over 140 performances and activities across 32 venues attracted nearly 40,000 attendees. Highlights included the Van Gogh Alive Exhibition, which drew 84,000 visitors and generated an estimated $7.7 million for the local economy.

CN has committed to a 5-year investment in the festival, securing its status as the city’s flagship arts event until at least 2028. The festival has featured over 1,500 artists and attracted around 95,000 visitors in its first 3 years. CN is also encouraging local artist participation through the ‘Made New’ program.

**Newcastle Cultural Precinct Concept Masterplan**

CN adopted the Newcastle Cultural Precinct Concept Masterplan to enhance and preserve the city’s cultural institutions. The precinct, bordered by Honeysuckle, Civic, Laman Street, the former Tower Cinemas and Hunter Street Mall, includes key sites like Civic Theatre, City Hall, Newcastle Art Gallery, Newcastle City Library, Civic Park, Victoria Theatre, the Conservatorium of Music and UON’s inner-city facilities. The area also features the Crystalbrook Kingsley and QT Newcastle hotels.

The plan aims to offer diverse experiences within a walkable area, preserving heritage and boosting cultural, economic and tourism benefits. Key projects include expanding the Newcastle Art Gallery and refurbishing Victoria Theatre.

**Opportunities in jobs, learning and innovation**

*We are excited about opportunities for work, education and lifelong learning, now and into the future. These opportunities will result in skilled and innovative people in our city.*

The following is a snapshot of some of the projects completed during this period.

**Economic Development Strategy**

CN progressed implementation of our *Economic Development Strategy*, which aims to transform local and regional economic development with a people-centred and place-led approach, building on or creating new opportunities for all. The strategy emphasises collaboration with esteemed partners, including UON, TAFE and secondary schools, to bridge skills gaps within our community. This collaboration provides students with invaluable opportunities to enhance their skills and gain the knowledge necessary to engage in emerging economic prospects.

**Enticing entrepreneurs to Newcastle**

CN and UON offered a 3-month membership at the ‘Landing Pad’ in UON’s I2N Hub for Australian and international innovators. This workspace provides access to smart city infrastructure, investor networks and academic collaboration, supporting immigrant scaleups and skilled professionals in the tech industry.

**Celebrating culture**

*Culture is an essential part of Newcastle, valued for its contribution to people’s lifelong learning and wellbeing and to the city’s identity and economy. We recognise the richness of our heritage and our diverse backgrounds, and the traditional knowledge that this brings. Our industrial heritage is activated through creative expression. Celebrating culture and the institutions that support it helps to unite and educate locals and visitors alike.*

The following is a snapshot of some of the projects completed during this period.

**Newcastle Art Gallery**

While the Gallery has been temporarily closed, we remained committed to supporting local artists, engaging the community and promoting Newcastle’s artistic heritage. During this period, 132,402 people engaged with the collection through exhibitions across NSW, ACT and NT, featuring works from artists Cressida Campbell, Valerie Strong and Jacqueline Hick.

The Gallery team advanced local artists’ professional development through studio visits, presentations and mentorship, and facilitated the annual IGN Art Fair 2023, collaborating with 20 galleries.

Local artist Izabela Pluta created new artwork for the construction site exterior, and Lottie Consalvo featured in the Gallery’s podcast series, *Conversations from the Collection*, keeping the community connected.

The Youth to Collection (Y2C) Project, led by the Youth Advisory Group, showcased emerging artists’ works alongside the Gallery’s collection, attracting over 15,000 visits to its digital platform. This project fostered meaningful dialogue between emerging artists and the collection.

**Civic Theatre**

The Civic Theatre is committed to fostering local talent and supporting diverse community events. It partnered with Tantrum Youth Arts, Newcastle University Choir and the Junior Theatre Festival to nurture local performers and young individuals. These collaborations provided creative avenues for personal and professional growth, gaining national and international recognition.

Additionally, the Theatre curated events for special weeks, including the Senior Comedy Festival for Seniors Week, *Wash My Soul in the River’s Flow* for NAIDOC Week and a screening of *Xanadu* for Pride Week.

**Newcastle Museum and Libraries**

CN’s Museum and Libraries hosted 13 exhibitions, amplifying community voices, celebrating cultural collections and sharing Newcastle’s stories. These initiatives highlight our commitment to preserving Newcastle’s cultural heritage, enriching the community, and promoting inclusivity.

Exhibitions included:

* **Gould – Treasures of the Hunter:** Showcased rare volumes of *Gould’s Birds of Australia* from Newcastle Libraries’ Rare Book Collection.
* **1X4 exhibition:** Continued its tour in Lilydale, Deniliquin and Tamworth.
* **Storytime with Uncle Amos Simon at Wallsend Library:** Shared Awabakal and Gathang language and culture through songs and rhymes, now embedded in children’s events.
* **Unabbreviated exhibition:** Celebrated with record-breaking participation of 375 individuals, including queer scholars, musicians and artists.
* **SHRALP exhibition:** Welcomed the skating community, fostering connection to the Museum’s past and present.
* **Hunter Science Festival:** Hosted at Newcastle Museum during National Science Week, the festival attracted 4,215 individuals with hands-on science activities and demonstrations by UON and Hunter Medical Research Institute.
* **Sea Monsters – Prehistoric Ocean Predators:** Presented the largest-ever exhibition at Newcastle Museum during spring 2022, featuring life-sized replicas and real fossils in partnership with the Australian National Maritime Museum and Queensland Museum Network.

**Major events**

We established Newcastle as a prime destination for major acts through strategic partnerships and high-profile performances, including:

* **Elton John:** Welcomed Elton John to McDonald Jones Stadium for his Farewell Yellow Brick Road tour in January 2023, drawing 30,000 attendees each night and injecting over $5.8 million into the local economy. Of the 50,000+ tickets sold, 10,859 were purchased by out-of-town visitors, including 2,556 from interstate and over 120 international attendees.
* **Paul McCartney:** Partnered with Venues NSW to bring Paul McCartney to McDonald Jones Stadium on 24 October 2023, marking his first visit to Newcastle and debut performance in Australia outside a capital city. This concert, part of a national tour by Frontier Touring, followed Elton John’s shows and preceded Pink’s sold-out February 2024 concert, boosting the local economy.
* ***The Rocky Horror Show*:** Hosted the 50th anniversary production of *The Rocky Horror Show* at the Civic Theatre, setting a new box office record with nearly 23,000 tickets sold. Featuring Jason Donovan and Myf Warhurst, it attracted audiences from across Australia and internationally, highlighting Newcastle’s demand for high-calibre productions.

**City-shaping partnerships**

*Newcastle is driven by city-shaping partnerships that enable success and attract people to live and invest in our city. We leverage the growth sectors of the new economy to allow the city to think globally and act locally. We retain Newcastle’s unique identity while embracing innovation and change that will unlock the city’s potential.*

The following is a snapshot of some of the projects completed during this period.

**Accelerated DA processing**

CN has introduced an Accelerated DA pathway aimed at streamlining the processing of low-impact applications. Following a 3-month trial, 96 low-risk DAs were assessed, averaging just 5.8 days per application, reducing overall processing times by 25%. Over 1,650 DAs were determined in the past year, with more than 30% eligible for the accelerated pathway. Eligible developments include residential projects, demolitions and commercial modifications.

**The vision for Broadmeadow**

The *Broadmeadow Place Strategy* outlines a comprehensive 30-year vision for revitalising the Broadmeadow area, aimed at enhancing land use and guiding infrastructure investments. Spanning 313ha, the precinct includes parts of Broadmeadow, Hamilton, Hamilton East, New Lambton and Hamilton North, situated to the west of Newcastle City Centre.

The strategy seeks to create a vibrant destination with well-connected neighborhoods that meet the needs of a dynamic community and support growth in Newcastle. It anticipates the creation of 15,000 jobs and 20,000 homes for approximately 40,000 residents, along with improved open spaces and social infrastructure. The initiative is developed collaboratively by CN and the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure.

**Airport runway upgrade**

In 2021, CN announced a significant investment in Newcastle Airport, with $66 million allocated by the Federal Government for the runway upgrade as part of the Federal Budget. This project, a key component of the *Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan*, is expected to create 4,500 jobs and generate an economic boost of approximately $12.7 billion, largely fueled by international airfreight and industrial growth.

The project marked a major milestone with a sod-turning ceremony led by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, who officially commenced the terminal expansion. Alongside this, a new premium covered carpark was unveiled, featuring 6 EV charging stations and 1,236 solar panels, providing more than 30% of the Airport’s power needs. By September 2023, passenger numbers had rebounded to 102% of pre-COVID levels, reflecting the positive impact of the Airport’s transformation on the region’s recovery and growth.

**Imagine Newcastle**

CN launched Imagine Newcastle, a digital prospectus at movetonewcastle.com.au, to attract and retain talent in response to local skills and labour shortages. Part of our 2021 *Economic Development Strategy*, this resource promotes investment and study in Newcastle, earning recognition as a finalist in Economic Development Australia’s National Economic Development Awards of Excellence.

**Achieving together**

**Where do we want to be?**

*Our people come together to collaborate, share great ideas and opportunities, and co-create positive change for our organisation and city. Our culture is one of trust and understanding, where honest conversations empower our people, customers and community. We value diverse perspectives and deliver what we promise. Our strength is growing our capability to manage community and customer expectations and continuously improve our service delivery.*

**Measuring progress**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Service Indicators** | **Baseline\*** | **2021/22** | **2022/23** | **2023/24** |
| 1. Operating performance ratio2. Own source operatingrevenue ratio3. Unrestricted current ratio4. Debt service cover ratio5. Rates and annual chargesoutstanding percentage6. Cash expense cover ratio(Source: CN Financial Statements) | 1. (7.36)%2. 86.31%3. 2.23x4. 3.34x5. 3.91%6. 6.62 months(Nov 2021) | 1. (0.64)%2. 86.23%3. 1.95x4. 5.00x5. 3.36%6. 6.05 months(Nov 2022) | 1. 3.69%2. 85.79%3. 1.99x4. 3.38x5. 3.44%6. 6.49 months(Nov 2023) | 1.3.18%2.84.55%3. 2.09x4.7.56x5. 3.82%6. 5.99 months (Nov 2024) |
| Long-term planning and visionfor the city(Source: CN Satisfaction Survey) | 3.3(2020/2021) | 3.0 | 3.1 | 2.9 |
| Trust in CN(Source: CN Liveability and WellbeingSurvey) | 71%Have at least some levelof trust in CNComplete trust – 5%A lot of trust – 23%Some trust – 43% | 71% | N/ASurvey heldbiennially | 71% |
| Response to community needs(Source: CN Satisfaction Survey) | 3.4(2020/2021) | 3.0 | 2.9 | 2.9 |
| Value of community grantsValue of inward grants(Source: CN data) | $585,110For community grant program(2021)$46 million in Federal andState Government grants and contributions in2020/2021 | $531,720$49 million inFederal and StateGovernment grantsand contributionsin 2021/2022 | $521,442$57 million inFederal andStateGovernmentgrants andcontributions in2022/2023 | $401,741$67.1 million in Federal and State Government grants and contributions in 2023/2024 |
| # of advisory committees andgroups(Source: CN data) | 8Committees and groups | 8Committees and groups | 8Committees and groups | 8Committees and groups |

\* The baseline refers to the initial set of data. By comparing future data to the baseline, CN can measure improvements, trends, or declines in performance.

**Key projects**

**Inclusive and integrated planning**

*Considered, holistic planning is crucial to the city’s future growth – locally, regionally and globally. We use evidence-based decision-making for the development of our policies and strategies and undertake research to understand the trends and issues affecting our community.*

The following is a snapshot of some of the projects completed during this period.

**Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2022–2025**

CN launched our latest *Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2022–2025* (AES). The AES aims to create a culturally safe workplace for all employees at CN and build deep, genuine relationships with the local Aboriginal community. The AES will also help us increase the number of Aboriginal employees working at CN at all levels, retain existing Aboriginal employees and create real employment pathways.

**Inclusion, Diversity & Equity Strategy 2023–2027**

CN adopted an *Inclusion, Diversity & Equity Strategy 2023–2027* (IDE) that outlines the steps we will take over the next 5 years to remove barriers to inclusion and participation in the workplace. This internal-facing strategy is designed to bring about a culture change within the workplace. We believe that our efforts will help to create positive outcomes for the community through more inclusive, equitable and accessible service delivery and staff conduct. We are committed to removing barriers to inclusion and creating a culturally safe workplace for all employees.

**Trust and transparency**

*Our culture encourages empathy, understanding and willingness to help each other. We have trust and confidence in the leadership of our city and work together to create better outcomes for our customers and community. Our culture values integrity and accountability and encourages open, transparent decision-making. We promote our opportunities and celebrate our stories.*

The following is a snapshot of some of the projects completed during this period.

**New Community Engagement Strategy**

CN adopted a new 4-year *Community Engagement Strategy* to ensure all Novocastrians feel involved in decision-making processes. The strategy, based on inclusiveness, transparency and responsiveness, outlines how CN engages with the community to develop plans, policies, programs and activities. It emphasises seeking feedback from diverse community groups and builds on current engagement activities.

**Customer Experience (CX) Transformation Program**

CN launched a 3-year CX Transformation Programto improve service delivery and capabilities. In the second year, we focused on embedding customer-centric approaches and enhancing service delivery to manage expectations and deliver on promises.

Key initiatives included:

* **CX training**: Continued organisation-wide training for over 1,100 staff, introducing new employees to customer-centric practices and embedding TRuST Principles (Transparent, Respectful, You, Simple, Timely). We also established a monthly TRuST Award for recognising trust-building behaviours.
* **Website improvements**: Enhanced the most visited pages for better digital CX and accessibility, increasing the website accessibility score from 58.8% to 79.4%.
* **Digital self-service**: Launched forms for Rates Direct Debit, Change of Details and Pensioner Concession Applications, leading to a 41% increase in customers using digital channels. Introduced the DA Fee Estimate Calculator for instant service.

**Collaborative and innovative approach**

*We build strong relationships where knowledge is exchanged. Effective**collaboration between our people, community, businesses, industry and government is essential. Innovative services and ways of working empower our people and community, and continuously improve our service delivery.*

The following is a snapshot of some of the projects completed during this period.

**Leaders in cyber security**

CN is a leader in local government cyber security, achieving 100% compliance with the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard and aligning with top information security frameworks. We continuously evolve our security protocols, using innovative technologies to counter new threats and creating a secure digital environment that promotes community engagement.

**Increased grants and sponsorships**

CN's grants and sponsorships have supported a wide range of successful initiatives. Funding has helped Grainery Care maintain an Outdoor Foodcare Delivery Space, enabled the University of Newcastle to establish an employment clinic and a student grocery hub for newly arrived migrants, and assisted with the creation of Newcastle's first Community Textile Recovery Hub in Wallsend.

Environmental grants have supported programs like Apnom's energy-saving initiative focused on food security and community nutrition. The Special Business Rate program has also boosted local precincts, contributing to events like the Newcastle Fringe Festival in Hamilton, Streets Alive in Wallsend, and the Wallsend Op Shop Trail.

Major events funding has supported Hockey NSW in hosting premier tournaments, further strengthening Newcastle's reputation as a vibrant events city.

**Digitisation of processes**

CN has modernised operations by digitising timesheets and automated invoice payments, reducing paper usage by 12 tonnes annually. We are also transitioning customer request forms to online platforms, improving community access and saving staff time.

# **What’s next**

CN is dedicated to creating well-planned, meaningful and accessible places that foster sustainable, healthy and inclusive communities. Our efforts have significantly enhanced streets, open spaces and neighbourhood centres, each reflecting unique character and heritage. However, as we look to the future, we face several key challenges and opportunities in our ongoing mission to improve Newcastle for all residents.

**Community Strategic Plan (CSP) Review**

In 2024 we checked back in with our community to see if their priorities are still relevant in our CSP, *Newcastle 2040.*

We heard that our vision for **Newcastle to be a liveable, sustainable, inclusive global city** remains relevant and aligns with our community’s aspirations.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Liveable Newcastle** *56% said that we're tracking towards this theme at least somewhat well.*Adequate and accessible options for moving around our cityActive transport, public transport and parkingAffordable housingWell-designed public spacesInvestment into roads and social infrastructure | **Sustainable Newcastle***61% said that we're tracking towards this theme at least somewhat well.*Care for our environmentManage resources and wasteUtilise sustainable planning and renewable energy sourcesMore trees and access to green spaces |
| **Creative Newcastle***77% said that we're tracking towards this theme at least somewhat well.*Support arts and cultural opportunitiesCelebrate our diversityEnable tourismActivate our city with events and entertainment | **Achieving Together***55% said that we're tracking towards this theme at least somewhat well.*Continue to provide genuine opportunities for consultationBe transparent with informationDemonstrate accountability to our community |

**Liveability and Wellbeing Survey**

CN conducts a community survey every 2 years to measure key indicators of liveability and social wellbeing. These surveys are used to track progress towards the goals and objectives outlined in *Newcastle 2040*.

In January 2022, a telephone survey was conducted with a randomly selected sample of 470 Newcastle residents, including 14 interviews in Mandarin. The survey was designed to represent the Newcastle local government area (LGA) by age, gender and ward, providing insights into residents’ quality of life, trust in CN and liveability within the community.

To follow up on these key measures and assess how things are changing, a second survey was conducted in March 2024. This time, 503 residents were randomly selected, including 10 interviews in Mandarin, with the survey again structured to represent the LGA’s demographic profile. The 2024 survey helps CN understand shifts in residents’ perceptions and track the community’s progress towards the goals of *Newcastle 2040*.

### Key findings

**Quality of life:**

* **2022:** 93% of residents rated their quality of life as ‘good’, ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’, with 32% reporting improvements.
* **2024:** A similar 93% rated their quality of life positively, and 30% reported improvements in recent years.

**Housing and affordability:**

* **2022:** 33% of residents agreed that Newcastle offers diverse housing options; 45% felt they could afford a reasonable standard of housing.
* **2024:** Only 24% agreed that diverse housing options exist, and 47% felt they could afford a reasonable standard of housing, indicating a drop in satisfaction.

**Trust in CN:**

* **2022:** 71% of residents expressed some level of trust in CN, with 43% agreeing that CN acts in the best interests of the community.
* **2024:** Trust remained steady at 71%, with 39% agreeing that CN acts in the community’s best interests.

**Social connectivity and community engagement:**

* **2022:** 96% of residents participated regularly in personal social activities, with high levels of community engagement.
* **2024:** Social connectivity remained strong, with 96% still engaged in social activities, but satisfaction with access to community facilities, parks and health services declined.

**Green spaces:**

* **2022:** 88% of residents were satisfied with access to parks, natural areas and open spaces.
* **2024:** Satisfaction with access to green spaces dropped slightly to 80%.

**Cycle friendliness:**

* **2022:** 59% of residents agreed that Newcastle was a cycle-friendly city.
* **2024:** Satisfaction with cycling infrastructure was 51%, with fewer residents agreeing that Newcastle is cycle-friendly from the 59% in 2022.

While Newcastle continues to offer a high quality of life for most residents, rising concerns around housing affordability, trust in local governance and access to essential services are shaping a more complex picture of life in the city.

Green spaces, though slightly less positively rated in 2024, remain a key strength that contributes to Newcastle’s overall appeal.

Addressing these emerging challenges, while continuing to invest in vital public amenities such as parks, cycling infrastructure and natural areas, will be critical to maintaining Newcastle’s liveability and ensuring it remains a desirable place to live, work and invest.

# Glossary

**ABS** Australian Bureau of Statistics

**ADVOCACY** The act of speaking or arguing in favour of something, such as a cause, idea or policy. In the context of the Strategic Priorities it refers to another sphere of government or organisation delivering a service or outcome for the city.

**AIAC** Access Inclusion Advisory Committee

**AMP** Asset Management Plan

**AMS** Asset Management Strategy

**ASX** Australian Securities Exchange Ltd

**BENCHMARKING** A process of comparing performance with standards achieved in a comparable environment with the aim of improving performance.

**BIODIVERSITY** The variety of all living things including plants, animals and microorganisms, their genes and the ecosystems of which they are a part.

**CBD** Central Business District

**CDC** Complying Development Certificate

**CEO** Chief Executive Officer

**CMP** Coastal Management Program

**CO2-e** Carbon Dioxide Equivalent

**COMMUNITY LAND** Land classified as community land must be kept for use by the general community. All community land must be regulated by a Plan of Management, which may apply to one or more areas of land.

**CN** City of Newcastle

**CREW** Cooperation, Respect, Excellence and Wellbeing

**CROWN LAND** Land that is owned by the NSW Government but managed on its behalf by Council.

**CSC** Customer Service Centre

**CX** Customer Experience

**DA** Development Application

**DELIVERY PROGRAM** A strategic document with a minimum 4-year outlook, which outlines the key strategies the organisation will undertake to achieve its desired outcomes. (Note: this is a legislative requirement.)

**DIAP** Disability Inclusion Action Plan

**ELT** CN’s Executive Leadership Team is led by the CEO and comprises 5 Directorates: Waste Services, Planning & Environment, City Infrastructure, Corporate Services and Creative & Community Services.
**ERM** Enterprise Risk Management

**EV** Electric Vehicles

**FBT** Fringe Benefits Tax

**FINANCIAL YEAR** The financial year we are reporting on in this annual report is the period from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023.

**FTE** Full-time equivalent. In relation to staff numbers this refers to a figure that is based on the wages for full-time staff.

**GIPA** The *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (NSW), or *GIPA Act*, replaced freedom of information legislation.

**GST** Goods and Services Tax

**HSR** Hunter Street Revitalisation

**IDE** Inclusion, Diversity & Equity

**IPART** Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal

**IPR** Integrated Planning and Reporting

**KWH** Kilowatt hour

**LATM** Local Area Traffic Management

**LGA** Local Government Area

**LGBTQIA+** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, Asexual

**LTFP** Long-Term Financial Plan

**MW** Megawatt

**NAIDOC** National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee

**NCAT** NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal

**NEWCASTLE 2040 COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN (CSP)** The integrated CSP provides clear strategic direction for the long term, and identifies the main priorities, aspirations and future vision of the community.

**OPERATIONAL PLAN** A document with a one-year outlook that outlines the key activities to be undertaken to achieve the desired outcomes set out in the CSP. (Note: this is a legislative requirement.)

**PAMP** Pedestrian Accessibility and Mobility Plan

**PARTNERING** A structured approach to working together with other parties to achieve a mutually beneficial outcome.

**PDP** Public Domain Plan

**PERFORMANCE** The results of activities and progress in achieving the desired outcomes over a given period of time.

**PID Act** *Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994*

**PPN** Principal Pedestrian Network

**PSC** Port Stephens Council

**RAAF** Royal Australian Air Force

**RAP** Reconciliation Action Plan

**RATE PEGGING** The percentage limit by which a council may increase the total income it will receive from rates. The percentage is set each year by the NSW Minister for Local Government.

**RISK MANAGEMENT** A discipline for developing appropriate procedures to reduce the possibility of adverse effects from future events.

**RSPCA** Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

**SDGs** Sustainable Development Goals

**SSD** State Significant Development

**SRV** Special Rate Variation

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT** Development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the capacity of future generations to meet their needs.

**SUMMERHILL** Summerhill Waste Management Centre

**TAFE** Technical and Further Education

**TARGET** A goal to be reached by a specific date, which may be higher than the forecasted performance. It aims to continually improve performance.

**TRuST** Transparent, Respectful, You, Simple, Timely

**UN** United Nations

**WDSP** Workforce Development Strategic Plan

**WHS** Work Health and Safety