



REGEN
MELBOURNE

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



Regen Melbourne acknowledges the traditional custodians of Greater Melbourne, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Bunurong and Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation. We pay our deep respect to Elders, past and present, and we acknowledge their living connections to land and waterways, including Birrarung Yarra River and Nairn Port Phillip Bay. We commit to walking alongside First Nations people on the path to Treaty for Victoria.

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ABOUT US

REIMAGINING AND REMAKING GREATER MELBOURNE, TOGETHER

Regen Melbourne (RM) is an engine for collaboration in service to the regeneration of our city. Our purpose is to move Melbourne towards a safe, just and regenerative future, defined and holistically measured through our [City Portrait](#).

Formed at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are powered by a community of over 200 organisations and aim to support city-wide collaboration. Our work is driven through two primary mechanisms: a portfolio of *Earthshot* projects that seek to tangibly transform this place, and a series of action-research streams in the *Systems Lab*. Sometimes this means building capacity, creating connections and unlocking resources for our community of partners; other times it means shifting the conditions required for change to take hold.

Through this work we aim to increase Greater Melbourne's collective ambition and to deepen the systemic impact of our partners. Take a look at our [Living Strategy](#) [here](#).



OUR PEOPLE

OUR TEAM



Nicole Barling-Luke
Director of Earthshots



Yasmina Dkhissi
Adaptive Futures Lead



Dheepa Jeyapalan
Lead Convenor, Food Systems



Kaj Löfgren
CEO



Charity Mosienyane
Lead Convenor, Swimmable Birrarung



Oliver Pelling
Communications Lead



Caroline Sanz-Veitch
New Urban Governance Lead



Nina Sharpe
Lead Convenor, Regen Streets



Jeremy Waanders
Finance & Operations Lead



Alison Whitten
Director of Systems Lab

OUR BOARD



Mele-Ane Havea (Chair)



Jo Cavanagh OAM



Gilbert Rouchecouste



Rebecca Scott OAM



Thea Snow

OUR RESEARCH COUNCIL

Associate Professor Magnus Moglia, Chair (Swinburne University)
 Professor Sarah Bell (University of Melbourne)
 Dr Todd Denham (Latrobe University)
 Professor Jago Dodson (RMIT University)
 Professor Dan Hill (University of Melbourne)
 Associate Professor Elmira Jamei (Victoria University)

Professor Andi Nygaard (Swinburne University)
 Professor Rob Raven (Monash University)
 Professor Lauren Rickards (Latrobe University)
 Dr Darren Sharp (Monash University)
 Professor Andrea Siodmok OBE (RMIT University)

And a very special thanks to our interns and volunteers across 2024: Lily Andrews-Quinn, Rachel Bucknall, Yan Chai (Addie) Cheung, Kate Ferguson, Michael Fendel, Mohanapriya Jawahar, Tiare Murphy, Lokesh Sangarya, Sebastian Swann, Wei (Vera) Wang and Gypsy Wright

2024 IN REVIEW



We live in complex and disruptive times. Regen Melbourne was formed at the end of 2020, at the height of COVID-19 lockdowns and in the wake of the Black Summer, as a collective response to the question: how can we better serve our city, together? As an emerging alliance we first designed a powerful vision and purpose, and from there our community of partner organisations grew and grew.

Since then, our dedicated team has worked with these partners to co-design three tangible “Earthshots” for our city, focused on the future of our streets (Regen Streets), our waterways (Swimmable Birrarung) and our food system (Food Systems). These ambitious Earthshots have created practical and impactful ways for our diversity of partners to contribute their skills, experiences, networks and resources in service of our city.

These Earthshots have matured significantly in 2024. The Swimmable Birrarung alliance has grown considerably, with the enrolment of community organisations, non-profits, businesses, academics and government partners. We supported and catalysed a range of initiatives, with the undoubted highlight being the privilege of supporting the Yarra Riverkeeper Association’s Riverfest in September. Our Regen Streets work has gone through a deep, nine month sensemaking process in 2024 exploring and supporting a vast array of neighbourhood regeneration work across our city. This work has created clarity in the systemic barriers and opportunities to unleash an effective wave of regenerative streets. And our Food Systems work has rapidly synthesised systemic barriers and co-developed transition pathways for this vital sector. Design forums and community workshops have unlocked new energy and set a powerful orientation for the years ahead.

This year we have also established our Systems Lab, an action-research platform that explores the enabling conditions for city transformation. Together with our incredible Research Council, we are actively interrogating key enablers that relate to policy, research, capital and narrative. This work provides a rigorous baseline to our Earthshots and catalyses research driven interventions like the City Portrait, the Climate Change Exchange and the Wellbeing Protocol (all described in the pages that follow).

After a generous period of incubation by the Small Giants Academy, this year we became a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission. This step is important as it places our mission at the heart of our formal constitution: we exist solely to serve the regeneration of our city. This year we also consolidated all our learnings into a publicly available living strategy: [dive in!](#)

At times our work can feel hard to grasp. It can be easier to think about the daily symptoms of our current system than to attempt to shift the messy root causes. And yet, this remains our focus. Regen Melbourne is an invitation to raise our collective ambitions and deepen our systemic impact. At a time of increasing urgency, where chaos fills our screens, our team and our partners return to the question we began with in 2020: how can we better serve our city?

In these pages you will find many, many examples of how we are doing this, together.

With deep gratitude,

Kaj Löfgren
CEO

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



I've been thinking a lot lately about this concept of regeneration. What does it actually mean, to live in a regenerative way? How could we run and govern our business according to regenerative principles? And, of course, in the context of our work – how could we design a regenerative city? That is, how will we bring the vision of Regen Melbourne to life?

When thinking about this question, I went back to first principles and opened up my dictionary and found a common definition of regeneration: "to grow (new tissue) after loss or damage".

I've been playing with this definition and think, in some ways, it does relate well to our work. No doubt, we see loss and damage everywhere. Environmentally, we are witnessing the unfolding realities of climate crisis, collapse of ecological systems, species loss at an unforeseen rate. And, socially, it is no different, from growing distrust in institutions to mental health, loneliness and isolation. Yes, loss and damage abound. Underlying these challenges, lies a profound disconnection, from self, from each other, from our beautiful home planet.

There are many people working to address these issues around the world and our city is no exception. There are a multitude of solutions and a deep well of good intent. And so, as I look around, at our broader context and reflect on this definition of regeneration, it strikes me that the tissue we need most to grow is "connective". That is the "tissue that supports, protects, and gives structure to other tissues and organs in the body."

Of late, I've been thinking of Regen Melbourne's work in this way – as the connective tissue that binds, supports and gives structure to the efforts of those in Melbourne committed to creating a safe and just space for humanity, committed to living within our planetary boundaries. This is the work of building collaborations, of enabling coherent collective action. This work is often invisible, it is relational, it is complex and it is essential.

I am proud of the Regen Melbourne team for seeing the system at play and taking an understanding about the essential role of collaboration from concept to reality, for stepping courageously into this new way of working. Challenges abound, they are everywhere, but we know we have a better chance of meeting them, if we work together.

Join us as we strengthen our connective tissue, as we work together for a safe and just future.

Join us in regenerating our city,

Mele-Ane Havea
Chair

A YEAR OF HIGHLIGHTS



NOVEMBER 2023 — Launch of [the Greater Melbourne City Portrait](#)



DECEMBER 2023 — RM community assembly

JANUARY 2024 — New Earthshot launched: [Regen Streets](#)



FEBRUARY 2024

- Swimmable Birrarung report published: [Fields of Action](#)
- Systems Capital report published: [Melbourne Invests for Systemic Transformation \(MIST\)](#)
- News platform launched: [The Regen Gazette](#)

MARCH 2024

- RM becomes registered not-for-profit
- Swimmable Birrarung initiative [media blitz](#)



APRIL 2024 — RM community assembly

MAY 2024

- Systems Lab established
- Project evolution: Participatory Melbourne Earthshot evolves into [New Urban Governance action-research stream](#)
- Swimmable Birrarung presented at the NGV



JUNE 2024 — Regen Streets Design forum

JULY 2024

- RM Strategy published: [A Living Strategy](#)
- New Earthshot launched: [Regen Food Systems](#)

AUGUST 2024

- Food Systems newsletter launched: [The Cornucopia](#)
- New action-research stream begins: Adaptive Futures
- First RM policy submissions completed
- Global-Social City Portrait workshop series



SEPTEMBER 2024

- Swimmable Birrarung & Birrarung [Riverfest](#) collaboration
- New Urban Governance prototype launched: Regen Streets and The Wellbeing Protocol

OCTOBER 2024

- Regen Street activations: Kensington, CBD, Footscray, Sandringham
- City Portrait widget launched: [The Impact Visualiser](#)

NOVEMBER 2024 — Walking Together event linking Melbourne and Australian Indigenous Doughnuts

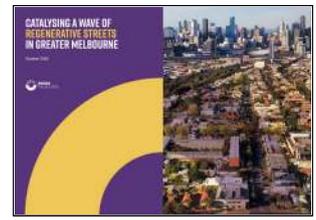
2024 PUBLICATIONS



[A Living Strategy for Regen Melbourne](#)



[Swimmable Birrarung: Fields of Action](#)



[Catalysing a Wave of Regenerative Streets in Greater Melbourne](#)



[The Foodie City We Need to Become: Greater Melbourne's System Opportunity](#)



[Participatory Melbourne: Active Participation Towards a Common Good](#)



[The Civic Health of Australia: A National Portrait in 30 Charts](#)



[Melbourne Invests for Systemic Transformation: Activating pathways for systemic investment towards a regenerative Greater Melbourne](#)



[Swimmable Birrarung: Enabling investment to flow in service of a regenerative future](#)



[The Regen Gazette](#)



[National Urban Policy \(Public Submission\)](#)



[Plan for Victoria \(Public Submission\)](#)



[A Portrait for Victoria's Future](#)



OUR EARTHSHOTS

**SWIMMABLE
BIRRARUNG**

**REGEN
STREETS**

**FOOD
SYSTEMS**

At the centre of our work are three “Earthshots”: wildly ambitious goals that serve as vehicles for the transformations we need across our city. Each Earthshot represents a major infrastructure layer of our city:

Swimmable Birrarung

Regenerating our waterways as the life-force of our city

Regen Streets

Catalysing a wave of regenerative streets

Food Systems

Cultivating a regenerative and resilient food capital

Regen Melbourne acts as a convenor and orchestrator, channelling the capabilities of organisations across Greater Melbourne into collaborative, coherent and ambitious action. Our role as an active backbone function across sectors enables accelerated and applied learning across the complex landscapes that make up our city. This creates acupressure points which draw together a range of organisations to create new partnerships and new pathways towards the shared goal. Bringing these Earthshots together as a portfolio means we can aggregate resources better, more efficiently and for greater impact.

Our approach to systemic transformation has been influenced by a diverse set of best-practice methodologies and frameworks from around the world, including Doughnut Economics, collective impact, mission-led economics (or challenge-led innovation), anchor collaboratives, community wealth building, systems thinking and open innovation processes. Building on all these models, we take a systems approach to acting in service to our city. The way we do that is by:

SENSEMAKING: Accelerating connections between people, information, ideas or resources;

ORGANISING LEVERS FOR TRANSITION: Supporting other organisations to do great work by amplifying existing initiatives and co-creating new projects;

STORYTELLING: Making meaning about what is happening in our city and mirroring that with what *could* happen in our city.

For each Earthshot we have co-developed transition pathways that organise actors into powerful formations and allow for tangible projects to be catalysed and accelerated.

In the pages that follow you will find reflections on the progress of each Earthshot in 2024, descriptions of the transition pathways and highlights from across the year.

SWIMMABLE BIRRARUNG

The Swimmable Birrarung initiative is a transformative and critical infrastructure project for our city. Its vision is to regenerate the Birrarung Yarra River to the extent that it is healthy, thriving and swimmable, from source to sea. Of course, making the Birrarung swimmable again is about so much more than just swimming. As the Woi-wurrung language name for the Yarra Strategic Plan says, Burndap Birrarung burndap umarkoo: "good for Yarra is good for all". We need to reorient our city to recognise our main waterway as a living entity, a place inextricably linked to our health and biodiversity. Our role in the Swimmable Birrarung initiative is to build coherence and momentum across diverse stakeholders to take this ambition from impossible to inevitable.

TRANSITION PATHWAYS (7 STEPS TOWARDS SWIMMABILITY)

Get swimming

Celebrate existing swimming locations upstream – and build momentum for this to happen in the right parts of city reaches.

Clean up the River

Stormwater, runoff and pollution don't belong in the water. Work with diverse experts, breakthrough technology and innovative interventions to clean our river.

Measure and keep watch

Before we can swim, we need to know what we're swimming in. Co-develop innovative and comprehensive ways to measure our real-time water quality along the length of the river.

Connect head, hands and heart

There is an unstoppable wave of people who love and care for this river. Making the Birrarung swimmable will be the result of many people and many hearts directing their energy.

Work with a living river

The Birrarung is one living entity, from source to sea. We need to create an enabling governance and implementation environment that reflects this powerful reality.

Get capital flowing

This is perhaps the most important infrastructure project our city faces. We need to get deep financial resources flowing towards transformation and the regeneration of the waterway.

Return to nature

The river is us. Prioritise our need to protect biodiversity and the role our natural systems have to play in healing our waterways.



SWIMMABLE BIRRARUNG: YEAR IN REVIEW

IMPACT AREA	ACTIVITIES (HIGHLIGHTS)	PARTNERS
SENSEMAKING	Design and development of seven transition pathways (Seven Steps Towards Swimmability)	<i>All collaboration partners</i>
	Strategic partnership with YRKA for the annual Birrarung Riverfest , enabling strategic, practical and communication support for the successful delivery of a four-week festival celebrating the river	<i>Yarra Riverkeeper Association, Good & Proper, Cummins & Partners</i>
	Co-hosting a sports and waterways for climate resilience event exploring partnerships between sports communities and urban waterways	<i>Green Planet Sports</i>
	Running an urban water safety for kids event: sharing tools, knowledge and experiences for river literacy and urban water safety	<i>Lifesaving Victoria, MPavilion, Patagonia</i>
ORGANISING LEVERS FOR TRANSITION	Co-hosting an International Swimmable Cities event, demonstrating transformations across waterways internationally	<i>Adriaan van der Linden, MAST, Metz Ville d'Eau, Regeneration Projects, Sydney Water</i>
	The Rowboat: A series of recorded conversations between people and the Birrarung Yarra River. The audio and video recordings are inspired and informed by relationships to shared waterways, and the importance of listening differently to the places and environments we find ourselves in.	<i>Hello Atoll, RMIT, Studio Esem, Dr. Erin O'Donnell, Uncle Andrew Gardiner</i>
	Co-designing and scoping opportunities for water quality monitoring technology and artistic activations	<i>D2k, Experimenta, Melbourne Water</i>
	Data Optimisation PhD; a collaboration with OPTIMA on the role of citizen science data optimisation for the Birrarung and how this is used to support decision making, governance and education.	<i>OPTIMA, Monash University, University of Melbourne</i>
STORYTELLING	Media moment: Swimmable Birrarung in the spotlight	<i>Good & Proper, Sunrise, Channel 7, Herald Sun, 774 Mornings, 3AW Drive, Time Out</i>
	Participating in a collaboration between Birrarung Council and NGV to explore the potential future scenarios of the Birrarung: Reimagining the Birrarung: Design concepts of 2070	<i>Birrarung Council, NGV</i>
	Presentations, panels and systemic advocacy across 2024	<i>Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, Parramatta River Riverfest, Lifesaving Victoria, Healthy Waterways Catchment Forum (Birrarung), Stormwater Victoria</i>

EARTHSHOT STEWARDS

These wonderful humans act as stewards of our collective work towards a Swimmable Birrarung:

Rob Adams (Adams Urban)
 Mitra Andersen-Oliver (DEECA Representative)
 Janet Bolitho (Yarra River Keepers Association)
 Sarah Holland-Clift (Barwon Water, previously Parramatta River Catchment Group)
 Phil Krasnostein (D2K Information)
 Andrew Mackinnon (The Taboo Group)

COLLABORATION PARTNERS

Across 2024 we have been working with a vast array of partners who have engaged in different ways from sensemaking, to active partnership on projects and initiatives, to multiple walks along the Birrarung sharing stories of our memories and ambitions for this beloved waterway.

We thank and recognise our many collaborators:

Adams Urban, Arup, Arbory Afloat, Birrarung Council, City of Melbourne, ClimateKic, Cummins and Partners, D2k Information, Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action (DEECA), Envirobank, Good and Proper, Green Planet Sport, Hart Biodiversity, Hatch, Hello Atoll, Life Saving Victoria, Manningham City Council, Melbourne Water, Minters Elison, Monash University, NGV, Parramatta River Catchment Group, Patagonia, Ponyfish Island, Regeneration Projects, RISING, RMIT, Stonnington Council, Studio Esem, The Royal Society of Victoria, The Taboo Group, Team Harvey, Tract Design, University of Melbourne, VicHealth, Wowowa, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, Yarra Pools, Yarra Riverkeeper Association, Yarra Valley Water, Yarra Yabbies.

REGEN STREETS

Regen Streets is an ambitious Earthshot to unleash a wave of regenerative neighbourhoods across Greater Melbourne. Streets are shared spaces where we shift from the private sphere to one which is public. Much of daily life is spent on the street. The conditions of a street impact everyone, no matter how you use them. We name our streets. We protest in them. We celebrate in them. Streets provide opportunity for people to connect in a way that no other public space can. What if we allow our streets to play the vital role in life they are intended for — to animate the social, environmental and economic aspects of communities? What if the streets were our change agent for the systemic transformation our city needs?

There are hundreds of incredible neighbourhood regeneration projects across our city. Our role is to support these initiatives by unblocking systemic challenges and creating new forms of power by generating coherence across communities.

TRANSITION PATHWAYS

Collective imagination

Moving from a focus on single issues driven by individual actors to instead helping people feel, imagine and act on how these interconnected issues can be tackled in the street.

New Urban Governance

Shifting to more distributed leadership that captures the voice and essence of streets and communities to better serve decision-making. Enabling participation of diverse publics in how we imagine our future places and how we enact the pathways to get there.

Investing in what we value

Redirecting substantial resources to transform streets, fostering social connection and green spaces, while adopting funding models that value community well-being and long-term vision over purely financial metrics.

Adaptive Streets

Reimagining and remaking street infrastructure to create healthy, resilient spaces that support thriving communities amid changing conditions.



REGEN STREETS: YEAR IN REVIEW

PHASE	ACTIVITIES (HIGHLIGHTS)	PARTNERS
SENSEMAKING	Community and council workshops – surfacing knowledge of landscape challenges with existing streets-based work	Local council and community group representatives
	Design forum – collectively designing the systemic responses required to enable street transformations	State government, local councils, community groups and academic representatives
	Report released: Catalysing a Wave of Regenerative Streets in Greater Melbourne	
	Design and development of four transition pathways	All collaboration partners
ORGANISING LEVERS FOR TRANSITION	Co-delivering a climate youth grant supported Green Spaces in Unusual Places, a three days public space take-over, hosting open space workshops and climate conversations	City of Melbourne, Sweltering Cities, Psychology for a Safe Climate, Climate and Health Alliance, Vic Health, Earthwatch and The University of Melbourne
	Supporting Green West Fest community festival uniting community groups exploring local climate solutions	Green Collect
	Facilitating Hosier Lane Community workshop & activating a local convenor pilot to reignite a sustained community-led response	Hosier Inc
	Facilitating Eastwood St community vision workshops to support local residents to organise around a hyper-local vision	Transition Town Kensington, City of Melbourne
	Supporting Re:Worlding Cardigan Commons street activation exploring play and gaming in place-making	RMIT Future Play Lab
	Piloting the Wellbeing Protocol prototype, testing a tool to facilitate the decentralised flow of capital into communities	Greening Cromwell St, Village Zero and Irregular Festival
	Reimagining urban governance for regenerative neighbourhoods – ARC Industry grant submission in partnership with Monash Sustainable Development Institute Senior Researcher Darren Sharp – ARC proposal	Monash University, MSDI
STORYTELLING	Co-facilitating Living Streets Design Workshop, exploring nature based solutions to street activations	Melbourne Design Week, Monash University
	Supporting Fishermans Bend Innovation Challenge, expanding the horizon of place-based solutions to include doughnut economics	City of Melbourne
	Activating Ashley St, Braybrook, running an experiential tour of the opportunities and challenges of a much loved street	Sustainable Living Festival, Green Collect, Better Streets, Bike West
	Designing and facilitating Regen Futures Leadership team workshop, exploring systems thinking and doughnut economics with teachers	Woodleigh School
	Co-facilitating a game day of the Adaptation Game with decision-makers and regenerators from across the city	Amble Studio, LMCF, Sweltering Cities, RMIT, DTP Connected Places

EARTHSHOT STEWARDS

These excellent humans act as stewards of our collective work towards a wave of Regenerative Streets:

Laura Aston (Wayfinder Labs)
 Dr Thami Croesser (RMIT University)
 Jess Dart (Clear Horizons)
 Professor Dan Hill (University of Melbourne)
 Associate Professor Troy Innocent (RMIT)
 Gilbert Rochecouste (Village Well)
 Dr John Stone (University of Melbourne)

COLLABORATION PARTNERS

Across 2024 we have been working with a vast array of partners who have engaged in different ways from sensemaking, to active partnership on projects and initiatives, to multiple walks along the streets of Greater Melbourne sharing stories of what we value about our places.

We thank and recognise our many collaborators:

Arup, Bayside City Council, Better Streets, Bike West, Centre for Cities, University of Melbourne, Centre for Just Places, City Compost Network, City of Melbourne, City of Stonnington, Clear Horizons, Connected Places (DTP), CPI, Earthwatch, EGIS, Good Cycles, Good Karma Network, Greater Western Water, Green Collect, Greening for Wildlife, Hatch, Hosier inc, i2C, Irregular, Kingston Council, LMCF, Maribyrnong Council, Merri-bek Council, Monash Sustainable Development Institute, Movement and Place, Municipal Association of Victoria, Office of Suburban Development, Renew Australia, Repower, RMIT, RMIT Future Play Lab, Streets Alive, STREAT, Swinburne University, Tamarack Institute, Trades Hall, Transition Towns, Trawalla Group, University of Melbourne, Victoria University, VicHealth, Village Greening, Village Well, Village Zero, Wilderhoods, Woodleigh School

REGEN FOOD SYSTEMS

Our food system presents the ultimate systemic challenge for transformation — one we cannot ignore as it impacts our health, wellbeing, ecosystems, and determines our future on this planet. While we hold dear our city's reputation as the foodie capital of the country, Greater Melbourne's food system grapples with deeply rooted, systemic issues.

Despite these challenges, incredible work is happening across our city to transform the food system. These place-based innovations, while often struggling to disrupt the status quo, form the backbone of Greater Melbourne's identity as Australia's foodie capital. Think of public markets, vibrant restaurants and cafes, food hubs, and community gardens. Our role is to support these initiatives by creating bold new collaborative opportunities, organising to shift resources and power, and supporting new visions of a foodie city to emerge.

TRANSITION PATHWAYS

Purpose driven purchasing

Melbourne, home to most of Victoria's population, is a major food consumer, with institutions playing a key role. Collaborative efforts to align food procurement with shared values are needed to boost local producers, strengthen supply chains, and enhance resilience.

Adaptive organising

Disrupting the current system requires diverse stakeholders to collaborate across silos, embracing complexities to co-create solutions. A new organising model for Greater Melbourne fosters cross-sector engagement, enabling collective action and adaptability.

Unlocking value

A food system that acts as a catalyst for regenerating nature, drives more equitable economies, and upholds the self-determination of First Nations communities. This approach recognises food's power to nourish not just our bodies, but our communities, environment, and cultural heritages.

Radical visioning

Food intrinsically connects us to nature and to each other. By creating spaces that remind us of this, we can resist quick fixes and open our minds to profound, transformative changes.



The Melbourne Doughnut

The Greater Melbourne City Portrait

Imagine Melbourne as a place that leads the world not just in liveability, but in equity, wealth distribution, energy production, biodiversity, environmental regeneration and happiness.

The Greater Melbourne City Portrait is an Australian-first project to create a new compass for progress for our city - a platform that gives all citizens a practical and holistic way of measuring how well we are all doing in supporting people and planet to thrive. These make up our Social Foundation, the inner Doughnut. Falling short of the Social Foundation leads to harm and disadvantage.

At the same time, there are limits to the planet's capacity to provide for us and maintain healthy ecosystems. Overshooting the Ecological Ceiling leads to environmental disaster.

The Doughnut acts as a compass towards the sweet spot where people and planet can thrive.

At this liveability hasn't been reached, we take great pride in the quality of life we have and the liveability we do have. The Melbourne Doughnut has been added to the model to the Greater Melbourne Doughnut as a practical tool for measurement.

It is about the types of actions, and mindset shifts required for our city.



Explore and learn more at <https://doughnut.regen.melbourne>

Ecological Ceiling

1. Climate Change
2. Chemical Pollution
3. Nitrogen & Phosphorus Loading
4. Freshwater Withdrawals
5. Land Conversion
6. Biodiversity Loss
7. Air Pollution
8. Ozone Layer Depletion

Social Foundation

9. Food
10. Energy
11. Political Voice
12. Arts & Culture
13. Health
14. Housing
15. Peace & Justice
16. Water
17. Access to Information
18. Equality in Diversity
19. Mobility
20. Education
21. Income & Work
22. Social Equity

HEALING & RECONNECTING TO COUNTRY & EACH OTHER



SYSTEMS LAB



The Systems Lab serves as a dedicated action-research platform that explores how to shift enabling conditions to facilitate place-based change. It aims to unlock conditions to accelerate impact across the Earthshots and at a whole-of-city scale.

The Systems Lab is organised around four action-research streams that are designed to interrogate and practically influence a set of underlying conditions in our city. Currently, these conditions actively stand in the way of our ambition for a regenerative city. However, if shifted and harnessed, these conditions have the potential to rapidly move Greater Melbourne towards our vision. The four action-research streams include:

- **Measuring What Matters**
- **Adaptive Futures**
- **New Urban Governance**
- **Investing in Transformation**

Each of these action-research streams engages with multiple layers of the system, such as policy, media, research structures and finance. Our work in the Systems Lab explores these action research streams through a series of questions, which we respond to through three modes of work:

1. **Diagnosing** systemic challenges
2. **Prototyping** responses within Regen Melbourne's Earthshots
3. **Maturing** prototypes into scaled up interventions with broader reach across the city

The Systems Lab operates under the guidance of our Research Council, composed of senior representatives from across six Melbourne-based universities. The Council informs the System Lab's direction and ensures the grounding of our work in rigorous evidence and methods.

In the pages that follow you will find reflections on the progress of each action-research stream in 2024, descriptions of the prototypes under development and highlights from across the year.

MEASURING WHAT MATTERS

What gets measured is representative of what is valued – socially, politically and economically. Our current system prioritises economic productivity measures that are not in service of human and environmental wellbeing. In addition, the limited focus of these measures means that they do not account for the full set of impacts of economic activity – the externalities – including ecosystem degradation and social and physical harm. In this, a conundrum exists: it is difficult to agree on new collective goals for our city without effective measures to gauge where change is needed, but without alignment on a new goal it is unlikely that suitable data sources become available.

Cities around the world are grappling with this challenge. A range of alternative economic models that move away from Gross Domestic Product as the central tenet are gaining traction: Wellbeing Economics, Gross National Happiness and Doughnut Economics all propose a departure from narrow measures of progress. Regen Melbourne emerged from an exploration of Doughnut Economics as a means of defining a new goal for Greater Melbourne – one which focuses on meeting human needs within the bounds of the planet. In November 2023, we launched the Greater Melbourne City Portrait, applying data to the Melbourne Doughnut to mature it into a measurement tool. We have now developed an action research stream in the Systems Lab to build on the City Portrait and explore the role of measurement in progressing towards the goal it describes.

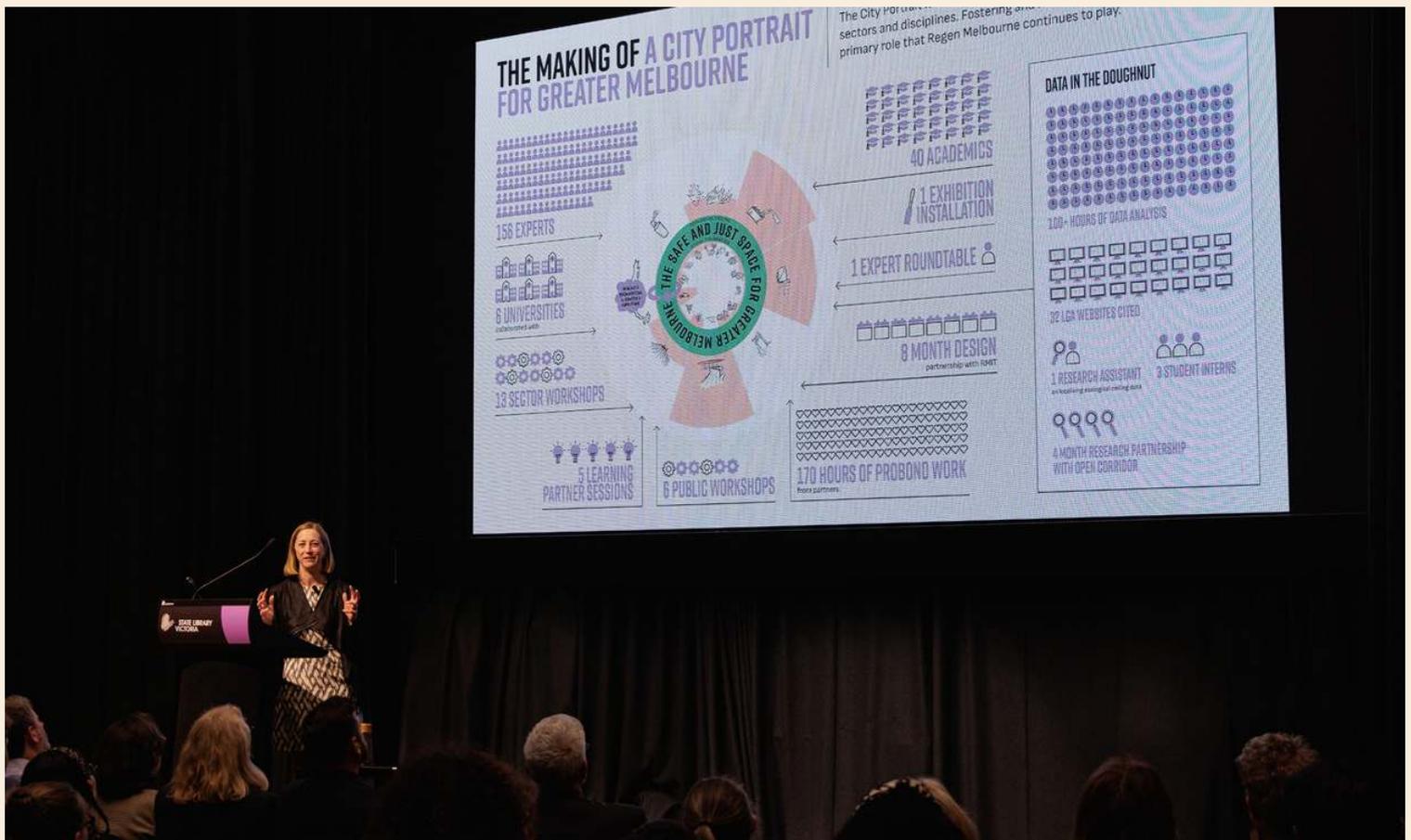
ACTION RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Primary question:

How might new measurement approaches support people and planet to thrive in Greater Melbourne?

Supporting questions:

- **A new model of progress:** How is Melbourne tracking as a place that supports people and planet to thrive?
- **Data and practices:** What measurement practices and forms of data facilitate a new understanding of progress in Greater Melbourne?
- **Adoption and capability:** How might we build capacity for measurement to accelerate a transition to a regenerative future for Greater Melbourne?



MEASURING WHAT MATTERS: YEAR IN REVIEW

This year, we responded to these questions through a range of research, policy, design and engagement-based activities, including:

RESEARCH QUESTION	ACTIVITIES (HIGHLIGHTS)
	Launch of the City Portrait digital platform, in partnership with Michael (Miek) Dunbar at RMIT
A NEW MODEL OF PROGRESS	Development of historical time-series data for social wellbeing measures
	Release of new Systems Stories on the digital platform
DATA AND PRACTICES	Prototype of how we can measure and visualise new aspects of Melbourne's social and ecological health
	Workshop series to explore our city's impacts on human wellbeing globally
	Podcasts and conference presentations to continue to raise awareness about the City Portrait
	Analysis comparing the City Portrait as a model to Infrastructure Victoria's <i>Choosing Victoria's Future</i> scenario modelling
ADOPTION AND CAPABILITY	Policy analysis and submissions responding to the Draft National Urban Policy and Plan for Victoria
	Release of the Impact Visualiser to map projects, strategies and policies to the Melbourne Doughnut
	Ongoing conversations with places locally and globally to share learning about City Portrait development and application (Gippsland, Sydney, Brussels, London, Oxfordshire, Nairobi)
	Contribution of City Portrait case study to academic research on risk and sustainability in decision analysis (to be published in 2025)

LEARNING PARTNERS

The Measuring What Matters program continues to evolve and develop based on strategic guidance, active support and cross-sector connections from a range of Learning Partners.

We thank these partners for continuing the learning journey with us:

Altioem, Arup, Centre for Policy Development, City of Melbourne, Edge Environment, Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations, Fireside Agency, Good Human, Gross National Happiness Centre Australia, Hatch Ltd, Infrastructure Victoria, Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, Monash University, Municipal Association of Victoria, Open Corridor, Planetary Accounting Network, Regen Gippsland, RMIT University, University of Melbourne, Victorian Department of Transport and Planning, VicHealth.

And a very special thanks for Michael (Miek) Dunbar from RMIT, for his ongoing partnership in this work.

NEW URBAN GOVERNANCE

How we make decisions collectively shapes our ability to adapt to a rapidly changing world. However, rising mistrust in institutions, declining civic participation, and the accelerating impact of technology on social relations create challenges for collective decision-making. Ambiguity about goals and limited community agency lead to disengagement and perceptions of meaningless efforts. These trends contribute to visible issues such as loneliness, social isolation, polarised discourse, and mental health concerns, which in turn fuel broader crises like climate change, inequality, and geopolitical tensions.

Participatory Melbourne began in 2023 as a research and action project to foster resilient, participatory communities and steer Greater Melbourne toward a regenerative future. By 2024, it became clear that transformational change requires addressing underlying conditions. Participation was reframed as a core element of Regen Melbourne's Earthshots rather than a separate project. Now integrated into the Systems Lab as "New Urban Governance," this work aims to enable a thriving civic life.

ACTION RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Primary question:

How can a stronger relationship between communities and democratic systems enable a thriving future for everyone?

Supporting questions:

- **New narratives for community:** What are the changing narratives of community and community resilience in these urgent times?
- **New systems leadership:** What new forms of leadership are required to shift us to the future we need, not just the future that is currently possible?
- **New governance mechanisms:** What mechanisms do Regen Melbourne's projects need to enable democratic involvement and collective action?



NEW URBAN GOVERNANCE: YEAR IN REVIEW

The first part of this year focused on rounding out the Participatory Melbourne project, synthesising insights and establishing the structure for the New Urban Governance stream, which kicked off in May 2024. From there, we began a series of prototypes to respond to our three supporting questions:

RESEARCH QUESTION	ACTIVITIES (HIGHLIGHTS)
NEW NARRATIVES FOR COMMUNITY	Translation of Participatory Melbourne insights into foundational communications assets to support an integrated campaign on community narratives in 2025
	Home-cooked dinner for community development practitioners to transition from Participatory Melbourne to New Urban Governance framing of community narratives. Co-hosted with Hinterland and Monash University (Monash Art, Design and Architecture)
	Validation of community narrative elements through a literature review, expert interviews and community workshops
	Collaboration with University of Melbourne students to produce literature reviews on measurement of social cohesion
NEW SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP	Development and validation of a set of community leadership archetypes for regeneration, surfaced from across Regen Melbourne's Earthshots
	Panels and presentations on new forms of leadership and new approaches to urban governance
NEW GOVERNANCE MECHANISMS	Wellbeing Protocol pilot across three Regen Streets sites (Greening Cromwell, Village Zero and Irregular Festival) as a tool to facilitate the decentralised flow of capital into communities
	Preliminary contribution to academic paper on urban governance dynamics in Greater Melbourne and the city's global city network engagement

LEARNING PARTNERS

The development of the New Urban Governance stream has been made possible through a range of learning collaborations this year.

We are grateful to many partners for their contributions to this year's foundational explorations:

The Adaptive Practice, Amble Studio, Banksia Gardens, The Bridging Place, Centre for Public Impact, CERES, City of Melbourne, CoDesignCo, Good & Proper, Greening Cromwell, Hinterland, Hot House Community Projects/Hot House Living Lab Inc, Initiatives of Change, Irregular (North West Melbourne Association), Lively, Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, Community Connector for Resilience, Menzies Foundation, Monash University (Monash Sustainable Development Institute and Monash Art, Design and Architecture), Merri-bek Council, Mosaik Experiences, Municipal Association of Victoria, Past Futures, Swinburne SIRI Measurement Network, Swinburne University, Transition Towns, Turning Ground, University of Melbourne, Victorian Department of Health, Village Zero, Voicecraft, Westgate Biodiversity

ADAPTIVE FUTURES

What will it take for us to collectively care for our future? Global, interconnected trends ranging from climate change to the rise of artificial intelligence to threats to democracy are putting pressure on our ecological and social wellbeing. In the face of these trends, a range of futures is imaginable, with some more desirable, safe and just than others. Many uncertainties exist, but it is clear that we will need to learn to adapt to changing conditions. We believe that the many challenges we face start with the way that we perceive ourselves as separate from the natural world. Through reconnecting to our nature and creating support systems that help us do so, we can surface our interconnectedness and learn to navigate uncertainty and design a better future together. This is why we seek to build bridges, helping one another connect, identify win-win-win scenarios, adapt and grow together.

The Adaptive Futures action-research stream brings an adaptive lens to Regen Melbourne's place-based Earthshots, horizon framing and intentional connection with nature. With an emphasis on climate change adaptation, this work is designed to help us navigate uncertainty. We do so by learning our way through questions, building our capacity to grow our awareness and responding wisely and creatively to change, as well as influencing the underpinning conditions that prevent us from adapting.

ACTION RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Primary question:

How might we build bridges to collectively adapt to changing conditions and interconnected trends?

Supporting questions:

- **Adaptive infrastructure:** How might we prepare and adapt for the climate change risks and impacts on Greater Melbourne?
- **Adaptive capacity:** How might we build our collective capacity to adapt to changing conditions?
- **Adaptive connectedness:** How might we shift our relationship and connection to nature - the way we view and value nature?



ADAPTIVE FUTURES: YEAR IN REVIEW

We kicked off our Adaptive Futures stream in August 2024. This began with developing the framing for the [Adaptive Futures](#) stream, including the set of action-research questions and supporting structures and assumptions. This was followed by reflective research reviewing current global trends informing the need for and nature of adaptation work, published as [Mosaics of Life](#). In addition, we are beginning to respond to the Adaptive Futures research questions through a number of scoping and design activities:

RESEARCH QUESTION	ACTIVITIES (HIGHLIGHTS)
	Preliminary scoping of adaptive infrastructure needs and opportunities in relation to the three Earthshots
ADAPTIVE INFRASTRUCTURE	Design of Adaptive Streets, a set of pathways and portfolio of activities in response to climate change risks and impacts in our streets
	Strategic review and exploratory interviews to inform the reestablishment of the Climate Change Exchange, a platform for mutual learning that brings together researchers, practitioners and policy makers to enable cross-sectoral, systemic climate change adaptation
ADAPTIVE CAPACITY	Exploration of new ways of collaborating and building skills across food system
	Participation in Subak Village, a cohort of climate-centric not-for-profits
ADAPTIVE CONNECTEDNESS	Design of intentional experiences and gatherings for 2025 that spark connection with the natural world to shift the way we relate with our streets, river and food system

LEARNING PARTNERS

Our early development of the Adaptive Futures stream has been supported and informed by a number of organisations with deep expertise in climate and adaptive practices.

We look forward to building on our early work together:

Australian Red Cross, Australian Resilience Centre, City of Melbourne, Co-Labs, Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, Equity Trustees, Federation of Community Legal Centres Victoria, Jesuit Social Services, La Trobe University, Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, Monash University, RMIT University, Subak Australia, Victorian Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, The Western Alliance for Greenhouse Action, Yarra Valley Water

INVESTING IN TRANSFORMATION

A raft of initiatives over the last decade have focused on utilising capital and finance to drive social and environmental change. However, a mismatch remains between acknowledging the urgent need to deploy finance in service of regeneration, and the amount and quality of money flowing towards genuinely systemic action. Our financial and investment systems (even those with a sustainable or impact focus) are geared to simple, linear relationships between investments and outcomes, costs and benefits. Hence, capital deployment is often limited to treating symptoms rather than solving for deep-rooted causes. The systemic challenge can perhaps best be summarised by asking: are we financing change or changing finance?

Our current financial paradigm is blind to the quality and magnitude of risks we face, and is equally blind to the transformational opportunity that lies in structuring system-level value. Money is not flowing in service to life. We need new approaches. Our Investing in Transformation action-research stream is actively exploring the intersection between finance, regeneration, systems thinking and place-based approaches.

ACTION RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Primary question:

How might the logic of capital flows be shifted so money is deployed in service of Greater Melbourne's long-term regeneration?

Supporting questions:

— **Field building:** How might we increase collective understanding of the intersection of finance, regeneration, systems thinking and place-based approaches?

— **New financial logics:** How might we learn about new logics of finance through collaborative action and the activation of new flows of capital?



INVESTING IN TRANSFORMATION: YEAR IN REVIEW

This year we have responded to our key research questions through action research, strategic convening and participating in learning exchange programs:

RESEARCH QUESTION	ACTIVITIES (HIGHLIGHTS)
	Report released: Melbourne Invests for Systemic Transformation
	Report released: Swimmable Birrarung: Enabling Investment to Flow in Service of a Regenerative Future
	Participation in learning exchange and serving as a case study in TWIST white paper: Emergence and Co-Creation: A Collective's Perspective on Investing for Systems Change
	Convening meetings and workshops with finance actors from across the city, including the inaugural round-table known as Melbourne Invests for Systemic Transformation (MIST)
FIELD BUILDING	Participation in the Place-Based Capital Network and Initiative hosted by Ethical Fields: Empowering Communities Through Place-Based Capital and Asset Ownership
	Participation in the Strategic Capital Facilitation program hosted by TransCap Initiative
	Featuring as a case study for the Stanford Social Innovation Review: Systemic Investing for Social Change
	Concept development of a Birrarung RiverBank, a bank in service to the Birrarung Yarra River, in partnership with Dark Matter Labs
NEW FINANCIAL LOGICS	Facilitation of new capital flows (both financial and in-kind) to key partners in the field, including: Regen Gippsland, Hosier Inc, RMIT, Village Zero, Yarra Riverkeeper Association, Greening Cromwell

LEARNING PARTNERS

Our exploration of new capital flows has been made possible through learning collaborations with a number of partners locally and globally.

We are grateful for the opportunity to learn alongside:

Climate-KIC Australia, Dark Matter Capital Systems, Equity Trustees, Ethical Fields, Ecotone Partners, First Australians Capital, The Good Shift, Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, Menzies Foundation, Purpose Made, Small Giants Academy, TransCap Initiative, Tripple, Together We Invest for Systemic Transformation (TWIST)



THANKING OUR PARTNERS

FUNDING PARTNERS

Our work is supported by a diverse group of catalytic philanthropic funders. These funders support either project or core organisational work, and in some cases both. We are so grateful for their trust and ongoing support.

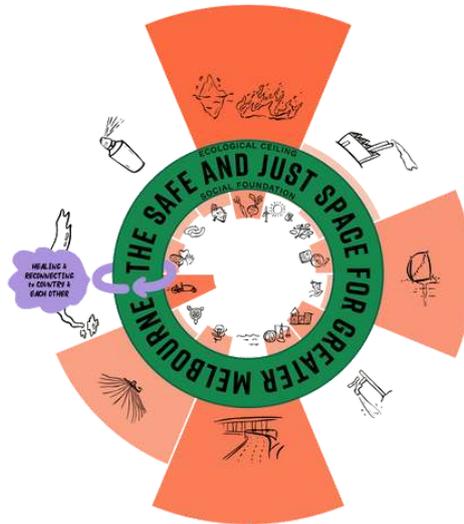
Equity Trustees, 5 Pillars Capital, Joe White Bequest, Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, Menzies Foundation, Morris Family Foundation, Moving Feast, Small Giants Family Office, Uncommon Folk

STRATEGIC PARTNERS

While our focus of action is deeply place-based, none of the work is possible without a growing international field of collaborators. These partners support our work in a range of formal and informal ways and we thank them for their partnership.

Doughnut Economics Action Lab, ClimateKIC Australia, Dark Matter Labs, Systems Innovation Initiative, Small Giants Academy, Transcap Initiative, The Good Shift, MinterEllison, WWF

2025 AND BEYOND



Since we began our journey in 2020, together with our partners, we have centred our work around the question: how can we be in service to the regeneration of the city we love? This question will continue to be our guide in 2025 and beyond. Together with our collective vision for the city, the [City Portrait](#) will continue to be central to our work, bringing tangibility and robustness to the emergent nature of our systems work.

Through our portfolio of Earthshots there will be more and more opportunities for the citizens and organisations of Melbourne to contribute their skills, experiences and wisdom in practical ways. And through our Systems Lab we will continue to explore the underlying conditions required for the regeneration to emerge.

See you on the streets and along the waterways of our great city!



Vp
Vision & Purpose

Ho
Horizons

Im
Innovation

Pr
Principles

Pp
Partnerships

St
Storytelling

St
Storytelling

Go
Governance

Lt
Leadership & Team

Sm
Systemic Measurement

Op
Operations

Sp
Strategic Partners

AI
RM Alliance

PI
Place & Culture

Cx
Context



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