Perth's Path to 2050

Making the Next Growth Cycle Count



Prepared by The Business of Cities for Committee for Perth

November 2026

COMMITTEE FOR PERTH

About this report

The Business of Cities has previously assessed Greater Perth alongside comparable cities internationally, examining its economic competitiveness, urban form and liveability. This identified distinctive strengths alongside longer term pressures that could influence Perth's future position among international cities.

This report looks ahead to 2050. It considers how global changes and Perth's next growth cycle could reshape the city's opportunities, which choices may prove most consequential and what can be learned from cities that have strengthened their metropolitan capabilities and collective leadership.

Committee for Perth has set an ambition for Greater Perth to be consistently among the world's five most liveable cities by 2050. This independent analysis provides international evidence and strategic perspectives to inform that ambition and the wider discussion about Perth's future. The analysis and conclusions are those of The Business of Cities.

Front cover: Perth's reach to 27 of the world's 30 largest urban areas projected for 2050, each within the flight time that already connects Perth to London, and in grey to Australia's other capitals and the Gold Coast. (Based on UN DESA, World Urbanization Prospects 2025.)

The Business of Cities

About The Business of Cities

The Business of Cities equips cities and companies with the urban intelligence they need to innovate, compete and succeed. It has worked with more than 200 cities in 50 countries, and its benchmarking compares how cities perform and how they are perceived against their international peers.

COMMITTEE FOR PERTH

About Committee for Perth

Committee for Perth is an independent, member funded organisation established in 2006. It informs and advocates for change that improves the cultural diversity, economic prosperity, sustainability and amenity of Greater Perth, drawing on a membership from across the Western Australian economy.

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Executive summary

Perth is entering a period that could redefine its place in Australia and the world. Over the next 20 years, the centre of the world's economic and commercial gravity is moving closer to Perth than at any time in its history, while competition over trade, energy and critical minerals brings greater strategic attention to the Indian Ocean. At the same time, another wave of population growth and industrial investment is gathering pace, with the potential to reshape where and how the city grows. What Perth makes of this growth cycle will shape the economy it builds, the quality of life it offers and the international roles it can credibly claim by 2050 and beyond.

Perth enters this next chapter with a strong hand. It combines the resources and economic weight of a vast state with the institutions, talent and lifestyle of an established metropolitan economy. It is also growing faster than most international peers, with considerable scope to shape where its next phase of growth goes and what it produces.

A top five liveability ambition demands a step change in what Perth delivers. Perth will need to keep the qualities millions already value while becoming a city where more people can build high value careers, live closer to jobs and services, find homes that suit different stages of life, enjoy a richer cultural life, and see Perth recognised internationally for a few things it does exceptionally well.

The opportunity is to turn the coming growth cycle into lasting capability. The next 25 years will bring more people, capital, infrastructure and industrial demand. Defence, mining and energy can also provide the customers, expertise and investment from which new Perth firms, technologies and specialist capabilities grow. There is a wide range of possibilities in how these forces reshape the city, and how much of that growth becomes enduring economic value.

Perth's fork in the road is now. Other cities across Asia and the Indian Ocean are becoming better connected, more innovative and more attractive to talent, investment and visitors, while some of the qualities that have long made Perth stand out are becoming less distinctive. Perth is likely to remain prosperous in the medium term, which makes complacency a real risk. It can keep growing while losing relative ground. The next wave of housing, industry and infrastructure will establish patterns that become progressively harder to change, so some of the hardest choices will need to be made early, when the costs and disruption are visible and the benefits are still years away.

As Perth grows, fragmented decisions become more costly. As the city moves towards three million and then four million people, choices about housing, transport, energy, skills and major precincts increasingly shape one another. Where homes are built determines how much pressure falls on roads and services. The larger Perth becomes, the more expensive it is to get these choices out of sequence.

Other cities show that long established patterns can be changed. San Diego, Auckland, Vancouver, Bilbao and Houston have each changed their economic base, urban form or identity during a period of growth by making a few consequential choices, aligning institutions and investment behind them and sustaining delivery long enough.

Perth's next phase of growth calls for stronger civic leadership alongside the powers, investment and delivery capacity of government. Other institutions bring capital, expertise, relationships, legitimacy and their own capacity to deliver. The lesson from mature metropolitan cities is that progress on shared priorities needs somewhere to be joined up, carried across political cycles and kept moving when responsibilities are dispersed. Civic leadership can provide that connective capacity.

The path to 2050 starts now. If Perth is moving in the right direction, the first signs will appear well before 2050. Major precincts will begin to turn infrastructure, research and industrial demand into new firms, technologies and commercial capability. Stronger centres and more housing choice will take shape, and the big choices will increasingly be understood as shared choices for Perth as a whole. Committee for Perth can help sustain that shared direction through its evidence, convening and continuing engagement with Perth's major institutions.



Introduction

The world Perth is preparing for

By 2050, larger markets, shifting economic geography, demographic change, new technologies, climate pressures and geopolitical rivalry will reshape what cities compete for and what they need to deliver. For Perth these changes are likely to enlarge demand for the resources, industries and expertise it already concentrates, while making the quality of its international connections and metropolitan development more consequential.

	Global outlooks to 2050				Likely implications for Perth
Bigger markets	**2x** the size of the global economy	**73%** higher GDP per person	**2.5bn** more middle class consumers	**50%** more urban waste	More value will sit in the services, technologies and know how that accompany resource and infrastructure demand.
Urban change and competition	**1bn** more city residents	**3,000** more cities	**50%** more built up land	**37** megacities of 10m or more people	The contest for talent, investment and influence intensifies, while poorly managed growth becomes more costly.
A more connected world	**2x+** air passenger traffic	**1.5bn+** more international trips each year	**18%** higher exports under stronger trade scenario High cooperation scenario	**1bn** additional postsecondary graduates worldwide through 2050	Commercial networks, trusted partnerships and trade arrangements increasingly shape how cities access customers, talent, investment and ideas.
Changing lives	**3x** as many people aged 80 and over	**750m** more people of working age	**75%** of countries below replacement fertility	**70%** more new cancer cases each year	Skills, health, housing and liveability become more important in attracting and retaining people.
Planetary extremes	**4bn** people exposed to extreme heat At 2°C of warming	**1bn** more people facing extreme water stress	**50%** of primary energy from fossil fuels, down from 80%	**Flat** energy spending while the economy doubles	Resilience and adaptation become economic capabilities, while energy transition reshapes industrial advantage.
A more contested world	**US$5.8tn** annual global military expenditure Based on Divided World scenario	**34%** probability of a nuclear weapon used in war Aggregate of 500+ forecasters	**2.3x** annual global investment in physical defence infrastructure	**45%** of the US Navy surface force uncrewed	Perth's position and capabilities gain strategic importance as demand for naval infrastructure, defence technology and secure supply chains grows.

Sources: OPEC World Oil Outlook 2026, Google and Alvarez and Marsal 2026, World Bank 2026, UN World Urbanization Prospects 2025, OECD 2025, IATA 2026, WTO 2026, HolonIQ 2023, WHO 2025 and 2026 with IARC, IHME and The Lancet 2024, Oxford University 2026, WRI Aqueduct 2023, DNV Energy Transition Outlook 2025, Institute for Security Studies 2026, Metaculus 2026, PwC 2026, US Navy 2026.

More of the world's economic weight is moving closer to Perth

Global output is continuing its century long shift towards Asia and the Indian Ocean, moving the geographic centre of global economic weight with it. As that centre moves closer to Perth, more of the customers, markets and institutions driving future demand will sit in Perth's wider sphere of influence.



Source: TBoC calculation using the IMF World Economic Outlook, April 2026, and PwC long run projections, with country output at purchasing power parity assigned to national centroids. The 2050 point is an indicative projection.

The geographic shift is increasingly favourable to Perth. Its economic dividend will depend on the commercial relationships, international connections and specialist capabilities the city builds around it.

This shift has several implications for Perth.

More growth markets are coming within Perth's reach

India is already the world's 3rd largest economy at purchasing power parity, while ASEAN is focused on becoming the 4th largest. By 2050, nine of the 10 largest cities are projected to be closer to Perth than to Sydney. The scale and geography of regional demand are changing, although access to that demand will depend on the roles and relationships Perth builds.

Much of that demand aligns with Perth's strengths

Fast growing economies are set to require more energy systems, infrastructure, minerals, industrial technology and urban expertise. Western Australia already supplies many of the underlying resources, while Perth concentrates much of the engineering, technology, finance, logistics and research capability that sits around them.

Connections will determine how much Perth captures

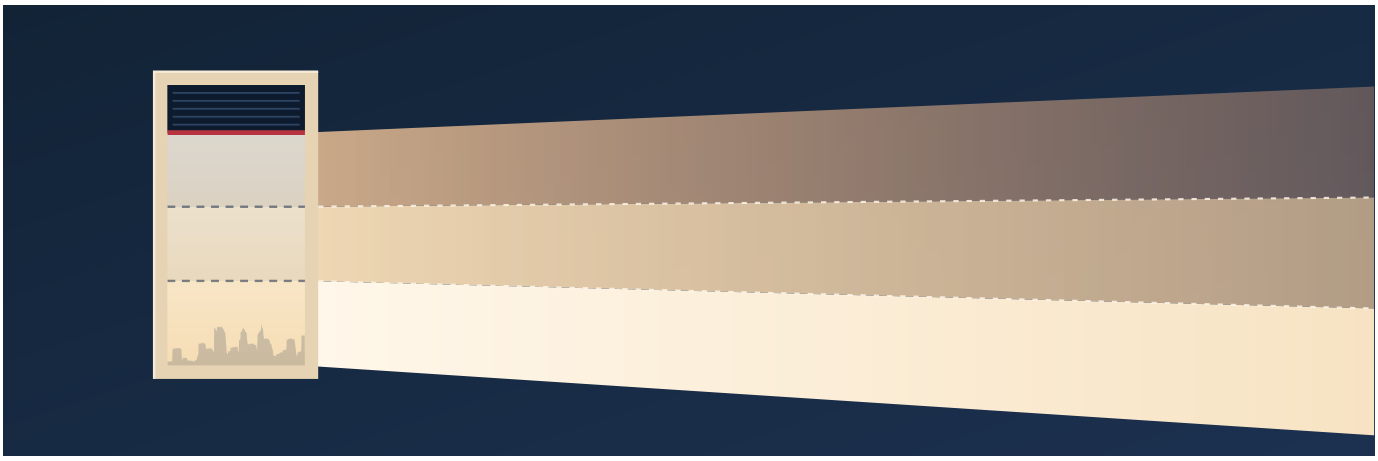
Asia Pacific's firms, universities and cities will also become more capable competitors for capital, talent and visitation. Direct air services, digital links, commercial relationships, diaspora networks and long term institutional partnerships will all influence how much Perth's newfound proximity will turn into contracts, research, investment and people.

Perth's Indian Ocean role is becoming more consequential

Perth is also becoming more important to regional security. Competition over Indian Ocean shipping routes, energy security and critical minerals is intensifying, while AUKUS and naval investment are expanding Western Australia's defence roles. By 2050, Perth's industrial capabilities and international partnerships will have deepened considerably, along with exposure to geopolitical flux.

The window of opportunity for Perth

Shifts in global investment and strategic priorities are opening four opportunities for Perth to take on larger economic roles. As investment decisions are made and new supply chains and partnerships take shape, the scope for Perth to secure a strong position will gradually narrow. The firms, capabilities and international relationships developed during this growth cycle could become lasting sources of economic strength.



Australia's western strategic gateway

Growing defence investment, energy trade and Indian Ocean relationships could bring more regional headquarters, specialist services and international activity to Perth. Stronger connections with India, Africa and Southeast Asia could establish it as an increasingly important base for Australian commercial and institutional engagement.

A new frontier for Perth's industrial economy

Defence shipbuilding and submarine sustainment, alongside energy and resources investment, could make Henderson and the Western Trade Coast an international calibre centre for complex engineering. The A$12bn committed to the Henderson Defence Precinct offers a chance to establish enduring skills, supply chains and globally competitive firms.

A global exporter of industrial technology

Perth's mining and energy industries provide demanding customers and real operating environments for automation, robotics, digital systems and lower emissions technologies. The opportunity is to turn more of this applied expertise into globally competitive Perth firms that develop, commercialise and export solutions to industrial customers worldwide.

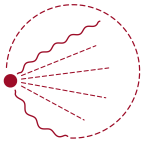
A model for living well in a hotter, drier world

Perth's record in desalination, groundwater replenishment and distributed solar could inform how other cities respond to climate pressures. Rooftop solar is installed on approximately half of Perth's houses, placing the city among the world's leading urban adopters. Further advances in urban cooling, building retrofit and neighbourhood design could improve local liveability while creating international markets for specialist expertise.



Perth’s edge

Perth combines attributes rarely found together in a city of its size. Its remoteness and the vast resources economy it serves have helped shape a corporate and institutional base more typical of a much larger city, while its coast, climate and outdoor way of life give the city a distinctive rhythm. These three edges help explain both the opportunities Perth can pursue and the challenges it faces as it grows.



Structural edge

Perth is built different

Distance from other large cities, the vast state it serves, a long, low density urban footprint and its role as the operating base of a resources economy have all shaped how Perth functions, connects and grows.



Competitive edge

The makings of tomorrow’s industries

Corporate offices with international reach, demanding industrial customers and universities that attract talent from around the world connect Perth to global networks of talent, capital and knowledge. Its growing innovation economy has the potential to turn more of these ingredients into new firms, technologies and industries.



Lifestyle edge

The good life runs deeper

Outdoor life, clean air and nature sit alongside the opportunities of a large city and a relatively informal coastal character. An international population, strong health outcomes and a broadly shared high standard of living add further depth to Perth’s appeal.

Perth’s geography has helped shape the roles it plays. Those roles create jobs, networks and opportunities that draw people in, while climate, coast and outdoor life strengthen the proposition for people to stay. The opportunity now is to make these strengths work together, with greater emphasis on intentional development, connectivity and coordination as Perth grows.

Structural edge

Perth is built different

Perth's structural edge reflects the interplay of extreme distance from other major cities, a long and low density urban footprint, a vast resources economy, abundant sunshine and the concentration of Western Australia's major functions in one city. These conditions shape how Perth works, grows and organises itself.

164 million
people live in cities within 4,000 km of Perth, more than for any other large Australian city.

0
Other cities of 1m people or more within 2,000 km. Perth is closer to Jakarta than to Sydney.

No.1
for built up land per resident among high income cities of at least 1m people.

1.7bn
people share Perth's time zone, the world's most populous, with Singapore, Hong Kong, Beijing and Manila.



150+ km
From north to south, shaping where and how Perth can grow.

11th sunniest
among 500+ cities of at least 1m people worldwide, ahead of Los Angeles, Cape Town and Madrid.

30%+
of the world's iron ore and lithium was produced in WA in 2025, with much of the associated corporate and specialist services activity based in Perth.

Only 9
countries in the world are larger than WA, whose principal business and institutional centre is Perth.

For sources, see p.35

Distance has shaped distinctiveness

Perth's isolation has encouraged the development of substantial corporate, professional and institutional capabilities locally. Its proximity to growing Asian markets creates opportunities that will increasingly depend on direct connections, commercial relationships and specialist expertise.

Perth performs functions on a continental scale

Perth concentrates the institutions, businesses and services supporting much of Western Australia's economy. Its metropolitan role extends far beyond its own population and boundaries, creating both economic opportunities and substantial coordination responsibilities.

Urban form makes growth choices consequential

Perth's exceptionally extensive, low density urban form makes the location of housing, jobs, infrastructure and services particularly important. More connected centres can improve accessibility, support productivity and reduce the long term costs of growth.

Competitive edge

The makings of tomorrow's industries

Perth combines the corporate reach of a much larger business centre with world scale industrial expertise and a growing technology economy. Together, these assets provide a strong platform for developing the next generation of internationally competitive Perth firms.

Corporate reach far beyond the city's size

Perth's resources economy has brought together corporate decision makers, financiers, engineers and international advisory firms with extensive global networks. They present emerging companies with potential routes to customers, contracts and markets around the world.

700+

ASX listed company headquarters, Australia's largest concentration

About one in three nationally

Top 70

worldwide for corporate connectivity, one of only 15 cities of its size to achieve this

Ahead of Atlanta and Vancouver

World scale industries provide a proving ground for innovation

Perth's mining and energy industries concentrate sophisticated customers, specialist engineers and demanding technical challenges. They provide opportunities to develop and test technologies in real operating environments, increasingly complemented by defence and advanced manufacturing. Perth's universities reinforce this industrial capability with internationally recognised research and specialist talent, creating foundations for technologies and services with markets around the world.

2 of the top 10

universities worldwide for mineral and mining engineering

Perth is currently the only city worldwide with two: Curtin 4th, UWA 9th

Top 20

for average salary among major cities

An emerging technology economy with considerable room to scale

Perth's technology economy has grown quickly from a modest base, drawing on industrial expertise and university research. The next opportunity is to turn that momentum into more firms capable of securing major customers, attracting growth capital and competing internationally.

6.5x

increase in the estimated combined value of Perth's venture backed technology companies

2019 to 2025

Top 60

worldwide for the pace of technology ecosystem growth

Lifestyle edge

The good life runs deeper

Perth's lifestyle advantage extends far beyond sunshine and beaches. Its distinctive natural setting, favourable living conditions, international population and cultural character combine to make Perth a compelling place to build a life.

A healthy city with exceptional environmental advantages

Perth combines high living standards with some of the cleanest urban air in the world. Life expectancy is among the highest of comparable cities, with relatively modest differences across local areas. The city's natural environment, prosperity and established public services contribute to its appeal for families, skilled workers and people seeking a high quality of life over the long term.

2nd

cleanest inner city air among more than 500 monitored cities worldwide

Behind only Zurich

Top 4%

worldwide for overall quality of life

Ahead of Barcelona, Auckland and Vancouver

Outdoor living is woven into the ordinary week

Perth's coast, river, parks and recreational spaces bring nature and outdoor activity into everyday life. Walking, cycling, water sports and informal recreation are part of the city's character, supported by sunshine and a coastal way of life. These qualities give Perth an identity that residents experience directly, with the potential to support an even richer variety of neighbourhoods and urban experiences as the city grows.

41% more

of Perth's residents live within 100 metres of a park, plaza or car free street than in the typical city worldwide



Up 16

globally for the appeal of its leisure experiences

since 2024, including dining, sports and nightlife

An increasingly diverse and dynamic culture

Perth's cultural identity is rooted in Whadjuk Noongar Country and enriched by communities with connections across the world. Their influence is visible in the city's neighbourhoods, workplaces, universities, food and cultural life. A growing creative sector, festivals and cultural institutions add further depth to Perth's character and the experiences it offers residents and visitors.

Top 10

among OECD metropolitan areas for the share of residents born overseas

41% of residents

Up into Top 10%

worldwide for the size and diversity of its student community

Perth enters its next growth cycle with a strong hand

Industrial demand, a rapidly expanding population and an Indian Ocean economy growing in importance are converging with major infrastructure investment already under way. For Perth, the opportunity lies in how these forces reinforce its established corporate, industrial and lifestyle strengths, expanding what the city can offer businesses and residents.

27th

worldwide for future potential, up 12 places since 2022

95%+

of large OECD urban centres are projected to grow more slowly than Perth to 2050

4x

the global average for air passenger growth since 2019, ahead of 18 of the world's 20 busiest airports

Industrial demand could create a much larger technology economy

Major defence, mining and energy investments could expand the market for Perth's specialist firms, researchers and engineers. The opportunity is for more of the expertise developed around these projects to become internationally competitive businesses and technologies.

Perth's western gateway is becoming more valuable

Economic growth across the Indian Ocean and Asia is increasing the significance of Perth's location and connections. Direct air links, digital infrastructure and international communities provide a platform for deeper investment, research and commercial relationships.

Population and infrastructure investment can create greater urban depth

Perth's rapid expansion is bringing a larger workforce, consumer market and demand for services. Combined with investments in rail, ports, airports and strategic precincts, this creates opportunities for stronger centres, specialised employment clusters and more varied urban experiences.

Environmental adaptation could become a competitive specialism

Perth's water expertise, distributed solar, biodiversity and outdoor lifestyle provide distinctive foundations for responding to a hotter, drier climate. Better integration of energy, water, urban design and environmental technology could also generate expertise relevant to other cities facing similar pressures.

Perth's opportunities extend beyond the individual investments and growth trends already in motion. Their combined value will depend on whether they reinforce one another, creating a more capable economy, stronger urban centres and a quality of life that remains distinctive as the city grows.

Growth on the wrong terms could blunt Perth's edge

Perth can remain prosperous and grow strongly while losing some of the qualities that have long distinguished it. Rising living costs, dispersed development, mounting environmental pressures and gaps in commercial innovation are already testing its advantages. Achieving Perth's liveability ambition will depend on managing these pressures while overlapping projects and agendas compete for capacity.

Costs are moving against Perth

Perth is now among the most expensive fifth of more than 100 cities for residents' living costs, having ranked closer to the middle earlier this decade, while home prices remain high relative to incomes.

Urban growth is stretching accessibility

More than 20% more of Sydneysiders can easily reach a rapid transport stop than Perth, and 15% more Melburnians. With still over 80% of homes approved being detached houses, Perth continues to surpass other major cities in Australia and the US for single family housing. This risks lock-in to longer car journeys and higher infrastructure maintenance.

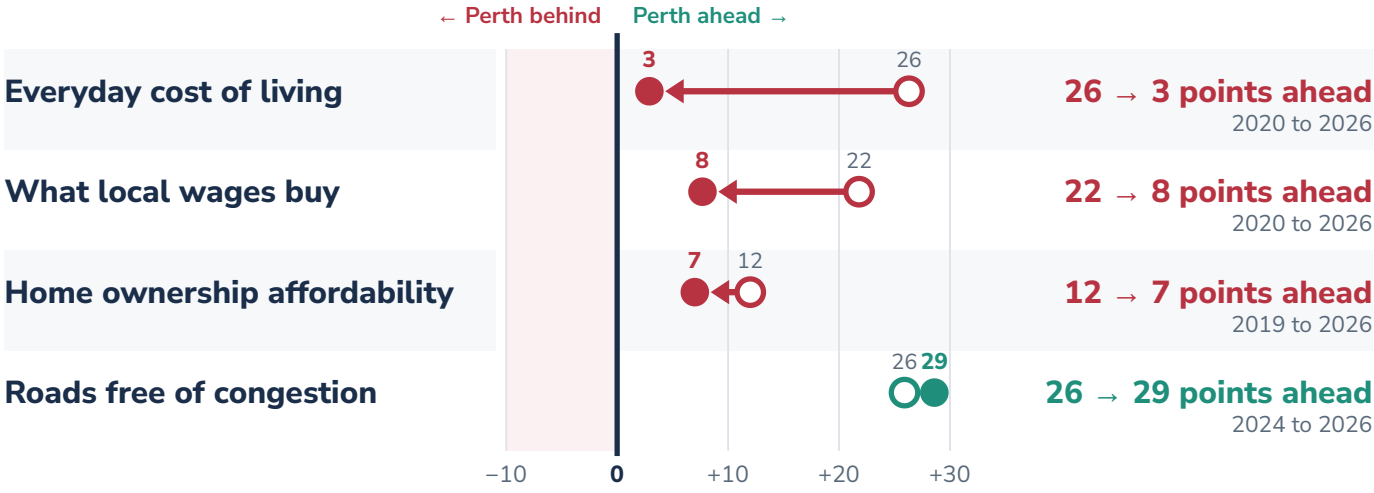
Rapid growth has yet to close Perth's innovation gap

Perth has slipped from 50th to 62nd of 100 leading innovation hubs for knowledge creation since 2022, while Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane rank well ahead. Significantly fewer start ups that raise a Series A go on to raise breakout funding. The risk is that Perth's considerable industrial and research strengths translate into fewer growing businesses and new technologies than in competing cities.

Environmental pressures are mounting

Perth's natural advantages are under growing pressure from a drying climate and the continuing expansion of its urban footprint. These trends are increasing the importance of water security, urban cooling, biodiversity protection and the long term cost of maintaining liveable neighbourhoods.

Perth maintains an edge over Australia's three largest eastern capitals, but its lead is narrowing. Everyday living costs, purchasing power and housing affordability are no longer permanent advantages Perth can count on, while congestion remains a key challenge.



Sources: Asia Competitiveness Institute, Demographia, TomTom, via Callimachus, The Business of Cities benchmarking database.



What Perth makes of its next growth cycle

Major projects and population growth will generate substantial activity. Their longer term significance lies in what they leave behind. Five potential dividends emerge from Perth's strengths and the gaps in its current performance.

1 More technology firms with global markets

Project demand — Export capability

Mining, energy and defence provide demanding customers whose challenges can generate valuable technologies. Access to contracts, testing environments, research and growth capital will influence how much of this activity develops into locally rooted firms, specialist careers and exports that endure beyond the original projects.

2 Centres with greater economic and cultural depth

Routine centres — Distinctive hubs

METRONET, major precinct investments and population growth create scope for a more animated city centre and stronger suburban hubs. Concentrations of housing, employment, education, cultural venues and services could support deeper labour markets, livelier public places and a richer urban experience that adds to Perth's appeal.

3 Housing choices for different lives

Detached default — Diverse homes

Detached housing still dominates Perth's new supply, while the economics of apartment development remain difficult. A broader mix of homes across a range of attractive neighbourhood densities can give younger workers, families and older residents more options of size, location and price, with wider benefits for accessibility, labour mobility and the vitality of established centres.

4 A way of life adapted to a hotter, drier climate

Rising exposure — Adaptive liveability

Perth's outdoor lifestyle and natural setting face growing pressure from extreme heat, urban expansion and declining natural water supplies. Existing expertise in desalination, groundwater replenishment and distributed solar provides a foundation for maintaining urban liveability and developing capabilities relevant to other cities facing similar conditions.

5 An international reputation grounded in achievements

Familiar image — Recognised strengths

Perth's Indian Ocean connections, Whadjuk Noongar culture and expanding technology and creative sectors offer a wider identity than its established resources and lifestyle associations. Distinctive firms, partnerships, places and cultural experiences could give international audiences more tangible reasons to recognise the city.

How other cities have made growth deliver more

International experience offers examples of how major customers, transport investment, planning reform and existing public facilities have generated wider benefits. The mechanisms differ, but each offers lessons Perth can adapt to its own opportunities and institutional circumstances.



San Diego

Defence as an innovation engine

San Diego's maritime and defence sectors provide demanding operational customers for technology businesses. The Port's Blue Economy Incubator offers firms access to working sites and support for testing new products. San Diego has used defence demand to build a far broader innovation economy. UC San Diego, founded on a former Navy camp, seeded firms such as Linkabit, the forerunner of Qualcomm. A regional partnership of universities, defence installations and industry equips SMEs for defence contracts and commercial uses. Military bases double as working testbeds.



Vancouver

Rail underpinning more substantial centres

Metro Vancouver has combined a regional growth strategy with SkyTrain investment, supporting more substantial housing and employment centres including Metrotown, Brentwood and Surrey City Centre. These locations are developing concentrations of residential activity, commerce and amenities beyond the traditional downtown core. 40+% of regional dwelling growth occurs in designated urban centres.



Auckland

Housing reform with lasting benefits

Following Auckland's 2016 planning reform, its housing stock grew by an estimated 18% in eight years. Minimum lot sizes per dwelling and mandatory parking requirements were removed. Rents for new tenancies have been estimated at 23% lower by 2024 than without reform. A delivery alliance brought housing agencies, council and utilities together to undertake neighbourhood upgrades. Auckland's next housing plan seeks to make better use of transport and infrastructure investment by enabling more homes in accessible locations, while accounting for environmental risks.



Barcelona

A whole-city response to extreme heat

Barcelona's metropolitan authority and 30+ local governments have expanded a network of libraries, parks, pools and civic facilities offering respite during severe heat. Over 300 shelters provide access within a 10 minute walk for nearly 90% of residents. Existing public spaces have acquired an additional role in everyday climate resilience.

Sources: Port of San Diego; Abremski and Roben 2021; Metro Vancouver; Auckland Council; University of Auckland; Kāinga Ora; AMB; Barcelona City Council.

Closing Perth's visibility gap

Perth has an established international profile through liveability and its connection to Western Australia's resources economy, but its wider brand identity remains relatively narrow. It receives less recognition for its capabilities in technology, research, Indian Ocean connectivity, culture and metropolitan experience. Some of Perth's advantages are also overshadowed by the more established international reputations of Australia's eastern capitals.

The evidence points to several candidates for a more distinctive international profile.

1. **Technology for physical industries**
   Perth's industrial, engineering and technology capabilities give it a credible claim to wider recognition for the technologies that design, operate and maintain complex physical industries.

2. **Australia's western gateway**
   Perth's location and connections give it scope to be more clearly understood as Australia's western base for business, education, research, investment and international relationships. This orientation is cultural as well as commercial, giving the city a field of reference that differs from eastern capitals.

3. **A distinctive Perth way of life**
   Perth's appeal is bound up in how the city feels. Sunlight, salt air, the coastline and river and outdoor life combine with a calm rhythm and more independent cultural and creative streaks to provide the basis for a distinctive identity beyond familiar Australian lifestyle motifs.

4. **Whadjuk Noongar heritage, culture and enterprise**
   Perth's identity is rooted in Whadjuk Noongar Country, with its enduring connections to land, water, culture and know-how. This living heritage and contemporary creativity are an increasingly important part of Perth's cultural story and international distinctiveness.

5. **Experience of a hotter, drier climate**
   Water security, solar energy and adaptation skills are increasingly relevant to other growing cities, and an opportunity for Perth to gain greater recognition.

These are five candidates for future identity and visibility work. Each should be tested for distinctiveness, credibility and relevance to international audiences as Perth evolves.

Perth's international reputation will increasingly depend on recognising and confidently promoting its people and achievements, from successful technologies and influential partnerships to distinctive places and cultural experiences.

Place is key to realising Perth's ambitions

Perth's extensive urban footprint makes the quality and connectedness of its centres and precincts especially important. Successful centres foster repeated interaction and opportunities for creativity and new businesses. They also influence how easily people reach jobs and services, and how much lasting value new investment creates.

Compared with cities worldwide

26% fewer
residents
within walking distance of both healthcare and education than in the typical city worldwide

Bottom 2%
worldwide
for the density at which residents live

Half as many
Perth residents
can reach the heart of the city centre within 30 minutes door to door by public transport

Versus typical OECD city, 1 to 5m

Different places are set to contribute to Perth's competitive performance



City centre and inner neighbourhoods

A more substantial city centre would strengthen Perth's metropolitan identity and cultural experience, enlarge the everyday market for shops and evening activity, and add to its appeal for internationally mobile talent.



Research and health precincts

University and health precincts influence how much expertise becomes commercially useful through shared facilities, industry relationships and access to investors.



Strategic industrial areas

The Western Trade Coast influences how much value Perth retains from major industrial investment by concentrating suppliers, engineering firms and technology businesses.



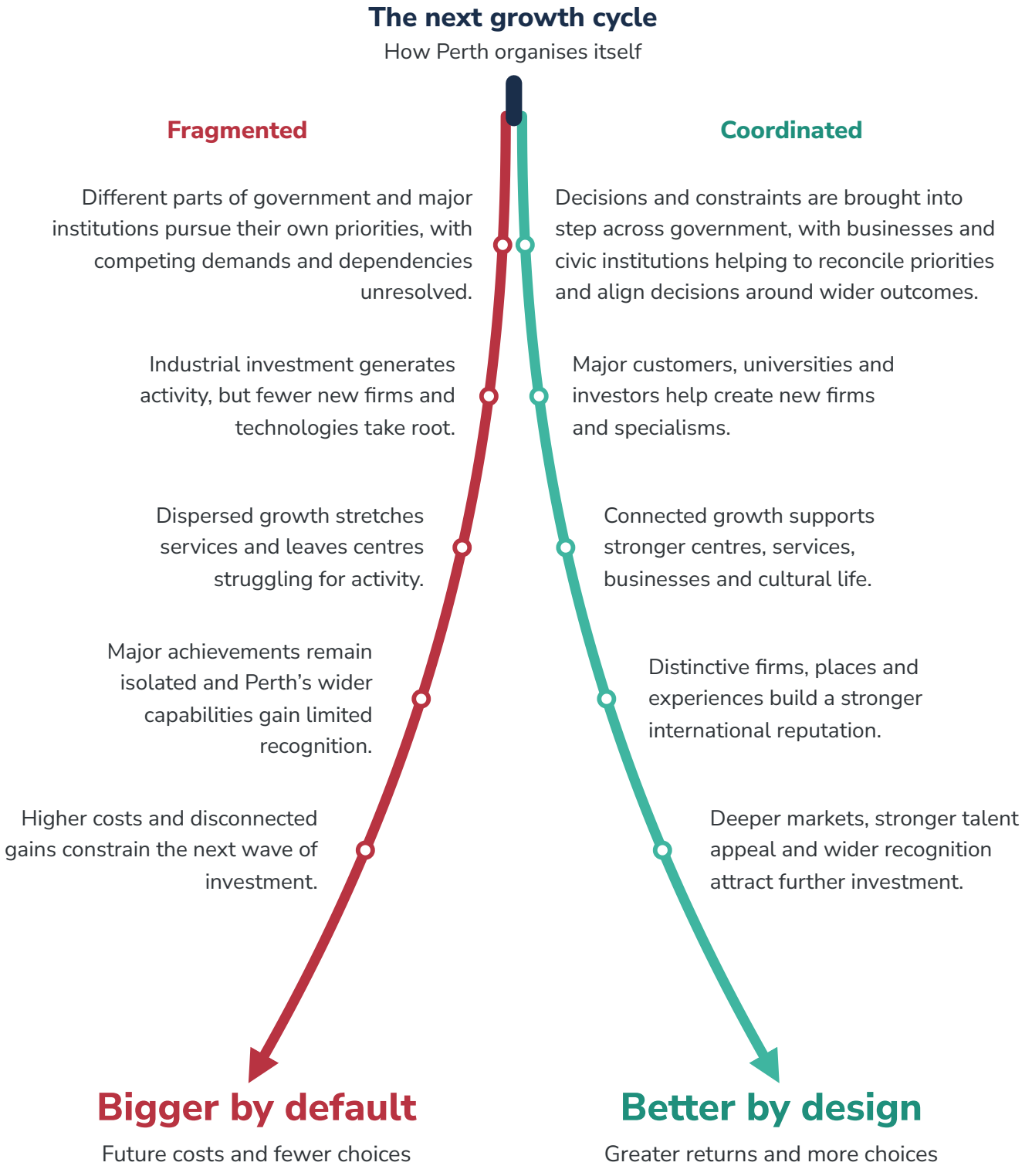
Centres on the transport network

Centres that bring housing, jobs, amenities and everyday services together in attractive, accessible places expand the labour market available to firms and the opportunities open to residents.

Perth has more to gain from developing stronger, better connected centres and precincts than many of its peers. Concentrating jobs, knowledge, housing and amenities in places with distinctive character and appeal can improve productivity, expand choice and increase the value generated by metropolitan growth.

Perth’s fork in the road

Perth’s next growth cycle could take the city in very different directions. International precedent shows that where development takes place, how places connect and whether major investments reinforce one another can shape a city’s long term competitiveness and liveability. Decisions that make sense in isolation can create costs and constraints elsewhere. How Perth’s institutions recognise these interdependencies and align their decisions will influence how much lasting value the city derives from current and future growth.





Making Perth's future a shared endeavour

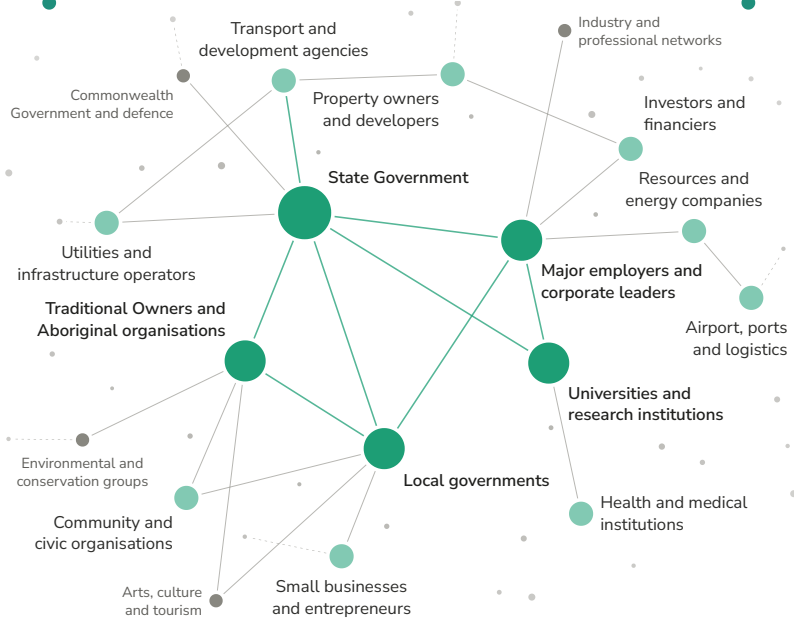
As Perth grows, more decisions about its economy, infrastructure and quality of life will depend on joined up design and delivery. Different levels of government, businesses, universities and civic institutions each influence part of the picture. A larger, more complex Perth will see its long run performance depend on the quality of collaboration and coordination.

Commercialisation of expertise

Connecting industrial customers, research, testing opportunities and capital to help more firms scale.

A more active city centre

Coordinating transport, public space, private development and cultural investment around shared priorities.



More varied homes

Bringing planning, infrastructure, finance and development viability into step.

Climate ready neighbourhoods

Connecting water, energy, urban greening and neighbourhood design.

Global identity

Promoting Perth's people, places and achievements in business, research and culture to strengthen international recognition.

Network map and agenda networks are illustrative rather than exhaustive.

The challenge is to turn this web of influence into shared priorities, timely decisions and commitments that others can rely on.

What coordination looks like in practice

In high growth cities, major priorities depend on organisations making separate decisions that reinforce a shared outcome. These decisions may compete for resources and reasonable institutional priorities may pull in different directions. Effective coordination makes these tensions visible, brings different evidence to bear, establishes shared priorities and secures credible commitments, even as institutions retain their authority and accountability.

Agree a shared purpose while choices remain open

Partners need to agree what a centre, precinct or programme is trying to achieve before major decisions become difficult to change. This means making trade offs explicit and involving residents, businesses and Aboriginal organisations early enough to influence choices.

Bring different evidence and perspectives together

Public agencies, employers, utilities, investors, universities, developers and communities each see different parts of the opportunity. Bringing their perspectives and evidence together can expose constraints, challenge assumptions and establish a common understanding of demand, infrastructure needs and risks.

Make commitments others can plan around

Shared priorities become credible when partners commit resources, decisions and delivery within their control. Clear commitments on infrastructure, land, funding, skills or investment, including their timing and dependencies, allow other organisations to plan with greater confidence.

Clarify ownership and decision making authority

Coordination needs clear responsibility for maintaining the wider picture, tracking commitments and escalating unresolved issues to those with authority to act. Each institution retains accountability for its own decisions and delivery, while the shared work remains visible and actively managed.

Sustain direction and adapt to change

Major metropolitan priorities extend across budgets, leadership changes and economic cycles. Shared milestones and measures can help partners monitor progress, maintain commitments and adjust programmes as circumstances change, while keeping sight of the agreed outcome.

The distinctive contribution of civic leadership

Some of Perth's most consequential choices depend on taking a wider view than individual mandates. Civic leaders can build the coalitions and commitments that make shared action credible.

Across leading cities, civic leadership takes shape when influential organisations use their standing, expertise and resources to advance priorities beyond their immediate mandates. Government retains its statutory powers and investment responsibilities, while specialist agencies and partnerships remain accountable for delivery. Civic leadership helps build the wider commitment and continuity that complex metropolitan priorities require.

Perth benefits from established State Government institutions and decades of metropolitan planning. As decisions about industry, housing, infrastructure and resilience become more interconnected, businesses, universities, Aboriginal organisations and other civic institutions have a growing opportunity to help shape priorities, support difficult choices and contribute resources to outcomes benefiting Greater Perth as a whole.

Different contributions to metropolitan progress

Public powers and resources

Commonwealth, State and local authorities exercise different powers over investment, regulation, planning, infrastructure and public services.

Delivery capacity and partnerships

Public agencies, firms, utilities and other institutions combine expertise, resources and accountability to deliver programmes in particular places and sectors.

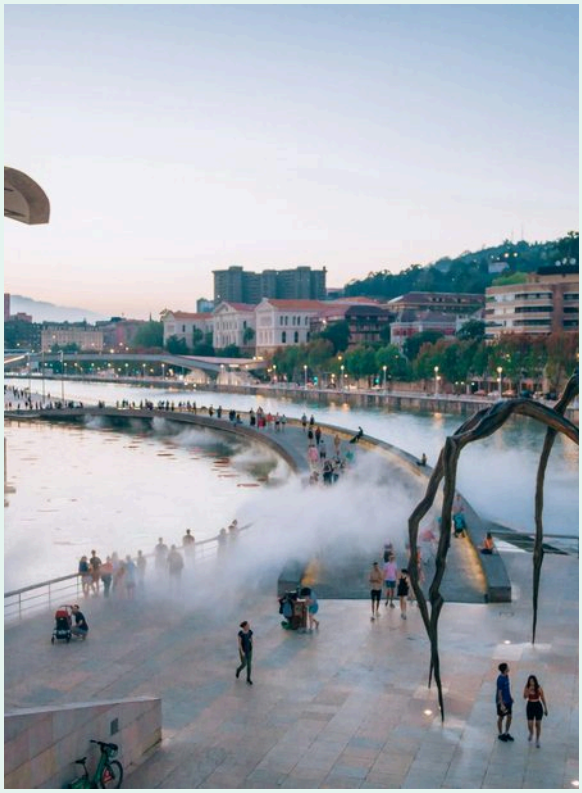
Civic leadership across institutions

Leaders from government, business, universities and civic institutions build shared purpose, bring independent challenge and mobilise wider commitments.

For Perth, the challenge is for a broad base of leadership to help difficult choices to be made earlier, back them with resources and sustain progress over time.

Lessons in the power of civic leadership

Among established and transforming cities, civic-minded coalitions have found ways to mobilise major employers, sustain priorities and champion difficult decisions. Their experience shows how civic coalitions can build shared confidence, encourage institutions to look beyond their immediate responsibilities and sustain commitment to ambitious goals.



"A place where we connect those who have a problem with those who can offer the solution."

Tomás Olano, President, Bilbao Metropoli 30.

Bilbao

(Bilbao Metropoli 30)

A shared metropolitan vision behind successive transformations

As Bilbao set out to modernise its industrial economy and reinvent its waterfront, business and civic leaders recognised the need for a shared metropolitan vision. Bilbao Metropoli 30 brought major employers, banks, universities, government and civic organisations together to develop it. Its strategic plan connected the new Metro, Guggenheim Museum, restoration of the Nervión estuary and waterfront redevelopment to a wider economic and urban agenda. Public agencies led the projects, while the association helped build consensus and maintain the backing of influential institutions. Once these landmarks were underway, it assembled around 1,000 professionals from its member organisations and almost 200 international experts to identify the next priorities, including innovation, talent and quality of life. Around 140 organisations remain involved today. Its latest agenda envisages the estuary as a metropolitan boulevard connecting neighbourhoods, transport, culture and new economic activity across the wider region.

Houston

(Greater Houston Partnership)

Energy giants take responsibility for the next economy

Houston has long been the world's energy capital. As its economy diversifies the Greater Houston Partnership has grown to combine the functions of a chamber of commerce, investment attraction agency and influential civic coalition. The Partnership has also embraced bigger challenges to Houston's long term competitiveness. It brought employers, colleges and government together to address workforce shortages and helped champion a major new innovation district. When its chair later challenged Houston's corporate leaders to take ownership of the energy transition, the positive response resulted in the Partnership launching the Houston Energy Transition Initiative. Industry working groups now regularly identify investment barriers, commission research on electricity demand and hydrogen, and advocate for infrastructure and policy changes. The initiative has connected Houston's industries with six national labs to advance commercialisation. The wider Partnership is now working on reliable power for expanding AI demand and turning captured carbon into commercially valuable fuels.



"As business leaders and members of the Greater Houston Partnership, it's our job to look around corners and anticipate both cyclical and secular change."

Bobby Tudor, former Chair, Greater Houston Partnership.



"We are increasingly asked to act as the neutral player in the middle that can take an initiative forward, because it has no institutional interest of its own."

Nina Tellegen, former Executive Director, Amsterdam Economic Board.

Amsterdam

(Amsterdam Economic Board)

Turning coalitions into working programmes

The Amsterdam Economic Board was established to get major institutions right across the region working together on problems that cross their responsibilities. Chaired by the city's mayor, its board brings leaders from big firms, universities, hospitals and government into a standing partnership. Its professional team develops coalitions around common challenges, helps secure contributions from participating organisations and establishes who will carry successful initiatives forward. One coalition brought three major hospitals together to create a secure platform for sharing medical data, which the Board reports has reduced the time needed for data exchange by over 80%. It has also led the co-design of new approaches to retraining, transferring the resulting tools and services to specialist organisations and allowing the Board to concentrate on new challenges in healthcare, AI and greener industry.

New York

(Partnership for New York City)

Major employers put their resources behind citywide priorities

David Rockefeller established the Partnership to bring New York's chief executives into a permanent civic role, and early on it united banks, builders and government behind a programme that delivered more than 40,000 affordable homes on vacant city owned land. Today more than 300 member companies combine senior business input with economic research, private capital and sustained advocacy. When New York's biomedical research institutions struggled to retain emerging companies, its investment arm identified the shortage of commercial labs, brought universities, developers and government together, and helped establish the city's first major life sciences campus. The Partnership has also supported difficult policy decisions. For nearly two decades, it assembled economic evidence and business backing for charging vehicles entering central Manhattan.



"Leaders from different sectors [...] have to have a forum where they can pool their resources, figure out how to tackle problems together."

Kathryn Wylde, former President and CEO, Partnership for New York City.



"Our role is to sustain momentum, fill gaps, and help ensure that revitalization reflects the priorities of the entire region."

Stefani Pashman, CEO, Allegheny Conference on Community Development.

Pittsburgh

(Pittsburgh Regional Alliance)

An enduring employer coalition that keeps reinventing its agenda

Pittsburgh was one of the first major cities where major employers became permanently engaged in shaping the metropolitan region's future. Originally the Allegheny Conference, it brought business leaders together with government to champion cleaner air, create a landmark waterfront park, and redevelop the city centre. As the economy evolved, it helped unite 10 previously competing counties behind a single investment strategy. More than 250 businesses and institutions now support its economic research, policy advocacy and investment attraction, with senior executives helping set priorities and open doors. Its influence comes from its ability to assemble partners, secure political backing and maintain attention on major initiatives over successive administrations. Most recently, it brought more than 40 partners together around city centre renewal, helping build support for a programme backed by nearly A$1bn in investment commitments, including housing conversions and new cultural and public spaces.

Cape Town

(Western Cape Economic Development Partnership)

A trusted intermediary that gets institutions moving

The Western Cape EDP was established in a context of Cape Town's complex growth challenges and underdeveloped connections between government, business and communities. With the backing of 130 public and civic organisations, it has become an important source of expertise in bringing stakeholders together, identifying shared problems and agreeing practical actions. Its independence and facilitation skills allow it to work between institutions with different mandates, building trust through practical results and holding participants accountable for agreed actions. One area where its contribution has been particularly visible is water security. Following a severe drought, it helped set up a forum that brings much greater regularity and urgency to identifying problems, assigning responsibilities and tracking agreed actions. This intermediary role has also extended to housing, energy resilience and industry partnerships, including a new coalition supporting Cape Town's food and beverage sector.



"I think you always need a convener, especially with fractured partnerships, because you don't get together ordinarily around the table."

Alan Winde, Premier, Western Cape Government.

What civic leadership adds

Six capabilities recur across the international experience. Together they describe the connective capacity Perth will increasingly need as its next growth cycle brings more interdependent choices.

Convene with credibility

Organisations with different interests and responsibilities need a trusted setting in which to test evidence, understand each other's constraints and agree what each will do. That trust rests on independence, sound evidence and a record of practical results.

Continuity across cycles

Metropolitan priorities usually outlast an electoral term, a budget round or a chief executive's tenure. Holding them requires broad ownership and dependable resources, so the agenda can be renewed as circumstances change without the coalition behind it having to be rebuilt each time.

Confidence to aim higher

Cities often set ambitions to match what one institution can deliver within its own term. Civic leadership can build shared confidence in what a city can become, assembling the evidence and coalition that make larger ambitions credible to investors, governments and residents before every question is settled.

Customer lens across boundaries

Firms, founders, investors and students experience a city across many agencies and jurisdictions. Business participation brings market intelligence, customers, capital and international relationships to bear on how a city supports emerging industries, and tests public programmes against what their users need.

Coordinate real commitments

Shared priorities become consequential when organisations commit people, money, data or decisions to them. Civic capacity can assemble those commitments across sectors, test an initiative with the partners it needs and settle who will run it once it works.

Cover for brave choices

Some of the choices that matter most for Perth involve immediate costs, difficult trade offs or benefits that take years to materialise. When respected business and civic leaders publicly make the case for these choices, mobilise wider support and sustain their backing through implementation, they give elected leaders greater confidence and political space to act.

For Perth, the value of these capabilities will be seen in what they make possible. Difficult choices gain informed support, promising initiatives attract partners prepared to commit resources, and long term priorities retain momentum through changes of leadership and circumstances.

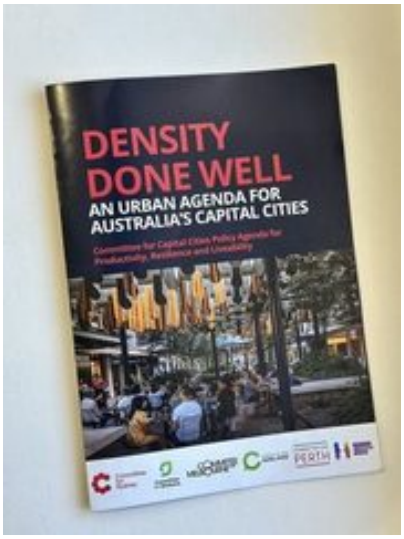
















Source: Committee for Perth





A Team Perth approach

Perth already has much of the institutional capacity, investment and civic commitment needed to shape its next growth cycle. There is an opportunity to connect these efforts more deliberately, particularly where the city's long term competitiveness and liveability depend on decisions extending beyond individual organisations and places.

In international examples touched on here, a more recognisable shared approach sees institutions give greater weight to common priorities in their own decisions, investments and partnerships, and support outcomes whose benefits extend beyond their immediate responsibilities.

Government remains central through its statutory powers, public investment and infrastructure responsibilities. Partnerships in particular agendas, places and industries can organise programmes around an agreed purpose, with clear responsibility for delivery. Organisations with convening power can contribute evidence, relationships and continuity, helping bring commitments from business, universities and community institutions alongside those of government. The opportunity is to connect these contributions where no single institution can secure the wider outcome alone.

In phases of purposeful initiative, city leaders have seen the benefit of identifying two or three consequential opportunities where institutional coordination could unlock demonstrably greater economic or social value. For each, partners can establish the intended outcome, the decisions that depend on one another, the contributions they are prepared to make and how progress will be assessed. In Perth, Henderson and the Western Trade Coast, and the city centre, offer possible starting points to focus on the wider economic dividend, pool effort around specific opportunities, and ensure public and private investments reinforce one another.

Committee for Perth already convenes members, brings evidence to debates about Greater Perth and advocates for the city's long term interests. It is well placed to help partners undertake this early test, building shared understanding, drawing out commitments and sustaining attention to progress while delivery remains with the responsible institutions. It can also bring different perspectives into Perth's international positioning, and enable members and partners to assess and accelerate progress towards the 2050 Ambition.

How Perth can judge if it is on the right path

Perth can grow larger without necessarily becoming more competitive or liveable by international standards. Its progress towards 2050 will depend on whether growth builds a stronger economy, creates more opportunities for its people, makes Perth a better place to live and strengthens its place in the world. Six areas provide a starting point for judging whether Perth is on the right path.

What should improve	How Perth could judge progress
More local firms grow and reach new markets	Growth capital reaches a wider range of Perth businesses. More firms turn research and industrial expertise into new products, services and international customers.
More people can reach jobs and services	More residents live near frequent public transport and can reach a wider range of jobs and services within reasonable journey times, closing the gap with comparable cities.
Stronger centres offer more housing and lifestyle choice	More varied homes are delivered in and around major centres, improving access to local services, amenities and culture. Affordability improves and distinct Perth vernacular emerges.
Perth remains a great place to live as it grows	Tree canopy recovers, exposure to extreme heat falls, and access to nature, culture and outdoor life remains strong as the population grows.
More people choose to stay and build their futures in Perth	More graduates stay after studying, skilled workers increasingly choose Perth for their careers, and employers find it easier to attract specialist talent.
Perth becomes better known for its distinctive strengths	International recognition grows in areas where Perth has particular capabilities, alongside more overseas customers, investment and partnerships.

These are illustrative signs of progress. Credible baselines, agreed international comparisons and appropriate targets would need to be developed and widely shared to track Perth's direction effectively over time.

Perth's next growth cycle offers an extraordinary opportunity. Its lasting value will depend on how confidently Perth's potential is embraced, how effectively institutions evolve to meet the scale of the challenge, and the commitments partners sustain together. The path Perth chooses now will determine how much this growth counts for generations to come.


BHP
RioTinto
EY

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