

YARRA JUNCTION PLACE PLAN - CONSIDERATION FOR ADOPTION

Report Author: Manager Design and Place
Responsible Officer: Director Planning & Sustainable Futures
Ward(s) affected: O'Shannassy;

The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020.

CONFIDENTIALITY

This item is to be considered at a Council meeting that is open to the public.

SUMMARY

The final Yarra Junction Place Plan has been developed with extensive involvement from the community. The Plan establishes a vision that will help guide decisions about Yarra Junction, lays the foundations for design, captures the values and qualities of the place, and directs future investment for the township.

The draft Place Plan was on public exhibition between 8 August to 8 September 2024. There was high level engagement with 762 visitors to the project's Shaping Page, 49 face to face interviews and 3 written submissions were received. The Plan has been heavily informed by a collaborative representative community working group that was convened across several sessions and directed feedback on actions and content as it was developed.

The final Yarra Junction Place Plan (Attachment 1) has applied the methodology and model from previous Place Plans and will be used as a mechanism to program and plan future projects.

Feedback received has been incorporated into the final Plan. The refined Action Plan has been internally reviewed to ensure that all actions align with Council strategies, plans and works programs. Actions have also been shared with the Community Reference Group members to ensure the changes have not lost the original intent of the actions.

This report seeks Council to note the findings from community consultation and consider adoption of the final Yarra Junction Place Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council

- 1. Note the findings from community consultation on the Yarra Junction Place Plan.***
- 2. Adopt the Yarra Junction Place Plan 2025.***
- 3. Advise the Yarra Junction community on the outcome of this meeting.***

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

Council was briefed on the draft plan prior to the draft Yarra Junction Place Plan going out on public exhibition between 8 August to 8 September 2024.

DISCUSSION

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of community feedback of the Draft Yarra Junction Place Plan, following public exhibition which occurred between 8 August to 8 September 2024.

The report explains how the community engagement undertaken throughout the process of developing the Place Plan has informed the priorities and actions of the final version of the Place Plan.

Finally, this report presents the final version of the Yarra Junction Place Plan (Attachment 1) seeking Council consideration of adoption.

Background

The Living Places Framework identifies Place Planning as an important tool for understanding a place, by identifying issues and opportunities, understanding what a community values and developing a vision to direct future planning. The Place Plan model is unique to Yarra Ranges, functioning largely as a broad Issues and Opportunities paper, and the current version has been patterned on the previously adopted Place Plans. Place Plans outline Council's long-term strategic intent for a place by providing a clear vision for the future and outlining specific actions to achieve this vision, over 20 years or more.

Following on from learnings in completing the Lilydale and Warburton Place Plans, the Yarra Junction Place Plan was approached with an intent to involve community in not just informing the Place Plan, but to be actively involved in the development of the Plan itself. This has been achieved through diverse community engagement opportunities and collaborative workshops.

A welcome and unplanned outcome of the Community Representative Group workshops was the recent establishment of the Yarra Junction Township Group. This community led

initiative is a positive outcome from collaborating with community in planning, with this group now inspired to begin an independent community planning exercise that will empower the community to achieve outcomes that align with the Plan’s vision.

Engagement Stages

Yarra Ranges Council’s community engagement is based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Engagement, summarised in Attachment 4. A brief overview of the different stages of engagement on this project is outlined below. Detailed engagement reports that have been shared with the community are provided as attachments to this report:

- Yarra Junction Place Plan Engagement and Directions Paper – December 2023 (Attachment 5)
- Yarra Junction Place Plan Consultation and Engagement Report – December 2024 (Attachment 6)

Stage 1: Initial Engagement

Initial Conversations

TimingSeptember – November 2023	
Type (IAP2)	Inform / Consult
Objectives	<u>Hear from community:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What community values/loves about Yarra Junction• Where are the opportunities for improvement• What community wants for the future
Actions	Allowing a diverse range of views to be collated through an extensive engagement period involving detailed conversations from a broad range of community members.

Engagement and directions paper

Timing April 2024	
Type (IAP2)	Inform
Objectives	<u>Report to community:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What we heard, key themes, demographic data
Actions	Reporting back to the community on the feedback received, as well as beginning to provide a township profile through exploring demographic data.

Community representative group workshops

Timing April – May 2024	
Type (IAP2)	Inform / Consult / Involve / Collaborate
Objectives	<u>Work with community:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• explore key themes.• establish priorities.• develop action plan.• create community vision
Actions	A series of interactive workshops with 22 community representatives from different sectors of the community; including clubs, groups, service providers, business owners, parents, seniors, carers and residents. Allowing community to collaboratively develop an Action Plan and Vision with Council.

Stage 2: Draft Place Plan Engagement

Community Engagement – Draft Place Plan

Timing	August – September 2024
Type (IAP2)	Inform / Consult
Objectives	<u>Share with community:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">publicly exhibit the Draft Place Planreceive community feedback
Actions	Present Draft Place Plan to the community and provide a diverse range of opportunities for community to provide feedback.

Engagement report

Timing	December 2024
Type (IAP2)	Inform
Objectives	<u>Report to community:</u> 11. What we heard, how we will respond in the final Place Plan and why
Actions	Reporting back to the community on the feedback received, how and why we will respond to this in the final plan.

Final Yarra Junction Place Plan

Timing	Mid 2025 (planned - confirm on adoption)
Type (IAP2)	Inform
Objectives	<u>Share with community:</u> 12. Release and promote the adopted Yarra Junction Place Plan with community

Actions	Once adopted, the Place Plan will be made public on Council's website, providing a clear direction for the township.
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Community feedback

Community priorities

The draft Yarra Junction Place Plan was developed to respond to community feedback and includes a vision and action plan developed with community.

What community values most about Yarra Junction:

- People are friendly and strong community culture.
- The natural environment.
- Yarra Centre facilities and activities.
- Service centre for Upper Yarra health, education and business.

Key issues raised by the community:

- Roads, parking & transport
- Community infrastructure
- Pedestrian movement and trails
- Shopping centre – diversity and aesthetics
- Planning and development – housing and industry
- Town aesthetics
- Accessibility – infrastructure and services
- Diversity of business
- Emergency services – health and emergency management
- Young people – services, activities and spaces

Yarra Junction Place Plan

The final version of the Yarra Junction Place Plan has been refined to respond to community feedback. Attachment 2 provides a marked-up version of the plan to show the changes made and Attachment 3 provides a list of key changes.

Key community feedback on the Draft Plan:

- Refine the Action Plan to eliminate overlap of objectives.
- Ensure the actions are clearly defined.
- Simplify and ensure consistency with the document language.
- Provide indicative timeframes.
- Be accountable by clarifying measures.
- The priorities of the Draft plan resonated with community.
- No new priorities were raised – giving confidence we haven't missed anything.

Final response to feedback:

- Actions were reassessed, with the action plan being refined from 21 to 15 actions. The refined action plan was shared with the Community Reference Group to ensure the original intent of the actions was not lost.
- The language and content of information provided in the Place Plan has been reviewed with clearer, more simplified messaging in the final draft.
- The actions required to achieve the plan are outlined in the final draft, indicating short, medium and long-term priorities as well as ongoing commitments.

Options considered

Option 1 – Adopt the final Yarra Junction Place Plan

The Yarra Junction Place Plan has been developed with extensive community input, the draft has been considered internally and externally, and the Plan as presented provides direction to achieve the future vision the community desires. There would be a high reputation risk in not proceeding with adoption of the final Plan.

A major piece of work coming out of this plan, Action 3.2 Township Design Framework, is due to commence late 2025. To delay endorsement will affect the team's ability to achieve this work in the planned timeframes.

Option 2 - Defer adoption of the Yarra Junction Place Plan

Officers are not aware of any conflicts or initiatives that would warrant deferring adoption of the Plan. The extensive community engagement and pausing for the Caretaker Period in 2024 has meant this project has extended over an 18-month period, to extend this further is unnecessary and may diminish the momentum built in community through the engagement process.

Option 3 - Abandon the Yarra Junction Place Plan

This option would see the loss of a comprehensive vision and action plan to direct future investment, projects and decisions for Yarra Junction. It would pose a high

reputation risk as the community has been so involved in the development of the plan.

There is a program of work lined up to follow adoption of the Place Plan, abandoning the Plan will result in a lack of direction and potential missed opportunities.

Recommended option and justification

It is recommended Option 1 be pursued. This will enable formal adoption of the Yarra Junction Place Plan and provide a clear vision and action plan for the Township. Having an endorsed Place Plan will help to inform Council decision making, guide future projects and direct investment in the centre. There are no identified risks that would justify delaying or abandoning adoption of the Place Plan.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

No capital funding is committed to any projects proposed within the Yarra Junction Place Plan.

Many of the actions are aligned with Council projects and business plans and will be achieved over time with relevant departments. Department managers have been involved in reviewing the Action Plan and agree to the actions that reflect on their business unit.

The action list has been aligned with the following future work that Council is currently committed to move forward with:

- Yarra Junction Township Design Framework
- Planning Scheme provisions
- Social and Affordable Housing Framework
- Storm Water Management Plan
- Yarra Junction Community Infrastructure Options Study
- Accessibility Standards Infrastructure Program
- Parking Framework
- Yarra Centre / Aquatics Master Plan
- Integrated Transport Strategy
- Emergency Resilience Community Programs
- Community and Small Business Grants Program
- Investment Attraction Plan
- Local Development Strategy

Any large-scale building works, public realm projects or streetscape projects, including design, architectural, surveyor and permit costs; site preparation costs; project management costs; construction costs; and other associated costs will firstly

need to be identified and detailed through the Yarra Junction Township Design Framework or precinct Master Plans before seeking project funding. Future funding streams may include but are not limited to capital works (Council funding) and available grants.

Whilst the Yarra Junction Township Design Framework is developed it would be beneficial for the community to see some physical outcomes from the Place Plan. This could be achieved through smaller, easily achievable Place Making projects such as public art, lighting, landscaping or community activations. Project ideas will be developed with a focus on youth involvement. Funding of these projects may be secured through future capital funding bids or potential grant opportunities.

The objectives of these types of projects would be to minimise the use of internal resources, engage community skills, involve young people to foster positive involvement in the community, and provide early outcomes to support the long-term vision for the township.

Action Items that may require short term financial investment include:

Action	Team	Estimated Cost	Year
Community art project	Design & Place Creative Communities Youth	\$20,000 Budget to be confirmed	2025-26
Community activation**	Design & Place Creative Communities Community Development Youth	\$5,000 Budget to be confirmed	2025-26
Traffic Review	Traffic & Infrastructure Services Design & Place	\$15,000 Cost already incorporated in 2024-25 operational budget	2024-25
Parking Review	Traffic & Infrastructure Services Design & Place	\$10,000 Cost already incorporated in 2024-25 operational budget	2024-25

****Note:** With the development of the Yarra Junction Community Group coming out of the Place Plan engagement process, there is potential that Council's role in community activation may be to support the group through the Community Grants Program. Empowering the community to drive positive community activation is a much stronger outcome for community long term, than for Council to run one activity.

APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES

This report contributes to the following strategic objective(s) in the Council Plan:

Connected and Healthy Communities

“Communities are safe, resilient, healthy, inclusive, and socially well connected. Quality services are accessible, gender equitable and inclusive catering for all ages, genders, and abilities. Our community is healthy and active, with easy access to recreational facilities and cultural activities that are available for everyone. Disadvantaged residents are well supported through partnerships between government, business, and community organisations.”

Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places

“Quality facilities and infrastructure meets current and future needs. Places are well planned and are hubs of activity that foster wellbeing, creativity and innovation.”

Protected and Enhanced Natural Environment

“A healthier environment for future generations.”

Vibrant Economy, Agriculture and Tourism

“Our tourism, agriculture, health, manufacturing, and other industries are leading and dynamic. Strong investment and attraction underpin sustainable economic growth and job creation.”

High Performance Organisation

“An innovative, responsive organisation that listens and delivers quality, value for money services to our community”.

Major Initiatives 2021 – 2025 include:

Major Initiative 5: Improve mental health outcomes for the community, strengthen social connections, and advocate for equitable and accessible mental health services across the municipality.

Major Initiative 6: Undertake and deliver integrated place planning for priority activity centres and town centres to achieve coordinated community outcomes across Yarra Ranges, in accordance with the Living Places Framework.

Other plans and policies the Place Plan responds to:

- Yarra Ranges Planning Scheme
- Living Place Framework 2023
- YRC Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025 (under Review)

- Environment Strategy 2015-2025
- YRC Aquatics Strategy 2022-2033
- YRC Recreation and Open Space Plan (under review)
- YRC Liveable Climate Plan 2020-2030
- YRC Green Wedge Management Plan (under review)
- YRC Economic Development Strategy 2022-2032
- YRC Creative Communities Strategy
- YRC Equity Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2023 (under review will be superseded by Draft Disability Action Plan)
- YRC Healthy and Active Ageing Plan 2019-2023 (superseded by draft Key Life Stages)
- YRC Early & Middle Years Strategic Action Plans 2019-2021 (superseded by draft Key Life Stages)
- YRC Integrated Transport Strategy 2020-2040

RELEVANT LAW

A Gender Impact Assessment has been completed as part of this project and will continue to be referred to as individual projects are progressed through the Action Plan.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The Yarra Junction Place Plan acknowledges the role Yarra Junction has in the Upper Yarra Corridor in terms of servicing the many townships of the Upper Yarra and providing an emergency management and recovery hub.

It is important to be mindful of the increasing risks that the communities of the Upper Yarra will face due to climate change, including higher numbers of extreme heat days, increased severe weather events, flooding and fire.

Ensuring sustainability measures are included in all planning and establishing a resilient and connected community that is prepared to respond to emergency events is a critical focus for the Place Plan. The concern for community is to ensure ongoing digital connectivity during an emergency event, and a road network that can support movement and accessibility to emergency infrastructure.

Economic Implications

Actions listed in the Yarra Junction Place Plan support economic outcomes, including develop township identity and character, sustainable development, balanced tourism development, industry development, development of retail and hospitality sectors, youth opportunities and roads, transport and parking solutions; foster positive investment for Yarra Junction by diversifying economic and retail activity supporting business growth and providing employment opportunities.

Social Implications

Actions listed in the Yarra Junction Place Plan encourage better community connections and overall improved community health outcomes. Including prioritising pedestrian movement, improved accessibility of community infrastructure and public realm spaces, positive activation of public spaces, youth focused activities and spaces, developing town identity and character, protecting the natural environment, promotion of services, and advocacy for strengthened local health and social services.

Environmental Implications

The community of Yarra Junction highly values the natural assets and environment in the area. It is an important item of the Plan, to ensure continued celebration and protection of natural assets such as the Yarra and Little Yarra Rivers and surrounding forests. The future Township Design Framework will need to respond to this by incorporating Environmentally Sustainable Design and Water Sensitive Urban Design solutions.

Increasing accessibility and prioritising pedestrian movement will have positive implications on the natural environment as active transport solutions become more feasible in the township.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Extensive community engagement has taken place in developing the Draft Yarra Junction Place Plan as detailed above under Background and detailed in the Engagement Reports (Attachments 4 and 5). This process has been intensive and involved many months of interaction with the community and was undertaken in accordance with the Council's adopted Community Engagement Framework.

It was intended that the engagement of the Yarra Junction Place Plan allowed for many opportunities for community to provide feedback, whilst developing a network of community stakeholders to help promote these opportunities.

Opportunities to engage were promoted via:

- Website – Shaping Yarra Junction page.

- A full graphic pdf version of the Draft plan accompanied by a plain text accessible word full version and plain text accessible word summary version of the Plan.
- Animated video explaining the Place Plan process and key priorities identified by community.
- Engagement activities including a quick survey, prioritising activity and allowance for detail submission.
- Survey – The community survey focused on the Action Plan, asking community to rate priorities and providing opportunity to comment on listed actions.
- Social media – Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, promoting opportunities to engage.
- Email – Council’s E-newsletter and Upper Yarra Community E-newsletter.
- Mail out – Letter promoting project sent to Yarra Junction residents.
- Drop-in sessions – advertised times where Council officers were available for discussion at Yarra Junction Community Link.
- Roving Pop Ups – staff dropping in to talk to community at key centre locations such as the Shopping Centre, Library, Yarra Centre, school drop off zones, recreation reserve and trails network.
- Local radio interviews – 99.1 Yarra Valley FM.
- Signage and posters around the centre and community facilities.
- Utilising stakeholder networks – many engaged community clubs and groups promoted the project through their networks.
- Youth specific engagement –Upper Yarra Secondary College student’s pier led workshops.

COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The actions of the Yarra Junction Place Plan have been developed through direct involvement from the Yarra Junction Community Reference Group, who invested their time to a series of workshops, discussions, and preparation. Council officers from different departments in Council supported the workshops and provided relevant expertise and insights to different topics being discussed. This collaborative effort led to a vision and action list that not only responds to community, but community is invested in. This has already been seen by the development of the Yarra Junction Township Group who have begun the process of community planning.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The Draft Yarra Junction Place Plan provides the necessary evidence-based context to guide future work, such as a Township Design Framework, Community Infrastructure Study and others listed in the Financial Analysis section of this report. As well as guiding future planning and development projects, the holistic approach will assist in informing a wide range of Council service delivery areas of the specific opportunities and challenges to consider in the Yarra Junction area and maximise the Council's response to community expectations.

The community has been heavily engaged in the development of the Plan and failure to deliver it will have a high reputational risk that may lead to disengagement from the community and loss of opportunities for cohesion and cooperation. It is important that the Plan is embraced, and actions followed through in a timely manner to maintain the strength in relationships and trust that has been developed through the Place Planning process.

As capital funding has not been committed to delivering infrastructure through the Place Plan, it is important to provide clear messaging on the steps to achieve the Plan's vision. Future work such as the Township Design Framework and precinct Master Plans will be required to secure funding for delivery of any major infrastructure projects. There is a risk that the community will expect to see immediate changes on adoption of the Plan. Clear communications outlining the next steps and delivering some smaller Place Making projects short term will help mitigate this risk.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No officers and/or delegates acting on behalf of the Council through the Instrument of Delegation and involved in the preparation and/or authorisation of this report have any general or material conflict of interest as defined within the *Local Government Act 2020*.

ATTACHMENTS TO THE REPORT

1. FINAL - Yarra Junction Place Plan - May 2025
2. Draft YJPP mark up of changes
3. YJPP Summary of proposed changes
4. YJPP Engagement and Directions Paper – December 2023
5. YJPP Consultation and Engagement Report – December 2024
6. IAP2 Community Engagement Summary
7. Yarra Junction Place Plan Project Timeline