

Yarra Junction Place Plan

May 2025

Acknowledgement of Country

Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nations as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of these lands and waterways. We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present and emerging, who have been, and always will be, integral to the story of our region. We proudly share custodianship to care for Country together.



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Executive Summary

Yarra Junction is known for its beautiful landscapes and strong community spirit. The town values its friendly atmosphere and natural surroundings. To plan for the future, we need a vision that ensures balanced growth, protects the environment, and preserves the town's character.

Over the past year, Council has worked with the community to create the Yarra Junction Place Plan. This plan sets out Council's long-term goals for the township, based on extensive community input and research.

The Yarra Junction Place Plan:

- Presents a vision and action plan.
- Identifies issues and opportunities.
- Lays the foundation for detailed design plans.
- Provides a basis for Government and private investment advocacy.

Community engagement started in late 2023 and continued throughout 2024. Reports on this engagement can be found on the Council website.



Action Plan

A Community Reference Group of 22 members helped shape the Action Plan and Community Vision. The final Action Plan includes 15 actions across five priority areas:

- 1. Culture and Character**
 - 1.1 Develop township identity and character
 - 1.2 Natural environment
 - 1.3 Sustainable development
- 2. Transport & Accessibility**
 - 2.1 Road maintenance and safety
 - 2.2 Transport reliability and safety
 - 2.3 Parking
- 3. Community Infrastructure**
 - 3.1 Township Design Framework
 - 3.2 Community facilities
 - 3.3 Positive activation of public spaces
- 4. Partnerships**
 - 4.1 Health and support services
 - 4.2 Emergency resilience
 - 4.3 Youth focused support and initiatives
- 5. Business and Employment Opportunities**
 - 5.1 Balanced tourism development
 - 5.2 Local industry development
 - 5.3 Development of the retail and hospitality sector

Details of the Action Plan can be found in Section 5 “A Plan for Action” in this report.

The Place Plan will help guide and prioritise future projects. Actions will be included in Council’s annual business and project plans. Specific tasks will be assigned to different teams with annual reporting of the Plan’s progress available through Council’s website.

A Vision for Yarra Junction

Community Vision

“Yarra Junction is a proud and welcoming township uniting people, founded by nature and culture.”

Vision

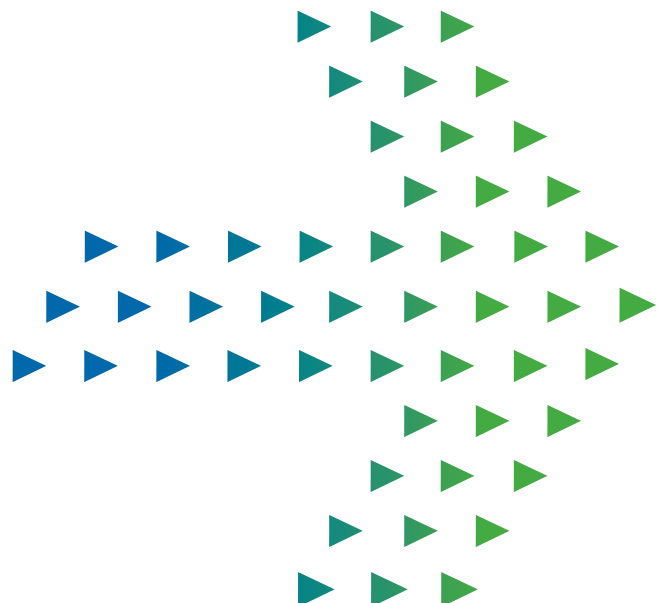
Yarra Junction aims to be a proud community that prioritises its people, celebrates its unique identity, and fosters well-being and resilience. Known for its thriving local businesses, flourishing local industries, and protected natural assets.

Yarra Junction will feature vibrant, accessible and inclusive public spaces that prioritise community connections and activity, with safe streets, paths and trails allowing accessible movement around the town centre.

Proudly maintaining its role of servicing the Upper Yarra, emergency resilience will be a key focus, with robust community infrastructure designed for consistent digital connectivity and a road network that supports accessible movement.

Our youth will be involved in the development of dedicated spaces and activities, and benefit from the increased opportunities coming from expanding local business investment.

Protecting our cherished natural environment, we will balance increased tourism with community needs, ensuring a future that is economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable.



1. What is a Place Plan?

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.

These plans are developed through extensive community engagement and thorough research, which is guided by five key principles, shown below. Place Plans establish Council's long-term goals and vision for the area, identifying key challenges and opportunities for improvement.

They also serve as a foundation for more detailed planning and design efforts, offering a clear evidence base to support planning decisions and advocate for funding and investment. Involving local community in the development of a Place Plan ensures that the areas growth aligns with the needs of the community and Council's strategic goals.



PRINCIPLE A: Culture, community & service needs

A

What is the current population telling us about this township?

Appropriate policies, support services and resources are based on a clear understanding of the community's aspirations, needs and culture.



PRINCIPLE B: Economic prosperity

B

How can we improve resilience and help a township flourish through changes occurring on a global scale?

Working together based on local connections to create shared values and a strong, resilient community, maximising benefits for the economy, health, and environment.



PRINCIPLE C: Transport, movement, public space & infrastructure

C

How can we best use common land in our townships?

Well-structured and welcoming public spaces integrate multiple functions, such as public transport and active transport, recreation and conservation areas, vibrant and attractive streets and meeting places.



PRINCIPLE D: Future land use & development

D

How will townships in Yarra Ranges respond as Melbourne develops?

Policy, planning and investment attraction help guide development and use of private land and buildings in order to support public and social activity.



PRINCIPLE E: Leadership & governance

E

How will we sustain and manage Council and community effort?

Planning for place and making those plans a reality involves many different parties and processes. Ongoing management is required to implement actions and evaluate their effectiveness once completed.

2. Why a Place Plan for Yarra Junction?

The Yarra Ranges Council vision statement for the entire municipality states:

“Whether you live here or visit, you will see how much we care for Country, how inclusive and connected our communities are, and how balanced growth makes this the best place in the world.”

Yarra Ranges Community Vision 2036



The Yarra Junction Place Plan takes the first step towards realising this vision in Yarra Junction. It will help guide decisions about Yarra Junction, lays the foundations for design, captures the values and qualities of the township, and will direct future investment.

Geographically, the town is set on flat and undulating land near the junction of the Yarra and Little Yarra Rivers, flowing from sources beyond Warburton and Powelltown respectively. With the water flowing to create a physical connection between the many townships of the Upper Yarra, Yarra Junction has traditionally and will continue to be the natural connection point for the people of the Upper Yarra area.

Yarra Junction continues to play a role in emergency management today, being home to the Yarra Junction Country Fire Authority (CFA). The centre is identified as an emergency relief hub, and the recreation reserve listed as a place of last resort.

The Place Plan seeks to capture a clear understanding of the Yarra Junction community and ensure that the values and culture of Yarra Junction are enriched as the township evolves and changes over time.

3. What is the Strategic context for the Place Plan?

The Yarra Junction Place Plan will work alongside existing planning rules to guide development decisions.

The town is recognised as a Large Neighbourhood Activity Centre, offering a mix of community, health, recreational, retail, and commercial services that also support nearby rural communities of the Upper Yarra.

The Design & Development Overlay 12 (DDO12) sets guidelines for building and town character.

The Yarra Ranges Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-25 (currently under review) highlights that Yarra Junction faces higher levels of disadvantage than other areas in Yarra Ranges. This has also been reflected in 2021 Census data that demonstrates more residents experiencing mental health issues, disabilities, or long-term health conditions compared to state averages.

The Place Plan aims to:

- Encourage growth in local industries
- Provide more training and job opportunities
- Strengthen the town's character
- Enhance local services

The Place Plan provides a clear direction and evidence base for advocacy and planning for funding future projects.



4. How was the community involved in the Yarra Junction Place Plan?

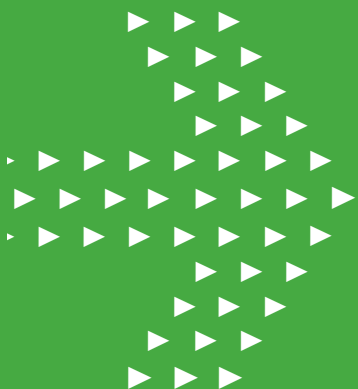
Yarra Ranges Council engaged community through interviews, surveys, workshops, pop-up stalls, social media, and events. Over 400 people participated directly, and thousands more were reached through various outreach efforts.

The project team collaborated with Upper Yarra Secondary College to involve youth, providing leadership opportunities to six students who led a workshop with their peers.

A community reference group of 22 members worked in April and May 2024 to refine broader community feedback, set priorities, develop an Action Plan and create a community vision for the Place Plan.

The draft Place Plan was open for community engagement in August 2024, with feedback being used to refine the final Plan.

Detailed community engagement reports explaining the ways community was engaged and what community told Council can be found on Council's website.



5. What did the community tell us?

The people of Yarra Junction value their strong sense of community and the protection of their natural environment. They want balanced growth with better services and amenities to support a vibrant town centre.



Key themes from community feedback include:

- **Roads and Transport:** Well-maintained roads to handle more traffic and improve safety, with more local transport options.
- **Community Infrastructure:** Accessible facilities, with focus on developing spaces with and for young people.
- **Town Centre:** Pedestrian-friendly with minimal barriers, encouraging visits from surrounding paths and trails.
- **Revitalisation:** Adding vibrancy to public spaces, celebrating town pride with attractive streetscapes, public art, and lighting.
- **Economy:** A strong economy with diverse business and industry development, providing local job opportunities.
- **Services and Healthcare:** Filling gaps in services, especially local emergency healthcare.
- **Youth Support:** Safe spaces and activities for youth, with diverse training and employment options to encourage them to stay.
- **Tourism:** An attractive town centre with signage to encourage tourists to stop and spend time.
- **Environment:** Caring for and celebrating the natural environment.
- **Housing:** Diverse and affordable housing options with a focus on sustainable design.
- **Infrastructure:** Effective drainage, roads, and communications for the whole community.

6. A Plan for Action

The Place Plan for Yarra Junction outlines five key priority areas, all of which are essential to achieve the vision. While no funding is currently allocated for infrastructure projects, ongoing planning and design will help develop costed projects to seek funding through State and Federal Government. The Plan's actions will be integrated into annual business planning and reporting processes.

Priority 1 – Culture and Character

Action 1.1 - Develop township identity and character

Establish strong connections to place by celebrating the history of the area through youth-focused community art projects.

Support revitalisation of the town centre by encouraging pedestrian movement and fostering community connections. Promote and support the township's ongoing role as a service centre for the Upper Yarra catchment.

Action 1.2 – Natural environment

Continue to celebrate and protect our natural assets, such as the Yarra and Little Yarra Rivers. Ensure balanced planning and development of the township, that is sensitive to the natural environment and embeds Ecologically Sustainable Development.

Action 1.3 – Sustainable development

Explore opportunities to increase housing diversity in the activity centre, including social & affordable housing. With considered decision making ensure preservation of the natural environment and neighbourhood character is balanced with community needs in planning & development.

Benefits

- Boost town centre activity.
- Enhances community connections and wellbeing.
- Preserves and values natural assets.
- Fosters a sense of belonging and community pride.
- Increases community perceptions of safety.
- Supports balanced development for a growing community.
- Offers diverse housing options for all ages.



Priority 2 – Transport and Accessibility

Action 2.1 – Road maintenance and safety

Complete a traffic safety review of the activity centre and respond to identified safety hot spots with traffic conditioning treatments and interventions. Explore a local network solution that can alleviate traffic pressure during events and emergencies.

Consider longer lasting maintenance treatments on local roads. Advocate to State Government for traffic calming treatments and interventions to increase safety for road users and pedestrians, particularly on Warburton Highway.

Action 2.2 – Transport reliability and safety

Partner with the State Government to develop innovative solutions that increase local access to, frequency and safety of public transport. Explore the opportunity for alternate local transport services such as a Flexi Bus network.

Action 2.3 – Parking

Develop a Yarra Junction Parking Strategy, identifying adequate accessible and short-term parking solutions in the heart of the activity centre and explores identified safety concerns. Develop a program of short, medium and long term projects for delivery.

Benefits

- Enhances safety for pedestrians and drivers.
- Reduces car dependence and congestion.
- Improves accessible movement.
- Supports positive travel experiences for locals and visitors.
- Encourages active transport and walkability.
- Removes barriers in the town centre.
- Ensures reliable movement during emergencies.

Priority 3 – Community Infrastructure

Action 3.1 – Township Design Framework

Develop a Township Design Framework based on the Place Plan priorities. This framework will integrate building design, public spaces, and movement, providing clear design goals to attract project funding. Prioritise pedestrian movement in the centre of the township with a focus on accessibility and traffic management. Identify and deliver missing connections to the pedestrian network. Involve young people in designing youth-focused spaces to foster positive relationships with these areas.

Action 3.2 – Community infrastructure

Complete a community infrastructure review and consider the consolidation of community facilities, focusing on accessibility, integration of services and resilience.

Action 3.3 – Positive activation of public spaces

Identify design solutions and a series of projects to be delivered, that focus on reimagining public spaces to encourage positive activation. Involve young people in the development of accessible community spaces supporting a diverse range of community activities that are inclusive to all abilities and ages.

Benefits

- Preserve and enhance Yarra Junction's character.
- Foster a vibrant and connected community.
- Improve accessibility and promote inclusion.
- Provide better services and integrate activities.
- Boost youth's sense of belonging.
- Create opportunities for intergenerational connections and more community events.

Priority 4 – Partnerships

Action 4.1 - Health & support services

Understand service needs and advocate for a consistent local healthcare network providing comprehensive care, including medical, social, emergency services, and support for homelessness, mental health, and substance abuse. Focus on filling service gaps, improving cross-service referrals and promotion of available services to community.

Action 4.2 - Emergency resilience

Encourage community emergency resilience by supporting preparedness programs and planning resilient infrastructure with a focus on digital connectivity and accessibility. Advocate to State Government for an improved road network and consistent means of communication in emergencies.

Action 4.3 - Youth focused support & initiatives

Work with agencies to co-design and activate youth-focused community spaces and initiatives in partnership with young people.

Benefits

- Improve community health.
- Build a prepared and resilient community.
- Enhance youth development and safety.
- Foster a connected community with a shared vision.
- Ensure support is accessible to those in need.

Priority 5 – Business and Employment Opportunities

Action 5.1 - Balanced tourism development

Support balanced tourism development including exploring ways to increase visitation from the users of the trails network. Seek funding to develop a business case for the introduction of a visitor information centre, potentially including social enterprise or maker spaces to boost local industry.

Action 5.2 - Local Industry development

Preserve industrial land for local light industry. Encourage small businesses, local industry and emerging industries with grants, maker spaces, workspaces, and training, especially for young people.

Action 5.3 - Development of the retail & hospitality sectors

Revitalise the activity centre with a focus on pedestrian movement and accessibility. Enhance township character by creating public spaces that feel inclusive for young people, and invite positive activation through outdoor dining, public art, and lighting.

Benefits

- Boosts the local economy and industry growth.
- Enhances day and night-time activity in the town centre.
- Creates more local jobs.
- Inspires future generations to stay and thrive in Yarra Junction.
- Promotes a diverse and resilient economy and community.
- Expands tourism opportunities and benefits.

6. Bringing the Place Plan to life

As a 20 year plan, the actions signal strategic intent for Yarra Junction and surrounds.

Funding is not currently allocated for major infrastructure improvements identified through the Place Plan. These key next steps will ensure the Place Plan progresses towards the delivery of real projects and community outcomes over time.

1

Adoption

Council adoption of the Yarra Junction Place Plan, aligning it with key strategies and actions in the annual Corporate Action Plan.

2

Township Design Framework

After adoption of the Place Plan, a Township Design Framework will be developed to translate the principles into actual designs and projects prepared for delivery.

3

Masterplans and Place Making Projects

Solutions that can be readily delivered will be designed and costed in order to seek funding for delivery in the short and medium term.

4

Major Infrastructure Projects

Planning for major infrastructure projects will begin with the Township Design Framework, Yarra Centre Master Plan, and other work. Long term advocacy and funding commitments are needed to deliver major infrastructure.

5

Annual Action Plan

The actions will be integrated into Council's annual business and project planning, with specific actions allocated to teams for delivery.

6

Reporting

Progress on actions and projects reported annually. Performance and monitoring publicly available through Council's on-line presence.

7

Review

The Yarra Junction Place Plan will be reviewed and evaluated over time to ensure it is current, relevant and adapted to any changes that have arisen.

8. How will we measure progress?

Place Planning is all about working together to create vibrant, thriving communities. It helps everyone agree on a shared vision and guides future development, making it easier to advocate for investment and funding.

The results of a Place Plan take time to see and can include both physical improvements and positive impacts for the community, the town and the natural environment. By gathering data as the plan progresses, we can track how well we're achieving our goals.

Measuring changes in built environment

- » Conduct a Place Assessment for Yarra Junction with follow up assessment every five years.

Measuring changes in economic performance

- » Compare local economic profile to baseline data.
- » Target:
 - Increase in visitor economy.
 - Increased economic activity within the activity centre.
 - Increase local employment opportunities for people under the age of 30.

Measuring changes in cultural environment

- » Compare measures of community activity with baseline.
- » Targets:
 - Increased community activity and events in public spaces.
 - Young people involved in the design and development of public spaces.
 - Yarra Junction Township Group established and sustained by community.

Measuring changes in transport networks

- » Compare use of public and active transport with baseline data.
- » Targets:
 - 20 percent increase in the number of people walking past the same locations after major capital works are complete.
 - Increase in public transport services or introduction of alternate local transport options for community.

Measuring changes in traffic

- » Compare traffic movement and safety to baseline traffic data.
- » Targets:
 - Decrease of speed and congestion in the activity centre.





Appendix A: Yarra Junction Snapshot

The following overview of Yarra Junction has been arranged around the five Principles of Place (see section 1. What is a Place Plan?)



Culture, community and service needs

PEOPLE AND COMMUNITY

Yarra Junction has experienced 25% growth over the past 10 years. (2021 census data indicates a population of 2,875 people compared to 2,297 people in 2011).



A large percentage of people in the 1-14 years old and 70-74 years old age groups, with a median age of 43 years old (slightly higher than the Greater Melbourne median age of 37).



High level of residents aged 60 plus, with concerns around housing diversity and services to allow people to age in place.

Growing concern about the limited opportunities for young people, including a lack of activities, lack of transport options and limited employment opportunities.



HOUSEHOLD TYPE AND INCOME



Yarra Junction currently has only a small supply of developable residential land, with an existing demand for smaller dwelling types.



A high level of one parent families and people living alone; and a low level of married or de facto couples.



The median weekly household income is \$1,302, lower than the Yarra Ranges median weekly household income of \$1,881.



SOCIAL ISSUES AND SERVICE PROVISION

There is growing concern about the social and emotional wellbeing of young people in Yarra Junction and the limited support services available to them locally.



Yarra Junction is recognised as the service centre for the broader Upper Yarra area.

SERVICE CENTRE

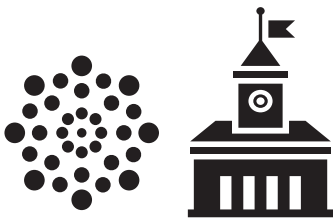


REQUIRING SUPPORT



Services have noted an increase in people with financial hardship and homelessness requiring support.

HERITAGE AND CHARACTER



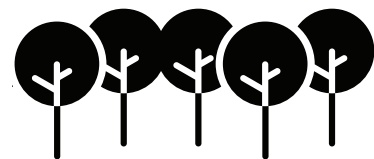
There is a strong desire to tell Heritage (Indigenous and European) stories to shape place.

Yarra Junction has traditionally provided emergency support to surrounding townships in the Upper Yarra area.



The areas Natural Assets, such as the rivers and surrounding hills and bushland, are highly valued by community.

HIGHLY VALUED



Appendix A: Yarra Junction Snapshot



Economic prosperity

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

TOP THREE PROFESSIONS

Top three professions held by residents of Yarra Junction:

21%

working as
Technicians and
Trades Workers

14%

working as
Community
and Personal
Service Workers

13%

working as
Clerical and
Administrative
Workers

VERY LOW LEVEL

Very low level of residents
attending or have attended
tertiary education – 10.5%

10.5%



25% of households have
an income of less than
\$650 per week

\$650 PER WEEK

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Trade workers are the
predominant workforce in this
area, many of these workers
are travelling out of the region
for their daily work.

The largest sector for
economic output in
Yarra Junction is the
Health Care and Social
Assistance sector.



The township does not currently
take advantage of the economic
benefits available from the
regions increased tourism.



The town's role as an
employment hub has
declined since the 1970's,
with the slowing of local
industry.

HOUSING

74%



74% of households in Yarra Junction are purchasing or fully owned their home, with 19.3% of owners paying more than 30% of their income on their mortgage.



LIMITED RENTAL STOCK

There is very limited rental stock available in the area.



There is limited diversity in the housing available, creating pressures on young people and the ageing population.

13.7% of households in Yarra Junction were renting privately, with 45.2% of renters paying more than 30% of their income on rent.



45%

PAYING 30% OR MORE OF INCOME ON RENT



Appendix A: Yarra Junction Snapshot



Transport, movement, public space & infrastructure

PUBLIC SPACE ACTIVATION



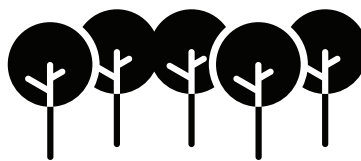
The town is lacking a central community space that connects community events with the activity centre.



Safety is a concern for some, particularly lighting, passive surveillance, and activity at night.



The activity centre lacks appeal and requires revitalisation.



NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The township value the visual connection to the natural environment.



ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC SPACES

Community would like accessible public spaces that support community events and activity.

PARKING



Community is concerned about the quality of parking options around the activity centre.

There are requests for more accessible and short-term parking options in centre.



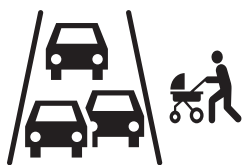
Parking on Warburton Highway limits line of site and creates safety hazards.





Warburton Highway - submitted by community member

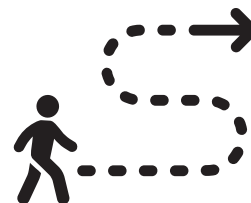
ACCESS AND MOVEMENT



WARBURTON HIGHWAY

The Warburton Highway acts as a barrier for movement around the town centre.

Community would like to see pedestrian movement prioritised in the town centre.



Limited public transport service provision.



Accessibility around the centre is very poor, with narrow and inconsistent paths.



VERY POOR

Increasing traffic is causing concern to community in terms of safety and emergency management.



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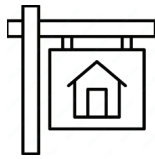
Appendix A: Yarra Junction Snapshot



Future land use and development

ACCESS AND MOVEMENT

There are dormant sites and undeveloped Special Use Zone sites in Yarra Junction that have great potential for positive impacts if developed.



OPPORTUNITIES

Some would like to see opportunities for creative and light industry development.



VIBRANT CENTRE

Community would like to see more vibrancy in centre, particularly with outdoor dining options to increase a night-time economy.

COUNCIL ASSETS



There are many ageing Council facilities fragmented across the township.



The Yarra Centre is highly valued by community, who would like to see further investment in this facility with particular focus on a warm water pool.

SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

Many community members do not know what services and activities run in Council owned facilities.

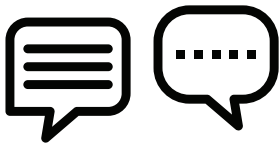


Appendix A: Yarra Junction Snapshot



Leadership and governance

COMMUNITY



There is opportunity for better communication or co-operation amongst community groups and clubs in Yarra Junction.



The natural environment is highly valued by community and needs continued protection.



RESILIENCE PROGRAMS

Council is committed to supporting Community Resilience Programs to ensure preparedness for emergencies.

NEW INVESTMENT AND ADVOCACY



Council will continue to explore opportunities to encourage new investment in the area.

Tourism visitor numbers are expected to increase.



Community would like to see balanced growth.

BALANCED GROWTH



Council will continue with State Government advocacy for roads and infrastructure to accommodate increased population.



Glossary

Accessibility - The ease of reaching destinations. Highly accessible locations, enable a person, regardless of age, ability or income, to reach many activities or destinations quickly. People in places with low accessibility can reach fewer places in the same amount of time.

Activity centre - Activity centres are a focus for services, shopping, employment and social interaction. They are where people meet, relax, work and often live. Usually well-served by public transport, they range in size and mix of uses from local strip shopping centres to traditional town centres and major regional centres.

Affordable housing - Housing that is appropriate for the needs of a range of low to moderate income households, and priced so these households are able to meet their other essential basic living costs.

Community Infrastructure – Infrastructure provided in the public domain for community use, which is generally maintained by Council. This could range from facilities or parks through to park benches and bins.

Governance – The system by which something is controlled or operates, and the way in which authorities or people are responsible for something.

Land use - The purpose for which the land has been or is being or may be developed. The activity on the land.

Neighbourhood activity centres - Local centres that provide access to local goods, services and employment opportunities and serve the needs of the surrounding community.

Precinct - The designated area of a town highlighted due to similar land uses or defined by major edges including roads, rivers, or land uses.

Priorities – The things that are regarded as the most important.

Traffic - Devices, such as speed humps, installed in streets to slow or reduce vehicle traffic and improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists. These measures can slow cars speed to between 15 and 40km per hour.

Vision – Is a statement defining the future priorities for a township or place, it should be aspirational yet realistic. The vision sets a direction, outlining goals and priorities to be worked towards over time.

Walkability - Walking environments that best balance safety, connection, accessibility and enjoyment.



