



Community Engagement Summary Report

Heathcote Urban Design Framework

OCTOBER 2024



Acknowledgement of Country

The City of Greater Bendigo acknowledges that the Heathcote is on Taungurung Country.

The City would like to acknowledge and extend our appreciation for the Taungurung People, the Traditional Owners of the land.

We pay respects to leaders and Elders past, present and future for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and the hopes of all Taungurung Peoples.

We express our gratitude in the sharing of this land, our sorrow for the personal, spiritual and cultural costs of that sharing and our hope that we may walk forward together in harmony and in the spirit of healing.

About the project

The Heathcote Township Plan was adopted by Council on September 17, 2019 and is being implemented through Planning Scheme Amendment C274gben. The Township Plan recommends improvements to High Street and aims to address public safety issues, enhance amenity and upgrade landscaping and street furniture.

The City's Commercial Land and Activity Centre Strategy (CLACS), adopted by Council on November 4, 2015, provides a framework for planning and developing activity centres over the next 20 years. A key recommendation from CLACS is to develop the Heathcote Urban Design Framework (UDF) to attract investment and guide future commercial development.

The preparation of the Heathcote UDF has now begun and will provide detailed guidance for the development and enhancement of the Heathcote town centre.

Community Consultation

To ensure that the UDF reflects the community's vision and needs, a consultation period was held from August 19, 2024 and September 16, 2024. This helped us understand community preferences, identify challenges, and gather suggestions for improving the town centre.

Heathcote residents were invited to participate through a survey and an interactive social mapping tool on the City's *'Let's Talk'* webpage. The survey allowed respondents to share their thoughts in comments, while the mapping tool allowed them to mark specific areas of interest within the project area and provide suggestions on 'Nice to haves' and 'What's missing'.

Additionally, three drop-in sessions were held on:

- Friday August 23, 2024 at the City's Heathcote Customer Service Centre
- Thursday August 29, 2024 at the City's Heathcote Customer Service Centre
- Saturday September 7, 2024 at the Heathcote Bush Market

The consultation was widely promoted using various communication channels, including:

- A media release in the Mclvor Times
- A targeted Facebook post
- Emails to individuals and local resident groups on our project mailing list
- Posters around the Heathcote town centre with details on how to participate

By the end of the community consultation, we had:

- 291 people viewed the Let's Talk page
- 16 responses via the social map
- 38 survey responses
- 50 people attending 3 drop-in sessions to share feedback

What we heard

A range of views were shared, giving us valuable insights into the community's vision for Heathcote. We heard what they appreciate, what could be improved, current town centre conditions, and suggested improvements.

The following is a summary of feedback:

Road Safety and Accessibility

- Concerns about the lack of school crossing supervisors, especially after one supervisor left. This has made crossings unsafe
- Footpaths are needed on all streets, especially Hospital Street, Camp Street, and Playne Street. Some existing footpaths are difficult to use
- The removal of ramps at disabled car parks has made it harder for wheelchair users to access shops. There were calls to reinstate the disabled parking spaces and improve access
- Speeding near the hospital is a problem, and speed limit signs are needed
- Speed humps near IGA are uncomfortable for older drivers
- The lack of ramps for wheelchairs at dedicated disabled parking area is a concern
- Pedestrian crossings are requested on High Street, along with traffic lights at the High Street and Chauncy Street intersection
- Speed cameras and additional pedestrian crossings were also suggested to improve safety

Parking

- Some residents mentioned that there is enough parking on High Street, while others feel there's a shortage of parking in the town centre
- Time limits on parking are not being enforced, particularly near the post office and pharmacy.
- More disabled parking spaces are needed

Public Toilets

- There is a need for more public toilets in the town centre, especially for truck drivers. The removal of toilets behind the Civic Centre has been inconvenient
- The toilets near the recreation reserve are too far from the playground, which makes supervising children difficult

Retail

- Some residents feel IGA lacks competition, and there's a call for another supermarket
- There is opposition to more cafes or bottle shops. Instead, requests were made for a Kmart, a fruit shop, or a clothing store
- A post box is needed, with suggestions for a second one to ease the demand

Recreational Facilities and the Natural Environment

- The tennis court fence needs to be replaced after flood damage
- A larger playground with more equipment is requested, along with an upgrade to the existing playground
- Many community members want an additional skate park for young people on High Street

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- Calls to make the local swimming pool more accessible for community use, including for kids, teenagers, and older residents
 - The McIvor Creek walking track needs repairs and maintenance, particularly following flood damage
 - Suggestions were made to better connect the creek to the town centre, with signage about its history and improved pathways
 - An additional golf course was also suggested to expand recreational opportunities
 - Ongoing concerns about flooding were raised, with requests for this to be addressed

Streetscape

- More tree planting and maintenance are needed, especially along High Street
- There were suggestions to replace European trees with Indigenous species
- Suggestions for gardening competitions to encourage public upkeep
- The Council's process for tree removal is seen as difficult, especially for trees on personal driveways
- Residents want to see plaques recognising heritage buildings and more effort put into preserving historic structures

Tourism and Economic Opportunities

- Improved signage for key tourist attractions like Viewing Rocks and Pink Cliffs was suggested
- Ideas were proposed for creating a mountain bike track and a camping area around McIvor Range and the showgrounds, similar to Harcourt
- Suggestions to promote wineries, accommodation, and camping were made to build on Heathcote's tourism potential
- Decorating vacant shops with murals or artwork was recommended to enhance the town's visual appeal
- Public art and preserving heritage sites were highlighted as ways to maintain Heathcote's character amidst new developments
- A unique tagline for Heathcote was suggested to boost the town's identity

Community Facilities

- Request for a new ambulance, CFA, and SES centre
- Public phone charging stations were requested to improve convenience for both residents and visitors

The feedback we received will guide the ongoing development of the Heathcote UDF, ensuring a balance between infrastructure improvements, enhanced public amenities, tourism promotion, and preserving the town's environmental and historical character.

Some suggestions received are outside of the City's control and cannot be delivered by an UDF. Feedback such as extended retail hours, specific or more retail stores depend on private businesses, and request for high schools, ambulance, Country Fire Authority and State Emergency Services are managed through various state departments.

Where to from here

The next steps in developing of the Heathcote UDF are as follows with indicative timeline:

- **Draft UDF (October 2024 – March 2025)**

We will use the feedback to develop a draft UDF, which will include design guidelines, maps, and strategic recommendations aligned with the community aspirations

- **Draft UDF for public review (April – May 2025)**

The draft UDF will be released for public review, and residents, stakeholders, and community groups will have the opportunity to provide feedback

- **Reviewing feedback and revising the UDF (June – July 2025)**

All feedback will be reviewed, and changes will be made to the UDF as needed

- **Council Adoption of the final UDF (August – September 2025)**

The final UDF will be presented to the Council for adoption

- **Planning Scheme Amendment (commencing in late 2025)**

Subject to Council adoption, the UDF's outcome will be incorporated into the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme