



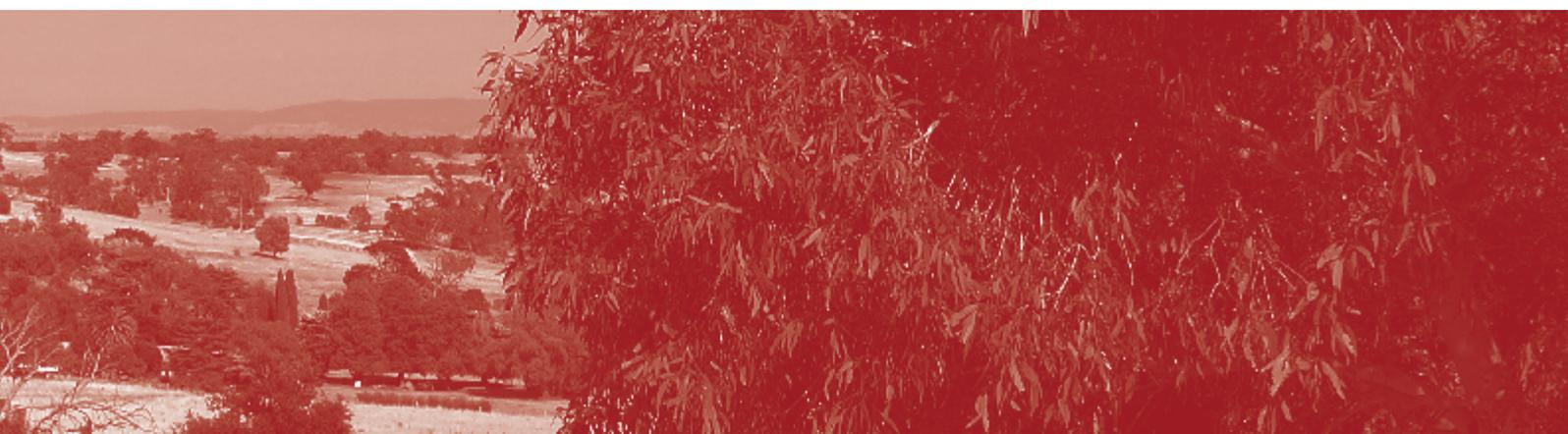
Draft Rural Communities Strategy - Summary Paper

Why has the Summary Paper been prepared?

This summary has been prepared to provide an overview of the Draft Rural Communities Strategy and to assist with gaining feedback from the City's rural communities and those interested in the City's rural areas. This feedback will assist with refining and making changes to the final Rural Communities Strategy.

Development of the Rural Communities Strategy

The Draft Rural Communities Strategy has been developed based on the Strategic Directions Paper and through consultation and input from the City's rural communities, groups such as Council's Farming Advisory Committee, and those interested in the City's rural areas.



What the community said

In 2015, Council produced the Rural Communities Discussion Paper identifying what changes are occurring and what the priority issues and opportunities are in Greater Bendigo's rural communities. Following this, Council began an extensive engagement program with community members from our rural towns and areas, and interested groups, to assist with the development of the Rural Communities Strategy (the Strategy). While there was no single over-riding issue that was raised during the community engagement process, various issues around some core themes were consistently heard:

Three core themes

- Many people and communities in the City of Greater Bendigo's rural areas feel marginalised, neglected, or overlooked.
- Communications and mobility for those who live in and do business in our rural areas and communities are vital.
- The City's rural communities are diverse in their characteristics

Other strong themes and issues raised

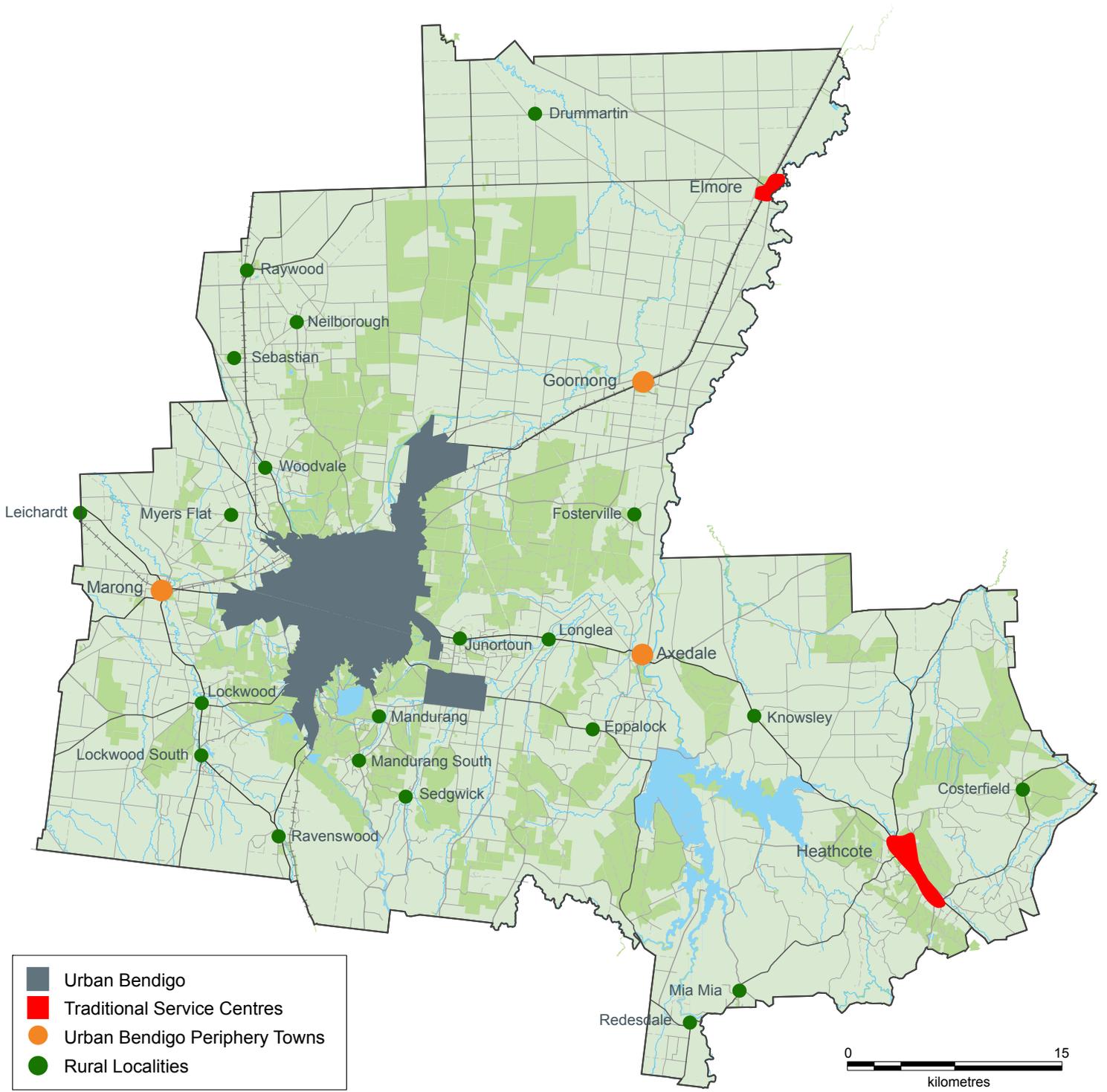
- a widespread understanding and appreciation in rural communities of the changes in the agricultural economy,
- a range of new and emerging opportunities in agriculture, but tackling water security, climate change, new skills, knowledge and succession planning are daunting,
- a fundamental set of changes occurring in the roles and social structure of small towns and in many cases these changes may be more rapid than experienced in urban Bendigo;
- a range of impacts from the rate of change and that the proportion of the population affected by change in a small town or community can be significant.
- a strong sense of resilience in rural areas and communities; most have faced drought, fire or flood, and in some cases all three.

Principles of the Strategy

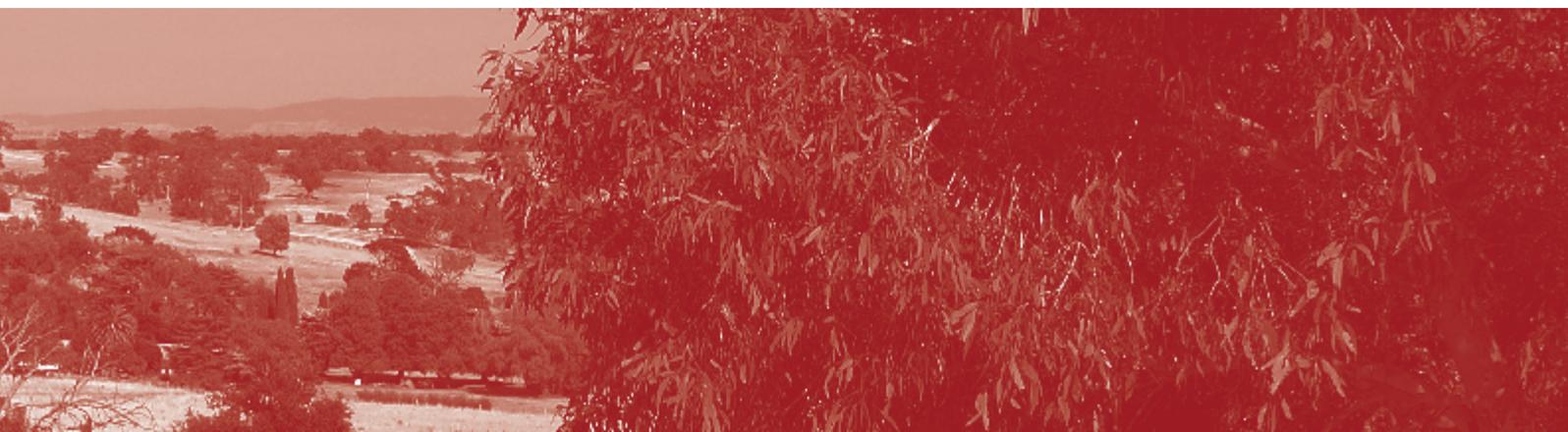
There are 6 overarching principles that guide the Strategy, which are based on a set of issues and drivers, and form the strategic directions for this document:

1. Building on Our Understanding of Our Rural Communities
2. Continuing to Work Much Better with our Rural Communities
3. Realising the Social and Economic Potential of Our Rural Communities
4. Sustaining the Unique Values and Attributes of Our Rural Communities
5. Advocating With and on Behalf of Our Rural Communities
6. Realising and Capitalising on Our City's Rural and Regional Leadership Potential





Bendigo rural areas - settlements



Key Initiatives and Actions of the Strategy

The Draft Rural Communities Strategy proposes a total of 46 initiatives and actions, selected examples representative of each principle include:

1. That Council undertake an annual consultation with its rural communities and produce a report each year on the 'State of Rural Communities' to ensure that it has an up to date understanding of its rural communities.
2. That Council consider forming a rural communities team within Council comprising of one Councillor from each ward and relevant Managers and Coordinators, which meets once every three months to ensure a coordinated and integrated approach to respond to, plan for and monitor the needs of rural communities.
3. That Council continue to work with relevant rural communities in the City of Greater Bendigo and adjoining municipalities to examine the potential for a series of networked tourist and recreation trails based on themes such as agricultural history and products, nature and environment, railways, rural innovation and invention, family history and ancestry, sporting and recreation history, built and indigenous heritage, and mining heritage.
4. That Council continue to work with Coliban Water on an Integrated Water Management Plan for the Bendigo region to better secure long term water supply for the whole City including its rural communities.
5. That Council and representatives from our twelve rural community planning communities work with Public Transport Victoria to increase public transport services with a particular focus on the Heathcote/Axedale/Junortoun/Bendigo bus service, the Marong, Goornong, and Raywood to Bendigo bus services, more services on the Echuca to Bendigo railway line, and the reopening of railway stations at Goornong and Raywood.
6. That Council review its Economic Development Strategy in partnership with representatives of our rural and regional communities and the Loddon-Mallee South region to prepare a specific section that builds on the region's agricultural and other strengths, including the growth and development of the intensive animal industries, agribusiness, agriculture based tourism, transport infrastructure and education and training to support agriculture.

Engagement Program

The Draft Rural Communities Strategy will be on exhibition until 29 July 2016. You can find the Draft Rural Communities Strategy, the summary paper, and all previous documentation on the City's website: www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/ruralcommunitiesstrategy or call 5434 6479 if you would like a hard copy.

How can you provide feedback?

We welcome your comments and feedback, and encourage you to complete or attend on or more of the following engagement opportunities:

1. Complete the following survey, which closes on 29 July 2016: www.surveymonkey.com/r/drafruralcommunitiesstrategy.

2. Attend one of the following meetings

- Elmore Community Meeting: Tuesday 12 July, 7pm-8pm, Supper Room in Memorial Hall, Hervey Street entrance. Supper will be provided.
- Axedale Community Meeting: Wednesday 13 July, 6pm-7pm, CFA Meeting Room in Axedale CFA, High Street.
- Bendigo Stakeholders Meeting: Friday 22 July, 2pm-3:30pm, City of Greater Bendigo Reception Room, 195-229 Lyttleton Terrace, Bendigo. Afternoon tea provided.

3. If your community group or organisation would like to arrange a meeting to discuss the Draft Rural Communities Strategy further, or additional comments or feedback, please email j.pendlebury@bendigo.vic.gov.au or call 5434 6479. Submissions close on Friday 29 July 2016.

Contact:

For more information you can have a look on the website www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/ruralcommunitiesstrategy or you can contact Jenny Pendlebury by email j.pendlebury@bendigo.vic.gov.au or call: 5434 6479