



Shaping Our Future – Stage One Findings Report

June 2021

COMMUNITY VISION

The first stage of community engagement for the ‘Shaping Our Future’ Project has been successful, with over 500 community members from across Murrindindi Shire providing valuable input.

Council would like to thank each person who shared their ideas with us. Whether you stopped by for a chat at one of our pop-up kiosks or completed our online or paper survey, we appreciate the time you dedicated to this important project. We received 148 responses to the long survey, 195 responses to the short survey which was used at our pop-up kiosks, and 28 responses to the Easy English survey. More information about the demographics of participants is available in the *Shaping Our Future: Stage 1 Community Engagement Report*, available on [the Loop](#).

We heard quick ideas, detailed feedback and thoughtful reflections on ways to shape the future of Murrindindi Shire. This Findings Report provides a summary of the themes and issues shared by community members for inclusion in a renewed Community Vision.

Under the *Local Government Act 2020*, Council is required to work with the community to develop a ‘Community Vision’ for at least the next ten years. The Community Vision is to be owned and worked towards by Council, the community and other stakeholders. The findings from the first stage of community engagement for Shaping Our Future, outlined in this report, have been used to draft a renewed Community Vision to guide our Shire for the next ten years.

Community Vision foundation - what you value and love



WHAT PEOPLE LOVE

We wanted to understand what is important to the community and asked participants 'what do you value and love about Murrindindi Shire?' This question was included in two of our three surveys. Presented below is a thematic analysis of the feedback received, in order of the most frequently raised themes, with direct quotes used to illustrate sentiment.

Figure 1: A word cloud with participants' responses regarding what they value about our Shire.

SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Participants often mentioned that there is a wonderful sense of community connection between Murrindindi Shire residents. There is a genuine love and appreciation of our community spirit. Many participants also mentioned the friendly 'vibe' of our towns, often referring to it as the 'country feel' of the place.

Murrindindi Shire was described as 'a close knit community'.

OUR RURAL LOCATION

A significant number of participants highlighted their value for our rural location, appreciating our low population density and our open spaces. The ability to access Melbourne easily while living rural was viewed positively. There is a desire to maintain our country feel as we grow and change.

'I've been a resident for 30 years and love Murrindindi Shire as it is - it is a beautiful place!'

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT. Participants remarked on the benefits of living amongst our natural environment, citing access to open spaces, great scenery, with an appreciation of being surrounded by parks, rivers and waterways.

'Clean air, quiet, paradise!' and 'The rivers, mountains, lake, outdoor spaces' and 'Bushwalking and opportunities for physical activities in our natural environment'

GREAT PEOPLE

There were numerous comments expressing an appreciation of our supportive communities which are neighbourly and caring, where 'everyone is very friendly & happy to help anyone in need'. We heard that people value community safety and social connections. Feedback indicated that public spaces are viewed as safe and inviting.

'The open friendliness from people is amazing, the local shops and people working at them is great. I love the community spirit as well'; and 'It's a fantastic place to raise kids with magnificent playgrounds and surrounds'

AMENITIES AND FACILITIES

Participants appreciate having access to amenities like shops, schools, sporting facilities, preschools and council services. Many valued the convenience of local services, including hospital, shops, parks and playgrounds. Some comments highlighted Murrindindi Shire's great walking and cycling paths and how they promote healthy lifestyles.

'There are strong community assets for young families'

ACTIVE GROUPS AND VOLUNTEERING

The role community groups play in the wider community was noted and appreciated.

'I love living here, the Music in the Park at Marysville this summer was such a great community experience. Taggerty Twilight Market is a great community event too. Both organised by the local community and well supported'

Community Vision - what you told us

Council's current Community Vision for 2030, established as part of a wider community consultation in 2013, states

'We are sustainable, vibrant and resilient. We focus on growing our business opportunities. Our communities are safe and connected, enjoying a healthy and productive lifestyle within our wonderful natural environment.'

The Shaping Our Future long survey started by asking participants to review this existing Community Vision and check whether it still reflects a future they want for Murrindindi Shire.

79% of respondents thought our current vision statement broadly reflects how they'd like Murrindindi Shire to be (*Results from 70-100 range*), **5%** felt it did not reflect (*Results from 0-30 range*). **16%** were positioned in the middle (*Results from 40-60 range*).

The graph below provides more details of the results from this question. It is important to note that while the majority of people were broadly positive about the Community Vision, almost **70% thought there was room to make it even better**.

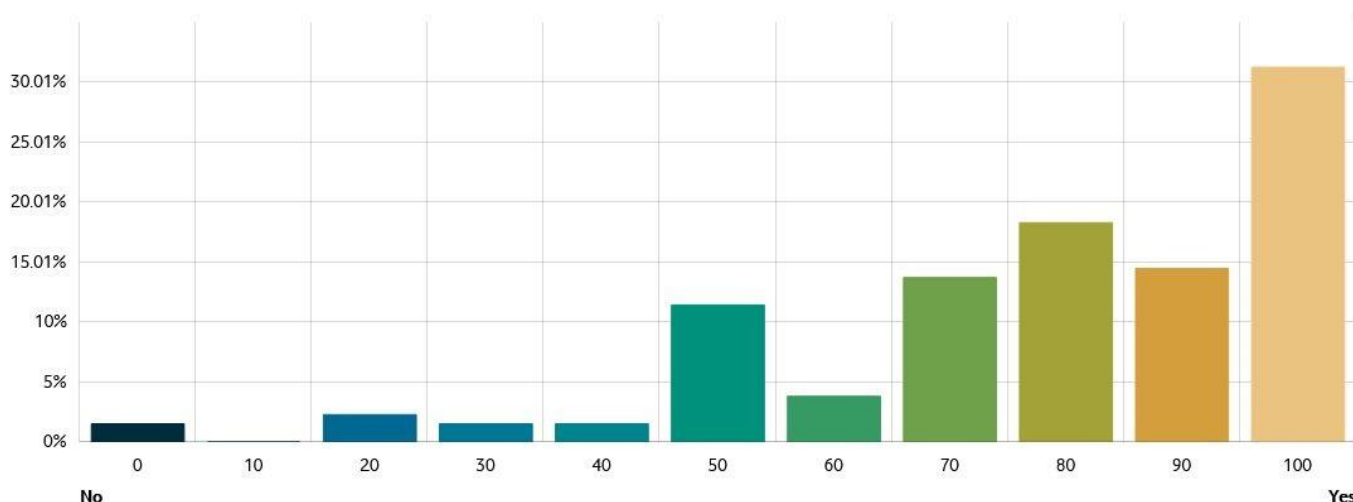


Table 1: Graph showing the spread of responses to the question "Does the current vision statement reflect how you want Murrindindi Shire to be?" noting that 89% of participants answered this question.

Subsequent questions (and other questions included in the short survey) provided an opportunity for people to expand their thinking about the Community Vision. Many participants offered detailed and thoughtful responses, providing an unprecedented depth of data for Council to consider. There were more than 200 responses specifically relating to the Community Vision.

From those responses, three key words from the current Vision continue to resonate and remained strong in people's preferences for a renewed Vision: **sustainable**, **resilient** and **vibrant**.

Other key themes that emerged included diversity and inclusion, honouring the Taungurung history and ongoing connection to the Shire, and protecting our rural setting as well as the environment. There was a strong sense of needing to plan for and manage a growing population so that Murrindindi Shire grows in a way that protects what we value.

Themes participants want included in the refreshed Community Vision:

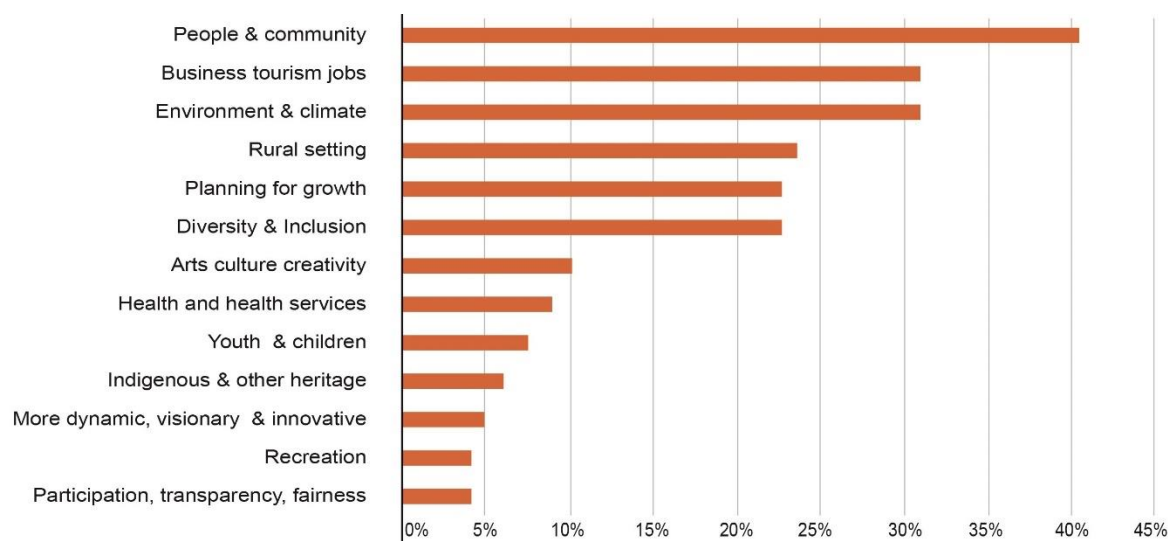


Table 2: Percentages of responses that want the particular theme included in a revised and refreshed Community Vision, based on questions 2 and 3 in the longer survey, the Pop-Up survey and Easy English interpretation.

A selection of responses from participants for the Community Vision have been provided below, to demonstrate the depth of thinking displayed by many participants as well as the range of topics to be included. This shows the value that community members place on getting the Community Vision right, knowing it will guide the work of Council well into the future.

- A place of harmony and acceptance where we are able to work and relax. There are strong support services for health and wellbeing.
- A renewable energy powerhouse, with lush regenerative agricultural land and beautiful bush that people travel from all over Victoria to experience. Our community is healthy with a vibrant local culture, we listen to and work with the Taungurung to lift each other.
- A rural community where all recreational pursuits are encouraged and supported, but in a manner mindful of neighbour and community peace and harmony.
- A shire where all business ventures, the environment and community are held in balance.
- Climate resilient, affirmative, supportive of minorities, working hand-in-hand with our local Aboriginal communities, food resilience especially organics to shift away from chemical and factory farming for community health, jobs for youth.
- Sustainable, vibrant, resilient, encourage economic growth through nature based tourism, education and wellbeing. Our aim is to be carbon neutral and have zero emissions by 2035.
- A place to call home, where people matter and life is celebrated
- Murrindindi shire should take every opportunity to grow community strength and resilience in ways that regenerate and protect our natural environment.
- We are sustainable, vibrant and resilient. We focus on growing our business and education opportunities to enable our youth to gain employment and remain in our community. We protect our natural environment to enjoy now and for future generations.
- As a community we strive to keep everyone safe and connected whilst enjoying a healthy and productive lifestyle within our wonderful natural environment. We continue to be sustainable, vibrant and resilient community whilst focusing on growing business and leisure opportunities.
- We are a premier tourism destination, committed to maintaining our abundant natural resources. Our communities are involved and connected with each other to maintain healthy lifestyles for all ages.

Other participants provided words or general areas that should be added to the current Community Vision. The selection that follows provides a cross-section from across all themes.

- There needs to be a mention of creativity and the arts.
- Sustainable vibrant communities but not a rat race.
- Listen to the community and think big.
- It's not bad; pretty close. But the early focus on business opportunities doesn't resonate with me. I'd prefer to delete the business reference; 'productive lifestyle' should be enough to address that area.
- Co-operative mix of rural and residential lifestyles.
- For it to keep its regional charm.
- Preservation of rural production, agriculture industry.
- Outwardly promote inclusivity to LGBTQI groups, refugees and CALD.
- Also a recognition of our need to give some community members a hand.
- The community should be inclusive and tolerant of different points of view.
- Need to grow our "community opportunities" along with business opportunities!
- Something about prioritising solid projects and action to tackle climate change.
- Protecting and embracing our local flora and fauna.
- I think that the statement is a bit passive in terms of our responsibilities to the natural world and mitigating the effects of climate change - sustainability suggests maintaining the current status quo, and living within our natural environment doesn't reflect any need to actively protect or regenerate. I think the responsibility to protect and restore our part of the planet should be given equal weight as a focus as growing business opportunities.
- An exciting centre of sustainable agriculture, ecotourism, research and development
- An opportunity for sustainable businesses and innovation to thrive.
- A progressive shire that is willing to diversify, supporting business.
- Something about transparency and fairness, equality when accessing council.

Community Vision - what happens next?

Council has used the ideas and suggestions reported here to draft a refreshed Community Vision. This draft is being shared with all participants who asked to be kept up to date with the project, as well as the broader community, seeking feedback. The Community Vision will then be finalised by the end of July 2021, and will be used to shape and guide other strategic planning documents of Murrindindi Shire Council including the 2021-2025 Council Plan and the longer term Financial Plan.

Council would like to express its appreciation to all community members who participated in the first stage of the [Shaping Our Future](#) project.