

Mount Alexander Shire Council

Economic Development Strategy

A thriving economy that serves the wellbeing of people, place and the environment

Issued 2024

Working together for a healthy, connected shire

Acknowledgement of Country

Mount Alexander Shire Council acknowledges that the traditional custodians of this land, the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung peoples, proudly survive. We acknowledge their continued practice of custom and their close cultural, spiritual, physical, social, historical and economic relationship with the land and waters that make up their Country, which includes Mount Alexander Shire.

Council recognises the Victorian Government's Recognition and Settlement with both the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and the Taungurung Land and Waters Council.



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Inside cover acknowledgement artwork by Daikota Nelson.

Artwork on pages 4–5 by Daikota Nelson, Playground Mural, 2024, Norwood Hill Recreation Reserve, photo by Craig Gaston.

Welcome



Uncle Rick Nelson – Djaara Traditional Owner

As the Senior Elder of this beautiful Djaara Country (Djandak), I welcome you to Mount Alexander Shire (Liyanganyuk Banyul) and introduce you to this Economic Development Strategy.

Before European colonisation, the natural places within Djaara Djandak were well known, had names and songs, and were celebrated as part of our culture. We had an economy, a political system, and the resources and means to care for our community. This strategy recognises that the idea of a 'wellbeing economy' is not new and that First Nations peoples have been looking after Djandak and the wellbeing of our communities for millennia.

It emphasises the importance of balancing economic prosperity with the strength, health and wellbeing of our community, and recognises the importance of restoring health to Djandak and caring for our precious environment.

In developing this strategy, Council has drawn inspiration from our First Nations values and our profound connection to Djandak and community. It is heartening to see an approach that promotes self-determination, aims to restore nature, and seeks to heal Djandak.

As we move forward together, let us remember that the path to true prosperity honours the wisdom of the past while embracing the challenges of the future. May this strategy serve as a bridge between ancient knowledge and modern practice, creating a thriving community that respects all people and the land we share.

I also want to acknowledge all Djaara people and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the custodians and caretakers of this land. We thank them for the care they have taken of Djandak; the rivers, mountains, trees and animals. We honour the Elders of the past and present and, most importantly, the young, proud Aboriginal people who are our leaders for tomorrow. I hope this strategy plays a part in creating a brighter future for us all.

Mayor's message



Councillor Matthew Driscoll – Mayor
Mount Alexander Shire Council

I am pleased to introduce our new Economic Development Strategy, which embodies our commitment to fostering a thriving economy.

Rooted in principles of sustainability, inclusivity, resilience, and prosperity, this strategy emphasises the importance of balancing economic growth with the overall wellbeing of our community.

It supports initiatives that promote innovation, inclusivity and strong community ties, while advancing sustainability practices such as circular economy approaches, regenerative agriculture and the development of local food systems.

This strategy reflects our collective vision for a healthy, connected shire that is vibrant, sustainable, and has a resilient and growing local economy.

I extend my gratitude to all who have contributed their expertise and passion to shaping this forward-thinking strategy.

Together, let us continue working towards a future where economic prosperity nurtures the wellbeing of our community and allows us to look after Country.

Introduction

Mount Alexander Shire is a beautiful and vibrant place to live, with a diverse community and a great variety of businesses and organisations.

Our community is ready to meet both challenges and opportunities as we navigate rapid technological advancements, confront climate challenges, transition to a circular economy, seek solutions for housing shortages and work to strengthen our healthcare system. Council recognises that real prosperity is more than just economic growth. It includes the health, fulfillment and overall wellbeing of our whole community. As we deal with the modern world's challenges, it is clear that traditional economic models, which focus only on productivity and financial measures, don't fully capture what makes life meaningful and fulfilling.

This is why we are adopting the idea of a **wellbeing economy**. Whilst some 'wellbeing economy' terminology and ideas may seem novel, many of the core principles are well established in First Nations traditions and culture. By focusing on quality of life, environmental sustainability and social justice, we aim to make our community more resilient: one in which nature and innovation flourish. Our commitment to this approach underscores our belief that every resident deserves the opportunity to flourish, and that success should be seen in the richness of our lives.

This forward-thinking and aspirational strategy builds on the 2021-2025 Council Plan pillar 'A resilient and growing local economy'. The pillar is about creating a strong and adaptable local economy. Council's objectives work to promote a diverse range of industries and reduce reliance on any single sector. Council supports continuous learning to ensure the local workforce can adapt to new technologies, whilst looking for ways to make business processes simpler to make operations more efficient and sustainable. Additionally, it encourages investment in the cultural and creative sectors to enrich the community and attract visitors.

Vision, goals and objectives

Community Vision

In 2031, our community is connected to each other, and comes together to build and celebrate an inclusive, creative shire.

- We are a healthy community that values the natural beauty of the Djaara Country we live on. We also know that preserving our natural environment means living sustainably and caring for country.
- We are protecting our shire from the threat of climate change by working together at the local level.
- We are a welcoming community where everybody has access to services and supports, and opportunities for housing, education, employment, and creative and social pursuits.
- We're known as a vibrant place which draws upon its creative spirit and shared heritage.
- We're building a place where everyone can enjoy the beauty, history and friendliness of the shire.

Vision for our Economic Development

A thriving economy that serves the wellbeing of people, place, and the environment.



To achieve a more equitable economy that ensures prosperity and sustainability, we have developed six goals with related objectives to guide our efforts:



Goal 1: Prosperous local enterprises and organisations

- **Objective 1.1** – Support local enterprises and organisations.
- **Objective 1.2** – Grow local community wealth building.



Goal 2: Future-ready people and industry

- **Objective 2.1** – Increase alignment between learning, workforce, government, industry, and community needs and opportunities.
- **Objective 2.2** – Enhance resilience and adaptability in people, enterprise and industry.



Goal 3: Connected, inclusive and vibrant precincts

- **Objective 3.1** – Create thriving local precincts and neighbourhoods.
- **Objective 3.2** – Provide infrastructure and assets that support innovation, inclusion and connection.



Goal 4: Sustainable approaches and systems

- **Objective 4.1** – Learn and lead in sustainability and wellbeing approaches.
- **Objective 4.2** – Promote and support innovation in sustainability across the shire.
- **Objective 4.3** – Promote reuse, repair and recycling, and circular economy thinking.



Goal 5: People participating equitably in the economy

- **Objective 5.1** – Reduce systemic barriers to economic participation.



Goal 6: Healthy Country

- **Objective 6.1** – Promote best practice in sustainable agriculture and local food systems.
- **Objective 6.2** – Protect, improve and promote health of Country.

Our approach

This strategy is developed in response to extensive community engagement through workshops, surveys and conversations.

We created a Discussion Paper to show where we were headed and why, pointing toward creating a 'wellbeing economy'. In it, we introduced a working model to explore what, where, how, and with whom we needed to collaborate to improve the wellbeing of our community through reshaping our local economy.

A Position Paper was then developed which outlined the key economic drivers, regional contexts and stakeholder analysis, and developed vision and goals which are now fleshed out and presented in this strategy. The community was subsequently invited to review the draft strategy and share their feedback.

Each year, we will develop achievable actions against the goals, objectives and strategic areas, based on where Council's resources can be most effective. These actions will depend on the priorities of the current council, and importantly what has changed in the community and external environment. Sometimes this means taking the lead, sometimes it is about supporting others to do the work, or it may mean advocacy.

This plan recognises the work that is already occurring under other plans and strategies across Council and will help to address gaps and support aligned initiatives.

We will also develop a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning framework to gauge the effectiveness of our initiatives and to shape our future priorities.

A strategic decision-making framework

Our Guiding Principles:

1. Our actions will support both the Council's Community Vision and the vision, goals, objectives, and strategic areas of our economic development strategy.
2. We foster economic development in the shire by supporting innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurial activity while prioritising community wellbeing and environmental sustainability.
3. We encourage use of local products and services to enhance community prosperity, resilience, and reduce dependence on global supply chains and markets.
4. We concentrate on **areas where Council can have the most meaningful impact** and take advantage of regional economic opportunities such as new infrastructure investments, whilst actively influencing regional initiatives to enhance community wellbeing.
5. We build on our **historical strengths** and **recent areas of growth** while also encouraging innovation, growth, and investment in **areas that will improve community wellbeing**.
6. We work to make positive progress on our **community wellbeing priorities** and to address socio-economic disadvantage.
7. Where possible, we work with local organisations and innovators who are advancing community health, wellbeing, or environmental stewardship, ensuring our actions align with community aspirations, needs, and strengths.
8. Community feedback, local research and engagement findings guide our actions, enabling us to monitor progress, analyse outcomes, and continually enhance our approach through learning.

9. We adopt wellbeing thinking and approaches:

- a. Holistic: Considering the whole system and interconnectedness of issues.
- b. Preventative: Intervening as early as possible to address root causes.
- c. Values-based: Guided by community values and goals in decision-making.
- d. Intergenerational: Making decisions that benefit both current and future generations.
- e. Outcomes and impact focused: Keeping improved human and environmental health and wellbeing as the ultimate goal.

10. We design initiatives that eliminate barriers to participation, ensuring all community members, regardless of background or ability, feel welcomed and valued.

Council's internal context and role

The objectives in the strategy were defined based on the areas of the economy where we have the most control and influence, although realising the benefits of the objectives will rely on other stakeholders. The goals themselves will require continued collective effort with community and stakeholders to achieve.

Council's role in the local economy is derived from its overarching vision – 'Working together for a healthy, connected shire'. The Economy and Culture Unit of Council holds primary responsibility for Council's economic development function which includes:

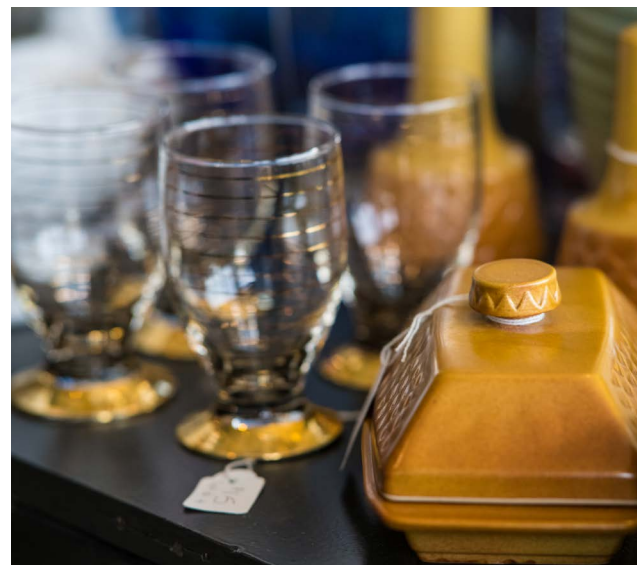
- Supporting the development of robust, prosperous, and sustainable industries and businesses.
- Facilitating coalitions and partnerships to promote active collaboration within the business community.
- Promoting and building capacity of tourism, arts and creative industries.
- State-wide advocacy to support local industry/business needs.

No team or strategy at Council operates as a silo, and the issues and opportunities presented in the Economic Development Strategy will rely heavily on the actions and leadership guided by other key plans and strategies, primarily:

- Council Plan.
- Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

As referenced in the Council Plan, other foundational work includes: Industrial Land Use Strategy, Communications and Engagement Strategy, Reconciliation Action Plan, Gender Equity Action Plan, Climate Change Strategy, Disability Access Plan, Waste Strategy. This is not an exhaustive list and there are many relationships across Council and across projects.

The economic development function of Council sits at the complex intersection of community, social, cultural and environmental focused functions. Cross collaboration and alignment across the various strategies and actions between these departmental areas (that have a direct impact on the local economy) is critical for a successful economic function of Council. Working together across the organisation, and in partnership with the community, is required to achieve the goals and objectives in this strategy.



About this strategy

This strategy is guided by six foundational goals, each representing an element of our vision for the future.

These goals symbolise our commitment to fostering prosperous enterprises, where businesses thrive and contribute to our community's growth, vitality, health and wellbeing.

We aim to help our workforce be 'future-ready', equipped with the skills to navigate an ever-evolving world, ensuring we are empowered to seize opportunities and innovate.

We want our precincts to be energetic and vital, serving as vibrant hubs of activity and culture that foster inclusion, connection and creativity.

Through sustainable practices, we are safeguarding resources for generations to come while fostering equitable participation.

We will prioritise our natural environmental, learning from First Nations people and recognising the intrinsic connection between human wellbeing and the health of our natural world.

What hasn't changed is that:

- We review trends in demography, industry and the global economy.
- We are drawing from the current strategic and political context.
- We acknowledge and build on the strengths of our economy and the community.
- We consider workforce, education and training, business and industry needs, skills, specialisation, supply chains, and traditional economy development components and principles.
- We show how the strategy draws from and contributes to other relevant strategies and plans.

What is different from previous approaches to the strategy is that:

- We have adopted a wellbeing-focused approach, articulating values, issues and priorities, and Council's role in the economy, so the strategy can direct our decisions and actions over the long term.
- It defines a vision for the economy, nested within the community vision, increasing the relevance and responsiveness of our strategy to the aspirations of the community.
- We have engaged broadly, bringing in voices that are often absent in shaping the economy, including young people, care workers and under-represented groups.
- We have balanced accountability with agility – giving the community and our stakeholders enough detail about our approach to ensure alignment and seizing the opportunities, without providing so much detail that we lock ourselves into actions or roles that become outdated.

This strategy will be reviewed at planned intervals in alignment with new Council plans, and when there are big shifts or shocks in the systems that require us to go back to our context and issues analysis to make sure they are still relevant.

A local and wellbeing-focused approach

Further analysis of the community vision included the question of how an economy could best serve to achieve that vision. We asked ourselves '*What approaches and disciplines can we use to bring this to life?*' While several practices and principles have been drawn from, the main ones are:

'Wellbeing economy'

A wellbeing economy considers immediate economic gains, and also the long-term health and general welfare of our community and the environment we rely on. It's about finding a balance where economic activity supports our wellbeing today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. In this approach, the economy isn't seen as separate from our wellbeing, but as a tool to enhance it. By aligning economic activities with the goal of improving overall quality of life and understanding the economic resilience needed to withstand climate change-induced extreme weather, we can create a more sustainable and resilient society.

'Place-based systems change'

'Place-based systems change' is all about joining forces to tackle important issues and take advantage of opportunities in our local area. It's about using the knowledge, skills, and connections we have in the shire to make meaningful changes. It means working together to create positive and lasting changes that benefit everyone.



Priority issues for our economy

During strategy development, we engaged with the community and diverse stakeholders, including sole traders, small business owners, large businesses, start-ups, health services, agriculture, job seeker organisations, migrant workers, human services, wealth holders, service clubs, youth, elderly individuals, carers, local ecologists, environmental groups, construction companies, and government organisations.

We heard that priority interlinked issues are:



Accessibility and transport:

- Making local services and places accessible
- Expanding active transport options
- Ensuring availability of public transport



Housing and cost of living:

- Providing affordable and appropriate housing
- Tackling cost of living issues
- Offering affordable childcare



Health and wellbeing:

- Supporting ageing well
- Supporting mental health
- Promoting physical health



Sustainability and environment:

- Promoting agricultural sustainability
- Encouraging sustainable use and reuse of land and resources
- Reducing waste, promoting reuse and recycling
- Soil and waterway health and biodiversity
- Building community resilience to extreme weather and climate change



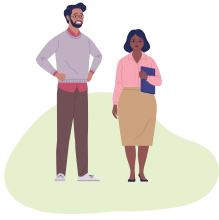
Digital and technology:

- Enhancing digital infrastructure and access to technology



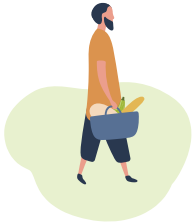
Inclusion and diversity:

- Fostering diversity, equality and inclusion
- Reducing disadvantage, discrimination and racism



Education and employment:

- Addressing skill shortages through education and training
- Reducing unemployment and underemployment



Food security and homelessness:

- Ensuring food security
- Addressing homelessness



Youth empowerment:

- Empowering and amplifying youth voices

For example:

- Housing access and stress is impacting people's sense of safety and mental health, and there can be immediate flow-on to accessing work and education. Often families are forced into areas away from school and support networks, with little access to transport. The lack of affordable housing means that local employers can't attract and retain staff, which is impacting organisations and services of all types, from hospitality and tourism to manufacturing and healthcare.
- Childcare access impacts parents and carers, and their capacity to work or study, which can have flow-on impacts for financial security, mental health and a sense of belonging. These issues are often compounded by related issues of housing, financial stress, isolation, and access to health and wellbeing services. For families lucky enough to have support from other family members it often means those family members are taking time out of the workforce to provide support.
- Other issues which impact Council's ability to shape the economy include land availability, zoning, and existing infrastructure.

Council is already working on a number of these issues through initiatives such as the Housing Strategy and the Early Years Strategy, and we are acknowledging these here because they have such a big impact on wellbeing and the economy.

These areas we're focusing on are important for people's lives, and they also present opportunities for economic growth. For example, making places more inclusive and accessible can bring in more visitors, and finding ways to help people age well locally can create new businesses and jobs. Through this strategy we will be working together with businesses, community groups and policymakers to tackle these challenges in ways that make our community, economy and the environment even better and more resilient.

Growth and strength industries

We heard from the community that we have both historical strengths, and areas of recent growth that will adapt and develop as we move towards an economy that is more centred on wellbeing. Some of these are captured below:

Historical strengths	More recent areas of growth / strength
• Agriculture and agribusiness. • Automotive and mechanical engineering. • First Nations culture, economy and connection to Country. • Heavy industries (including mining). • Heritage and restoration. • Manufacturing. • Retail trade (locally owned/operated).	• Arts and creative economy. • Business incubators and innovation hubs. • Community events and festivals. • Construction. • Healthcare, social assistance and care economy. • Home-based businesses, sole traders, start-ups and people working remotely. • Knowledge economy (professional, scientific and technical services). • Visitor economy (inc. accommodation, food services and gastronomy).

The community also identified industries where further growth, innovation or investment will improve community wellbeing, these include:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advanced technologies.• Development of affordable and sustainable housing.• Healthcare, aged care and social assistance services.• Circular economy, resource recovery and recycling.• First Nations enterprise and initiatives.• Gastronomy tourism, eco-tourism, heritage and cultural tourism. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local food systems and small-scale agriculture.• Post-school education, training and skills development.• Renewable energy generation, storage, transmission and charging infrastructure.• Regenerative land management.• Sustainability products and services. |
|--|---|

What else will change as we grow our wellbeing economy?

Beyond a focus on industry, there are other aspects of the economy where we will see change as our local economy strengthens with a focus on a wellbeing economy. These changes will include:

- More and stronger local small businesses (sole traders, owner-operator, micro-business and cooperatives).
- Increased economic complexity, including strengthened value chains, more diversification and more things made (and repaired, restored and repurposed) in our region.
- Improved livelihoods and individual/family security that enables individuals to contribute to the economy through volunteering, caring and other high-value work.
- Businesses that are more culturally safe, accessible, and inclusive in their practices and infrastructure.



Local, regional and global context

Mount Alexander Shire is located in Central Victoria on Dja Dja Wurrung Country and includes the towns of Castlemaine, Maldon, Newstead, and Harcourt, and a number of other smaller communities. It covers an area of 1,530 square kilometres. It is known for its rich history, vibrant arts community, and beautiful natural environment. Djaara (Dja Dja Wurrung People) have lived on these traditional lands and cared for Djandak (Country) over many thousands of years.

The region

As one of the most significant related regional plans, the Loddon Campaspe Regional Economic Development Strategy aims to boost the region's economy by focusing on key areas like business growth, job creation, and sustainable development. It highlights the importance of investing in local businesses, improving infrastructure, and supporting sectors such as tourism, agriculture, and manufacturing. The strategy also focuses on enhancing education and training to equip people with the skills needed for future jobs.

The Loddon Campaspe Regional Employment and Innovation Corridor Plan aims to make the region more innovative, connected, and liveable. It focuses on improving infrastructure to support economic growth and create jobs. The plan highlights strengths in construction and the knowledge economy while promoting new opportunities in food systems, renewable energy, and waste processing. It also looks at how digital technology can improve education and health services, and addresses regional challenges like housing, childcare, and access to health services, aiming to ensure a resilient and prosperous future for all residents.

This strategy builds on these and other State and regional plans by aligning with broader visions and goals set by our regional partners. It also complements Bendigo Regional Tourism's Destination Management Plan and Visitor Services Strategy. It recognises the work of First Nations organisations through examples like DJAARA Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan. It sits alongside regional training, education, and service providers planning.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

There are 17 SDGs, 14 of which we believe Local Government can influence. Each goal in this plan has been associated with a number of SDGs.

We use these indicators so that we can understand our progress towards globally recognised social justice and environmental sustainability.



End poverty in all its forms everywhere.



To reduce inequalities, policies should be universal in principle, paying attention to the needs of disadvantaged and marginalised populations.



Ensure healthy lives and promoting the wellbeing for all at all ages is essential to sustainable development.



There needs to be a future in which cities provide opportunities for all, with access to basic services, energy, housing, transportation and more.



Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.



Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.



Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.



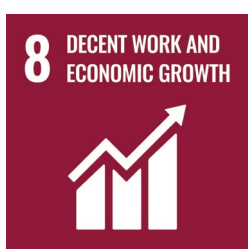
Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.



Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all.



Protect and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.



Sustainable economic growth will require societies to create the conditions that allow people to have quality jobs.



Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.



Investments in infrastructure are crucial to achieving sustainable development.



Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.



Goals

Vision for our economic development

A thriving economy that serves the wellbeing of people, place, and the environment.

Economic development goals



Goal 1: Prosperous local enterprises and organisations



Goal 2: Future-ready people and industry



Goal 3: Connected, inclusive and vibrant precincts



Goal 4: Sustainable approaches and systems



Goal 5: People participating equitably in the economy



Goal 6: Healthy Country





Goal 1: Prosperous local enterprises and organisations

About this goal

Supporting locally owned and governed businesses and organisations is a key goal for a wellbeing economy, as they provide the combined benefits of:

- Local employment.
- Maximising local wealth investment (and reinvestment) as more spending stays in the shire.
- Increased economic resilience and self-sufficiency.
- Greater local control and accountability.
- Strengthened local supply chains and increased preference for purchasing local goods and services.

Local businesses give back to the community, and generally have a greater sense of social and environmental responsibility. They value and work to maintain the social license to operate in the shire.

When we have prosperous organisations, we also maximise local work and volunteering opportunities that are purposeful, dignified and create connection.

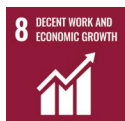
What Council is already doing

Council supports local enterprises and organisations through a range of initiatives. These include a business help desk, engagement with local business associations, prioritising local procurement, grants and in-kind support, supporting artists and artisans, advocating for favourable policies, promoting tourism, sharing positive news, participating in job fairs, and investing in local infrastructure. Council has also actively supported several First Nations projects and enterprises.

Objectives and strategic areas

	What we want to achieve (Objectives)	Strategic areas
1.1	Support local enterprises and organisations.	1. Support the start-up, operations and growth of local businesses that align with Council's commitment to enhancing community wellbeing. 2. Enable business and industry growth by seeking opportunities to minimise regulatory burden and improve Council customer experience. 3. Link organisations to the resources, information, networks and expertise they need to support their growth and adoption of wellbeing economy practices.
1.2	Grow local community wealth building.	1. Preference local businesses and encourage wellbeing economy practices in procurement. 2. Encourage residents to buy and sell locally to strengthen the shire's economy. 3. Encourage the development of locally focused, innovative funding models to build community wealth. 4. Recognise and support First Nations traditional owner-led economy and enterprises. 5. Strengthen community volunteering. 6. Encourage the use of Council and community assets for innovation and wellbeing business models. 7. Support initiatives that improve creative infrastructure, networks, and resources.

Sustainable Development Goals: 8, 9 and 10.





Goal 2: Future-ready people and industry

About this goal

Being ready for the future means learning new skills, and also being able to adapt and think ahead. It's about planning for the long term and making sure our goals match up with what the community needs. This includes improving education, planning our workforce, and being open to new ideas and technologies. It is also about working towards our local economy connecting well with the wider region and ensuring people and businesses have the tools they need to succeed.

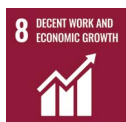
What Council is already doing

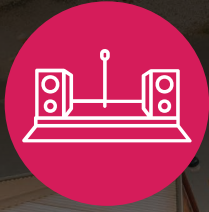
Council actively collaborates with local educational institutions, businesses and organisations to boost economic growth and increase job opportunities. Council promotes entrepreneurship through hosting workshops and supports the creation of co-working spaces. Council supports several youth, health, and mental health programs and fosters an ongoing relationship with Goldfields Local Learning and Employment Network. Additionally, Council assists communities affected by extreme weather events in recovery efforts and resilience building.

Objectives and strategic areas

	What we want to achieve (Objectives)	Strategic areas
2.1	Increase alignment between learning, workforce, government, industry, and community needs and opportunities.	1. Encourage deeper collaboration between business, community, government, arts, education and training sectors to: a. Improve future workforce readiness. b. Create new training and learning opportunities. c. Drive innovation. 2. Work with state government agencies and corporate partners to: a. Align policy and resourcing to wellbeing objectives. b. Better connect businesses and markets along the Calder Employment and Innovation Corridor to each other, and external opportunities and markets. c. Improve access to high-speed data networks, reliable mobile phone coverage and dependable electricity supply.
2.2	Enhance resilience and adaptability in people, enterprise and industry.	1. Engage with the business, community, government, arts, education and training sectors to: a. Increase understanding of shared risks (e.g. climate, disaster, and economic downturn) as well as opportunities for innovation. b. Develop individual and organisational capacity around resilience and disruption preparedness.

Sustainable Development Goals: 4, 8, 9 and 11.





Goal 3: Connected, inclusive and vibrant precincts



About this goal

We want our towns to be vibrant and full of life, and for people to be able to move easily between them to access opportunities for learning, work and fun. This means investing in places like local business areas and hosting events where people can come together.

Strong and vibrant neighbourhoods, towns and hamlets enable connection and the opportunity for people to provide support for each other and create opportunities and solve problems for their local areas.

When we build welcoming and inclusive places, it helps everyone feel happier and more connected to each other and to our shire.

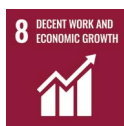
What Council is already doing

Council supports local markets, festivals and events, as well as places where people can come together such as local Neighbourhood Houses where community lunches are held. We work alongside businesses to make our towns more accessible for everyone. We encourage environmentally sustainable design. Council invests in arts, festivals, public art and special events to bring our community together and to celebrate our diversity, health and the beautiful environment around us. We take care of our parks and gardens, beautiful buildings and streetscapes. We also work to create safe and fun places for young people to stay connected.

Objectives and strategic areas

	What we want to achieve (Objectives)	Strategic areas
3.1	Create thriving local precincts and neighbourhoods.	1. Actively engage with our shops and traders to make our precincts more inviting, vibrant and accessible. 2. Work to fill vacant spaces or refresh existing places for shops, fun, work, play, connection, and innovation, ensuring they're vibrant and inclusive. 3. Prioritise holistic thinking (good urban design, integrated planning, environment, heritage, health and wellbeing) as we work to make our towns and places better. 4. Encourage the development of infrastructure to support the visitor economy. 5. Support creative endeavours which enhance cultural vitality and wellbeing of the community.
3.2	Provide infrastructure and assets that support innovation, inclusion and connection.	1. Work closely with state and regional authorities, and organisational stakeholders to advocate for our area's needs in regional planning and development. 2. Advocate for upgrades in walking, cycling, roads, trains, and delivery and transport routes for enhanced accessibility. 3. Engage First Nations organisations to identify opportunities to reflect culture in infrastructure planning.

Sustainable Development Goals: 3, 8, 10 and 11.





Goal 4: Sustainable approaches and systems



About this goal

We have the people, industry and capacity to lead the way in our region by coming up with smart ideas for a sustainable economy. We're focusing on things like recycling, using land wisely and promoting local food. This not only helps the environment but also creates new jobs and supports business. By doing this, we're working towards reducing our impact on the planet and moving closer to net-zero emissions.

What Council is already doing

Council is committed to achieving net-zero emissions by 2025 for its own operations, implementing a wide range of strategies and initiatives which prioritise sustainability, energy efficiency measures and waste reduction strategies. Council supports local sustainability initiatives through grants and funding opportunities, and collaborates with the community, waste and recycling industry and State Government to reduce waste and improve reuse and recycling efforts. Council also supports community gardens and promotes the use of renewable energy and energy efficiency. Council uses 100% renewable electricity and is increasing its use of electric and hybrid vehicles. Council is also committed to reducing the generation of waste, increasing resource recovery of reusable and recyclable materials, supporting a local circular economy, and minimising the environmental impacts of waste.

Objectives and strategic areas

	What we want to achieve (Objectives)	Strategic areas
4.1	Learn and lead in sustainability and wellbeing approaches.	- Learn from and amplify: - First Nations perspectives and support effective community initiatives. - Community initiatives, businesses and other organisations which have found ways to improve sustainability, health and wellbeing. - Help organisations to prioritise sustainability and long-term thinking. - Partner with community-based organisations in genuine and open engagement processes and support local community projects that improve wellbeing.
4.2	Promote and support innovation in sustainability across the shire.	- Support local sustainability and circular economy initiatives. - Advocate for change to support new ideas in sustainability and wellbeing.
4.3	Promote reuse, repair and recycling, and circular economy thinking.	Engage businesses, organisations and individuals in sustainable consumption and production, and cultivate a culture of reuse, repair, recycling, and closed-loop systems.

Sustainable Development Goals: 3, 10, 15 and 16





Goal 5: People participating equitably in the economy

About this goal

In the wellbeing economy that we are working towards, everyone's needs are met, and everyone feels safe and respected. People can reach their goals and do their best over time. This helps local businesses to grow.

We acknowledge that issues like discrimination, violence and poverty happen in our community. We do what we can to address these issues, and aspire to a fair and inclusive economy, where everyone can take part in making decisions about the issues which affect them.

What Council is already doing

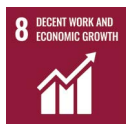
Council provides care to those in need through Council-run services and by collaborating with community organisations to offer support services for those facing economic hardship. It supports initiatives and advocates for affordable housing and food security while facilitating connections between job seekers and local employers through networking events, job fairs and workshops.

Council is committed to ensuring public spaces are accessible for individuals with disabilities and fostering a community culture of inclusion and acceptance for equity including women and girls, First Nations, migrant groups, LGBTQIA+ community and people who identify as having a physical or intellectual disability.

Objectives and strategic areas

	What we want to achieve (Objectives)	Strategic areas
5.1	Reduce systemic barriers to economic participation.	1. Work closely with partners and stakeholders to address changing community needs (including current issues of housing, childcare, service access, accessibility and mental health). 2. Find ways to nurture and strengthen the care economy, including Council-run services. 3. Work to strengthen accessibility and equity in employment pathways, education, volunteering, job opportunities, businesses and public spaces. 4. Continue to implement – and build upon – existing programs that foster a community culture of inclusion, diversity, equality and acceptance.

Sustainable Development Goals: 3, 8, 10, 11 and 16.





Goal 6: Healthy Country



About this goal

Our natural environment is crucial for our health, wellbeing and economy. We aim to promote responsible land use, including in farming and housing, and infrastructure development, to ensure soil, land and waterways are protected. We also understand that supporting farmers in adopting eco-friendly methods and planning for the future is important.

We seek to collaborate with First Nations groups to learn how to better care for the land, and we support events and tourism that highlight our land and culture.

Our goal is to strike a balance between growth and preserving nature for everyone, now and in the future.

What Council is already doing

Council is committed to environmental conservation and sustainable land management. We collaborate with local organisations to protect natural areas, waterways, wetlands and wildlife habitats, while also establishing community gardens and walking trails. Our initiatives include promoting indigenous plant use, supporting farmers' markets and working with farmers. We actively work to reduce plastic usage, restore ecosystems and protect threatened species. Council partners with landcare groups and First Nations organisations to preserve culture and improve and increase indigenous vegetation.

Objectives and strategic areas

	What we want to achieve (Objectives)	Strategic areas
6.1	Promote best practice in sustainable agriculture and local food systems.	1. Plan land use for future generations, thinking about the need for food, homes, soil and waterway health, and nature. 2. Support the crucial role of farming and productive and sustainable agricultural land use in local food security and the economy. 3. Encourage the adoption of sustainable and regenerative practices in farming, food production, distribution and manufacturing.
6.2	Protect, improve and promote health of Country.	1. Partner with Traditional Owners and their enterprises to support initiatives to heal, care and protect areas of local heritage and significance. 2. Work with local organisations to take care of nature, including all ecosystems and indigenous biodiversity. 3. Support tourism and events that share the stories of our land and culture.

Sustainable Development Goals: 3, 8, 10, 12 and 15.



Next steps

Review and renewal

This strategy will be reviewed and refreshed at the following planned intervals which are:

- Change to the Community Vision.
- A new Council Plan.
- Inputs from monitoring, evaluation and learnings, and continuous improvement.

Other triggers for a review might include significant external shocks and changes (including legislation, policy, or political context, national and global disruptions).

Annual Action Plans which respond to the Goals, Objectives and Strategic Areas will be developed (see page 8, 'Our Approach').

Council will create a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) framework to guide its ongoing learning and review process. Council will systematically collect and use data to track, assess, and improve the project as it happens. By gathering data to check progress (Monitoring), understanding the project's impact (Evaluation), and making continuous improvements (Learning), Council can effectively evaluate its Economic Development Strategy.



Appendix

Links to other Council strategies

Strategic Documents	Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3	Goal 4	Goal 5	Goal 6
Castlemaine Urban Waterways Management Plan						
Active Transport Strategy						
Arts Strategy						
Castlemaine Botanical Gardens Flora and Fauna Reserve Environment Plan						
Climate Change Action Plan						
Castlemaine Streetscape Plan and Design Standards						
Climate Change Strategy						
Council Plan						
Communications and Engagement Strategy						
Customer Service Strategy						
Disability Action Plan						
Domestic Wastewater Management Action Plan						
Early Years Plan						
Environment Strategy						
Gender Equality Action Plan						
Healthy Landscapes Regenerative Agriculture Program						
Industrial Land Strategy (in development)						
Maldon Streetscape Plan and Design Standards						
Middle Years Plan						
Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan						
Plan Harcourt						
Public Art Policy						
Public Open Space Strategy						
Reconciliation Action Plan						
Waste Management Strategy						
Youth Engagement Action Plan						

Links to other external strategies

Strategic Documents	Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3	Goal 4	Goal 5	Goal 6
Coliban Water Strategy (dhehk gatjin dhehk balak)						
DJAARA Gatjin (Water) Strategy						
Flourish Loddon Campaspe Regional Food System Framework						
Forest Gardening Strategy Galk-galk Dhehkunya						
Goldfields Local Learning and Employment Network Strategic Plan						
Healthy Loddon Campaspe Strategic Plan						
Loddon Campaspe Regional Economic Development Strategy						
Loddon Campaspe Regional Employment Innovation Corridor Plan						
DJAARA Dhehkunya Dja Country Plan						
Nalderun Annual Report						
Nalderun Strategic Plan						
North Central Regional Catchment Strategy						
Bendigo Regional Destination Management Plan and Local Area Action Plan						
RDA Loddon Mallee Industry 4.0 Business & Investment Prospectus						
Loddon Campaspe Regional Growth Summit Summary Report						
Plan Victoria (in development)						
Recycling Victoria: A New Economy						



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