

Planning now for the future – BACKGROUND Information

DISTRICT PROFILE AND OUTLOOK

Population growth will continue to see parts of the district change from rural to more urban in nature with population expected to double in the next 20 to 30 years. Growth will offer challenges and opportunity that must be planned for.

GLOBAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

Our planning will be influenced not only by local and regional issues but also global trends. Good strategic planning will consider both.

Global context – ‘mega trends’

Demographics	Large, ageing populations
Mobility	Urbanization and a growing middle class in the Asia Pacific region
Society	Inequality and unemployment
Geopolitics	Power transitions especially in the Asia Pacific region
Sustainability	Resource use and insecurity and climate change
Health	Shifting burdens of disease
Technology	The information and communications revolution

(The Oxford Martin Commission for Future Generations ‘Now for the Long Term’ Report)

Regional context – local issues and needs

Population characteristics and projections	Population growth, catering for young people and the ageing population
Housing	Affordability, lack of private rental and emergency accommodation and quality and sustainability of housing stock
Social Health	Higher rates of mental health issues for young people, availability of health care services and immunization rates
Community involvement	Maintaining high volunteering rates and connecting new residents and commuters with their communities
Community aspirations	Protecting the strong sense of community, local employment, environmental protection, services and opportunities for young people and health and wellbeing of the ageing population.
Social Infrastructure	Community and recreation facilities and addressing shortfalls in arts, cultural, civic and youth facilities
The Economy	Maintaining the relatively low unemployment rate and reducing the number of people commuting out of the district for work by providing regional jobs
Infrastructure	The provision of the necessary infrastructure to meet the needs of the growing population (Road, public transport, energy, water, wastewater treatment, stormwater management and waste)

Land use	Ensuring high quality, appropriate development and building the region's reputation for niche food, wine and tourism products
The Environment	Minimizing the impact of development on the environment and protecting local biodiversity.
Climate Change	Adapting to climate change through infrastructure planning, bushfire prevention and management of urban environments and open space.

(Mount Barker State of the District Report 2013)

THE STRATEGIC PLANNING FRAMEWORK

As part of the development of this new Strategic Plan, Council will be adopting a new Strategic Planning Framework. The Strategic Planning Framework, which is depicted in the diagram below, will guide investment in the local community.



FOCUS AREAS

To help inform community engagement and develop priorities for action, 4 Focus Areas are outlined below. These Focus Areas have been developed through consideration of the global and regional context, from planning undertaken by Council and from previous input from our community.

Focus Area 1- The Economy

- The district currently supports a relatively low unemployment rate however it also has a high commuter population.

- As the district population grows, the need to consider and develop strategies to support the district wide economy and local jobs is increasing.
- Consider Council's role in advocating and participating in regional efforts to protect rural lands and to build the region's reputation for niche food, wine and tourism products and the role of tourism in economic development
- Incomes are higher than the metropolitan average.
- There are more people holding certificate and diploma qualifications.
- There are fewer people with bachelor level and post graduate qualifications.
- Consider more restaurants, cafes and local businesses.
- Consider the growth of micro- businesses.
- Shared office space- collaborative working to encourage people to stay local.

Key Message: In planning for the future, while population growth is likely to have a positive impact on the local economy, there will be a need to generate new sustainable local jobs to maintain the current level of 'employment containment'. Timely provision of infrastructure and services is also important in ensuring that the full economic benefits of population growth can be realized.

Focus Area 2- Community Wellbeing (community & social infrastructure)

Key Points

- Social infrastructure plays a key role in quality of life by facilitating non-commercial encounters between people and building social cohesion. It also enables resources to be fairly accessed by people of different incomes and abilities.
- The ability to access appropriate arts, recreational, sporting and general community participation opportunities has a strong bearing on residents' wellbeing and connection with their local community.
- There is good access to reserves and trails with some shortfalls in sporting and recreation opportunities.
- There is a need more social engagement, sporting parks, events.
- Youth currently have limited activities in the area.
- The district has a highly connected community.
- There are above average volunteering levels.
- There are a large number of community based organisations' active in the community.
- The community places high value on safety.

Key message - Providing additional community, recreational and sporting facilities needs to be at the forefront of future planning for the District. Like health and community services, providing new and upgraded facilities is important in ensuring that existing shortfalls, as well as new demands, are met.

Focus Area 3-The Urban Environment

Key Points

- Road, public transport, energy, water, wastewater treatment, stormwater management and waste management infrastructure and services are the basic requirements of any community.

- While infrastructure and services exist in these key areas to meet the needs of the current community (with some shortfalls), there are very real capacity issues that must be addressed in the coming years.
- High quality development is needed.
- Wastewater management in new growth areas.
- Additional access from the SE freeway and the internal road network.
- Improved public transport services and park 'n' ride facilities.
- More sustainable approaches to stormwater and wastewater management.
- Match infrastructure and services to growth.

Key Message While Council is the direct provider of some of this infrastructure such as wastewater, in other areas its role is to advocate on behalf of the community to the relevant providers, such as the State Government.

Focus Area 4- Sustainable Living and the Natural Environment

Key Points

- The District Council of Mount Barker is predicted to be warmer and drier in the future, with more extreme weather events. Future planning is therefore needed to minimize adverse impacts such as on:
 - Infrastructure planning and provision of green infrastructure
 - Maintenance of public land and open spaces
 - Environmental health, and
 - Bushfire prevention.
- Council also has a role in working with the regional community to develop and implement adaptation strategies to protect regional assets and respond to the potential opportunities emerging as a result of climate change.
- Council can act as a community leader by reducing its emissions, using green power and considering offset schemes.
- Impact of extreme events- planning for flood and fire.
- There is less than 10% native vegetation remaining.
- Biodiversity is under increasing threat from growth and land use and management.
- Public land management is a significant role and challenge for Council.
- Watercourse management is also an ongoing challenge.

Key Message A sustainable community is paramount in the eyes of residents, business and visitors alike. Sustainability, while sometimes hard to define, includes how we conduct our lives and the way we care for people, other species and the environment in which we exist. Our long term future will be defined by how well we meet this challenge.