



CITY OF GREATER
BENDIGO

Heathcote Service Centre

Monday to Friday 8.30am - 5.00pm
Closed 12.30pm - 1.30pm
Phone: 5434 6000

Community bulletin

Heathcote Civic Precinct Stage One concept floorplan

The City of Greater Bendigo is planning some building upgrades as Stage One of the Heathcote Civic Precinct project.

The project is a priority within the Heathcote Community Plan 2017-2021. Community input has shaped the concept floorplan. The City is now encouraging community members to provide feedback to help guide the more detailed designs by Monday August 23, 2021.

Have your say

You can provide your feedback by Monday August 23, 2021 at
www.letstalkgreaterbendigo.com.au/heathcote-civic-precinct-concept-floorplan
To find out more about the project you can scan the QR code.
You can also email any questions to Deb Simpson at d.simpson@bendigo.vic.gov.au





What is the Heathcote Civic Precinct and what buildings are included in the precinct?

The precinct is an important community hub located on High Street between Herriot Street and Barrack Street. The buildings and spaces that make up the precinct include:

- Municipal Office, 125 High Street
- Former Court House, 123 High Street
- Hall, 1/121 High Street
- Former Mechanics Institute, 2/121 High Street
- High Street forecourt public space
- Camp Street public space

What is the concept floorplan proposing for the precinct and its buildings?

The first stage of works will focus on improvements to the Municipal Office and former Court House buildings. Upgrades to the Hall and former Mechanics Institute will be considered as a future stage. Some of the benefits of the first stage of works will include:

- An expanded and more contemporary library space
- Spaces that can support diverse community outreach services
- Co-working spaces for local small businesses and community groups
- Community activity spaces that are more accessible and multi-purpose
- Improved building energy efficiency
- Better indoor / outdoor connections
- Improved landscaping

Key considerations in planning the first stage of works have included:

- Preserving the heritage values of the buildings and public spaces
- Re-using as much of the existing building structures as possible, to keep project costs down
- The needs of current precinct user groups, and how the upgrades could support those needs plus broader community needs
- Making the available spaces as accessible, flexible and multi-purpose as possible
- Not replicating the types of community activity spaces that already exist within Heathcote e.g. at Barrack Reserve
- The ability to do the upgrade works in different stages, to limit disruptions to current precinct user groups and to spread the project costs over several years

Who has developed the concept floorplan?

The City has worked with many different community groups to develop the concept floorplan, including current precinct user groups. This concept floorplan is the third version. Some very constructive community feedback was received about the previous versions, resulting in changes being made. For example, it was initially proposed to relocate the Heathcote Library into the former Court House.

Why are the upgrades needed?

The upgrades will help the precinct continue to function as an important community hub that can support many different community needs, and uses, now and into the future. They are a community priority of the Heathcote Community Plan 2017-2021.

The upgrades will help to preserve the heritage values of the buildings, bring them up to contemporary accessibility and multi-purpose standards and make them more energy efficient. They will also improve the technology available within the buildings, for example access to wi-fi.

Who are the current users of the precinct buildings?

These buildings are greatly valued and frequently accessed by the community, with services offered including the Heathcote Library and an onsite City of Greater Bendigo customer support centre.

The Heathcote Library has an onsite collection of about 5,000 items and has over 900 members. In 2019-2020 the library had over 14,000 visits, loaned over 11,000 items and delivered over 80 programs. This is despite the library being closed for about a quarter of the year due to COVID safety measures.

Many other groups also use the precinct buildings. Some of these include McIvor Cottage Industries Co-operative (Court House Crafts), various community outreach services, Heathcote Lions Club, Heathcote Brownies/Guides Club, Heathcote Senior Citizens Club, Heathcote U3A, Goldfields Wesleyan Methodist Church and the Country Women's Association.

The upgrades are not intended to 'displace' any of the current user groups, they are intended to make the buildings and spaces easier and better for these community members and many more to use.

What is a community hub?

Community hubs play an important role in supporting community wellbeing and prosperity. They help people to connect with one another, with services, activities, events and learning opportunities. Community hubs are also a cost-effective way of providing community infrastructure and services. Community hubs are characterised by:

- Being multi-purpose
- Able to support many different community needs and interests
- Being accessible to and inclusive of all community members
- Supporting 'joined up' service access for community members

Victoria's Draft 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy recently released by Infrastructure Victoria for public comment indicates that community hubs are consistent with future infrastructure planning and development strategic directions.

What is the history of the buildings?

The Municipal Office and former Court House were designed by Melbourne architect John Flannagan and constructed in 1863. Their construction was funded by the local council and state government. Only a few buildings that included both a court house and council offices were built in Victoria, and even fewer of those have survived until today.

The buildings were painted white in the 1950's. In July 2018 the City commenced a project to restore the building facades. They were in poor condition with visible mould, peeling paint and damaged render. The works involved removal of the white paint, render repairs and application of a breathable external treatment to extend the render's life.

The work has greatly improved the external appearance of the buildings and returned the buildings to their original warm stone colour. This \$380,000 project was funded by the City. Heritage Victoria guided this project as heritage listings apply to the buildings.

The buildings have historical importance as they demonstrate the growth of the central goldfields area and in particular the period of permanent settlement in the 1860s and 1870s when temporary buildings were replaced with permanent ones.

What sort of feedback is the City seeking on the draft concept plans?

The City wants to hear your thoughts on:

- What you like about the concept floorplan
- How the upgrades will benefit you
- If you have ideas for improving the concept floorplan
- If you have any concerns about the project and how those concerns could be resolved

How will the upgrades be funded?

Grants will be sought from other levels of government to support the upgrade works. Some City funds will also be needed for the upgrade works. The allocation of these funds will need to be managed through City budget development processes. Hire fees will help offset the community hub running costs. Hire fees are generally split into community rates and commercial rates. This split is designed to make use affordable for volunteer or community-membership based groups who generally have limited income streams.

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