

Imagine
GREATER BENDIGO

Engagement report



CITY OF GREATER
BENDIGO

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This report summarises the community engagement approach and feedback received as part of stage 1 consultation for the Imagine Greater Bendigo project. This information is essential to supporting the deliberative engagement process in stage 2 and will inform the development of key strategic documents for the City of Greater Bendigo.

Imagine Greater Bendigo is the name of a nine-month project that will collect community feedback to help develop a community vision, Council Plan, Financial Plan, and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan by October 2021. An Asset Plan will also be developed in 2022.

It is a requirement of the new Local Government Act (2020) and Public Health and Wellbeing Act (2008) for every Council to engage with its municipal community to complete this work.

The purpose of Imagine Greater Bendigo stage 1 community engagement, which commenced in February 2021, was to understand what the community loves, values, and wants to see improved or changed in the future.

The objectives for stage 1 engagement were:

To create interest and excitement in the future of Greater Bendigo.

To build on previous community engagement.

To provide opportunities for a diverse range of community members to participate.

To build relationships with the community and delivery partners.

A community engagement plan was developed in October 2020 (Appendix 1). This document provides a strategic overview of the engagement approach for Imagine Greater Bendigo. There are five distinct components to the engagement plan describing internal, external and deliberative engagement.

The community consultation process for Imagine Greater Bendigo has been divided into three stages. Stage 1 has focused on collecting data to inform the community vision and related plans, with reference to six key themes. This information will inform stage 2 and the deliberative engagement process.

The themes were informed by guidance from Local Government Victoria, which outlines what a community vision should focus on. See figure 1 below:

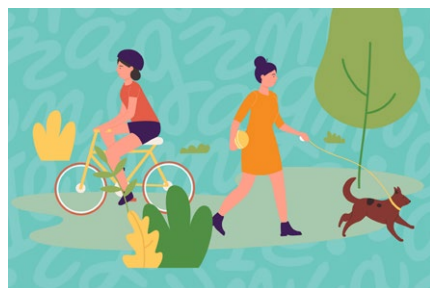
Figure 1: Community vision guidance



Prior to undertaking stage 1 engagement, recent community engagement processes were reviewed to identify key themes and outcomes already identified by the community. This information formed a baseline to develop further in stage 1 engagement. Each theme was described in a way that captured recent community feedback.¹ The final six themes are illustrated in figure 2.

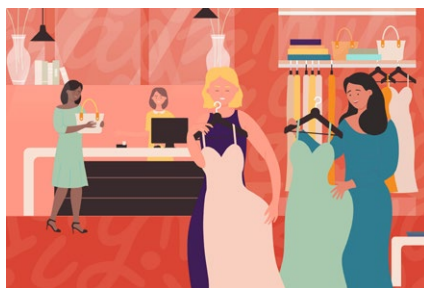
1. Reference documents: Greater Bendigo All Ages All Abilities Plan, Creative Greater Bendigo, Economic Development Strategy (A Stronger Greater Bendigo), Food System Strategy, Greening Greater Bendigo, Relief and Recovery survey; Walk, Cycle Greater Bendigo; Reconciliation Plan and Reimagining Bendigo Creek.

Figure 2: Imagine Greater Bendigo themes



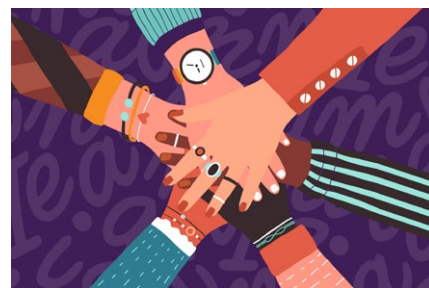
Theme 1

A healthy, liveable community



Theme 2

A strong, inclusive and sustainable economy



Theme 3

Aboriginal reconciliation and celebration of diversity



Theme 4

A healthy natural environment that promotes climate resilience



Theme 5

A vibrant, creative community



Theme 6

A supportive community and social environment

The outcomes of each engagement process were collated and sorted to align with each of the themes.² Relevant outcomes of previous community engagement are outlined in the detailed findings section of this report.

As well as building on previous engagement, stage 1 aimed to engage widely across the municipality with representation from the community including those considered 'harder to reach' by providing a variety of engagement opportunities and methods. The Imagine project aims to build the capacity of Councillors and staff to understand deliberative and innovative engagement practices, and build support for the development of the strategic documents that will come from the Imagine process.

2. For more information, see Appendix 5

Figure 3: Imagine stage 1 engagement process

| Date | October 2020 – January 2021 | February 2 – March 9, 2021 | March 2021 |
|-------|--|---|---|
| Phase | DESIGN <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff and stakeholder engagement Plan engagement activities and content | IDEAS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect the community's ideas | SYNTHESIS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Synthesise data received |
| Tools | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff workshops Councillor briefing prior to each stage of engagement 'Translation and response' workshops at the end of each engagement stage to consider the outcomes Regular internal updates on activities and outcomes. Plan engagement activities and content | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online engagement platform Share your story/vision Public art project 'Imagine it – Draw it', listening posts Community conversation toolkit to allow community groups to host their own conversation Postcards at key locations, community centres, Neighbourhood Houses, Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services and Bendigo Community Health Services. Postcards were provided in Dinka, Dari, Karen and English. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stage 1 report Materials for stage 2 |
| IAP2 | Inform/Consult | Consult/Involve | Consult/Involve |

Around 1,000 people participated in stage 1. Listening posts and postcards generated the greatest number of contributions, with 549 responses, followed by the Let's Talk Greater Bendigo community engagement website generating 194 individual survey responses, 24 group surveys with direct input from at least 160 people (representing many more), and 27 submissions to the short 'visioner' tool on Let's Talk. This equates to contributions from at least 930 people. The art project, 'Imagine it – Draw it' was located at several venues across the municipality primarily intended to generate interest and be an alternative feedback tool where literacy may be a barrier or for those that think more visually. The art project materials, including 98 text entries, and all responses received were analysed for themes to help inform stage 2 engagement. Appendix 2 shows full details of event locations and participation levels.

The postcards, listening posts and online visioner tool focused on two higher level questions:

1. What makes Greater Bendigo a great place to live now?
2. What would make Greater Bendigo an even better place to live 30 years from now?

The survey also asked these two questions then reported back findings of previous engagement and sought input about what people valued across the six themes.

Responses to the first two questions were analysed by theme and the findings are detailed in Appendix 3, with the 'other' category serving to identify emerging themes.

What makes Greater Bendigo a great place to live now?

Answers to this question will be used to understand what the community values and wants to protect and strengthen into the future. In both the online responses (shown in chart 1) and the postcards (shown in chart 2), respondents most value a healthy, liveable community (108 online mentions, 49 postcard mentions). Bendigo's walking and bike paths and green spaces were mentioned prominently in this theme. There was also strong overlap with Theme 4, a healthy natural environment. Together these two themes are what respondents most love about Bendigo now. Within the 'other' category for emerging themes, respondents love the country and community feel (89 online mentions, 53 postcard mentions) and Bendigo's history and heritage (52 online mentions, 39 postcard mentions).

I love the big-country-town feel: the air is fresh, it lacks that big-city grime, the countryside is all around, it's a 'city in the forest'; you bump into someone you know just about anywhere you go, see familiar faces everywhere, but there's plenty of diversity' – survey respondent

Chart 1: Online responses

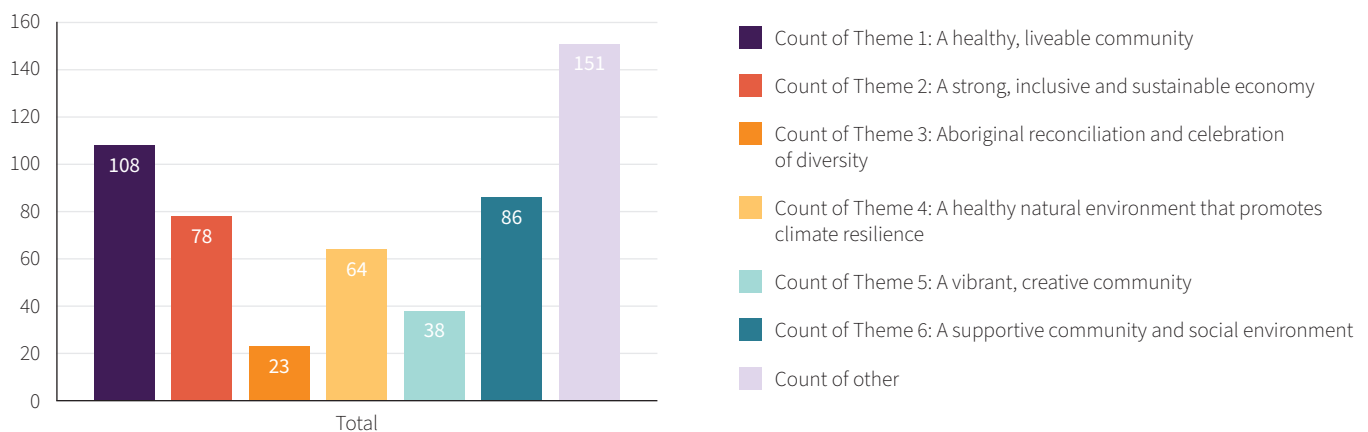
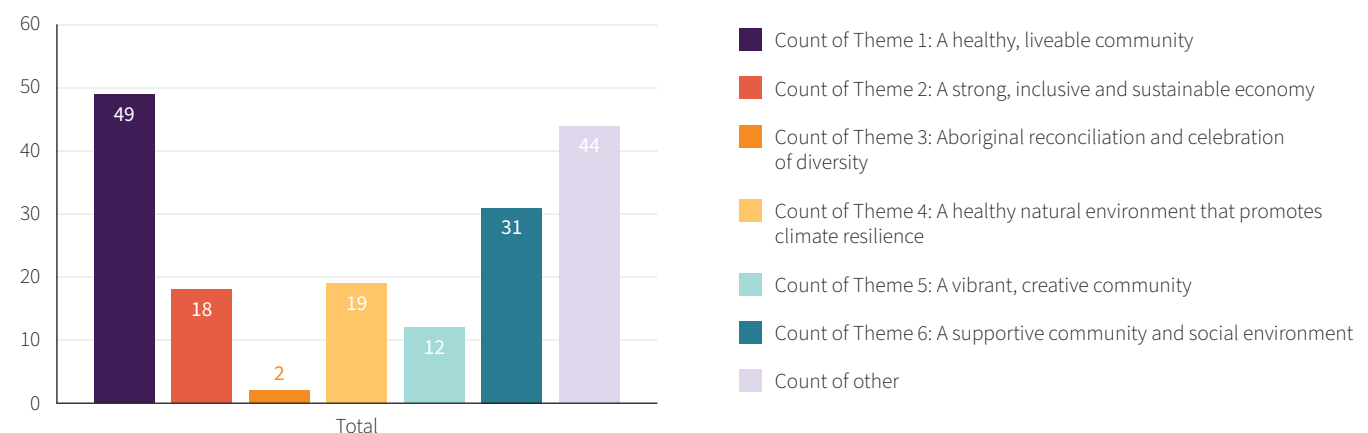


Chart 2: Postcard responses



What would make Greater Bendigo an even better place to live 30 years from now?

Responses to this question help understand the community's strongest future priorities. While most who completed the online survey also answered questions relating to the six major themes, those who completed postcards did not. However, as illustrated in charts 3 and 4, the priorities were consistent across both groups, with top priority being given to a healthy, liveable community (mentioned 172 times in the postcard responses and 118 times online) and the economy (mentioned 105 times in the postcard responses and 83 times online).

Chart 3: Online responses

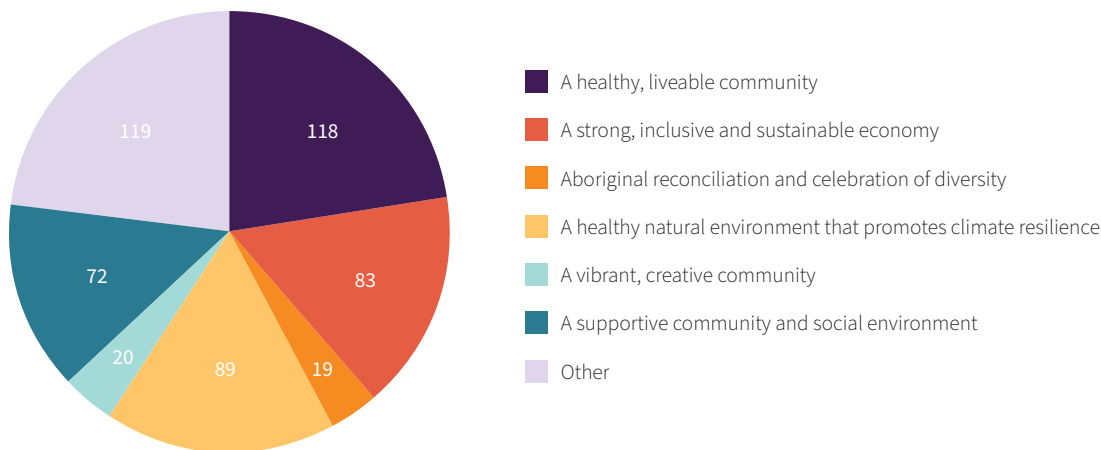
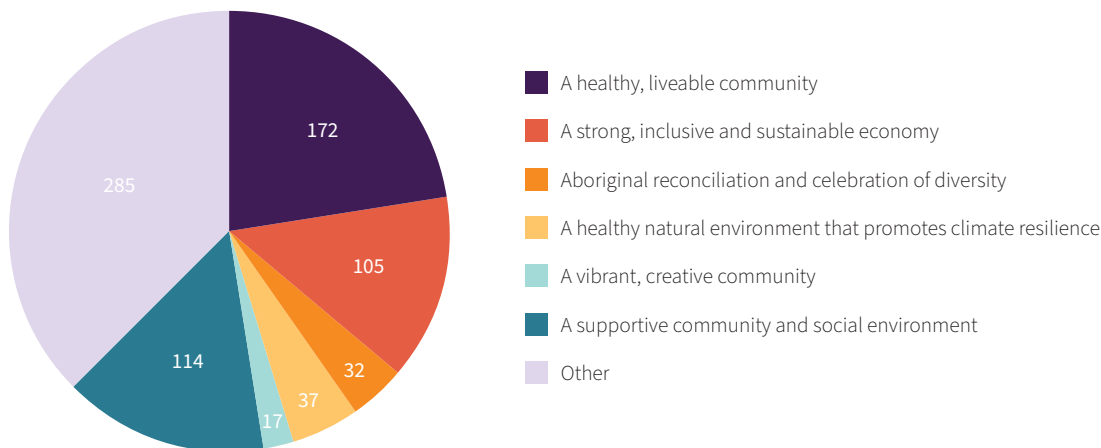


Chart 4: Postcard responses



Top emerging themes for 'What would make Greater Bendigo an even better place to live 30 years from now?'

1. Hargreaves Mall – most commonly mentioned in association with the economy (Theme 2) and safety (Theme 6), although sometimes mentioned without context, with 91 mentions in postcards and 44 mentions in the online survey. Residents are divided on what should be done with the Mall, with some suggesting it be turned into an attraction and others wanting it demolished.

Stop wasting money on updating Hargreaves Mall. – survey respondent

Improve Hargreaves Mall, European eateries, lots of umbrellas – survey respondent

2. Water – received 34 online responses and 46 postcard mentions. Most commonly people were concerned with a secure water supply into the future, but water play spaces and pools were also mentioned.

A desal plant or some way of securing our water supply – survey respondent

Adventure playground [in] this area with water – survey respondent

3. Planning for our future – most often discussed in the context of roads (33 online mentions, 67 postcard mentions) and parking (57 online mentions, 50 postcard mentions), although many residents are proud of our beautiful heritage sites, both built and natural, and want to preserve them (39 postcard responses, 71 online responses).

Free parking in the CBD to entice people in – survey respondent

Greener, keeping current green spaces national forests, maintaining & protecting heritage buildings – survey respondent

4. A theme across all questions was for the more rural communities to get the same inclusion and recognition. Sometimes this is mentioned regarding infrastructure and sometimes in conjunction with social inclusion.

Bendigo paying attention to its setting/rural surrounds. – survey respondent

Improved rural community facilities. – survey respondent

These trends were mirrored in the top five unprompted responses across all questions in the online survey:

Online top five unprompted responses:

1. Focus on water (87)
2. Create a more resilient climate – resilient built environment (planning controls, incentives, retrofits, environmentally sustainable design, access to green space) (52)
3. Do more to promote uptake of renewables (47)
4. Environmental sustainability (under Healthy Liveable theme) (39)
5. Community facilities – sport and recreation (36)

Across all six online survey themes, the highest community priorities:

Cool, shady and green streets, spaces (151)

Create well-designed spaces that are mindful of our future climate (125)

Seeing more examples of Aboriginal culture and history across Greater Bendigo (117)

Support for community sport, recreation and community groups to increase social connection after COVID-19 (99)

Increasing community understanding of the cultural practices and values of Traditional Owners (87)

Art project responses:

‘Imagine it – Draw it’ participants (98 text responses) most valued a vibrant, creative community (Theme 5) and a supportive community (Theme 6), with 34 and 17 mentions respectively. There was some overlap because activities and events fall into both categories. Trees, parks, trails and green space, water and energy received 17 mentions (Themes 1 and 4) and infrastructure was mentioned 11 times.

Theme 1: Healthy, liveable community

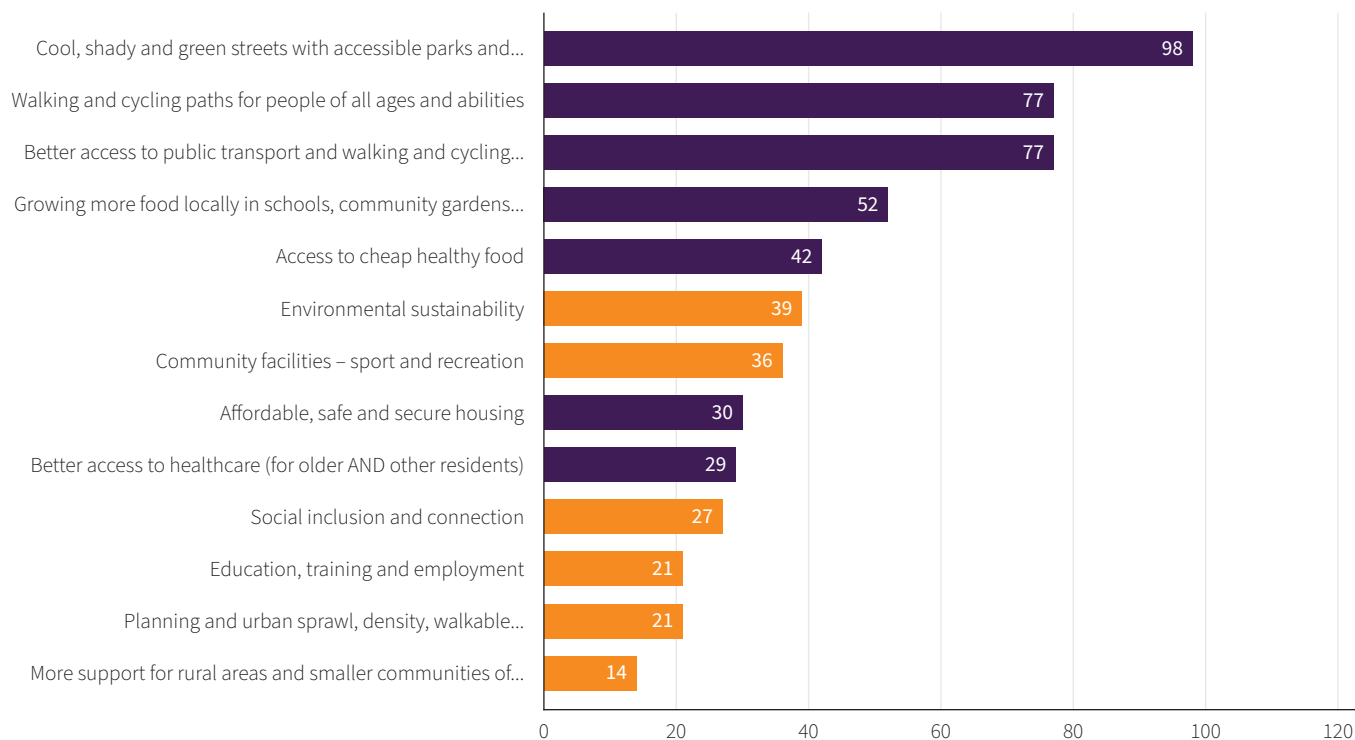
Theme 1 focuses on what respondents value for a healthy and liveable community. The Greater Bendigo Community Plan 2017-2021 defines a liveable community as: 'One that enables people to live healthy, safe, harmonious lives in attractive and affordable settings. Liveable places have an excellent range of services for children and adults of all ages, and facilities that are accessible to all. They don't make unsustainable demands on the environment.'

In previous engagement that informed stage 1, community members said they value:

- Cool, shady and green streets with accessible parks and play spaces
- Access to cheap, healthy food
- Walking and cycling paths for people of all ages and abilities
- Growing more food locally in schools, community gardens and on farms
- Affordable, safe and secure housing
- Better access to public transport and walking and cycling paths to move around
- Better access to health services for older residents

These seven areas were all reinforced in survey responses, and six new areas were identified (illustrated in orange in chart 5).

Chart 5: Healthy and liveable priorities



The importance of cool, shady, and green streets was the most mentioned (98 times). Responses were broader in nature than just streets, parks and play spaces. Open green spaces, shaded paths and general greening were also commonly mentioned, as was equal access to green space. This focus on greening was also prominent in response to Theme 4 of the survey.

Accessible and safe walking paths for all ages and abilities was the equal second most common theme in survey responses (mentioned 77 times). Inclusion of fitness equipment and distance markers along paths was also mentioned numerous times.

Better access to public transport and walking and cycling paths to move around the city had the same amount responses (77). Of these, 11 responses specifically mentioned the concept of all bike and walking paths linking together to create a network that provides access to neighbourhoods, workplaces, shopping and services to encourage active transport around the city.

A priority area relates directly to the theme, whereas a sub-priority is considered to align with the theme but is less specific.

| Theme 1 – Priority areas | Total | Sub-priority/Comment <i>Note: if blank, this indicates that the comments closely reflected the established priority area</i> |
|---|-------|--|
| Cool, shady, and green streets with accessible parks and play spaces* | 98 | Open green spaces, shaded streets and paths prominently mention. Greening generally and equitable access to green space |
| Walking and cycling paths for people of all ages and abilities | 77 | Include distance markers and fitness equipment along paths |
| Better access to public transport and walking and cycling paths to move around | 77 | Linkages of paths important, regular accessible public transport in and beyond the urban area |
| Growing more food locally in schools, community gardens and on farms | 52 | Also verge gardens, edible plantings and urban agriculture generally. Education and social opportunities surrounding community food production |
| Access to cheap healthy food | 42 | Access to local healthy food was prominent, also food security. Affordability was also mentioned in Themes 2 and 6. |
| Environmental sustainability | 39 | Water use and drought, rooftop gardens and nature strip gardens, improving Bendigo Creek (see Theme 4) |
| Community facilities – sport and recreation | 36 | More shade at facilities, more public gathering spaces and good quality facilities |
| Affordable, safe and secure housing | 30 | Homelessness and quality of housing |
| Better access to healthcare for older (AND other) residents | 29 | Equitable and accessible, addressing wait lists. Access for older residents and residents generally |
| Social inclusion and connection | 27 | Volunteering, community events and connection opportunities (see Theme 6) |
| Education, training and employment | 21 | Focus on employment, education programs and health/nutrition education |
| Planning and urban sprawl, density, walkable neighbourhoods | 21 | |
| More support for rural areas and smaller communities of Greater Bendigo | 14 | Farmers, technology and older areas of Bendigo |

*In each theme, bold denotes theme as reported from previous engagement. Not bold = new theme

Theme 2: Strong, inclusive, sustainable economy

Theme 2 focuses on what respondents value for a strong, inclusive, and sustainable economy.

In previous engagement, community members said they value:

- More opportunities for young people to go to university or TAFE so they can stay in Greater Bendigo
- More job opportunities for young people and people with a disability
- Support for local artists and businesses, particularly after COVID-19
- Promote and sell a wide variety of local produce in the community
- An economy that addresses disadvantage, attracts visitors and is sustainable
- Supporting people whose income and employment was hit particularly hard by COVID-19, including women, young people and temporary visa holders
- Supporting young people whose schooling and education has been interrupted by COVID-19

All of these priorities were reinforced in survey responses, with a range of sub-priorities emerging. Support for local artists and businesses, particularly after the impact of COVID-19, was the most common response. A total of 79 responses highlight that they would like to see more support for small local businesses and creatives, including from Council. Retaining local manufacturing and attracting new industry was a strong sub-priority (9 responses).

Another strong emerging theme, with 74 respondents, is the need for an economy that addresses disadvantage for marginalised and vulnerable members of the community, and the need for improved employment opportunities.

There is strong support among survey respondents to retain local manufacturing and attract industry to the city. The third most-mentioned priority area is the need to create job opportunities for young people and people with a disability. A total of 69 responses mentioned the need for stable and secure job opportunities for this cohort, with 11 people mentioning that pathways for disengaged young people are important.

| Theme 2 – Priority areas | Total | Sub-priority/Comment |
|--|-------|---|
| Support for local artists and businesses, particularly after COVID-19 | 79 | More support from Council for small local businesses and creatives Support for and retain local manufacturing, attract more (9) |
| An economy that addresses disadvantage³ | 74 | Improved employment and economic opportunities for (22): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturally and linguistically diverse communities (15) • Traditional owners (2) and wider Aboriginal community (4): (6) • Gender equity and barriers to women's employment, retention and career progression (4), Supporting people whose income and employment was hit particularly hard by COVID-19, including women, young people and temporary visa holders (18) Supporting young people whose schooling and education has been interrupted by COVID-19 (18) Jobs and training for people that are in insecure work, long term unemployed, disadvantaged (15) Promote more affordable housing (14). Address homelessness (12) |

3. One theme ('an economy that addresses disadvantage, attracts visitors and is sustainable') was separated into three for the purpose of analysis, as this conflated three separate concepts. Survey responses touched on each of these concepts, with disadvantage taking in a range of subthemes, including 2 themes of previous engagement.

| Theme 2 – Priority areas | Total | Sub-priority/Comment |
|--|-------|---|
| More job opportunities for young people and people with a disability | 69 | Support for those who are disengaged as well as job opportunities (11) Employment pathways for young people (8) |
| More opportunities for young people to go to university or TAFE so they can stay in Greater Bendigo | 62 | Concerns raised about local university offerings being reduced (12) and staff cuts (3), relevance of available courses/training relative to local job options Education for all community members (not only young people) (5) More tertiary options/providers (6), better links between university/TAFE and other community organisations (3) |
| An economy that attracts visitors | 41 | Retain and enhance local events and attractions, world class creative scene (15) Improve city centre/Mall, create a more vibrant city centre (8) Attracting new business and address barriers to this (15) |
| Promote and sell a wide variety of local produce in the community | 36 | More support from council for small local business |
| An economy that is sustainable | 34 | Opportunities in green industries, renewables and circular economy (30) Sustainable practices and use of technologies by existing businesses and council (23) |

*In each theme, bold denotes theme as reported from previous engagement. Not bold = new theme

Theme 3: Aboriginal Reconciliation and Diversity

This theme focuses on what respondents value for Aboriginal reconciliation and celebration of cultural diversity in Greater Bendigo.

In previous engagement community members said they value:

- Seeing more examples of Aboriginal culture and history across Greater Bendigo
- Better job opportunities, procurement and improved economic outcomes for Aboriginal people
- Aboriginal families and children being supported to connect to their culture
- Increasing community understanding of the cultural practices and values of Traditional Owners
- Seeing the goals of Traditional Owners reflected in long-term plans for Greater Bendigo
- Working together to meet the needs of refugees and people seeking asylum
- Working together to build a welcoming city by addressing racism

All of these themes were reinforced in survey responses. Most strongly reinforced was seeing more examples of Aboriginal culture and history across Greater Bendigo. This was expressed in 117 responses. Examples people gave include education (39), celebration of language and culture (33), greater visibility and representation generally (24), more Aboriginal place names and dual names (19), truth telling (16) and more public monuments (12).

Support for increasing community understanding of cultural practices and values of Traditional Owners is mentioned in 87 responses, with five mentioning the need for genuine integration into the fabric of our community rather than simplistic or tokenistic approaches.

The third most-represented theme, with 84 responses, is the desire for Council to work with the community to build a welcoming city by addressing racism. Responses generally focused more on multicultural communities and examples of how this may be achieved included hosting festivals and educational opportunities to promote understanding diverse cultural groups that form part of the local community (17).

| Theme 3 – Priority areas | Total | Sub-priority/Comment |
|--|-------|---|
| Seeing more examples of Aboriginal culture and history across Greater Bendigo | 117 | <p>More education about Aboriginal history (in early years, schools, for adults) (39)</p> <p>Celebrate Aboriginal culture and language (33)</p> <p>More visibility and representation in general (art, culture, history events, Indigenous foods) (24)</p> <p>Dual naming/Aboriginal naming (e.g. facilities, places, streets) (19)</p> <p>Public monuments about Aboriginal history and culture (12)</p> <p>Truth telling (16)</p> |
| Increasing community understanding of the cultural practices and values of Traditional Owners | 87 | Genuine, not token engagement (5) |
| Working together to build a welcoming city by addressing racism | 84 | <p>Festivals and educational opportunities to understand different cultures and traditions (17)</p> <p>Celebration of diversity/more representation of diverse cultures and interaction (12)</p> <p>*See Theme 5, which strongly highlighted celebrating Bendigo's diverse cultures, and opportunities for education of the wider community</p> |

| Theme 3 – Priority areas | Total | Sub-priority/Comment |
|---|-------|---|
| Seeing the goals of Traditional Owners reflected in long-term plans for Greater Bendigo | 42 | Representation on council and within council committees and processes, Traditional Owners and wider Aboriginal community (13) |
| Better job opportunities, procurement and improved economic outcomes for Aboriginal people | 42 | Aboriginal tourism and on-country education (10), Aboriginal cultural centre (7), Art Gallery (8), Council support for these |
| Working together to meet the needs of refugees and people seeking asylum | 25 | |
| Aboriginal families and children being supported to connect to their culture* | 22 | <i>*This was a strong priority from Aboriginal community engagement for the current Reconciliation Plan. It is only speculative, but perhaps not so strongly emphasised given the overwhelmingly non-Aboriginal survey respondents.</i> |

*In each theme, bold denotes theme as reported from previous engagement. Not bold = new theme

Theme 4: A healthy natural environment that promotes climate resilience

Theme 4 focuses on what respondents value when it comes to a healthy natural environment.

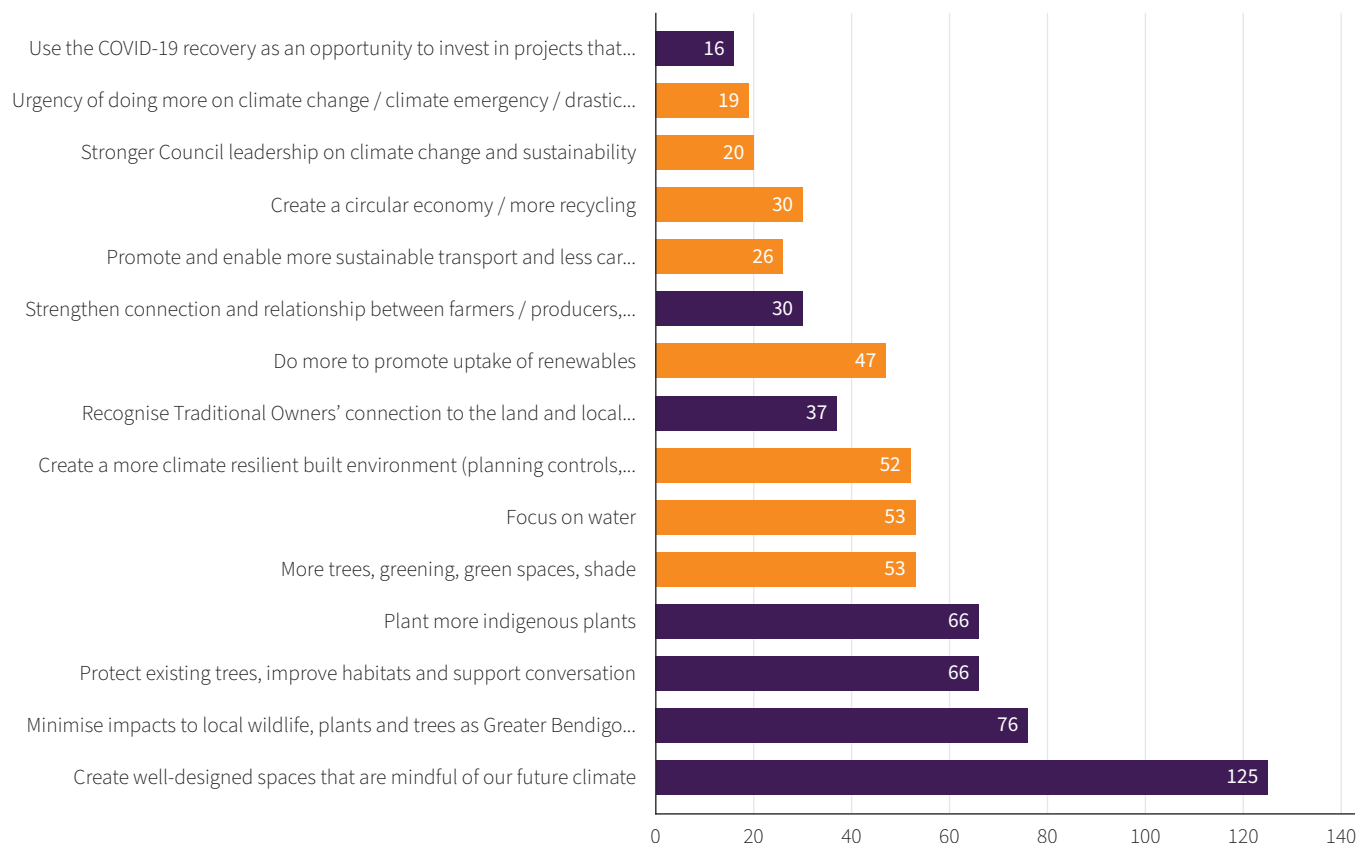
Community members previously said they value:

- Create well-designed spaces that are mindful of our future climate
- Minimise impacts to local wildlife, plants and trees as Greater Bendigo grows
- Recognise Traditional Owners' connection to the land and local knowledge
- Protect existing trees, improve habitats and support conservation
- Plant more indigenous plants
- Strengthen connections and relationships between farmers/producers, schools and the general community
- Use the COVID-19 recovery as an opportunity to invest in projects that have positive impacts on the environment (e.g. improve energy efficiency of housing and buildings)

All of these themes were reinforced by survey respondents and six new priority areas emerged, illustrated in orange in chart 6.

Responses to this theme yielded the longest responses, typically several paragraphs, and the question was only skipped by 10 respondents (as there was the option to skip questions in the survey). There is a major overlap with Theme 1 in the desire for more trees and green space and sustainable or active transport, and the repeat of the concern about water shown in the two general questions and Theme 1. There was also a strong emphasis on renewables and sustainability (though not explicitly with reference to COVID-19 as reported from previous engagement).

Chart 6: Environment and climate priorities



| Theme 4 – Priority areas | Total | Sub-priority/Comment |
|--|-------|--|
| Create well-designed spaces that are mindful of our future climate* | 125 | Equity of access to green space and of tree canopy cover (11). Also equity in rural and outlying areas More trees/greening etc. was a strong sub-priority of this and a theme in its own right (see below ‘More trees/greening/green spaces/shade’ and Theme 1) |
| Minimise impacts to local wildlife, plants and trees as Greater Bendigo grows | 76 | |
| Protect existing trees, improve habitats and support conversation | 66 | |
| Plant more indigenous plants | 66 | Indigenous vegetation (trees and plants) |
| More trees/greening/green spaces/shade | 53 | In general, in the Mall/city centre, sporting facilities, playgrounds, walking and cycling trails, new developments, livestock exchange *Not just indigenous trees |
| Focus on water | 53 | Water sustainability/security (23) Caring and rehabilitation of creeks and waterways (Bendigo Creek mentioned 10 times) (17) Water recycling and stormwater recovery (7) Mandate/incentivise water tanks (residential and commercial buildings) (9) |
| Create a more climate resilient built environment (planning controls, incentives, retrofits, solar, access to green space) | 52 | More environmentally sustainable design outcomes of new subdivisions (12) Mandate higher solar and energy efficiency standards (7) Improved energy efficiency of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Houses (new and existing) (16) Commercial buildings (4) Council buildings (8) Reduce urban heat through use of appropriate building materials (7) |
| Do more to promote uptake of renewables | 47 | See Theme 2 (opportunities in green industries and local power generation etc) |
| Recognise Traditional Owners’ connection to the land and local knowledge | 37 | Support for Indigenous fire management (5) |
| Strengthen connection and relationship between farmers/producers, schools and the general community | 30 | Promote regenerative/sustainable farming practices (13) Opportunities for urban farming/community food growing/nature strip food production/edible plantings (11) Farmer inequity, need to look after/not forget farmers (5) |
| Create a circular economy/more recycling | 30 | |
| Stronger Council leadership on climate change and sustainability | 20 | |
| Urgency of doing more on climate change/ climate emergency/drastic emissions reduction | 19 | |
| Use the COVID-19 recovery as an opportunity to invest in projects that have positive impacts on the environment (e.g. improve energy efficiency of housing and buildings) | 16 | Strong support for this theme |

*In each theme, bold denotes theme as reported from previous engagement. Not bold = new theme

Theme 5: Creating vibrant, creative communities

Theme 5 focuses on what respondents value for a vibrant, creative community within Greater Bendigo.

Community members previously said they value:

- Recognition of the importance and benefits of creativity
- Greater understanding and representation of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural and creative practices
- Activation of public and private creative spaces
- Opportunities for connection and collaboration with artists and the wider community
- Opportunities to grow networks that are supportive and inclusive
- Support opportunities for local artists and their initiatives
- Inclusion of culturally diverse people in local arts and creative industries

All of these themes were reinforced by survey respondents. The strongest theme reflected was the importance and benefits of creativity. The benefits of creativity for wellbeing, mental health and building community resilience were specifically identified in eight responses.

Support for activating public and private spaces was mentioned in 64 responses, with the need to focus beyond the city centre to small communities and suburban areas mentioned five times. The need to activate the Mall and city centre was also mentioned five times.

The third most-represented theme, with 53 responses, is the desire for more connection and collaboration with artists. A desire for participation in creative activities by community members was a strong sub-priority of these responses (15 mentions), as were the desire for inclusive activities and events and opportunities for children and young people to participate. These themes were also prominent in Theme 6. An additional theme around the need for inclusive spaces and infrastructure to support community participation in creativity also emerged (22 mentions).

| Theme 5 – Priority areas | Total | Sub-priority/Comment <i>Note: if blank, this indicates that the comments exactly or closely reflected the established priority area</i> |
|--|-------|--|
| Recognition of the importance and benefits of creativity | 70 | Benefits for wellbeing, mental health, community resilience identified (8) |
| Activation of public and private creative spaces | 64 | Thinking beyond the central urban area, small communities and suburban areas too (5) Activating the Mall/city centre and addressing issues there (5) |
| Opportunities for connection and collaboration with artists and the wider community | 53 | Participation of community in creativity key, not just observers (15) Inclusive activities and events (8) Participation of children and youth (5) |
| Support and opportunities for local artists and their initiatives | 46 | Infrastructure/spaces to enable this More festivals and local events with local artists and content (7) Local education offerings for artists/musicians at local TAFE/university (7) |
| Inclusion of culturally diverse people in local arts and creative industries | 29 | |

| Theme 5 – Priority areas | Total | Sub-priority/Comment <i>Note: if blank, this indicates that the comments exactly or closely reflected the established priority area</i> |
|---|-------|--|
| Opportunities to grow networks that are supportive and inclusive | 26 | |
| Greater understanding and representation of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural and creative practices | 25 | |
| Inclusive spaces/infrastructure to support community creativity | 22 | |

*In each theme, bold denotes theme as reported from previous engagement. Not bold = new theme

Theme 6: A supportive community and social environment

Theme 6 focuses on what respondents value for a supportive community and social environment within Greater Bendigo.

In previous engagement community members said they value:

- Family-friendly events and activities for people from different generations
- Working together to address loneliness and social isolation
- Improving support and services for mental health, homelessness and financial stress
- Working together to make Greater Bendigo feel safe and welcoming for all and preventing family violence
- Improving internet access, especially for rural residents and households with no internet
- The way the community has banded together during COVID-19
- Support for community sport, recreation and community groups to increase social connection after COVID-19

All of these themes were reinforced in survey responses. The strongest was the need to support community sport, recreation and community groups to increase social connection after COVID-19 (99 responses). Sub-priorities include the need to support volunteers and volunteering (17 responses) and for quality community facilities and hubs that enable such social connection (13 responses).

Working together to make Greater Bendigo feel 'safe, welcoming and inclusive for all' was the second strongest theme that emerged (78 responses). This theme from previous engagement was 'Working together to make Greater Bendigo feel safe and welcoming for all and preventing family violence' but the importance placed on inclusion was particularly strong (21 responses). Prevention of family violence was explicitly mentioned seven times. The need to address safety issues in Hargreaves Mall and the city centre was also mentioned six times.

The third most-represented theme, with 67 responses, was working together to address loneliness and social isolation. Support for older residents (14) and rural and isolated people (10) were strong sub-priorities in these responses. Opportunities for children and older people to come together (in aged care settings) was mentioned four times. The equal fourth most-common themes, with 61 responses, were improving support and services for mental health, homelessness and financial stress, and inclusive events and activities for people from different generations and backgrounds. While only reflected in 29 responses, improving access to internet and phone networks came through as a strong priority that is interrelated with the focus on rural and isolated people under the loneliness and social isolation theme.

| Theme 6 – Priority areas | Total | Sub-priority/Comment |
|--|-------|--|
| Support for community sport, recreation & community groups to increase social connection after COVID-19 | 99 | Community facilities/hubs, sporting facilities/public space as an enabler (13) Support for volunteers and volunteering/mentoring/skill sharing (17), low cost/free events, activities (7) |
| Working together to make Greater Bendigo feel safe and welcoming for all and preventing family violence | 78 | <i>Perhaps 'Working together to make Greater Bendigo feel safe, welcoming and inclusive for all' better captures the theme based on stage 1 engagement</i> Inclusive and safe spaces/opportunities to engage, and connect (21), issues in the city centre/Mall safety (6) |
| Working together to address loneliness and social isolation | 67 | Support for older residents (14) and rural and isolated people (10) strong sub-priority Opportunities for children and older people to come together in aged care settings (4) |

| Theme 6 – Priority areas | Total | Sub-priority/Comment |
|--|-------|--|
| Improving support and services for mental health, homelessness and financial stress | 61 | Addressing poverty and socio-economic disadvantage (14) Affordable housing (6), support for youth mental health and meaningful youth engagement (9) (linked to city centre/Mall issues) Support services, improved accessibility and inclusion of people with a disability (NDIS) (7) Focus on people in vulnerable situations (at risk, mothers/new parents) (6) |
| Family-friendly events and activities for people from different generations | 61 | Family-friendly and intergenerational activities for all life stages, all cultures and inclusive of LGBTI young people (21) <i>Perhaps 'Inclusive activities for all people' better captures the theme based on stage 1 engagement</i> |
| Improving internet access, especially for rural residents and households with no internet | 29 | Phone coverage as well as internet (5) |
| The way the community has banded together during COVID-19 | 22 | Community cooperation and whole-of-community effort to contribute, take care of those that are disadvantaged (8) Knowing you neighbours, and knowing they're there to support you (6) |

*In each theme, bold denotes theme as reported from previous engagement. Not bold = new theme

Long term financial planning/future finance

Given the Imagine Greater Bendigo deliberative engagement process will be drawn on to develop the City of Greater Bendigo's Long-Term Financial Plan, two optional survey questions sought community input around financial challenges facing the organisation and Council.

The preamble to these questions highlighted:

Rate-capping and maintaining spending on all current services is a significant challenge that limits our ability to fund new projects and initiatives.

As an example, the City of Greater Bendigo will need to spend between 2 and 3 per cent more every year for the next 10 years just to maintain existing assets. This is an increase from \$33M per year in 2020 to \$40M in 2030.

Without major change to service delivery or significantly more financial support from other levels of government, there will be less money available to fund new initiatives and maintain existing services or infrastructure. This will require prioritisation of the City's services.

The City is required to provide a number of services (e.g. swimming pools, garbage collection, immunisation and Bendigo Easter Festival) to the community. These services need to be provided fairly and meet the many different needs of residents.

The first question that followed this preamble was: How should Council prioritise which services it delivers to our growing and changing community, while also maintaining infrastructure it is responsible for and investing in new projects as they are needed?

There were 197 responses received and nine themes identified. The top theme, identified in 52 responses, was around better scoping, planning, monitoring and evaluation of projects. Sub-priorities related to improving asset and service planning. The second most-common theme, identified in 51 responses, was the need to prioritise improving health, wellbeing and equity. Sub-priorities identified relating to this were around addressing the disadvantage faced by particular cohorts, including Greater Bendigo's ageing population (8 responses), socio-economic disadvantage/financial hardship (8 responses), and children and young families. The third most-common theme was the need to prioritise climate risk and embrace environmentally sustainable design, identified in 38 responses.

| Priority areas | Total | Sub-priority/Comment |
|--|-------|--|
| <i>Note: if blank, this indicates that the comments exactly or closely reflected the established priority area</i> | | |
| Better scoping, planning, monitoring an evaluation of projects (to avoid cost blow outs and to help prioritisation) | 52 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good/better asset planning (15) • Good/better service planning (6) |
| Prioritise health and wellbeing/equity | 51 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific mentions: Ageing population/pensioners (8), socio-economic disadvantage / financial hardship (8), children and young families (5), vulnerable/marginalised (3), access and support for people with a disability (3) • Footpaths/sustainable transport/walking and cycling infrastructure (7) |
| Prioritise climate risk/Environmentally Sustainable Design (to address climate change and save on energy/renewal costs) | 38 | |
| Reduce operating costs and improve productivity/efficiency | 34 | |
| More regular informed community consultation on prioritisation | 29 | Not just listening to the loud voices/powerful interests (5) |

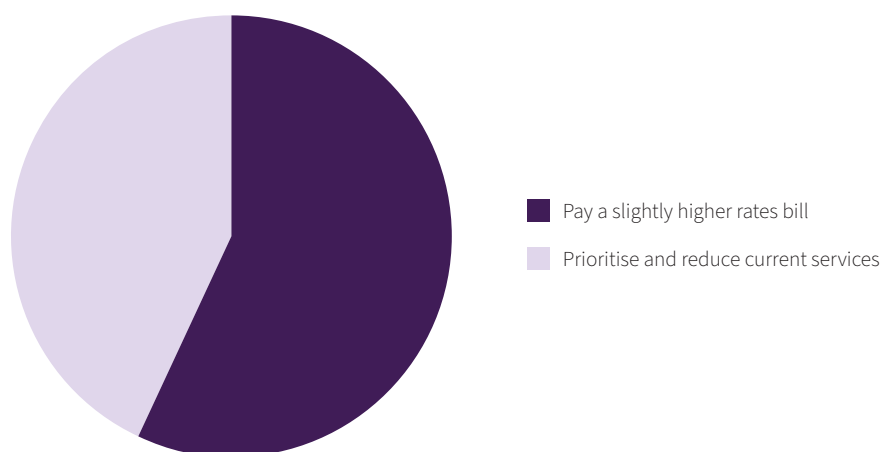
| Priority areas | Total | Sub-priority/Comment |
|--|-------|--|
| | | <i>Note: if blank, this indicates that the comments exactly or closely reflected the established priority area</i> |
| Find more ways to generate income | 18 | |
| Prioritise investment in rural/suburban areas/ outside the city centre and mall | 13 | |
| Advocate for more state and federal funding | 12 | |
| Co-management/co-investment of facilities with community | 7 | |

*In each theme, bold denotes theme as reported from previous engagement. Not bold = new theme

The second question asked: If you had to choose how Council funded future services and new projects, which of the below options would you prefer? The response options for this question were:

1. Pay a slightly higher rates bill to continue to fund new and current services and infrastructure, meaning the City would need to apply to the Victorian Government to raise rates above the set rate cap.
2. Prioritise and reduce current services so as not to pay more in rates

Of the 191 responses to this question, 109 (57%) opted for a slightly higher rates bill, while 82 (43%) opted for prioritising and reducing current services to avoid a rate rise.



A final optional question was asked to inform the Managed Growth Strategy currently being developed by the City's Regional Sustainable Development unit:

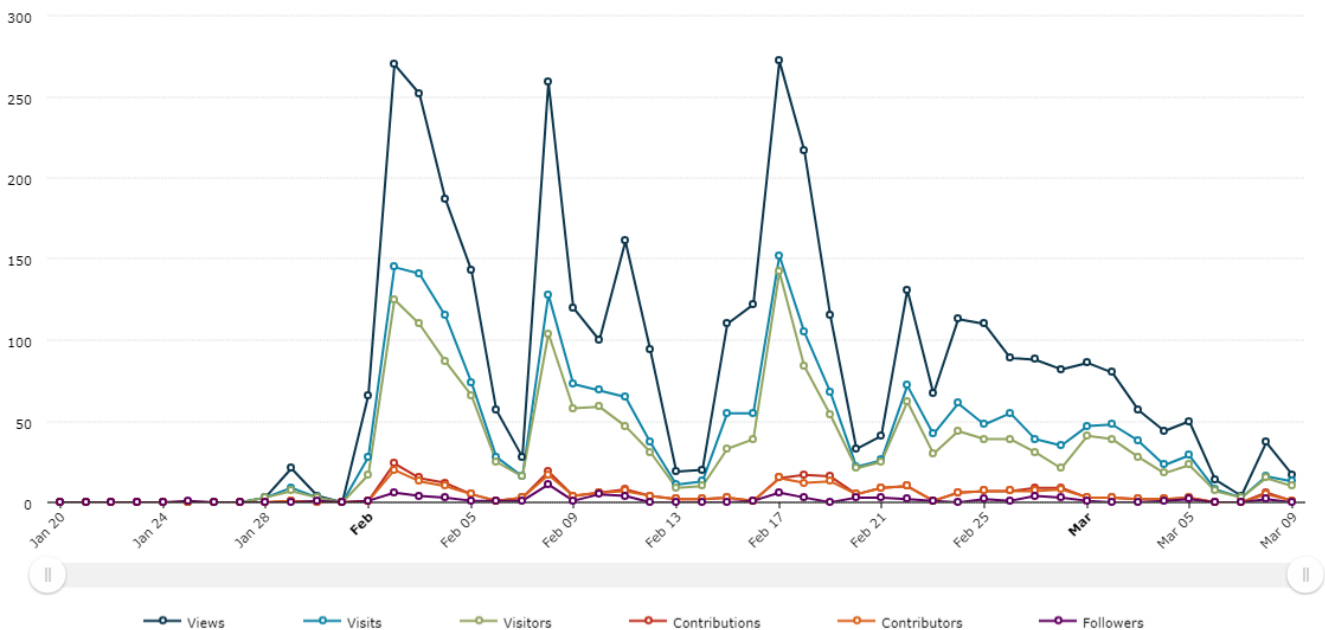
Greater Bendigo's population is predicted to grow significantly over the next 30 years, from around 120,000 today to 200,000 people by 2050. The purpose of this exercise is to get your thoughts on how our city, suburbs and rural townships should grow using the money Council has available, so as residents can have access to what they need to live good lives. We'd like you to think about your neighbourhood. It's up to your group how you want to define 'neighbourhood' – it might be a suburb, town or even the whole Greater Bendigo area.

Question 11: What are the most important issues you think we need to consider if Greater Bendigo's population nearly doubles in size (as predicted) by 2050?

The data from this question has been passed on to the City's Regional Sustainable Development unit. Analysis of the responses has not been conducted by the Imagine Greater Bendigo project team or presented in this report, as they do not relate specifically to the Imagine Greater Bendigo project.

While a full evaluation report will be produced, some early learnings have emerged, notably around who was reached and who engaged with stage 1 of the Imagine process. As graph 1 shows, engagement and contributions were high during February, with peaks on Tuesday February 2, Monday February 8 and a peak associated with the lockdown from February 17-19.

Graph 1: Frequency of responses

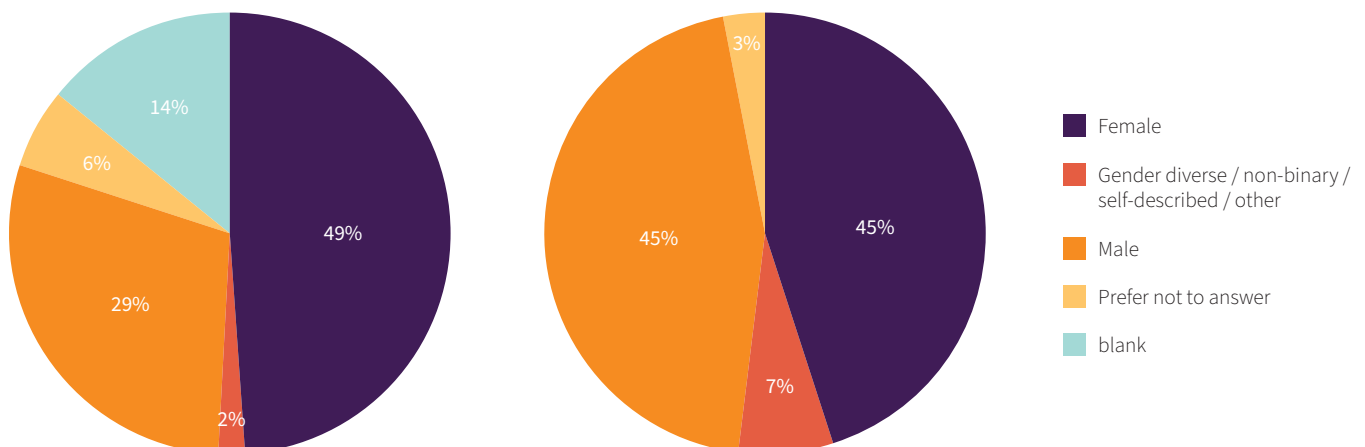


Demographic information from online respondents showed that more women than men completed the survey, with the exception of those in the 19-30 bracket where it evens out, as illustrated in figure 4. Note also the proportion of people with diverse gender identities is higher in this age group.

Figure 4: Gender split on online contributions

Gender split, all ages

Gender split, 19-30



Volunteer reflections have not been analysed in full however a few have mentioned that younger men were more difficult to engage at listening posts, this was reflected in the Let's Talk data with the average age of male respondents at 54.8 years, compared to the average age of female respondents at 47.9 years.

Bendigo, Strathdale and Strathfieldsaye were the top locations for online engagement, representing 21 per cent of total online participation.

By contrast, in-person participation was highest in Kangaroo Flat, with 186 contributions received, representing 45 per cent of all listening post interactions recorded. The second-highest location was Strathfieldsaye with 119 postcards received, 29 per cent of the total. Note art projects were held in both suburbs over three weekend days, which partly accounts for the high numbers.

Demographic data collected from online survey participants (187 responses) highlights that:

- 96% of responses came from people who speak English as their main language at home
- 70% of survey respondents have completed a Bachelor degree or higher
- Only one respondent identifies as Aboriginal
- 5 respondents identify as LGBTQIA+

Low online engagement among multicultural communities was anticipated and compensated for with postcards translated into Dinka, Dari and Karen, distributed in partnership with Bendigo Community Health Services and Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services, and at the Intercultural Ambassadors Games Day. This approach yielded 77 postcards from Bendigo's multicultural communities (full details in Appendix 2). Emerging themes in those responses differ slightly from the wider community, with a strong emphasis on inclusion in education and jobs.

This information will be further analysed to target stage 2 engagement prior to the deliberative engagement process.

This report summarises the community engagement approach and themes identified to date from stage 1 responses. This will inform the deliberative engagement process and targeted engagement in stage 2. A wide variety of tools and locations were used to invite community participation. Listening posts and postcard drops have generated 549 responses, followed by the Let's Talk website generating 194 individual survey responses, 24 group surveys with direct input from at least 160 people (on behalf of many more) and 27 submissions to the short 'visioner' tool. The 'Imagine it – Draw it' art project generated a further 98 entries, bring the total contributions to over 1,000 people.

Analysis shows that the community most values how healthy and liveable Greater Bendigo is now. They also value its country feel and heritage. Across all response types, improving health and liveability also rated as the highest priority, followed by a vibrant economy and resilience to climate change. Suggestions overlapped with priorities in health and liveability, like greening Greater Bendigo and sustainable transport. Water is a strong emerging priority across all datasets. The City has a strong base to build on and the large response numbers show that the community is engaged and committed to being part of the Imagine process.

Appendix 1: Engagement Plan on a Page

Appendix 2: Engagement locations and participation levels

Appendix 3: Analysis Approach

Appendix 4: Survey text

Appendix 5: Themes from previous engagement

1. Goals and Objectives

| Goals | Objectives |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To build the municipal community's understanding of current Council services, strategy and resources. 2. To strengthen trust in Council and its commitment to listening and responding to the municipal community needs. 3. To build a more comprehensive understanding of municipal community needs and aspirations to inform the development of short, medium- and long-term strategy | <p>Undertake a program of community engagement that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds upon the outcomes of previous engagement. • Engages a representative group from the municipal community with emphasis on groups considered 'harder to reach.' • Utilises all staff and partners in reaching out to the municipal community to seek their input and feedback. • Builds the capacity of Councillors and staff to understand and undertake deliberative and innovative engagement practices. • Builds Councillors trust and confidence in the overall engagement process and preparedness to accept its outcomes and build these into future strategy. • Enables continuous improvement as described in the overarching governance and community engagement principles of the new Local Government Act. |

2. Engagement Plan

| | Internal Engagement | Stage 1 Public Engagement | Stage 2 Public Engagement | Stage 3 Public Engagement | Deliberative Engagement |
|------------------------------|--|---|--|---|---|
| Purpose | Provide opportunities for Councillors and staff to understand, observe and participate in the community engagement. | Understand what the community loves, values and wants to see improved or changed in the future. | Understand the broad range of community needs and priorities in relation to Council's services and program delivery. | Present the draft strategic plans and invite feedback. | Deliberate over issues, challenges and opportunities to develop a shared Community Vision. |
| Timing | October 2020 – June 2021 | 18 January – 26 Feb 2021 (six-weeks) | 19 April – 14 May 2021 (four-weeks) | 12 July – 5 August 2021 (four-weeks) | 26 April – 14 May 2021 (three-weeks) |
| Engagement Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To seek endorsement of engagement approach from Council. • To provide Council staff with opportunities to share their local knowledge and provide support to deliver community engagement. • To meet integrated planning and reporting requirements. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To create interest and excitement in the future of Bendigo. • To build on previous community engagement. • To provide opportunities for the diverse members of the community to participate in thematic and placed-based conversations. • To build relationships with community and delivery partners. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To explore the key themes and outcomes of the Stage 1 engagement. • To understand community preferences and priorities. • To invite feedback on the draft Annual Budget. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To invite feedback on the draft strategic plans. • To demonstrate how community has contributed and influenced outcomes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To explore the key themes and outcomes of the Stage 1 engagement. • To deliberate on the future direction of the City of Greater Bendigo and a model for an effective community vision. • To create a Community Vision that will be embedded in strategic planning. • To use the deliberative process to explore supplementary issues or trade-offs. |

| | Internal Engagement | Stage 1 Public Engagement | Stage 2 Public Engagement | Stage 3 Public Engagement | Deliberative Engagement |
|-------------------------|---|--|--|---|--|
| Engagement Tools | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff workshops • Councillor briefing prior to each stage of engagement. • 'Translation and response' workshops at the end of each engagement stage to unpack the outcomes. • Regular internal updates on activities and outcomes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Engagement platform 'Let's Talk' • State of play report, City of Greater Bendigo Summary of Services and FAQs • Public art project to promote engagement and create interest in the community 'Imagine it – Draw it' • Share your story/vision • Listening posts / pop-ups at key location • Community conversation toolkit to allow community groups to host their own conversation • Postcards at key locations; Community Centres, Neighbourhood Houses, Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services and Bendigo Community Health Services. Postcards were provided in Dinka, Dari, Karen and English | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus groups / round tables • Targeted interviews with key stakeholders. • Structured feedback form focusing on the draft Annual Budget. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic and placed-based fact sheets and videos to summarise 'what we asked, what you said, how we will/have responded'. • Online Engagement including structured submission process. • Targeted interviews with key stakeholders. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two x community assemblies. 1 x adult (50 n), 1 x youth (20 n). • Three-day deliberative workshops for each community assembly. |
| Key inputs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement Approach • State of Play Report • Capacity building and training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State of Play Report (including high level narrative about the financial landscape) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage 1 Engagement Summary report • Stage 1 Engagement data • Draft Annual Budget | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage 1 and 2 Engagement Summary Reports • Stage 1 and 2 Engagement data • Draft Financial Plan, Community Vision, Council Plan (inc. Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State of Play Report • Stage 1 Engagement Summary Report • Stage 1 Engagement data • Facilitation training • Research papers / position statements around key themes or challenges |
| Outcomes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors and senior leadership to support and endorse the engagement process. • Staff have the skills and knowledge to support the engagement. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation that reflects Bendigo's diversity. • Rich evidence base to inform the Community Vision and Council's draft strategic plans. • Community members discussing and exploring the future of Bendigo. • High level of community interest, buy-in and support. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich evidence base to inform Council's draft strategic plans. • Community members discussing and identifying their preferences and priorities. • High level of community interest, buy-in and support. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich evidence base to inform Council's final strategic plans. • Community members with an understanding and appreciation of Bendigo's future direction. • High level of community interest, buy-in and support. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members with a high understanding of Bendigo's future direction. • High level of understanding of the role of Council. • Group of 'community champions' the reflect the diversity of Bendigo's population. |
| Outputs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Plan strategic objectives • Agreed negotiables and non-negotiables for the public and deliberative engagement. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage 1 Engagement Summary Report • Public art project | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage 2 Engagement Summary Report • Finalise annual budget | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage 3 Engagement Summary Report • Council Plan (inc. Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan) • Financial Plan • Asset Management Position Paper | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Vision • Deliberative Engagement Summary Report |

Listening posts

When mapping the engagement, there were an equal number of opportunities in each Council ward and while some locations did not yield postcard responses, there was value in listening to feedback and providing opportunities for conversation.

| Event details | Venue | Ward | Rural or Urban? | Responses |
|----------------|--|-----------|-----------------|---|
| Listening Post | Junourton General Store | Eppalock | Rural | 12 |
| Listening Post | Axedale General Store | Eppalock | Rural | 1 |
| Listening Post | Café Budburst, Redesdale | Eppalock | Rural | 2 |
| Listening Post | Flora Hill Bakehouse | Eppalock | Urban | 19 |
| Listening Post | Lockwood South and District Community Hall | Lockwood | Rural | No postcards but feedback, which was forwarded to Councilor Support |
| Listening Post | Malone Park | Lockwood | Rural | 0 |
| Listening Post | IGA Maiden Gully | Lockwood | Rural | 0 |
| Listening Post | Old Church on the Hill | Lockwood | Urban | 9 |
| Listening Post | Gurri Wanyarra | Lockwood | Urban | 18 |
| Listening Post | Spring Gully General Store | Lockwood | Urban | 0 |
| Listening Post | IGA - Kangaroo Flat | Lockwood | Urban | 38 |
| Listening Post | Sebastian Community Hall | Whipstick | Rural | 0 |
| Listening Post | IGA Elmore | Whipstick | Rural | 8 |
| Listening Post | Raywood Post Office | Whipstick | Rural | 12 |
| Listening Post | Huntly Family Fun Day | Whipstick | Rural | 5 |
| Listening Post | Eaglehawk Library | Whipstick | Urban | 8 |
| Listening Post | Long Gully IGA | Whipstick | Urban | 23 |
| Listening Post | Summer in the Parks, Garden For the Future | Whipstick | Urban | 17 |
| Listening Post | International Ambassadors games day | | Urban | 12 |

| Art Project | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----------------|---|
| Event details | Venue | Ward | Rural or Urban? | Responses |
| Imagine it - Draw it | Heathcote Library | Eppalock | Rural | Materials collated and analysed |
| Imagine it - Draw it | Strathfieldsaye IGA | Eppalock | Rural | 120 postcards received and recorded Art materials being analysed |
| Imagine it - Draw it | Kangaroo Flat Library | Lockwood | Urban | Materials collated and analysed |
| Imagine it - Draw it | Lansell Square | Lockwood | Urban | 163 postcards received and recorded Art materials being analysed |
| Imagine it - Draw it | Elmore Library Agency | Whipstick | Rural | Materials collated and analysed |
| Imagine it - Draw it | Beehive Building Culture Exchange | Whipstick | Urban | Materials collated and analysed |
| Imagine it - Draw it | Bendigo Library | Whipstick | Urban | 4 postcards Materials collated and analysed |

| Postcards and letterboxes | | | | |
|--|---|-----------|-----------------|-----------|
| Postcards produced in four languages; Dinka, Dari, Karen and English. A 'letterbox' together with postcards were set up at a number of locations. While there was goodwill and a desire to be involved, this did not always translate into postcards received. | | | | |
| Event details | Venue | Ward | Rural or Urban? | Responses |
| Letterbox and postcards | Bendigo Neighbourhood Hub | Eppalock | Urban | 0 |
| Letterbox and postcards | Eaglehawk Community House | Whipstick | Urban | 17 |
| Letterbox and postcards | Heathcote Community House | Eppalock | Rural | 0 |
| Letterbox and postcards | Kangaroo Flat Community House | Lockwood | Urban | 3 |
| Letterbox and postcards | Long Gully Neighbourhood Centre | Whipstick | Urban | 0 |
| Letterbox and postcards | Marong Neighbourhood House | Lockwood | Rural | 0 |
| Letterbox and postcards | Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services (LCMS) | NA | Urban | 2 |
| Letterbox and postcards | Bendigo Community Health Services (BCHS) | NA | Urban | 53 |

Group surveys

Based on the survey responses given by the groups themselves, these submissions represent a membership of 2,971 people. Given that some groups stated the number of people involved in developing a submission and some reported their overall membership, we have conservatively estimated that 160 people or more were directly involved in developing a response. In many cases groups reported that they were writing on behalf of their members.

| Group number | Total number of members | Age range | Number of people who developed response |
|--------------|---|--|---|
| 1 | 10 | 35-65 | 10 |
| 2 | 5 | all adults | 5 |
| 3 | 4 | 40-60 | 4 |
| 4 | 5 | 40-65 | 5 |
| 5 | 18 | 55-85 | 3 |
| 6 | 30 | 7-68 | 1 |
| 7 | 18 | 55-85 | 4 |
| 8 | 94 | 20-90 | 1 |
| 9 | 114 | 6 weeks to 6 years | 1 |
| 10 | 100 | 16-75 | 6 |
| 11 | 100 | 1-75 | 13 |
| 12 | 12 | 20-55 | 1 |
| 13 | 20 | 35-80 | 1 |
| 14 | 200 | 15-90 | 25 |
| 15 | 3 | 27-56 | 3 |
| 16 | 6 | 40-70 | 6 |
| 17 | 9 | 30-55 | 9 |
| 18 | 1650 | From primary aged students to 90+ | 8 |
| 19 | 13 | 30 to 60 years of age. This is our office staff only | 13 |
| 20 | 180 | 17-90 | 15 |
| 21 | 350 on mailing list with 20+ active members | 18-96 | 3 |
| 22 | 15 | 12-25 | 15 |
| 23 | 15 | 10-12 | 11 |
| 24 | 29 | All ages | 2 |

The data from all sources was recorded in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. It was then qualitatively analysed following a thematic approach, which is a tool for identifying, reporting and analysing patterns in data in a rich and detailed way ([Braun & Clarke, 2006](#)). Because a goal of stage 1 engagement was to build on previous community engagement, a deductive analysis process was followed, to allow a more detailed analysis of the data relating to our six pre-identified themes. To identify new themes, an inductive process was followed at the same time.

Following the process in Braun and Clarke (2006), analysis began with capturing the data. All coding was done by two people working together to ensure rigor. Coding began by reading the data to become familiar with its content, then continued by going through the entries line by line and allocating codes to elements that stood out.

Because of the large data set, each team of two coders analysed answers to one question. Priority was given to analysing Question 2: 'What would make Greater Bendigo an even better place to live 30 years from now?' and the six questions relating to already identified themes. Question 1: 'What makes Greater Bendigo a great place to live now?' will be reported in the stage 2 engagement report.

Question 1: What makes Greater Bendigo a great place to live now?

Question 2: What would make Greater Bendigo an even better place to live 30 years from now?

The next section (Section 3) is divided into six themes and summarises feedback from recent community engagement opportunities about what our community values most about where they live. We want to see if you agree with this feedback or if there is anything else you would like to add. Ask people, individually or in small groups, to consider these themes and write down what participants agree on and any differences. Add additional points the group feels are missing. Thinking about recent times, we would also like people to consider what is most important to them now. Have your priorities changed compared to what you might have said in 2019?

Theme 1: A healthy, liveable community

Community members said they value:

- Cool, shady and green streets with accessible parks and play spaces
- Access to cheap, healthy food
- Walking and cycling paths for people of all ages and abilities
- Growing more food locally in schools, community gardens and on farms
- Affordable, safe and secure housing
- Better access to public transport and walking and cycling paths to move around
- Better access to health services for older residents

Question 3: When you imagine a future Greater Bendigo, what do you value for a healthy, liveable community?

Theme 2: A strong, inclusive and sustainable economy

Community members said they value:

- More opportunities for young people to go to university or TAFE so they can stay in Greater Bendigo
- More job opportunities for young people and people with a disability
- Support for local artists and businesses, particularly after COVID-19
- Promote and sell a wide variety of local produce in the community
- An economy that addresses disadvantage, attracts visitors and is sustainable
- Supporting people whose income and employment was hit particularly hard by COVID-19, including women, young people and temporary visa holders
- Supporting young people whose schooling and education has been interrupted by COVID-19

Question 4: When you imagine a future Greater Bendigo, what do you value for a strong, inclusive and sustainable economy?

Theme 3: Aboriginal reconciliation and celebration of diversity

Community members said they value:

- Seeing more examples of Aboriginal culture and history across Greater Bendigo
- Better job opportunities, procurement and improved economic outcomes for Aboriginal people
- Aboriginal families and children being supported to connect to their culture
- Increasing community understanding of the cultural practices and values of Traditional Owners
- Seeing the goals of Traditional Owners reflected in long-term plans for Greater Bendigo

- Working together to meet the needs of refugees and people seeking asylum
- Working together to build a welcoming city by addressing racism

Question 5: When you imagine a future Greater Bendigo, what do you value for Aboriginal reconciliation and celebration of diversity?

Theme 4: A healthy natural environment that promotes resilience to a changing climate

Community members said they value:

- Create well-designed spaces that are mindful of our future climate
- Minimise impacts to local wildlife, plants and trees as Greater Bendigo grows
- Recognise Traditional Owners' connection to the land and local knowledge
- Protect existing trees, improve habitats and support conservation
- Plant more indigenous plants
- Strengthen connections and relationships between farmers / producers, schools and the general community
- Use the COVID-19 recovery as an opportunity to invest in projects that have positive impacts on the environment (e.g. improve energy efficiency of housing and buildings)

Question 6: When you imagine a future Greater Bendigo what do you value for a healthy natural environment that promotes resilience to a changing climate?

Theme 5: A vibrant, creative community

Community members said they value:

- Recognition of the importance and benefits of creativity
- Greater understanding and representation of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural and creative practices
- Activation of public and private creative spaces
- Opportunities for connection and collaboration with artists and the wider community
- Opportunities to grow networks that are supportive and inclusive
- Support opportunities for local artists and their initiatives
- Inclusion of culturally diverse people in local arts and creative industries

Question 7: When you imagine a future Greater Bendigo, what do you value in a vibrant, creative community?

Theme 6: A supportive community and social environment

Community members said they value:

- Family-friendly events and activities for people from different generations
- Working together to address loneliness and social isolation
- Improving support and services for mental health, homelessness and financial stress
- Working together to make Greater Bendigo feel safe and welcoming for all and preventing family violence
- Improving internet access, especially for rural residents and households with no internet
- The way the community has banded together during COVID-19
- Support for community sport, recreation and community groups to increase social connection after COVID-19

Question 8: When you imagine a future Greater Bendigo, what do you value in a supportive community and social environment?

Section 4 is optional and focuses on finance and managing future population growth. These topics will be explored in more detail in stage 2 of community consultation for Imagine Greater Bendigo, but it would be great to get some feedback now. The purpose of these questions is to get the group's thoughts on:

- *How we prioritise delivering services to our growing and changing community*
- *Where and how we grow to make sure our city, townships and rural areas continue to provide what people need to live good lives, within the resources available to us*

Finance

Rate-capping and maintaining spending on all current services is a significant challenge that limits our ability to fund new projects and initiatives. As an example, the City will need to spend more every year for the next 10 years just to maintain existing assets. This will need to increase from \$33M per year in 2020 to \$40M in the future. Without major change to service delivery or significantly more financial support from other levels of government, there will be less money available to fund new initiatives and maintain existing services or infrastructure. This will require prioritisation of the City's services. The City is required to provide a number of services to the community. These services need to be provided fairly and meet the many different needs of residents. With this in mind:

Question 9: How should Council prioritise which services it delivers to our growing and changing community, while also maintaining infrastructure it is responsible for and investing in new projects as they are needed?

Question 10: If you had to choose how Council funded future services and new projects, which of the below options would you prefer?

- *Pay a slightly higher rates bill to continue to fund new and current services and infrastructure, meaning the City would need to apply to the Victorian Government to raise rates above the set rate cap*
- *Prioritise and reduce current services so as not to pay more in rates?*

Managing growth

Greater Bendigo's population is predicted to grow significantly over the next 30 years, from around 120,000 today to 200,000 people by 2050. The purpose of this exercise is to get your thoughts on how our city, suburbs and rural townships should grow using the money Council has available, so as residents can have access to what they need to live good lives. We'd like you to think about your neighbourhood. It's up to your group how you want to define 'neighbourhood' – it might be a suburb, town or even the whole Greater Bendigo area.

Question 11: What are the most important issues you think we need to consider if Greater Bendigo's population nearly doubles in size (as predicted) by 2050?

Reporting back what community members said they value under each of the themes was sourced from the following engagement processes. Where publicly available, a link to the source document is included.

Greening Greater Bendigo

- Cool, Shady and Green
- Support human health and wellbeing
- Well-designed spaces mindful of future climate and maintenance requirements
- Protect existing trees.
- Enhance habitat and support conservation.
- Indigenous vegetation

Barpangu: Reconciliation Plan

- Priorities identified by the Aboriginal community:
- Aboriginal employment and procurement outcomes
- Increase visibility of Aboriginal culture and history across Greater Bendigo
- Improved cultural safety of the organization
- Support connection to culture for Aboriginal families and children
- Greater communication and feedback back to community
- Increase awareness of broader community

All Ages All Abilities Plan

Early years – Children 0-11

- More parks and green spaces. More shaded play spaces and play spaces with secure fencing
- Infrastructure to increase opportunities for physical activity i.e. cycling and walking paths, and outdoor exercise equipment
- More family friendly events
- Access to affordable healthy food options
- Increased support and shelters for homeless people
- Improved communication about networks, events and services available to the community

Young people – aged 12-25

- Increased support and services for mental health
- Improved safety perceptions for the community
- Access to employment opportunities
- Improved cycling and walking paths

People with a disability

- Improved communication about supports, networks, events and services available to the community
- Improved employment opportunities
- Infrastructure to increase accessibility e.g. walking paths, footpaths, parking

Older adults

- Increased transport support to access activities for social connection and reduced isolation
- Increased access to health services
- Improved safety perceptions for the community
- Accessible parking options
- Improved avenues for communication regarding supports, networks, events and services available to the community
- Improved cycling and walking paths
- Intergenerational activities

Relief and Recovery Plan Survey: First 1000 responses analysed

- **Opportunities:** Building on from where we are (strength based)
- Supporting local- “banding together as a community’
- Environment/Climate – invest in projects that have positive impacts on environment e.g. energy efficiency
- Focus thinking – where we were before, do we need to reassess? Fear of returning to ‘normal’ after COVID-19 – remember for some people ‘normal’ wasn’t good pre-COVID-19
- Need for Advocacy to promote digital inclusion
- **Gaps:** Job loss, imbalance for people who are “citizens” for tax purpose (pay tax), but not eligible for assistance
- “unfair distribution of jobkeeper and other support across community, impacted significantly on youth casual employment”
- New group of vulnerable people that have lost jobs and haven’t required support prior to COVID-19
- “Loss of focus on environment, had traction with fires”

Food System Strategy

- More food being grown locally – food grown in schools, community gardens, orchards
- More local produce being utilised locally – sold at Famers Markets and local supermarkets, used in cafes and restaurants, cooked with in school kitchen garden programs
- Strengthen connection and relationship between farmers/producers, schools and the general community
- Less unhealthy fast food, more healthy options available

Greater CREATIVE Bendigo

- Recognise the importance and benefits of creativity
- Greater understanding and representation of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural and creative practices
- Inclusion of culturally diverse people
- Activate public and private spaces
- Connect and collaborate with other creatives as well as non-creatives.
- Supporting local creatives and initiatives through empowerment and providing opportunities
- Grow networks that are supportive and inclusive
- Collaboration across the region and regional leadership

Reimagining Bendigo Creek

- The broader community have limited understanding about the cultural practices and values of the Dja Dja Wurrung. Djaara people have a special connection and relationship with Country. Traditional ecological knowledge plays an important role
- The creek predominantly reflects migrant culture and values
- There is a lack of cultural education and interpretive signs along the Bendigo Creek about the Dja Dja Wurrung
- Pressure from increasing urbanisation and population growth impacts on aquatic flora and fauna
- Parks, public places, cultural attractions and other places of significance along the Creek are not well integrated
- There are limited opportunities, infrastructure and amenities to encourage all abilities access to the Creek
- High organisational/governance complexity – many organisations and interests are involved. Fragmented views and uncoordinated approach across responsible organisations

Walk, Cycle Greater Bendigo

Residents want

- To be separated from cars when riding a bicycle
- Bendigo's trail networks to be connected and activated
- Safe and comfortable road crossings on trails

A Stronger Greater Bendigo – Youth forum thematic analysis

In 10 years, the youth of today will stay in Bendigo if there was:

- More high-profile universities and wider range of courses
- Businesses employing youth
- Easier transportation around the city
- Making the environment feel safer and welcoming for all
- Creating opportunities with more universities available so people will stay in Bendigo.
- Communication; with young people and youth council, link with businesses and schools, funding (budget control) and investing money into youth opportunities.