

September 2019

DRAFT PLAN HARCOURT



Acknowledgement of Country

Mount Alexander Shire Council acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung as the traditional owners of the lands and waters of Harcourt and recognises all other indigenous people of the Shire and the vital role that the traditional owners, the local Jaara people, play as custodians of the region.

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1 Why we need this plan and what it does

The towns of Mount Alexander Shire have a strong sense of place, which is the focus of significant community pride. Plan Harcourt is one step in Council's efforts to foster this sense of place and use this as a catalyst for future development.

Mount Alexander Shire is an attractive place to live for its proximity to Melbourne and Bendigo, and the improved transport connections through the Calder Freeway and the Melbourne to Bendigo railway line.

Harcourt has been identified as a small town that can accommodate planned growth in the region. This is recognised in the Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan 2014 and in the Mount Alexander Planning Scheme. However, this needs to be carefully planned to promote local character, recognise the highly productive agricultural operations around the town, ensure that there is adequate land supply and infrastructure to accommodate growth, and protect other natural and cultural features of the area.

Plan Harcourt is an overarching Council-led project that focuses on better integrating planning and local economic development with community aspirations and local identity. Plan Harcourt comprises of the Harcourt Framework Plan and Shine Harcourt Leanganook.

The Harcourt Framework Plan is a spatial plan that takes a township-wide approach to how land is used, to the town's look and feel, and to fostering the elements that contribute to the township's identity.

The plan is based around five themes identified through community engagement in Harcourt.

Each of the plan's actions are grouped into one of the following categories, which follows through to an implementation plan:

- Planning policy reforms that will lead to changes to the Mount Alexander Planning Scheme. This will inform future land use and development decisions in Harcourt.
- Urban design interventions that relate to how Harcourt looks, feels and works as a town.
- Advocacy priorities for both Council and the community to drive.

The plan will:

- Guide land use and development in Harcourt through planning policy reform, with a focus on fostering local character and landscape amenity, supporting a cohesive sense of community and supporting primary production.
- Guide the look, feel and function of the town centre, by better linking and defining key public spaces and fostering a more cohesive public realm.
- Build from studies such as the Harcourt Landscape Master Plan, Harcourt Town Centre Master Plan, planned upgrades to Stanley Park North and the potential return of passenger trains to Harcourt Railway Station to ensure these interventions are knitted into the town's fabric.

Shine Harcourt Leanganook is an economic growth plan that frames the further development of a localised economy with measures that can be community-led, incorporated into government strategy or become the focus of local advocacy. Where Shine Harcourt Leanganook includes elements that can be implemented spatially and led by Council, these are considered in the development of the Harcourt Framework Plan.

2 The place-based method and the Ecological Framework

The Harcourt Framework Plan takes a place-based approach, which aims to recognise and foster Harcourt's unique character and attributes into the future. This has involved listening to and engaging with community members who live, work and play in Harcourt to understand their needs and aspirations, and conducting deep observational research. It means working in partnership to capitalise on these assets to create a distinctive place. This approach aims to ensure that growth and change does not overwhelm the town's character or its fabric, but rather contributes to it.

An ecological framework underpins this place-based method. The framework recognises five interrelated factors that sit at the 'heart' of a place:

- Wellbeing
- Prosperity
- Place character
- Connectedness
- Resilience

Research activities conducted as part of the Harcourt Framework Plan include:

- Audit of current planning policies.
- Reviews of plans, written histories and archaeological documents.
- Quantitative data including ABS Census information and reviews of building permit data.
- Observational activity mapping in the town centre to better understand vehicle and pedestrian movement, built form, landscape, gateways to town and key activity nodes.

The *Plan Harcourt Discussion Paper* was released for community feedback in November 2018.



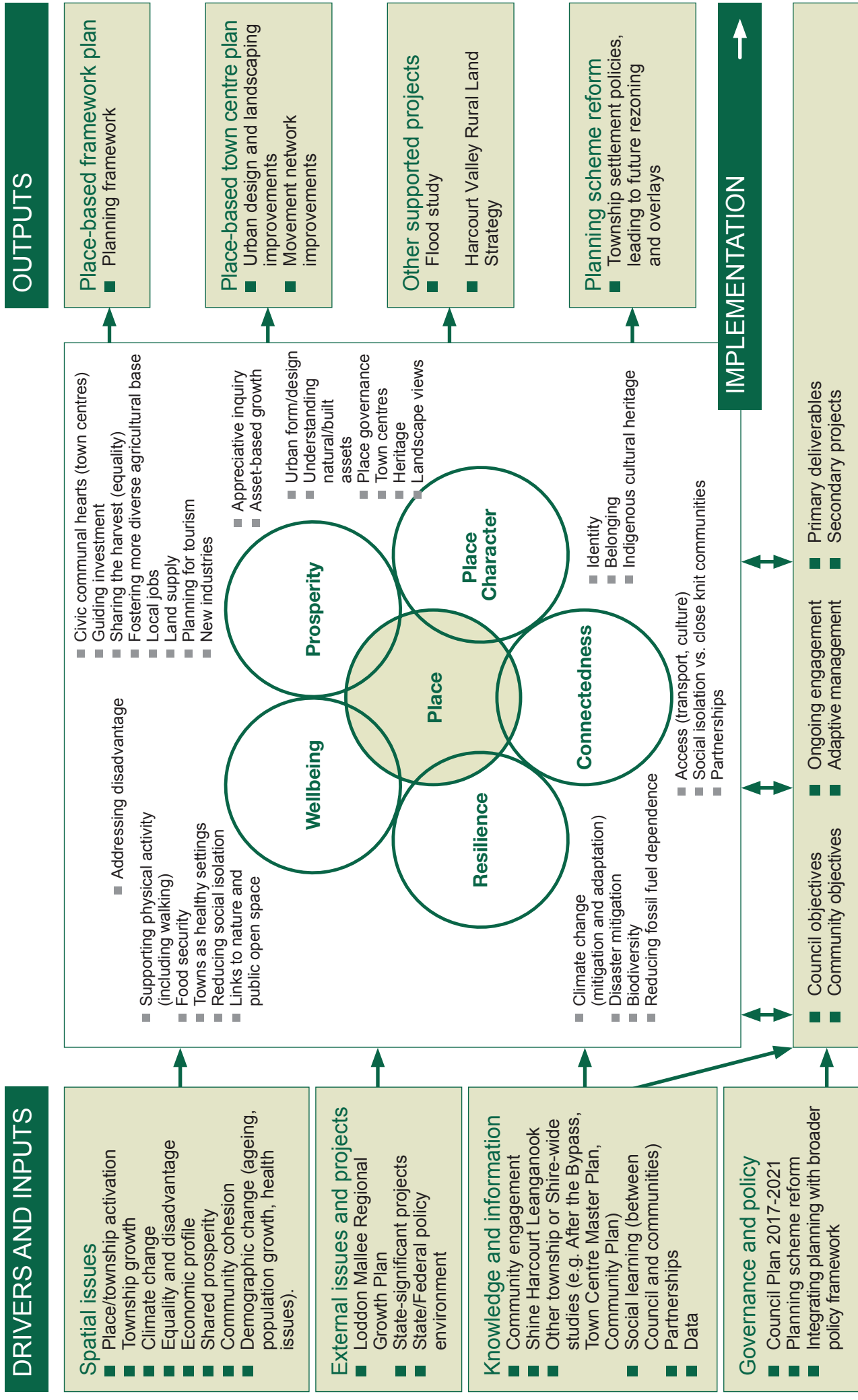
Community engagement activities informing the plan included:

- Consultation launch week information sessions
- Drop-in sessions (pop-up project offices)
- Surveys (online and hard copy)
- Online interactive map of Harcourt allowing for users to share their ideas for Harcourt spatially
- A workshop with grade 5/6 students of Harcourt Valley Primary School
- Meetings and conversations with community groups, government agencies, referral authorities and Council staff

The Plan Harcourt: What We Heard paper summarises the feedback that was received.

The Harcourt Framework Plan has also drawn insight from community engagement conducted as part of the Shine Harcourt economic stimulus process.

2 The place-based method and the Ecological Framework



3 The layers of Harcourt

3.1 A Story of Place

Mount Alexander Shire Council recognises the Dja Dja Wurrung people as the traditional owners of the lands and waters of Harcourt and recognises the vital role that the local Jaara people play as custodians of the region.

Nestled in rolling topography, on meandering creeklines and the foothills of 'Lianyuk', the mountain that gives our Shire its name, Harcourt is a town in a stunning setting. Harcourt is located on Barkers Creek and this waterway and its tributaries have played an important role to the local Jaara people for many years. The Dja Dja Wurrung Country Plan emphasises the significance of waterways:

“ They are places that are central to our creation stores, and many of our cultural heritage sites are associated with waterways –burial sites, birthing sites and middens. Our waterways are places that we connect with our ancestors and pass traditional knowledge on to our children and grandchildren”.

The nearby Mount Alexander, known to the Jaara people as 'Lianyuk' (Leanganook), was significant as a sacred ceremonial ground (Carr, 2002). This mountain was named by Major Mitchell on his 1836 expedition after Alexander the Great, emperor of ancient Macedonia, and remains a prominent landmark in the area.

Dr William Barker was one of the first settlers in the Harcourt area who established the Mount Alexander Station in 1835. The township was surveyed in 1853, followed by the opening of a school (1859) a Methodist church (1864) and a railway station (1863) when the line was opened between Kyneton and Bendigo. While alluvial gold was discovered at Barkers Creek in 1851, the early settlement's role was more prominent in supplying agricultural produce to the Castlemaine goldfields.

The first apple orchard was planted in 1859 and the region soon became known as one of the state's major apple centres.

By the 1880s the main plantings were apples, pears and cherries. In 1881 a water-supply channel from the Coliban system for sluicing gold at Specimen Gully was tapped for irrigation of the

Harcourt orchards, and by 1868 a reservoir had been built north of Harcourt on Barkers Creek. Over the next several decades, the Harcourt Valley, between Mount Alexander and Bald Hills, became an apple orchard area which produced export quality crops, and much of the town's housing stock can be dated from that period. A co-operative fruit-drying company was formed in 1908 with an extension to the irrigation channels to service the northern and western areas in 1910. It was around this time that Harcourt experienced its greatest period of growth (Twigg and Jacobs, 1994) and the development of Stanley Park with its monuments and trees reflects the town's prosperity around this time.

During the late 19th century Harcourt became the largest producer of granite in Victoria and this was used for buildings all over Australia, including Parliament House in Canberra, the John Flynn Memorial at Alice Springs and the pedestal of the Burke and Wills statue in Melbourne. Today, the town continues to be defined by its evocative landscape setting, the interaction of bushland, apple trees and wineries and places that hold a deep sense of attachment.

Harcourt has experienced significant change through the bypassing of the Calder Freeway in 2009, which resulted in approximately 9,000 fewer vehicles travelling through Harcourt per day. The former Calder Highway was renamed Harmony Way in 2012 after Henry 'Harmony' Nelson who was one of the 'apical' elders of the Dja Dja Wurrung clan of the late 19th century.

La Larr Ba Gauwa Park, located two kilometres east of Harcourt and adjacent to the Mount Alexander Regional Park was opened in March 2018. The Park, funded by the Victorian Government's Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund, includes 34 kilometres of mountain bike trails and is becoming a key tourism destination in the region. A miniature railway station currently under construction within the Harcourt township is also expected to attract future visitors. In August 2018 the State Government committed to starting to plan for the reopening of the Harcourt Train Station, which would have a significant influence on the town's growth.

3 The layers of Harcourt

3.2 Urban form

The layout of the Harcourt township has formed around the natural constraint of Barkers Creek to the west / northwest, the railway line to the west and native bushland, the irrigation channel and productive agricultural land to the east. This is further enhanced through the Harmony Way spine and its original role as part of the old Calder Highway, with High Street to the east forming the main retail spine. This has led to a linear layout with three key nodes including:

- the James Park to Stanley Park precinct geographically located at the centre of the town;
- the primary school and recreation reserve to the south on Mills Road; and
- the recreation facilities on Bridge Street north of the town centre.

The town centre can be difficult for visitors to recognise as it lacks the typical features of a rural settlement such as a single main road and buildings and verandahs that face onto the street. The road network is also unusual: Both Harmony Way and High Street could act as the main road and rather than the streetscape being dominated by buildings, it is characterised by an abundance of green and vacant space including James Park, Stanley Park and the area around the café and motel buildings.

This spaciousness creates an open relaxed atmosphere that meshes well with the surrounding landscape, but it also results in a large amount of space being given over to roadways and undermines the coherence of the town centre, particularly at points where buildings do not clearly face street frontages or paths.

The meandering road layout and topography around Harcourt’s outskirts create a range of approach views and interactions with the landscape – particularly from the southern



approach. This layout and the lack of wayfinding can create disorientation, and there are opportunities to create clearer thresholds to mark out points of entry to the town and point to major destinations.

Residential development is generally concentrated in two areas being east of Harmony Way and south of the intersection of Victoria Road and Harmony Way. The street layout east of Harmony Way has a grid pattern with a mix of lot sizes ranging from 700 to 4,000 square metres. The southern residential area is formed around the curved roads of Coolstore Road and Bingham Road.

Roads in Harcourt are a mix of sealed and unsealed with minimal formal drainage infrastructure. There is an inconsistency of nature strip widths however these are generally wide and in many cases contain large eucalypts trees.

Most dwellings in Harcourt are located well setback from the front boundary and side boundaries, often with open-styled fencing. This provides views between built form. This is enhanced by a dominance of single storey dwellings, providing for views to significant landscapes including Mount Alexander and the ridgelines of Barkers Creek. This sense of landscape openness is important in defining the town’s character.

3 The layers of Harcourt

3.3 Heritage

Heritage buildings and sites of Harcourt have been documented in the Shire of Metcalfe Heritage Study (1994) and this has led to Heritage Overlays being applied to nine heritage places located in the Harcourt township, as well as other sites in the wider Harcourt locality, Harcourt North, Faraday and on Mount Alexander.

Barkers Creek and land 200 metres either side of the waterway are mapped as having potential Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity. No sites of Aboriginal cultural heritage significance are currently mapped under the Heritage Overlay, however sites in the town centre including the scar tree in Stanley Park have particular significance.

The town centre spine along Harmony Way and High Street from Victoria Road to Bridge Street contains the heritage buildings of Blume House & Bakery, Hampson House, the ANA Hall, the Harcourt Post Office and the Harcourt Hotel, which is now a private residence. Other heritage sites within this area include the remains of an early granite bridge on Bridge Street and Harmony Way and Stanley Park. The Metcalfe Heritage Study (1994: 27) states:



“Harcourt expressed its new found civic pride in the creation of a park – Stanley Park – located in the centre of the town and opened by the Governor of Victoria in 1914”.

Stanley Park today remains Harcourt’s focal point, and with the Scar Tree and memorial deciduous plantings forms a unique repository for local stories that can be further fostered.

The wider township area includes the heritage buildings of Harcourt Uniting Church and the former Harcourt Primary State School, as well as the Harcourt Church of Christ and Rechabite Hall on the Midland Highway.

The Heritage Overlay applies to two precincts associated with the railway, including the Symes Road railway bridge and the Blackjack Road railway bridge, which are both included on the Victorian Heritage Register.



There is potential for decommissioned irrigation infrastructure, including the concrete channel on the eastern edge of the township, to have cultural heritage significance. These assets could be adaptively reused to achieve broad community benefit.

4 Strategic context

4.1 Drivers of change

Proximity to Melbourne and Bendigo along the Calder transport corridor

Harcourt's proximity to Melbourne and Bendigo and the strong transport links of the Calder transport corridor are increasing the movement of people. This is allowing for more potential for commuter living, which would be accentuated with the potential future reinstatement of passenger rail services to Harcourt. Better connecting the railway station and surrounds into Harcourt's fabric would become an increasing focus of planning.

With transport links and Bendigo's growth, comes the increasing potential for peri-urban growth pressure around Harcourt. This highlights the need for future residential development to be carefully planned so as not to encroach on landscape character and the productivity of agricultural land.

Planning will need to focus on preserving the character of these non-urban breaks around Harcourt, particularly on ridge lines around the town.

Changing economic profile

Harcourt's economy is evolving and new businesses are emerging. There is a drive to value add to existing primary production through processing, cider and wine production, and agritourism offerings that also draw on the local landscape. These economic opportunities depend on continuing to foster Harcourt's sense of place, while ensuring residential development does not encroach on agricultural production. While the Harcourt Framework Plan focuses on the town, it recognises an opportunity to review planning policies in the surrounding Harcourt Valley to ensure they foster primary production while also supporting value-adding activities like processing or agritourism. Harcourt is also becoming a key tourist destination for its mountain bike trails at La Larr Ba Gauwa Park and the miniature railway is currently under construction.



Climate Change

Mount Alexander Shire is vulnerable to weather events that will be magnified by climate change. This includes prolonged droughts and fire seasons, heatwaves and widespread floods. The Shire's average temperatures will continue to increase in all seasons, with warmer days and fewer frosts projected. Less rainfall is also projected during the cool season (Climate Change Action Plan 2016-2020). These changes will have widespread implications on Harcourt and highlights the need to plan to respond to flooding, bushfire and extreme heat. There are also ways to reduce urban heat island temperatures through increasing the level of tree canopy cover in urban areas.

Changing demographic profile

Harcourt has a relatively young population compared to the Shire as a whole. The median age of Harcourt residents is 46, compared with a median age of 49 for the Mount Alexander Shire. While Harcourt's median age is much higher than the Victorian median age of 37, the town has a significantly lower portion of population aged over 75 than the state average. Harcourt also has a higher average people per household count at 2.5 persons compared with 2.2 persons for Mount Alexander shire, and a higher rate of couple families with children at 41.5 per cent compared with 35.3 per cent for the shire. This demographic profile may be a result of the potential for commuter living in Harcourt, combined with the lack of smaller, low maintenance housing for people to access as they age.

4 Strategic context

4.2 Policy context: Current policies and strategic directions

Mount Alexander Shire Council Plan 2017-2021

The Council Plan 2017-2021 includes a strategy based on ensuring sufficient residential land and protecting commercial, farming and industrial land, and in order to do so, Council plans to guide the revitalisation of Harcourt. A measure of success for this strategy is to complete the framework for the growth of Harcourt.

Harcourt Landscape Master Plan (2015)

The Landscape Master Plan outlines a landscape vision for the town centre. It identifies issues and potential opportunities to be addressed through the plan and includes an implementation plan. This has informed landscaping work undertaken by Council in Harcourt over the past several years, such as street tree planting.

Harcourt Community Plan (2013)

The Harcourt Community Plan is a community led plan that was initiated by Mount Alexander Shire Council as part of a series of community plans for towns within the Shire. The Community Plan focuses on five key themes that emerged from community feedback and identifies objectives and strategies for the community to drive. While some of the strategies are beyond the scope of this plan, there are others that have helped to inform this plan and can be supported through planning and urban design activities, including:

- Explore and develop ways to consolidate our town centre.
- Create a visual statement at the freeway exits and in the town centre to draw people into Harcourt through trees, landscape, sculpture.
- Identify and create an appropriate commercial zone.
- Consider the rezoning research undertaken by consultants through the Master Plan.
- Improve and protect the local landscape in and around Harcourt.

Harcourt Town Centre Master Plan (2011)

The Town Centre Master Plan establishes a spatial masterplan for the Harcourt town centre. Short term, medium term and long term strategies are identified with relevant implementation actions.

Harcourt; After the Bypass (2009)

After the Bypass is a strategic action plan developed for Harcourt, identifying opportunities for economic and community development, urban design, land use and planning policy.

Urban Living Strategy (2004)

The Urban Living Strategy and subsequent planning scheme amendments led to the current framework plan for Harcourt that sits within the planning scheme. This Strategy adopted a 1.4 per cent population growth rate for the Shire and proposed significant growth at Harcourt with estimates for the town population at 750 by 2011 (projecting an average annual population growth of 4.31 per cent over 2001 to 2011) and 1,100 by 2021 (projecting an average annual population growth of 3.18 per cent over 2011 to 2021). In reality, from 2001 to 2011 the Shire's average annual population growth was 0.82 per cent over this period, and while Harcourt's growth exceeded this at 1.09 per cent, this was still well below the estimates of the Urban Living Strategy. As a result, much of the land that has been identified for future residential expansion in the current framework plan has not been rezoned to residential or developed.

Other existing documents that are guiding this project include:

- Mount Alexander Early Years Plan 2018-2021
- Climate Change Action Plan 2016-2020
- Public Open Space Strategy (2016)
- Mount Alexander Environment Strategy 2015-2025
- Dhelkunya Dja (Dja Dja Wurrung Country Plan) 2014-2034
- Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan (2014)
- Rural Land Study (2014)
- Mount Alexander Shire Council Walking & Cycling Strategy 2010-2020
- Rural Living Strategy (2006)
- Metcalfe Heritage Study (1994)

Documents informing the plan's development include:

- Current policies that influence local and regional land use planning in the Mount Alexander Planning Scheme (including Clauses 21.01, 21.02, 21.03, 21.12-6, 22.05).
- Bushfire Development Report (Terramatrix, 2019).

4 Strategic context

4.3 Local economy and Shine Harcourt Leanganook

Plan Harcourt is a Council document that integrates two distinct but interrelated projects exploring spatial land use planning, town centre design and activation, and local economic development initiatives.

The two projects are the Harcourt Framework Plan, and Shine Harcourt Leanganook.

The Harcourt Framework Plan makes a series of specific, detailed policy recommendations that will be introduced into the Mount Alexander Planning Scheme to guide the future growth of the town. The Harcourt Framework Plan also makes recommendations for public realm projects in the town centre that will improve pedestrianisation, sense of place and connection to place, and boost local economic activity.

Shine Harcourt Leanganook focuses primarily on community-driven initiatives that will foster the local economic base through diversification of primary production and tourism, and local place-making initiatives that will drive visitation and local expenditure.

The two projects come together in Plan Harcourt. The Plan supports a direction of growth for the town that builds on important place attributes, and which emphasises landscape stories and local assets as a way to strengthen Harcourt’s character and social and economic wellbeing.

The Relational Map at Appendix 2 integrates the objectives and recommendations of the Harcourt Framework Plan and Shine Harcourt Leanganook into a single visualisation. The Map clarifies that change in Harcourt will occur via:

- Planning policy reform, i.e. changes to the Planning Scheme to set an appropriate course for development;
- Town Centre Activation, i.e. public realm projects that will enhance the town for the benefit of residents and visitors; and
- Economic enabling initiatives, i.e. locally-led programs and projects to stimulate the economy.

Projects shown on the Map are located along an axis according to Council’s role (Lead, Partner, Advocate) and the level of certainty and stability inherent to each project.



5 Analysis

5.1 Land Demand Assessment

Residential land

An assessment of the demand for residential land has involved a review of the Victorian Government’s Victoria in Future (VIF) 2019 project population and household growth in the Shire, Census data, and building permit data to anticipate the projected demand for land for new dwellings in Harcourt.

The VIF 2019 projects the population of the Shire to increase between 0.53 per cent and 0.91 per cent per year over 2016 to 2036. This is lower than what has occurred over recent years as 2016 Census data shows that the Shire’s population increased by 1.25 per cent per year during the 2011 and 2016 period. Harcourt’s population increased 2.19 per cent per year over that same period (this is based on the Census data’s Urban Centre and Locality boundary, which is similar to the extent of land zoned Township Zone in Harcourt).

Residential building permit data from 2013 to 2018 indicates that a total of 662 dwellings were constructed in the Shire over this period. Of these, a total of 33 houses were constructed in Harcourt, which represents an average of six dwellings per year (and 6 per cent of all dwelling approvals in the Shire over this period).

Given Harcourt’s status as a town that can accommodate further growth in the region, its population growth is likely to increase above the VIF 2016 projections and greater than the actual population increase that occurred between 2011 and 2016 (2.19%).

It is important however that Harcourt’s growth is managed in such a way that respects the village feel and responds to place values.

Low, medium and high growth scenarios have been projected to understand the potential rate of growth, the extent of population growth, the demand for new dwellings and the amount of land necessary to cater for this growth. The low growth scenario is based on a similar growth rate to what has occurred over the past 8 years, the medium growth scenario is based on a growth rate that was projected at the time of the Urban Living Strategy (2004) and the high growth scenario is based on the population increasing at almost three times

the existing growth rate. The reopening of the train station within Harcourt will significantly influence this rate of growth.

Harcourt: Growth scenarios over next 17 years

	Annual % growth rate	Estimated population at 2036	Dwelling demand over next 17 years*	Dwelling demand per year
Low	2.5%	805	106	6
Medium	4%	1004	185	11
High	7%	1510	390	23

* Based on current household size of 2.5 persons per dwelling.

Analysis of residential land supply and demand data:

There are infill development opportunities within the existing Township Zone area however due to land constraints such as the presence of waterways, flood and bushfire risk and steep topography, the potential lot yield is limited. This area would allow for approximately 128 lots averaging approximately 1,000 square metres each.

Assuming that growth is higher than the low growth scenario, additional land to the east and north will need to be rezoned to accommodate future growth. This land is already located within the existing township boundary and has been identified for future residential expansion since 2004. There is the potential for approximately an additional 165 conventional-sized residential lots (averaging 1,000 square metres each) in this area, which would accommodate an additional 714 persons (based on the current average household size of 2.5 people per household).

Land further north of this that is located in the current town boundary will continue to be identified for residential expansion, subject to flood investigations. This would provide for additional residential land supply if the rate of growth is more like to follow the high growth scenario. Additional land to the northwest of the town between the railway line and Harmony Way that is located in the current town boundary will be identified for further investigation for residential expansion (previously identified as future Low Density Residential land).

5 Analysis

5.1 Land Demand Assessment

Commercial land

As residential growth occurs, there will be increased demand and viability for an increased range of commercial and community services. It is therefore important that the Commercial 1 Zone is applied to land within the town centre to consolidate future commercial uses such as retail and other complementary commercial, entertainment and community uses.

The amount of commercial land required depends on the level of growth. To obtain an indication of the amount of retail floorspace required in the future, an analysis of other towns in Victoria with a similar sized population has been conducted.

Under a medium growth scenario (a town of approximately 1,000 people) the types of retail that may be supportable include:

- A food store of 300-500 square metres, such as a smaller supermarket or convenience store that can provide a significant food and grocery shopping presence but not with the range and depth of items available at larger supermarkets.
- A small number of speciality shops (up to 10) of around 100 square metres each, such as a bakery, takeaway food stores, a café and a pharmacy.
- Limited range of non-retail stores such as a bank and a real estate agent of around 150 square metres each.

Under a higher growth scenario (a town of approximately 2,000 people) the types of retail that may be supportable include:

- A small supermarket of 500-1,000 square metres.
- A small number of speciality shops, potentially around 15-20 stores, such as a bakery, a butcher, a convenience outlet, 2-3 takeaway food stores, 1-2 cafes, 1-2 restaurants, a newsagency, an opportunity shop, a hair-beauty salon, a hardware store and a pharmacy.
- A limited range of non-retail facilities, such as 1-2 hotels, a post office, a bank, a real estate agency, an antique store and a trade supply outlet.

Land within the town centre along High Street and Harmony Way between Market Street and Wright Street has been identified for rezoning to commercial. Depending on the level of growth, there is the potential to expand this zoning further south subject to further investigations. This would increase its proximity to the train station and could provide for greater integration between the two.

Industrial land

Presently the only industrial zoned land in Harcourt is located along Coolstore Road where the Industrial 3 Zone is applied to land currently used by the Harcourt Cooperative Coolstores and a timber and pine store. This was rezoned in 2014 as part of Amendment C054 to the Mount Alexander Planning Scheme in order to support the existing cool stores and provide greater flexibility and incentive for business investment.

There are very few options for additional industrial use and development in and around Harcourt, despite its location close to key transport corridors. Land constraints include steep topography, waterways and the potential amenity impacts on land within proximity used for agricultural and rural residential purposes.

Further work is required to understand the industrial land supply and demand requirements at a Shire level, including those related to supporting primary production (such as value-adding) around Harcourt. It is important that this is located to take advantage of freight links via the Calder Freeway and to minimise impacts on landscape character and amenity.

Regionally, the City of Greater Bendigo is a major regional centre with over 20 industrial nodes and major strategies in plan. Given its proximity, industrial land supply issues in the Mount Alexander Shire will need to take into account the City of Greater Bendigo's industrial land use strategies.

5 Analysis

5.2 Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

The five interrelated factors of the ecological framework have formed the basis for understanding Harcourt's current opportunities and threats, which are further discussed and analysed within the context of each key principle for managing change. The recommended actions to planning policy reform, urban design and place activation, and advocacy aim to protect and enhance these strengths and opportunities, and address the weaknesses and threats.

	Strength / opportunity	Weakness / threat
Place character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Orchard history Viewlines to Mount Alexander and Barkers Creek bushland Interaction between native bushland and horticultural areas Open landscape and rolling topography 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Old highway divide in town centre Rural residential development on land suitable for orchards Potential for development to encroach into non-urban breaks
Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community groups, including Harcourt Progress Association and sports clubs Potential for community gathering spaces and facilities to consolidate around the town centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many key services located in Bendigo or Castlemaine Flooding Bushfire (particularly to the south)
Economic prosperity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity to encourage expansion and diversification of agricultural enterprises (orchards, Harcourt Organic Farming Co-op) Farmgate sales Wineries Mountain bike park Miniature railway in future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of commercial activity in town centre Challenges managing interface between horticulture and housing
Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New play space in town centre Access to Mount Alexander, Goldfields Track Walking/bicycle paths to Mount Alexander Strong links to nature and landscape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of constructed footpaths Dependence on surrounding communities for services
Connectedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities to work with DELWP to develop open space corridor along Barkers Creek including walking trails. Existing public transport link to Castlemaine and future reinstatement of passenger train services Primary school and preschool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highway feel Lack of wayfinding Disorienting road network around town centre and approaches Dispersed public infrastructure Lack of well-defined, central community meeting places



6 Key principles for managing change

Five key themes have been identified through community engagement that form the basis of the framework plan. The themes are:

Managing growth in a village setting

We heard that the rural village feel is important to Harcourt’s sense of place. There is support for residential growth to be guided through design controls and other requirements to ensure that it respects and is in harmony with the existing town character.

A defined town centre

We heard that there is a need for a more attractive and useable town centre. This includes a desire for more shops and food premises, a better place space (currently underway), a community hub or civic space where residents and groups can meet, and improvements to car parking, footpaths and street planting.

A town based on growing, producing and making

We heard that Harcourt’s horticultural history and existing orchards, vineyards and other niche food producers are highly valued. They contribute to the town’s identity and in attracting tourism to the area.

Open views and native trees

The open spaces, native trees and landscape views to rural land, including farmland and bushland contribute to Harcourt’s sense of place. The views from within the valley are highly valued. They include views to Mount Alexander (Leanganook) to the east, hillslopes to the north and west, and vegetation within road reserves and alongside Barkers Creek.

Transport, connection and movement

There are opportunities to improve rail, road, pedestrian and cycling connections within Harcourt and between Harcourt, Bendigo and Castlemaine. This includes support for the reopening of the Harcourt Railway Station as a means to help the town grow and reach its full potential as a tourism destination.

The next section of the plan provides further discussion around each of these themes and identifies actions from each that relate to planning policy and strategy, urban design improvements and advocacy.

These actions then flow through to an implementation plan. Appendix 1 provides further details on the proposed planning scheme changes, including changes to local planning policy, zones and overlays, and mapping.



6 Key principles for managing change

6.1 Managing growth in a village setting

Town boundary

Growth should be prioritised within a clear town boundary that provides for up to 15 years of land supply. The current town boundary that was established in 2004 can achieve this given that a higher rate of growth was forecasted than what has occurred. As a result, there is no need to expand this boundary to include additional undeveloped land for residential expansion at this stage. There is a need to realign the town boundary however to address anomalies, distances from horticultural uses and natural hazard risk; particularly along Harcourt's northeast, east and southeast edges. This realignment clearly articulates the limits for residential growth, minimises risks to bushfire, and protects horticultural uses and surrounding rural and natural landscapes.



Future residential expansion

While there are some larger, infill development opportunities within the existing Township Zone area the potential lot yield is limited due to land constraints such as the presence of waterways, flood and bushfire risk and steep topography. Additional land to the east and north that is already located within the existing town boundary and has been identified for future residential expansion since 2004 will therefore need to be rezoned from Farming Zone to residential to accommodate future growth. Limiting residential growth to these areas at this point in time will help to ensure that development occurs in a sustainable way, is in keeping with the village feel of Harcourt and respects the existing place character.

Development Plan and Development Contributions Plan requirements

It is important that the future residential expansion areas are coordinated and planned with regard to risks of bushfire and flood, environmental assets, and the provision of open space, infrastructure (including community facilities where necessary), access and movement corridors. Future development should also contribute towards new or upgrades to infrastructure more broadly.

Infill development

There should be an emphasis on focusing growth close to the town centre to allow for walkability between home and key facilities and services. This can be achieved by encouraging medium-density housing that provides for easy access to these facilities and services but also preserves viewlines where possible. This includes land along High Street, Wright Street and Buckley Street given the proximity to the town centre and that as the land slopes upwards towards the east there are no existing views to Mount Alexander from the street.



The land located within the Commercial 1 Zone to the west of the town centre could also be developed for medium-density and/or shop-top style housing.

There would be support for an aged-care, retirement village or medium density housing development aimed at older people with good access to services given the current shortage of this type of housing within Harcourt.

6 Key principles for managing change

6.1 Managing growth in a village setting

Design and development

The rural village feel is important to Harcourt's sense of place. As residential growth occurs through rezoning land from Township Zone and Farming Zone to General Residential Zone, it is important that this character is not lost. There is particular concern about how new residential development on the edge of the town would look and affect local landscape character. At the same time, it is important that future housing options are diverse and cater for a wide range of people. To ensure that this preferred village character is protected and enhanced, there is a need for planning policies to guide future design and development, both within the existing residential area and new growth areas. This includes requirements to setbacks (distance between a building and the lot boundary), fences and site coverage.

This plan proposes to introduce three Design and Development Overlay schedules to guide character in particular sections of the town:

- A schedule to promote a particular sense of openness in current and future residential areas with viewlines to Leanganook/Mount Alexander.
- A schedule to promote a high standard of urban design, including pedestrian-friendly active frontages and strong interfaces with Harmony Way along the western edge of the town centre.
- A schedule to set urban design guidelines and requirements for active frontages that interface with footpaths along High Street.

Commercial centre

As residential growth occurs, there will be increased demand and viability for an increased range of commercial uses, including retail and other complementary commercial, entertainment and community uses. It is therefore important that the Commercial 1 Zone is applied to land within the town centre to consolidate these future uses.



There is the potential to further investigate the expansion of the commercial centre to include land further south along Harmony Way, including land on Victoria Road and the Harcourt Bowling Club, as identified as part of the Shine Harcourt process. It is important that if this were to proceed that it does not detrimentally affect the existing town centre and its functions.

There is also potential to trial pop-up style trading in pockets of underused land in the town centre.

This includes the consolidation of James Park as a marketplace and the potential use of road reserves around Harmony Way and road reserves on the eastern side of Stanley Park North for temporary trading linked with events, food and drink that can support established businesses by promoting agglomeration or serve outside standard trading hours, or creative enterprises such as arts and crafts.

6 Key principles for managing change

6.1 Managing growth in a village setting

Community, sport and recreational facilities

As the population grows, it is important that community infrastructure needs in Harcourt are identified and provided to ensure that the needs of the future community can be met. This includes education, community centres (providing early years, youth and aged services), sports and recreation facilities, health services, emergency and judicial services, and arts and cultural activities. It is recommended that these types of facilities be co-located where possible.

Harcourt currently has a primary school and preschool with kindergarten programs. The Department of Education have indicated that there is sufficient capacity at the primary school to cater for the expected population growth and the anticipated number of primary school-aged children. Discussions are currently underway regarding the preschool and the preferred location for this facility within the town.

Sport and recreational facilities include the recreation reserve, the bowling club, the swimming pool and the BMX track. A new play space has been designed at Stanley Park North and is scheduled to commence construction later this year.

Given Harcourt's proximity to health care providers in Castlemaine and Bendigo, the need for health care services within the town has not been identified at this stage.

The ANA Hall currently provides a space for the Harcourt Museum but this is also available for community groups as a meeting space. It is important that assets like the ANA Hall and the school/recreation precinct are leveraged to achieve more community benefit. This would also involve promoting closer connections between the Primary School and Recreation Reserve.

As part of the future residential expansion areas, public open space requirements must be met. It is also recommended that the land to the northeast of the town includes a play space and/or community centre given the distance to the town centre to provide opportunities for social interaction and social cohesion.



Industrial land

There is concern in the community about a proposed industrial zone on the southern edge of the township boundary, which is identified on an existing framework plan prepared in 2004. There are a range of issues including interfaces to residential areas and landscape constraints that mean this land is not suitable for industrial development. Instead, this land is recommended to be rezoned to Rural Living to create a transition within the town boundary to the Farming Zone land located outside of the town boundary.

The need for alternative industrial land in or around Harcourt has not been identified and there are very few options for suitable land. Further work is required to understand the industrial land supply and demand requirements at a Shire level, particularly given changes to fruit processing and packing activity and the value adding opportunities.

6 Key principles for managing change

6.1 Managing growth in a village setting

Strategies and Actions

Planning Policy Reform

Amend the framework plan at Clause 21.12-6 to improve clarity for land that will/can be rezoned to accommodate future residential growth by realigning the Township boundary:

- Realign township boundary to the southwest to capture a row of lots along Midland Highway that are current zoned Township Zone.
- Realign township boundary to the south to exclude land covered by the Bushfire Management Overlay to ensure compliance with Clause 13.02-1S of the Mount Alexander Planning Scheme.
- Realign township boundary to the east so that it follows the open concrete channel, property boundaries or roads to be consistent with best practice, protects biodiversity, minimises bushfire risk and provides for an adequate buffer from existing and potential horticultural uses. This includes bringing the eastern boundary westward (towards the township) in heavily treed pockets on Harcourt's eastern edge to meet Clause 13.02-1S, by reducing bushfire risk relating to current town boundaries and reflecting changes in state planning policy since 2015. Bringing the boundary westward in these undeveloped pockets will conserve native vegetation, and support State Planning Policy that requires settlement planning does not open up new residential development in areas where dwellings may need a Bushfire Attack Level above 12.5.

Prepare local planning policy for Harcourt that aims to locate growth close to the centre of town and provides for housing diversity by:

- Continuing to discourage residential development outside of the town boundary.
- Encouraging medium-density housing within close proximity to key facilities and services and shop-top style housing within the commercial area while protecting viewlines.
- Encouraging ageing in place accommodation within close proximity to key facilities and services.
- Where possible, encouraging community facilities to be co-located.

Rezone land within the township boundary from Township Zone to General Residential Zone and Commercial 1 Zone to provide greater certainty for future use and development in these areas.

Rezone land from Farming Zone to General Residential Zone to the east and northeast of the town to accommodate growth.

Rezone a parcel of land to the south of the town on the corner of Coolstore Road and Blackjack Road from Township Zone to Rural Living Zone that removes the reference to future industrial and creates a transition within the town boundary.

Apply a Design and Development Overlay (three separate schedules) to land within the existing township area and new residential growth areas to maintain a sense of openness and protect views to significant landscape areas through wide side setbacks, minimal building site coverage, and limiting building height.

Apply a Development Plan Overlay on the land within the new residential growth areas (land to be rezoned from Farming Zone to General Residential Zone) to ensure it is managed, coordinated, and has regard to an agricultural buffer and public open space and community infrastructure needs.

Prepare a Development Contributions Plan to ensure that new development contributes towards local infrastructure projects, and defer rezoning of future residential land until this plan is completed.

Complete a flood study to determine the extent of flood risk in areas earmarked for future expansion, beyond those identified for rezoning in this plan.

6 Key principles for managing change

6.1 Managing growth in a village setting

Urban Design and Place Activation

Fill gaps in the existing pathway network to connect key places of interest and promote walkability, particularly between the town centre, the southern precinct (primary school, recreation reserve and railway station), northern precinct (swimming pool and future Stanley Park North play space) and the new residential expansion areas.

Advocacy

Work with the Department of Education and Training and Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning to better integrate the Primary School and Recreation Reserve.



6 Key principles for managing change

6.2 A defined town centre

The town centre as a gathering point

There is a significant opportunity to shape the town centre as a more defined gathering point that fits into Harcourt's rolling landscape. The evolution of Harcourt's road network and subdivision pattern over time has contributed to the town lacking a well-defined centre, or focal point for the urban area. The interaction of Harmony Way and High Street in particular and the lack of clear definition at town centre entrance points means the town lacks a traditional main-street configuration that might be expected to form a focal point in a similarly sized town. These factors of urban form, community engagement feedback and Harcourt's proximity to Castlemaine indicate the need for Harcourt's town centre to evolve as a stronger community meeting place with opportunities for niche shops and food premises.

Alongside this desire for shops and food premises, a better play space (currently underway in Stanley Park North), a community hub or civic spaces where residents can meet and improvements to planting; the need for parking and footpath improvements has been raised through community feedback. This plan proposes links through key assets in the town centre, to the Harcourt Railway Station to improve connectivity between these key nodes into the future. Further footpath links may be investigated through Council's capital works program and a separate walkability plan.

While the town centre's linear form poses challenges, the design with Stanley Park in the north and James Park in the south presents an opportunity to consolidate activity around two meeting places as focal points that serve different roles.

This may include opportunities for marketplace or street stall trading in defined locations around James Park and retail or mixed-use development along the edges of the main streets. It is important that these two focal points develop with different functions, so as to be complementary.

Stanley Park

Stanley Park would remain the primary meeting space and a repository of local stories, told through the scar tree, vegetation plantings and memorials. Play space upgrades in Stanley Park North present the opportunity for a low-imprint meeting and performance space to be developed in Stanley Park (in place of the existing play space) to cater for an array of community events or arts activities. The creek-side environment presents opportunities for bush food plantings to tell stories of Country and complement the new play space as a sensory and educational experience.

James Park

Given its topography, James Park could include a rain garden or water sensitive urban design plantings at its lowest point to better integrate drainage infrastructure into its landscape and beautify its centre. The park around this area could then function as a marketplace, with opportunities for itinerant trading around the edges of the ANA Hall Carpark. A path along the side of the ANA Hall could also break down the long block between Harmony Way and High Street, and improve pedestrian access to this area from across Harmony Way. Seating could also be provided at the entrance to the ANA Hall Carpark in the road reserve, as a way of drawing activity towards the park and supporting nearby markets.

Harmony Way

Harmony Way, the former Calder Highway, retains the appearance of a highway and a high-speed traffic environment. The continued implementation of the Harcourt Landscape Masterplan, through a variety of plantings and outstands that will narrow the roadway, is vital in breaking down the scale of this road. Creating a pedestrian and bike friendly, visually attractive streetscape will redefine Harmony Way as the main commercial street and draw it into the heart of the town. Part of this involves threshold treatments at the town centre's northern entrance from the Barkers Creek bridge, and from the south around the intersection with Victoria Road. This could take the form of a sculptural installation to break down the scale of the area, complement tree planting and the surrounding landscape, and provide visual cues to slow traffic and promote a sense of arrival.

6 Key principles for managing change

6.2 A defined town centre

Connections

Providing shared paths and crossing points in conjunction with good way finding signage will help to connect the northern and southern precincts with the town centre and residential growth areas to the east and northeast. This includes clear links to the railway station that will also cater for the anticipated return of passenger rail services.

Barkers Creek

Barkers Creek forms a significant landscape asset along Harcourt's west and northern edge. Extending the creek trail and revitalising the natural landscape through revegetation works will promote better walkability and draw this natural asset into the town. The creek line near Stanley Park North could also be the site for community bush tucker plantings, as outlined in Shine Harcourt Leanganook.

Strategies and Actions

Planning Policy Reform

Consolidate commercial growth in the town centre.

Rezone land to along High Street and Harmony Way to Commercial 1 Zone to promote it as the centre of commercial and community activity.

In order to further promote its status as Harcourt's major gathering space, rezone Stanley Park and Stanley Park North to Public Park and Recreation Zone and reserve the park for public purposes.

Rezone James Park to Public Park and Recreation Zone and reserve the park for public purposes.

Apply a Design and Development Overlay to land on the western edge of Harmony Way facing the street, to ensure that future development displays outstanding urban design that is appropriate to the context and prominence of the site and aids the consolidation of the present town centre. This should include:

- Active street frontages with large ground floor windows that present to the public realm.
- Tree protection zones during construction to preserve current street trees on the western side of Harmony Way.
- Verandahs to define the first floor.
- Encouragement of terrace-style development to achieve a hard edge to Harmony Way.
- Natural materials and neutral colours, with well-articulated facades at the fine grain to encourage walkability.

Apply a Design and Development Overlay to land in the town centre to promote outstanding urban design that is appropriate to the context and prominence of the site and promotes active street frontages and public safety within and around the site. This should include:

- Active street frontages with large ground floor windows that present to the public realm.
- Signage placed on parapets above the first storey.
- Verandahs to define the first floor.
- A 9 metre (two-storey) height limit.
- Natural materials and neutral colours, with well-articulated facades.

Should future growth warrant more Commercial land provision, investigate the potential to expand the commercial centre to include land along Victoria Road and Harmony Way, including the Harcourt Bowling Club.

6 Key principles for managing change

6.2 A defined town centre

Urban Design and Place Activation

Earmark a site in the Harmony Way median at the northern entrance to Harcourt's town centre for a sculptural element, to be designed to be sympathetic to the scar tree and creekfront landscape.

Support measures in the Harcourt Landscape Masterplan to soften the edges of Harmony Way through Indigenous riparian plantings along road edges, and further tree plantings. This will break down the scale of the highway, soften its appearance, create a conceptual link to the creekline and create a sense of arrival and enclosure.

Introduce a shared foot and bike path within the existing road reserve of Harmony Way to promote walkability and improve the scale of the street, with potential riparian plantings in indigenous species to provide a physical separation from the roadway. This should form part of the pedestrian link between the BMX park, Stanley Park and James Park, potentially linking to the railway station.

Develop a program of themed wayfinding signage that links connections to Leanganook/Mount Alexander, community facilities in the town centre, Barkers Creek Trail, Harcourt Recreation Reserve and the railway precinct.

Reduce curb width in sections of Harmony Way and along High Street by promoting a program of tactical urbanism including painted planter boxes (based on apple crates), seating and sculptural elements that reflect landscape and farming stories. This can be used to further strengthen connections between Stanley Park and James Park, and promote bush food plantings identified in Shine Harcourt Leanganook.

Link Stanley Park and Stanley Park North with pavement treatments and a pedestrian crossing to create a lower speed environment. Use temporary bollards to reduce the roadway to one-way (running towards the town entrance) at peak event times and consider trialling an ongoing closure.

Install a community noticeboard at the edge of the ANA Hall carpark. Consider using corten steel and timber in the design to promote a rustic appearance.

Develop a rain garden around the stormwater outlet in James Park to improve amenity and introduce a centrepiece defined by water sensitive urban design.

Develop a pocket park and seating node at the northern edge of the James Park/ANA Hall Car Park in the road reserve, supported by plantings to promote a strong edge.

Partner with community groups to explore potential for pop-up trading around surplus road reserve land, James Park marketplace and the eastern edge of Stanley Park North. This would require integrated support across Council departments, and tactical urbanism measures to promote amenity including temporary plantings, seating and public art exhibitions.



6 Key principles for managing change

6.3 A town based on growing, producing and making

Harcourt’s horticultural history and existing orchards, vineyards and other niche food producers are highly valued. They contribute to the town’s identity, local economy and in attracting tourism to the area. These properties benefit from a pressurised piped irrigation system that replaced a concrete and earthen gravity channel system in 2016.



Harcourt’s eastern town boundary is particularly important in ensuring the town’s renowned orchards, vineyards and other agricultural activity is protected from residential encroachment. The Harcourt Valley’s topography, soil and climactic conditions make it especially suitable for fruit growing and a strategically important agricultural asset.

For this reason, it is important that the eastern town boundary is strengthened as a buffered interface to protect agricultural activity from residential growth and ameliorate the impacts of spray drift on future residential development. This approach supports the objectives of State Planning Policy at Clause 14.01-1S around the need to protect strategically important agricultural land.

Configuration of the eastern town boundary, the agricultural buffer and the interface between agricultural and residential land uses

The current town boundary is drawn as an interface that incorporates areas of a now-decommissioned open concrete channel and topographic lines. It does not include a wider, formed buffer to development. The framework plan at present instead includes arrows located outside of the town boundary to the east that indicate the need to prevent conflict between residential and horticultural land uses, and for buffers to

be provided within the township boundary. This is supported by local planning policy relating to spray drift that is based on the importance of the horticultural industry in the Shire, particularly in Harcourt and the surrounding area. Within proximity to the town, horticultural land uses are predominantly located to the east along Reservoir Road and Danns Road, and therefore there is particular tension at the east and northeast where residential expansion areas are located adjacent to or in proximity to horticultural or other agricultural land uses.

It is important that this buffer is retained and strengthened to ensure that ongoing horticultural production or the potential to introduce other complementary forms of intensive primary production is not compromised by conflicting land uses, such as new dwellings. These conflicting land uses are described in the Mount Alexander Shire’s Rural Land Study (2014):

It can reasonably be anticipated that it would be merely a matter of time before objections were registered against the noise of horticultural plant and equipment (eg: tractors, pumps, harvesting equipment, lighting, scare devices etc), the use of herbicide and pesticide sprays, the out-of-hours movement of trucks, mud or dust on roads, or operations of storage facilities and packing sheds. Conversely, objections could be expected from producers against matters such as roaming domestic animals.

The local planning policy relating to spray drift states that it is policy to maintain a minimum separate distance between dwellings and agricultural land of 300 metres but that this distance may be reduced or increased depending on the environmental and topographical features of land separating the dwelling from the agricultural land use.

6 Key principles for managing change

6.3 A town based on growing, producing and making

Rather than indicating a 300 metre buffer area from the town boundary on the framework plan, which creates uncertainty around the use of the land within the buffer area, the buffer can be addressed through a combination of measures:

- A decommissioned open concrete channel, formerly used for irrigation, currently runs close to the existing town boundary along the east and northeast, and there are restrictions to how close new buildings can be constructed to the channel as enforced by Coliban Water. This presents an opportunity to use the channel as a physical edge to the town boundary and as the focus of an interface between future dwellings in the northeast residential expansion area and the existing and/or potential horticultural activities to the east and northeast of the town. Requirements for a buffer can be built into planning controls. For example, the schedule to the Development Plan Overlay should require that the land adjacent to the channel and surrounds form a green, open public space corridor to provide a separation between agricultural and residential uses that provides multiple benefits around biodiversity, health, pedestrian connectivity and adaptive reuse of the channel. This includes pathways, revegetation and interpretative signage telling to the landscape and agricultural stories. This pathway network could eventually link up around the north and south of town to future trails along Barkers Creek and through town centre. The channel's remains may have cultural heritage significance given their associations to Harcourt's agricultural history, and an open space corridor could ensure adaptive reuse of this asset. A perimeter road could also be built into this buffer that would increase the resilience to bushfires within the future residential areas.
- The town boundary should be retracted at certain locations to ensure that land cannot be rezoned to residential when it is located adjacent to an existing horticultural use. This is the case for land to the east between Craigie and Market Streets.
- A requirement in the schedule to the Development Plan Overlay/future planning permit conditions at the subdivision stage could require that agreements must be registered on residential land titles to ensure that future land owners are aware of the proximity to agricultural uses and the potential land use conflicts.



Agritourism opportunities

The local and regional tourism industry could benefit from tourism-based activities centred on Harcourt's food production, including the potential bush tucker industry as identified in Shine Harcourt Leanganook. This includes events on land used for food production to allow visitors to experience and learn about the variety of produce and landscapes, as well as short term accommodation such as farmstays and group accommodation. There are also opportunities within the town to support these industries and other local producers and makers. The existing cool stores site and its surrounds as the 'Cool Stores Quarter' could build on the existing operations of producers and makers and become a tourism hub centred on food and drink tastings and selling.

There is also a need to review rural land use arrangements outside Harcourt's town boundaries to ensure they support the needs of agriculture, agritourism and other potential value-adding activities in the area. This is particularly relevant for small lots that may have limited viability for large scale production but could be used for supporting enterprises, boutique horticulture or market gardening.

6 Key principles for managing change

6.3 A town based on growing, producing and making

Strategies and Actions

Planning Policy Reform

Amend the framework plan at Clause 21.12-6 by:

- Realigning the Township boundary to follow the old concrete channel in the northeast and to move westward to exclude heavily treed bushfire prone areas and land immediately adjacent to existing horticultural land uses.
- Include a policy statement relating to developing open space and biodiversity corridors to reinforce the eastern town boundary as a buffer between agricultural and residential land.

Amend Clause 22.05 to clearly define and strengthen the eastern town boundary as a buffered interface to protect agricultural activity from residential encroachment.

Prepare local planning policy for Harcourt that better supports tourism based on food production, including bush tucker and bush medicine (e.g. through amendments to Clause 21.09-3 Tourism and the decision guidelines in Clause 22.04 Use and Development of Land in the Farming Zone and Rural).

Apply a Development Plan Overlay to new residential land on the eastern fringes of Harcourt that requires a buffer to be incorporated into the design of future development.

Commission a strategy to define the land use zoning and policy opportunities for the Harcourt Valley that can better support agriculture, agritourism, food processing and other value-adding activities outside Harcourt's town boundaries. This would be particularly relevant to providing more productive and innovative land use opportunities on small lots below 20 hectares in the Farming Zone.

Review and if necessary strengthen existing planning overlays that protect the channel, with a view to ensuring it will form a spine of an open space corridor separating horticultural areas from future residential development.

Urban Design and Place Activation

Develop a program of wayfinding signage within and around the town to key destinations, including orchards and vineyards that are open to the public.

Recognition of horticultural significance through signage and public art at key entrances and within the town centre.

Encourage public seating and infrastructure works to incorporate design elements reflecting apple crates, agricultural machinery elements or locally sourced granite.

Advocacy

Work with Coliban Water to investigate potential environmental restoration works and open space upgrades around the decommissioned irrigation channel, with a view to this asset being secured as the focus of an interface buffer between horticultural and future residential areas.



6 Key principles for managing change

6.4 Open views and native trees

The open spaces, native trees and landscape views to rural land, including farmland and bushland contribute to Harcourt’s sense of place.

Sense of openness

Harcourt has a distinctive sense of openness that has emerged as a result of the town’s interaction with the landscape. This sense of openness arises from the abundance of public open spaces, including Stanley Park, James Park and the Barkers Creek corridor; and the way that buildings within the town, including those within the town centre are generally well set back from front and side boundaries and have minimal front fencing. This allows for extensive gardens and canopy trees that can be seen from the public realm. It is important that new development, both within the established town and in the residential expansion areas adopt similar setbacks to retain this feel.



Trees

Native and exotic trees are common both on public land within road reserves, most significantly at key town entrances and gateways and along Barkers Creek, and within private land. Tree plantings on public and private land should be encouraged to enhance this attribute. New residential development should also be designed to protect large old native trees. This can be achieved by designing subdivisions in such a way that significant trees are retained in future public reserves.

Increasing the extent of tree canopy cover in the town will also reduce the urban heat island effect and assist in dealing with and developing resistance to the hazards associated with climate change.

Landscape views

The views from within the valley are highly valued, including views to Mount Alexander (Leanganook), particularly from Victoria Road and Harmony Way upon arrival into the town, Bingham Road, Eagles Road and Market Street, and the hillslopes to the north and west from within the town centre.

The orchards and vineyards along Harmony Way, Reservoir Road and Blackjack Road also positively contribute to the distinctive landscape views from within and around Harcourt. Future development should therefore be designed to ensure that these views are protected where possible through height limits, orientation of lots and protection of viewlines.

Environmental Sustainable Design

Community feedback emphasised the importance of nature and environmental sustainable design (ESD). As Harcourt grows, future development should incorporate ESD measures that help to minimise the town’s ecological footprint, as well as water and biodiversity sensitive urban design measures that contribute to the public realm and help manage stormwater without the need for heavy infrastructure. Renewable energy such as solar panels should also be encouraged.

Indigenous bush tucker garden and tourism to promote indigenous cultural heritage

The central role of nature links back to the Indigenous connection with the land and caring for Country. Community engagement and place-based analysis has revealed a high level of interest and potential for tourism initiatives that promote and celebrate indigenous cultural heritage and teachings. This can be supported through local planning policy, and making this the focus of urban design initiatives within the town through an indigenous bush tucker and bush medicine garden/farm. This also builds on the existing town setting where native trees dominate streetscapes and surrounding landscapes, and could integrate with the Stanley Park North play space to provide a supporting sensory element and draw on links with Barkers Creek. Plantings along Harmony Way could also incorporate indigenous creekfront vegetation to help soften the road edges and promote a sense of connection to Country. This can be further supported through local planning policy.

6 Key principles for managing change

6.4 Open views and native trees

Strategies and Actions

Planning Policy Reform

Prepare local planning policy for Harcourt that supports tourism based on promoting and celebrating indigenous cultural heritage and teachings.

Apply Design and Development Overlays for the existing township area and future growth areas to maintain a sense of openness through wide side setbacks (a minimum of 2 metres both sides), protect views to significant landscape areas through height limits (a maximum of 9 metre height), and provide for canopy trees within front setbacks.

Amend the mapping of the Schedule 5 to the Environmental Significance Overlay so that it covers land located 200 metres both side of Barkers Creek and other waterways that are currently covered by this overlay to protect native vegetation.

Undertake further work on the landscape significance of Mount Alexander, the ridgelines of Barkers Creek to the west and the hills surrounding the valley to inform any future Significant Landscape Overlay that may be applied to high points and ridge lines.

Undertake further work on how Environmental Sustainable Design (ESD) can be incorporated into future development. This could be developed at a community level, or through a Shire-wide strategy and design guidelines.

Urban Design and Place Activation

Encourage residents to plant native/indigenous shrubs and trees within their private property by making a brochure available on the preferred species and locations.

Plant appropriate native street trees as part of replacement street tree planting programs or within new residential areas.

Investigate the preferred location of a bush tucker garden within or close to the town centre.

Encourage public art based on horticultural history and Aboriginal culture.

Advocacy

Council to investigate and seek community feedback on returning the name Leanganook to Mount Alexander (from Shine Harcourt Leanganook).



6 Key principles for managing change

6.5 Transport, connection and movement

Harcourt’s layout and street pattern, and the withdrawal of passenger rail services have constrained connectivity between the town centre, community assets, residential areas and surrounding centres of Castlemaine and Bendigo. There are opportunities to improve rail, road, pedestrian and cycling connections within Harcourt and to Bendigo and Castlemaine. This includes supporting the reopening of Harcourt Railway Station for passenger rail services, and taking measures to promote better access to the station and places of interest including alternatives to driving. Such steps can lead to a range of social, health, environmental and economic benefits for the Harcourt community.

There is also support for an integrated walking/cycling trail along Barkers Creek, and improving walking/cycling connectivity along Harmony Way to promote active lifestyles. This should form part of a pathway connection that joins recreation assets in the north of the town (including the swimming pool) with Stanley Park, the town centre, James Park and the railway station, the primary school and recreation reserve in Harcourt’s south.



It is important that these connections are designed in such a way that addresses and reduces barriers to access for everyone, including young and old people and people with disabilities.

A key priority involves wayfinding signage to help promote better use of existing infrastructure. This could include approximate walking times to key destinations. Wayfinding can also be used as an opportunity to tell stories of landscape, particularly along Barkers Creek.

A new Harmony Way

The layout of Harmony Way largely reflects its role as the old Calder Highway, which forms a divide through the town. Pedestrian crossings near Stanley Park, further landscaping in the median and along the highway and threshold treatments including sculptures around the town centres can help break down this divide and reimagine Harmony Way as a lower speed environment that can be crossed more easily. Urban design actions put in place to consolidate Harcourt’s town centre are important in this regard.

Further design work needs to be done to understand how best to address the challenges associated with Harmony Way and its current layout (e.g. a potential road realignment). In the meantime, tactical urbanism measures such as reclaiming space for pop-up interventions can help to break down the scale of Harmony Way. This could be supported through tests of pop-up retail/event infrastructure along the road’s edges in partnership with community groups.

Public transport improvements

Harcourt currently has a bus service into Castlemaine, and Council should work with Public Transport Victoria (PTV) to trial extensions to this service to provide more frequent connections, with an additional bus stop along Harmony Way. Council can also advocate to PTV for bus timetables to be connected to passenger train times, should buses reconnect with the Harcourt Railway Station. Pedestrian paths should also link to bus stops to promote better access, and Council can work with PTV to promote urban design and tactical urbanism interventions to highlight bus stops as resting stops or seating pods along walking trails. Bus stops can also be supported with pedestrian crossings along Harmony Way where pedestrian sightlines are appropriate.

6 Key principles for managing change

6.5 Transport, connection and movement

Waterway trails

Barkers Creek forms a meandering corridor around Harcourt that should be expanded on by developing a pedestrian trail along the west and northern edge of town. This theme can also be replicated with a trail along the decommissioned irrigation channel along the eastern edge of the township, expanding on an open space network along the eastern and western edges of the township.

Both waterway trails also present important opportunities to tell landscape stories: Barkers Creek relating to connection to Country, and the decommissioned irrigation trail relating to horticulture.

Strategies and Actions

Planning Policy Reform

Focus short-term growth in locations that provide easy access to the town centre.

Apply the Development Plan Overlay in new growth areas to ensure that they have appropriate pedestrian and cycling links to important places such as the town centre, primary school, recreation reserve and the railway station.

Prepare a Development Contributions Plan to ensure that new development contributes towards local infrastructure projects, and defer rezoning of future residential land until this plan is completed.

Correct the zoning of roadways to and through Harcourt to ensure those that are no longer managed by VicRoads following the bypassing of Harcourt are no longer zoned Road Zone Category 1.

Urban Design and Place Activation

Connect the town centre, play space, swimming pool, recreation reserve and railway station through improved wayfinding and pedestrian paths.

Use wayfinding signage and threshold treatments at entry points to the town centre, including the Victoria Road-Harmony Way roundabout.

Provide crossing points at key locations, including Market Street and Harmony Way, adjacent to Stanley Park and Victoria Road's connection with Bingham Street.

Further investigate how to address the challenges associated with the layout and size of Harmony Way.


Conduct a review of signage to identify further wayfinding opportunities and surplus signage that may cause clutter and need to be removed.

Develop a landscape plan in consultation with Traditional Owners and community to regenerate the environment along Barkers Creek and provide pedestrian trails and interpretive signage relating to landscape and biodiversity elements.

Develop paths to ensure safe walking and cycling from the BMX Park, to Stanley Park North, James Park and the railway station.

Advocacy

Continue to support advocacy efforts for the return of passenger train services to Harcourt, and advocate for further funding support for pathway, bus service and urban design improvements to better connect the station into the town's fabric.



MOUNT ALEXANDER
SHIRE COUNCIL

Harcourt Framework Plan
Regional Context Map



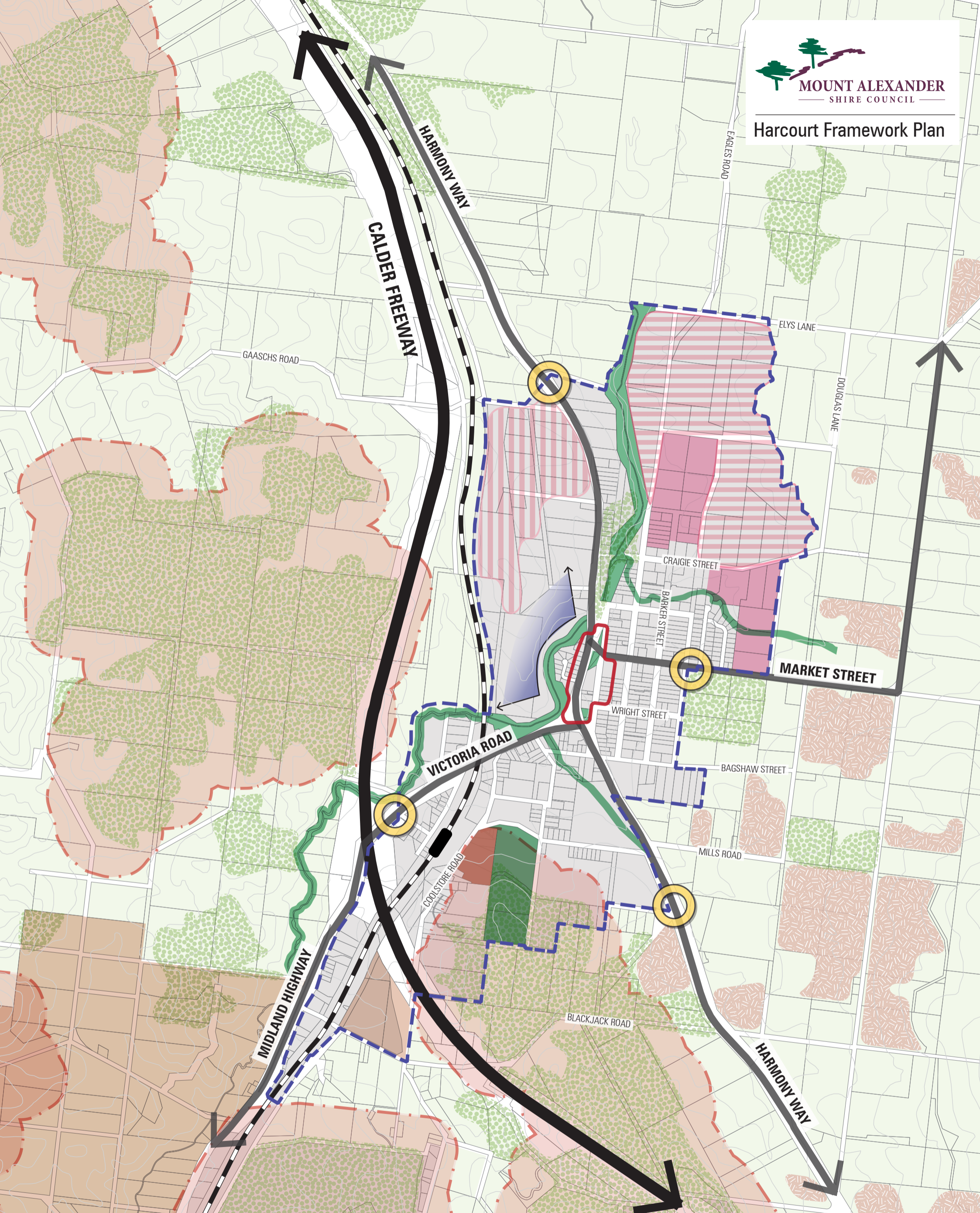
Legend

- Harcourt
- Regional City
- Major Town
- Township
- Mount Alexander Shire Boundary
- Freeway
- Highway
- Major Roads
- Train line (V-Line)
- Train line (Steam)







hansen







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 Revision: -







Legend

-  Township Boundary
-  Town Centre
-  Freeway
-  Main Roads
-  Train Station
-  Rail Corridor

-  Township Entrance
-  Retain hillslope and landscape background to Town Centre
-  Rural Living Zone (RLZ)
-  Industrial Land
-  Public Open Space
-  Bushfire Management Overlay

-  Residential Growth Area
-  Future Residential Expansion Area
-  Potential Future Residential Expansion Area (further investigation required)
-  Existing Canopy Vegetation
-  Existing Horticultural Land

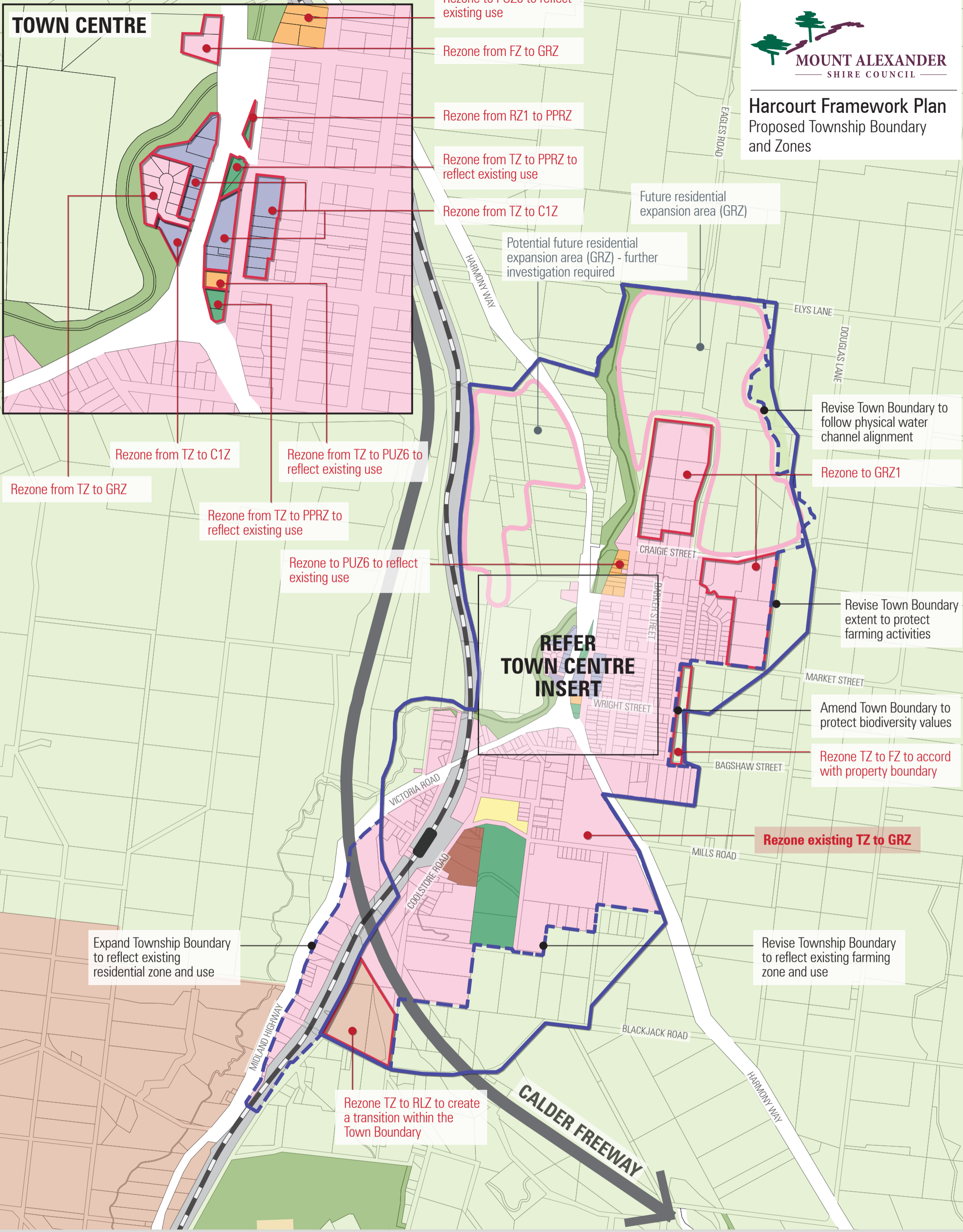







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Harcourt Framework Plan
Proposed Township Boundary and Zones




- Legend**
-  Existing Township Boundary
 -  Proposed Township Boundary
 -  Township Zone (TZ)
 -  General Residential Zone (GRZ1)
 -  Rural Living Zone (RLZ)

-  Public Use Zone 2 (PUZ2)- Education
-  Public Use Zone 4 (PUZ4) - Transport
-  Public Use Zone 6 (PUZ6) - Local Government
-  Public Conservation Resource Zone (PCRZ)
-  Public Park and Recreation Zone (PPRZ)

-  Industrial 3 Zone (IN3Z)
-  Commercial 1 Zone (C1Z)
-  Farming Zone (FZ)
-  Freeway

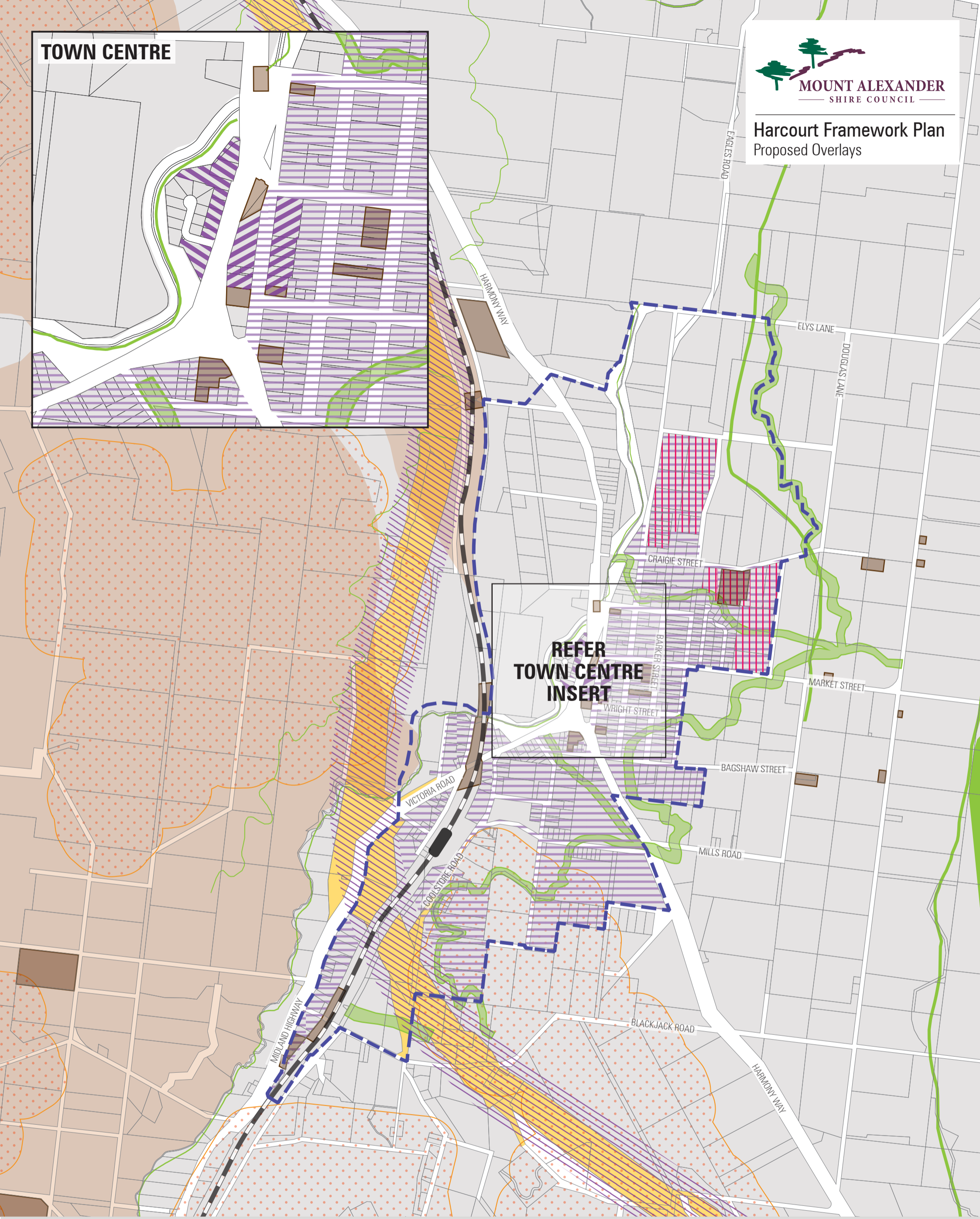


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TOWN CENTRE


Harcourt Framework Plan
Proposed Overlays




**REFER
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INSERT**

Legend

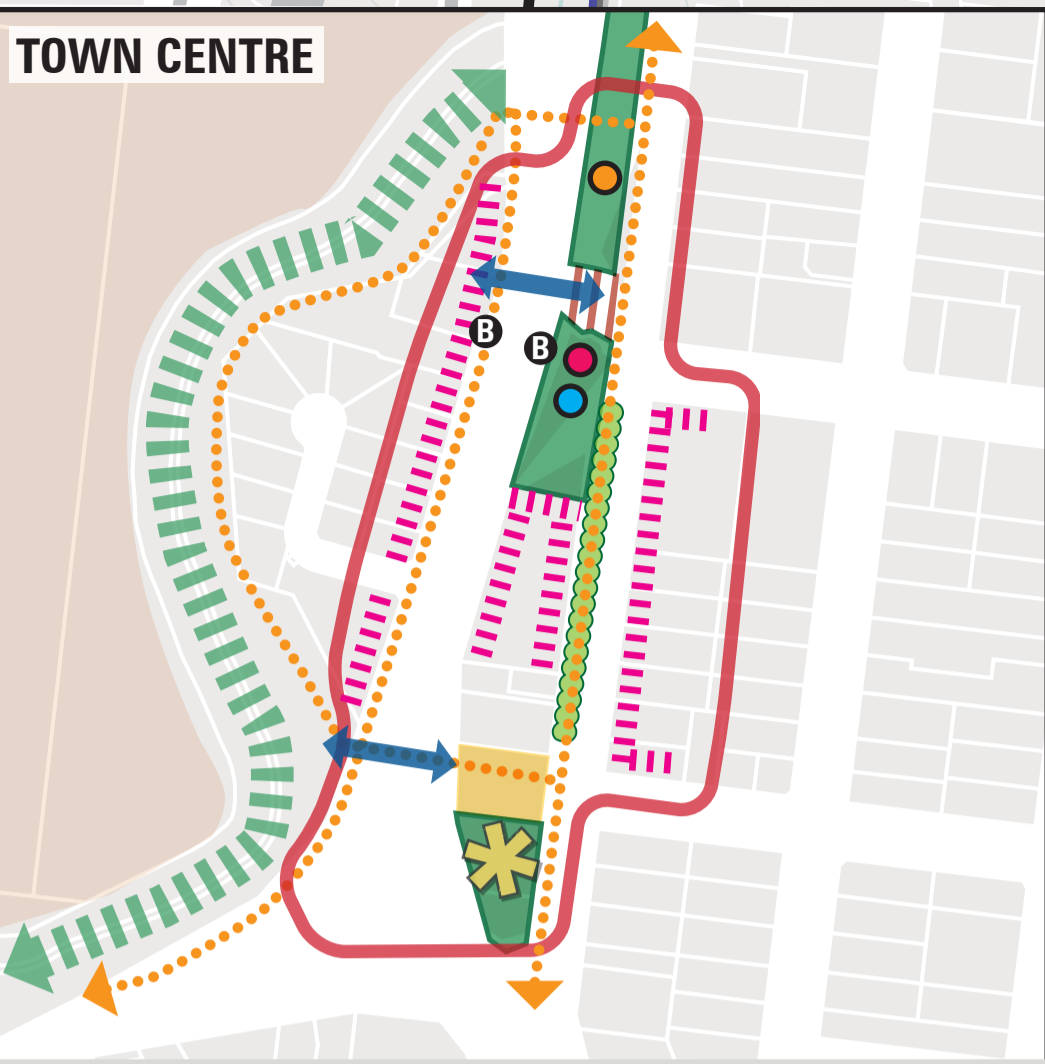
-  Proposed Township Boundary
-  Existing Erosion Management Overlay (EMO)
-  Existing Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO)
-  Existing Public Acquisition Overlay (PAO2)
-  Existing Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO5)
-  Investigate Potential Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO)
-  Existing Design and Development Overlay (DDO1)
-  Proposed Design and Development Overlay (DDOX)
-  Proposed Design and Development Overlay (DDOY)
-  Proposed Design and Development Overlay (DDOZ)
-  Proposed Development Plan Overlay (DPO)
-  Proposed Development Contributions Plan Overlay (DCPO) - extent of overlay TBD once Harcourt DCP has been prepared
-  Existing Heritage Overlay (HO)



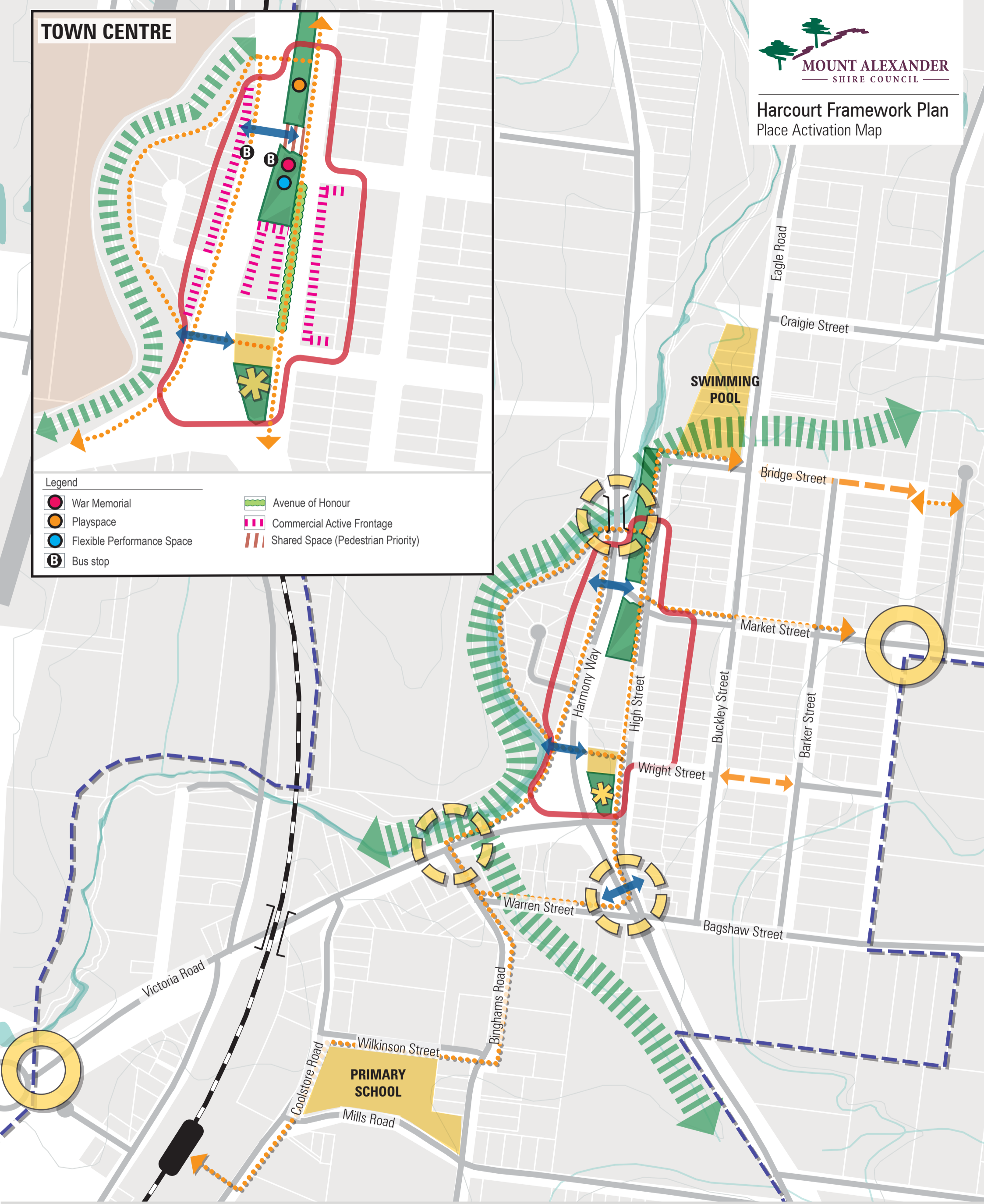
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TOWN CENTRE



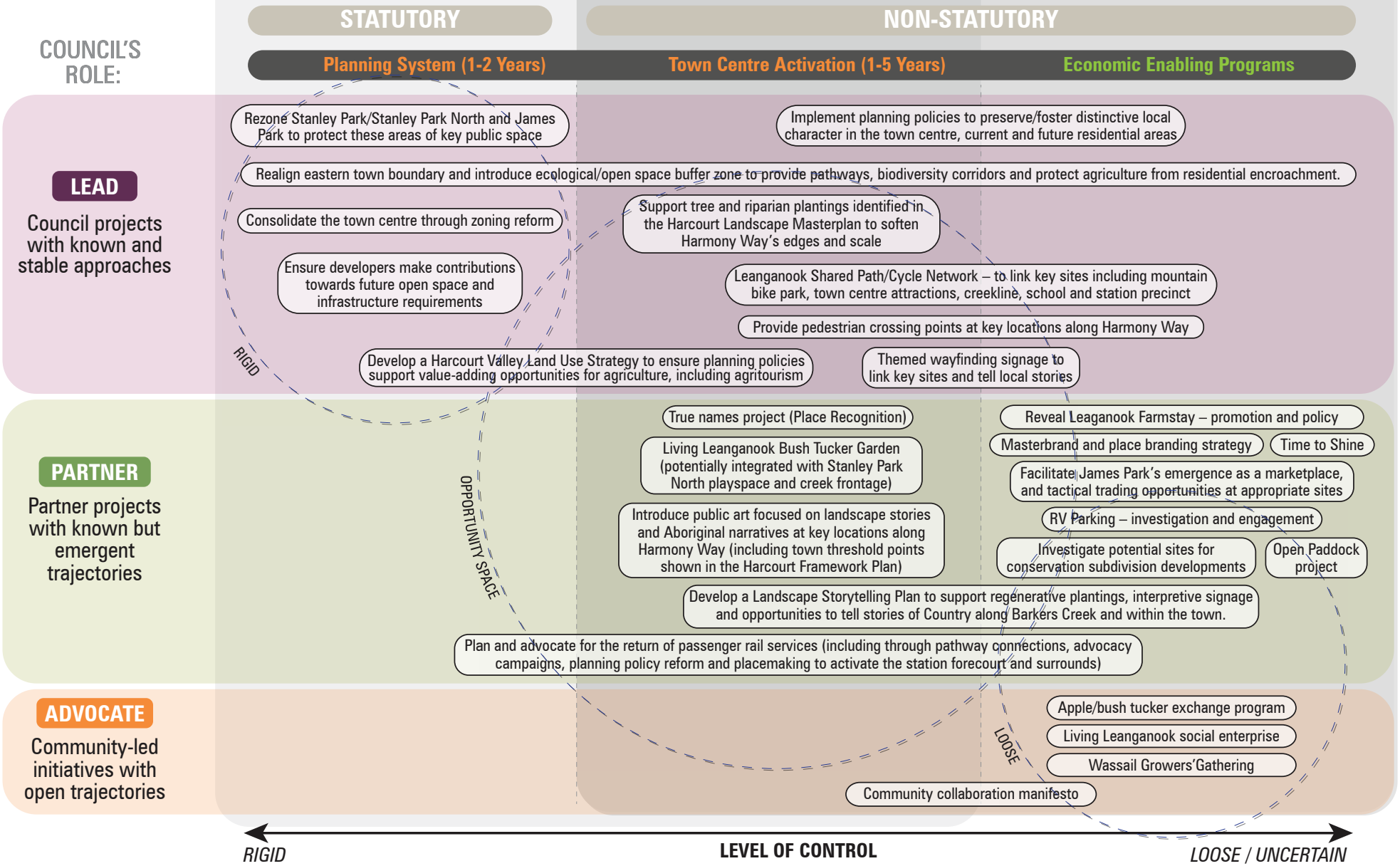
- Legend**
- War Memorial
 - Playspace
 - Flexible Performance Space
 - Bus stop
 - Avenue of Honour
 - Commercial Active Frontage
 - Shared Space (Pedestrian Priority)



- Legend**
- Township Boundary
 - Town Centre Boundary
 - Township Entrance
 - Township Threshold
 - Train Corridor
 - Bridge
 - Shared Trail
 - Potential Shared Trail Links
 - Pedestrian Crossing
 - Town Green (Flexible Market Space)
 - Existing Public Open Space
 - Linear Open Space Network
 - Community Use

HARCOURT FRAMEWORK PLAN

SHINE HARCOURT



** This map is not all-encompassing or all-seeing. It is a way of imagining the projects and the linkages between the more rigid spatial planning and more emergent local initiatives.

Appendix 3: Implementation Plan

Urban Design and Place Activation

Action	Lead Responsibility at Council for further investigation and implementation	Notes
Fill gaps in the existing pathway network to connect key places of interest and promote walkability, particularly between the town centre, the southern precinct (primary school, recreation reserve and railway station), northern precinct (swimming pool) and the new residential expansion areas. This includes providing crossing points at key locations, including Market Street and Harmony Way and Victoria Road's connection with Bingham Street.	Infrastructure and Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities	Council capital works
Earmark a site in the Harmony Way median at the northern entrance to Harcourt's town centre for a sculptural element, to be designed to be sympathetic to the scar tree and creekfront landscape.	Strategic Planning (urban design)	Grant and partnership opportunities
Support measures in the Harcourt Landscape Master Plan to soften the edges of Harmony Way through Indigenous riparian plantings along road edges, and further tree plantings.	Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities	
Introduce a shared foot and bike path within the existing road reserve of Harmony Way to promote walkability and improve the scale of the street, with potential riparian plantings in Indigenous species to provide a physical separation from the road.	Infrastructure and Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities	Grant and partnership opportunities
Develop a program of themed wayfinding signage that links connections to Leanganook/Mount Alexander, community facilities in the town centre, Barkers Creek Trail, Harcourt Recreation Reserve, the railway precinct and orchards and vineyards open to the public. This includes conducting a review of signage to identify further wayfinding opportunities and surplus signage that may cause clutter and need to be removed.	Strategic Planning (urban design)	Grant and partnership opportunities
Reduce curb width in sections of Harmony Way and along High Street by promoting a program of tactical urbanism including painted planter boxes (based on apple crates), seating and sculptural elements that reflect landscape and farming stories.	Strategic Planning (urban design) and Infrastructure	
Link Stanley Park and Stanley Park North with pavement treatments and a pedestrian crossing to create a lower speed environment. Use temporary bollards to reduce the roadway to one-way (running towards the town entrance) at peak event times and consider trialling an ongoing closure.	Infrastructure	Grant and partnership opportunities
Install a community noticeboard at the edge of the ANA Hall carpark. Consider using corten steel and timber in the design to promote a rustic appearance.	Strategic Planning (urban design)	

Appendix 3: Implementation Plan

Urban Design and Place Activation

Action	Lead Responsibility at Council for further investigation and implementation	Notes
Develop a rain garden around the stormwater outlet in James Park to improve amenity and introduce a centrepiece defined by water sensitive urban design.	Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities and Strategic Planning (urban design)	Grant and partnership opportunities
Develop a pocket park and seating node at the northern edge of the James Park/ ANA Hall car park in the road reserve, supported by plantings to promote a strong edge.	Strategic Planning (urban design) and Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities	
Partner with community groups to explore potential for pop-up trading around surplus road reserve land, James Park marketplace and the eastern edge of Stanley Park North.	Development Services (including Planning and Public Safety & Amenity), Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities and Infrastructure	
Encourage residents to plant native/indigenous shrubs and trees within their private property through making a brochure available on the preferred species and locations.	Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities	
Plant appropriate native street trees as part of replacement street tree planting programs or within new residential areas.	Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities	
Investigate the preferred location of a bush tucker garden within or close to the town centre.	Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities and Strategic Planning (urban design)	Grant and partnership opportunities
Encourage public art based on horticultural history and Aboriginal culture.	Strategic Planning (urban design)	Grant and partnership opportunities
Recognition of horticultural significance through signage and public art at key entrances and within the town centre.	Strategic Planning (urban design)	Grant and partnership opportunities
Encourage public seating and infrastructure works to incorporate design elements reflecting apple crates, agricultural machinery elements or locally sourced granite.	Strategic Planning (urban design)	
Further investigate how to address the challenges associated with the layout and size of Harmony Way.	Infrastructure, Strategic Planning (urban design) and Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities	
Develop a landscape plan in consultation with Traditional Owners and community to regenerate the environment along Barkers Creek and provide pedestrian trails and interpretive signage relating to landscape and biodiversity elements.	Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities and Strategic Planning (urban design)	Grant and partnership opportunities

Appendix 3: Implementation Plan

Further planning work

Action	Lead Responsibility at Council for further investigation and implementation	Notes
Prepare a Development Contributions Plan to ensure that new development contributes towards local infrastructure projects.	Strategic Planning and Infrastructure	Allocated funding in FY2019/20
Prepare and implement a planning scheme amendment to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Introduce the new framework plan at Clause 21.12-6 and introduce the Harcourt Framework Plan as a reference document. <input type="checkbox"/> Applies various changes to local planning policy, zone and overlay provisions. 	Strategic Planning	Scheduled to commence in FY2019/20
Complete a flood study to determine the extent of flood risk in areas earmarked for future residential expansion.	Strategic Planning and Infrastructure	Work with North Central Catchment Management Authority
Further investigate the potential to expand the commercial centre to include land along Victoria Road and Harmony Way, including the Harcourt Bowling Club.	Strategic Planning and Infrastructure	Subject to future growth
Commission a strategy to define the land use zoning and policy opportunities for the Harcourt Valley that can better support agriculture, agritourism, food processing and other value-adding activities outside Harcourt's town boundaries.	Strategic Planning	Scheduled to commence in FY2020/21.
Review and if necessary strengthen existing planning overlays that protect the channel, with a view to ensuring it will form a spine of an open space corridor separating horticultural areas from future residential development.	Strategic Planning	Work with Coliban Water and North Central Catchment Management Authority
Undertake further work on the landscape significance of Mount Alexander, the ridgelines of Barkers Creek to the west and the hills surrounding the valley to inform any future Significant Landscape Overlay that may be applied to high points and ridge lines.	Strategic Planning	Not yet scheduled in Strategic Planning work program
Undertake further work on how Environmental Sustainable Design (ESD) can be incorporated into future development.	Strategic Planning and Infrastructure	Not yet scheduled in Strategic Planning work program

Appendix 3: Implementation Plan

Advocacy

Action	Notes
Work with Coliban Water to investigate potential environmental restoration works around the old channel, and for this land to be retained as part of a horticultural buffer.	
Investigate and seek community feedback on returning the name Leanganook to Mount Alexander.	See Shine Harcourt Leanganook
Continue to support advocacy efforts for the return of passenger train services to Harcourt, and advocate for further funding support for pathway, bus service and urban design improvements to better connect the station into the town's fabric.	



Appendix 4: List of recommended changes to the planning scheme

Proposed change
<p>Amend local planning policies to reflect the updated strategic directions for Harcourt, including policy that aims to locate growth close to the centre of town and provides for housing diversity by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Continuing to discourage residential development outside of the town boundary. <input type="checkbox"/> Encouraging medium-density housing within close proximity to key facilities and services and shop-top style housing within the commercial area while protecting viewlines. <input type="checkbox"/> Encouraging ageing in place accommodation within close proximity to key facilities and services. <input type="checkbox"/> Where possible, encouraging community facilities to be co-located.
Amend Clause 21.09-3 to better support tourism based on food production and to support tourism based on promoting and celebrating indigenous cultural heritage and teachings.
Replace the framework plan at Clause 21.12-6 with the updated framework plan.
Amend the decision guidelines in Clause 22.04 (Use and Development of Land in the Farming Zone and Rural) to support agritourism in the Harcourt Valley.
Amend Clause 22.05 to clearly define and strengthen the agricultural buffer between existing rural uses and dwellings.
Rezone land within the township boundary from Township Zone to General Residential Zone and Commercial 1 Zone to provide greater certainty for future use and development in these areas.
Rezone land from Farming Zone to General Residential Zone to the east and northeast of the town to accommodate growth.
Rezone land to along High Street and Harmony Way to Commercial 1 Zone to promote it as the centre of commercial and community activity.
Rezone 61 Coolstore Road from Township Zone to Rural Living Zone that removes the reference to future industrial and creates a transition within the town boundary.
Correct the zoning of roadways to and through Harcourt to ensure any no longer managed by VicRoads following the bypassing of Harcourt are no longer zoned Road Zone Category 1.
In order to further promote its status as Harcourt's major gathering space, rezone Stanley Park and Stanley Park North to Public Park and Recreation Zone and reserve the park for public purposes.
Rezone James Park to Public Park and Recreation Zone and reserve the park for public purposes.
Apply a Design and Development Overlay to land within the existing township area and future growth areas to maintain a sense of openness and protect views to significant landscape areas through wide side setbacks, minimal building site coverage, and limiting building height.
<p>Apply a Design and Development Overlay to land on the western edge of Harmony Way facing the street, to ensure that future development displays outstanding urban design that is appropriate to the context and prominence of the site and aids the consolidation of the present town centre. This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Active street frontages with large ground floor windows that present to the public realm. <input type="checkbox"/> Tree protection zones during construction to preserve current street trees on the western side of Harmony Way. <input type="checkbox"/> Verandahs to define the first floor. <input type="checkbox"/> Encouragement of terrace-style development to achieve a hard edge to Harmony Way. <input type="checkbox"/> Natural materials and neutral colours, with well-articulated facades at the fine grain to encourage walkability.

Appendix 4: List of recommended changes to the planning scheme

Proposed change

Apply a Design and Development Overlay to land in the town centre to promote outstanding urban design that is appropriate to the context and prominence of the site and promotes active street frontages and public safety within and around the site. This should include:

- Active street frontages with large ground floor windows that present to the public realm.
- Signage placed on parapets above the first storey.
- Verandahs to define the first floor.
- A 9m (three-storey) height limit, with encouragement for upper levels to be recessed in order to preserve openness.
- Natural materials and neutral colours, with well-articulated facades fronting on to Harmony Way.

Apply a Development Plan Overlay on the land within the future growth area (land to be rezoned from Farming Zone to General Residential Zone) to ensure it:

- Is managed, coordinated, has regard to an agricultural buffer and public open space and community infrastructure needs.
- Is planned with regard to risks of bushfire and flood.
- Retains significant, large old native trees.
- Has appropriate pedestrian and cycling links to important places such as the town centre, primary school, recreation reserve and the railway station.

Amend the mapping of the Schedule 5 to the Environmental Significance Overlay so that it covers land located 200 metres both side of Barkers Creek and other waterways that are currently covered by this overlay to protect native vegetation.



Appendix 5: **Shine Harcourt Leanganook**



SHINE HARCOURT LEANGANOOK

AN ECONOMIC
STIMULUS
PROJECT

We would like to
acknowledge the
Jaara Jaara people,
custodians and
caretakers of this land.

We thank them for
the care they have
taken of Country; the
rivers, mountains,
trees and animals.

We honour this Country,
the Elders of the past
and present as well
as the young proud
Aboriginal people.

chan
in the
to

"I believe in
ge. I believe
power it has
unite us and
ignite us."

- Uzo Aduba



From Shine Harcourt to Shine Harcourt Leanganook

This project was originally branded Shine Harcourt. One of the recommendations coming out of the Shine Harcourt Ideas Lab was to refer to the Harcourt Valley area as Harcourt Leanganook, to return the original name Leanganook to Mount Alexander and to take every opportunity to emphasise the relationship between the town and the mountain.

For this reason the project has been rebranded. All new activities, documents and activities that occur after the Ideas Lab, including this report, will be referred to Shine Harcourt Leanganook, while the original process leading up to the lab is referred to by the original name of Shine Harcourt.

Privacy and confidentiality

Hello City does from time to time collect personally identifiable and confidential information. We meet our responsibilities under the Victorian Privacy Act 1988 and comply with the Australian Privacy Principles 2014. Our professional practice is guided by the Australian Market Research Association Code of Conduct.

Consultation

Hello City takes all reasonable steps to ensure the accuracy and authenticity of the information provided. We take our responsibility to present the views of participants accurately seriously, however we cannot be accountable for the authenticity of information provided to us. Where there are gaps and omissions in the information provided we will work with you to fill or correct these within the scope of the project.

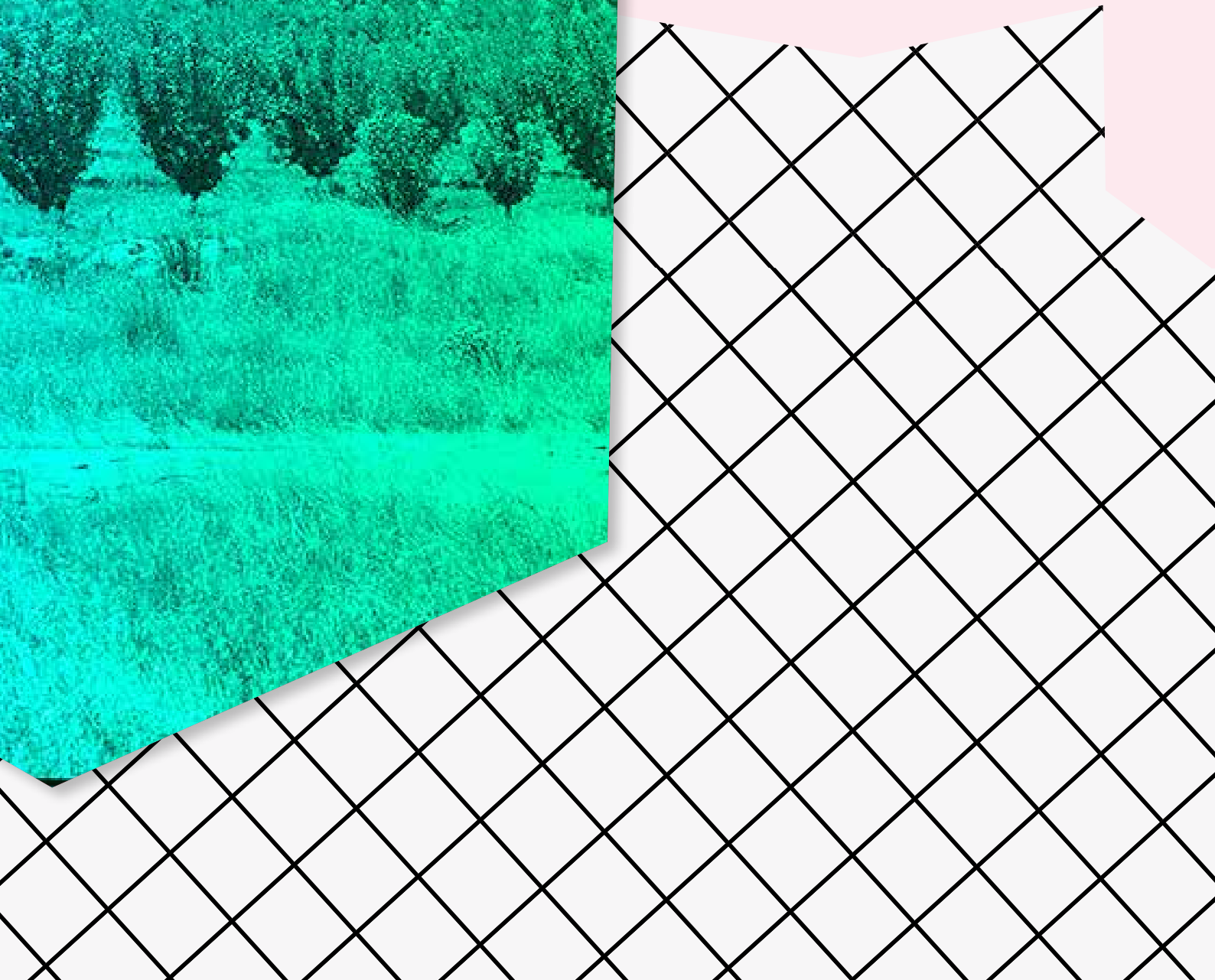


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Funded by the **Building Better Regions Program**



in collaboration with **Mount Alexander Shire Council** on behalf of the **Shine Harcourt Leanganook Partnership**

September 2019



Photo credit: Royal Galas (Ideas-a-lthon Capture Challenge, Childhood memory)

Foreword

Change is coming to Harcourt. Our population is set to increase dramatically over the next 15 years, our existing economy is evolving and new enterprises are emerging. It is time to engage with the forces of change to make sure we end up with the kind of town we can be proud of, and that reaches its full potential. It's time for us to come together, roll up our sleeves and grab opportunities with both hands to create the economic future that we want. It's time for Harcourt to shine!

Shine Harcourt Leanganook¹ is our response to this challenge and opportunity. It is an economic stimulus project led by Mount Alexander Shire Council in collaboration with the Shine Harcourt Leanganook Partnership which sets out to define a clear economic direction for Harcourt that captures the imagination of the town and shines a light on the best way forward.

Shine Harcourt Leanganook aims to be a catalyst - harnessing the determination of the town to define effective strategies, both big and small that can mobilise and galvanise local entrepreneurship, confidence and investment in the local area.

Guided by creative urban strategists Hello City, over the past 6 months the Shine Harcourt Leanganook Partnership has come together with people of all ages and from all walks of life to dream and scheme together, to hear Harcourt's story and to uncover what it hopes to become.

What we found was a real desire for positive change combined with a deep understanding of what makes Harcourt, Harcourt, and of what kinds of ideas will work here and why.

In a single inspired evening at the Bowlo we gathered over 1000 ideas for our future, which, after being tested for suitability and sustainability have become the foundation of this report and our **5 big ambitions for Harcourt**.

Together we think these 5 ambitions have the power to guide us to the future we want. We invite the good people of Harcourt to take the ideas in this report and make them happen. Please feel free to tweak them or change them to make them your own, or find better ideas to achieve the ambitions than the ones included here. **See this document as a starting point and a framework to support you to do your thing for the good of Harcourt.**

You don't have to be a business owner, policy-maker, political leader, investor, or a creative genius to get involved (although you are welcome if you are) - all you need is a passion for this town and the desire to make Harcourt Shine!

- *The Shine Harcourt Leanganook Partnership*

¹ The first part of the project including the Ideas-a-thon and the Ideas Lab was called Shine Harcourt, the project was rebranding in response to key Ideas Lab findings and became known as Shine Harcourt Leanganook

What participants said about Shine Harcourt Leanganook

“The Shine Harcourt process is an exemplar for community based and owned economic development, which will increasingly be fundamental to small town success and prosperity. It has built on and developed the locally specific knowledge and expertise of Harcourt residents, and further deepened relationships that will provide a platform for sustainable development.”

Patrick Fensham, SGS Economics and Planning
Principal and Partner

“Congratulations to all that contributed to the Shine Harcourt Ideas-a-thon. What a fantastic community event. A special thank-you to The Harcourt Progress Association Staff at Mount Alexander Shire and also the Bowling Club for hosting this important event. A big thank-you to the facilitators and also the panel of experts that have workshopped and developed our ideas into what will be a blueprint for the future of Harcourt.

I feel very fortunate to have grown up in Harcourt. One of the things I love about our community is our rich blend of our early pioneering families, our ancient history of earliest inhabitants and the newest members of our community.

The way we welcome strangers and the way we work together for the benefit of our community. There is a level of comfort in friendships that last for generations but there is also lots to be learned from new members of our community. Our fabulous rolling hills and our beautiful mountain of granite is like a magnet that continues to draw us back to our wonderful community.

Shine Harcourt encapsulates the goodness in our community so thank-you again for being involved.

I sincerely wish you all the very very best for the future and hope you enjoy seeing our community develop in innovative ways building on our rich heritage.”

Tony Cordy, Deputy Mayor Mount Alexander Shire Council

“What’s good about this project is that it’s giving us all a way to work together as a whole township, even if we don’t necessarily all get along as individuals. The project is like a bus that’s taking us in the right direction, and everyone is welcome to get on board!”

Donna McMahon,
Goldfields Track Cafe

“The timing for Shine Harcourt has been remarkable. There is incredible energy and enthusiasm in the community and Shine Harcourt has captured this and provided great momentum. It has encouraged people to come together and collaborate for an overall community benefit. Having outside support bring this about has validated the process and provided a level of independent advice and support which has been invaluable for the process. A spot of cabaret and some good times didn’t go astray either! Who says you can’t change the world and not have fun at the same time...”

Jacqueline Brodie-Hanns, Harcourt Progress
Association and Shedshaker Brewery

Introduction

“We do not need magic to change the world, we carry all the power we need inside ourselves already: we have the power to imagine better.”

- J.K. Rowling

In response to economic changes and emerging business opportunities Mount Alexander Shire Council saw a need for strategic thinking around ways to stimulate the economy, plot out the best economic future and build on the existing ideas and assets of the community. Instead of working with an economist to carry out the usual desktop process it was decided that it would be better to take a much more collaborative and community-led approach. The Shine Harcourt Leanganook process was designed to ensure that the economic strategies were built on sound local knowledge, on a clear understanding of what would stack up and responded to the values, ideas and characteristics that make Harcourt truly Harcourt.

After securing federal funding Council decided to use Hello City's tried-and-true process of creative community-led strategy development which started by establishing the Shine Harcourt Partnership, this partnership approved the project branding, methodology and objectives and kick-started the project in collaboration with Council.

Guiding and championing the project throughout, the partnership includes representatives from key local organisations including growers, Landcare, the Harcourt Progress Association, local business operators and consultants, Harcourt Cooperative Cool Stores, state government and Council.

Hello City has facilitated the process and provided strategic frameworks and direction to strengthen the creative thinking of the community and pull together an overarching strategic economic vision that reflects the energy, ideas, opinions and practical wisdom of the people of Harcourt.

The process we have used is very different to traditional strategy development techniques. We sought to engage in a more creative way and collaborate with people who would never show up to a public meeting or complete a dry, if worthy, survey. We wanted to hear the thoughts, ideas and aspirations of people from all walks of life - from grassroots community to senior government officers, from emerging artists to big landowners and everyone in between. Then we wanted them to think through their ideas and tell us what was really possible so that the process would result in a real way forward rather than a wishlist of undeliverable or unsupported ideas.

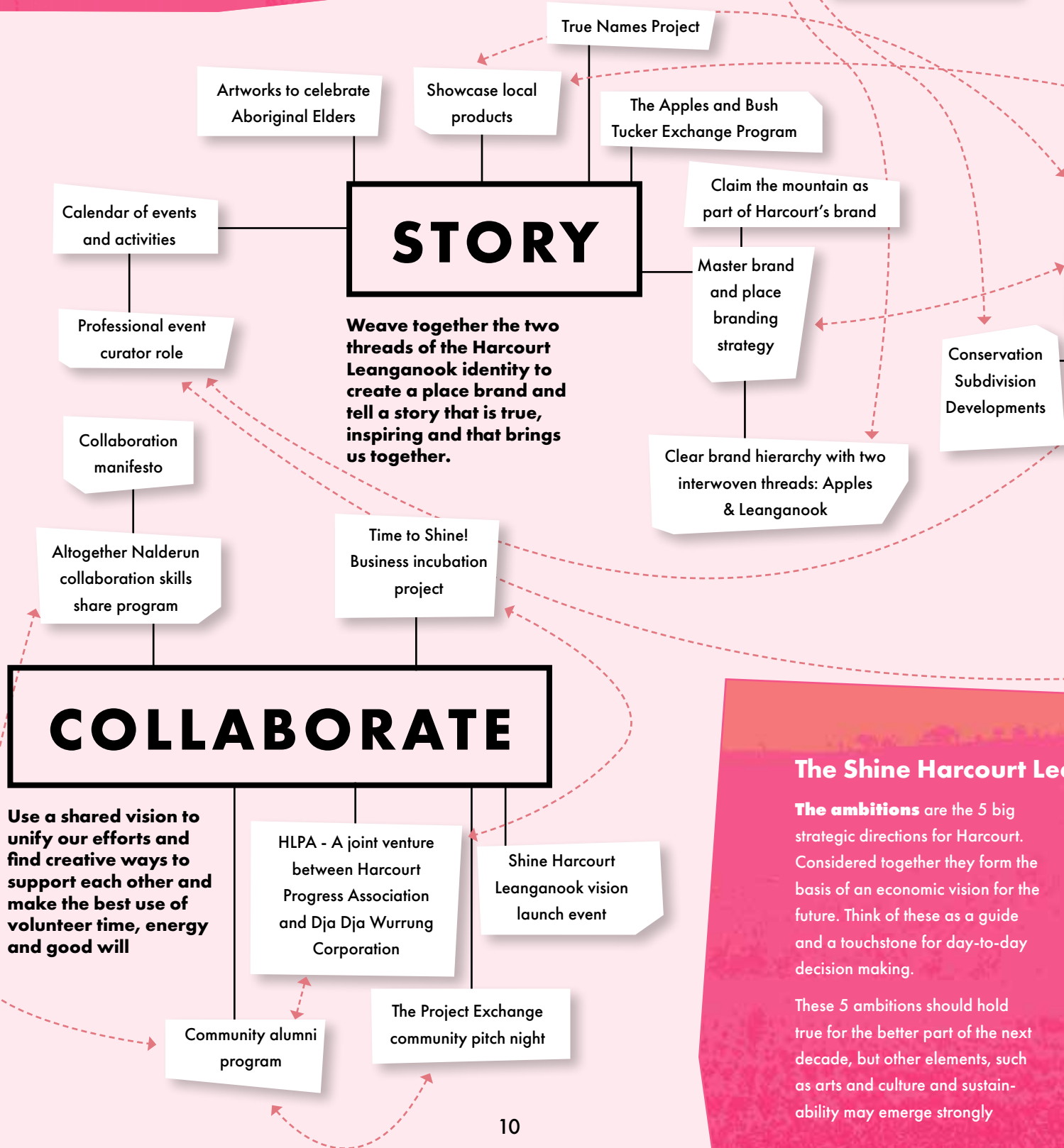
We were amazed by what they came up with. We hope you will be too.

Our ambition for Shine Harcourt Leanganook is that it is used as a tool by those among you who are making things happen in this town. To inform what you do and how you do it. To inform how and where you spend your resources and how you make your decisions. To inspire and crystallise your conversations, your passions and your work.

What do we mean by Harcourt? We didn't define a boundary for the project - we wanted the people of Harcourt Valley to tell us what Shine Harcourt meant to them.

The results are sometimes very specific to the town centre as the focal point and at other times broad & regional.

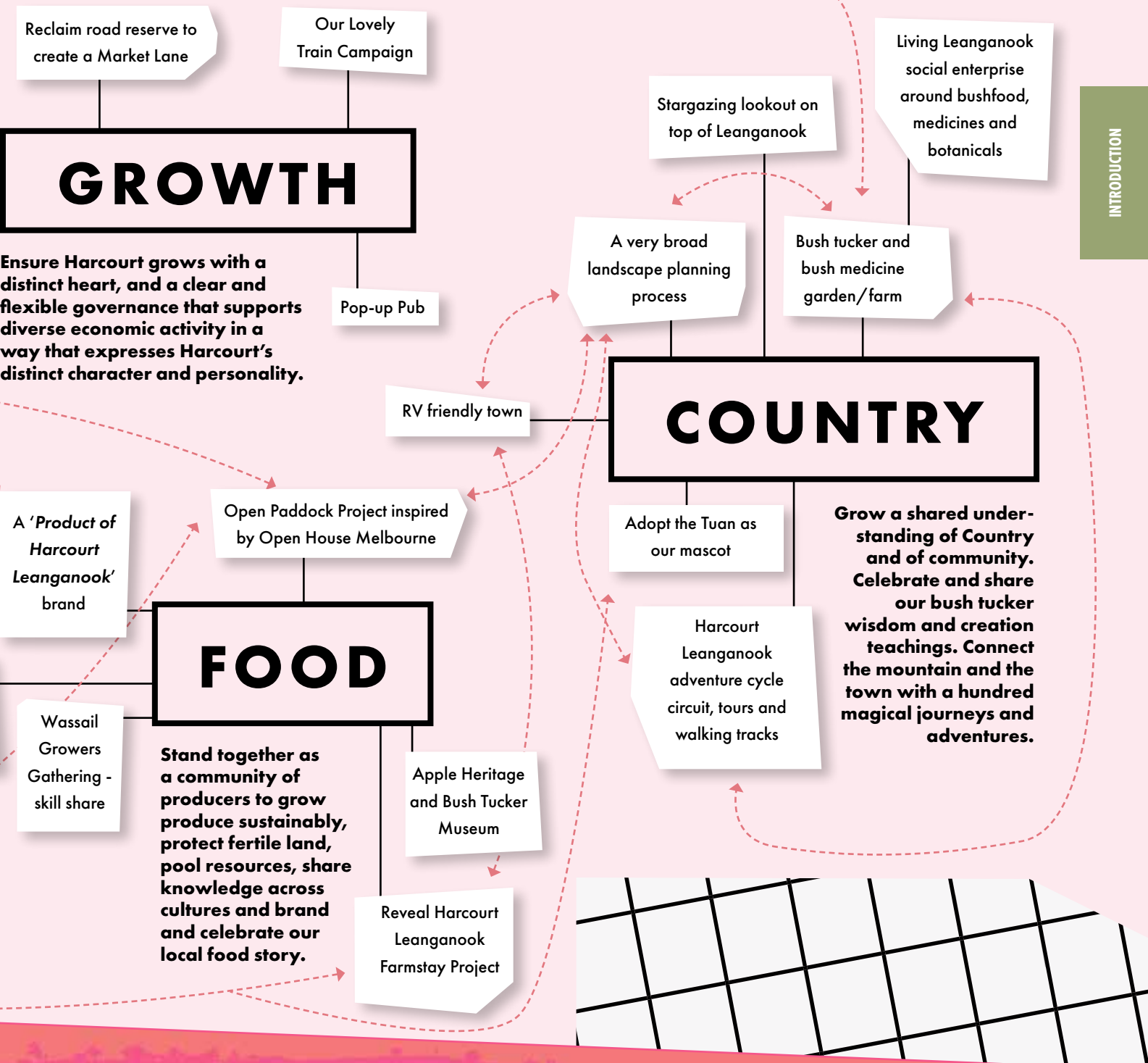
SHINE HARCOURT LEANGANOOK 5 AMBITIONS



The Shine Harcourt Le

The ambitions are the 5 big strategic directions for Harcourt. Considered together they form the basis of an economic vision for the future. Think of these as a guide and a touchstone for day-to-day decision making.

These 5 ambitions should hold true for the better part of the next decade, but other elements, such as arts and culture and sustainability may emerge strongly



Leanganook ambitions, delivery mechanisms, next steps and ideas

enough over the next couple of years to justify adding additional ambitions to the list.

The ambitions along with key projects are summarised above.

The delivery mechanisms are a collection of project ideas that have the potential to deliver each of the ambitions. These projects are ideas that have emerged directly from the community, or else are evolutions or alternatives of those

ideas developed during the Ideas Lab, or by Hello City. Each of the ideas and projects proposed in this section has been tested and refined and has high levels of support and ownership in the community.

Take care however not to ignore new ideas or other delivery mechanisms that may emerge or that haven't been included here; the projects explored in this report represent only one way of making the ambitions a reality - of course

there are countless other pathways that would be equally effective.

The next steps section outlines ways to get the ball rolling for each ambition. Think of these as starting points only. Next steps should be flexible and be able to change quickly in response to real world barriers and opportunities.

Ideas-a-thon ideas generated by the community during the Shine Harcourt Leanganook process are

shown throughout the document as if typed on small pieces of pink paper. Some of these ideas have been developed and have become recommended projects listed in the delivery mechanisms section. Many ideas of the ideas that have not yet been developed would also be fantastic, and have been shown in this document so that they remain on the table for consideration.

THE SHINE HARCOURT LEANGANOOK CONVERSATION

The process of defining the ambitions for Shine Harcourt Leanganook started early in 2019. We were after big ideas, fresh thinking, new connections and inspiration. At the same time we wanted this new thinking to build on what was already here, already proposed or already happening.

The Ideas-a-thon

In May the Shine Harcourt Leanganook team invited the people of Harcourt to come down to the local Bowlo on a Saturday night to compete in teams to generate ideas for the future of Harcourt and we were completely blown away by the response.

Not a seat was spare. More than 75 participants in 18 teams showed up including community members, families, government, small business, big business, university students, musicians and consultants.

Challenge One - Capture - was to take and upload photos of Harcourt in response to a series of 16 statements, such as "Wouldn't it be terrible if Harcourt more of this?", "This makes my heart sing" and "Change".

Challenge Two - Spark - was about quantity: coming up with as many ideas as humanly possible racing against the clock

Challenge Three - Hack - was about taking an idea, pulling it apart and putting it back together again. Participants brainstormed in groups through a set of questions such as "What would a 6 year old do with this idea?", "How would you deliver this idea if you only had 3 months and \$100?" and "How would you deliver this idea if it were the year 2100?".

A team of local luminaries including Mount Alexander Shire Council Deputy Mayor, a local business coach, an IT wiz and the local school principal gave feedback on the quality and diversity of the ideas and awarded prizes.

An incredible **1016 ideas** were produced along with **59 photos** capturing the hopes and aspirations for Harcourt, many of which illustrate this document.

We added to these with existing ideas gleaned from a review of existing strategies, programs, studies and community contributions, including the Plan Harcourt engagement outputs and preliminary documents, Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan and the Harcourt Community Plan. As we pored over this mass of ideas, clear themes started to emerge to set the scene for the next stage.

Ideas Lab

Less than a week later around 35 knowledgeable people with myriad backgrounds and expertise gathered for an Ideas Lab. We brought together people who were best placed to understand each theme from its different angles; people with intimate knowledge of the barriers, levers, politics and history around the ideas - and what it would take to bring them to fruition.

The Ideas Lab delegates were divided into groups around each ambition according to their skills and interests, and were asked to define frameworks that would allow the ideas to flourish. Participants explored the issues and forces shaping Harcourt today, and mapped out possible resources and barriers around each theme. They made hard judgement calls about the sweet spot between ambition and practicalities, and set defined goals before finally mapping what needs to happen to realise each goal. Not bad for a day's work.

This document attempts to capture all of this industriousness, thinking, dreaming and momentum in one place. Don't think of it as a strategy or a report. Think of it as a glimpse into the heads of the many people who have taken part so far and an insight into **what we collectively feel should happen next to create the most audacious future for Harcourt.**



Some of the genius Shine Harcourt Ideas-a-thon participants



A tiny fraction of the hundreds of Ideas-a-thon ideas

Pop-up Twilight Cinema

Caravan park

Festival for central Victorian Brewers cider and Mead makers

Tours of historic locations in Harcourt + promote this!

A tourist route or scenic drive from Bendigo to Harcourt

Barefoot bowling for youngsters

Singing club or choir

Regenerative permaculture farm

Educational facility teaching self-sufficiency

Focus on creating a town for kids
Concerts at local wineries

New welcome to Harcourt sign

Attract a top class chef and restaurateur

Return land legally to Indigenous people native title

Incentivise retirement village to be built

Treetop zipline course

Re-open train station

Indigenous cultural perspectives trail
Indigenous cultural events around Reconciliation week

Signage at Pollard Road and freeway for Bendigo scenic route via Harcourt

Open gardens

Community Hub/live music venue

Functioning railway station

Walking track to Castlemaine

Native title

Bathroom and shower facilities in Oak Forest for camping

Create an indigenous knowledge centre on Mount Alexander

Awesome Harcourt sign think Hollywood

Bubble park

An ATM

A ban on single use plastics

Low plantings and removal of rocks in roundabout

Solar farm

Set up twin town or sister city for Harcourt

Landscape Barkers Creek waterway

Pagan festival in oak forest

More festivals and events

Regular social dances in Leisure Centre Supermarket

Apple sculpture at roundabout

Harcourt sign at each end of town

The Very Hungry Caterpillar eating through apples in a park or as children's sculpture

Ideas-a-thon teams: CNS, Diva Lovers, Donna & Dave, Gas Bottle Crew, Harcourt Lions Club, Harcourt Shiners, Hardcore Toil, Juicy Fruits, Not Just Cider, Teed Team, The ANA mob, The Bowlers, The Harcourt Producers, The Hongs, The Royal Galas, The Shiny Shiny Ponies, The VMRTians, Whoop Whoop Team.

Observatory

Wayfinding signage for walker and bikers including indigenous Heritage information

Bonfire night with fireworks

mountain bike valet service

Wine and produce trail

Co-working space

Open air cinema/theatre

Library

Encourage small scale farming

Large corporate mountain biking events

Small business/enterprise networking events

Modular homes with mountain views

Big water slide for swimming pool

Better signage

Camping grounds

Agri-tourism

Developed town centre with retail precinct

Wine bar

Dedicated events coordinator for area

More walking trails

Pop up shops

Wildlife Park

Hat making club

Walking cider and wine tour

Lego club/museum

Dog friendly town

Giant granite sculptures

Night-time horse riding track

Encourage bed and breakfast and holiday stays on farms

Gin distillery

Bush Nursing centre

Improve walking tracks around mountain tracks with connection to Town Centre

Flower tasting

Coordinated food and wine festival

Community pizza oven

Vocational agricultural programs

Farm to Table

Granite benches and tables in the reserve opposite the general store

Promote the town's riches: apples, cherries, granite, bike track

Big music festival

Observatory on Mt. Alexander for star-gazing

Pub

Koala breeding program

Ad campaign: 'Escape to Harcourt; we value peace and quiet, we value good food, good wine, good food, good wine, relax and unwind!'

Turn disused railway station into something special

More beginners bike paths

Botanic Gardens featuring local indigenous plants

Walking trail into Castlemaine

Support for small businesses - and less red tape so they invest in town

Climbing wall at bike park

New housing to have correct aspect to maximize power efficiency

A Town Centre - and beautify it!

Swimming in the reservoir

More information available for tourists about indigenous culture

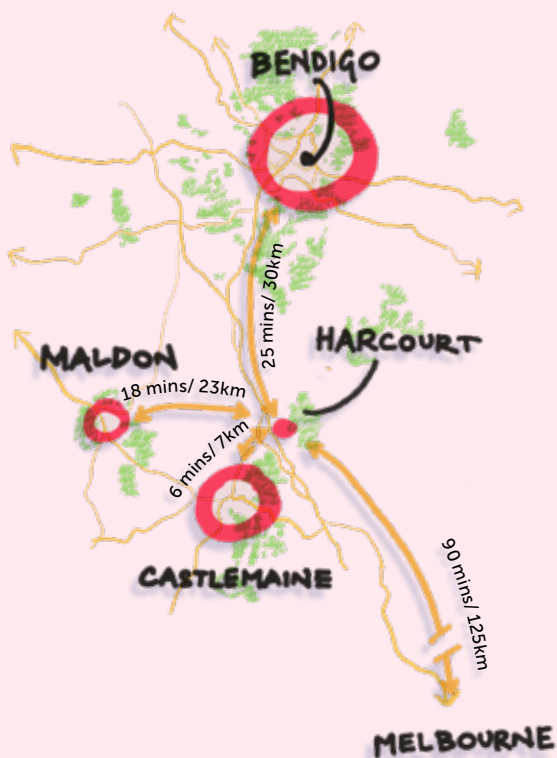
History tours

20 Fast Facts about Harcourt

1. Located in Victoria's Central Highlands at the foot of Mount Alexander, Harcourt Valley is within commuting and day-tripping distance of Melbourne and minutes from Castlemaine and Bendigo.
2. The Dja Dja Wurrung Clans are the traditional owners and custodians of Harcourt Valley and are a strong and creative presence in the community. DjaDjaWurrung Enterprises trading as Djandak provides a range of services including natural resource management, policy and strategic development. There is also an established and active Aboriginal community who have settled in the area over the last century and have powerful connections to the Harcourt Valley area.
3. Harcourt's population of less than 1000 people² is expected to balloon over the next 2 decades with a growth rate up to 4 times faster than previous years. Tourist visitation is estimated to jump to over 200,000 people annually following an even steeper increase.
4. Only 30km away from Bendigo, over the next decade Harcourt can be expected to be affected by Bendigo's predicted 30% growth..
5. Harcourt's location on the main north-south highway, and adjacent to the railway line (which remains decommissioned at this stage) make the town easily accessible from Bendigo and Melbourne. The re-elected Victorian Labor Government made a 2018 pre-election commitment to investigate re-opening the Harcourt Railway Station and undertake a design process.
6. Some growth scenarios in the Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan and The Harcourt Framework Plan Review anticipate a town of up to 3000 people which would typically support a medium-sized supermarket, about 20 specialty shops and a range of non-retail businesses.³ Council has a strategic view that Harcourt is the township with the greatest growth potential in the Mount Alexander Shire.
7. Harcourt is relatively affluent compared to the rest of the Shire but shares the Shire's comparatively high unemployment rate of 6.5%. Of those in employment the great majority work in Castlemaine or Bendigo.
8. Despite this, Harcourt scores 1014 on the SEIFA index of disadvantage meaning that it has a relatively low level of disadvantage - with 1000 being the benchmark score. 38.2% of households in Harcourt earn over \$1000 per week and 14.5% earn less than \$350 per week (as compared to 17.6% in Regional Victoria).
9. Most Harcourtians own their home or are paying it off, with rental rates almost half that of regional Victoria.
10. Nalderun (meaning all together in language) is a highly active and effective organisation that provides services that support the Aboriginal Community and is led by Aboriginal people. The services include education around local Jaara Jaara knowledge integrated with the Australian curriculum, participating in an Indigenous Round Table with Mount Alexander Mayor, and the bush tucker catering service Murnong Mammis.
11. There are a number of other well established and long running not-for-profit groups in the area providing a range of services and activities including the Harcourt Progress Association, Harcourt Heritage (also known as Harcourt Valley Heritage and Tourist Centre Inc) and Landcare.
12. The Harcourt bypass completed in 2009 has resulted in a reduction of 9000 vehicle movements through the town daily and left a legacy of large areas of surplus road reserve and urban form that don't reflect the current or future needs of the community. The town centre is currently located beside the old highway and is not within walking distance of the existing railway line or (decommissioned) station.

² Current population numbers depend on where you draw the boundary, the population is recorded as 943 in the 2016 census

³ The Harcourt Framework Plan Review uses several population estimates including this one to understand the size and types of commercial uses



13. Harcourt boasts a range of award winning accommodation, retreats, local food producers, wineries, cideries and beautiful landscapes. In the township key businesses for visitors include Blume's Bakery, Goldfield's Track Cafe and the soon to be opened Harcourt Produce and General Store.
14. Despite its assets Harcourt is currently relatively unknown to visitors familiar with nearby Castlemaine and Maldon.
15. There are over 30 sites and building of heritage interest in the Harcourt valley including a fruit-packing shed (1940s), railway bridges, several houses, the former railway station and the unusual ANA Hall established by a pre-Federation friendly society.⁴
16. Harcourt is possibly best known for apples, producing 40% of the state's apples and renown for the quality of their Pink Ladies. Two of the countries largest growing groups Montague Fresh and Jeffomson Orchards call Harcourt home as does the Harcourt Coolstore Co-operative which goes beyond marketing of fruit to engage broadly with other products and enterprises – including cider, wine, juice and mineral water.
17. Harcourt has an established horticultural industry and is developing an excellent reputation as a wine and cider region, with beverage production now including craft beer and ginger beer and the well known Maidenaii vermouth made with native botanicals.
18. Queensland fruit fly has been found in Harcourt in March 2019 in home garden crops and the threat is actively monitored by local residents and farmers.
19. Quarrying granite has been an important source of employment since 1859. High quality Harcourt granite has been used all over Australia, including Parliament House in Canberra, the John Flynn Memorial at Alice Springs and the pedestal of the Burke and Wills statue in Melbourne.
20. There are two large tourist destinations in Harcourt. Harcourt Mountain Bike Trails at La Larr Ba Gauwa offers 34 kilometres of cross-country mountain bike trails with stunning views and unique rock features. Opened in February 2018 and funded by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, the park is expected to bring 70,000-90,000 visitors annually.⁵ Still under construction, the Victorian Miniature Railway project is forging innovative education and learning partnerships. Occupying a picturesque site on the hill, the railway is expected to attract about 2000 people to Harcourt each weekend.

Sources: Mount Alexander Shire Council Economic Development Strategy 2013-17, SEIFA, Mount Alexander Shire Council, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Harcourt - After the Bypass Report 2009, Dja Dja Wurrung Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan, Harcourt Town Centre Master Plan 2011, Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan 2014, Plan 2014, Plan Harcourt DiscussionPaper 2018, Harcourt Community Plan, Sydney Morning Herald, DELWP's Victoria in Future report.

⁴ Australian Natives Association was an historical benefit society for Australian-born men established as part of the Federation movement (1911)

⁵ The park out performed estimates of 25,000 visitors in the first year by attracting approximately 34,000 visitors



The Eachness of Harcourt

Where are we now, where do we want to get to?

We like to use the term Eachness, coined by William James in the 1800s to talk about those individual qualities of something that define it and make it unique. The Eachness of Harcourt captures those details and qualities that make it entirely itself.

Where are we?

How Harcourt is currently perceived

quiet, peaceful, fragmented, beautiful, community oriented, apples, cider, gold, green, pocket of hidden wonders, world class produce, warm, picturesque, agricultural, emerging, fertile, growing, bypassed, isolated, constrained, unattractive, stagnant, safe, divisive, unknown, no centre

Where do we want to get to? *What we hope for Harcourt's future*

fun, lively, growing, innovative,
vibrant, experiential, a sensory place,
known, green, connected to Country,
welcoming, sustainable, diverse,
surprising, destinational, profitable,
friendly, active, exporter, thriving,
leading, family friendly, grounded,
authentic, harmonious, bush tucker,
restorative, special, proud

**"GIVE ME A PLACE
TO STAND AND
A LEVER, AND I
SHALL MOVE THE
WORLD."**

— ARCHIMEDES



Photo credit: Juicy Fruits (Ideas-a-thon Capture Challenge; Childhood memory)

Our Ambitions

The results of the Shine Harcourt Leanganook process have been distilled into 5 ambitions for the town. Some are grand and optimistic, others suggest starting at grassroots level and growing over time. All have been suggested and developed because they get us closer to the future town that Harcourt says it wants. **Together they can transform this town for the better.**

Adventure tourism was a strong area of focus in the Shine Harcourt Leanganook process. In the report these ideas have been spread throughout the **Country, Brand** and **Food** ambitions to better address the challenges around adventure tourism including; the lack of integration of existing adventure tourism assets with the town, the narrow appeal of key experiences, the lack of a complete offer in Harcourt that is capable of attracting overnight visitors and of redirecting the economic benefits of adventure tourism back to the town. In this report ideas that address these issues have been prioritised over ideas for new adventure tourism infrastructure.

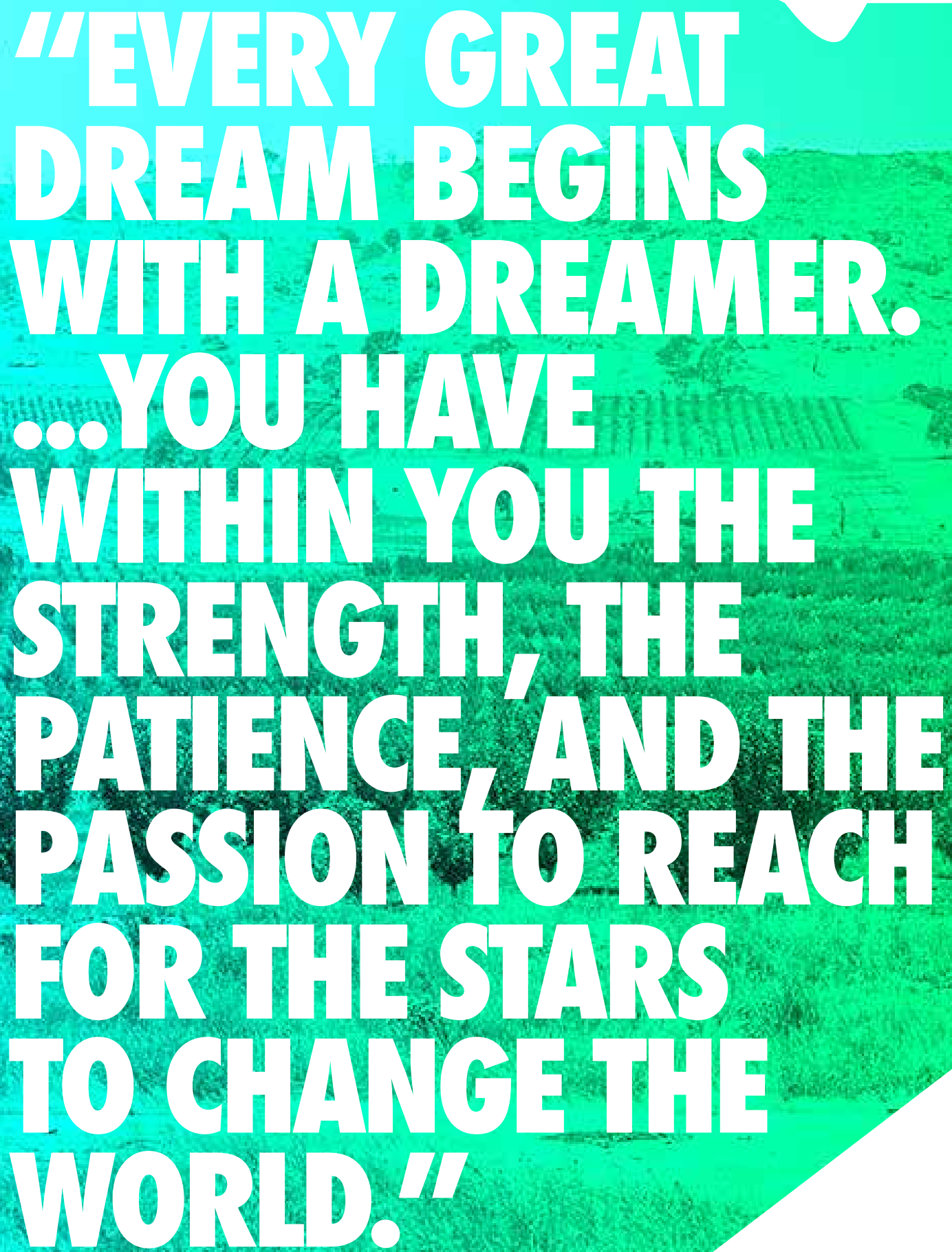
One of the things that struck us was the level of consensus across the community that the future vision and needs of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal locals are very much aligned. There is a very clear sense that much more can be achieved in collaboration than would be possible separately, and that it is the right time to walk in courage to build the future we want, together.

In fact so many of the ideas generated by the ideas-a-thon process were about local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their cultural perspectives that in the Ideas Lab one of only 6 tables was dedicated to exploring ideas around Dja Dja Wurrung and Country. In this final report those ideas have been spread evenly throughout each of the 5 ambitions. The objectives, values and principles of the Dja Dja Wurrung and Nalderun as articulated in the Nalderun Evaluation Snapshot and Dja Dja Wurrung Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan have served as a key framework for defining and articulating the ambitions.

The other thing that really struck us was the sense of building momentum; of positive change already happening and gathering speed.

The ambitions outlined in this document have been explored by the people who understand the issues surrounding them. It will take the continued commitment of those people to do all of the testing, feasibility studies and project planning that it will take to turn them into a reality. There is enormous value in each person, each business, each organisation that has taken part to date - giving us a powerful resource to do just that.





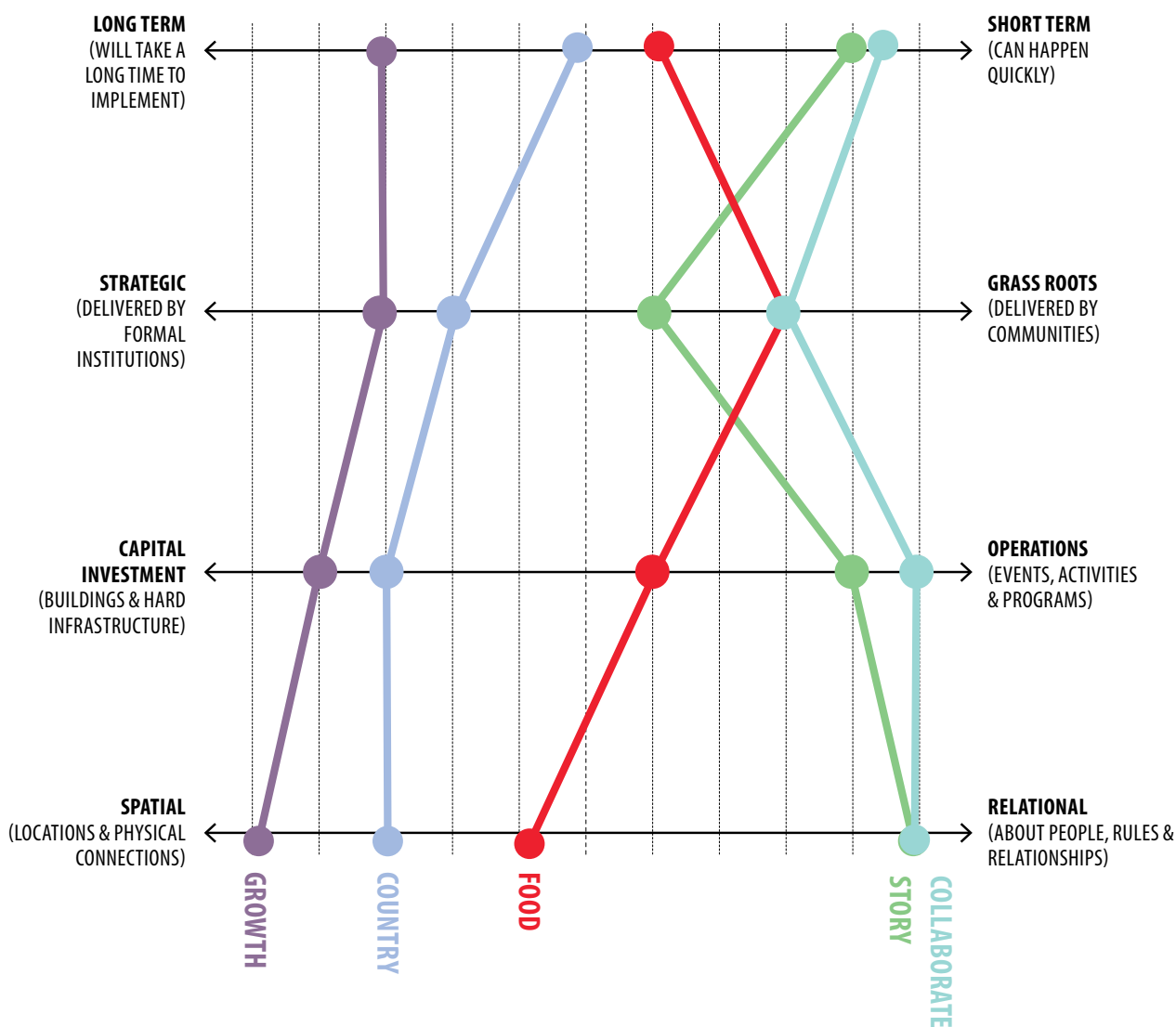
**“EVERY GREAT
DREAM BEGINS
WITH A DREAMER.
...YOU HAVE
WITHIN YOU THE
STRENGTH, THE
PATIENCE, AND THE
PASSION TO REACH
FOR THE STARS
TO CHANGE THE
WORLD.”**

— HARRIET TUBMAN

AMBITIONS MAP

The ambitions that emerged from Shine Harcourt Leanganook were diverse in terms of their reach. Some were highly strategic, long-term and complex. Others suggested a gradual evolution from small beginnings. This diagram demonstrates the breadth of the ambitions when taken as a group, plotting each according to:

- How long it will take to make it happen
- Whether it is strategic or grassroots in nature
- Whether it focuses more on infrastructure or activity
- Whether it is more to do with the physical environment or relationships



A photograph of a person standing in a field at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, red, and purple. The person is standing in the middle ground, looking towards the camera. The foreground is a dirt path. Large white text is overlaid on the image.

**"MY
GRANDFATHER
SAID TO ME,
'YOU HAVE
TO FIRST LOVE
YOURSELF,
AND SPREAD
IT AROUND'."**

— MUM SHIRL

AMBITION 1

STORY

Weave together the two threads of the Harcourt Leanganook identity to create a place brand and tell a story that is true, inspiring and that brings us together.

First we tell ourselves stories about who we are, and then we tell them to others. These stories are the core of our brand and identity. Harcourt's stories include Dja Dja Wurrung and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander history and living culture, pioneering history, apple growing, and being a town nestled in the foothills of an ancient mountain. How we tell these stories, which ones we repeat, which stories we try to forget, which ones we take pride in and what we find in the stories to love about ourselves - all this becomes the brand and identity of our town.

As well as being embedded in these stories, the identity and brand of Harcourt is in how Harcourt looks and feels. It's also in the kinds of experiences that are possible, the values we hold, and in the overall sense of place.

The work of creating a brand is to look through all of these elements and to decide which of these true stories we want to tell, and which real experiences we want to share and expand. Then we need to tell those stories and build on those experiences in a way that is effective, consistent and compelling.

Good place brands can not be reduced down to logos or slogans. They're not simply about putting a themed sculpture in a park or putting up some signage. A good brand is about how the stories that we tell about places resonate with us emotionally.⁶ Good place brands make visible and knit together a range of powerful and authentic experiences of culture and of the place.

Harcourt's identity is layered, complex and made up of light and shadow. The trick is to not simplify the identity down to a caricature or to a one-liner, while also making the most of Harcourt's key strengths and the elements that really stand out

and provide the town with a clear point of difference in the region and in the state.

Truly effective place brands are layered and rich and invite exploration without trying to cram everything interesting about the place into a single slogan or image. Good brands use a clever trick of synecdoche to make the part stand in for the whole.

Harcourt is apples and granite and mountain bike riding, it's beautiful home gardens and apple orchards, it's the ancient power of Leanganook⁷ and over 40,000 years of Aboriginal continuous custodianship and living culture, it's the old-school Bowlo and the ANA Hall, it's cider and wine and vermouth made with bush botanicals. It's all of these. Of these elements, it's **apples and Leanganook** that provide the strongest point of difference for the town in the region. These two elements should become the core of Harcourt's master brand.

Use Apples and Leanganook as the two key organising elements of the overall brand identity. Think of the brand as being made up of two major threads; the Harcourt thread and the Leanganook thread. The Harcourt thread is about the township itself, and apple growing and orchards, farming, food, wineries and cider. The Leanganook thread is about the mountain, learning, community, wellbeing, bush tucker, bush medicine, landscape, culture, history and adventure. These two threads are already interwoven and have the potential to be even more closely knitted together as they grow to complement and support each other. The more creatively we weave these threads together, the stronger our appeal and point of different in the region will become.

⁶ Logos, sculptures and names are also important of course, but they are the surface signs or markers of the deeper elements of the brand experience. Think of logos and sculptures as the packaging, while experiences such as eating a freshly baked apple pie, or climbing the mountain to look at the views of the plains, are the product. These experiences are what is inside the box and what visitors really care about. Harcourt needs strengthen those experiences that provide it with a point of difference before it can focus on markers like logos. In other words; first work out what goes in the box, then go ahead and create the packaging.

⁷ Leanganook (or Lanjanuc) is the original name of Mount Alexander. If advice from Dja Dja Wurrung Corporation indicates that either Lanjanuc or Leanganook can be used, go for Leanganook because it rolls off the tongue better and has a good graphic shape with the double oo and the k at the end. Until linguistic advice can be sought, we will use the Leanganook spelling in this document.

BRAND HIERARCHY

HARCOURT

Apples - Apple Festival

Local farming/food experiences

Cideries and wineries

Cellar door and orchard walks

Food, cider and wine festivals

Bakery, cafe, general store

ANA hall, pioneer history

The Bowlo

Solstice Festivals
- Wassailing

Sustainable farming

LEANGANOOK

Big views from Leanganook

Dja Dja Wurrung and local
Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Island culture

Bush Tucker and
bush medicine

Adventure tourism

Harcourt to Leanganook
interpretation walks

Learning and wellbeing
experiences

Connection to community
and to Country

Protecting rare and endangered
plants and animals

HARCOURT LEANGANOOK

Harcourt Leanganook Music Festival

Local products like cider with Living
Leanganook bush botanicals

Low fructose apple juice with a mix of
indigenous and European apples

Calling the valley Harcourt Leanganook

The place brand for Harcourt needs to deal with the following challenges:

- Harcourt's assets are hidden or co-opted by Castlemaine/ Bendigo and the Harcourt Valley is not on people's radar and so there are few flow-on benefits from visitation to attractions to local businesses
- Harcourt is not associated with Mount Alexander more than any town in the goldfields. Many associate Mount Alexander with Castlemaine rather than with Harcourt. Visitors are unaware the town is in the foothills of the mountain and do not treat the town as a gateway for the range of experiences available on the mountain, including the mountain bike park
- Harcourt's international renown as an apple growing town and its reputation for quality is undersold and not easily experienced by visitors. Assets like the excellent juice, the interesting apple drying sheds, the orchards and cideries are all but invisible
- The lack of wayfinding, signage, critical mass in the town centre and defined pathways to catch people's eye or guide them to key experiences
- Harcourt's pioneering history, including assets like the ANA Hall are not very visible
- The powerful local Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Dja Dja Wurrung story, culture, teachings, language and character is almost completely invisible to the wider community and to visitors

Our Ambition is to establish a compelling place brand for Harcourt that:

- Is professionally developed and delivered but strongly community-led
- Builds on a sense of place and local pride of residents first, and works as destination branding second. Tourists are attracted to places loved by locals. If the brand works for the people of the Harcourt Valley, it will also serve to drive and attract inward investment
- Supports the development of a complete offer for Harcourt with experiences offered from early to late that are suitable for families, for food lovers, for adventure seekers and everyone in between, and which can provide enough diversity and interest to reward a week-long visit
- Is inclusive and based on a broad consensus with strong buy-in and clear messages. It has a long term commitment and support from key partners
- Powerfully associates Harcourt with Mount Alexander in multiple ways. As a first step the name Mount Alexander should be discontinued to break the association between Mount Alexander and

Castlemaine and the broader goldfields region. Once that connection is broken the town should seek ways to strengthen the connection between Harcourt and Leanganook and build a strong mental image of Harcourt as a town set in the foothills of the mountain.

- Reveals both threads of the Harcourt Leanganook story equally and finds multiple, creative and inspiring ways to weave them together - such as products with both European apples and bush tucker apples; including native black apples and red apples, the indigenous kangaroo apple and common apple berry
- Presents and builds on the identity of Harcourt Leanganook as a strong community that works together in truth and with courage to make their place better for everyone
- Explores themes of growth, challenge, exploration, connection and learning in the context of good food, ancient living culture, beautiful views and Country. Positions Harcourt Leanganook as a place of rich experiences, a place to learn and expand on who you are as a person
- Embeds Dja Dja Wurrung and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values, ambitions and culture into the heart of the story of place
- Grabs every possible opportunity to use Dja Dja Wurrung language, markers and symbols
- Strongly positions Harcourt as the premier apple town of Australia that provides countless ways to enjoy apples and orchards for visitors. Joyfully learns from and exchanges ideas, recipes, traditions and experiences around the world, and presents them here with a local twist that makes them our own
- Takes an apples-plus approach. Makes apples the headline to pull people in, and supports and expands the headline with a rich range of food and wine experiences including farm-to-table, local producer stories and the full range of produce grown today
- Focuses on activities, events, experiences and stories before logos, slogans, sculptures and hard infrastructure. Prioritises elements that the audience can experience with their whole bodies. Once a foundation of strong experiences and events that capture the key elements of the place brand are in place then energy should be directed towards logos, sculptures and other signs and markers of brand experiences
- Provide funding support for businesses to create signage or provide experiences that directly support the brand of Harcourt specifically rather than the broader goldfields region. This should include supporting businesses to change their names or appearance to ones more closely aligned with apples, mountain tracks, the word Leanganook and/or bush foods

DELIVERY MECHANISM:

Develop a **master brand and place branding strategy** that is community led, but professionally developed, delivered and managed with a unique selling point and clear point of difference for both aspects of the Harcourt/Leanganook identity.

Firstly this master brand should clearly **claim the mountain as a key part of Harcourt's brand**. A key way to do this is to officially return the original name of Leanganook (just Leanganook, not Mt. Leanganook). This will allow businesses, events and organisations in the Harcourt Valley to use the term Harcourt Leanganook to refer to the valley area and effectively tie together the name of Harcourt with the mountain. The naming conventions should be extended to other initiatives that will link the mountain and the town, such as the tours and walking trails outlined in later sections of this report. While a range of names could be considered, e.g Mount Harcourt, returning the name Leanganook is more powerful from a branding perspective than creating a new name as it is an authentic name already in use and using it reveals and highlights key elements of Harcourt's overall brand identity.

Secondly the master brand should **define a clear brand hierarchy** that places adventurous mountain experiences, bush tucker and bush medicine and cultural learning at the top of the Leanganook thread, and places all things apples and local food/wine experiences at the top of the Harcourt thread.

As part of the place branding strategy a 3 year **calendar of events and activities** should be developed which includes: the Apple Festival, solstice festivals, a beer and cider festival and a Harcourt Leanganook music festival. This program should build on the existing successful events program including the Twilight Markets and Apple Festival. While remaining strongly community and volunteer-led, a role for a **professional event curator** who has proven experience delivering events locally or in similar local town contexts should be created, as volunteer resources around event management are at maximum capacity and can be expected to plateau or decline if not reinforced with targeted funding. Funding from developing bespoke programs for large-scale tour operators should be actively explored.

This event curator should also explore unique event venues for everything from weddings to large scale music festivals including sites like under the brick arches of Vick's Viaduct, the silk farm ruins, the Oak Forest, orchards and the oval and leisure centre. Over the next 3 to 5 years in particular, until more permanent attractions to complete Harcourt's offer can be built, the events strategy should be seen as a key way of delivering Harcourt's branding, destination and economic stimulus strategy and should be funded accordingly.

Commission a **series of artworks to acknowledge local Aboriginal Elders** such as Mununggabun. Include a mosaic or ground mural artwork on Harmony Way to strengthen the association of the name to the Dja Dja Wurrung. Specific stories of, and memorials to local Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander soldiers should be included in the ANZAC display.

Dja Dja Wurrung Clever Man - Mununggabum was a resistance fighter who contracted smallpox twice and lived. When he was imprisoned for stealing two sheep 250 Dja Dja Wurrung marched on the lock up.

Encourage and support cafes, restaurants and food oriented businesses in town such as The Harcourt Produce and General Store, the Goldfield's Track Cafe and Blume's Bakery to **showcase local produce** in general with a particular focus on providing unique in-house apple and bush food experiences.

As part of this overall approach establish a knowledge exchange program around apples and bush tucker. **The Apples and Bush Tucker Exchange Program** will fund locals to visit apple growing and native plant cultivation regions all over the world to learn their secrets and bring them home to share. We will also host visitors in our homes to share our own wisdom, insights and recipes. The program might start by inviting a winemaker from Normandy to teach us how to make Calvados and their take on artisanal apple vinegar, by sending a representative to the annual Native Youth in Food and Agriculture Leadership Summit in Arkansas, or by heading to the Nagano region of Japan to learn the secrets of honey core apples, edible apple branding and their magical version of Baumkuchen which hides a whole apple in its centre.

Commission a poet to work with Dja Dja Wurrung Language expert and the broader community to return original names to places and to celebrate our community by creating new names together. The **True Names Project** project should honour the truth of the interwoven history, experiences and culture of pioneers and European settlers as well as Dja Dja Wurrung and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander communities. Community members should be able to nominate places and stories that have meaning for them for possible renaming, and all stakeholders should support the name before it becomes official. A marker of success will be to see hundreds of new signs in Language within the next two years alongside signs that make visible apple, food and wine stories and which celebrate the unique character and personality of our town.

While the True Names project may serve important objectives around cultural development and reconciliation it is proposed here as an

economic stimulus initiative, to this end the new names should be catchy, fit-for-purpose, intriguing, memorable, authentic, local, consistent with place identity and brand and work to strengthen Harcourt Leanganook's point of difference in the region. Dual naming protocols do not work well from a brand perspective as they come across as apologetic and wishy washy. For this reason places should have only one official name (it's not a problem if locals call a place by other names unofficially). Finally, this initiative is intended to enrich and expand history and identity, not to erase it.

A number of the ambitions and ideas outlined in this document provide strong concepts and experiences to support the brand:

- Food journeys and experiences (Ambition 4)
- Learning from and experiencing Dja Dja Wurrung, Aboriginal, Torres Strait culture (Ambition 3)
- Adventure tourism, learning, exploration (Ambition 3)
- Connecting to the landscape (Ambitions 3, 4)



Popular brand of local apple juice given pride of place in retail display in Nagano, Japan



A unique local take on Mille Feuille in Japan's largest apple growing region in Aomori Prefecture

Suggested Partners: Local, state and federal government, Nalderun, Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, Harcourt Progress Association, Harcourt Heritage Centre, Shedshaker Brewery, Come Together (local event management company), sporting clubs, Harcourt Lions Club, La Larr Ba Gauwa Park, Harcourt Primary School, Victorian Miniature Railway, tourism organisations, City of Greater Bendigo (UNESCO gastronomy city bid), key local or high profile producers/partners such as Henry of Harcourt, Maidenii, Bress, Blumes Bakery, The Harcourt Produce and General Store, Masons, Harcourt Honey, The Little Red Apple, Tellurian Fruit Gardens.

Paint murals on blank walls of packing sheds based on old fruit labels (The ANA Mob)

Large corporate mountain bike events (Not Just Cider)

Granite benches and tables in the reserve opposite the general store - (The Harcourt Producers)

Suggested next steps

1. Develop a community-led *Harcourt Leanganook master brand and place branding strategy* by reclaiming the mountain as a core element, inviting participation of local creatives, entrepreneurs and innovators alongside council and community leaders to help shape this future identity. The brand identity outlined in this report should be tested and formalised. Don't wait for the full master brand strategy to be in place before supporting the Harcourt Leanganook branding on local produce and on business signage and namings, build on the momentum that's in place and allow the brand identity to emerge as organically as possible.⁸
2. Council to investigate and articulate the possible benefits of returning the name Leanganook to Mount Alexander and carry out broad community consultation to assess the level of support within the community and stakeholders for the change.
3. Ensure that the Language elements of any projects are overseen by Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation. Harley Dunolly-Lee is a linguist who specialises in Djadjawurrung.
4. Guided by the Harcourt Progress Association (HPA) events subcommittee and by Council, secure funding and appoint a professional events curator and event management subcontractor to develop and deliver a **3 year calendar of events** which includes; the Apple Festival, solstice festivals, *Open Paddock Project*, a beer and cider festival and a Harcourt Leanganook music festival. Aim to kick off the program with Christmas and New Year events and seek to begin delivery of program elements as outlined in this report in advance of the resolved branding strategy.⁹
5. Make use of local talent by funding existing community activity and supporting event management resources already active in the community. The point of this process is to transition the existing event management activity from a passionate amateur space into a professional one. Explore alternative funding for the event curator role, including establishing contracts with large international tour companies.
6. Consider framing the *True Names Project* as a collaborative arts project managed by Council and seek funding through Regional Creative Arts Victoria, Australia Council for the Arts and other arts funding bodies. This project would have an obvious appeal to poets and writers, but conceptual artists, human ecologists, participatory artists, anthropologists and historians may also be interested. Ensure that Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal perspectives are addressed during the procurement process.
7. As part of the review and consultation process make sure the new names perform well from a branding perspective and are catchy, compelling and memorable. Ensure multiple communities and stories are represented. Look for possible confusing overlaps in names and missed branding opportunities. For example, if the Leanganook branding for the region and Mount Alexander is adopted, consider rebranding La Larr Ba Gauwa Park as 'Harcourt Leanganook Trails' or similar to strengthen the connection to the town and to the mountain.
8. Create a working group with representatives of the Harcourt Heritage Centre and local Aboriginal Elders and Council to find ways to include Aboriginal stories in Harcourt's ANZAC display with the aim to have new elements included for ANZAC Day 2021.

⁸ Laura Camilleri and Ben Grosz, Grosz Co Lab gave their time pro bono to develop the Shine Harcourt Leanganook branding strategies and are well placed to contribute to further brand strategy development

⁹ A number of participants in the Shine Harcourt Leanganook process have experience and/or are active in this area; Evan Read is an experienced band booker while Jacqueline Brodie-Hanns is currently co-ordinating a program of successful events in Harcourt including the Twilight Markets, Equinox festivals and the upcoming Books at the Bowlo

9. As part of the Indigenous Round Table develop a procurement process for artworks that celebrate and acknowledge local Aboriginal Elders and Aboriginal history and culture beginning with an artwork on Harmony Way. Ensure that both local Aboriginal and Dja Dja Wurrung voices lead the discussion working in collaboration with Council. Consider running this program as part of the artist in schools program in partnership with Harcourt Valley Primary School to involve young people and to access funding for the artworks via Creative Victoria's Creative Learning Partnerships¹⁰.
10. Create a small working group with a representative from Council and from the proposed events and tourism subcommittee of the Harcourt Progress Association to manage *The Apples and Bush Tucker Exchange Program*. Consider the benefits of a formal versus informal approach to programming and acquittal processes, partial versus complete funding and options such as asking applicants to match funding provided by finding funds from other organisations. Consider the value of managing funding for this project as part of *The Project Exchange*.

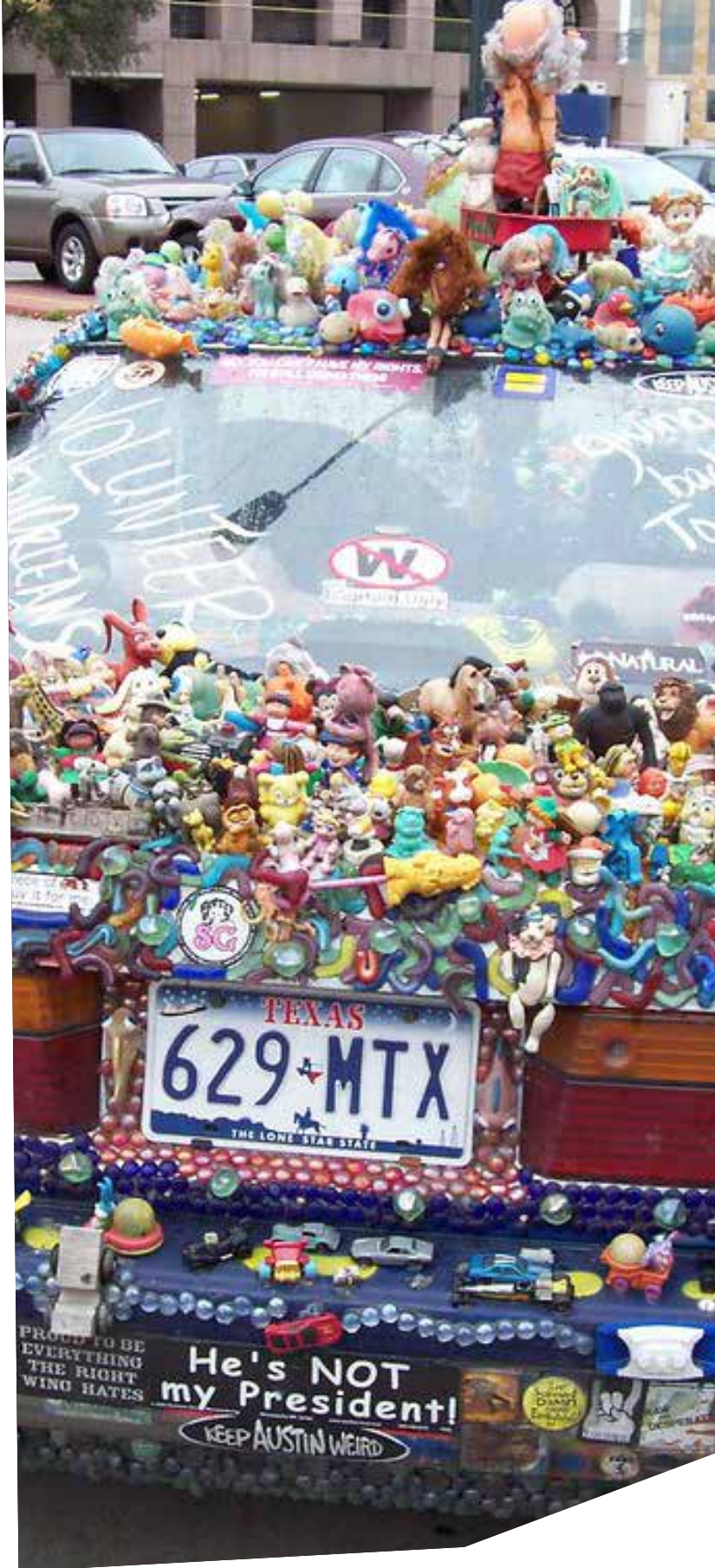


Rose Laki Rodrigues beside the lane named after her father as part of the The Laneway Naming Project in Toronto



*Yininmadyemi - Thou didst let fall', war memorial sculpture in Hyde Park, Sydney by Tony Albert

¹⁰ Alternatively the True Names Project could be run partnership with Harcourt Valley Primary School if it proves easier to find funding for the commemorative artworks through other avenues. As part of this process the school may consider renaming themselves Harcourt Leanganook Primary which would reinforce the town branding as well as forwarding reconciliation objectives



CASE STUDY

CASE STUDY: KEEP AUSTIN WEIRD CAMPAIGN, AUSTIN, TEXAS

Starting as a grassroots marketing campaign; Keep Austin Weird is the slogan developed by the Austin Independent Business Alliance to promote small businesses in Austin, Texas. The campaign successfully captured the eclectic, tolerant and progressive nature of the city, evolving from a protest slogan into the key positioning for the city. It has been so successful it has been copied by other cities around the world including Copenhagen and Portland, Oregon.

Why this project is successful: It focuses on Austin's clear point of difference in the conservative state of Texas, and speaks directly to the brand's core audience. It makes the most of local talents and personalities with a 'collaborative fission of coordinated individualism' that tells the stories of local producers, retailers and artists through the Austin Independent Business Alliance. It also has a very strong foundation in the true values of the community which gives the campaign authority and authenticity.

Strengths: Austin is a global centre for live music and creative pursuits of all kinds. By understanding the link between tolerance of difference and creativity, the Keep Austin Weird positioning has helped to celebrate and cement its creative role as a social and economic driver for the city. Rejecting expensive marketing campaigns in favour of a grassroots marketing and promotion; the campaign taps into the very heart of what people love about Austin. It has carefully walked the line between making the weird mainstream and staying original and unique.

Limitations: May not be attractive to the mainstream but also offers choice for people tired and bored with the same old, same old.

Applicability to Harcourt: Shows how you can take what is unique and authentic to Harcourt and make this the central focus of the brand. Different is good.

Photo credit: A Mendelsohn

The Keep Austin Weird branding strategy inspires all kinds of informal creative expression

Historical map of families who lived in the area (Teed Team)

Virtual tour of Harcourt which includes tourism accommodation, history and recreation (Diva Lovers)

**“EVEN IF I KNEW
THAT TOMORROW
THE WORLD
WOULD GO TO
PIECES, I WOULD
STILL PLANT MY
APPLE TREE.”**

— MARTIN LUTHER

**"ALONE
WE CAN DO
SO LITTLE.
TOGETHER WE
CAN DO SO
MUCH."**

— HELEN KELLER

Photo credit: Royal Galas (Ideas-a-thon Capture Challenge; We need more of this)



AMBITION 2

COLLABORATE

Use a shared vision to unify our efforts and find creative ways to support each other and make the best use of volunteer time, energy and good will.

Harcourt has always been a strong community that punches well above its weight with a can-do attitude and willingness to roll up our sleeves and make things happen.

There is a lot of trust across different sectors of the community in Council leadership and management. Key groups within the community including Nalderun, Harcourt Progress Association, Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, Harcourt Lions Club, Harcourt Heritage and the local school all have good relationships and open lines of communication with Council. There are also established lines of communication between most organisations, but some could be strengthened, expanded and improved.

There is an opportunity to strengthen the relationships between Nalderun and the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and the rest of the community sector. Both are active, well organised and impactful community-led groups. Stronger relationships across the sector will increase the local Aboriginal-led groups access to shared community resources while opening access of the broader community to the skills and knowledge held by Nalderun and by Dja Dja Wurrung groups around collaboration, mentoring and land management.

Through this process it has become apparent that there is a large overlap between the ambitions and objectives of Nalderun, Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and local Aboriginal groups and the Harcourt Progress Association, Lions Club, VMA and Landcare as well as other farming and community groups. Our ambition is to find better ways to join forces and to work together. The key areas of overlap include:

- Land management, weed control and remediation
- Ecological preservation, regeneration and research
- Place branding and telling the story of place
- Native food and medicine plant cultivation
- Creating and managing tourism destinations and programs

- Culture, artworks, events and celebrations
- Tangible and intangible historical and cultural preservation, interpretation, display
- Learning, education and community development
- Economic development and jobs
- Creating opportunities for youth, pathways to education and employment

All the community groups in Harcourt express a need for more community involvement particularly when it comes to getting projects done. Again this impacts local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community groups particularly because on top of their day-to-day activities they also carry a disproportionate burden of participating in government-led engagement and consultation which is too often inefficient and repetitive and doesn't necessarily return meaningful outcomes for local Aboriginal communities or their initiatives.

Any collaboration processes that involve local Aboriginal communities needs to understand these constraints. They need to consider the opportunity cost of participation to local Aboriginal communities, and provide additional support including funding where necessary to enable equitable collaboration. Besides being funded, these processes need to be efficient and time-effective because most local Aboriginal community leaders are super busy and already working at capacity in their volunteer work.

Council is very keen to support businesses, particularly to find ways to incubate micro and emerging businesses in their early stages of growth and to support people who want to get their ideas off the ground. There is recognition that these businesses may need additional support to navigate planning processes and hurdles around the time and financial cost of compliance. Because of the specific combination of risks, resources and opportunity in Harcourt a number of small or emerging businesses are struggling to cope with the usual planning



Make Something Edmonton focuses on sharing ideas and generating projects of all kinds to make the city a better place

processes and have identified these as a threat to the viability of their enterprises, especially in the early stages of growth. One way to conceptualise the needs of Harcourt's economy is to think of it as being like growing a garden in poor soil. In this kind of garden properly adapted plants will thrive, but the usual gardening practices may need to be adjusted to nurture individual seedlings; rather than allowing natural attrition to occur like you might in richer soil, a little extra help and protection from the elements is needed.

This project will provide a much needed framework for these kinds of creative endeavours, and we also think it would be useful too for Council to work with entrepreneurial, community oriented, small and micro businesses to find ways to cut through red tape.

Collaboration and community participation in Harcourt is being impacted by the lack of a shared vision for the future. Over the last couple of decades, changes to the apple growing and granite industries, shifts in the economic profile of new residential subdivisions and the bypass have shifted Harcourt's sense of itself and created some sense of uncertainty about the future of the town. This is made worse by the lack of town centre or local pub; places where people can get together informally or bump into each other to exchange ideas.

Without a shared vision and a sense of a common goal it is difficult for the community to pull together to get things done. Also, without this shared vision, the economic and community benefits of collaboration may not outweigh the individual emotional costs, time or risks around competition and opportunity cost, particularly if community members have been investing time and money for a long time.

There are also some challenges around the culture of collaboration that has evolved in some quarters. In small communities where everyone knows each other, it's not unusual to find that over time a collection of armchair critics develop, not unlike the Muppets' cantankerous duo Statler and Waldorf. If the practice of criticising from the sidelines is allowed to go unchecked it can become a significant problem and have serious effects on levels of participation and overall community wellbeing. The best way to avoid this problem is to have a clearly defined shared vision and a set of defined shared values, principles and processes around collaboration, and constructive feedback that are well understood by the community and that set expectations.

Another typical scenario in small towns is that you have one or more super-doers who shoulder a lot of the community development work. These people, being very capable, tend to take on more and more because they feel like otherwise the work won't get done and because they often are the first ones asked to do something. As the old adage goes "if you want something done, ask a busy person". The problem of course is that these super-doers are more likely to burn out and drop away from involvement altogether. All too often the super-doers in this scenario feel unsupported and under-appreciated, while other community members may feel overpowered, underestimated or excluded from the process.

Besides the high social and emotional costs, the problem with this disproportionate distribution of volunteer labour and leadership is that when one person burns out they often drop out of their role so quickly there are few opportunities for handover, succession planning, sharing knowledge and insights or ongoing mentoring. Our ambition is to find ways to support the super-doers and to better distribute the workload, and to also steal an idea from the old boy networks and from surf lifesaving clubs and create our own version of a community alumni association that provides people with ongoing opportunities to provide guidance and mentoring after they step back from active community work and to formalise ways the community can celebrate and show appreciation for our volunteers and community leaders.

Although like any community there are divisions and disagreements there is a very strong consensus across the business community that our economic destiny is united and the success or failure of one business affects all of us. This is particularly true of businesses that are the public face of Harcourt such as Blume's Bakery, Bress Winery, Henry of Harcourt, The Goldfields' Track Cafe and The Harcourt Produce and General Store. In some cases there is a strong desire to collaborate closely together, but across the board there is a recognition of how important it is to promote each other and work together towards realising the same ambitions. One local business owner talks about this as making sure that we are all on the same bus and that it's going in the right direction. Another uses the Champagne Region in France as a model, where local winemakers will never have a bad word to say about other winemakers, whatever the local and interpersonal politics might be, and where all operators actively promote competing wineries and businesses.

Finally, one of the legacies of a long history of community activity is that there are a number of local organisations with duplicated activities or objectives, or that lack the people power to get things done. In order to reduce the administrative burden on organisations Harcourt should seek to share resources, bring in new blood and avoid duplication by:

- consolidating existing groups
- avoid creating new organisations unless necessary
- create focused subcommittees within existing organisations with high levels of independence and clear objectives



Photo credit: Juicy Fruits (Ideas-a-thon Capture Challenge)

A pioneering museum that shows the complete Harcourt's history and is developed in partnership (VMRians)

Incentive for agriculture to set up pop-up stores to sell their produce in town (The Hong's)

Buddy system to look out for the elderly/disabled (Teed team)

DELIVERY MECHANISMS

Starting with the Shine Harcourt Leanganook Partnership, conduct a broad community and stakeholder review of the ambitions outlined in this document. Assess if any additional visioning work is required to develop a cohesive vision for Harcourt that has broad support. Hold a **launch of the final Shine Harcourt Leanganook ambitions** and ensure that it is widely known and supported.

As a community, define a series of values and principles around working together and volunteering, a kind of **collaboration manifesto**. Include an Acknowledgement of Country that can be read by the chair of any formal meeting. This manifesto is less about governance and more about a set of shared values and ways of doing things, elements raised by community members during the Shine Harcourt Leanganook process include:

- Criticism should be rare, and should always be constructive
- If you think it's important to criticise make sure you do it from the centre of the action, not from the safety of the sidelines
- We know that making mistakes is a sign of healthy activity and growth, we learn from our mistakes and when we see someone fall down we help them back up with a smile
- We save some energy to celebrate our achievements and say thank you to each other
- We remember to take the time to help people to step back as well as to step up, we stay connected and help our community volunteers to pass on their experiences and knowledge

Expand the Harcourt Progress Association (HPA) into the **Harcourt Leanganook Progress Association** (HLPA) as a joint venture and/or partnership between the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, HPA and Council involving key representatives from and other key primary producers and business organisations. The Harcourt Leanganook Progress Association would expand its functions to act more like a traders' association to deliver services to its fee-paying members. The organisation would be co-led by Dja Dja Wurrung representatives and deliver services that are in line with both the objectives of the Aboriginal Corporation and the broader association members' needs. It is expected that these would include, but not be restricted to: branding and marketing, weed control, land remediation and care, native farming techniques including fire stick farming, native honey and bush apple varieties, and delivery of cultural events and services such as Welcome to Country.

Create a quarterly program of pitch nights called **The Project Exchange**. Each event will be a great night out with food and music where individuals and community groups pitch their projects to the audience to win grants handed out in cash on the night with no acquittal processes, or to attract volunteers to sign up to deliver the projects for Harcourt.

We propose that a **community alumni program** be established which recognises and celebrates the contributions of volunteers in general as well as recognising the work of individuals. This program should track and celebrate accomplishments, hold events to thank volunteers, maintain a social network and ensure ongoing participation of community alumni and create opportunities for mentoring. This program could be completely informal or quite structured but it should cover all sorts of organisations in the town including the Lions Club, Nalderun, school groups, Harcourt Progress Association and the Harcourt Heritage Centre.

Establish a **Time to Shine! Business incubation project** working group focused on supporting micro and emerging businesses and entrepreneurial activities, and finding ways for businesses to collaborate and support each other. Target enterprises that are well aligned with the Shine Harcourt vision and which are either likely to have a significant impact on the economy (e.g. VMR), are providing a valued service and/or are vulnerable (e.g. KT's coffee cart).

Nalderun Upper Loddon run an extremely successful mentoring program and have established processes around managing succession, passing on knowledge, youth mentoring, teaching leadership skills and celebrating community achievement. We propose that a one-off **Altogether Nalderun collaboration skills share program** should be delivered to share the knowledge and skills held within Nalderun with the broader community, including techniques and processes around community development, mentoring and effective collaboration. This program would help local community groups through the proposed process of reorganisation and assist various groups to write the collaboration manifesto together.

Suggested Partners: Local residents, investors, Local, state and federal government, Nalderun (with Aunty Kath around community leadership and skills share in particular), Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and Elders (including Uncle Rick, Aunty Kath, Aunty Julie) and Harcourt Progress Association, Harcourt Heritage Centre, key landowners and producers including Henry of Harcourt, Bendigo Bank, Anglicare Victoria, Council, Harcourt Valley Primary School, Castlemaine Secondary College, Connecting Country, ANTAR, Weenthunga, HPA, Harcourt Coolstore, sporting clubs, Harcourt Lions Club and Victorian Miniature Railway, La Larr Ba Gauwa Park, Harcourt Primary School, Hardcore Harcourt Facebook group

Suggested Next Steps

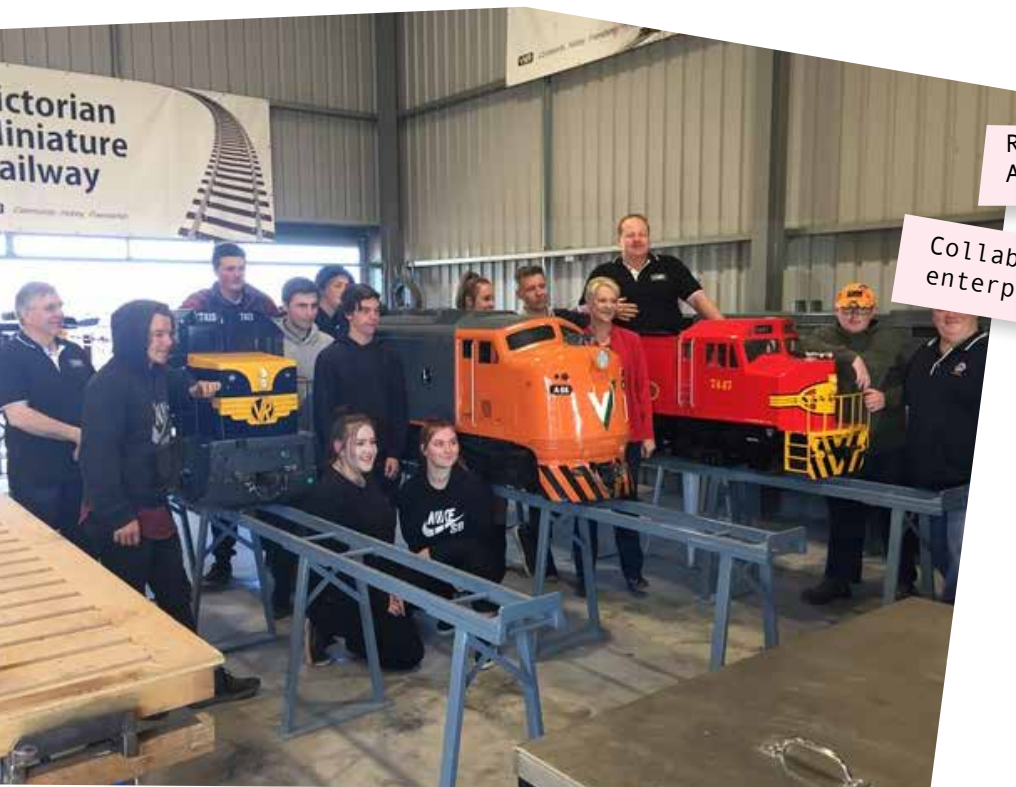
1. At the next Indigenous Round Table investigate ways to fund the **Altogether Nalderun collaboration skills share program**. Include the HPA in discussions as a possible funding partner. Together define key learning outcomes and deliverables, how many workshops are needed, which community groups would benefit the most from participating, whether to bring multiple community groups together is one session or run separate sessions. This program should be timed to build on the momentum from the Shine Harcourt Leanganook process. Ideas and guidelines for **the community alumni program** and a draft of the **collaboration manifesto** should emerge from this process.
2. Create a working group to explore issues and opportunities around creating a new expanded **Harcourt Leanganook Progress Association (HLPA)**¹¹ which includes members from the Shine Harcourt Partnership, Harcourt Progress Association, Council, Aboriginal organisations and local farming and production representatives. Ensure this working group seeks guidance and key inputs from Aunty Julie, Aunty Kath, Jacqueline Brodie-Hanns, Grant Victor Gordon, Eva Parkin, David Leathlean, Katie Finlay and Michael Henry whose insights have shaped this proposal. Look to expand the capacity of the HLPA to include services associated with trader and business associations.
3. In the first meeting of this working group define two (or more) rates of pay to fund Aboriginal participation. Explore options like a lower pro-bono rate that just covers costs (including opportunity costs), with a higher rate for strategic or specific cultural advice around Aboriginal culture or economic initiatives. Likewise find ways to fund event management work, as volunteerism in both these areas is stretched to capacity and is at risk of collapsing if additional pressure is applied before financial and strategic support systems are in place.
4. Consider commissioning a governance expert with experience working with local communities including Aboriginal communities to assist¹² with the formalising new collaboration processes and changed governance structures to ensure that they are viable and effective.
5. Encourage local community groups to write their own **Acknowledgement of Country** together. Let the groups know that they shouldn't worry too much about particular rules or protocols while writing this; it's more important that it comes from the heart and represents the true values of each group. The draft Acknowledgement of Country texts should be reviewed as part of the Indigenous Round Table. Consult with Harley Dunolly-Lee and the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation about whether it's more appropriate to translate the **Acknowledgement of Country** to Language or leave them in English.

¹¹ Assume that activities assigned to Harcourt Progress Association (HPA) in the document will be taken over by the new Harcourt Leanganook Progress Association (HLPA) and subcommittees if this recommendation is embraced

¹² Janet Phillips has been recommended by a Shine Harcourt Leanganook participant as a governance expert who has previously worked with local Aboriginal groups in Mount Alexander Shire

6. The HPA events subcommittee should host quarterly events for **The Project Exchange** starting in the first quarter of 2020. These events may also be included in the professionally managed Harcourt Leanganook events calendar. The Project Exchange events can potentially field pitches and funding for The Apples and Bush Tucker Exchange Program and provide opportunities for events and celebrations related to the **Community Alumni Program**. Seek seed funding from HPA, Council, Bendigo Bank and local businesses and donations of volunteer hours from key organisations (do not include Aboriginal volunteer hours or time associated with event management in this process unless they are funded).
7. As part of the The Project Exchange and the Community Alumni Program establish a volunteer of the year award with a certificate and a prize of goods/services donated by local businesses. Include acknowledgements of key volunteers from the decades before (for example in 2020 acknowledge a volunteer from 2010, 2000 and 1990, and in 2021 look back to 2001, 2011, 1991 etc.)
8. Create a subcommittee of the HPA to work with Council to find ways to work in collaboration with emerging or marginal businesses to provide support and build frameworks and resources to cut through red tape and speed approvals processes. Consider creating specific **Time to Shine! Business incubation project** resources and providing a key contact person in Council. Build on resources provided by state government's Better Approvals program which has assisted Councils in this work (including supporting Glen Eira City Council to cut the waiting period for footpath trading permits down from 126 days to 11 days). This might best managed as part of a broader HPA-led Shine Harcourt subcommittee or working group which also addresses elements covered in the later Growth ambition.

Micro-business education and small business enterprise networking events (CNS)



Re-organise Harcourt Progress Association (The Bowlers)

Collaboration between local enterprises (Diva lovers)

Major events committee (Not Just Cider)

Photo credit: VMRians (Ideas-a-thon Capture Challenge; We need more of this)



CASE STUDY

POLAR BEAR PITCHING, FINLAND

Polar Bear Pitching (PBP) started in Oulu when people came together after the collapse of Nokia and other tech businesses in the region. The project is created in the spirit of Finnish “talkoot”; a gathering of friends and neighbours to work together for the common good or to help someone in need, and is designed to provide funding for local tech startups. At the same time the project seeks to position Oulu as a kind of mini nordic silicon valley. The event is held outside, in winter, in a literal hole cut into the ice.

Why this project is successful: The project has a very clear understanding of its objectives, to raise funds for startups, to help technical specialists develop skills to pitch their ideas and to position Oulu as a place of creativity and innovation. Every decision from the eccentric location of the event, the language and visual imagery of their communications and their core principles of perseverance (sisu), bravery and playfulness support those objectives.

Strengths: PBP has kept the process rather open, the hierarchy low and the communication transparent to give the community a sense of ownership. The community decide what to put their energy and money behind which increases the sense of buzz and participation.

Limitations: The project was created during a time when low employment meant there was a surplus of workers and of talent, this model may not work so well without that surplus resource or in smaller communities.

Applicability to Harcourt: a model of open, equal collaboration where a community has found success by collaborating across silos and by generously giving their time and sharing resources to support their neighbours.

Photo credit: Polar Bear Pitching

AMBITION 2. COLLABORATE

Funding hopeful pitching his idea to judges from a hole in the ice in one of Oulu's Polar Bear Pitching events

"THE LAND IS MY MOTHER. LIKE A HUMAN MOTHER, THE LAND GIVES US PROTECTION, ENJOYMENT AND PROVIDES OUR NEEDS – ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS."

– DJINYINI GONDARRA

Photo credit: Royal Galas (Ideas-a-thon Capture Challenge; This makes my heart sing)

Cultural and historic indigenous perspectives trails/tours/events (Not Just Cider)

Buy and return land to the Aboriginal community (Juicy Fruits)

Map of indigenous places of significance (Teed team)

Living Leanganook is a unique virtual, self guided, Indigenous cultural tourism trail. Celebrating Jaara heritage and teachings, the trail features indigenous food, medicinal plants and sites of significance. (Harcro Toil)

AMBITION 3

COUNTRY

Grow a shared understanding of Country and of community. Celebrate and share our bush tucker wisdom and creation teachings. Connect the mountain and the town with a hundred magical journeys and adventures.

More than in the city, people who live in a rural community share a deep connection and relationship with the land. That relationship is not always sustainable, and it's not always simple or straightforward but it is always profound.

Throughout the Shine Harcourt Leanganook process it became clear that more and more members of the community are looking to local Aboriginal leaders for guidance on how to connect with land and live together in harmony with Country. There is a shared recognition that the land needs healing, that it's a living entity, not a resource to be exploited and that farming practices and land use need to work with the forces of nature rather than against them. There is a growing interest in understanding the properties of indigenous plants like lomandra, saltbush, nardoo, cumbuji, wattle, red gum and chocolate lilies and protecting endangered species like the Tuan (brush-tailed phascogale) and the world's only remaining patch of Southern shepherd's purse.

At the same time it's broadly recognised that the shared economic benefits of a healthy relationship with Country and stronger partnerships between traditional landowners, farmers and businesses are significant.

The key areas of economic opportunity are around cultivation of native plants for food and medicine, sharing knowledge around land remediation, sustainable farming and ecology, cultural tourism and place branding.

Bush tucker and bush medicine is an industry set to boom in Australia and around the world. Globally supply is not meeting demand for bush products and prices are skyrocketing as a result. In addition our preliminary market research indicates that is a gap in the market around providing credible advice and curatorial services around effective, healthy and culturally appropriate use of bush foods and medicines. We see this as

a key opportunity for Harcourt particularly if driven by local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and insight.

Harcourt is well placed to take advantage of this opportunity with local expertise and a number of organisations and businesses already active in this area including Maidenii Vermouth which uses a combination of Australian native and traditional European botanicals, Murnong Mammals a Koorie catering business specialising in indigenous ingredients, and of course Aunty Julie McHale's well-known bush tucker garden which has conversations already underway around expansion.

Our ambition is to establish a bush medicine and bush tucker garden near the centre of town which shares the beauty, amenity and educational and tourism benefits of Cranbourne Botanical Garden, Penang's Tropical Spice Garden combined with the productivity of a commercial farming enterprise and the grassroots energy and personality of projects like Nek Chand's Rock Garden of Chandigarh.

Besides production, the garden would be dedicated to sharing knowledge, education and learning, providing employment and learning pathways, especially for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait young people. It would be a centre for ecological and commercial research, provide places to gather, and serve as the starting point for multiple interpretive walking tracks around Leanganook.

Harcourt Leanganook is full of beautiful and relatively unknown walking paths. We would like to see these upgraded and linked to form a broad network of trails that allow people to connect to Djandak (Country) and learn about the culture and heritage of the Dja Dja Wurrung and local Aboriginal communities. These paths should be curated to allow for different experiences including a day-trip product from Melbourne - however it is not necessary or desirable for these

Indigenous planting in city centre (The Shiny Shiny Ponies)

Miniature train driving training (VMRians)

trails to be focused on specific sites or artifacts which may be better left unvisited by the general public. The focus of the Leanganook walks is more on the plants, landscape, knowledge, language, values, perspectives and creation teachings of the Dja Dja Wurrung and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, than specific locations or destinations.¹³

One of the key opportunities around adventure tourism is broadening the appeal of the mountain bike park which currently caters for a very specific and skilled part of the market. Any new tracks should seek to provide experiences for a wide range of cyclists. Parking should also be carefully considered and should balance convenience against the value of positioning parking in relation to a key anchor activity or destinations to encourage people to linger or walk through the town.

The network of trails should link all the key existing and planned destination nodes including the cafe, general store and bakery and, the mountain bike park as well as the Oak Forest, silkworm farm ruins, granite quarries, Vick's Viaduct, Harcourt's granite houses, Dog Rocks and Shepherd's Flat Lookout. In terms of creating infrastructure to support tourism, cycle and pedestrian parks are significantly less expensive than buildings and tend to deliver higher bang for buck. At this point in time it is felt that an investment in wayfinding and pathways is the most cost-effective way to complete the Harcourt Leanganook offer and to increase overnight visitation. The usefulness of built form infrastructure may be revisited down the track.

Where the paths connect with walks through orchards and farms, opportunities should be taken to spark discussion about the impacts of farming on Country, innovative ways to manage drought, firestick farming and the battles that were fought around settlement. Interpretation can take the form of artworks, landscape architectural interventions, augmented reality apps, maps and tours.



The super adorable brush-tailed phascogale (*Phascogale tapoatafa*), also known by its Australian Aboriginal name *tuan*. The species is considered very vulnerable to localised extinction.



Southern shepherd's purse (*Ballantinia antipoda*) was presumed extinct until it was rediscovered in Victoria in 1983. It is persisting at a single site, with threats from human disturbance, changed hydrology and projected climate change.

Suggested Partners: *Mount Alexander Shire Council, state and federal government, Nalderun, Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, Harcourt Progress Association, Harcourt Heritage Centre, sporting clubs, Harcourt Lions Club, La Larr Ba Gauwa Park, tourism organisations, Connecting Country, ANTA, HPA, Aunty Julie, Aunty Kath, Murnong Mamas, local food and beverage companies, UNESCO gastronomy city bid/City of Greater Bendigo, Ray Norris (CSIRO; Aboriginal Astronomy expert), Australian Native Food Botanicals (a peak body), Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) provides business and capital support to Indigenous Australians to acquire, establish and grow their business.*

¹³ This idea was proposed in the Ideas-a-thon with the name Living Leanganook, but we've borrowed the name to use for the bush food and botanicals idea because we think they're a great match

Glamping in the Oak Forest (The Harcourt Producers)

Story-telling nights (CNS)

Wilderness lodge or eco accommodation near La Lar Ba Gauwa (Not Just Cider)

Walkabout cider and wine tour (Not Just Cider)

DELIVERY MECHANISMS

Set up a **Living Leanganook company or social enterprise around bushfood, medicines and botanicals**. Partner with universities, TAFES, schools, the Australian Native Food and Botanical peak body (ANFAB), Melbourne Botanical Gardens, scientists, researchers, chefs and with local producers and makers to increase knowledge, awareness, education pathways and equity in the native food and medicine industry. This organisation should be strongly led by local Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people who should be the primary benefactors in terms of financial and social returns. A key product/service of this organisation could be curated and branded botanical mixes for companies across the wine, spirits, cosmetics, health and food industries which come with the Living Leanganook seal of approval for quality, cultural appropriateness, authenticity and efficacy.¹⁴

Plant a **Living Leanganook bush tucker and bush medicine garden/farm**. Look into partnering with Aboriginal groups, Victorian Miniature Railway, Land Care, Lions Club and Council to secure land and find volunteers to plant the garden. Establish a strong educational program which provides employment and learning pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people in tourism, horticulture, ecology, marketing, hospitality, education and natural resource management. Provide tours of the garden and of further afield to Leanganook and up to Lake Boort and places of interest in Dja Dja Wurrung Djandak.

Adopt the Tuan as the mascot of Harcourt Leanganook and promote carefully controlled and sustainable tourist visitation as a means of attracting funding for research, conservation and breeding programs for the endangered Brush-tailed Phascogale (*Phascogale tapoatafa*).

Create a **stargazing lookout** on Mount Alexander overlooking Harcourt. Initially this could be a simple platform lookout with interpretation material including information about aboriginal astronomy. Over time the area could evolve into a designated observatory with a permanent structure housing a telescope, and with a strong program of research, education or with tourist and community use.

Declare Harcourt a **RV friendly town**. Create a free dedicated parking area for self contained campers on surplus road reserve near the ANA Hall on Harmony Way within walking distance of local businesses. Inspired by the very successful Jugiong model partner with the HPA, the Goldfields' Track Cafe and the Harcourt Produce and General Store to ensure that breakfast, lunch and dinner and evening food is available for campers and that the facilities are maintained. Mark the RV camping area with ground murals that tell the story of Harcourt Leanganook. This town-centre RV area should complement other free parking spots in bush settings including Powell's Lost Quarry, Oak Forest and the Leanganook Camp Ground. Upgrade facilities and maintenance program to support 24 hour use of public toilets, the

existing public dump point and the shower facilities at the Harcourt Swimming Pool. Work with growers and producers to encourage self-contained campers to visit the wider area by providing parking areas and signage to points of interest. If demand increases for camping spots in the township consider expanding self contained camping spots or glamping areas to include the Harcourt Pony Club, the parking area of the Harcourt Bowling Club and areas behind Blume's Bakery and the Harcourt Produce and General Store.

Create **Harcourt Leanganook adventure cycle circuit, tours and walking tracks** which link La Lar Ba Gauwa Mountain bike park to the town centre and takes visitors through key tourist destinations including Dog Rocks, Shepherd's Flat Lookout, the proposed bush tucker garden and stargazing lookout and apple orchards. Make sure the route is family friendly with lots of places to stop and rest and that it caters to a broad range of ability levels. The route should be very clearly signposted and curated to provide insights into Country, ecological systems especially around waterways, creation teachings, and rare and endangered species. The route should be designed to have a clear appeal to adventure tourists.

Undertake a **landscape planning process** that takes an unusually broad approach to understanding Country. Local Aboriginal Elders should work with council to procure and appoint any consultants. Landscape elements should be considered as part of a broader Plan Harcourt Process where appropriate and guide land use planning, residential development, town centre master planning, key branding and tourism works and the design and location of the Living Leanganook Bush Tucker garden, the Adventure Cycle circuit and the stargazing lookout. Landscape planning works should include:

- Strategies to deliver branding objectives
- Key destination and nodes and wayfinding strategy and master plan that links them all
- Curated walking paths and circuits
- Remediation strategy e.g blackberries in Barker's Creek
- Mapping of view lines
- Incorporating data around rocky outcrop mapping along with significant sites to guide land use planning and creation of protection mechanisms
- Places of significance (some sites of significance to Dja Dja Wurrung communities should not be made public)
- Sites and tracts of land of strategic importance to protect endangered flora and fauna
- Develop both spatial and strategic recommendations and review the feasibility of key projects, including the Living Leanganook garden, playground, camping and RV infrastructure

¹⁴ Opportunities for collaboration between primary producers and Aboriginal land managers are explored in the ambition 4: Food

Suggested Next Steps

1. Host a working session for organisations and individuals already working in the native food space to work through possible organisational and business model for Living Leanganook and explore ideas, including locals like Aunty Julie, Aunty Kath and the Murnong Mammias, Sharlee Dunolly-Lee (who is making indigenous teas), Sonia Anthony from Masons, Grant Victor Gordon, Shaun Byne from Maidenii, and external experts like Melbourne Botanical gardens,¹⁵ the Australian Native Food Botanicals, a peak body representing the interests of the rapidly growing industry, tourism and agri-business experts and other partners including local chefs, cooks and bakers such as Annette Larsen, Jodie Pillinger and Donna McMahon and interested local primary producers.
2. Seek primary producer and land owner partners to work with Living Leanganook, particularly around lucrative enterprises such as native honey farming with Blue Banded bees.¹⁶ Work with Mount Alexander Fruit Growers, Harcourt Organic Growing Cooperative Coops and other growers organisations.
3. Set up a committee to drive the **Living Leanganook bush tucker and bush medicine garden/farm** and decide whether it can and should be managed under the Living Leanganook organisational structure. Seek seed funding.
4. Proprietors of the Harcourt General Store and Goldfield Track Cafe in partnership with Council, the HPA and the Lions Club should explore how to support the establishment of an RV camping area near the ANA Hall. This process might begin with a field trip out to Jugiong to look at the relationship between the Sir George, Long Track Pantry and the free RV park to see how self-contained campers have become the economic lifeblood of the town, and to understand how key local businesses and community groups have collaborated, and sometimes refused to collaborate in order to manage the RV camping area, overcome challenges and create opportunities together.
5. Find a central site for the **Living Leanganook bush tucker and bush medicine garden/farm**. The VMR site has already been proposed and has some magical potential around using the miniature trains to provide tours of the landscape and for practical farming uses to move produce. The site also offers potential to forge connections with the creek.
6. Begin **landscape planning process** by mapping recommended routes for the Leanganook Cycle Circuit and other paths and includes engagement and negotiation with both private and traditional landowners along with key stakeholders such as Landcare, the appropriate subcommittee of HPA, the mountain bike park, Mount Alexander Fruit Growers, Harcourt Organic Growing Cooperative Coops and other growers organisations, local Aboriginal Elders and the Dja Dja Wurrung Corporation.¹⁷
7. Set up a working group work with the new event curator role, local landowners and conservation groups to explore ways to develop a program of controlled tourist visitation of Tuan conservation sites. The objectives of this program is to raise funds and to increase awareness of Tuan-friendly land management practices including installing nest boxes and keeping pets in at night. This group should maintain partnerships with Council, Parks Victoria, DEPI, SWIFFT, Connecting Country and The Brush-tailed Phascogale Coordinating Group (BtPCG) along with local Aboriginal Elders, Dja Dja Wurrung Corporation, researchers¹⁸ and other Landcare and Friends of groups including Barkers Creek Landcare and Wildlife Group, Harcourt Valley Landcare, Field Naturalists Club of Victoria and Friends of the Box-Ironbark Forests.

¹⁵ Jude Mayall and her company Outback Chef has been recommended as a potential collaborator by a local producer who currently works with bush botanicals

¹⁶ Blue banded native honey is currently selling for \$180 per litre

¹⁷ Andrew Bos and Paula Ewing founders of Tread have contributed to the Shine Harcourt Leanganook process and can provide valuable insights around adventure tourism

¹⁸ Jess Lawton and William Terry are PHD Candidates at La Trobe University and Southern Cross University respectively who are researching Brush-tailed phascogales preservation in Victoria

CASE STUDY

THE ORANA FOUNDATION

Owner-chef of Adelaide's Restaurant Orana and founder of The Orana Foundation, Jock Zonfrillo has made it his mission to preserve the food heritage of Indigenous peoples, integrate native food into Australian produce and cooking, and ensure the benefits of the industry are returned to the Indigenous communities involved. The Orana Foundation works with Aboriginal communities, employs two foragers (one in northern Australia and one in Adelaide), and maintains an online database of native foods in partnership with the University of Adelaide. This project has been realised with the help of a \$1.25 million South Australian government grant.

Why this project is successful: The Orana Foundation has forged a strong partnership with the University of Adelaide to form a commercial-university model which has enabled it to access funding as well as to establish educational pathways

Strengths: Is focused on delivering a powerful shared resource as well as supporting economic growth in remote Aboriginal communities

Limitations: The foundation is not lead by Aboriginal people

Applicability to Harcourt: The right partnership with a university or within the private sector could provide access to significant funding and support other organisational objectives such as providing educational resources. The online database of native foods is a useful resource

Burial ground for natural burials on Mt Alexander (Diva Lovers)

An education program on the Phascogale marsupial. Includes a research program & breeding conservation program, the Phascogale becoming the icon/mascot of Harcourt (CNS)



Photo credit: Tourism NT

The Orana Foundation is building a native food database in collaboration with South Australian Museum and Botanic Gardens of South Australia, conducting assessments of nutritional and bioactive characteristics with The Australian Bioactive Compounds Centre, and bringing chefs and food researchers together in collaboration with Adelaide's FOODplus Research Centre

Observatory on Mt. Alexander overlooking Harcourt. Tag line: "Harcourt; The Centre Of The Universe." (Juicy Fruits)

Community purchase of tract of land inside rural buffer to support protection of endangered flora and fauna. Ideal land is in Market St. (Royal Galas)

Penang's Tropical Spice Garden is a bio-diverse living museum of the spices and other tropical plants that have shaped global history



CASE STUDY TROPICAL SPICE GARDEN, PENANG

The Tropical Spice Garden is an eco-attraction tucked within a natural valley fronting the Straits of Malacca. Despite being outside the major tourism locations, this nature conservation area has become a must-do for day-trippers. The showcase garden houses over 500 species of herbs, spices and tropical plants. It offers multilingual self-guided or walking tours through trails and pathways that meander through undulating hills, jungles terraces and natural streams; meeting spaces, a gift shop and gallery, cooking classes, tearooms and a cafe featuring produce grown in the garden.

Why this project is successful: The garden not only provides powerful interpretative and educational experiences it is a treat for all the senses. Hours can be spent wandering the garden and discovering a secret nook, an intriguing fact about the history of spices or soaking up a heady scents of the garden

Strengths: This isn't your typical hands-off walk around a national park. The English-speaking guide goes into great detail about the trees and plants, often plucking a leaf and rubbing a seed pod on your wrist to allow you to smell the sweet aromas. The tour will even direct you to a lily pond, where you can dip your feet for a brief respite to the often oppressive Malaysian humidity. There, the guppies nibble your toes as part of your organic pedi-spa treatment

Limitations: Significant time and resources are required to upkeep a major tourism attraction like this

Applicability to Harcourt: Located outside of Georgetown the Tropical Spice Garden is the perfect day trip for visitors and is a key element of the local economy. Complete in itself, the garden is enough to justify the trip which can be followed up by a visit to local restaurants and markets

**"THIS IS ANOTHER
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THAT'S WHAT OUR
ELDERS SEE – THE REAL
THING – A WORLD OF
DREAMS WHERE THE
PAST, PRESENT AND
THE FUTURE LINK. "**

– HETTI PERKINS

Wayfinding project around Harcourt, including extending the walking track from Barker's Creek Reservoir to Harcourt, landscaping, installing a boardwalk from 3 arch stone bridge. This would include information panels on features and history (Juicy Fruits)

Mystical Fairy Garden in Oak Forest. Promote area as family friendly picnic spot. Possible addition of tree house (Diva Lovers)



Photo credit: Juicy Fruits (Ideas-a-hon Capture Challenge: Gift)

**“HONOR THE
HANDS THAT
HARVEST YOUR
CROPS.”**

— DOLORES HUERTA

AMBITION 4

FOOD

Stand together as a community of producers to grow produce sustainably, protect fertile land, pool resources and share knowledge.

Food and farming is at the very heart Harcourt. Growing food and providing nourishment is not just what we do, it's at the core of who we are as a community.

There is an immense amount of pride and knowledge held in this town. From generations of working the land and evolving European farming practices to suit the seasons and ecology of the Australian landscape, to a millennia of traditional land management, custodianship and connection to Country.

Our ambition is to find ways to come together to share that knowledge with each other and the broader community, and to define a compelling story about the quality of our food and food experiences that gives people a sense of our values, our approach and the myriad ways they can explore our local food story.

We need a place brand that celebrates the quality of local produce and gives it a clear point of difference in the region to not only increase visitation but to also improve the value of these goods in the market¹⁹. Being grown in Harcourt should mean something in terms of the freshness, quality and general-feel-goodness of the food.

We want to increase the efficiency, effectiveness and creativity around how we collaborate as growers, and develop a culture of learning and productivity that puts the health of the land and it's people first.

Harcourt is a town of growers, and that is what we want to remain. Urban sprawl is a global issue for all peri-urban agriculture and the Harcourt Leanganook region is no exception. While we want to see our town grow, and we welcome more people and more houses and all the shops, amenities, jobs and opportunities that come with them, we are very aware of the risks associated with residential growth to farming, to habitat and to the availability of arable land.

While strong controls around township zoning and rural buffers are a good start, we don't think it's enough long-term. Our ambition is to find multiple creative ways for people to live on acreage and embrace the rural tree-change lifestyle without further land fragmentation and the flow-on issues related to weed-management, land remediation, hobby farming and the critical mass needed to make farming operations viable.

Establish a micro-farming community (The ANA Mob)

Co-op/farm accommodation (Hardcore Toil)

Workshops in cider making and bottling (Gas Bottle Crew)

Local food/farm products sold in town (Donna & Dave)

Community garden (The Harcourt Producers)

¹⁹ See Ambition 1: Story for more information about place branding

DELIVERY MECHANISM

As part of the master brand and place branding strategy outlined in Ambition 1 we want to create a **'Product of Harcourt Leanganook' brand identity** built around clear values of tradition, sustainability and connection to country. Allow all aligned producers based in Harcourt Leanganook to make use of the brand.

Establish an **Apple Heritage and Bush Tucker Museum** in the coolstores precinct, at an expanded ANA Hall or as part of the Living Leanganook Bush Tucker Garden. This museum should take the broadest possible approach to exploring and celebrating multiple elements of Harcourt's history, traditions and primary production but should knit these disparate elements together using the two themes of apples and bush tucker. A playful and highly insta-worthy curatorial approach should be taken with plenty of opportunities to dress-up, touch and interact with the exhibits and sample local produce.



A large rustic barn surrounded by green pastures and old wooden outbuildings, Willie Smith's Apple Shed is an Apple Museum and the home of Willie Smith's Cider. It's a place to learn about the history of the Huon Valley and its apple industry, while enjoying food made from local and regional, seasonal and sustainable produce.

Create the **Harcourt Leanganook Open Paddock Project** inspired by Open House Melbourne. Create an evolving calendar of seasonal walks that allow visitors to walk from farm to farm at different times of the year to experience the variety of produce, landscapes and local producers. Like Open House, the program should provide walkers with opportunities to



Wassailling celebrations

meet the hosting farmers and producers, and get a glimpse into the back-of-house of a working farm, orchard and vineyards. The open paddock walks will change from month to month and sometimes week to week but should always connect in interesting ways to the permanent walks linking productive landscapes to the township and to the mountain.

To maximise the benefits of the Open Paddock Project hold a **Wassail Growers Gathering** once a quarter. Build on the ancient apple growing and farming traditions of wassailling and equinox celebrations as ways of bringing farmers together to share knowledge and resources, support each other through tough times and celebrate big harvests. Non-farming neighbours may be invited to join in, but these are proposed as event by growers for growers. Like the very successful seed savers program these informal gatherings should be hosted by a willing farmer or producer who will open their property to neighbours and host a discussion and shared meal. Growers might share strategies on dealing with fruit fly, native bee-keeping, pruning, permaculture, how to transition to organics, cider making, brewing, wine making, bushfood production or firestick farming.

This Growers Gathering may evolve into a stand-alone organisation that specifically provides services to members overtime, but for now we propose consolidating the existing organisations together or forming sub-committees of larger organisations like the *Harcourt Progress Association* to reduce overlaps and redundancies, and the burden of paperwork and compliance.

In onsen towns in Japan accommodation providers and land owners pay a levy and band together to provide visitors with access to natural hot springs and amenities on each others properties. This way, instead of being limited to their own inn, visitors can experience the full variety of onsens and outdoor roten-buro of the town. In a similar way our accommodation providers, farmers, landowners, asset managers and service providers should come together to form a **Reveal Leanganook Farmstay Project** that focuses on finding ways to unlock unique and unforgettable experiences to visitors throughout the Harcourt Leanganook area.

This project should weave together the farming, food and wine offer in powerful ways and may include experiences such as staying in an isolated rover's hut perched on a hillside, a personalised walking route through productive orchards, passing cellar doors on the way, meeting producers, or being provided with a curated hamper of local foods to greet you when you arrive at your AirBnB. This project should focus on farm stays and providing visitors with increased access to farms, vineyards and cellar doors but should absolutely include a range of accommodation options including staying in the town centre (especially in the granite houses), glamping in the Oak Forest or on Leanganook, and providing unique experiences for RVs and self-contained campers.

This project could be managed by the business association proposed (Harcourt Leanganook Progress Association) in Ambition 2 and should build on the considerable knowledge base of small independent accommodation providers in the area as well as seeking relationships with organisations with existing networks, customer bases or resources such as Flop House and Happy Glampers. Participating independent accommodation providers would pay a fee to be involved which, besides providing access to special experiences for their guests, could go towards shared resources. This could include professional photography, marketing, working with Council to find ways to provide unique and possibly mobile accommodation on farms like rovers huts or tiny houses, a library of specially commissioned artworks and ornaments shared between properties, cleaning services, procurement assistance, management services or especially tailored classes.²⁰

Adopt a **Conservation Subdivision Developments (CSD) approach** to new housing both within and outside the township zone and the buffer zone. The principles of Conservation Subdivision are simple and well tested and include:

- 50%-70% of the developable land of the site is preserved as habitat or farming land and managed by a trust, co-op or body corporate
- the balance is developed at significantly higher densities than is typical of the area to maintain overall housing yield

In locations like Harcourt, Conservation Subdivision Developments typically lease land to farmers and the income from rents is used to manage the property and/or as returns to owners. Because the CSD approach has been around for more than half a century there is a lot of material to guide implementation along with evidence of the considerable benefits to developers, landowners and/or the community. These benefits include: quicker sales and higher sale prices, reduced construction and infrastructure costs, reduced stormwater and runoff, habitat preservation, reduction of land fragmentation, increased access to open space and preservation of farming land.

Sometimes described as 'golf course developments without the golf course', CSD are a perfect fit for rural communities looking to attract tree-changers who want the views and lifestyle without the work. They also have the potential to provide a possible avenue for existing farming co-ops to tap into their land values without compromising core farming activities. Although not strictly Conservation Subdivision projects, new developments like The Paddock: Eco Village in Castlemaine are in line with the broad CSD approach and are good examples of what such developments might look and feel like. Conservation subdivision sites should be considered in conjunction with existing policies in the Planning Scheme around Rural Living Zones, Rural Conservation Zones and buffers.



A development plan for a historical site using principles of Conservation Subdivision Development (CSD)

²⁰ Sarah Andrews of The Hosting Masterclass has been recommended by a local AirBnB operator

Marathon with stop-offs at wineries, cheese, farm gate (Juicy Fruits)



Suggested Partners: Producers, growers, wine and cider makers in the region, Mount Alexander Fruit Growers, Harcourt Organic Growing Cooperative Coops and other growers organisations, AirB&B, Happy Glampers, Flop House, Camplify, Camptoo, Hardcore Harcourt Facebook group, Bress, Blackjack and other producers, Mount Alexander Shire Council, Nalderun, Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, Harcourt Progress Association, other sub-committees, Connecting Country, UNESCO gastronomy city bid/City of Greater Bendigo, CSD-friendly developers, landowners, Trust for Nature



Pick your own farm produce at farm gate (The Harcourt Producers)

Melbourne food & wine festival long lunch in orchard (The Gas Bottle Crew)

College for Agriculture (Not Just Cider)

Suggested Next Steps

1. Incorporate the Mount Alexander Fruit Growers association into sub-committee of the HPA or the newly expanded Harcourt Leanganook Progress association (HPLA) and ensure growers hold positions on the new board and take part in collaborative initiatives such as Living Leanganook and bush food cultivation
2. Work with the events subcommittee of the HPA and with Mount Alexander Shire Council to establish the *Open Paddock Project*, *Reveal Leanganook Farmstay Project* and the quarterly *Wassail Growers Gathering*. Aim to kick off this program of events and activities in early 2020.
3. Create a map of Harcourt Leanganook's wineries, cideries and foodie venues and walking tracks and secret spots
4. Put up informal interpretive signage telling passersby what crops are growing and providing interesting information about the farming process
5. Invite a pop-up glamping company or via a #vanlife weekend to work within the calendar of event opportunities and test the appetite to grow the visitation experience at Harcourt
6. Run a workshop with landowners, Aboriginal elders, Landcare, Council's Strategic Planning team and an expert on conservation subdivision to explore possibilities, identify potential sites, develop a framework to encourage sustainable development and investigate possible future planning scheme amendments

CASE STUDY INCREDIBLE EDIBLE TODMORDEN

Incredible Edible Todmorden began as a community initiative to grow food on underused bits of public land including footpath verges and empty blocks with the ambition of providing free, fresh food to the town. The project started as a way to inspire people to use local produce and has now become a foodie cultural movement. The incredible edible model has inspired over 100 projects around the UK, 700 projects worldwide, and two spin-off social enterprises, which are all independent of the original entity.

Why this project is successful: This project makes the best possible strategic use of its underused resources and the energy of the community. It started small and expanded to follow the community's needs and aspirations. It is founded on local passions and has simple clear and heartfelt ambitions including building a stronger and kinder community.

Strengths: Community collaboration, transparency of intention And independence from statutory funding; the only income the project receives is from voluntary donations and fees for talks and tours

Limitations: This project relies on community labour and Harcourt's resources are already stretched in this area

Applicability to Harcourt: Harcourt could take a community development approach to a number of the projects outlined in this report including the bush tucker garden or the Open Paddock project. Both of which could develop more commercially oriented off-shoots like The Incredible Farm and The Incredible Aquagarden.



Left; the Stanthorpe Apple & Grape Harvest Festival is one of Queensland's longest running and most successful Festivals Right; Incredible Edible Todmorden started as a small community initiative and has grown into a international movement and tourism destination

Harcourt's Centre of Excellence for organics, cider and wine (Not Just Cider)

Wine trail map & promotion of all wineries and cider producers in area (The Royal Galas)

**"AND THE DAY
CAME WHEN THE
RISK TO REMAIN
TIGHT IN A BUD
WAS MORE
PAINFUL THAN THE
RISK IT TOOK TO
BLOSSOM."**

— ANAÏS NIN

Photo credit: Juicy Fruits (Ideas-a-thon Capture Challenge: A sense of history)



AMBITION 5

GROWTH

Ensure Harcourt grows with a distinct heart, and a clear and flexible governance that supports diverse economic activity in a way that expresses Harcourt's distinct character and personality.

The people of Harcourt want 3 key things for the town. A proper town centre, the return of the train service and a pub. On top of that they want the town to grow up into itself in a way that is completely Harcourt. The very clear message throughout the Shine Harcourt Leanganook process has been; we don't want to become an outer suburb of Castlemaine and we don't want to become a generic regional node filled with ugly large format buildings and bland housing developments.

Historically the centre of Harcourt has been divided spatially, with part of the centre growing up around the railway station and the other part clustered around the highway near the intersection of Market Street. With the closure of the station almost 40 years ago and the construction of the bypass a decade ago, both centres have lost their primary reason for being in those locations. As a result many key local assets are hidden away or difficult to access and the town itself is without a clear heart.

There are two ways to think about where Harcourt's town centre is today, one is to focus on what is missing, the other is to see the opportunity. We feel that we have the opportunity to dream and scheme together now, before development really kicks off to make sure the right things are built, and the wrong things are blocked.

The township of Harcourt has grown up around granite and food production - at first the town exported fruit and vegetables to the gold fields, then to Melbourne and the world. Initially very much a tiny centre servicing surrounding farms, it is increasingly becoming a residential town with people commuting to work in Castlemaine, Bendigo and Melbourne. Growth projections indicate that the town can expect to grow dramatically over the next 15 years. The need for a regular train service and a properly laid out town centre has never been greater.

Without a train service and without a clearly defined centre that services residents' needs and provides employment, we know that even with strongly defined township growth boundaries there will be very little to stop Harcourt effectively functioning as a satellite suburb of Castlemaine or Bendigo. The very best way to combat this is to grow ourselves a strong, highly functioning town centre that reflects the true character and spirit of Harcourt and is the focus of local pride and activity.

Harcourt may have lost out to Castlemaine in the battle for the train station back in the day, but we used our influence to make sure we got an absolutely first class train station building. Now it's time to band together again and build on existing wins to do everything in our power to make sure that election promises lead to the return of an operational train station, located according to a well thought-through strategic approach to planning our town centre, and that this happens before the next election cycle.

Any decisions about the future layout of the town should be based on the assumption that at some point the trains will stop at Harcourt again. Ideally any future town centre will exist within a 400m radius of the railway station with most assets and amenities located on the eastern side of the tracks so that the centre is not divided by the rail-line.

As the existing town centre is over a kilometre away from the railway station, some decisions need to be made now before the train service reopens about how the town centre should grow and consolidate, and whether and where the station can move. Growth predictions indicate that Harcourt may expect to boast a medium-sized supermarket, about 20 specialty shops and a range of non-retail businesses over the next decade. We need to plan now to make sure this retail is consolidated to create an attractive two-sided main street and that parking and wayfinding is considered in order to maintain the attractiveness

of our town and to pack the most punch economically.

In the shorter term, the people of Harcourt strongly believe that it is now high time that we got ourselves a new local. It's been well over 100 years since Hugh Pope McLean bought the last pub in Harcourt and closed it down. We lost the Porcupine Inn in 1860, the Old Talbot Hotel in the early 1880s and then in 1912 we lost the Live and Let Live Hotel from nearby Black Jack Gully. In more recent years the bar area of the Tread Hotel evolved into the much-loved Goldfields Cafe.

A pub and a post office is pretty much the definition of a country town in Australia and its lack has become a problem for this town in a number of ways. Reopening a pub or perhaps more appropriately a cider & brew house would provide a place to gather, a place for the town to come together, a place to showcase local ciders, beers, wines and liquors and will provide a more complete experience for visitors.

Pubs don't need to be fancy to do this job, they don't even need to be housed in permanent buildings, but they do absolutely need to be open 5 days a week including weekends, they need to cater to a range of price points, they need to pour a good beer, provide comfortable places to gather and encourage large informal groupings, and they need to serve food.

The Harcourt Produce and General Store will shortly reopen and will serve food and alcohol which will go some way to closing the gap short term. Once a pub has opened the general store will help complete the offer of the town to visitors, but a pub is still a critical element of the township mix.

For many decades trade and energy and people flowed into the town via the Calder. Like many places with highway bypasses the under-used highway land now serves to drain energy and activity from the town, and encourages motorists

to speed past rather than slow down and linger. But we see all this disused land as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create the missing elements of our centre on public land in a way that the community and Council can control, and which generates income for our township.

As the town grows and throughout the process of land use changes we recognise that there will need to be high levels of collaboration between Council and established businesses to work together to incubate and support small, micro and emerging enterprises until they become established. Costs and processes which are routine to larger or more established businesses can pose insurmountable barriers to businesses that are still finding their feet, especially businesses in small town and regional settings.

The reality of land use and economic development in rural areas is that people often need to work from home, and that they need to find opportunities where they live. Farming, after all, is the ultimate to live/work land use. At the same time controls are necessary to preserve the visual appeal, essential services and safety of the town. Through the Plan Harcourt process the Council's Strategic Planning team is currently working with the community and business to seek ways to strike this balance.

Zoning and planning overlays are relatively blunt tools that nevertheless are generally effective at managing the complex dynamics of changing land uses. We see the challenge as being finding the sweet spot between nurturing economic development and concentrating activity in the town centre.

We would like to see this longer term strategic thinking and town centre planning supported by a number of quick wins that can have an immediate impact, such as improvements to the entry experience to the town, wayfinding, simple infrastructure to be a RV friendly town and a pop-up pub.

Redevelop Cool Stores as a complementary venture to The Mill with affordable studio and workshop spaces for artists, makers, and local producers (The Diva Lovers)

Pop-up market in town in eco-friendly pods. The pods would encircle a community garden and open air theatre for community events. They will have a focus on produce grown by local farmers (The Hong's)

A pub, a retail precinct with yoga studio and an op shop and re-open the train station (The Harcourt Lions Club)

DELIVERY MECHANISM

Things are looking up recently on the train service front, but now is not the time to get complacent. These kinds of logistical and planning processes are long and involve multiple-agencies; many a slip can happen between cup and lip. We need to be ready to band together and create a witty, noisy and insistent **Our Lovely Train Campaign** that has Council, the community and State Government working together to make sure the planning process continues to build momentum and returns the best possible outcomes for Harcourt. Until we get our train service back we need to spread the good word about public transport and raise awareness of the issue throughout the region. We also need to make sure that the design process around the new train stop incorporates a town centre master planning process to ensure that we end up with a walkable town centre.

Establishing a complete town centre is not something that is going to happen overnight. To lay down the tone and function of our town centre quickly we'd like to approach it the same way townspeople have for centuries and start with activity, followed by provisional built form and finally with permanent buildings.

To do this we propose the **Harcourt Leanganook Market Lane** be established in the area identified as the location of the future main street. Activity should

start small with food and retail pop ups and the twilight market, then grow into a small permanent market housed in shipping containers that expands on weekends and for special events. Overtime, as the use, program and activity of the street is defined and the town grows larger, the street market will evolve into a traditional main street with small-grain permanent buildings and/or might elect to maintain elements of the flexible market form, as some towns do.

Our new pub should have pride of place on the market lane, and we should take a similar grassroots approach to its establishment. While we should actively encourage interested parties to build a bricks-and-mortar pub, in the meantime we will look for ways to make it happen right now with the resources currently available. We propose a **Pop-up Pub** which makes use of provisional and temporary options such as shipping containers, spiegel-tents and tiny mobile options like the little Irish Pub on wheels inspired by the tradition of unofficial and informal public houses - the Shebeen. An alternative approach is to hold regular pub nights at The Bowling Club where the club leases its facilities to another provider for food, service of alcohol and entertainment, the likes of which we enjoyed at Shine Harcourt Leanganook's Ideas a-thon. Whichever form it takes, the new pub should showcase apple products of all kinds, especially cider along with local beers, wines, liqueurs, bush tucker and local produce.



The very popular Tramyard precinct in Dalkey, Dublin shows how a small space can be a thriving retail precinct if it creates a great place for pedestrian, has small retail and is well designed.



Pubs don't have to be large or permanent; the Shebeen is a mobile pub created in converted caravan in Dublin that fits 10 people. The pub is complete with a fully functioning bar with two beers on tap.



Cambria in California features shopping areas with tiny shops and restaurants that are linked together by pedestrian-only paths that also encourage visitors to walk through backyards of businesses which are set up as courtyards and gardens; in Harcourt the cafe, bakery and general store all have generous spaces which could be used to create spaces for people to gather

Carry out a **Town Centre Strategic Process** that translates the ambitions of Shine Harcourt into Plan Harcourt along with a range of policies, programs and incentives to intensify the town centre and support activity.

This town centre strategic process should build on the 2011 Harcourt Town Centre Master Plan, much of which is still relevant.

However this key decisions should respond to the areas of previous plans that are now out of date, in particular the relationship of the centre to the train station, and include new ideas proposed in this report such as the Bush Tucker Garden and curated interpretive paths. To respond to the ambitions outlined in Shine Harcourt, Council's strategic planning team and the Plan Harcourt process should take a broad approach to also encompass programming, licensing, levies and ongoing management and maintenance. Decisions around the town centre should also strongly prioritise controls around the location, function and look and feel of commercial land in the town centre areas and ensure that commercial development stacks up economically and supports and expands Harcourt's identity.

The town centre strategic process should:

- Define the best way to grow and focus the town centre and the location of the train station
- Find ways to celebrate the creek and use it to provide amenity and pedestrian pathways as part of an open space network and links to the new playground while providing multiple informal and high quality places to play for kids of all ages

- Define neighbourhood precincts with different characters that support the place identity and economic functioning of the centre:
 - **The Creek Precinct** should embrace the creek and provide a gateway to the miniature railway as well as future initiatives such as the Leanganook Bush Tucker Garden. The landscape elements of this precinct should support the Harcourt Leanganook identity, celebrate the creek and provide a strong arrival experience to visitors. This precinct includes The Harcourt Produce and General Store, the Goldfields' Track cafe, Stanley Park, the petrol station, post office, the new subdivision and possible reclaimed land, the ANA Hall and James Park as the town square. The businesses and new developments on the northern side of Harmony Way should engage with the creek. New development in this area will need to be carefully managed so that it opens up access to the creek and provides an active street and unified frontage to Harmony Way. A supermarket, pharmacy and other medium-format retail outlets could work here if risks around built form, visual appeal and layout are able to be managed. Over time the historic building to the north of The Harcourt Produce and General Store could be repurposed to a complementary use
 - **The Market Lane Precinct²¹** should provide a vibrant retail heart within walking distance of the new train station. This precinct should be located near Victoria Road including James Park as the town square and within 400m of the new train stop location. This area would include Blume's Bakery, the Harcourt Bowling Club and the proposed fine grained two-sided retail lane on reclaimed road reserve including a local pub and small village green
 - **The Cool Stores** Precinct includes the old railway station buildings and the cool stores, this precinct should build on existing operations such as Maidenii Vermouth and honey producers and expand into a neighbourhood for local makers, producers and creative industries inspired by successful role models such as The Mill in Castle-maine. This location may be suitable for large format retail such as a supermarket

²¹ See Appendix A for sketch plans of possible spatial configurations of this precinct and the town centre

- Consider creating a town square next to the ANA Hall which showcases the ANA Hall as a key part of Harcourt’s history and identity
- Identify possible development sites, including reclaiming land from road reserve of Harmony Way for commercial use and transferring ownership to Council to develop and lease, or sell with strict development controls
- Ensure that any planning and zoning changes do not negatively affect existing businesses and allow for existing businesses to expand in ways which support the delivery of the ambitions in this document. Find ways to support local businesses around compliance during periods of change and uncertainty particularly through rezoning processes. This is particularly important for the 3 existing food and beverage businesses in the town centre which together form the core of the visitor town centre experience, including Blume’s Bakery, The Goldfields’ Track Cafe and The Harcourt Produce and General Store
- Define areas with main street retail frontages
- Include diversity in housing, including affordable housing
- Explore maximising bang for buck by co-location of community assets and resources e.g. childcare centres and aged care
- Establish strict neighbourhood character overlays and design guidelines with real teeth to guide the design of built form, materials, fences, setbacks and look and feel of new developments in the town centre, particularly main street retail buildings to make sure Harcourt keeps a unique aesthetic. This is less about controls on temporary elements like signage or program and more about making sure that permanent and long term decisions support the visual appeal and economic function of the town centre. The new subdivision on Harmony Way opposite The Goldfields’ Track Cafe is a cause of real concern in the community because of its size, prominence and strategic location and needs specific attention and strict controls
- Use rocky outcrop maps and other resources to protect local Aboriginal artifacts from development
- Ensure new developments provide amenities for new and existing residents and make an overall positive contribution to the town
- Identify and promote potential conservation subdivision development sites
- Develop innovative approaches to zoning and planning controls that prioritise the needs of small and micro businesses and recognises the necessity and long history of live/work arrangements in regional areas

New bespoke signage at towns entrance & exit (The Harcourt Producers)

Legislate for play space in each new subdivision (The ANA Mob)

Artisan gallery and retail space (The Bowlers)

A town square (The Royal Galas)

Co-located kinder and aged care facility; combining shared community facilities and a kitchen garden with support staff (Diva Lovers)



The tiny thriving village of Jugiong in NSW has managed to provide visitors with a complete offer despite consisting of only a pub, a cafe-provedore and a paddock set up to offer donation-only camping. Local business have capitalised on the stream of visitors by expanding; the pub has converted an historic stone stable into accomodation and built contemporary cabins, an expanded restaurant space and now a bakery, while Long Track Pantry has developed their own line of food products and opened an icecream shop next door.

Suggested Partners: *Local, state and federal government, V/Line, Victrack, VicRoads, Regional Development Victoria, Public Transport Victoria, Shedshaker Brewing Company, Victorian Miniature Railway, key property owners including Blume's Bakery, Harcourt Bowling Club, Cool Stores business operators, The Mill Castlemaine and Hardcore Harcourt Facebook group and the Railpage online community.*

- Map out a possible future town centre wifi strategy targeted to visitors including places to charge devices in public space
- Clarify NBN provision and other infrastructure limitations
- Find ways to support pop-up activities to enable compliance with licensing laws and insurance
- Find enabling mechanisms for fine grain and small scale events and programs in the town centre and the development of artist in residence programs, art and festivals, informal or pop-up events in public space
- Provide support and education in advance of new program and town centre development to ensure the needs of residents are balanced against the needs of other users, eg noise reduction
- Develop strategies to support small commercial, food and beverage operators, and small scale live music events and venues to interface with residential uses
- Support existing business to extend in ways that helps Harcourt provide a complete offer to visitors and which support the brand and ambitions in this report. For example provide in-principal support for extension of trading hours, liquor licensing, programs and events on private and public space
 - Support a broad range of home businesses
 - Support a broad range of pop-up businesses whether they be in caravans, shipping containers or market stalls
 - Strongly support footpath and outdoor dining
 - Define a wayfinding strategy including better signage from highway and at towns entry points
 - Define a program of quick wins including signage, landscaping and an attractive low-maintenance solution for the roundabout on Victoria Road

Suggested Next Steps

1. Create a community working group, possibly as part of HPA which is focussed on guiding development of the town centre, and creating a true heart for Harcourt. This group should drive the **Our Lovely Train Campaign**, advocate for the **Market Lane** and look for operators to run a **Pop-up Pub**, as well as a more permanent local. Working closely with Council's Economic Development and Strategic Planning team this group should also ensure that the ambitions and delivery mechanisms outlined in this report are translated into master planning and economic development strategies and that the holistic vision articulated through Shine Harcourt is not lost as planning and design processes become specialised and detailed.
2. Council's Strategic Planning team should conduct a detailed review process exploring the possible implications of the Shine Harcourt Leanganook ambitions and recommendations culminating in feedback to the community to provide insights around the complex issues involved, and outlining Council's position and proposed response.²²

²² Patrick Fensham and SGS Economics participated in the Shine Harcourt Leanganook process (pro bono) and are well placed to contribute economic advice to this review process. Likewise Steve Turner from colonysix gave his time to the Ideas Lab and may be able to provide useful advice around innovative development and retail models, as well as Council/developer partnerships and learnings from the similar Shaping Wollongong process.



CASE STUDY RE:START CHRISTCHURCH CONTAINER MALL

Christchurch created a temporary mall built entirely of shipping containers as a response to the 2011 earthquake, which destroyed most buildings in the city's mall and resulted in the central city being cordoned off from public access while buildings were being demolished. Initially considered a short-term response to the lack of permanent buildings, Re:START was popular with locals and tourists alike and remained open for business until January 2018.

Why this project is successful: The temporary nature allows retailers to be creative with minimal cost, which in turn created value and interest both customers and visitors.

Strengths: By suspending the usual rules of retail precincts and using quick low cost solutions retailers were able to more quickly rebuild and capitalise on opportunities.

Limitations: The proportions of the shipping containers limit the program, and maintenance may eventually become higher than the value of the structures.

Applicability to Harcourt: Containers are low cost, temporary, permeable, ad hoc and can be creatively branded for the community to test a new direction for the expansion of the town centre and new business initiatives. They are a way to quickly bring built form and activity to the town centre.

Great pub with good kids area (Hardcore Toitl)

Harcourt Eco-Living Habitat. 50 living spaces, promotes local attractions and produce. NFP model, with profits supporting homeless charities (Not Just Cider)

The Participants

Many of the consultants who took part in the Ideas Lab travelled from across the region, from Melbourne and even interstate to generously donate their time and expertise pro-bono to the Harcourt community. Very special thank you to Ben Grosz and Laura Camilleri from Branding and Marketing consultancy Grosz Co. Lab, to Patrick Fensham from economists SGS, community development and arts consultant Jane York, placemaking consultant Kesanya Baker, Steven Turner from colonysix and Chris Haywood, design anthropologist. Hello City has also delivered elements of this project pro-bono.

Thank you to local businesses who donated prizes to the Ideas-a-thon: Shedshaker Brewery, Victorian Miniature Railway, Goldfields Track Cafe, Granite House Bed and Breakfast, Larsen Produce, Liesl Malan Landscape Architects, Blue Elephant Beverage Company, The Taproom and Mount Alexander Shire Council.

fabulous ideas lab participants

Andrew Bos, Tread
Annette Larsen, Harcourt General Store
Aunty Julie, Aboriginal Elder
Ben Grosz, Grosz Co Lab
Brian Gould, CoGB
Dave Tripp, Regional Development Victoria
David Leatham, MASC
Eva Parkin, MASC
Evan Read, Juicy Fruit team rep
George Milford, investor/local
Jacqueline Brodie-Hanns Harcourt Progress Association/ business owner
Jane York, cultural development consultant
Katie Finlay, Harcourt Fruitgrowers' Assoc, organic co-op, Bendigo Bank
Kerry Anderson, author
Kesanya Moore, Placemaking Consultant
Laura Camilleri, Grosz Co Lab
Liesl Malan, Liesl Malan Landscape Architects
Michael Henry, Henry's Cidery
Nareena Bloomfield, Daylesford-Macedon Tourism
Patrick Fensham, SGS
Paul Henderson, Federal Government Aus Industries,
Paula Ewing, Tread
Robyn Miller, Harcourt Progress Association/ business owner
Scott Harrington, Blue Elephant Cidery
Sha Cordingley, Royal Galas team rep
Sharna Crosbie, MASC
Slade Beard, EcoThought
Sonia Anthony, Mason's at Bendigo & Food Fossickers Group,
Steve Turner, colonysix

fantastic ideas-a-thon teams

Colleen & Sharon (CNS)
Diva Lovers,
Donna & Dave,
Gas Bottle Crew,
Harcourt Toil,
Harcourt Lions Club,
Harcourt Shiners,
Juicy Fruits,
Not Just Cider,
The ANA Mob,
The Bowlers,
The Harcourt Producers,
The Hongs,
The Royal Galas,
The Shiny Shiny Ponies,
The Teed Team,
The VMRians,
Whoop Whoop Team

**Shine Harcourt
Partners**

**others to whom we are eternally
grateful for their support and advice**

Andrew Meirsch

Annette Larsen

Ben Rowbottom

Dave Tripp

David Leathem

Donna McMahon

Katie Finlay

Liesl Malan

Michael Henry

Robyn Miller

Scott Harrington

Aunty Julie

Aunty Kath

Chris Hayward

Jacqueline Brodie-Hanns

Jodi Pilinger

Kate Gamble

Paul Mizzi

**"WE'RE ALL
GIFTED WITH THE
OPPORTUNITY
TO SUCCEED. BUT
YOU GET FURTHER
IF YOU EXTEND
THE HAND OF
FRIENDSHIP."**

— JIMMY LITTLE

THANK YOU

The ideas, thoughts and suggestions of Shine Harcourt Leanganook have only been possible because of the participation of such a diverse and committed group of people. We sincerely thank all of those who took part in the Ideas-a-thon, the Ideas Lab and in every step of this rewarding process. **We think you are amazing.**





THANK YOU



A special thank you to the Harcourt Progress Association for hosting the Ideas-a-thon and providing food and entertainment for the evening. Thank you to our judges and to Paul Kunkler, Adrian Stewart, Meg Kunkler for volunteering on the night and especially to Jacqueline Brodie-Hanns for making sure everyone had a fantastic time. Thank you to Ozzie and Ricky Townsend of KT's Coffee cart for the delicious Thai feast and to the fabulously talented Tracey Candy for being the absolute life and soul of the party.

**CHOOSE YOUR
DESTINY PATHWAYS
WITH DETERMINATION
BUT BE PREPARED TO
CHANGE COURSE IF
YOU HAVE CHOSEN THE
WRONG WAY TO GO."**

— KEN WYATT AM



WHAT'S NEXT?

The Shine Harcourt Leanganook Partnership is continuing the conversation about how to turn all of these ambitions into reality.

If you have been inspired to get involved, please get in touch! We'd love to hear your thoughts, ideas and suggestions about the enhancement of Harcourt and how you could play a role in making it happen.

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APPENDIX A

Town Centre Growth

How should the centre grow?

During the Shine Harcourt Leanganook process 3 possible ways for the town centre to grow were identified.

1. The first scenario is to focus it where it is now around the intersection of High, Wright and Market Streets. The benefits of this are that it reinforces the current centre, it is close to the swimming pool, the general store, ANA Hall, Stanley Park, open space used for markets, Tread Motel, the Goldfields track cafe and the post office. The disadvantages are that the main part of the centre would not be within optimal walking distance of the train station and it is unlikely to be feasible to reroute the track to change this.

There are also significant issues with land configuration and existing subdivisions which would make it difficult to allow the town to grow cohesively and create a two sided main street in this location.

2. The second possible growth area is near the existing railway station. The advantages of this position include proximity to the existing station, to the primary school, the recreation reserve and the cool stores. The key disadvantage being that over the last 4 decades any previous town centre amenities here have eroded or moved to the existing centre on the highway, which would split the energy of the centre in two.

3. The third possibility is to move the station further north along the track to near the intersection with Victoria Road and allow the centre to grow south to include its original location near the intersection of High Street and Harmony Way. This is the preferred scenario as it would have the advantages of linking the station area to the northern precinct, and maintaining proximity to the Tread Hotel, the General Store and Goldfield Track Cafe while linking in the Bowling Club and historic Blumes Bakery. It also has good potential to consolidate and intensify underused or fragmented land in a way that could create publicly owned retail land. Key benefits include consolidating existing assets and availability of land on Warren, Bagshaw and Buckley Streets suitable for higher density housing or commercial use. This scenario is explored in Ambition 5, Growth.

The sketches below show two possible ways to reimagine the new town centre within 5 minutes walk (400m) of the new train station and to create publicly commercial land for a town centre by reclaiming road reserve. This would support and extend existing town centre activities and businesses.



Figure 1: **The large area of road reserve on the old Calder Freeway presents an exciting opportunity for the creation of new retail spaces which are publicly owned** Figure 2: **Sketch showing how the existing centre can grow to take advantage of the disused road reserve**



Market Lane Precinct, Harmony Lane: the first sketch shows a village-style approach linking the ANA open space to the Bowling Club with a pedestrian market street that includes a small village green in the centre near Blumes Bakery. The advantage of this approach is that nearly the whole site is reclaimed road reserve with minimal impact on adjacent properties. The small grain size and small pedestrian market street will allow for cheaper rents, and will maximise the sense of variety, bustle and intensity in a small overall retail area. The other advantage is that this super fine grain retail format is quite unusual in this part of Victoria and will give Harcourt a point of difference in the region. Detouring Harmony Way around the market street serves to slow traffic and provide glimpses into the Harmony Lane Market Street while providing a sheltered street market area away from traffic

Figure 3: **Harmony Lane Market Street configuration extends the centre south to connect the existing centre to the railway line and creates an intense bustling market street on a human scale**



Market Lane Precinct, Harmony Main Street: The second sketch shows a more traditional main street layout and produces a less unified retail frontage. Land would be reclaimed from both High Street and Harmony Way reducing both to the minimum size required for traffic flow. This scenario would have larger impacts on adjacent residential properties and would require changes in current land uses.

For both sketches retail areas shown on Victoria Road and Warren Street indicate possible sites for later retail development.

Figure 4: **Harmony Way configuration with more traditional retail layout**



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