



Rochester Place Based Plan


Future Rochester



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The Shire of Campaspe is the traditional lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung and Yorta Yorta Peoples.

We respect and acknowledge their unique Aboriginal cultural heritage and pay our respect to their ancestors, descendants and emerging leaders as the Traditional Owners of this Country.

We acknowledge their living culture and their unique role in the life of this region.



1. Introduction

Nestled on the banks of the Campaspe River, Rochester is a charming town, rich in heritage and home to a resilient and proud community.

This plan presents a shared vision for Rochy and actions to support local liveability and a thriving community.

Rochester is located in the heart of the Campaspe Shire Council local government area on the traditional lands of the Yorta Yorta, Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungunrung People who have called this area home for thousands of years. Traditional Custodians continue to hold connections to Country through lands, skies and waters.

There is a lot to love about Rochester. Nestled on the banks of the Campaspe River and surrounded by some of Victoria's most productive agricultural land, it is a naturally beautiful place – green and peaceful. Settled in the 1840s, the Rochester town centre continues to boast a rich and charming heritage character. But it is the people that make this town so special – this community is strong, resourceful and look out for each other.

Future Rochester is a place-based and community-led plan. It has been developed through a collaborative process with the Rochester community, and:

- Outlines those aspects which contribute to local character and identity
- Identifies key strengths, challenges and opportunities for the town and community
- Articulates a shared vision for the future
- Contains an action plan to guide collective effort, advocacy and investment.

This plan contains a range of actions from programs and events to infrastructure improvements, all aimed at enhancing the unique lifestyle and identity of Rochester. The plan will ultimately provide the basis for future planning, funding applications, service and program delivery, capital expenditure and collaboration between the community, government and other key stakeholders.

Building on our success

This is not the first place-based plan for Rochester. The Rochester Community Economic Development Plan was developed in 2018 through a similar process, and over the last few years the community demonstrated their ability to organise, advocate and deliver. The plan's actions have been delivered through a range of partnerships, successful national, State and local grant applications and community drive.

Major achievements arising from the plan include:

- Silo art project
- Wirima at Rotary Park
- Additional V/Line service
- Experience Rochester brochure

**1
Background and
context review**

Policy analysis and review of key background, spatial and demographic information to understand the strategic, place and people characteristics and drivers for Rochester.

A review of the previous plan, Rochester Community Economic Development Plan 2018, was also undertaken.

**2
Community
and stakeholder
consultation**

Consultation with community and key stakeholders to understand local assets, values, issues, opportunities and aspirations. Refer to section 4 for more information about the engagement process and key messages.

**3
Draft Future
Rochester Plan
(current)**

Preparation of draft Future Rochester in collaboration with the Rochester Place-Based Plan Committee.

**4
Final Future
Rochester Plan**

Finalisation of the Future Rochester Plan based on feedback from public exhibition, and in collaboration with the Rochester Place-Based Plan Committee.

**5
Implementation**

The delivery of this Place Based Plan will require the effort and collaboration from a range of stakeholders – including residents, community groups, businesses, service providers, Campaspe Shire Council, as well as State and Federal government.



2. Rochester is a Township With Ability and Agility



2. Recovery From the October 2022 Flood Event

Rochester and district were significantly impacted by the October 2022 flood event, the worst of its kind in 150 years. More than 900 homes were either damaged or uninhabitable, there was significant impacts to businesses, infrastructure and the natural environment. The disaster has significantly disrupted the lives and livelihoods of the local community, and negatively impacted the mental health and wellbeing of many people.

What this event has highlighted is how much of a special place Rochester is, and what a special community it houses. They came together before, during and after the recent event to ensure the community prepared and responded to the best of their ability. This included preparing over 30,000 sandbags by hand and locals offering support and evacuation for their fellow residents. When a senior government representative visited the town after the flood they commented, "This community is amazing. You are days ahead of where you should be due to the amazing coordinated approach this community has established".

The community's sense of care, compassion and ability to just get on and take action, are some of the defining features of Rochester, and what makes it such an appealing place to live, work and invest.

The community led recovery saw on the ground engagement with community, business, and service organisations. This recovery worked with Campaspe Shire Council, State and Federal governments along with small, medium and corporate businesses and philanthropic organisations to assist the relief and recovery. The recovery has been enhanced by corporate offerings including Agnico Eagle as well as state government flood recovery funds to Rochester Community House and Rochester Business Network.

Campaspe Shire Council has sourced state and federal grants, delivered savings to residents, created community events and repaired council owned and managed assets. All together the representatives for Rochester have delivered advocacy for their residents, advocacy for future mitigation and are preparing plans to keep the community safe and prospering. This report will assist the community to prosper.



2.1 Supporting recovery

Below are some of the key flood recovery activities that have been undertaken by Council, the Rochester Community House and others to support the Rochester community post the event:

- The Rochester Community House played a key role in leading volunteers to establish the initial relief centre which included gathering of information to assist the immediate relief efforts, offering food share along with meals.
- With Victorian Government funding, a fit-for-purpose Community Recovery Hub with dedicated flood recovery officers and mobile outreach service has opened in Rochester.
- Council staff working closely with the Rochester Community Recovery Committee, the Rochester Business Network and key community leaders and community groups to address locally-identified needs and priorities.
- The Rochester Community House has been the “go to place” where the community can find support and assistance as they navigate flood recovery.
- A 2022-23 rates relief package for identified flood-impacted properties was endorsed by Council.
- Repairs to damaged roads, buildings, sports facilities, paths, playgrounds and other Council-owned assets.
- Relocation and refurbishment of the Rochester Early Learning Centre which was kitted out with all new equipment for the children to enjoy.
- A regular newsletter is delivered to households to keep residents informed.
- A road maintenance blitz on residential streets in Rochester was conducted in addition to the emergency road repair works.
- With funding from the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, a range of free leisure activities have been run for young people so they can learn new skills while socialising in a supportive and fun environment.
- More than 3,300 tonnes of flood waste was received at the Rochester emergency transfer station (equivalent to 30 years’ worth of waste usually received through the Rochester Resource Recovery Centre).
- Working with the Insurance Council of Australia to host insurance forums for residents.
- Supporting residents to lodge submissions to the Victorian Government Inquiry into the 2022 Flood Event in Victoria.



3. About Rochester



3.1 Our Community

Most residents have lived in or around Rochester for generations, but there are others who have moved in more recently seeking an affordable small-town lifestyle.



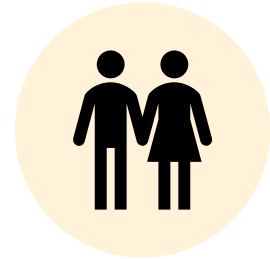
Current population

3,146 people



Forecast population

3,229 by 2036



Median age

53 (compared to 47 in Campaspe)



People over 65

32% (compared to 25% in Campaspe)



Living with disability

10% (compared to 7% in Campaspe)



First Nations

2% (compared to 3% in Campaspe)



Median household weekly income

\$1,114 (compared to \$1,284 in Campaspe Shire)



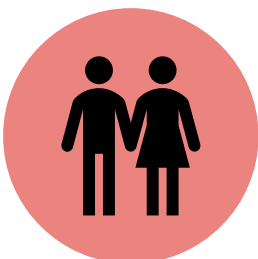
Born overseas

6% (compared to 8% in Campaspe). Top places of birth are the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Malaysia, Italy and the Philippines.



Languages spoken at home other than English

2% (compared to 4% in Campaspe). Top languages are Italian and Mandarin.



Couples without children

31% (compared to 30% in Campaspe)



Lone person households

31% live alone (compared to 28% in Campaspe)



Homeowners

71% are homeowners, either outright or with a mortgage (compared to 67% in Campaspe)

3.2 Our strengths and challenges

3.2.1 Our Strengths

Campaspe River

Originating from the Great Dividing Range, the Campaspe River flows through Victoria before joining the Murray River in NSW. Rochester is located along the river's lower reaches as it nears Echuca and the Murray River.

Teeming with a diverse array of plant and animal species—including the common long-necked tortoise, squirrel gliders, platypus, and the small scurf-pea—the Campaspe River showcases rich biodiversity. Both locals and visitors enjoy various recreational activities along the river's banks, from fishing to scenic walks. Enthusiastic photographers often journey to capture the historic Red Bridge, constructed in 1876. Beyond its natural significance, the Campaspe River has the potential to draw tourists to Rochester, bolstering our local economy and promoting the growth and development of our community.

Public art

Rochester boasts a vibrant public art scene that showcases local art and add vibrancy and creativity to the town's identity. The Silo Art along the GrainCorp Silos by mural artist Jimmy DVate each showcase a native species: the Squirrel Glider, symbolizing the species' ability to thrive and adapt, and the Azure Kingfisher, a jewel of waterway habitats, and more recently a Platypus has been painted in the town. These silos are the 22nd installment of the Australian Silo Art Trail, a collection of painted silos and water towers across Australia.

There are also hand carved wood sculptures throughout Rochester, created by artist Brandon Kroon, also celebrating the theme of native species, as well as metal art works.

The Rochester Mural Festival, another creative highlight, features eight artists crafting murals that grace the Mural Park annually, celebrating art's power to uplift communities and unite diverse narratives.

History and heritage

Rochester Historical & Pioneer Society, preserves this heritage and history through its diverse collection, including the original Common School building from 1874. This site encompasses not only historical structures but also the stories of our history and heritage.

Noteworthy heritage buildings like St. Joseph's Church, the Presbyterian Church, Shire Hall, the Rochester Court House, and the Shamrock Hotel, stand as testament to our town's historical depth.

Range of community places and spaces

Rochester has a range of important community places, spaces and services that improve the quality of life of community members. The local parks and playgrounds provide people, especially families with young children, with spaces to play and socialise. One of the most recent additions to the local community network is Wimira in Rotary Park. This nature-based play space is located in the centre of town and provides opportunities for imaginative play for young and old, while also providing a beautiful place to pause, meet and socialise. This recent upgrade of Wimira in Rotary Park was one of the projects successfully delivered from the previous plan.

Rochester is also home to a local skate park which provides an important space for young people to meet and recreate.

The Rochester Community House is a vital link bringing localized programs and support to people of all ages across the community. Other community spaces include the Shire Hall for community events and meetings and Rochester Library.



3. About Rochester

A strong business network

There are a range of local businesses and services in Rochester. From the local hotels, IGA, bakery and cafes which support residents' daily needs to the local chemist, hospital, vet, medical and aged care facilities that help maintain the health and wellbeing of our community, while providing an important source of employment. The Tourist Information Centre at the Rochester Sports Museum in the historical Rochester Train Station is also a key facility to support local tourism.

There is strong network that exists across local businesses to support the vitality of the local economy.

Local community spirit

Our small size fosters an atmosphere of inclusivity and warmth, where our people are known for being proactive, welcoming and helpful. Whether its volunteering at a local sports club, or running into their neighbours at the local shops for a chat, our people are there for each other.

At the heart of our community are local community groups that drive action and go above and beyond to help improve our town. An example of this is the Rochester Sports Museum, which was a Rochester Lions Club Centenary project. This facility is popular amongst locals and visitors alike. Located in the Rochester Railway Station, and curated and run by the community, it takes people on a nostalgic journey through the recent sporting past.

Strong sporting culture

Sport is the heartbeat of Rochester, providing adults and children alike the opportunity to play sport, socialise and stay healthy. There are a range of sporting opportunities available, including football, netball, basketball, bowls, golf, pony club, cricket, angling, tennis – all with great facilities.

As residents gather to cheer on local sports teams, these spaces become a hub for community and intergenerational connections.

Location – proximity to Echuca, Bendigo, Melbourne

Rochester's location as a small regional town with strong connections to Echuca, Bendigo and Melbourne, is a key strength. Residents are able to enjoy the tranquil nature of a small town, while being able to access Echuca's historic Murray River port, Bendigo's vibrant arts scene, and Melbourne's cosmopolitan offerings relatively easily. Rochester also functions as a commuter town for many people who work in Echuca, Shepparton and Bendigo.

The location and transportation to and from Rochester is also important in attracting visitors and boosting the economy through tourism.



3.2.2 Our Challenges

Ongoing recovery

Rochester is in a phase of recovery and renewal from the recent 2022 flood event. While the town has been impacted in a variety of ways, there are a range of actions and community momentum to continue to recover and improve the town.

Diversity of local business and employment opportunities

Rochester faces the challenge of attracting a diverse range of businesses and employment opportunities. In particular, there are challenges with the range of local shops, specialty stores and dining options across Rochester, as well as weekend trading hours. This can limit local employment and tourism opportunities for our town.

Things for young people to do

A key challenge we face is providing a range of engaging and enriching activities for our children and young people. We understand that they are looking for a greater range of places to socialise and “hang out”, opportunities to access key services and local employment and study opportunities.

Housing diversity

Providing a range of well-located and affordable housing for people across different life stages and abilities – from young people to older residents is challenge for our community. It can be difficult to find smaller houses for people to downsize that are accessible, as well as aged care and supported living options.





4. What We Heard



4. What We Heard

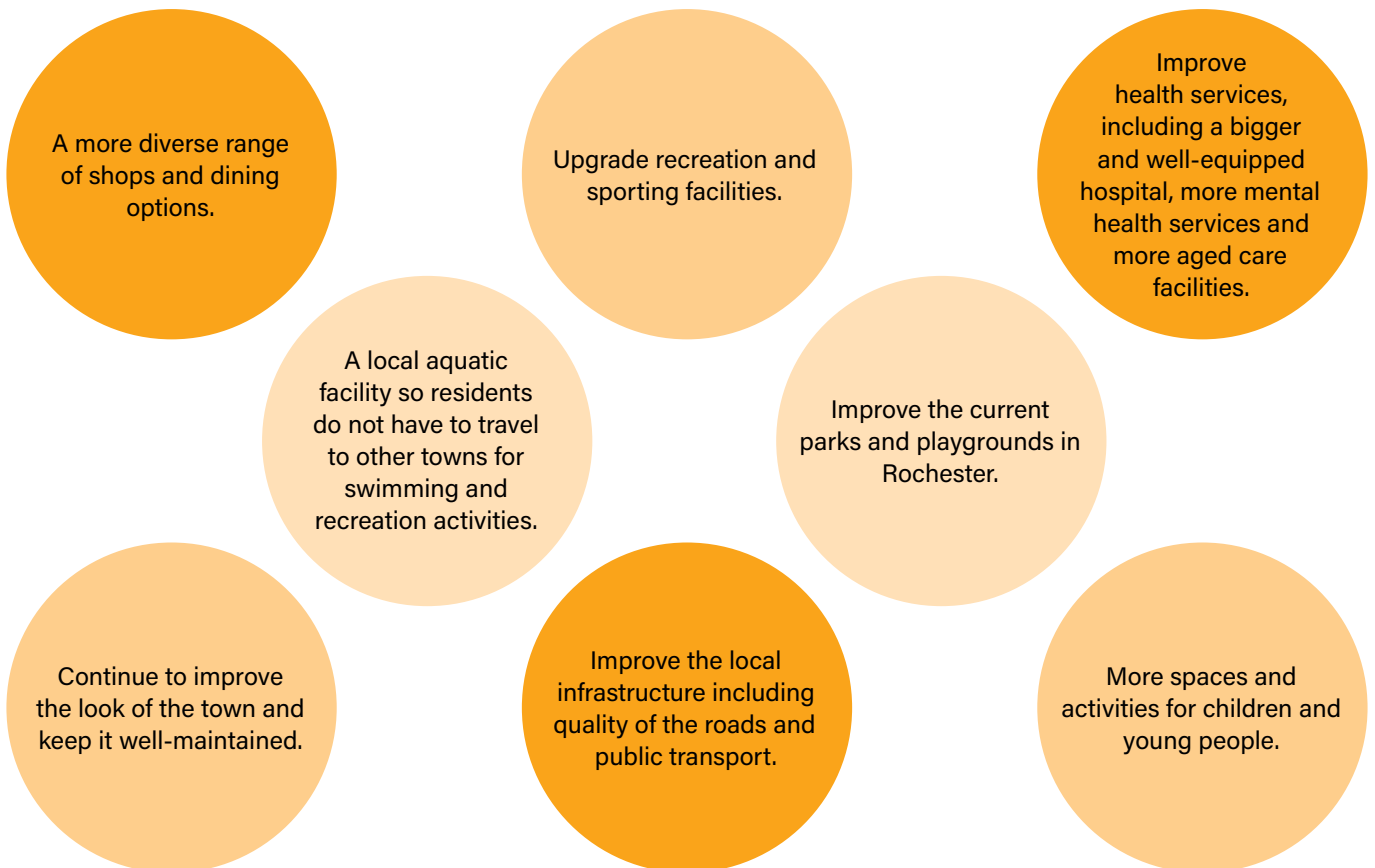
A range of community engagement activities were undertaken between 27 April and 4 June 2023. They are described in the table below, along with their estimated participant numbers. These activities were largely promoted, led and facilitated by representatives of the Place Based Plan Committee (PBPC) and Campaspe Shire Council, with support from the consultants at Cred and CoFutures.

Table 1- Summary of engagement activities

Engagement activity	Reach
Survey and discussion guide	262 responses <i>This activity was often undertaken in small groups - it is estimated that around 600 people actually participated</i>
Interviews	5 participants
Workshop	6 participants
Pop ups	*200 participants
Activity with primary school students	*160 participants
TOTAL	965 people

Key messages

People's top priorities for Rochester are:





5. Vision

Rochester is a thriving and progressive community, growing in a sustainable way.

Great lifestyle

Strong community

Invest with confidence

All are welcome



SHIRE OF ROCHESTER
RECOGNISEMENTS HONOUR ROLL

6. Action Plan



6. Action Plan

This section presents the action plan to improve the quality of life, wellbeing and resilience of the Rochester town and community.

The delivery of this action plan will require effort and collaboration from a range of different groups and stakeholders – including local residents, community groups, businesses, service providers and Campaspe Shire Council, as well as State and Federal government.

Action themes

In order to achieve the vision for Rochester, four different themes of actions have been developed. The initiatives included in the action plan align with these, or sometimes multiple, themes.

A progressive Rochy

Actions which create a vibrant local economy, and diverse business and employment opportunities.

A town for everyone

Actions which build community connections, capacity and wellbeing for everyone.

A sustainable and resilient environment

Actions which support community and environmental resilience.

A strong local identity

Actions which enhance and strengthen those unique place attributes that make Rochy special.

Action types

The actions have been grouped into the following categories:

Game changing projects: Strategic and transformational projects

These are key strategic projects to transform Rochester. They will involve collaboration and investment across a range of different stakeholders, including the community. They will require committed action over the short, medium and longer term, and are likely to continue beyond the life of this plan.

Seize the now: Short term actions

Actions to be delivered over the next 6 – 12 months.

For Rochy, with Rochy: Medium term actions

Actions to be delivered over the next 2 years

Keeping focus: Long term actions

Actions to be delivered in the next 3+ years

Advocacy

Actions for ongoing and collective advocacy across the community, business and Campaspe Council.

6.1 Game changing projects: Strategic and transformational projects

Action	Action theme(s)
<p>The Banks development</p> <p>The Campaspe River is a tremendous source of local identity, recreational asset, connectivity and economic ambition.</p> <p>This is an evolution from the initial Rochester Place Based Plan that saw interventions such as the Holiday Park upgrade and the installation of an all-abilities fishing pontoon provide a positive impact upon the Rochester economy and community.</p> <p>This project will look to reinstate both sides of the Campaspe River as the key locations for passive and active activation.</p> <p>Short term action: Develop a Master Plan –that holistically considers improving accessibility, activation and linkages along the river and both sides of the riverbank. Consider experience from Red Bridge to Pascoe Street. The master plan should include staging and actions that can be delivered over time</p> <p>Medium term and long term: Deliver on the projects identified in the master plan.</p>	All
<p>Reclaim and revive the factory</p> <p>Since the closure of the Saputo owned milk plant located in the Rochester town centre, there has been significant conjecture throughout the community about its future.</p> <p>Current owners Saputo have had limited to no engagement with community or council about its strategic or operational plans for the site.</p> <p>This project is based on reclaiming and reactivating this site for the economic and community benefit of Rochester.</p> <p>Short term action: Led by Council and key strategic leaders, an advocacy program will seek to release the entire site.</p> <p>Medium/long term action: Develop a concept plan that will identify what sustainable and innovative interventions are possible to reinstating the site as an active and participatory part of the Rochester community</p>	All

Action	Action theme(s)
<p>CBD Revitalisation</p> <p>Renowned for some of the most beautiful and unique buildings in country Victoria, the integrity of many key historical buildings within the town centre have been challenged.</p> <p>This project focuses on more than just reinstating these significant historical sites. It seeks to create new developments and opportunities to support the liveability and prosperity of Rochester. It will focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identification of key buildings and an assessment of their long-term integrity. ▪ Development of intervention plans, where appropriate, for these key buildings. ▪ Coordination of a structure plan for the Rochester CBD focusing on the spaces and areas to help with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interconnection of spaces - Identification of development opportunities - Retail - Hospitality - Public Art - Customer and Tourist comfort - Opportunities for modernisation (e.g. CBD WIFI electronic signage) - Parking and traffic flow - Greening and landscaping <p>Short term action: Assessment of heritage buildings.</p> <p>Medium/long term action: Develop and implement the CBD Revitalisation Plan.</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Unlocking the 4Rs</p> <p>The open space known as the 4Rs has been identified as a significant opportunity for development to generate economic and population growth and health and wellbeing outcomes for Rochester and the wider Campaspe region.</p> <p>Short term action: Assessment of land use potential and infrastructure requirements to rezone and redevelop the land.</p> <p>Medium/long term action: Development of land use plan, seek developer and investment interest in the site</p>	<p>All</p>

6.2 Seize the now: Short term actions

Action	Action theme(s)
<p>Resolve the future direction for aquatic facilities in Rochester</p> <p>Undertake community consultation to resolve the location and type of aquatic facility to be delivered to replace the end of life pool.</p>	<p>Town for everyone</p> <p>Progressive Rochy</p>
<p>Undertake a review of the Rochester Recreation Reserve Masterplan</p> <p>The review will focus on whether the existing strategies and actions are still relevant or if there is a need to update.</p>	<p>Town for everyone</p> <p>Strong local identity</p>
<p>Establish a youth hub in Rochester</p> <p>To provide a dedicated and safe place for young people in Rochester. The role and programming of this facility will evolve over time.</p> <p>Ultimately the aspiration is for the hub to provide a range of different activities, education and skill development opportunities and support services for young people. This will build on the strong work undertaken by the community house, schools and Council.</p> <p>This could include a program of “community classroom” / intergenerational activities where community members can share knowledge or skills with young people.</p>	<p>Town for everyone</p> <p>Progressive Rochy</p>
<p>Understand Rochester’s First Nations history and values</p> <p>Engage with local elders and First Nations peoples to understand the history, values and stories of Rochester and consider ways this can be reflected in the town.</p>	<p>Town for everyone</p> <p>Strong local identity</p>
<p>Review the Rochester wayfinding strategy</p> <p>Review the wayfinding strategy for Rochester and identify any updates.</p>	<p>Town for everyone</p> <p>Strong local identity</p> <p>Progressive Rochy</p>
<p>Improved RV and e-charging facilities</p> <p>Provide an improved RV and e-charging facilities in the Rochester town centre.</p>	<p>Progressive Rochy</p> <p>Sustainable and Resilient Rochy</p>
<p>Business activation and events strategy</p> <p>Develop a strategy to provide a calendar of events and activities to bring the community together and attract visitors. This strategy could also consider ways to attract more and diverse businesses and expand trading hours.</p>	<p>Progressive Rochy</p> <p>Town for Everyone</p>

Action	Action theme(s)
<p>Branding and tourism strategy</p> <p>Develop ongoing marketing and branding tourism strategy that evolves the established Rochester brand.</p> <p>This strategy should complement the Economic Development Strategy currently being developed by Campaspe Shire Council.</p>	<p>Progressive Rochy</p>
<p>Provide a new town entrance sign</p> <p>Design and install a new town entrance sign to Rochester. The design should be “low key” and in keeping with the unique character of Rochester.</p>	<p>Progressive Rochy</p> <p>Strong identity</p>
<p>Greening Rochester</p> <p>Identify programs and initiatives, in partnership with Landcare and other local groups, which provide planting and landscaping throughout Rochester.</p> <p>Deliver over time with relevant stakeholders, community groups and others.</p>	<p>Sustainable and Resilient Rochester</p> <p>Strong identity</p>

6.3 For Rochy, with Rochy: Medium term actions

Action	Action theme(s)
<p>Undertake an all abilities audit of the town centre Identify / map locations that do not have accessible footpaths or crossovers.</p> <p>The audit should be undertaken by an accredited professional, but also draw on the lived experience of people with limited mobility living in Rochester, to understand accessibility barriers across town and identify improvement opportunities.</p>	Town for Everyone
<p>Cycling Plan Develop cycling plan to identify locations for cycle paths and routes in, around and linking Rochester. The plan should identify opportunities to improve local movement, as well as potential tourist routes.</p>	Town for Everyone Progressive Rochy Sustainable and Resilient Rochester
<p>Upgrade the Shire Hall Undertake improvements to the shire hall to improve comfort, functionality and adaptability. Consider / explore installation of a lift in the building, improve heating and cooling, install concertina walls to allow for room to be divided up.</p>	Town for Everyone Strong identity
<p>Endorse and deliver the Rochester Recreation Reserve Masterplan Seek endorsement and implement the Rochester Recreation Reserve Masterplan.</p>	Town for Everyone Strong identity
<p>Sustainability Rochester Develop a local program of activities and initiatives to support a more sustainable lifestyle in Rochester. This could focus on opportunities and behaviour change centred around the principles of 'reduce, reuse, recycle,' waste management or climate change action.</p>	Sustainable and Resilient Rochester

6.4 Keeping focus: Long term actions

Action	Action theme(s)
<p>Housing Strategy</p> <p>Develop a strategy to guide the location, type and improve the diversity of housing provided in Rochester.</p> <p>This strategy should review the current zoning, infrastructure availability, servicing and greenfield development opportunities across the town, and consider the outcomes from the floodplain study</p>	<p>Progressive Rochester</p> <p>A town for Everyone</p>
<p>Industrial land availability and zoning review</p> <p>Undertake a review of land available for industrial and commercial development in Rochester.</p> <p>Investigate demand, location, servicing and work with industry and key stakeholders to identify opportunities to attract and grow local business and employment.</p>	<p>Progressive Rochester</p>
<p>Maximise existing open space network</p> <p>Identify opportunities to maximise amenity and use of existing open space areas.</p>	<p>A town for Everyone</p> <p>Sustainable and Resilient Rochester</p>

6.5 Advocacy

Action	Action theme(s)
<p>Flood Mitigation</p> <p>The protection of Rochester from future flooding is the highest priority for the Community. Council commits to representing the needs of Rochester and working with all levels of government and relevant stakeholder agencies to develop an effective range of interventions that will protect Rochester.</p>	
<p>Public Transport</p> <p>To ensure the Rochester Community attains its Vision, it is essential that a focus remains on the evolving of public transport services to support modern rural living. It is acknowledged that Public Transport services have improved to support improved access to education and health services, but now a broader focus is required to ensure that public transport structures for Rochester help the community access entertainment and tourism opportunities expected in modern society.</p>	

7. Implementation



JIMMY DATE
SQUIRREL & TREE CO.

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7. Implementation

7.1 Governance

Council established the Place Based Plan Governance Committee to oversee the implementation of the Rochester Place Based Plan.

In line with previous processes, Council oversee an EOI process for all community members to self-nominate their interest

- Evaluation of applications was based on the following principles:
- They have strong community links
- Communication skills (online and verbal)
- Diversity of background
- Key interest in the projects identified in the Place Based Plan.

7.2 Implementation and monitoring

The annual delivery plan will set out the projects and activities for implementation, the timelines for the actions to be conducted and any budgetary considerations for these actions.

7.3 Evaluation

The Rochester Place Based Plan will be reviewed annually to determine progress status. This will be provided to Council to assist in community planning, budget development and community needs assessment.

A formal review and evaluation of the Rochester Place Based Plan will be undertaken every four years, in line with the Council term.