SHIRE OF MERREDIN
INNOVATING THE WHEATBELT

Strategic Community Plan

2020 – 2030

CONTENTS

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I am pleased, on behalf of the Council to present the Shire of Merredin's Strategic Community Plan 2020 – 2030.

The Plan was developed through the latter part of 2020 when we, with the community, were working through the aftermath of the COVID-19 lockdown and the on-going pandemic emergency. Although the Shire had reviewed its Strategic Community Plan in 2018 the Council considered that the magnitude of the emergency and its potential economic and social impacts warranted the Council to engage with the community again. An extensive program of drop-ins, meetings, surveys and conversations took place out of which has come this plan which sets the direction and reflects clear community priorities for the next ten years.

The plan has a strong focus on the economy and growth. It emphasizes the importance of tourism and the on-going development of what our Shire and region, working together, has to offer travelers. While tourism is important the plan also focuses on building on Merriden's strengths, including the farming and renewable energy sectors, to expand the local and region economy.

The livability of Merredin also is a high priority. Many of the things that make Merredin livable and which may help attract population also enhance the economic opportunities and bring focus to the social and environmental challenges and opportunities. We are actively pursuing grant funding to accelerate the development of the CBD, Apex Park will be redeveloped, we will continue to invest in roads and footpaths, and in creating an attractive town environment.

The plan also recognizes our vulnerability to climate change. We live in a dryer climate. The drying will continue. We strongly support the Government's establishment of the Merredin's Dryland Research Institute and its work on water sustainability in the farming sector. Our plan recognizes the importance of addressing long term potable and non-potable water security and addressing this in the context of a strategy to address the impacts of climate change both in mitigation of the effects and in effective actions that we can take to reduce the impact of our activities on climate.

I am particularly pleased about the initiatives our plan contains to recognize and celebrate our Njaki Njaki Noongar people and culture, and to work with Njaki Njaki and with the wider Aboriginal community on social and economic initiatives that will benefit of us all.

This plan is ambitious and its full potential relies on us working together towards shared goals with State Federal, private and voluntary partners in a spirit of collaboration and cohesion.

Councillor Julie Flockart
President, Shire of Merredin

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Shire of Merredin's Strategic Community Plan. The Strategic Community Plan is a long-term planning document that sets out the community's vision, aspirations for the future, and the key strategies we will need to focus on to achieve our aspirations. It is part of our fulfilment of the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR) Framework. All Local Governments in Western Australia are required to implement IPR which enables robust decision-making.

The Plan will be used to:

- Guide Council decision-making and priority setting

- Engage local residents and ratepayers, local businesses, community groups, and other local stakeholders that contribute to the future of our community

- Inform decision-making with respect to other partners and agencies, including the State Government and other Local Governments in our region

- Provide a clear avenue to pursue funding and grant opportunities by showing how projects align with the vision and strategic direction outlined in this Plan

- Inform future partners of our key priorities, and the ways in which we seek to grow and develop

- Provide a framework for monitoring progress against the community's vision and aspirations

The draft Plan was adopted for community consultation on 16 February 2021. It will remain open for public consultation until 11 March 2021. The community's feedback will be incorporated into the final Plan, which will be adopted by Council on 16 March 2021. It will be reviewed by 30 June 2023 and every 2 years thereafter. The two-yearly cycles will alternate between a mini strategic review and a major strategic review, as shown in *Figure 1: Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework Planning Cycle* on page 4.

The Council last undertook a major strategic review in 2018 and was about to embark on a mini strategic review in 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic struck. The focus of the Shire of Merredin turned to what needed to be done to immediately to support the community through the lock-down period, halt the spread of the virus and to find ways to support struggling businesses a difficult time. These steps included a freeze on rates and a focus on buying local.

As we emerged from lockdown and the range of federal and state government initiatives to support and stimulate the economy started to become known the Council decided to go back to the community and upgrade its mini strategic review to a major review out of cycle to ensure the direction set reflected community views in the changed circumstances.

Priorities in this Plan

Priorities

The themes were not challenged by the community during the engagement. They provide a sound framework and logical structure upon which to construct the plan. The following priorities in each theme are key drivers of this plan.

Community and Culture	Economy and Growth	Environment and Sustainability
- Development of cultural life: infrastructure and spaces; activation; and celebration of Njaki Njaki Noongar culture - Development of sport and recreation: infrastructure and participation - Community safety	- Clearly articulate Merredin's identity and value proposition - Tourism product development, including cultural tourism - Strengthening the economy through local business development - Building on Merredin's strengths to expand the economy	- Address climate change - Ensure continuous potable and non-potable water supply - Advocacy for drylands farming support - Developing a more efficient and sustainable waste management service - The Shire leading by example
Communication and Leadership	**Places and Spaces**	**Transport and Networks**
- Effective mechanisms for community representation in key decision-making - The Shire has a strong working relationship with the Njaki Njaki Noongar Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal community members - Maximising the value of Shire assets	- Revitalise the Merredin Central Business District - Improve public open space	- Improving local roads - Improving stormwater management

Resourcing implications

In common with many local governments with small and relatively stable populations the Council is dealing with on-going stress on its ability to meet the needs of the community, maintain and develop its assets, strengthen its financial position, and deal with the twin challenges of climate change and pandemic. The Council will therefore continue to take a rigorous approach to addressing the community priorities in a manner that is financially sustainable. Detailed medium term financial planning is being undertaken to ensure robust decision-making.

The community wishes the Council to move forward whilst maintaining a tight rein on the financial costs to ratepayers and the Council will do this by careful, prioritisation, actively pursuing partnerships with the community, being well-prepared to pursue grant opportunities, and looking for opportunities to reduce the reliance on rates and charges.

Western Australia Local Government Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework

The Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework is shown in the diagram below. The idea behind the framework is to ensure that the Council's decisions take the community's aspirations into account and deliver the best results possible with the available resources.

The Strategic Community Plan sets the scene for the whole framework – it expresses the community's vision and priorities for the future and shows how the Council and community intend to make progress over a ten-year period.

However, it is not fixed for ten years – it would be long out of date by then. Rather, it is a "rolling" Plan which is reviewed every two years. The two-yearly reviews alternate between a minor review (updating as needed) and a major review (going through all the steps again).

The Plan is continuously looking ahead, so each review keeps a ten-year horizon. This is to ensure that the best decisions are made in the short to medium term.

Detailed implementation for the next four years is covered in the Corporate Business Plan. The "Informing Strategies" – particularly the Long-Term Financial Plan, Asset Management Plans and Workforce Plan – show how the Plan will be managed and resourced.

The Annual Budget relates to that year's "slice" of the Corporate Business Plan, with any necessary adjustments made through the Annual Budget process.

The Planning Cycle

Figure 1: Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework Planning Cycle
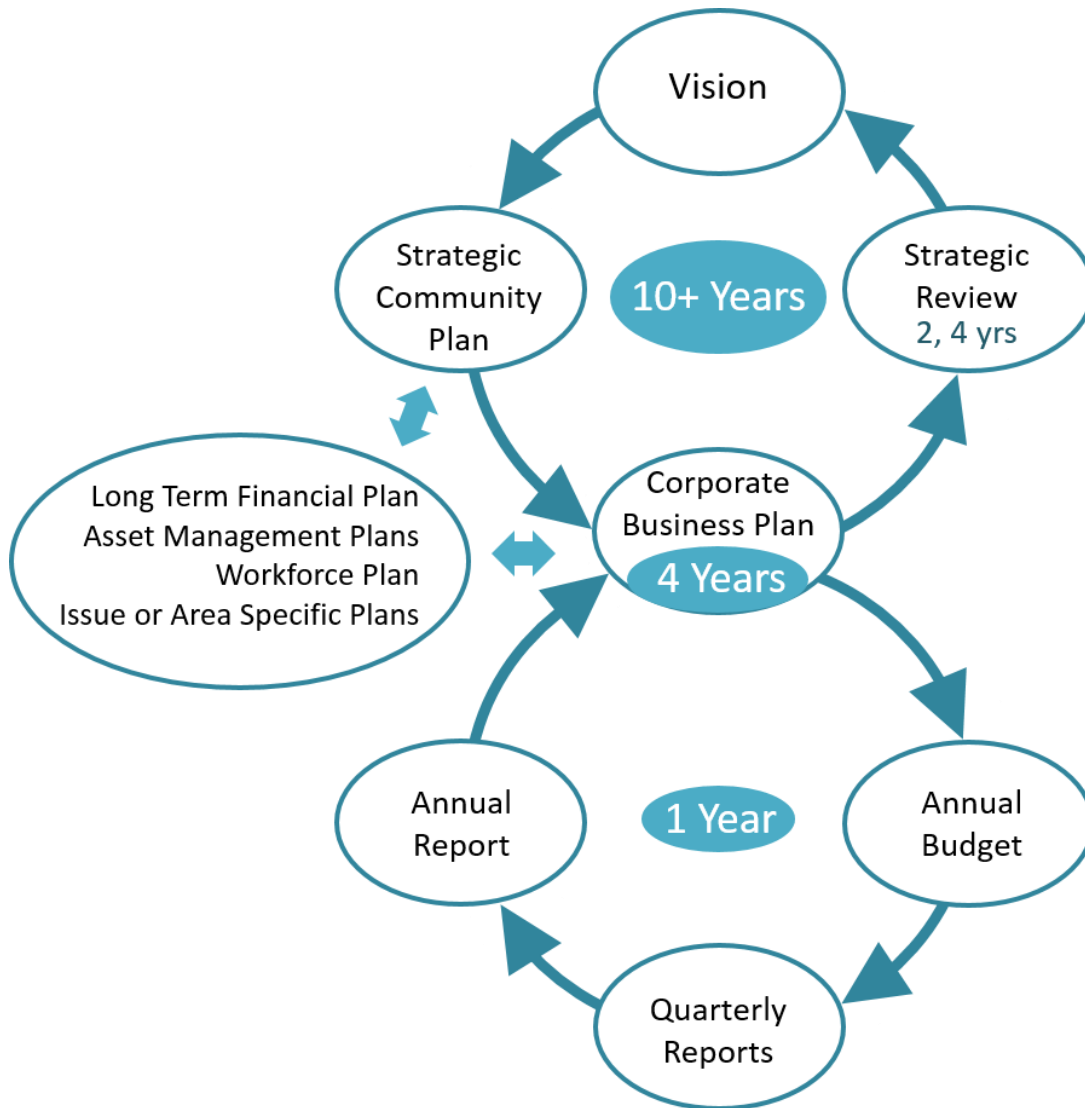
COMMUNITY PROFILE

The Shire of Merredin covers an area of 3,372sq kms and incorporates the townsites of Burracoppin, Hines Hill, Merredin and Muntadgin along with the localities of Goomarin, Korbel, Nangeenan, Nokanning, Norpa, Nukarni, South Burracoppin and Tandegin.

Merredin is located approximately 260km east of Perth and is the major commercial and retail centre for the eastern Wheatbelt, servicing a hinterland of approximately 15,000 people. Merredin is also a regional base for a range of Government agencies and services. It is an area with high employment and extensive community involvement.

Merredin was gazetted as a townsite on 16 March 1891, with the first Merredin Road Board being established in 1911-12. The Shire of Merredin was constituted on 1 July 1961.

The Shire is bounded by the Shires of Bruce Rock, Kellerberrin, Narembeen, Nungarin, Westonia and Yilgarn.

The region is known for agriculture with approximately 40% of Western Australia's wheat production coming from a 100km radius around Merredin. Sheep farming is also popular in the region, along with production of a range of grains in addition to wheat.

Attractions include the Collgar Windfarm, historic Cummins Theatre, Merredin Peak, Merredin Railway Water Tower, two museums, an art gallery, the largest grain storage facilities in the Southern Hemisphere, as well as the remains of military installations from the town's role as second line of defence during World War II.

Wildflowers and granite rocks are also a picturesque natural environmental feature of the area.
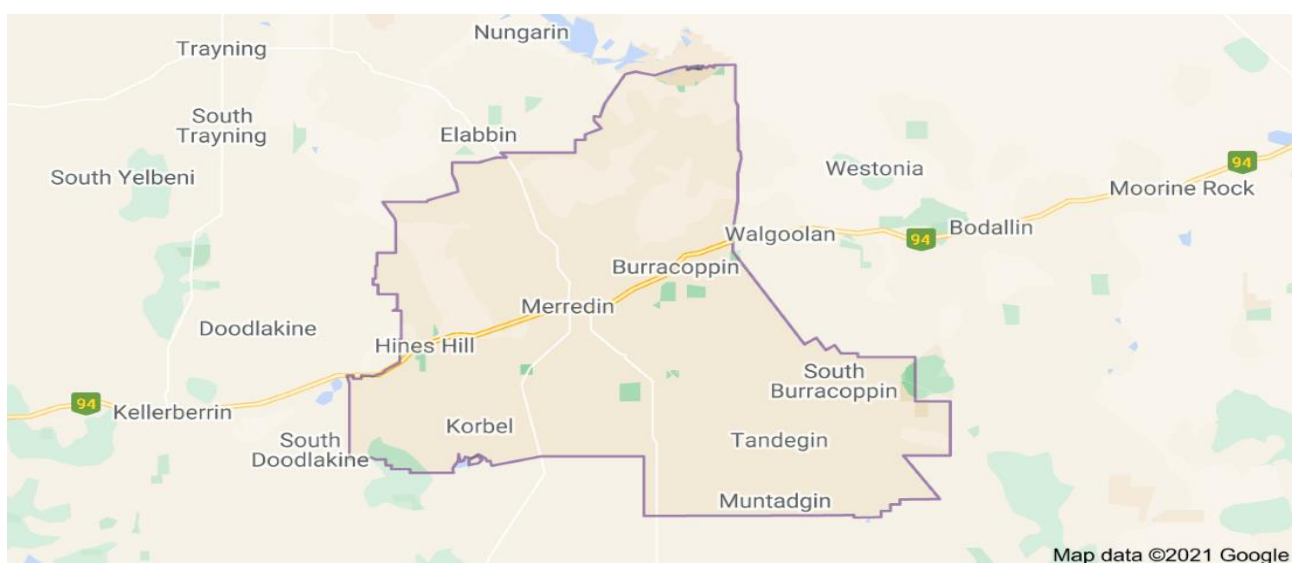
Snapshot of key characteristics

The "Census snapshot at a glance" below is a summary of the key changes between 2011 and 2016.

Item	Merredin 2011	Merredin 2016	Change 2011-2016	WA 2016
Population	3,282	3,350	+68	2,474,410
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	5.7%	7.0%	+1.3%	3.1%
Male:Female ratio	53:47	53:47	0:0	50:50
People with disability (core need for assistance)	3.7%	3.9%	+0.2%	3.9%
Median age	36	38	+2	36
Children and young teens (0-14)	21.6%	19.6%	-2%	19.2%
Working age (15-64)	65.2%	64.7%	-5%	67.0%
Seniors (65+)	13.2%	15.6%	+2.4%	14.0%
Born overseas	14.6%	15.4%	+0.8%	32.2%
Volunteering	24.9%	28.4%	+3.5%	19.0%
Total business counts* *ABS Counts of Australian Businesses	353 (2015)	298 (2019)	-55	N/A
Top three industries by employment	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing; Retail Trade; Education and Training	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing; Retail Trade; Education and Training	-	Health Care and Social Assistance; Construction; Retail Trade
Unemployment rate	4.1%	5.3%	+1.2%	7.8%
Participation rate	63.6%	58.8%	-4.8%	62.9%
Median household income	$1,099	$1,332	+$233	$1,595
Completed Yr 12+	Not available	49.7%	-	62.5%
Tertiary qualification	Not available	31.7%	-	46.5%
Rental affordability	$130 (11.8% of average weekly household income)	$180 (13.5% of average weekly household income)	+$50 (+1.7% of average weekly household income)	$347 (21.8% of average weekly household income)
Household internet	69.5%	75.4%	+5.9%	85.1%
SEIFA disadvantage index	983	971	-12	1015

ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE THE LAST PLAN

The Shire of Merredin has delivered, and been host to, a range of actions since the adoption of the its original Strategic Community Plan (2012-2018 and 2018-2020). These achievements include:

Economic Development
- 27 Independent Living Units – Central East Aged Care Alliance Inc (CEACA)
- "Energy Hub" with windfarm, 2 solar farms, and diesel substation
- Merredin served by National Broadband Network
- Tourism development and promotion
- Investigations into Merredin as a horticulture hub (private sector opportunity)

Accommodation
- Construction of 2 x 3 bedroom Exec homes
- Provision of housing for medical staff

Regional Co-operation
- Wheatbelt East Regional Organisation of Councils Inc – a strategic collaboration between the Shires of Bruce Rock, Kellerberrin, Merredin, Yilgarn, Westonia joined by Tammin in 2020,
- Central East Aged Care Alliance – 71 Units developed across 11 Councils
- Joint Visitor Information services with WEROC Councils, and Shire of Cunderdin
- With 15 Wheatbelt Shires delivered federally funded community bio-diversity project
- With the Wheatbelt Development Commission assisted develop Wheatbelt Tourism Growth Plan

Governance
- Developed Shire of Merredin Risk Management Governance Framework
- Developed Shire of Merredin's Communication and Engagement Framework
- Review of IPR 2018

Health Facilities and Services
- CEACA Independent Living Units
- Advocacy for redevelopment of Merredin Hospital
- Implementation of Aged Friendly Community Plan
- Lobbying for accessible services to support the senior community

Assets
- Footpath and road construction (own resources, Regional Road Group, Roads to Recovery)
- Redevelopment of North Merredin Primary School buildings as Regional Library and community rooms

Town Enhancement

- Central Business Development Upgrade (Stage 1)
- 2 town entry statements
- Signage on Great Eastern Highway
- Redevelopment of Lenihan Park to include a nature playground
- CCTV – Visitor Centre, Regional Library, CDB additional

Arts and Cultural Programs

- Cummins Theatre programs substantial grant funding
- Library services development

Natural Environment

- Water reuse – ongoing development
- Water efficiency at Aquatic Centre
- Solar panels on Shire buildings

COVID-19

- Leadership and community support during COVID lockdown

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Background

Comprehensive community engagement was undertaken during July 2020.

Community engagement process

On 16 June 2020 a Council workshop was held to confirm the process for the community engagement. Seven engagement sessions were held over the month of July 2020. These were targeted to reach a wide cross section of the Merredin Community. Two distinct processes were adopted for these workshops. Some were conducted as formal structured workshops and some as "drop-ins" where participants moved between subject stations engaging with Shire staff and contributing their ideas.

An on-line survey was conducted concurrently with the face-to-face engagement process. Responses were self-selected online supplemented by face-to-face engagement outside the IGA where in 12 two-hour sessions Councillors and staff assisted passersby to complete the survey.

The results of the community engagement were workshopped by the Council and a summary was published in the Shire newsletter.

Consideration has also been given to the community scorecard of satisfaction with services undertaken in October 2019.

Participation

Summary

In total there were 407 inputs to the community engagement, representing 12.1% of the total population.

Engagement	Participation
Community Face to Face Sessions	203 attendees
IGA Survey	161 responses
Online Survey	43 responses
TOTAL	407 inputs

In addition, we received 71 postcards from young people aged between Pre-primary and Year 6 representing 2.11% of the total population and 22.3% of the 5-11 year old population.

Overall, there was under-representation of males and young people amongst those who responded.

Community Face to Face Sessions

Attendees – 203 (6% Shire population)

Age Breakdown (Approx.)

- under 20: 5%
- 20-40: 21%
- 40-55: 28%
- 55-70: 26%
- 70+: 20%

Gender

- M: 43%
- F: 57%
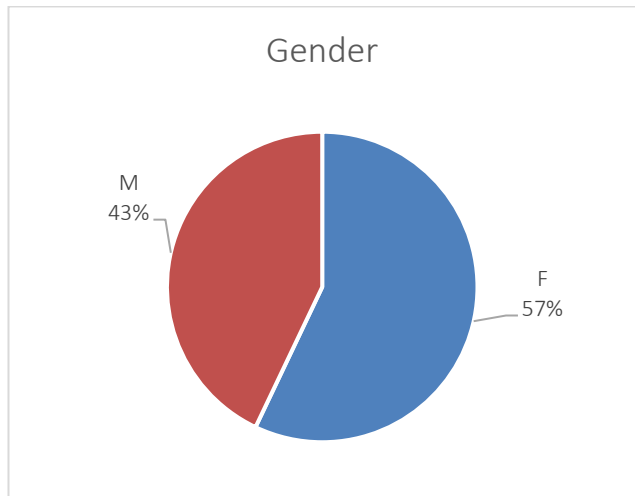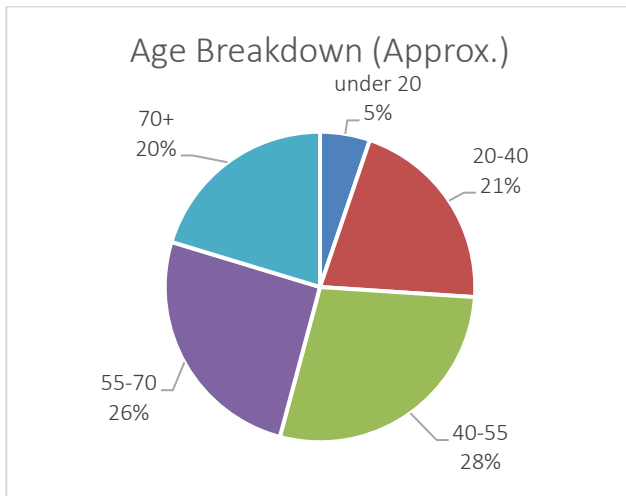
IGA Survey

Responses – 161 (135 Shire Residents – 4% population)

Shire of Merredin Resident?

- No: 16%
- Yes: 84%
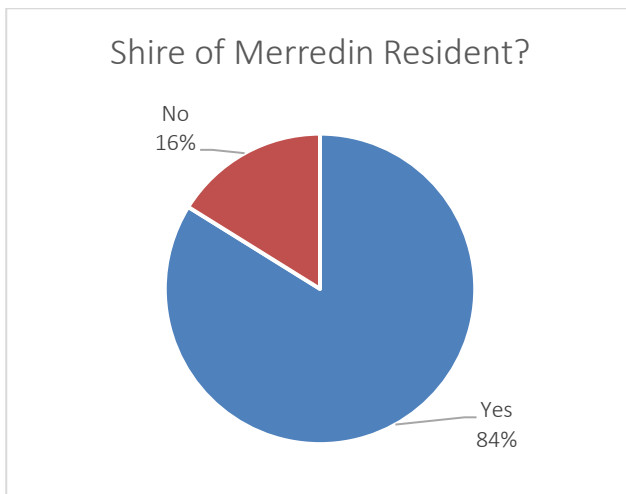
Online Survey

Online Survey Responses – 43 (1.3% population)

Shire of Merredin Resident

- No 16%
- Yes 30%
- Yes/Ratepayer 54%
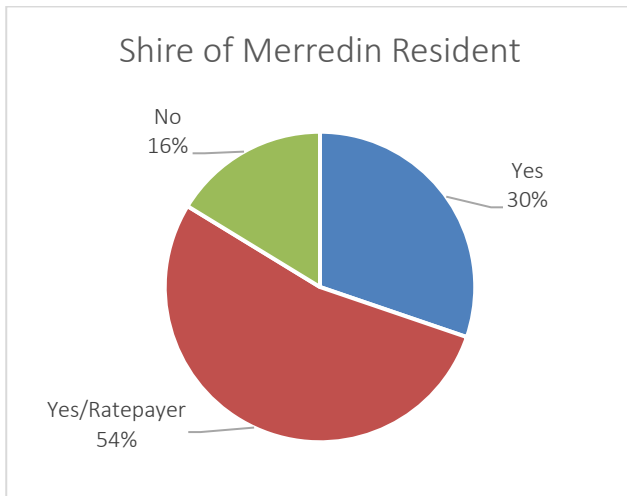
Results

Central Business District Visits

IGA Survey

CBD Visits Frequency

- >twice per month 5%
- Once a month or less 6%
- Weekly 31%
- Daily 58%

Online Survey

CBD Visits Frequency

- > twice per month 5%
- Once a month or less 7%
- Weekly 32%
- Daily 56%
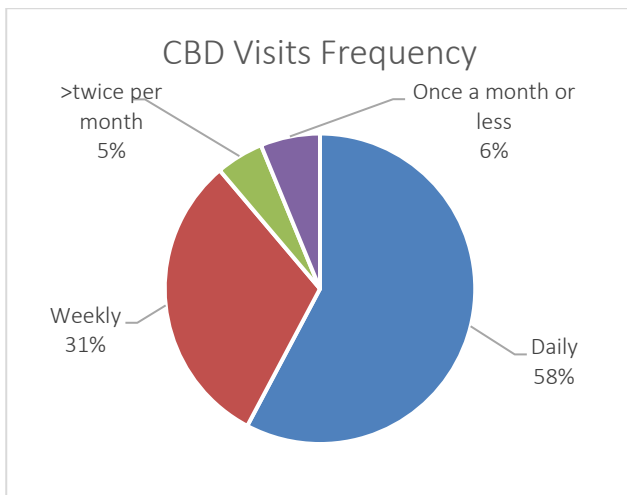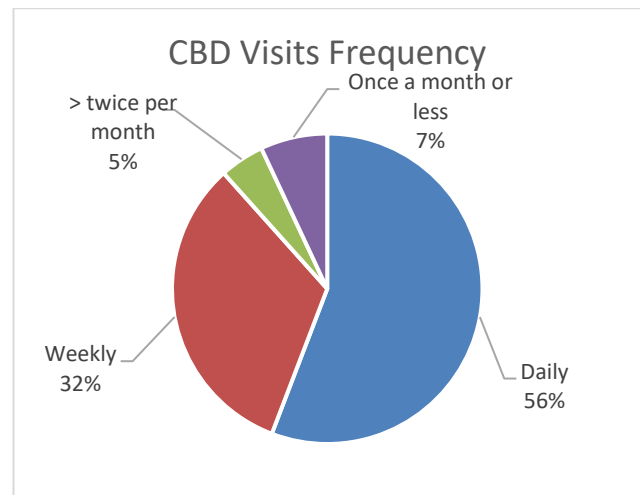
Satisfaction with Shire Services

Legend (in order of satisfaction):

- Cummins Theatre (100%)
- Library services (98%)
- Visitors Centre (97%)
- Olympic Swimming Pool (95%)
- Festivals, events, art & cultural activities (90%)
- Cemetery (87%)
- Playgrounds, parks and reserves (86%)
- Community and Leisure Centre (83%)
- Seniors services (82%)
- Community buildings, halls and toilets (82%)
- Waste management (81%)
- Customer service (79%)
- Street lighting (79%)
- History and heritage (77%)
- Safety and security (75%)
- Animal and pest control (75%)
- Conservation and environment (74%)
- Footpaths, trails & cycleways (73%)
- Natural disaster education, prevention & relief (68%)
- Climate change and sustainability (65%)
- Disability access (64%)
- Communication (62%)
- Streetscapes (61%)
- Town Centre development (59%)
- Planning and building (59%)
- Roads (59%)
- Tourism and marketing (58%)
- Community engagement (55%)
- Storm water drainage (55%)
- Advocacy and lobbying (53%)
- Youth services (53%)
- Economic development (39%)

Blue Sky Thinking

Participants were asked: What is your "Big Picture" game changer idea for Merredin? A wide range of ideas were contributed and these are set out in Appendix 1.

Student Feedback

We received 71 postcards from young people aged between Pre-primary and Year 6 representing 2.11% of the total population and 22.3% of the 5-11 year old population.

A selection of the postcard pictures are shown below.

Consultation on the draft Strategic Community Plan

The draft Strategic Community Plan will be open for community feedback from 19 March 2021 until 16 April 2021. The consultation will be advertised on the Shire's website and social media, the radio, and in the Shire newsletter.

This section will be completed at the end of the consultation period.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

The detailed concerns expressed by the community in the engagement process are shown in the graph below. These have been grouped and summarised as follows:

- Choice of retail and hospitality in a healthy and attractive CBD
- Grow and build local industry, support local businesses
- Tourism
- Events
- Strong and vibrant regional hub
- Community engagement and morale
- Services for young people
- Population
- Health services

The engagement was undertaken around the time that it had been announced that Target Country would close in 2021 and the sports shop would close immediately.
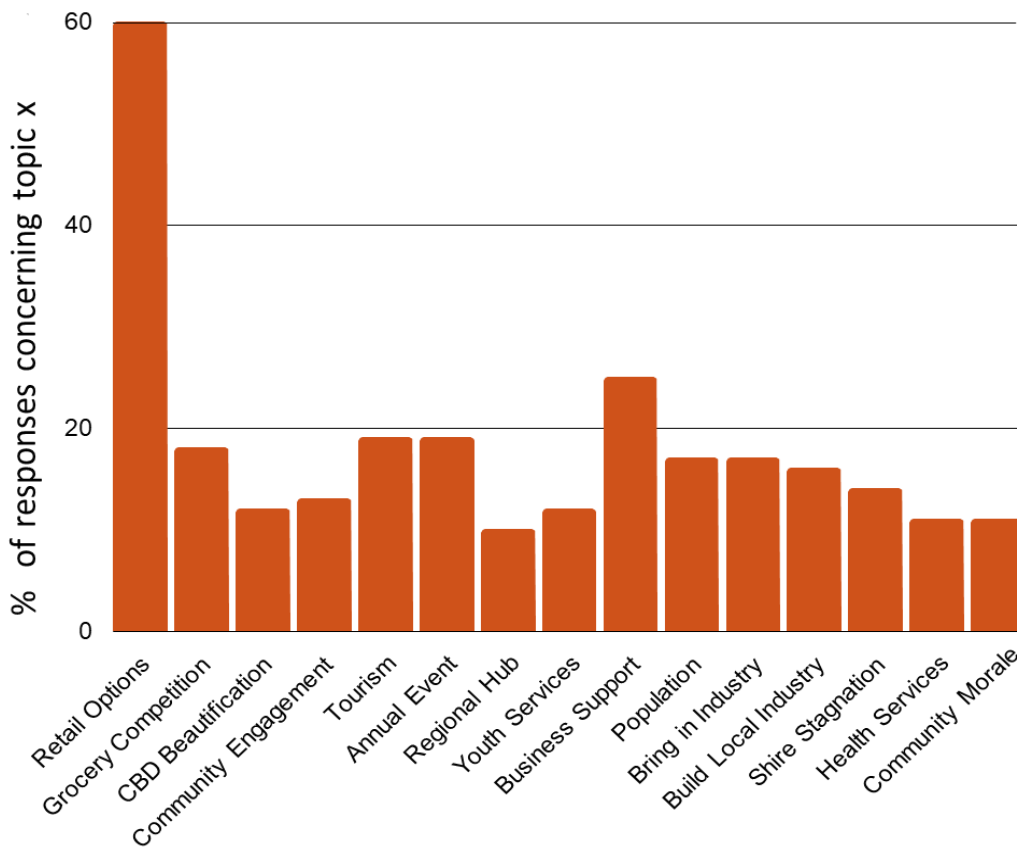
STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND PRIORITIES

Strategic Context

Overarching State Priorities

Local Government is an integral part of the State Planning structure. Alignment of local priorities with State and regional priorities assists "sustained growth and prosperity" for Western Australia and gives confidence to State Government to support local projects and programs.

The State Planning Strategy 2050 provides direction for all State, regional and local planning strategies, policies and approvals. The State Planning Strategy identifies five interrelated strategic goals:

1. Global competitiveness will be enhanced through continued economic diversification

2. Strong and resilient regions will be built through economic expansion and inter-regional collaboration

3. Sustainable communities will be enhanced by investment in infrastructure and social capital

4. Infrastructure planning and coordination will achieve efficiencies and synergy in pursuit of economic growth

5. Conservation of the environment will be enhanced by sustainable development and efficient resource use

Strategic Priorities for Regional Development in WA

The State Regional Development Portfolio has developed five strategic priorities to ensure a coordinated and strategic approach to regional development across Western Australia. These are:

1. Industry diversification

2. Resource and energy sector development

3. Normalise living standards

4. Normalise Aboriginal economic development

5. Organisational excellence.

These priorities are consistent across all nine Regional Development Councils.

The Wheatbelt Development Commission has identified its own five strategic priorities that align with the above State priorities of regional development. These are:

1. Enabling infrastructure

2. Diversifying the economic base

3. Sustainable landscapes and communities

4. Entrepreneurship and innovation

5. Organisational excellence.

Community Vision

'Merredin is the commercial and cultural heart of the eastern wheatbelt region. A place people are proud to call home and where visitors are always welcome.'

Principles

The Council has committed to the following principles to guide its decision-making in the development of this plan and in future decisions on project and programs.

1. Sustainability
   - Resource efficiency and innovation
   - Regeneration
   - Adaptation and resilience

2. Strengths-based
   - Build on local strengths and under-utilised assets
   - Collaborate to compete
   - Triple bottom line drives decisions

3. By everyone for everyone
   - Community-led
   - Local enterprise investment and return
   - No-one left behind

Achieving the Vision

There are four main roles that the Council has:

1. Provision of Facilities and Delivery of Services
   This role includes such services as roads, footpaths, drainage, waste management, parks and gardens, sport and recreation facilities, and cultural facilities such as libraries, events, community grants and support for community groups. The provision of infrastructure underpins most services and maintenance and renewal of these infrastructure assets is a vital part of Council's service delivery role.

2. Regulation
   The well-being of the community is strongly supported by some specific regulatory responsibilities of local government. Councils have a regulatory and enforcement role in public health (e.g. licensing and monitoring food premises), the appropriateness and safety of new buildings, the use of land and community amenity (eg noise control, litter bylaws).

3. Facilitation, advocacy and influence
   The Shire has limited resources to provide services and must look to others for the provision of services either in partnership or with a high level of co-ordination as the community relies on strong well-functioning networks.
   We play a key role in facilitating and advocating for services within our community and influencing decisions made by State Government and other bodies. Positively positioning our community and obtaining grants to invest in the facilities and services our community needs is a major focus in this area.

4. Civic Leadership
   Good governance and leadership can play a central role in building community confidence in its future. We listen to our community and work together to create the future we aspire to.

Themes and Goals

The community engagement process was structured around the existing themes and goals contained in the earlier Strategic Community Plan. Nothing arose from input from the community to suggest that these should change and maintaining the current structure enables comparisons to be made between generations of the plan.

The themes and goals are as follows:

Theme	Goal
Community and Culture	Merredin is rich in culture, arts, sport and community life. Everyone is safe. Everyone belongs.
Economy and Growth	Merredin thrives with a job-rich and multi-faceted economy, building on local strengths.
Environment and Sustainability	Merredin looks after the natural environment and minimises its carbon footprint.
Communication and Leadership	The Merredin community is highly engaged in planning and action for its future, with a well governed, forward-looking, and proactive local government.
Places and Spaces	Merredin is an attractive regional town, with an inviting public realm.
Transport and Networks	Merredin is easy to get around for all and well-connected regionally, nationally and internationally for people and industry.

Objectives, Priorities and Strategies

In the tables below, each theme contains service area objectives, followed by the priorities and strategies for change. The service area objectives are high level and cover all the Shire's activities. Within that, the Shire will focus particularly on the priorities and strategies for change which have been developed taking into consideration community views.

Theme 1: Community and Culture

Merredin is rich in culture, arts, sport and community life. Everyone is safe. Everyone belongs.

Service Area Objectives for Community and Culture

ITEM	SERVICE AREA OBJECTIVES
1.1	Events, Arts and Culture
1.1.1	A community that is engaged in a variety of inclusive events, arts and other cultural activities which enrich their community experience and increase their sense of belonging
1.1.2	The Cummins Theatre is an accessible and inclusive cultural space, serving the needs of Merredin and other surrounding wheatbelt towns
1.2	Community Sports & Infrastructure
1.2.1	Sporting clubs are thriving in membership and volunteers, with an appropriate standard of facilities and other support services
1.3	Community Safety
1.3.1	The Shire, Local Emergency Services and wider community working together to prevent bushfires and other emergencies as well as being well placed to respond and recover in such events
1.3.2	Collaboration between the Shire and WA Police to improve safety and surveillance through the continued improvement of CCTV in the town and across all Shire facilities
1.4	Community Development
1.4.1	Activities and programs that assist in youth development and leadership are developed or promoted
1.4.2	An improved sense of belonging for our Njaki Njaki Noongar and wider Aboriginal community
1.4.3	Merredin is rich with thriving community organisations and clubs who are working together with the Shire to increase the profile of arts and culture in Merredin
1.5	Environmental Health
1.5.1	The Shire of Merredin provides a proactive Environmental Health service which is integral to monitoring food safety in commercial premises and ensuring buildings meet accessibility and safety standards
1.6	Merredin Regional Library
1.6.1	The Merredin Regional Library continues to provide learning, social and cultural opportunities

Priorities and Strategies for Change for Community and Culture

PRIORITIES	STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE
Development of cultural life: infrastructure and spaces; activation; and celebration of Njaki Njaki Noongar culture	The Shire actively facilitates a flourishing cultural corridor around the old North Merredin Primary School precinct, Cummins Theatre and Merredin Regional and Community Leisure Centre sports precinct
	Increasing the number and diversity of events, including a signature annual event, which celebrate the rich culture and history of the town and region
	Partnering with Njaki Njaki Noongar leaders on the visibility of their heritage and living culture
Development of sport and recreation: infrastructure and participation	Development of Merredin Regional and Community Leisure Centre as the main hub for sports and recreation in Merredin
	Work with Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, State sport organisations and local clubs to increase participation at player and Committee level
	Review of the Merredin District Olympic Swimming Pool in order to determine life expectancy and options for short to medium term development and future renewal
Community safety	Reinvigorate emergency management structures and procedures
	Collaborate with WEROC on arrangements for ranger and emergency management services

Theme 2: Economy and Growth

Merredin thrives with a job-rich and multi-faceted economy, building on local strengths.

Service Area Objectives for Economy and Growth

ITEM	SERVICE AREA OBJECTIVES
2.1	Economic Development
2.1.1	Merredin is well known by those not local to the area, as a great place to live, work and visit
2.1.2	The Shire of Merredin is a place of choice for business investment and for new residents settling to enjoy a balance lifestyle and employment opportunities
2.1.3	Job and training opportunities are available in Merredin to community members who are entering the workforce
2.2	Tourism
2.2.1	Visitors to the Shire are well serviced and accommodated, with opportunities that leverage our historic, cultural environmental and natural assets
2.2.2	The Shire works closely with businesses and other community groups to actively support and develop visitor growth
2.2.3	Leveraging on our local strengths, our tourism-based economy is resilient and adaptable to change
2.3	CBD
2.3.1	The Merredin town centre is strengthened as a regional centre, serving the needs of the Merredin community and surrounding catchment
2.3.2	The Merredin town centre is contemporary and adaptable to the emerging retail and industrial trends, continuing to attract business and investment opportunities
2.3.3	Merredin has suitably located and sized land for various industrial opportunities that serve the productive needs within the Shire

Priorities and Strategies for Change for Economy and Growth

PRIORITIES	STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE
Clearly articulate Merredin's identity and value proposition	Develop a marketing plan for Merredin as a place to live, work, invest and visit
Tourism product development, including cultural tourism	Collaborate with WEROC to develop a tourism product investment prospectus
	Collaborate with the Njaki Njaki Noongar and other relevant organisations to develop cultural tourism

Strengthening the economy through local business development	Prepare a local economic development strategy and action plan, led by business
	Support a local business leadership organisation to drive business development in partnership with the Shire and others
	Collaborate with the Njaki Njaki Noongar people and the wider Aboriginal community to develop local Aboriginal businesses
Building on Merredin's strengths to expand the economy	Identify business opportunities and prepare and market a Merredin investment prospectus
	Be a business-friendly Shire and provide a concierge service for businesses that have the potential to locate in Merredin
	Ensure adequate supply of industrial and commercial land

Theme 3: Environment and Sustainability

Merredin looks after the natural environment and minimises its carbon footprint.

Service Area Objectives for Environment and Sustainability

ITEM	SERVICE AREA OBJECTIVES
3.1	Environmental Management
3.1.1	The Shire of Merredin observes a number of sustainable water and energy harvesting, conservation and usage practices
3.1.2	The Shire of Merredin's fleet is dominated by vehicles fuelled by renewable or alternate fuels
3.2	Waste Management
3.2.1	Reduced waste through increased recycling, re-use and reduction education and practices
3.3	Environmental Planning
3.3.1	Land use planning respects our natural assets and ensures limited impact on climate change
3.3.2	Natural assets are protected and conserved

Priorities and Strategies for Change for Environment and Sustainability

PRIORITIES	STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE
Address climate change	Develop climate change strategy and action plan
Ensure continuous potable and non-potable water supply	Develop a water strategy and action plan
Advocacy for drylands farming support	Work with State and Federal agencies and representatives for the inclusion of our local farming community in schemes to develop drylands farming techniques and support water short regions
Developing a more efficient and sustainable waste management service	In collaboration with WEROC, develop a regional waste management plan and solutions
The Shire leading by example	Institute exemplary practices in energy and water efficiency and waste minimisation
	Local biodiversity plan for natural areas under Shire control

Theme 4: Communication and Leadership

The Merredin community is highly engaged in planning and action for its future, with a well governed, forward-looking, and proactive local government.

Service Area Objectives for Communication and Leadership

ITEM	SERVICE AREA OBJECTIVES
4.1	Community Engagement
4.1.1	The Shire regularly engages with its community and, in return, communicates the information gathered in a clear and transparent manner
4.1.2	The Council works closely with the community to successfully achieve projects or outcomes that delivery the community's vision for Merredin
4.1.3	The Shire has a strong working relationship with the Njaki Njaki Noongar Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal community members
4.2	Decision Making
4.2.1	Council is equipped with appropriate technology, allowing for better public accessibility to the Council Chambers
4.2.2	The Shire is progressive while exercising responsible stewardship of its built, natural and financial resources
4.2.3	The Council is well informed in their decision-making, supported by a skilled administration team who are committed to providing timely, strategic information and advice
4.3	Advocacy
4.3.1	The Shire is implementing its Public Health Plan and strongly advocates to other decision makers and the wider community for a healthier environment
4.3.2	The Shire continues to advocate for infrastructure and services which meet the need of its business and residential community
4.4	Communications
4.4.1	The Shire is continuously working to maintain efficient communication, providing open, transparent and factual information, through a variety of channels
4.5	Customer Service
4.5.1	The Shire is continually working to improve its customer service
4.5.2	Shire is an employer of choice within the region, offering its team with a positive and productive workplace culture
4.5.3	The Shire works to continually improve its systems and processes to improve internal capacity and capability
4.6	Regional Collaboration

4.6.1	The Shire is proactive in seeking out regional collaboration and partnership opportunities which seek to benefit the Shire of Merredin and the wider eastern wheatbelt region
4.7	Integrated Planning and Reporting
4.7.1	The Shire is committed to ongoing consultation to ensure that the reporting associated with the State's Integrated Planning Framework is in line with the community's vision for the town and its surrounds

Priorities and Strategies for Change for Communication and Leadership

PRIORITIES	STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE
Effective mechanisms for community representation in key decision-making	Design and establish mechanisms for engagement by residents/ farmers/ businesses/ groups (as applicable) in major decisions over the period of each Corporate Business Plan
The Shire has a strong working relationship with the Njaki Njaki Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal community members	Work with Njaki Njaki Noongar people and wider Aboriginal community to develop and implement a Reconciliation Action Plan
Maximising the value of Shire assets	Consolidate and rationalise Shire owned facilities and properties (eg old oval site, and properties in Caw Street, Endersbee Street and French Avenue)
	Respectful beautification and sustainable water management for the public cemetery

Theme 5: Places and Spaces

Merredin is an attractive regional town, with an inviting public realm.

Service Area Objectives for Places and Spaces

ITEM	SERVICE AREA OBJECTIVES
5.1	Streetscapes
5.1.1	The Merredin CBD has been significantly upgraded and is well maintained and representative of the regional status that it holds
5.1.2	The streetscapes within Merredin's urban areas have well kept, tidy and safe streets, verges and footpaths
5.2	Parks and Gardens
5.2.1	Parks within the Shire are maintained to a high standard, with adequate facilities for community members of all ages and abilities
5.2.2	The Shire of Merredin's Public Cemetery is well planned for, attractive and respectful
5.3	Facilities
5.3.1	The Shires heritage assets are maintained and protected for future generations
5.3.2	The Shire is continually improving its asset management practices
5.4	Town Planning & Building Control
5.4.1	Community members are educated and empowered to ensure their privately owned heritage sites are maintained and protected for future generations
5.4.2	The Shire has a current local planning scheme and associated strategy which is flexible and able to suitably guide future residential and industrial growth

Priorities and Strategies for Change for Places and Spaces

PRIORITIES	STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE
Revitalise the Merredin CBD	Develop a shovel ready CBD revitalisation plan in partnership with businesses and residents and actively pursue funding
	Create more compelling and welcoming town entrances
Improve public open space	Revitalise Apex Park

Theme 6: Transport and Networks

Merredin is easy to get around for all and well-connected regionally, nationally and internationally for people and industry.

Service Area Objectives for Transport and Networks

ITEM	SERVICE AREA OBJECTIVES
6.1	Roads & Footpaths
6.1.1	The Shire's road system, footpaths and cycle trails are well maintained and safe
6.2	Drainage
6.2.1	Stormwater drainage is well managed and capable of handling storm events at an appropriate standard
6.3	Verge Maintenance
6.3.1	Verges are attractive and well maintained

Priorities and Strategies for Change for Transport and Networks

PRIORITIES	STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE
Improving local roads	Development of Roading Hierarchy and ten-year capital works plan to establish clear, transparent and affordable priorities to meet the needs of residents and industry
Improving stormwater management	Development of a Stormwater Asset Management Plan and ten-year capital works program

Assumptions

The following assumptions have been used in the development of this Plan.

Item	Assumptions
Shire population	Current (2016) Population is expected to remain stable (without intervention)
Property base growth	No allowance is specifically factored into the rates calculation
Rates Level Increase	After 0% increase in 2020/21 3% a year (2%CPI +1%)
Interest rate (Investment)	2.5%
Local Government Cost Index (LGCI)	The WA Local Government Association has previously forecast the LGCI. The most recent estimate was given in February 2020 (2021/22 2.7% and 2022/23 3.2%). It will be revised again when the conditions are more stable.
Payroll	2% annually over four years. This is related to the provision for wage increases in the currently expired EBA and inflation forecast in the Long-Term Financial Plan
The wider policy or legislative environment	Operating grants and contributions increasing with forecast inflation of 2%. The current COVID-19 environment has resulted in significant opportunities to obtain grant funding for infrastructure and other projects.
Staffing levels	The plan provides an increase of one staff member: Economic Development Officer to actively engage with the Merredin business community. Consideration will also be given to the establishment of traineeships and work experience programs. Priorities not funded: Project Manager – to manage the implementation of development projects.
Infrastructure Assets	Expenditure based on historical levels escalated by inflation and is highly dependent on government grants and contributions.

RESOURCING IMPLICATIONS

The Shire of Merredin in 2019 adopted a "Strategic Resource Plan" for the period 2019 – 2034. The plan sets out the Shire's long term financial and asset management situation and provides a key tool to model the impact of possible investment decisions and to meet our strategic objectives.

The last 12 months has provided a perfect case study in how quickly circumstances can change. It demonstrated clearly that when planning for a 10-15 year period the challenges and opportunities can change overnight and it is impossible to predict every possibility. The post COVID-19 lockdown community engagement demonstrated that changing population levels and demographics bring with them changing community needs and expectations. Clear expectations were articulated by the community as to the Council's involvement in facilitating economic development, and in advocating for private and public sector services as well as expectations for higher levels of service in the maintenance and upgrading of roads, parks and CBD streetscape.

In preparing this plan no changes have been made to the underlying assumptions used by the Council to prepare its Long-Term Financial Plan and annual budgets. These are set out separately. Providing for increased expectations within the current financial envelope will require on-going careful prioritisation and financial management.

Some of the new initiatives contained in the plan do not create significant new costs, others will not progress without substantial inputs of new external funding. There is an underlying emphasis on having projects "shovel ready" in order to capitalize on the availability of grants at both a Federal and State level.

While this plan addresses increased community expectations it does so with only minor impact on total workforce with the creation of a new position of Economic Development Officer. The plan does identify the need for additional capacity and capability in project management. In the absence of funding such a position the additional skill requirement will be contracted in as part of project costs.

STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT

The following table outlines the strategic risks to the Plan and the risk controls that apply.

Risk Category	Risk Description	Risk Controls
Political	Core changes to role of Local Government and/or funding	• Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP) • Lobbying and advocacy • Community engagement
Governance	Breakdown in relationship between Shire President/ Council and CEO	• Code of Conduct and relevant policies • Regular meetings CEO/Shire President • CEO performance review process • Councillor induction and training
Community	Lack of community awareness and engagement with Council's direction	• Communications and community engagement
Financial	Increased contractor and/or materials costs putting pressure on capital program	• Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP) • Asset Management Plans • Budget process • Rigor of project management
Financial	Employee cost rises above assumption	• Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP) • Workforce Plan (WFP) • Budget process
Financial	Reduced external grants/funding	• Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP) • Budget process • Lobbying and advocacy
Financial	Misappropriation of funds	• Policies and Procedures • Audit controls
Economic	Low business growth	• Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP) • Economic development facilitation
Human Resources	Lack of available skilled staff	• Workforce Plan (WFP)
Human Resources	High staff turnover	• Workforce Plan (WFP)
Human Resources	Lack of available skilled contractors / suppliers	• Tender and Procurement Process • Workforce Plan
Environmental	Disasters i.e. bushfire/flood/ storm	• Local Emergency Management Risk Mitigation, Planning, Response and Recovery Arrangements

HOW WILL WE KNOW IF THE PLAN IS SUCCEEDING?

Some of the new initiatives contained in this plan will require new measures to be developed.

Priorities	Measures
Theme 1: Community and Culture	
Development of cultural life: infrastructure and spaces; activation; and celebration of Njaki Njaki culture	New measure tbc
Development of sport and recreation: infrastructure and participation	Community scorecard
Community safety	Community scorecard
Theme 2: Economy and Growth	
Clearly articulate Merredin's identity and value proposition	New measure tbc
Tourism product development, including cultural tourism	New measure tbc
Strengthening the economy through local business development	New measure tbc
Building on Merredin's strengths to expand the economy	New measure tbc
Theme 3: Environment and Sustainability	
Address climate change	Community scorecard = new measure
Ensure continuous potable and non-potable water supply	New measure tbc
Advocacy for drought relief	New measure tbc
Developing a more efficient and sustainable waste management service	Community scorecard + new measure
The Shire leading by example	New measure tbc
Theme 4: Communication and Leadership	
Effective mechanisms for community representation in key decision-making	Community scorecard
The Shire has a strong working relationship with the Njaki Njaki Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal community members	New measure tbc
Maximising the value of Shire assets	New measure tbc
Theme 5: Places and Spaces	

Revitalise the Merredin CBD	Community scorecard
Improve public open space	Community scorecard
Theme 6: Transport and Networks	
Improving local roads	Community scorecard + Community scorecard
Improving stormwater management	Community scorecard + Community scorecard

APPENDIX 1: BLUE SKY THINKING

Participants were asked: What is your "Big Picture" game changer idea for Merredin? A wide range of responses was received and these are set out in the Appendix.

Responses included:

- Strategic Partnerships – International, Local big corporates State Government
- Water Ski Facilities
- Desalination – reduce reliance on pipeline
- Recycling Business Opportunities – from cardboard to tyres
- Slow down the emptying of Baandee Lake
- 'The Big' Merredin Icon
- Attract businesses like flour mill, uni campus, Uncle Toby's Factory
- Economic Development Incentives
- Business Hub of the Wheatbelt
- Cultural Tourism Development
- Major annual event
- Host and International Event – Water/Energy/Environment
- Ten Pin Bowling Centre / Mini Golf / Maze
- Mall
- Heated Aquatic Centre
- Outdoor cinema
- Military Base
- Art Gallery in the Main Street
- LGBTQI Friendly Event – the Wheatbelt Mardi Gras
- Explore options for airfield
- Space Port
- Community Fund – e.g. crop for a project
- Prison Farm
- Incorporated Arts Body
- Aged care – high
- Production Studios – movie making