








Council Plan 2025-2029

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the
Traditional Custodians
of the land on which we
live and work, and pay
our respect to their Elders
past and present.



Contents

Mayor's Message	2
Our Councillors	3
About the Council Plan	4
Integrating Public Health, Wellbeing and Disability into the Plan	5
The Importance of External Funding	5
Aligning with Community Vision 2036	6
About Benalla Rural City	8
If Benalla Rural City was 100 People	10
Our Community Engagement	13
How to Read This Plan	16
Themes	17
 Theme 1: Community	18
 Theme 2: Economy	20
 Theme 3: Environment	22
 Theme 4: Liveability	24
 Theme 5: Leadership	26
Delivering the Plan	28
Monitoring and Accountability	29
Gender Impact Assessment	30
Appendices	31
Appendix 1: Survey Key Findings	31
Appendix 2: Detailed Survey Results	32

Mayor's Message

It is with great pride that I present the *Benalla Rural City Council Plan 2025–2029*. This Plan reflects the voices of our entire community and sets a clear direction for the next four years.

For the first time, we worked with a Community Panel to help shape this Plan. Their insights and dedication have been invaluable, and I want to thank everyone who participated in the Panel. This process has shown the strength of collaboration and the importance of listening to the people who call Benalla Rural City home.

Another milestone is the integration of the *Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan* and the *Disability Action Plan* into this document. By bringing these two plans together, we are taking a more holistic approach to supporting the health, wellbeing, and inclusion of everyone in our community.

This Plan is built around five key themes: Community, Economy, Environment, Liveability, and Leadership. It outlines strategies to strengthen our community connections, support local businesses, protect our natural environment, enhance liveability through better infrastructure, and ensure good governance. From improving access to services in rural areas to promoting sustainable growth and tackling the impacts of climate change, this Plan is focused on what matters most to our residents.

Together, we can build a future that is sustainable, inclusive, and thriving. I look forward to working with you to bring this vision to life.

Cr Bernie Hearn
Mayor,
Benalla Rural City Council

Our Councillors



**Cr Bernie
Hearn**



**Cr Justin
King**



**Cr Peter
Davis**



**Cr Puna Hewa
Gunaratne**



**Cr David
Blore**



**Cr Jillian
Merkel**



**Cr Nathan
Tolliday**

About the Council Plan

The *Integrated Benalla Rural City Council Plan 2025–2029* brings together the Council Plan, the *Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan*, and the *Disability Action Plan* into a single, strategic document. It reflects what matters most to our community and guides how Council will deliver services, allocate resources, and respond to local priorities over the next four years.

As a legislative requirement under Section 90 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, all Victorian councils must adopt a four-year strategic plan that outlines key priorities, services, resource use, and ways to measure performance. The Plan meets the requirements of Section 55, with deliberative engagement practices shaped by Council’s *Community Engagement Policy* to ensure it reflects the values, needs and aspirations of the Benalla Rural City community. This Council Plan achieves these legislative requirements.

Developed for both the organisation and the community, the Plan draws on the long-term Vision in the *Benalla Rural City Community Plan 2016–2036* and aligns with key documents including the *10-Year Asset Plan*, *10-Year Financial Plan*, and a range of Council strategies and policies. Together, these guide Council’s annual budgets and short-term planning.

	Vision, Strategy, and Policy	Resource Allocation and Management
 Long Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Benalla Rural City Community Vision 2036</i>• <i>Benalla Rural City Community Plan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Asset Plan</i>• <i>Long-term Financial Plan</i>
 Medium Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Council Plan integrating the:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– <i>Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan</i>, and– <i>Disability Action Plan</i>• Other Key Strategies and Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Budget</i>• <i>Revenue and Rating Plan</i>
 Short Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Action Plans• Service Plans• Programs, projects and initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Budgets• Staff• Grant Funding

Integrating Public Health, Wellbeing and Disability into the Plan

Council's commitment to health and wellbeing is reflected in the integration of the *Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan* and the *Disability Action Plan*, which outlines Council's role in supporting better health outcomes across the municipality. It aligns with the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023–2027 and has been developed in accordance with the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*.

The Plan focuses on six locally relevant themes:

1. Increasing healthy eating
2. Increasing active living
3. Improved mental wellbeing
4. Supporting healthy ageing
5. Preventing all forms of violence
6. Tackling the health impacts of climate change

These priorities will be delivered in partnership with local and regional organisations including Benalla Health and the Goulburn Valley Public Health Unit, whose work is supported and complemented through this Plan. The Benalla Health and Wellbeing Partnership will work collaboratively to monitor the Plan.

The Importance of External Funding

Achieving the ambitious goals outlined in the *Integrated Benalla Rural City Council Plan 2025–2029* requires more than just careful planning and resource allocation. While municipal rates provide a critical foundation for Council's operations, they are not sufficient to fully fund the transformative initiatives and services envisioned in this Plan.

To bridge this gap, securing external funding from State and Federal Government streams is essential. These funding opportunities enable Council to deliver on its commitment to the community by supporting vital projects, programs, and infrastructure that would otherwise be beyond the reach of local resources alone.

By leveraging these external funding sources, Council can ensure that the priorities identified in the Plan — such as improving health and wellbeing, tackling climate change, and enhancing community infrastructure — are not only aspirational but achievable. This approach reinforces the vital importance of community collaborations, emphasising that partnerships and shared responsibility are the foundation for building a thriving, resilient, and sustainable Benalla Rural City.

Aligning with Community Vision 2036

Our Community Vision 2036

Benalla Rural City is welcoming and friendly, thriving and prosperous, environmentally responsible, innovative and industrious, caring and supportive, and engaging for all residents and visitors — a place where people want to continue to live, move to and are proud to call home.

The *Benalla Rural City Community Vision 2036* was developed in 2015 through a deliberative engagement process involving more than 700 community members and a panel of independent representatives. It reflects a collective aspiration for a sustainable, inclusive, liveable and resilient future — and continues to guide Council's planning and investment. The *Benalla Rural City Council Plan 2025–2029* plays a key role in delivering on this Vision that ensure each four-year Council Plan cycle continues building toward the future our community has imagined.



The *Community Vision 2036* is supported by seven guiding themes:

- **Community wellbeing and sense of place**
Fostering a vibrant, inclusive and connected community that values diversity, lifestyle and local identity.
- **A well-planned, connected and accessible community**
Ensuring high-quality infrastructure, transport and digital connectivity for everyone.
- **A vibrant, thriving and progressive economy**
Supporting business growth, innovation, and local employment across all industries.
- **Planning for population growth**
Embracing diversity while ensuring services, housing and workforce capacity keep pace with future needs.
- **A sustainable environment**
Protecting landscapes and waterways through responsible planning, education and community partnerships.
- **A destination of choice**
Creating opportunities through tourism, arts, events and cultural initiatives that enrich local life.
- **Leadership and community spirit**
Building on local leadership, collaboration and civic pride to strengthen our future together.

To bring this Vision to life, Council must lead with intention, act in partnership, and stay accountable to the community's goals. The following Vision, Purpose and Values guide how Council plans, delivers and advocates over the next four years.

Council's Vision

A sustainable, thriving and cohesive community where lifestyle, culture, health and wellbeing are supported by sound leadership and community partnership.

Council's Purpose

Council's purpose is to work in partnership with the community to build a connected, future-focused municipality where people and place can thrive.

Council's Values

To deliver on this purpose and support the *Community Vision 2036*, Council is guided by the following values:

- **Accountability**
Acting with transparency and responsibility.
- **Continuous improvement**
Always striving to do better.
- **Equity**
Making fair, inclusive and evidence-based decisions.
- **Integrity**
Being honest, consistent and ethical.
- **Leadership**
Setting direction and taking action.
- **Respect**
Valuing people, place and diversity.

About Benalla Rural City

Benalla Rural City sits on the traditional lands of the Taungurung and Yorta Yorta peoples, whose enduring connection to Country continues to shape the region's identity. Council acknowledges their custodianship and is committed to respectful collaboration, cultural preservation, and reconciliation.

Located in North-east Victoria, around two hours from Melbourne, Benalla Rural City is home to more than 14,500 people. Over one-third live in rural communities beyond the township of Benalla, contributing to a strong rural lifestyle and industry.

While English is the primary language spoken at home, Punjabi is now the second most common, reflecting the growth of a vibrant South Asian community and the region's evolving cultural diversity.



Regional Snapshot



193 km

North east of
Melbourne



14,528

Total 2021
population



36%

Reside outside
Benalla township



51

Median age



87.6%

Speak english
at home



\$1.1b

Gross Regional
Product estimate

Council Services and Assets

Benalla Rural City Council supports the liveability of the region through services that many people rely on every day, including family and youth programs, waste collection, public health, and business support. Council also looks after the infrastructure that keeps the community running, such as more than 1,300 kilometres of roads, over 100 public buildings, and key facilities like the aquatic centre and local recreation reserves.

Council's Key Services	Details
Community Development and Family Services	Programs fostering community resilience, family wellbeing, and youth development.
Economic Development	Business support, tourism efforts, and cultural development to enhance the community's vibrancy.
Waste Management	Responsible for kerbside collections, landfill operations, and waste minimisation projects, ensuring EPA compliance.
Public Health	Promotes wellbeing through immunisations, health education, and regulatory oversight of food safety and accommodation standards.
Emergency Management	Plans and responds to natural disasters, ensuring the safety and preparedness of residents.
Facilities and Maintenance	Looks after community assets, including open spaces, recreational reserves, and other key infrastructure.

Key Assets Maintained by the Council	Details
Sealed Roads	561km
Unsealed Roads	773km
Kerb and Channel	130km
Off-street Carparks	110,097m ²
Bridges	75
Major Culverts	230
Footpaths	104km
Cycleways	21km
Pipe	54km
Pits	2,059
Buildings and Structure	104
Benalla Art Gallery	1
Aquatic Centre	1
Recreational/Sporting Centres	8

If Benalla Rural City was 100 People



Sources:

Goulburn Valley Public Health, Health Needs Assessment 2023, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Benalla (LGA) Census All Person 2021 and Profile.id Benalla Rural City.

Population Change

With a median age of 51, Benalla Rural City has a strong retiree presence and an ageing population that is expected to grow over time. Projections show continued increases in older age groups alongside a gradual decline in younger cohorts. This shift is part of a broader demographic trend affecting many regional areas across Victoria.

Migration

In line with the region’s demographic profile, older adults are more likely to move in, often arriving from nearby rural and peri-urban areas for lifestyle reasons and more affordable housing. On the other hand, younger cohorts tend to move out as part of life stage shifts, typically for study, work, or broader opportunities. Most of this movement remains local, with strong ties to surrounding LGAs, such as Mansfield and Strathbogie.

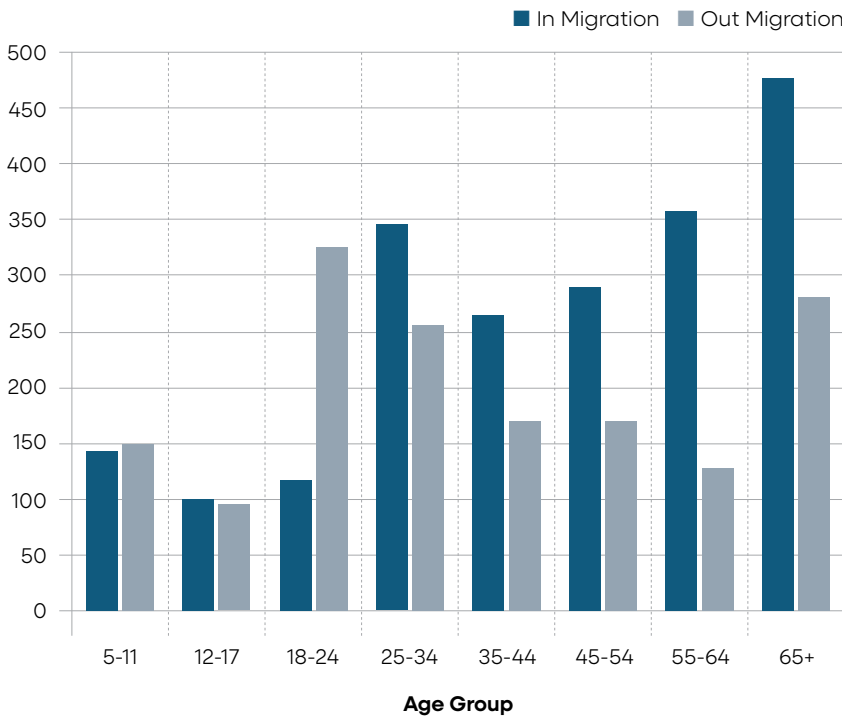
Population change by age group

Age Group	2016	2021	2036 (Forecast)	% Change (2021-2036)
0-14	2,200	2,050	1,950	-11%
15-29	2,000	2,000	1,500	-25%
30-44	1,900	2,050	2,200	+16%
45-59	3,000	2,800	2,700	-10%
60-74	3,100	3,600	3,300	+6%
75+	1,500	2,000	3,200	+113%

Top migration locations

	In Migration	Out Migration
Top 3 Locations	Strathbogie	Mansfield
	Mansfield	Strathbogie
	Casey	Wyndham






Migration by age group 2021



Major Industries

The local workforce includes a strong base of professionals, with health and social care emerging as the region's leading employment sector. The region is also home to advanced manufacturing operations and a vocational training presence through GOTAFE, both of which contribute to local job pathways. While these industries attract large employers and investment, access to skilled labour is shaped by housing availability and ongoing workforce retention challenges.

Top industries of Benalla Rural City

Employment Sector		Change
	15.1% Health Care and Social Assistance	+0.7%
	12.6% Construction	+4.2%
	9.7% Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	-0.1%
	8.5% Manufacturing	-0.3%
	8.2% Retail Trade	-0.9%

What is Benalla Rural City known for?

Benalla Rural City is renowned for its vibrant arts and cultural identity, with public art, exhibitions, and events bringing the community together. In 2023–24, over 79,000 people visited the Benalla Art Gallery, while the region's growing collection of street and silo art in Benalla, Goorambat, and Devenish continues to attract visitors. Council also supports popular events like the Benalla Street Art Festival and the annual Benalla Festival in November.

The city's rich heritage and history, along with attractions like the Winton Motor Raceway, which draws motorsport enthusiasts nationwide, further enhance its appeal. Nature lovers can explore the Winton Wetlands, a unique ecological and cultural landmark, as well as the Warby Ranges and Mount Samaria State Park, offering stunning landscapes, diverse wildlife, and opportunities for hiking, cycling, and camping. Together, these experiences highlight the region's cultural vibrancy and natural beauty.

Our Community Engagement

In developing this Council Plan, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods were used. Through consultations, workshops, pop-up sessions and listening forums, we heard directly from residents, students, businesses, service providers and local groups about their experiences and aspirations. These conversations were complemented by a community survey, along with a review of existing strategies, plans, and datasets to build a more complete understanding of local priorities.

Qualitative Approach

Throughout early 2025, we engaged the Benalla Rural City community through a series of community engagement activities.

These activities included:

- 71 individual consultations
- 5 community workshops
- 4 community panel sessions with up to 15 participants
- 13 listening sessions with schools, local groups and at public events
- Street pop-up sessions across the municipality

Quantitative Approach

To support our analysis of the region's trends and priorities, we reviewed over 120 data sources.

This work drew on:

- 45 Council strategies and plans
- Over 50 datasets sourced by the Council
- 172 community survey responses
- Data from over 10 community organisations
- Findings from benchmarked Councils



What the Community Says

In developing this Council Plan, we conducted a series of community consultations that included community groups, service providers, and key organisations. Some insights from the consultations were:

What do you like about where you live?

"The natural environment is beautiful and calming. The lake, walking tracks and green spaces are a big part of why people stay."

"It's a relaxed place to live, but there are still plenty of ways to get involved if you want to."

"Community spirit is one of the region's biggest assets. People take pride in supporting local groups, events and each other."

"Benalla has a creative feel. The murals, the gallery and local events add life and character to the town."

What are your challenges?

"Public transport within and beyond Benalla is limited. The timing often doesn't match up with work, school or appointments."

"Young people want more pathways to study, work and build a future here."

"Some people still feel left out of community life, especially if they're new, living outside of Benalla, or speak another language."

"People in the outer towns want to feel seen and supported, just like those in central Benalla."





Key Challenges and Considerations

Benalla Rural City, like many regional communities, faces a range of external pressures that may influence the delivery of this Plan.

Key challenges include:

- Ageing population and workforce shortages, which may impact service capacity and local employment.
- Housing affordability and availability, particularly in attracting and retaining skilled workers.
- Climate change and increasing frequency of extreme weather events, which place pressure on infrastructure, natural assets and community wellbeing.
- Limited access to mental health and other vital health services, especially for young people and rural residents.
- Diversity of employment and educational opportunities.
- Digital exclusion and access to transport, particularly for isolated or vulnerable residents.
- Cost-of-living pressures, which affect residents' health, safety and access to opportunities.

Council will continue to monitor these issues and adjust service delivery and planning accordingly, in collaboration with local, regional and state partners.

How to Read this Plan

This Council Plan sets out Benalla Rural City Council's direction for the next four years. It explains what the community has told us is important, and how Council will respond through services, projects, partnerships and advocacy.

To make the Plan easy to navigate, we've broken it down into clear and connected segments. Each part builds on the last, showing the link between your priorities and the Council's strategies.



Themes

This Council Plan is organised into five themes that group together related priorities and challenges. Each theme brings together the types of issues the Council works on, such as services, infrastructure, community wellbeing, the environment, and local leadership. This structure helps display how different parts of the work done by the Council connect and provides a clear lens for understanding the Plan's goals and actions.

The five themes are:



Community

Covers inclusion, connection, and support for people across different life stages and backgrounds.



Economy

Focuses on business, employment, tourism, and local industries.



Environment

Encompasses sustainability, climate resilience and the natural environment.



Liveability

Relates to how people experience daily life, including safety, neighbourhoods, transport, and access to services.



Leadership

Looks at the Council's internal performance, community engagement, decision-making, and advocacy.

Throughout the Plan, the Council's role is defined for each strategy to clarify its level of responsibility:

- **Advocate**
Represent community needs to other levels of government and external bodies
- **Facilitator**
Enable collaboration and support community-led initiatives
- **Provider**
Directly deliver services, programs or infrastructure
- **Asset Owner**
Manage and maintain Council-owned assets and infrastructure
- **Regulator**
Administer and enforce local laws and statutory obligations
- **Partner**
Collaborate with others to deliver joint outcomes
- **MPHWP**
Refers to a strategy that is aligned with the Municipal Public Health & Wellbeing Plan.



Theme 1: Community

Objective 1.1: A healthy, safe and resilient community

Strategy	Council's Role	Measure of Success
Work with key partners to implement and support initiatives that promote gender equality, reduce and prevent gendered violence, homelessness, food insecurity and harms caused by drugs, alcohol and gambling.	MPHWP, Advocate, Facilitator, Partner	Partners working collaboratively to identify and address public health and wellbeing priorities and concerns.
Support our community to feel safe, build resilience and prepare for emergencies and natural disasters.	MPHWP, Advocate, Facilitator, Partner	Community safety initiatives delivered. Emergency planning or preparedness actions implemented.
Deliver inclusive, accessible events and programs that reduce social isolation and promote participation for all community members.	MPHWP, Advocate, Facilitator, Partner, Provider	Improved accessibility to Council and community spaces or events. Programs and events co-designed and delivered in partnership targeting social isolation.
Help people stay healthy and active.	MPHWP, Advocate, Facilitator, Partner	Improvement in health indicators within the community. Increased opportunity for active participation.

Objective 1.2: A connected, involved and inclusive community

Strategy	Council's Role	Measure of Success
Provide opportunities for our children and young people to thrive.	MPHWP, Advocate, Facilitator, Asset Owner, Partner	Initiatives delivered and designed with a focus on children and young people.
Improve access, inclusion and opportunities for an ageing population.	MPHWP, Advocate, Facilitator, Asset Owner, Partner	Age-friendly programs and communications delivered.
Support volunteering opportunities that enable all community members to contribute to community life.	MPHWP, Advocate, Facilitator, Partner	New or improved volunteer opportunities promoted with a focus on inclusion.
Respectfully engage, include and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and communities.	MPHWP, Advocate, Facilitator, Partner	Engagement activities held in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and other stakeholders.
Ensure rural residents can access Council services fairly, and join in community life, and share their ideas and priorities.	MPHWP, Provider, Asset Owner, Partner, Facilitator	Engagement sessions or consultations delivered in smaller rural townships. Council services made available or improved in rural areas.
Support initiatives that enhance the inclusion of culturally diverse groups.	MPHWP, Advocate, Facilitator, Partner	Events or programs delivered incorporating multicultural content or partnerships with the CALD community.

What the community says ...

"Young people here have a lot of potential. They just want more chances to get involved and do something meaningful."

"Benalla is really diverse now, but sometimes that is not reflected in the events we see. It would mean a lot to include more cultural celebrations."

"There's a need to focus on preventing family violence. More awareness and education could go a long way."

"Families are experiencing more complex needs, and early mental health support for children under 12 remains limited. There is an opportunity to strengthen wraparound services."

"It would be great to see more events and programs in the smaller towns - something that brings people together and makes sure no one feels left out."

"Most local groups run on volunteers, and it is getting harder to find new ones. A bit more support would make it easier for people to step in and help."

"People living further out are finding it harder to get to appointments. More local services or better transport would make things a lot easier."





Theme 2: Economy

Objective 2.1: Flourishing visitor economy and sustainable growth

Strategy	Council's Role	Measure of Success
Improve local accommodation and nighttime economy offerings in Benalla Rural City.	Facilitator, Advocate, Partner	Council-led initiatives to assess or improve accommodation or nighttime economy. Visitor economy initiatives delivered or supported.
Attract investment and support local businesses.	Facilitator, Advocate, Provider, Asset Owner, Partner	Council-led investment attraction or industry engagement activities. CBD or small business support initiatives delivered or co-designed.
Advocate for improved digital, freight and transport connectivity to support business growth and new development.	Facilitator, Advocate, Partner	Formal advocacy or partnership activities progressed.
Work with key stakeholders to improve local learning and employment pathways that address skills gaps, align with future needs, and local employment opportunities.	Facilitator, Advocate, Partner	Initiatives delivered in partnership with key stakeholders.
Promote Benalla Rural City's liveability and proactively plan for sustainable residential development.	Facilitator, Regulator, Advocate	Development and launch of a liveability campaign. Planning or engagement actions progressed to support residential development.



What the community says ...

"It is hard to grow a business if we lack reliable internet and better freight access."

"People are already coming for things like the gallery, street art and wetlands – we just need to promote them better and make the most of what we have."

"Benalla has a great lifestyle, but we need to raise people's awareness about it. Promoting areas could bring in more families and businesses."

"We want youth to be able to get their training in the region, but access to things like TAFE or other post-school opportunities can be really limited."

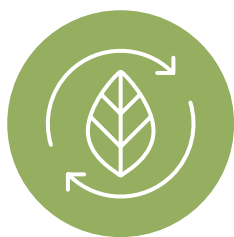
"Young people want pathways that go beyond more courses available, like experiences that lead to jobs."

"There is a lot of interest in moving here, but we need to plan for that growth, so it stays sustainable – housing, infrastructure, the works."

"It would be great to see more support for businesses trying to reduce waste or do things more sustainably"

"There is strong economic potential in the region, but we need to attract more businesses and make it easier for them to grow, especially in the CBD and smaller towns."

"Benalla has some great assets, but there is not much to do in the evenings. More dining or entertainment options would help keep visitors around longer."



Theme 3: Environment

Objective 3.1: Healthy and protected natural environment

Strategy	Council's Role	Measure of Success
Enhance climate change resilience.	Provider, Facilitator, Regulator, Partner	Climate resilience and education initiatives delivered.
Partner to manage and enhance our environmental assets.	Facilitator, Regulator, Advocate, MPHWP, Partner	Collaborative initiatives aligned with regional priorities delivered.

Objective 3.2: Circular economy, renewable energy and sustainable waste management

Strategy	Council's Role	Measure of Success
Provide efficient waste services and promote recycling and reuse through community and business involvement.	Provider, Facilitator, Regulator, Advocate, Partner	Circular economy education or engagement campaigns delivered. Deliver high quality, efficient and sustainable waste management services.
Improve the environmental sustainability and climate resilience of Council assets.	Provider, Facilitator, Regulator, Advocate, Asset Owner	Internal systems, processes or assets improved to embed sustainability.
Support, inspire and provide opportunities for the community to embrace clean and renewable energy.	Facilitator, Advocate, Partner	Council-led campaigns, resources or pilots to support renewable energy uptake initiated.

What the community says ...

"People want to do the right thing, but we need clearer information about recycling and ways to reduce waste."

"There's interest in the circular economy– things like reusing, sharing, composting– but it needs more support to take off properly."

"We'd love to see more promotion of clean energy and support for residents and businesses wanting to switch."

"More trees and shade in our streets and parks would really help, especially with the hotter summers we've been getting."

"It's great that Council buildings are running on renewables. That kind of leadership makes a difference."

"There's good momentum from groups like Landcare, but we need stronger partnerships to look after the river and environment long-term."





Theme 4: Liveability

Objective 4.1: Vibrant public spaces and places

Strategy	Council's Role	Measure of Success
Provide and maintain services, spaces and facilities that support community wellbeing and creative activities.	Provider, Facilitator, Asset Owner, Advocate, MPHWP, Partner	Equitable access to well-maintained spaces and services that promote wellbeing and creativity.
Make Council services and facilities easy for everyone to access.	Provider, Facilitator, Asset Owner	Increased community access to Council services and facilities. Improved ease of use, inclusivity, and satisfaction across all user groups.
Beautify and maintain streetscapes, landscaping, signage and town entrances.	Provider, Facilitator, Asset Owner, Advocate, Partner	Increased visual appeal and community pride.
Protect and promote heritage to preserve local character and culture.	Provider, Facilitator, Asset Owner, Advocate, MPHWP, Partner	Heritage promotion or maintenance actions delivered or supported.
Maintain and develop recreation reserves, parks and gardens, playgrounds, and paths.	Facilitator, Asset Owner, Advocate, MPHWP	Increased community use and enjoyment of recreation reserves, parks, gardens, playgrounds, and paths.
Facilitate and support better quality design principles in new developments.	Facilitator, Asset Owner, Advocate	Increased adoption of high-quality design principles in new developments, reflected in improved aesthetics, functionality, and community satisfaction.

Objective 4.2: Connected and accessible roads, footpaths, transport and parking

Strategy	Council's Role	Measure of Success
Plan for accessible, sustainable, well-serviced and connected neighbourhoods.	Provider, Facilitator, Asset Owner, Advocate, MPHWP	Subdivision or precinct planning processes embedding liveability principles.
Maintain and improve roads, footpaths, drainage and other infrastructure.	Provider, Facilitator, Asset Owner, Advocate	Infrastructure actions progressed.

What the community says ...

"As more people move in, we need to make sure roads and parking can keep up, especially around key services."

"Drainage and footpaths are an issue in some older areas. They just don't hold up like the newer subdivisions."

"Footpaths and crossings are really important, especially for older people or anyone using a mobility aid."

"We'd love to see more shade, seating, and better lighting in public areas. Small changes like that make a big difference to how people use the space."

"People in smaller towns or new developments really rely on transport. Having better public options would help connect communities and ease pressure on roads."

"The parks and gardens are a big drawcard. Keeping them well-maintained and accessible means more people can enjoy them"

"The region's heritage is part of its charm. It is important that older buildings and cultural sites are looked after and promoted properly."





Theme 5: Leadership

Objective 5.1: Good governance

Strategy	Council's Role	Measure of Success
Ensure Council meets legislative obligations.	Provider, Facilitator, Regulator	Internal governance reviews, updates or training completed. Compliance with legislation.
Ensure procurement provides good value and benefits the local community.	Provider, Advocate	Procurement processes updated.
Advocate to all levels of government for improved services, infrastructure and social outcomes.	Partner, Advocate	Advocacy or funding actions implemented.

Objective 5.2: High performance culture

Strategy	Council's Role	Measure of Success
Deliver accessible and responsive services.	Provider, MPHWP, Asset Owner	Customer service improvements completed.
Maintain an educated, healthy, safe, inclusive and diverse workforce.	Provider	Workforce development actions delivered.

Objective 5.3: Engaged and informed community

Strategy	Council's Role	Measure of Success
Engage clearly and openly with our community and stakeholders to better understand their needs and priorities.	Provider, Facilitator, MPHWP, Partner	Engagement tools or processes improved. Increased community participation in decision making process.
Provide clear, timely, and accessible communication.	Provider, MPHWP, Asset Owner	Access improvements delivered to support communication with the community.

What the community says ...

"Community feedback should not just be collected – it needs to shape decisions. People want to see that they are making changes"

"We need to see Council decisions based on real community needs and made in a way that feels transparent and fair."

"People want to be able to get things done easily. Making services more responsive and straightforward really matters."

"Partnering with other Councils to push for regional priorities can be a good value as it shows strength in numbers."

"Advocacy is strongest when it brings together community voices, Working alongside residents make the message more powerful."

"It's great when Councillors get out and talk with people directly. That kind of visibility builds trust."

"It's important that Council's advocacy matches what the community is asking for and that funding goes where it's needed most."

"Procurement is a chance to support local jobs and deliver broader value for the community."

"Clear communication is everything. Just knowing what's happening and where to go for help makes a big difference."

"Having a safe and inclusive workplace is key, especially when working with vulnerable communities. Ongoing training is essential."

"We have a small team wearing different hats. It makes a big difference when staff feel supported and trained to do their job well."

Delivering the Plan

This Council Plan will be delivered through a coordinated program of strategies, services and partnerships over the next four years.

Its implementation will be supported by:

- The *10-Year Financial Plan*, which ensures resources are allocated sustainably to support community priorities.
- The *Annual Budget*, which identifies year-by-year service delivery, capital works and operational projects aligned with the Council Plan objectives.
- The *Council's Workforce Plan*, which supports the organisational capability required to deliver the actions in this Plan.
- Partnerships with other levels of government, community organisations and local stakeholders, which are essential to deliver shared outcomes.

Council will ensure that resourcing decisions remain consistent with the goals of this Plan, while maintaining flexibility to respond to emerging needs or opportunities.





Monitoring and Accountability

Council is committed to transparency and continuous improvement. Progress against this Council Plan will be monitored and reported through:

- The *Annual Report*, which includes a formal review of progress on Council Plan objectives and measures of success.
- Quarterly internal reporting, enabling timely performance monitoring by Council and the executive team.
- Community updates, such as newsletters, digital noticeboards or annual scorecards, to show how Council is delivering on its commitments.
- A mid-term review at the two-year mark to assess progress and ensure the Plan remains relevant and responsive.

These processes support accountable, evidence-based decision-making and build community trust in Council's delivery.

Gender Impact Assessment

As part of our commitment to fairness and inclusion, Council has completed a Gender Impact Assessment in line with the *Gender Equality Act 2020*. This ensures the Council Plan considers how gender and other factors, such as age, culture, or caregiving roles, might affect people's ability to participate in engagement activities and provide input.

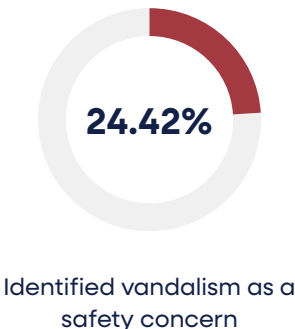
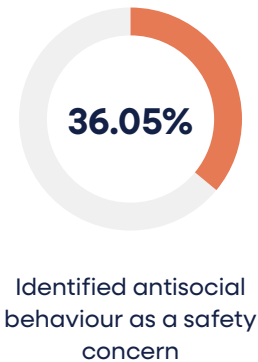
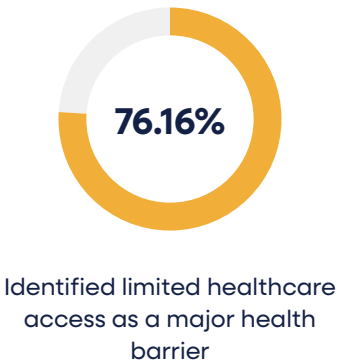
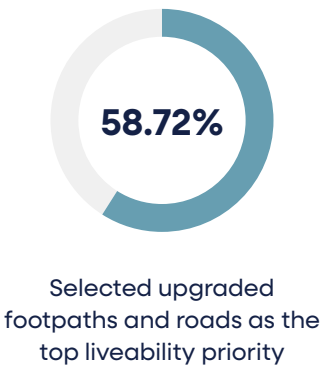
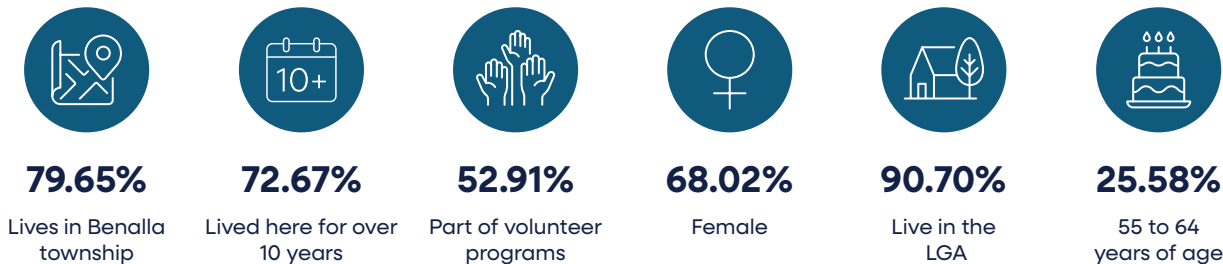
Efforts were made to remove barriers and create safer, more welcoming opportunities for involvement — in particular for women, young people, caregivers, and gender-diverse or LGBTIQ+ community members, whose voices are often underrepresented in local planning.

This commitment to inclusion continues through the Council's partnerships, program design, and community-facing work, ensuring that equity remains a guiding principle in how decisions are made and implemented.



Appendix 1: Survey Key Findings

Respondent Profile



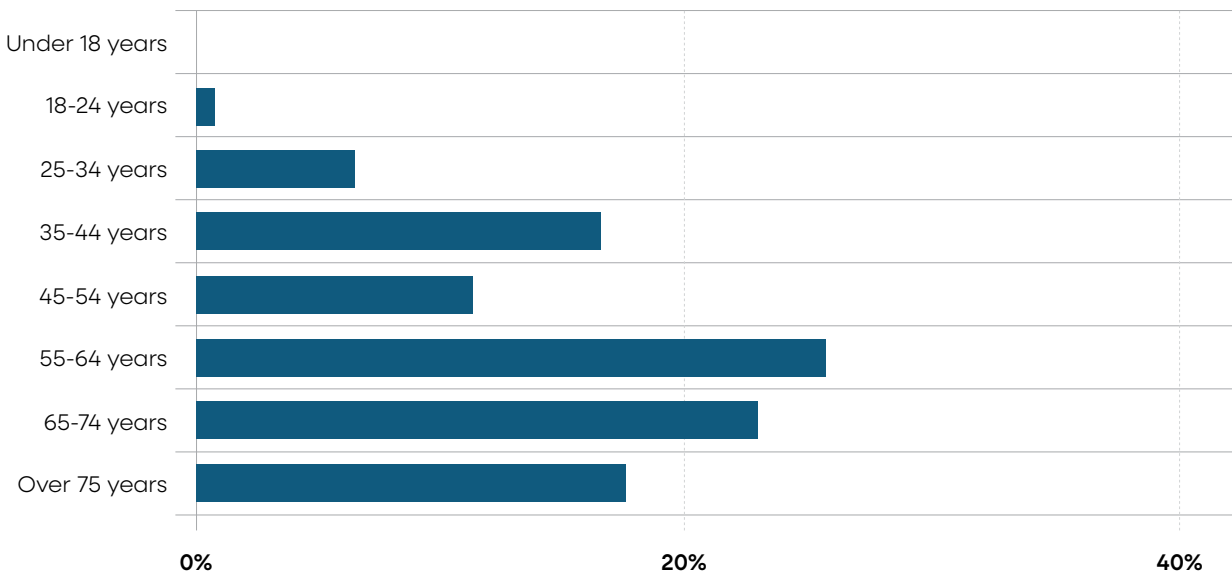
Appendix 2:

Detailed Survey Results

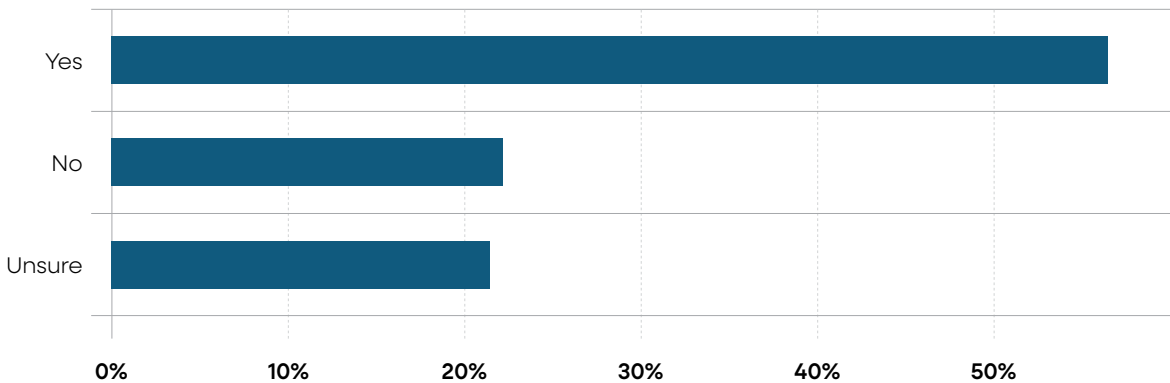
Survey Respondents – 172 responses



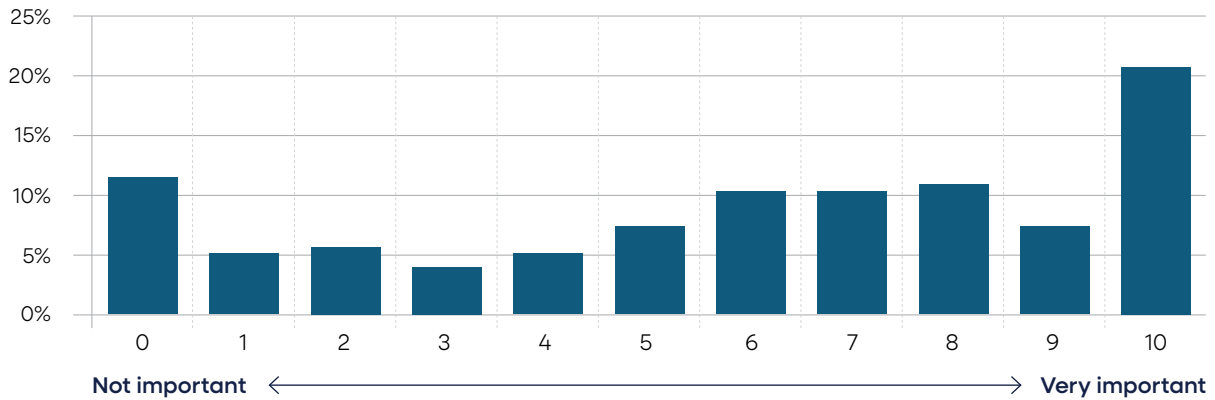
Survey Respondents Age Groups



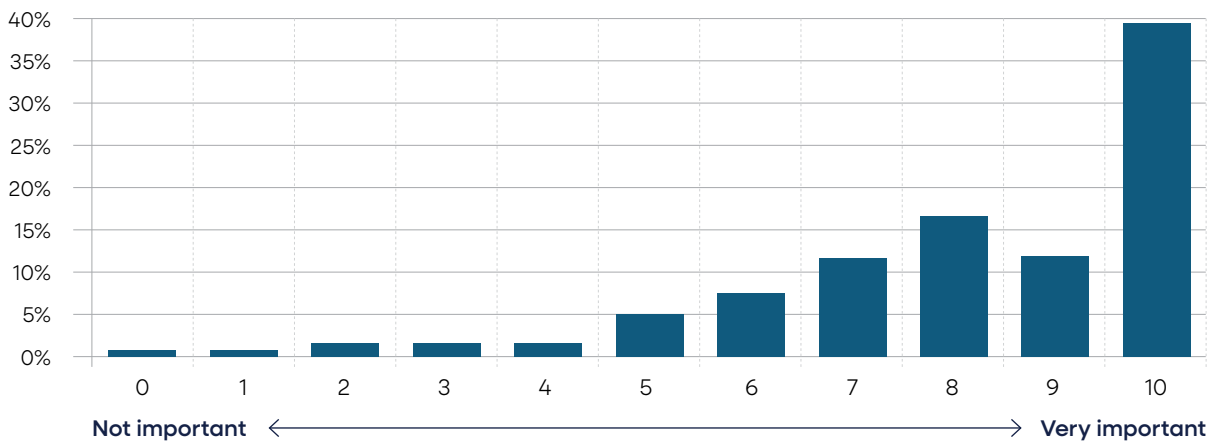
Do you think the Vision still reflects the needs and aspirations of our community?



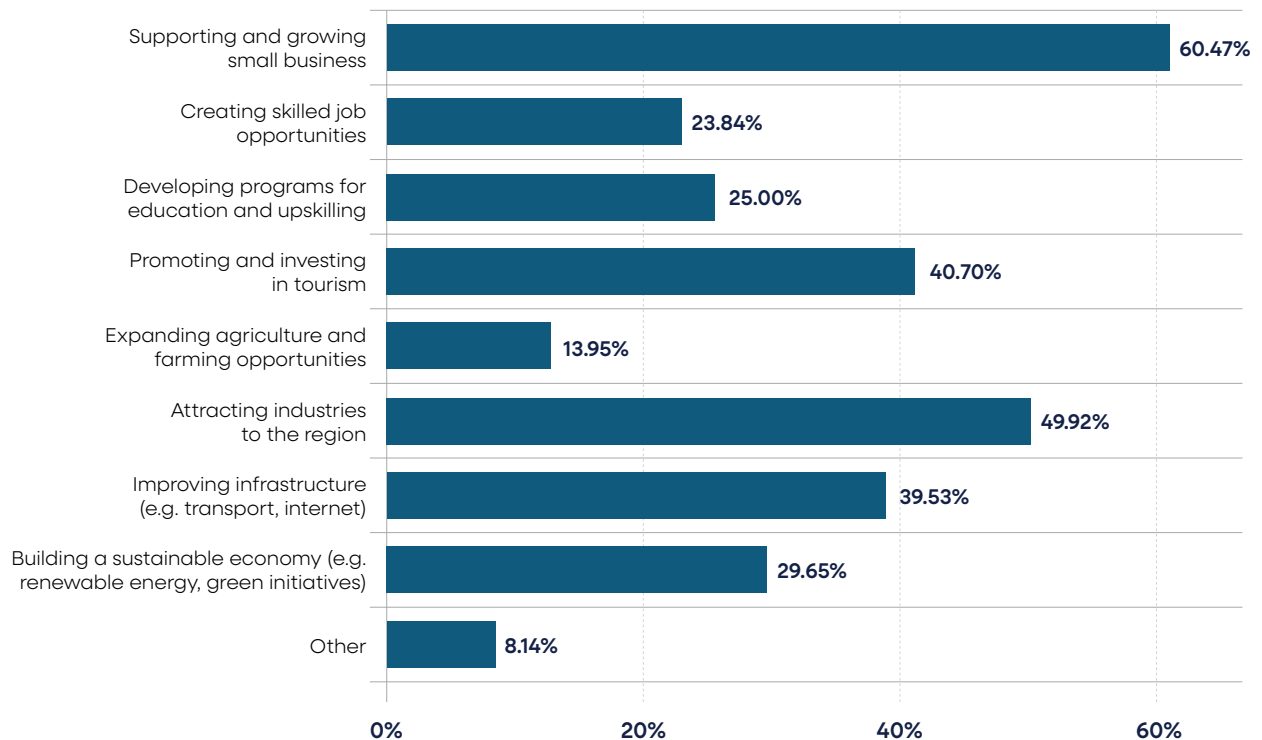
Set a net zero target to address climate change and reduce our environmental impact.



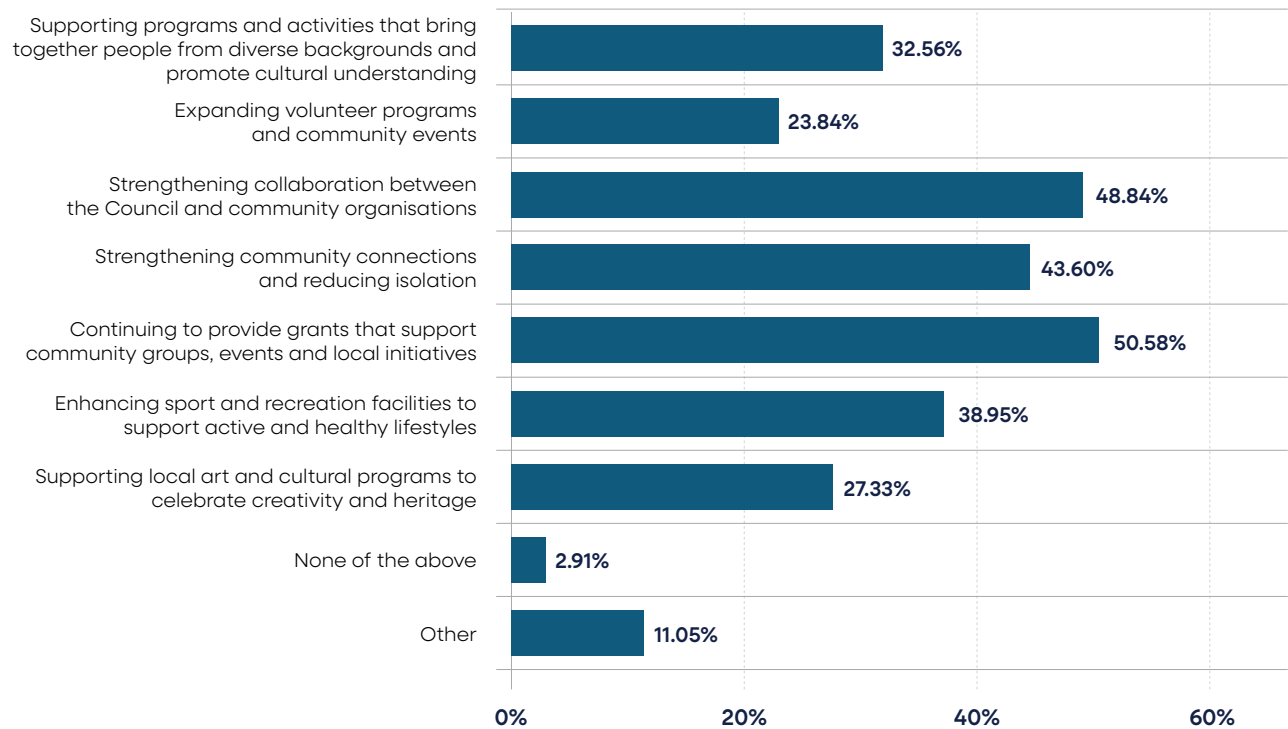
Increasing tree cover to cool the urban area, improve air quality, and support wildlife.



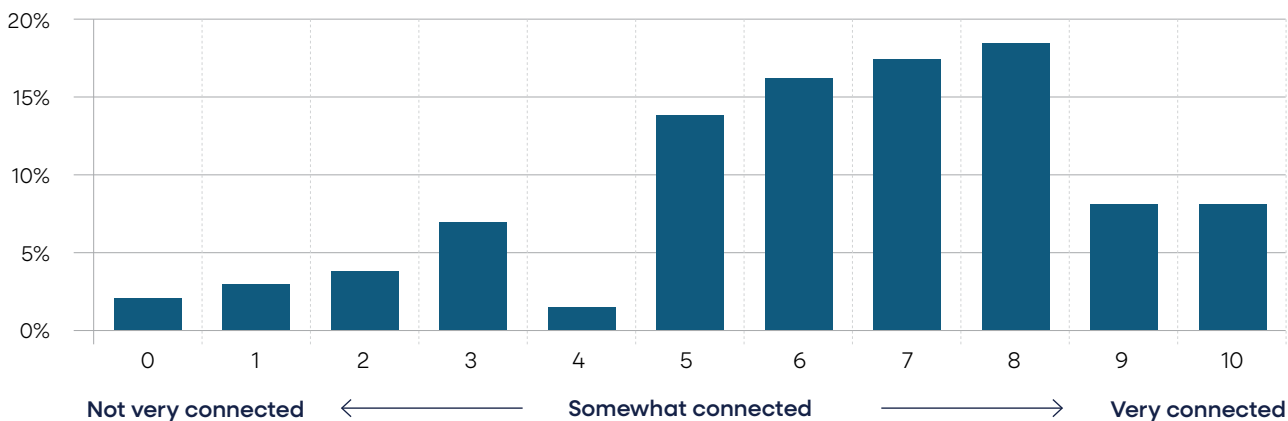
What should Benalla Rural City Council's economy focus on most to thrive in the future?



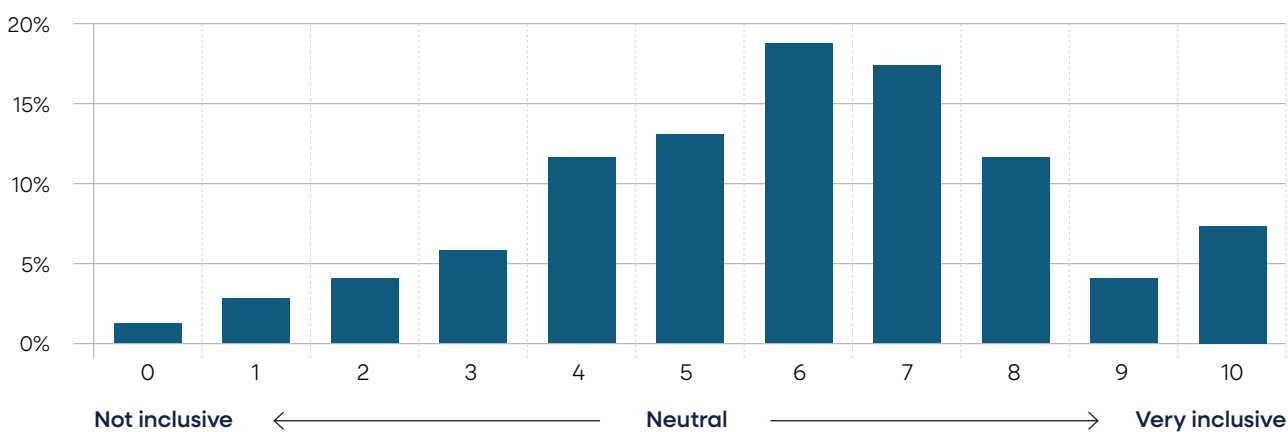
What should Benalla Rural City Council focus on most to promote liveability in the community?



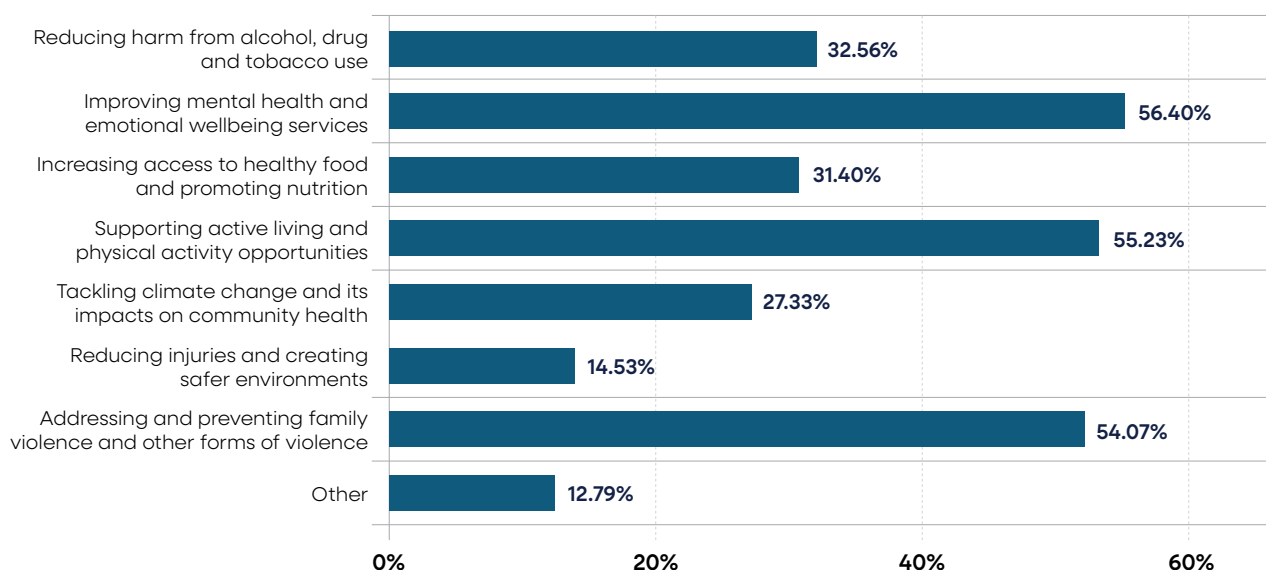
How connected do you feel to your local community?



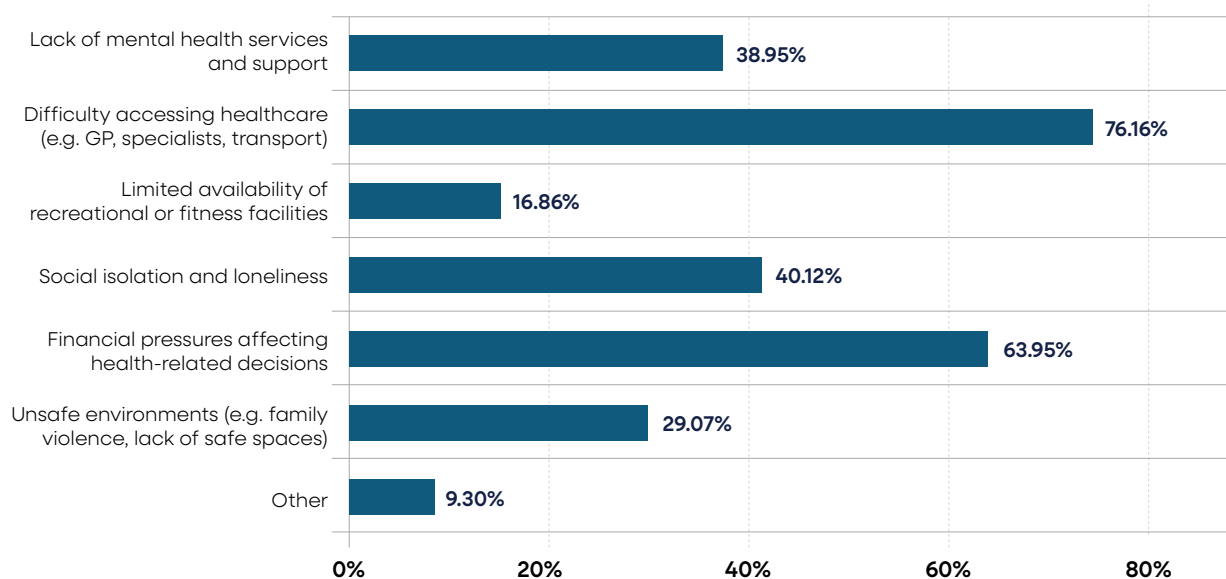
How inclusive do you feel the community is for people from diverse cultural backgrounds, including migrant populations?



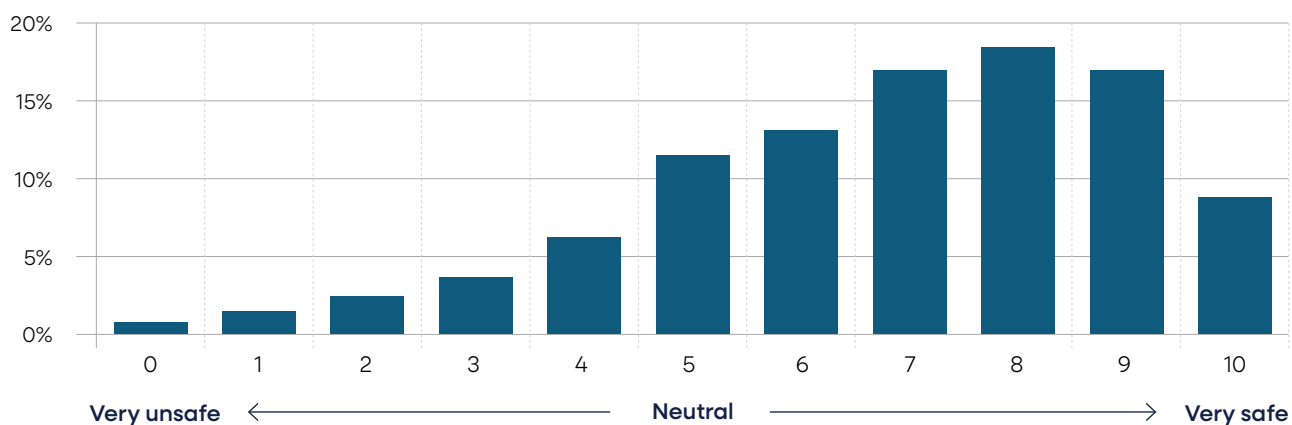
What should Benalla Rural City Council prioritise to improve health and wellbeing across the community?



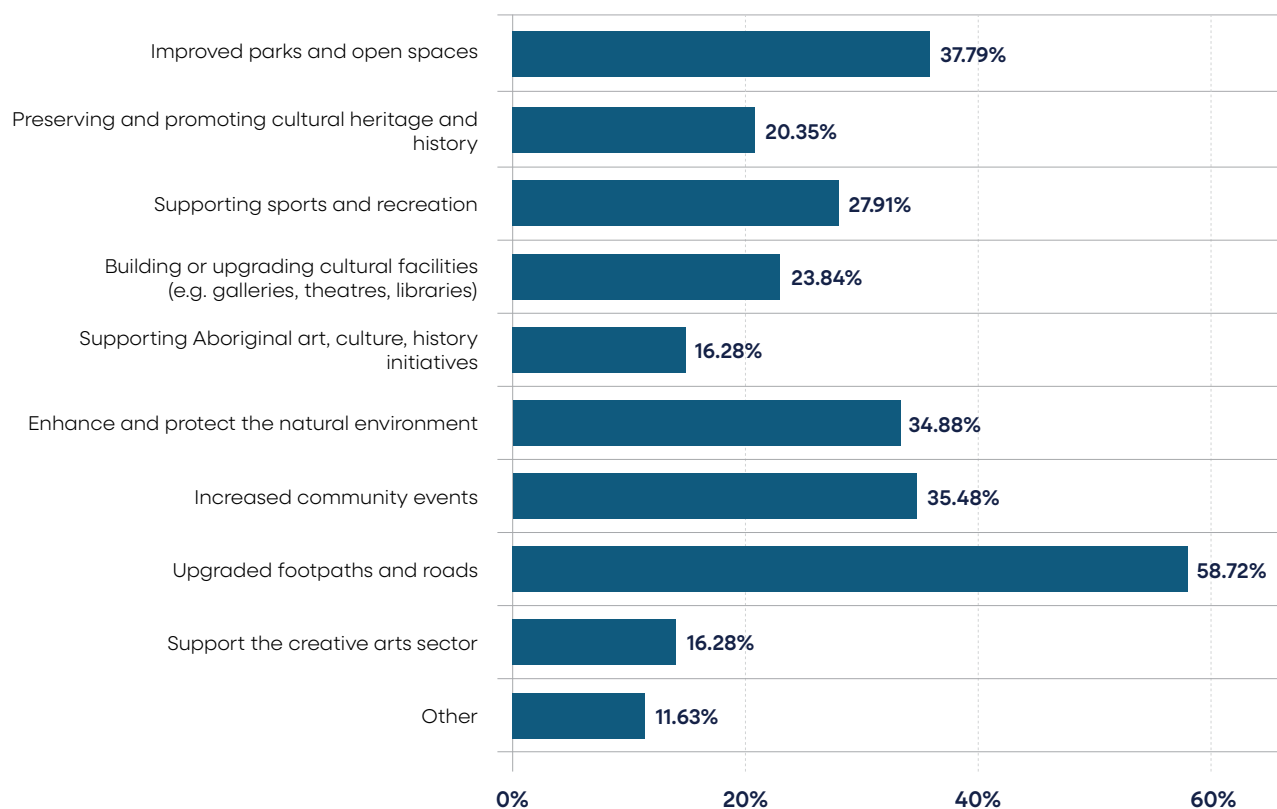
What are the biggest barriers to good health and wellbeing in the community?



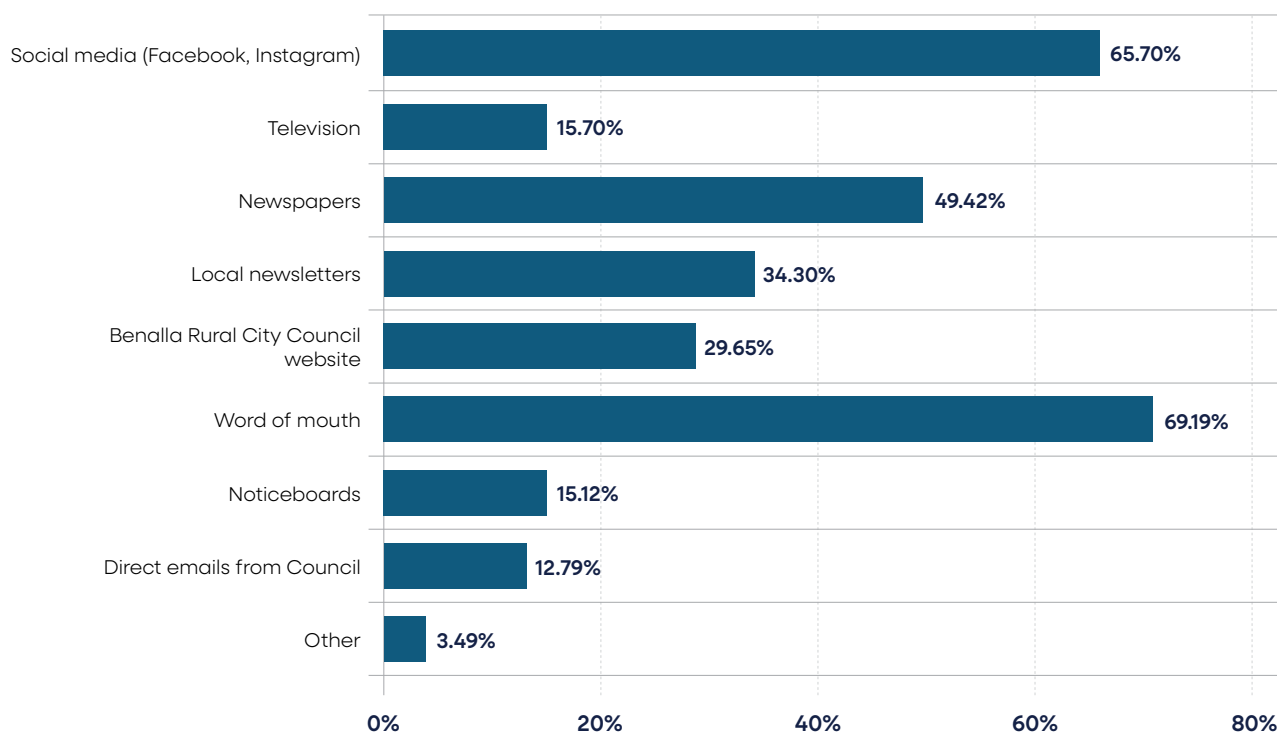
Do you feel safe in your community?



What should Benalla Rural City Council focus on most to help the community thrive in the future?



Where do you (and your household) usually get your information about news, services, or events in your community?



Back cover street art image:

Artwork by Travis Price (Photo by Holly Hawkins 2024)

benalla.vic.gov.au

