Your Community, Your Vision Engagement report

Results of stage one – broad community engagement

MOUNT ALEXANDER
SHIRE COUNCIL

SHAPE

Mount Alexander

Acknowledgement

Mount Alexander Shire Council acknowledges that the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung peoples, proudly survive, and are the traditional custodians of the land now called Mount Alexander Shire. We acknowledge their continued practise of custom and their close cultural, spiritual, physical, social, historical and economic relationship with the land and waters that make up their country, which includes Mount Alexander Shire.

About Your Community, Your Vision

From March to June 2021 we ran an extensive community engagement project, Your Community, Your Vision. This engagement will inform and support our long-term strategic planning, including Shire's first-ever ten-year Community Vision. Here's an overview of what we did, who we heard from and what we heard.

What is the process?

Mount Alexander Shire's ten-year community vision is exactly that, the community's vision. To that end, we set about seeking input from as many people in the shire as possible.

This report presents the results of our shire-wide community engagement effort, to understand the hopes and aspirations of residents, visitors, community groups and businesses for Mount Alexander Shire in 2031.

Over 650 residents let us know what they thought, through our new community engagement platform, Shape Mount Alexander, and printed postcards found throughout the shire. They offered quick, simple 'three-word visions', as well as hundreds of completions of an extensive 15-question survey which helped us dig a bit deeper into how those aspirations might be made a reality.

Mount Alexander Shire's first-ever community vision is an enormously exciting project. It will result in a shared understanding of our goals for the future, and will play a concrete role in shaping the shire and its community.

This consultation will continue as we build on this vision, and develop the four-year Council Plan, which will start putting in place steps to reach the ten-year vision. This report is the presentation of the huge number of responses we received during this initial consultation.

How we communicated to the community

10,000 postcards distributed across the shire, and in rates notices

Full-page advertisements in local papers

Regular ads on local community radio

Regular reminders and updates in our Council Columns

Reminders in our Shire News email newsletter

Targeted social media posts and advertisements

In-person meetings between Councillors or council staff and community groups and organisations

Who we heard from

447
Online contributions from
341
individuals

312
Handwritten responses via postcards

25
Full surveys completed in hard copy

39.3%
Male

56.7%
Female

1.1%
Self-described

2.9%
Prefer not to say

(80.3% of online participants responded to this question)

How we communicated

Who we heard from

Participation by location

Participation by age
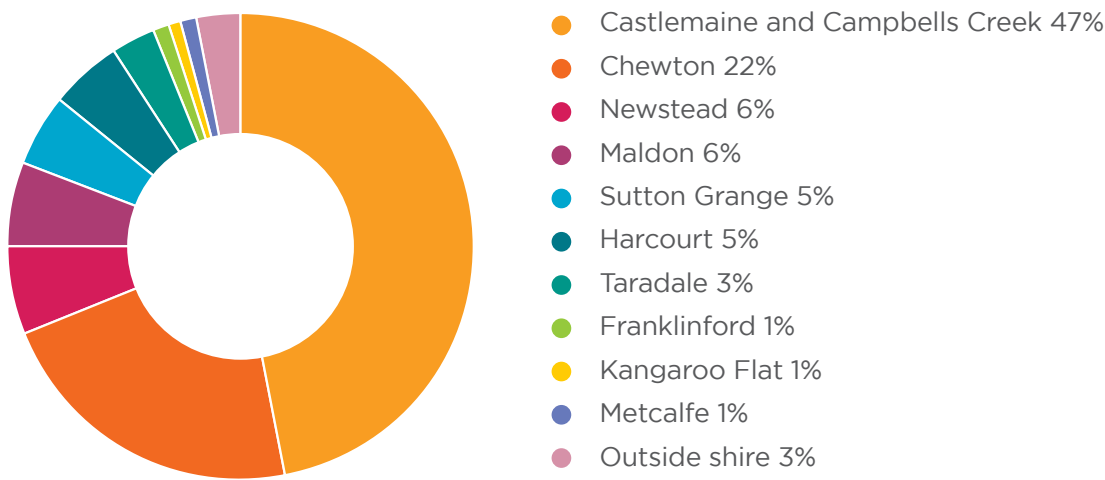
Three-word vision

Full survey

Exploring specific issues

Priorities by age bracket

Summary

Participation by location

Community vision round 1 all contributions by location (postcode)

- Castlemaine and Campbells Creek 47%
- Chewton 22%
- Newstead 6%
- Maldon 6%
- Sutton Grange 5%
- Harcourt 5%
- Taradale 3%
- Franklinford 1%
- Kangaroo Flat 1%
- Metcalfe 1%
- Outside shire 3%

Population (2016 census)

- Castlemaine 38%
- Campbells Creek 10%
- Maldon 9%
- Chewton 8%
- Lockwood South 5%
- Harcourt 5%
- Newstead 3%
- Elphinstone 3%
- Barkers Creek 3%
- Taradale 3%
- Other 13%

How we communicated

Who we heard from

Participation by location

Participation by age

Three-word vision

Full survey

Exploring specific issues

Priorities by age bracket

Summary

Participation by age

Community vision round 1 all contributions by age cohort

- Under 12
- 12 to 17
- 18 to 34
- 35 to 49
- 50 to 69
- 70+

Population spread (2016 census)

- Under 12
- 12 to 17
- 18 to 34
- 35 to 49
- 50 to 69
- 70+

How we communicated

Who we heard from

Participation by location

Participation by age

Three-word vision

Full survey

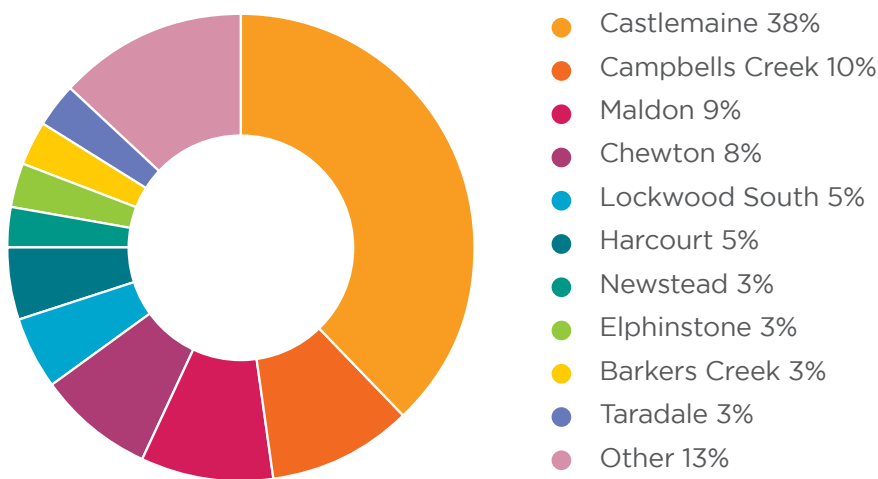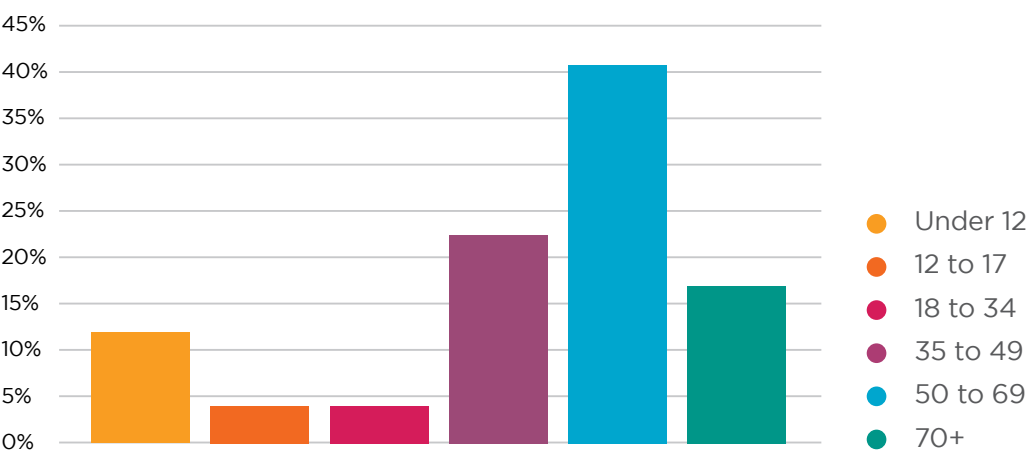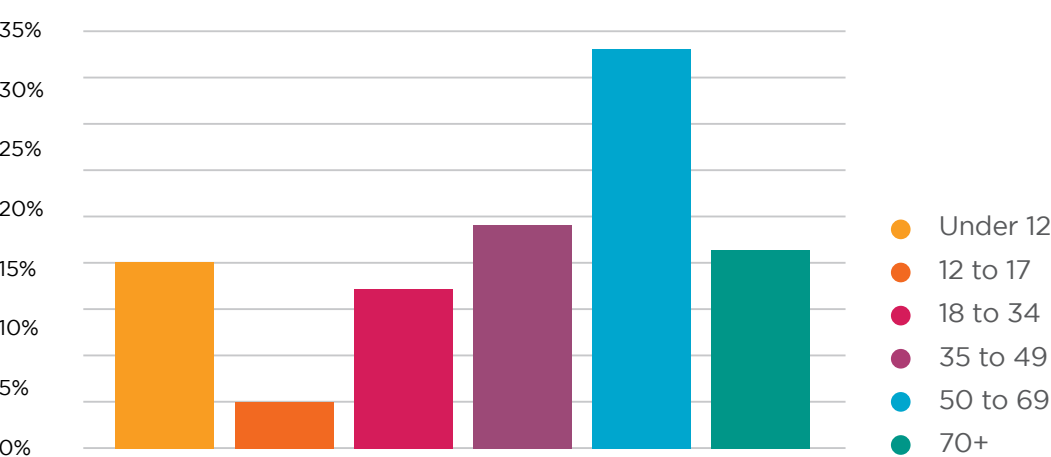Exploring specific issues

Priorities by age bracket

Summary

What you told us/What we heard
Three-word version

Across the three-word vision, the open text responses, and the survey responses, much of the data collected could be sorted into one of the following ten categories or themes:

- Environment & Climate
- People & Community
- Health & Wellbeing
- Services
- Arts & Culture
- Education, Employment & Opportunity
- Economy
- Movement & Infrastructure
- Places & Spaces
- Access & Accessibility

Your "three-word vision"

What are three words that describe Mount Alexander Shire today?

Three words that describe the shire and its community today

People & Community 33%
Services 15%
Health & Wellbeing 12%
Arts & Culture 8%
Movement & Infrastructure 7%
Access & Accessibility 7%
Economy 7%
Environment 4%
Education, Employment & Opportunity 4%
Places & Spaces 3%

0% 5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30% 35%

What are three words that you think SHOULD describe the shire in ten years' time?

Three words that should describe the shire and its community in ten years

Category	Percentage
People & Community 17%	17%
Health & Wellbeing 12%	12%
Services 12%	12%
Economy 11%	11%
Access & Accessibility 10%	10%
Arts & Culture 9%	9%
Environment 8%	8%
Places & Spaces 7%	7%
Education, Employment & Opportunity 7%	7%
Movement & Infrastructure 7%	7%

0% 2% 4% 6% 8% 10% 12% 14% 16% 18%
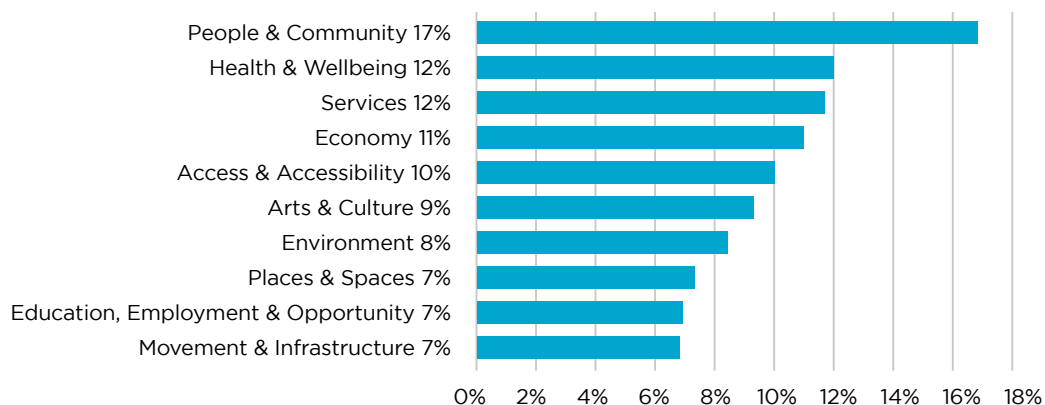
Three words, today vs ten years from now

Category	Today	Ten years
Services	15%	12%
Places & Spaces	3%	7%
People & Community	33%	17%
Movement & Infrastructure	7%	7%
Health & Wellbeing	12%	12%
Environment	4%	8%
Education, Employment & Opportunity	4%	7%
Economy	7%	11%
Arts & Culture	8%	9%
Access & Accessibility	7%	10%

0% 5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30% 35%

● Today
● Ten years

How we communicated

Who we heard from

Participation by location

Participation by age

Three-word vision

Full survey

Exploring specific issues

Priorities by age bracket

Summary

What you told us/What we heard
Full survey

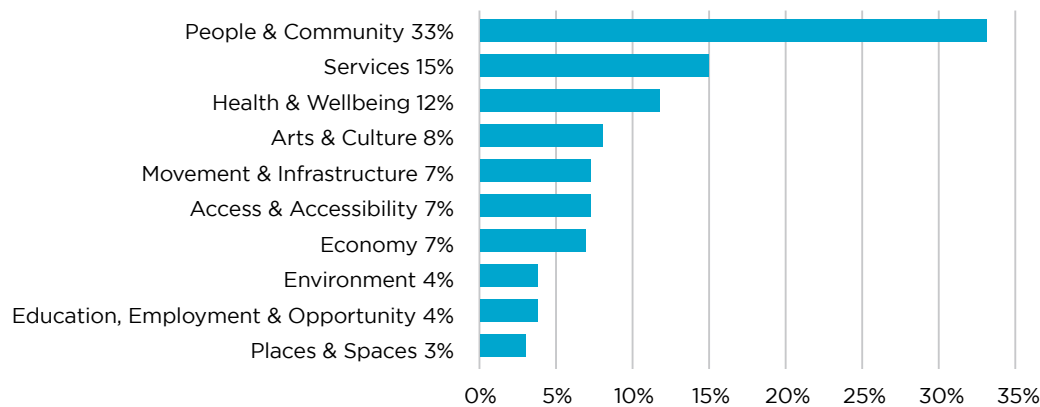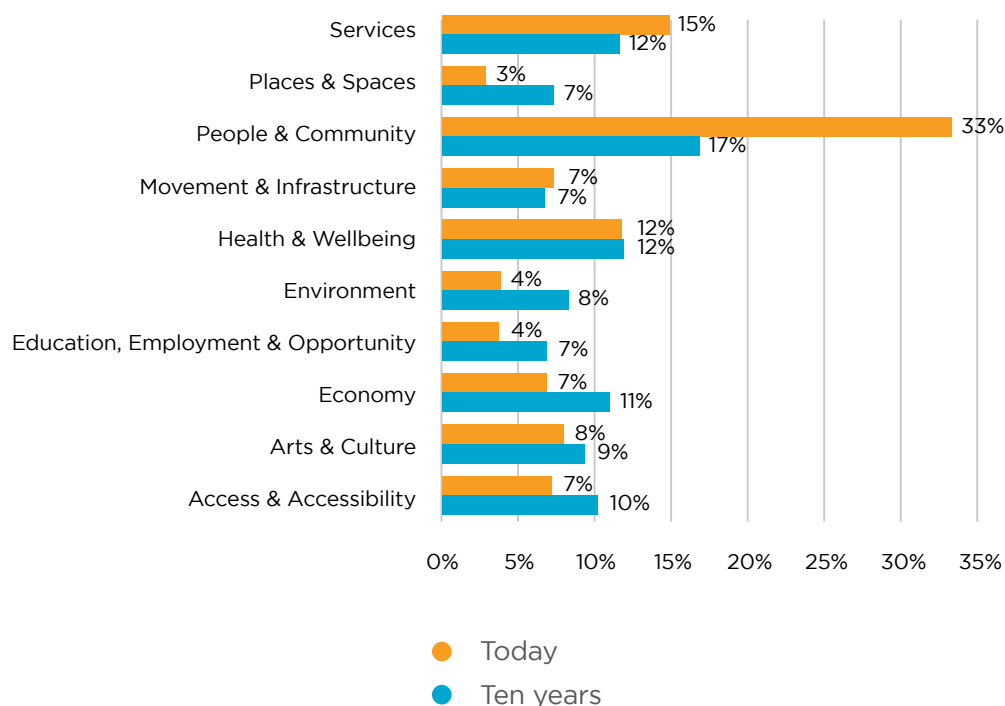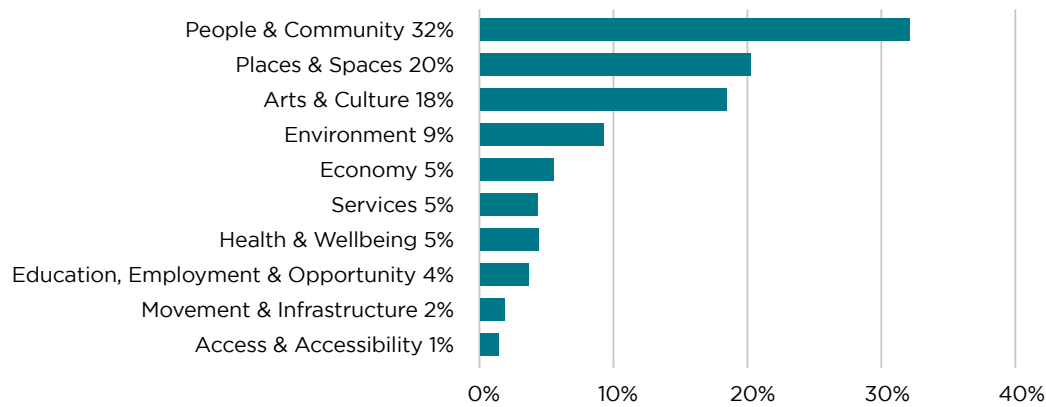### Q1. What do you love about living in Mount Alexander Shire?

Tell us what you love about living in Mount Alexander Shire

Category	Percentage
People & Community	32%
Places & Spaces	20%
Arts & Culture	18%
Environment	9%
Economy	5%
Services	5%
Health & Wellbeing	5%
Education, Employment & Opportunity	4%
Movement & Infrastructure	2%
Access & Accessibility	1%

Some indicative responses

- "Great neighbors, great amenities, lots of activities available, great medical services, fantastic hospital, lots of green space, good council services."

- "Leanganook and a great range of interesting bush walks. Great range of arts music programs events. Diverse, so can generally find "your tribe.""

- "The heritage values, the trees, the weather. Also like the open-mindedness of the people in the Shire, I feel free to be myself, no pressure to conform to something. Very lovely community here."

- "An inclusive, vibrant and engaged community. People with great values, socially and environmentally."

Q2. What makes living here unique?

What makes living here unique?

Category	%
People & Community	26%
Places & Spaces	23%
Arts & Culture	18%
Environment	10%
Services	8%
Movement & Infrastructure	5%
Access & Accessibility	3%
Economy	3%
Health & Wellbeing	3%
Education, Employment & Opportunity	1%

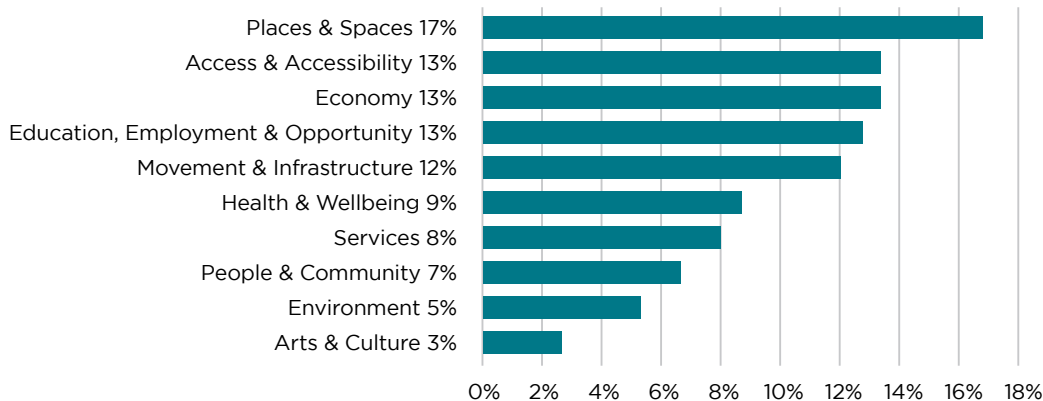(Horizontal axis: 0%, 5%, 10%, 15%, 20%, 25%, 30%)
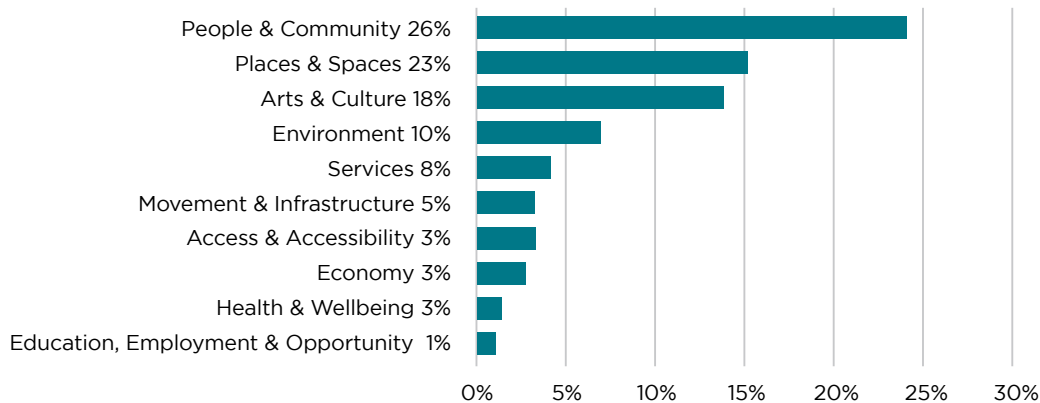
Some indicative responses

- "The folks both old timers and newcomers, vibrant arts community, great Cafés. close enough to Melbourne and no traffic."

- "Historical buildings in Castlemaine and Maldon. The weather, hot during the day and crisp at night. Can commute to Melbourne or Bendigo easily for work."

- "The arts and culture space is really special, especially for a small shire like ours. That arts and culture attracts artists and interesting folks to live and work here which results in an inclusive and open-minded atmosphere."

- "The landscape and quality of hospitality."

How we communicated

Who we heard from

Participation by location

Participation by age

Three-word vision

Full survey

Exploring specific issues

Priorities by age bracket

Summary

Q3. What's one key thing that needs to change to make the shire a better place to live?

What's the one key thing that needs to change?

Places & Spaces 17%
Access & Accessibility 13%
Economy 13%
Education, Employment & Opportunity 13%
Movement & Infrastructure 12%
Health & Wellbeing 9%
Services 8%
People & Community 7%
Environment 5%
Arts & Culture 3%

Some indicative responses

- "Housing affordability."
- "Less resource use and less carbon emissions."
- "Increased environmental sustainability."
- "A stronger focus on community health with outreach and inclusive services that assist those who are socially disadvantaged."
- "Better internet coverage."
- "Better career prospects."
- "Places for people to live, not just wealthy people moving from the city."
- "Safer roads, verges to bike ride and commute on, a cheaper supermarket."
- "Better management of natural environment through weed control."
- "Disability access, more parking!!!"
- "Better bicycle friendly road management."

How we communicated

Who we heard from

Participation by location

Participation by age

Three-word vision

Full survey

Exploring specific issues

Priorities by age bracket

Summary

Q4. How would you describe your everyday encounters with Mount Alexander Shire Council?
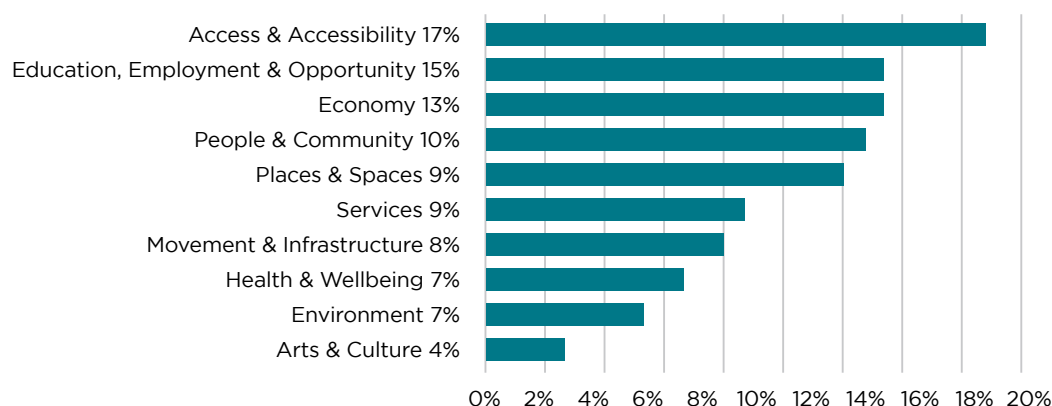

Some indicative responses

- "Positive, when I interact with workers they are kind and helpful and generally care about what they do. I would also that the services Council provides are highly valuable to all shire members."

- "Terrible. Not responsive or accessible. No real direct numbers for help with dogs - can't report an unsafe dog or dogs off-lead in banned or on-lead areas in real time to get help."

- "A bit off putting to be honest."

- "Positive. The Council achieves a lot for a small population and revenue base."

- "I think the Council is isolated from the community by the behaviour of a few residents. Thus the Council has become a fortress and not very welcoming."

- "Friendly and good."

Q5. What are your aspirations for the community in ten years?

What are your aspirations for the community in ten years?

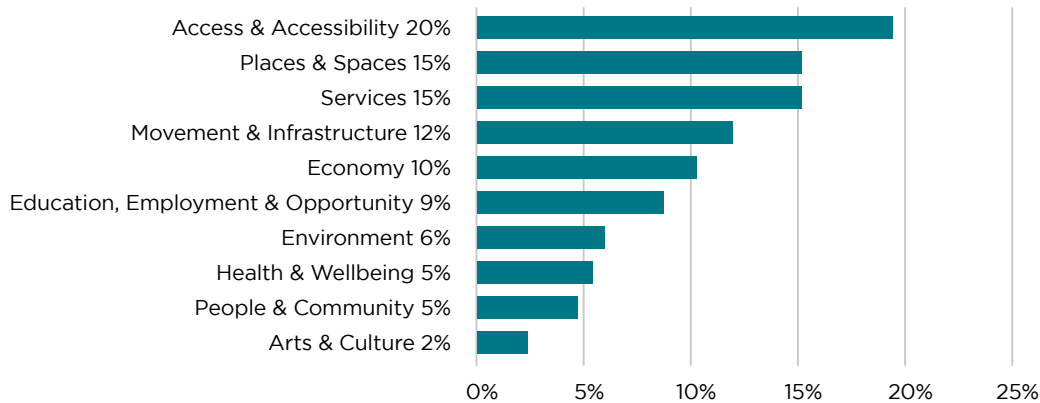| Category	Percentage
Access & Accessibility 17%	
Education, Employment & Opportunity 15%	
Economy 13%	
People & Community 10%	
Places & Spaces 9%	
Services 9%	
Movement & Infrastructure 8%	
Health & Wellbeing 7%	
Environment 7%	
Arts & Culture 4%	

(Chart axis: 0% 2% 4% 6% 8% 10% 12% 14% 16% 18% 20%)

Some indicative responses

- "Fantastic sporting facilities, preserve the heritage and uniqueness of a smaller town, appropriate development and not trying to build on every square metre of land. Beautiful parks. No shopping centres."

- "I hope it continues to be diverse, passionate and unpretentious. I hope there's accessible housing and facilities for the poor and disabled. I hope the Dja Dja Wurrung continue to grow in strength. And I hope local women and LGBTIQ+ people feel safe."

- "A more inclusive and accessible environment and community for people with disability or are isolated by difference."

- "Strong action on climate change with a big focus on equity, stronger involvement of Traditional Owners, creating a connected, supportive, green, healthy environment."

- "That it keeps its unique character and new areas don't turn into bland suburbs that aren't walkable and diverse."

Q6. What is something we need to start doing in order to build your desired community for the future?
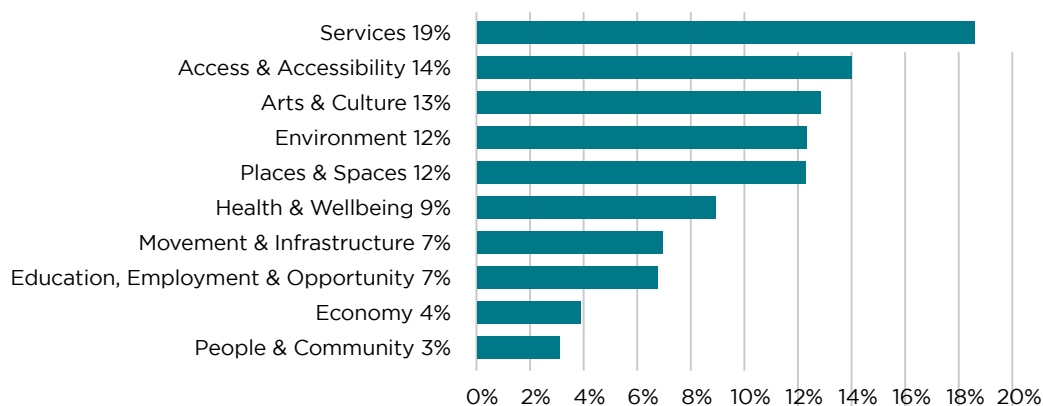
What is something we need to start doing?

Category	Percentage
Access & Accessibility	20%
Places & Spaces	15%
Services	15%
Movement & Infrastructure	12%
Economy	10%
Education, Employment & Opportunity	9%
Environment	6%
Health & Wellbeing	5%
People & Community	5%
Arts & Culture	2%

Some indicative responses

- "Progressive initiative to address sustainability. Increase in health and wellbeing supports across all age groups."

- "More meaningful community engagement."

- "Maintain affordable housing!!! Not just public housing but consider putting caps on housing prices instead of letting real estates run the show. If Council wants to maintain vibrancy, affordability is key. Consider some kind of policy for locals."

- "Working on a supermarket that is affordable, encouraging family-friendly businesses, reduce cost of living all round."

- "Directly provide social housing options/ retirement living options close to key facilities and services. Create strategies focused on enhancing funding opportunities for the arts and cultural industries."

- "Aged care quality to continue good and innovative care, accessible housing."

How we communicated

Who we heard from

Participation by location

Participation by age

Three-word vision

Full survey

Exploring specific issues

Priorities by age bracket

Summary

Q7. What is something we need to keep doing?

What's something we need to keep doing?

Category	Percentage
Services	19%
Access & Accessibility	14%
Arts & Culture	13%
Environment	12%
Places & Spaces	12%
Health & Wellbeing	9%
Movement & Infrastructure	7%
Education, Employment & Opportunity	7%
Economy	4%
People & Community	3%

Some indicative responses

- "Asking questions and listening to not just the loud community, but the quiet ones too."
- "Keep working on improving footpaths, trails, seating, water fountains, etc."
- "Keep encouraging artists of various fields to become or remain residents."
- "Maintain our strong artistic influence and sense of community."
- "Maintain the excellent family support services including playgroups, Maternal and Child Health services, library, parks, daycare, etc."
- "Protect from over development and maintain the local and quiet features."

How we communicated

Who we heard from

Participation by location

Participation by age

Three-word vision

Full survey

Exploring specific issues

Priorities by age bracket

Summary

Q8. What is something we need to stop doing?

Given the negative framing of this question, the responses did not fit comfortably into the themes that emerged across other questions.
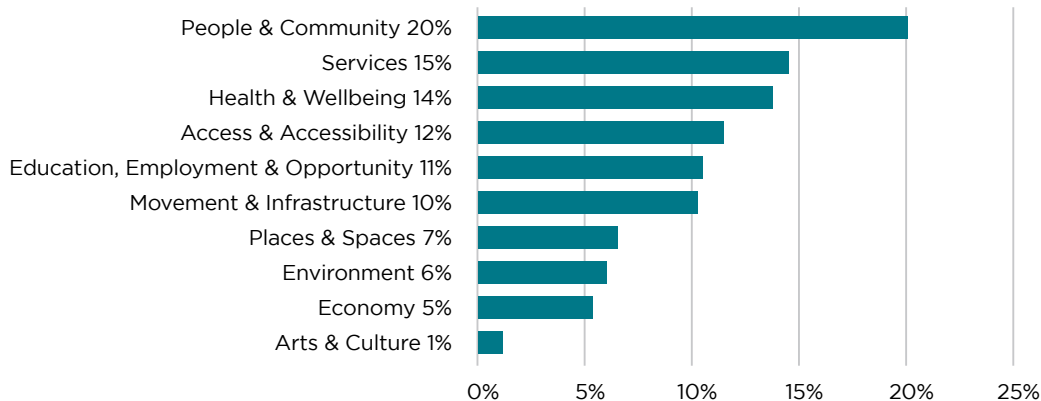
Some indicative responses

- "Identity of Castlemaine as an Anglo town - promote more ethnic diversity - settlement of refugees and migrants in the shire."
- "As money gets tighter it'll be harder to justify supporting minority groups."
- "Services that can be provided by community groups."
- "Radical politics which is not supported by the majority of residents."
- "The past. There is significant heritage in Mount Alexander, but if we focus too much on it, that's all it will be. Preservation of heritage is so often about aesthetics, rather than being concerned with future proofing the shire for success. Why not both?"
- "Listening to NIMBYs."

How we communicated

Who we heard from

Participation by location

Participation by age

Three-word vision

Full survey

Exploring specific issues

Priorities by age bracket

Summary

Q9. What does a healthy and liveable community look like?

What does a healthy and liveable community look like?

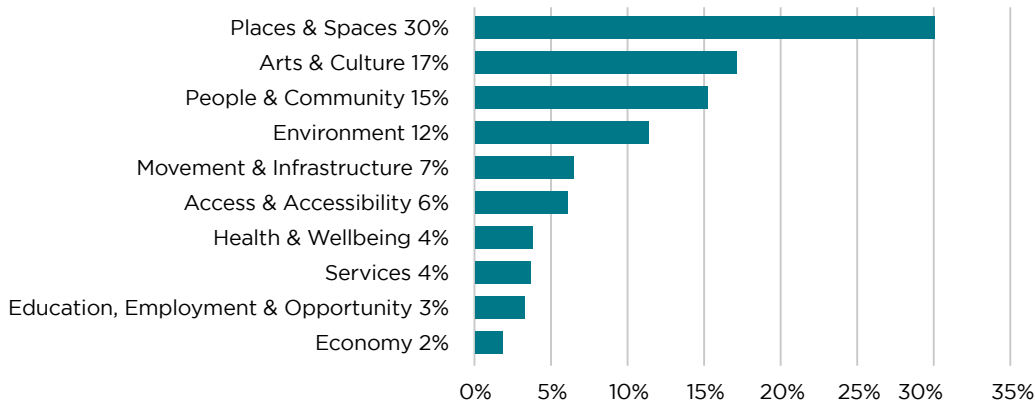| Category	%
People & Community	20%
Services	15%
Health & Wellbeing	14%
Access & Accessibility	12%
Education, Employment & Opportunity	11%
Movement & Infrastructure	10%
Places & Spaces	7%
Environment	6%
Economy	5%
Arts & Culture	1%

Some indicative responses

- "Accessible community health services. Well maintained and protected natural environment assets. A variety of community activities, events and exhibitions."

- "Green, connected and walkable."

- "Mitigation of impending impacts of climate change. More cycle paths. Inclusive and celebrating diversity. Improved recycling programs - I'm happy to sort my rubbish more."

- "Safer road crossings, paths for people with reduced mobility. Quality early childhood."

- "A liveable community is one that has affordable and appropriate housing, supportive community features and services, and adequate mobility options."

- "A thriving diverse community, that is connected and resilient, well serviced with spaces for all."

How we communicated

Who we heard from

Participation by location

Participation by age

Three-word vision

Full survey

Exploring specific issues

Priorities by age bracket

Summary

Q10. How would you like family and friends who live outside the shire to describe it?

How would you like friends and family outside the shire to describe it?

Category	Percentage
Places & Spaces 30%	
Arts & Culture 17%	
People & Community 15%	
Environment 12%	
Movement & Infrastructure 7%	
Access & Accessibility 6%	
Health & Wellbeing 4%	
Services 4%	
Education, Employment & Opportunity 3%	
Economy 2%	

(Horizontal bar chart, x-axis from 0% to 35%)

Some indicative responses

- "A cool place where everyone just seems to get along, it feels so environmentally conscious."

- "It's a great place to live. Beautiful bushland, friendly quiet streets. A lot of cafés but in desperate need of a variety of stores."

- "A great country environment and a caring community."

- "A beautiful country town where you can still go out and have a great time, either indoors or outdoors."

- "A fantastic community of people from all walks of life that all interact well. Accepting of others, amazing schools. Is well placed to take it to the next level in leading the way of sustainability and a strong arts culture."

- "That area has the most amazing vibe. It is some of the best bush around and the creek is so beautiful."

How we communicated

Who we heard from

Participation by location

Participation by age

Three-word vision

Full survey

Exploring specific issues

Priorities by age bracket

Summary

Exploring specific issues

Q11. How do we make sure everyone matters in the community?

Some indicative responses

- "Ensuring housing is affordable so we can have a diverse community."

- "Encourage dialogue and inclusion. Welcome everyone to the discussion table. This survey is a good example."

- "Celebrate diversity. Celebrate and support the Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal people to have their voice heard, a place to call their own, their knowledge and stories be shared and celebrated."

- "This is a good start. Listen carefully to those people who feel left behind. Support community organisations who are working with them."

- "Assist those who are disadvantaged. Prioritise community health and wellbeing. Have a commitment to social justice and welcoming migrants and refugees."

- "Looking out for our most disadvantaged and vulnerable people. If we don't look after these people we lose much as a society and community."

How we communicated

Who we heard from

Participation by location

Participation by age

Three-word vision

Full survey

Exploring specific issues

Priorities by age bracket

Summary

Q12. How do we improve the shire through construction and development?

The nature of this question led responses to focus on the themes of Movement & Infrastructure, Places & Spaces, and Access & Accessibility.

Key themes:

Consulting with and listening to community over development decisions

Improving access to housing, and improved housing affordability

Ensuring the shire's natural beauty is retained

Accessibility for older people, younger people and those living with disabilities

Some indicative responses

- "Improved access for people with disability, e.g. disabled access playground equipment. Better use of recycled, Australian made and environmentally sustainable materials in construction. Improved acknowledgement of Aboriginal sites and stories about place."

- "Business Park Wesley Hill doing well it seems, sports well catered for, mainly low cost housing needed."

- "Affordable housing. Bike paths and lanes."

- "By making them better and safer places to walk, ride and think."

- "Making our towns (even the small ones) places where people love to walk and wander - cars are great to get around the shire, but we should be walking once we're in a town."

- "Rejuvenation of older buildings back to glory, green spaces maintained, walking/riding trails and tracks upgraded. More affordable housing, a train station at Harcourt."

How we communicated

Who we heard from

Participation by location

Participation by age

Three-word vision

Full survey

Exploring specific issues

Priorities by age bracket

Summary

Q13. How do you think the local community should continue to contribute to addressing climate change?

The nature of this question led responses to focus on the theme of Environment & Climate.

Key themes:

Ensuring climate is considered in development and infrastructure decisions

A commitment to renewable energy – particularly solar – and better recycling and waste management

Supporting local efforts to improve sustainability

Focusing development away from polluting cars and towards walking and cycling

Some indicative responses

- "Continue the great work of providing affordable solar panels to homes. More sustainable options. Greater local recycling facilities and options. Facilitate safe cycling in the shire and between shires."

- "Weed management and revegetation as well as better access to recycling."

- "Continue to work on Community Transition Plan for ZNET emissions plan and celebrate achievements. Increase/set target for homes with solar panels."

- "Encouragement, education and support for renewables. Making Castlemaine and surrounds more bike friendly."

- "Support businesses to remain carbon neutral, provide better recycling options and composting to houses."

- "Solar panels support. Electric car charging station. Better rubbish collection."

How we communicated

Who we heard from

Participation by location

Participation by age

Three-word vision

Full survey

Exploring specific issues

Priorities by age bracket

Summary

Q14. How do we ensure a creative, thriving culture?

The nature of this question led responses to focus on the theme of Arts & Culture.

Key themes:

Continue supporting venues where creative culture takes place

Housing affordability

Some indicative responses

- "Supporting the places where creative activities take place - if there are venues to perform or display, the creatives will find them and use them."

- "By ensuring the shire is accessible and affordable to all."

- "Keep doing what you're doing."

- "Support the art community. Simple really."

- "Better access to performance spaces for local artists. Continued small grants to community arts events and initiatives. Affordable housing (artists and writers are relatively poor)."

- "Bring First Nations into Council as critical friends/cultural advisors. Employ people who are creative and vibrant."

How we communicated

Who we heard from

Participation by location

Participation by age

Three-word vision

Full survey

Exploring specific issues

Priorities by age bracket

Summary

Q15. How do we ensure everyone has access to education and employment?

The nature of this question led responses to focus on the theme of Access & Accessibility, and Education, Employment & Opportunity.

Key themes:

Housing affordability

Access and accessibility for people living with disabilities and other obstacles to employment and education

An effort to support local business and to encourage patronage of those businesses

Some indicative responses

- "Start early. Evidence has proven quality care and education for children between birth and three years is the most cost effective way to get the best educational and employment outcomes. More employment programs for people with disability in mainstream."

- "Free and accessible mental and social health support."

- "Social enterprises offer great potential for our community, and creative hubs can provide diverse whole-of-life education opportunities. Advocating for TAFE would be good."

- "Disability access! Disability facilities. Improve the high school! Create programs there for better mental health and inclusion for students."

- "Advocate for quality facilities and good transport links. Support local employers."

How we communicated

Who we heard from

Participation by location

Participation by age

Three-word vision

Full survey

Exploring specific issues

Priorities by age bracket

Summary

Priorities by age bracket

Under 18
Fun, eco-friendly, green, safe, clean, sustainable, shops, parks, bikes.

18 to 34
Support, develop, local, people, town, access, new, house, afford, opportunity, service, health, active.

35 to 49
People, support, local, house, town, need, access, live, art, diverse, space, nature, connect, develop.

50 to 69
People, support, local, town, need, house, access, art, culture, diverse, develop, environs, access, busy, work.

70+
People, support, place, live, local, environment, house, town, art, creative, access.

Summary

The response from the Mount Alexander Shire community was overwhelming, and enormously informative.

There was a clear understanding of the purpose of this project – the answers to our questions laid out that the community is generally happy with life in the shire, and has a clear vision of what the shire could look like in the future.

Moreover there was a clear sense of what needs to be done in order to get there.

People valued the friendly sense of community here, the creative culture, the environment – both in natural beauty and built heritage – and the unique nature of the individual towns that make up the shire.

When considering the future of the shire, responses moved to notions of connectedness, sustainability, inclusiveness, creativity and community. There was a clear understanding that to get there, work needed to be done to preserve our natural environment, ensure fairness and affordability, contribute to addressing climate change, and support people facing personal or systemic challenges to be more fully able to partake in what the shire has to offer.

How we communicated

Who we heard from

Participation by location

Participation by age

Three-word vision

Full survey

Exploring specific issues

Priorities by age bracket

Summary

Human Rights Statement

It is considered that this policy does not impact negatively on any rights identified in the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006). Mount Alexander Shire Council is committed to consultation and cooperation between management and employees. Mount Alexander Shire Council will formally involve the Workplace Consultative Committee in any workplace change that may affect employees.