

**Our
Bass
Coast.
Our
Future.**



***Federal
Government
Advocacy
Priorities***

July 2021

Bass Coast Shire Council acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the first Australians and recognises that they have a unique relationship with the land and water. Council also recognises that we are situated on the traditional lands of the Bunurong/ Boon Wurrung, members of the Kulin Nation who have lived here for thousands of years. We offer our respect to their elders past and present and through them, all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



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Mayor's Message



The effects of COVID-19 hit our community hard. With our economy heavily reliant on tourism many businesses were forced to diversify and pivot to respond to a new world. And while Council has been there to support, we need investment to help grow the local tourism market. Our priorities take advantage of opportunities and present ways in which other levels of government can help us help ourselves so that we can recover and rebound stronger than ever before.

Our priorities also respond to our unprecedented population and economic growth. Since 2007 our population has increased by 21.6 per cent and every summer our population temporarily swells to over 80,000. We also welcome 3.4 million annual visitors. Projected population growth will see Bass Coast grow from an estimated population of 36,320 in 2021 to 46,429 by 2036.

Our economy is growing; in fact we are the fastest growing economy in regional Victoria and the third fastest growing economy in Victoria. Since 2007 our economy has grown 45.6 per cent, out pacing all other local government areas except Wyndham and Melton.

This anticipated growth brings challenges, but also many exciting opportunities. Significant challenges include seasonal visitor fluctuations, labour and skills shortages, key worker accommodation concerns, traffic congestion and transport linkages, global economic uncertainty, increasing environmental pressures including climate change, and increasing competition from other destinations.

We have the opportunity to drive regional tourism through the creation of flagship tourism infrastructure centred around, nature based tourism, recreation, arts and culture. These projects will provide local jobs and grow our visitor economy.

We will focus on ensuring Bass Coast is a place where our people thrive and a region people want to live. We will continue to tackle climate change, improve digital connectivity and work towards making sure your journey, whether on foot or by car or bike, is safer and less congested.

Council continues to invest time and funds into creating strategies that support future development. We are seeing significant investments, both publically and privately and continue to work closely with the Federal Government to advocate for our priorities, in a highly competitive regional funding environment.

Our community has been very clear. They have asked us to continue to strongly focus on advocating to the Federal Government on key priorities.

We are thrilled to see our advocacy work already paying off with the funding announcements for the Country University Centre Bass Coast and erosion mitigation and adaptation. However, it is vital that we maintain our focus for our other priority projects, which are critical to the liveability of Bass Coast.

We look towards Our Future.

Cr Brett Tessari
Mayor

About Bass Coast

From surfing and cycling to wining and dining, and everything in between, Bass Coast provides the perfect balance of rural, residential and holiday lifestyles for all to enjoy – all with stunning backdrops of beaches, bushland and rolling hills.

Bass Coast is approximately 130km south east of Melbourne and is bounded by Western Port in the north and west, Cardinia Shire in the north east, South Gippsland Shire in the east and Bass Strait in the south.

Bass Coast's main centres are Wonthaggi, Cowes, Inverloch, San Remo and Grantville. In addition, Bass Coast comprises a further 28 towns.

Bass Coast has over 35,000 permanent residents and our population more than doubles during the peak summer season. Our proximity to Melbourne makes it also very attractive to visitors and to people wanting to make a sea change.

Bass Coast is home to Phillip Island Nature Parks and boasts many beautiful beaches, unique nature reserves and many major events that attract more than 3.5 million visitors each year, such as the Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix at the Phillip Island Circuit.

Snapshot

36,320

Estimated residential population

Over 80,000

Population during peak visitor periods

865km²

Size of Bass Coast Shire

130km

Approximate distance from Melbourne





\$66 million
investment

Aquatics - Phillip Island and Wonthaggi

Bass Coast Aquatic and Leisure Centre - Wonthaggi

A new centrepiece for leisure activities for Wonthaggi and surrounding townships. The current facility is 45 years old and restricted in its ability to provide the community with programs to improve health and wellbeing, it does little in attracting increased membership, casual use, events, activities and competitions.

The proposed \$42 million Bass Coast Aquatics and Leisure Centre will feature a range of facilities and be capable of accommodating competitive swimming, leisure activities, general community use and major regional events.

Council seeks **\$31.5 million** towards construction.

Phillip Island Aquatics Centre

For more than two decades the community has lobbied for an aquatics facility to cater for the Phillip Island Community. Residents must commute long distances to participate in a number of aquatic and recreational activities. The population of Phillip Island and San Remo is anticipated to increase by 37 per cent by 2035 and host an additional 1.6 million visitors per annum.

Council has purchased land in Cowes on the southwest corner of the intersection of Phillip Island and Ventnor Roads for the future home of the Phillip Island Aquatics and Recreation Precinct. The proposed \$46 million Centre will provide for anticipated growth and meet the recreation standards expected of a top tourist town.

Council seeks **\$34.5 million** towards construction.

Supporting Strategies

- Bass Coast Aquatics Strategy 2015
- Active Bass Coast 2018
- Victorian Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) five-point plan – Tourism is Victoria's Business
- Victorian Visitor Economy Strategy Action Plan 2016-20
- Australian Local Government Association Federal Election Initiatives 2018 'All Politics is Local'





\$7 million
investment

Bass Coast Dinosaurs Trail

The Bass Coast Dinosaurs Trail will be a unique and valuable tourism asset that celebrates and promotes the global significance of the region's pre-historic heritage. Bass Coast has the most diverse range of polar dinosaurs in the world and coal reserves in Kilcunda and Wonthaggi were formed from the forests these creatures inhabited.

The Trail builds upon the ground-breaking work and passion of local community, traditional owners and palaeontologists over 40 years. It visibly expresses the sense of wonder, learning and stories in concert with the country that shapes them.

This iconic experience will traverse 40kms from San Remo to Inverloch featuring six creative art sites that link polar dinosaur fossils. These key sites will be fully accessible by car, bike or foot.

Council seeks **\$6.4 million** towards the development of the art sites.

The Bass Coast Dinosaurs Trail presents an ideal synergy for a museum/cultural centre to be developed in Inverloch alongside a sound and light installation linking science, Aboriginal culture history and the environment. Council seeks **\$600,000** for feasibility studies for the Museum/Cultural Centre and Sound and Light installation.

This leading tourism experience will entice local, interstate and international visitors and encourage extended visitation within the region. The Trail will educate residents and visitors about the embedded value and diversity found within fossils and pre-historic fauna in the region.

Supporting Strategies

- Gippsland Tracks and Trails Feasibility Study
- Victorian Visitor Economy Strategy Action Plan 2016-2020
- Victorian Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) five-point plan – Tourism is Victoria



\$5 million
investment

Cowes Cultural and Community Centre

The Cowes Cultural and Community Centre is a major 'place making' project located on Phillip Island. It will create an events destination, increase visitation and length of stay, and provide for a diverse range of community uses and activities. It will cater to high projected population growth and address impacts of the pandemic.

The \$20 million Centre will include a library, theatre, gallery, café, community hall, meeting and gathering spaces. After more than a decade of planning, including significant community consultation, the Centre is now designed and ready for construction. Catering to projected high population growth and addressing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centre will generate 69 construction jobs, 30 ongoing jobs and \$51.8m in economic benefit to the region.

Serving both community and visitors, it will provide a landmark facility and address the presently disconnected town structure by creating a central cultural hub and gathering place. It will be a physical and symbolic focal point for Cowes' revitalisation - a catalyst for future investment and further renewal of the town centre's ageing infrastructure.

Increased access to cultural, educational and community opportunities and enhanced visitor experiences, together with heightened levels of community inclusion and connectivity will significantly contribute to the region's economy and amenity. It will improve liveability, complementing major new education and health facilities in the region that are attracting new residents, and help to drive new skills development and employment opportunities by supporting the creative economy.

Council seeks **\$5 million** towards construction.

Supporting Strategies

- Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-21
- Cowes Activity Centre Plan - 2015
- Bass Coast Towards 2030
- Gippsland Regional Growth Plan
- Gippsland Regional Plan
- South East Melbourne Regional Plan



**\$4.01
million
total
investment**

**Policy
Change**

Climate Emergency Mitigation and Adaptation

Council has joined 100 other local governments across Australia in declaring a climate emergency, recognising the serious risk that climate change poses to safety of the entire Bass Coast community. Council and the community have confirmed a shared target of zero net emissions by 2030 and has developed a plan that recognises the role each can play. In Bass Coast, climate change and severe weather events are impacting our coastal communities and environments now. Rising sea levels and coastal erosion is a concern for our community, with the Inverloch coast experiencing significant erosion in recent years, impacting local amenity, vegetation and infrastructure.

Erosion Control: \$1.86 million

Council is seeking funding to complete urgent coastal erosion impacting our coastal townships of Inverloch, Cowes and the Waterline areas of Western Port.

Street Lighting: \$1.5 million

Funding support for transitioning street lighting to more efficient LED lighting, converting T5 fluorescent lights and Compact Fluorescent (CFL) globes to LED would save the Bass Coast community \$56,859 per year, and saving 69.5t CO₂-e.

Carbon Drawdown Smart Farms Pilot Project: \$500,000

Support for improved agricultural and farming practices, including investigation and development of carbon capture and drawdown practices to build and contribute to a stronger local economy, increase productivity and diversify to contribute to climate change and future proof.

Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Stations: \$150,000

Support to fund three EV charging locations with DC fast charging stations, upgrading and adding to the existing Council operated charging stations.

Federal Government Climate Policy and Programs

Bass Coast calls on the Federal Government to set an accelerated ambitious national emissions reduction target to limit global temperatures increases to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

Supporting Strategies

- Paris Agreement
- *Local Government Act 2020*
- Climate Change Act 2017
- Marine and Coastal Policy 2020
- Plan Melbourne 2017-50
- Sustainable Subdivision Framework, CASBE
- Bass Coast Planning Scheme
- Draft Statement of Planning Policy
- Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-21
- Natural Environment Sustainability Strategy 2016-26
- Victorian Auditor General's Office - Protecting Victoria's Coastal Assets
- Coastal Erosion Management Options Cowes Main Beach Foreshore Reserve (April 2018)
- Cowes East Foreshore: Erosion Management Option (July 2018)
- Western Port Local Coastal Hazard Assessment



Improve
connectivity
to support
business

Digital Connectivity and Telecommunications

Good digital connectivity is fundamental to attracting investment and tourism to the region and improving liveability for those that reside in Bass Coast. This is increasingly more important with the recent shift in thinking around remote working and the opportunities it presents post-COVID-19.

While the Gippsland Digital Regional Plan analysis offers a solid evidence-base and often indicates good telecommunications and digital connectivity coverage, we know from real world users that the 'lived experience' can be quite different. Newhaven College had to resort to setting up a radio signal to gain access from the Mornington Peninsula and the Phillip Island Nature Parks Koala Conservation Reserve was so restricted to internet access, they could not set up their office as intended.

Further, internationally acclaimed attractions in Bass Coast such as the Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix and Phillip Island Penguin Parade have been identified as having major shortfall in supply and this is also seen across major tourist towns including Phillip Island, San Remo and Inverloch with usage spikes affecting supply. Businesses and vendors report interrupted connectivity, connections and reduced speed impacting their growth, sales and level of service. Existing services struggles to cope with the demand during peak seasons with an influx of tourists adding to the load.

Inadequate fixed line broadband and mobile coverage has been identified as a key issue as well as the provision of adequate business-grade NBN services in our townships. With the Bass Coast population expected to grow from an estimated 36,083 in 2021 to 46,429 by 2036 this will put increased strain on our networks.

Council is requesting that **Bass Coast is prioritised** in the next round of the Federal Government's Mobile Blackspot Program and Regional Connectivity Program. Areas such as tourism and hospitality, food and fibre, education, e-health and professional services will all benefit from better services.

Supporting Strategies

- Gippsland Digital Plan 2019
- Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-21
- Council's Economic Development Strategy 2016-21
- Phillip Island and San Remo Visitor Economy Strategy 2035 - *Growing Tourism*
- Australian Local Government Association Federal Election Initiatives 2018 'All Politics is Local'



\$5 million
investment per
annum for
four years

Sealing Urban Roads

Bass Coast Shire has a legacy with over 120km of urban roads not built to acceptable modern standards worth in excess of \$250 million to upgrade. Council seeks a significant increase in funding to address sealing roads across the Shire to provide the expected quality urban areas to support our visitor economy and accommodate our tourists and residents.

Affecting over 5,000 residents these urban unsealed roads are experiencing increasing levels of traffic and generating high levels of dust. Residents in these locations and users of the roads are subjected to large amounts of dust during the summer months as well as during construction of housing and local infrastructure such as schools.

Many of these gravel roads feature a substandard design for their current traffic volume and have had to have their speed limits reduced to assist with road safety. Environmental concerns abound due to the silt run-off from the gravel road. This impacts both stormwater and sewerage systems and has greater impacts on the RAMSAR-listed wetlands in these areas.

The sealed roads will increase the safety, amenity and reliability of the routes for all road users.

Council seeks an increase of **\$5 million per annum** over the next four years to the Roads to Recovery Fund.

Supporting Strategies

- Phillip Island Integrated Transport Strategy
- Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-21
- Urban Roads and Drainage Improvement Policy 2019
- Phillip Island and San Remo Visitor Economy Strategy 2035 - Growing Tourism



**\$7.35
million
investment**

Tourism Infrastructure – Bass Coast Tracks and Trails

Tracks and trails play a critical role in the health and wellbeing of a community. They provide connection, recreation and exploration for all and in Bass Coast, they also make a significant contribution to our visitor economy, providing links to key attractions and contributing to our unique eco-tourism.

Council has prioritised a series of tracks and trails requiring investment.

Inverloch to Wonthaggi

The construction of a 14km shared pathway linking Wonthaggi to Inverloch, completing a tourism trail that stretches from Cowes to Inverloch. Council seeks **\$5.5.million** for construction of this path.

Cowes to Rhyll – Partnering with Phillip Island Nature Parks

Completion of the off-road Cowes to Rhyll link between Oswin Roberts Reserve and the Rhyll Township, connecting popular walking trails. Council seeks **\$800,000** towards construction.

Cowes to Penguin Parade – Partnering with Phillip Island Nature Parks

Creation of a shared pathway linking Cowes to the biggest tourism attraction within the region; Phillip Island Nature Parks Penguin Parade encouraging pedestrian and cycling activation. Council seeks **\$250,000** for strategic planning.

Signature Gippsland Trail: Bass Coast Rail Trail extension - Woolamai to Nyora

Strategic 24.3km link joining up with the Great Southern Rail Trail at Nyora, creating a super trail from Cowes all the way to Welshpool. The signature 'Gippsland Trail' would connect Gippsland's main towns and experiences, providing strong marketability and offering large commercial opportunities for trail and off-trail businesses. Council seeks **\$800,000** for strategic planning working in partnership with neighbouring councils.

Supporting Strategies

- Gippsland Tracks and Trails Feasibility Study
- Active Bass Coast 2018
- Aspirational Network Pathways Plan 2016
- Phillip Island and San Remo Visitor Economy Strategy 2035 – *Growing Tourism*
- Victorian Cycling Strategy 2018-28
- South East Transport Strategy
- Victorian Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) five-point plan – Tourism is Victoria's Business
- Victorian Visitor Economy Strategy Action Plan 2016-20



\$500,000
investment

Transport - Freight

The growth of freight movements, tourism growth, and increased development within Wonthaggi place increasing and conflicting demand on the local transport network. The Wonthaggi Alternative Freight route will encourage freight and through traffic movements to avoid the town centre by providing an alternative freight route.

The combined impact of population growth and congestion created by freight, alongside heavier and more frequent freight volumes will impact on livability and changes will provide for a more efficient, sustainable and cost-effective freight and logistics movements. This is particularly important for the dairy, agricultural, tourism and extractive industries.

An alternative freight route will

- Eliminate current and potential bottlenecks
- Enhance the livability of Wonthaggi by the creation of a bypass or more efficient and less disruptive routes through town
- Improve safety
- Increase productivity and reduced freight costs
- Provide efficient access to sand extraction sources and markets
- Reduce impact on amenity of town by diverting heavy vehicles
- Reduce burden on intersection

Council seeks **\$500,000** for the detailed study and design of the Wonthaggi Alternative Freight Route.

Supporting Strategies

- Phillip Island Integrated Transport Study
- Phillip Island and San Remo Visitor Economy Strategy 2035 Growing Tourism
- Regional Public Transport Strategy
- Gippsland Freight Strategy
- Wonthaggi Activity Centre Plan



**\$8 million
investment**

Wonthaggi Opportunity Unlocked

Wonthaggi is a vital regional centre for Bass Coast and Southern Gippsland. Experiencing continued population growth, Bass Coast is the fastest growing regional economy in Victoria, up 45.6 per cent since 2007, with continued forecast growth of 37 per cent by 2035. Unlocking Wonthaggi's full potential aligns with the objectives of key State and Federal planning strategies relating to regional regeneration, urban decentralisation, population growth and investment attraction.

Acknowledged in Plan Melbourne as one of seven Victorian Regional Centres able to forge greater economic and social links with Melbourne, Wonthaggi is primed for positive change that will support new jobs and attract continued investment in the town and region. To prepare for the growth Council, in partnership with the Victorian Planning Authority has prepared a Precinct Structure Plan and Developer Contributions Plan for the Wonthaggi North-East Growth Area.

Wonthaggi North-East

Wonthaggi North-East will provide the structure for sustainable, housing growth, guiding investment in construction of homes for 12,000 new residents, community amenities and an expanded business and industry precinct. It will:

- Facilitate the development of 450 hectares of residential land allowing 4,400 residential plots
- Facilitate 70 hectares of commercial land creating 2940 jobs over the life of the plan
- Double the size of Wonthaggi
- Provide affordable housing options for Victorians with the average house price in Wonthaggi \$385,000 vs Melbourne's \$700,000

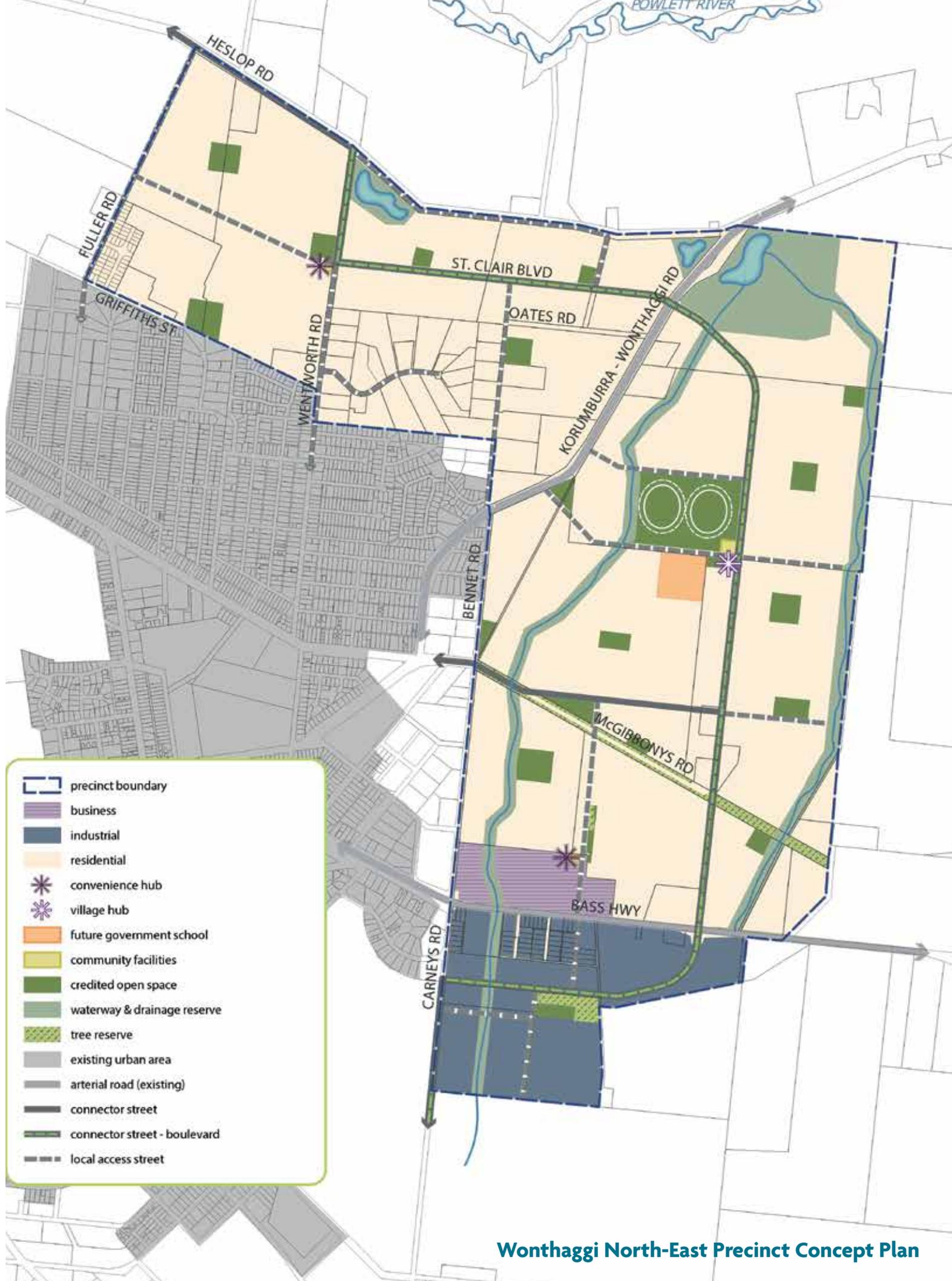
This land makes a significant contribution to Bass Coast in terms of maintaining a minimum 15 years of residential land supply and increasing vacant lots in Wonthaggi. Funding support is required to provide key infrastructure items (traffic and drainage) upfront to facilitate the development in a timely manner. In order to unlock the precinct, two large roundabouts will be required on the Bass Highway, in order to open up the only vacant commercially zoned land which is critical for continued economic development. The roundabouts will be required prior to Council securing sufficient developer contributions to fund the projects.

Council seeks **\$8 million** towards construction of roundabouts.

Supporting Strategies

- Plan Melbourne
- Gippsland Regional Growth Plan
- Victoria's Regional Statement
- Gippsland Regional Plan 2015-20
- Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-21





Wonthaggi North-East Precinct Concept Plan

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