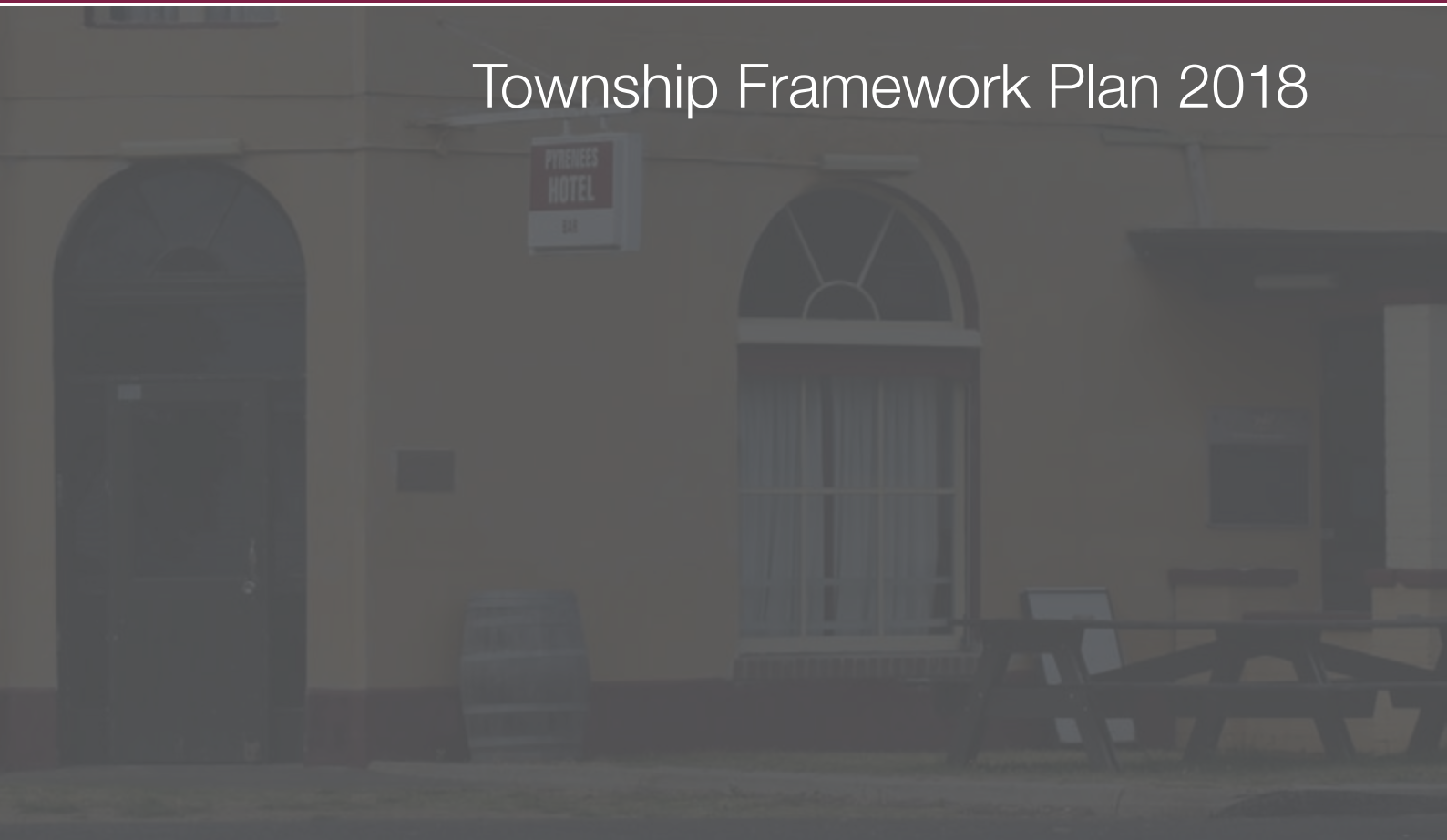


PYRENEES
— S H I R E —



Lexton

Township Framework Plan 2018



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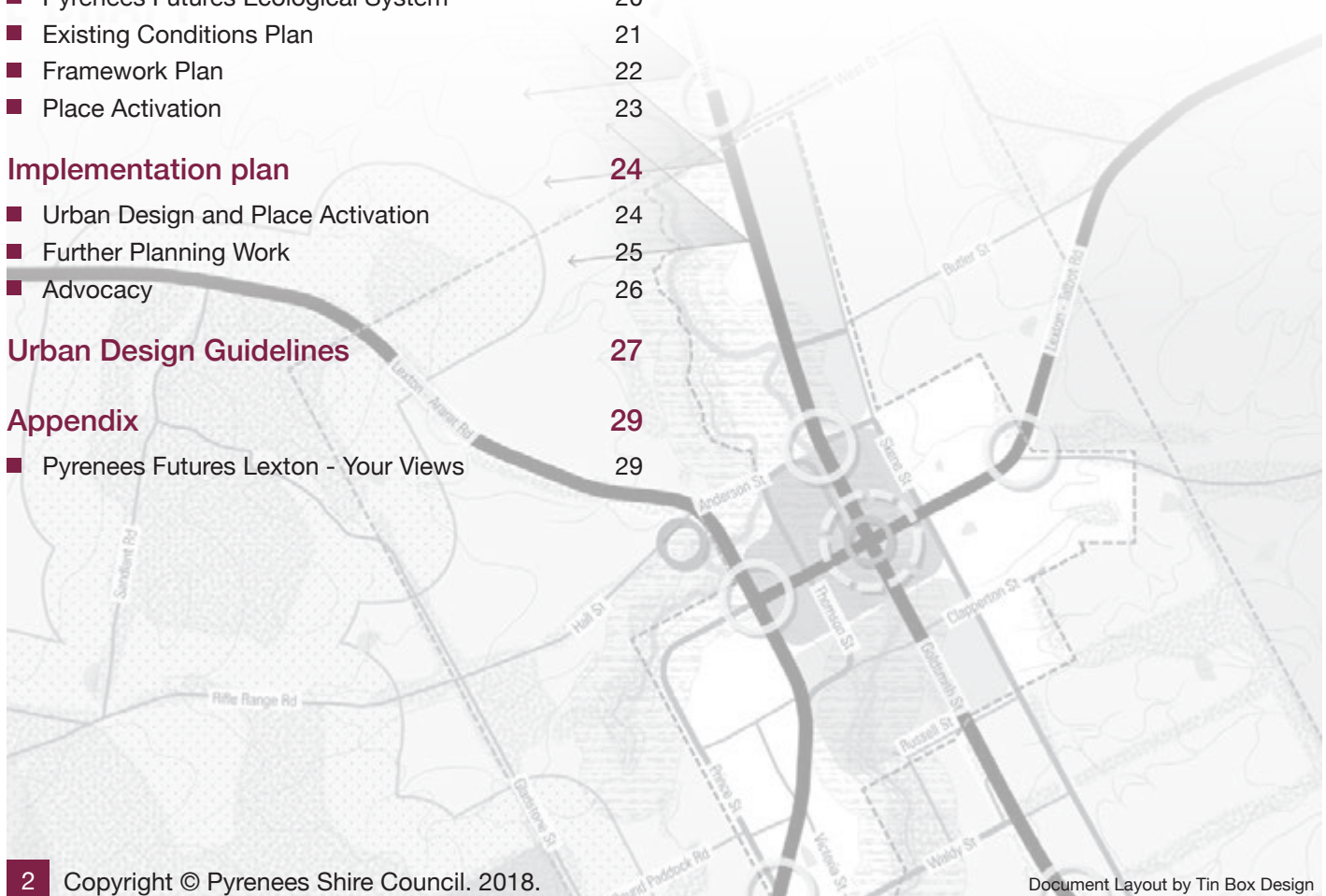
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A Story of Place

Pyrenees Shire Council recognises the Djadja Wurrung people as the traditional owners of the land on which Lexton stands today.

When Major Thomas Mitchell travelled through the area now known as Lexton on his trek from Portland through to Sydney, he was stunned at what he saw. From here, the phrase “a valley of the finest description” has come to permeate the area’s history. Two years after Mitchell penned these words, European settlement began with pastoral runs taken up from 1838 (Oulton, 1995).

It is likely that the mosaic of grasslands and eucalypts that Mitchell encountered had been formed through the careful land management of the Djadja Wurrung people. The area around Lexton was originally inhabited by the Galgal Balug clan of the Djadja Wurrung tribe. The clan’s name roughly translates as “the people with tame dogs”.

Lexton’s creeklines and topography are attributed in traditional knowledge to the movement of Mindi, the Rainbow Serpent, whose tail carved out the waterways that remain central to Djadja Wurrung cultural identity including the creeks around Lexton. According to the Djadja Wurrung Country Plan:

“Our rivers are the veins of Country, and provide food and medicine, and places to camp, hunt, fish, swim and hold ceremonies. They are places that are central to our creation stories, and many of our cultural heritage sites are associated with waterways – burial sites, birthing sites and middens.

“Our waterways are places that we connect with our ancestors and pass traditional knowledge on to our children and grandchildren... These are significant parts of our Country that link us to our past and will provide for our future”
(Dja Dja Wurrung Aboriginal Clans Corporation, 2014)

The introduction of grazing runs and further settlement brought about the dispossession of Aboriginal people through violence, dislocation and the spread of diseases like smallpox.

Lexton’s location at a confluence of creeks and early tracks has seen the town being described as the “crossroads of early Victoria”. Today, this theme remains with a meeting of highways at the town’s main junction, and the junction of the Burbank Creek with an un-named tributary some 500m north of the general store.

The town’s distinctive topography is formed by the eastern edge of the Pyrenees Ranges (known to the Djadja Wurrung as Pilliwin-panyul), from which several creeks flow. The town’s grid was set on the Burnbank Creek (named after the first pastoral run), which meanders north-south through the town, running north towards the Loddon River and flowing into the Bet Bet Creek. The creek, fringed by red gums, remains a defining feature of the town today.

Although some diggings were established near Lexton, the town had a minimal reliance on mining and was instead in its early days a predominantly agricultural and forestry-related settlement. The town’s timber cutting history is reflected in the town centre through the use of rough-hewn timber fencing along Burnbank Creek and in Toll Bar Park.

By 1852, the town had become an administrative and legal centre boasting a post office, courthouse and police presence with a school established by 1855. By 1900 churches and a public hall were established. Orchards were established, and in 1903 the Australian Handbook described the red gum grown in the area as being of



“excellent quality”. Oats, wheat, hay, peas, beans and potatoes were grown. Lexton’s administrative role made it the centre of the Lexton Shire, and the former Shire Hall building is today used for community events.

Urban form

Lexton's form is dominated by a grid laid out on a south-west to north-east axis on the banks of the Burnbank Creek. While the grid appears on the surface to provide for a well-organised and compact town, the tension between the grid layout and the creeklines is a major issue affecting the town's development today.

Two arms of the Burnbank Creek run through the town. The Burnbank Creek has its source south-east of Lexton's town centre and flows north through the town. The main creekline roughly follows the alignment of the Sunraysia Highway through the town centre, while the secondary arm meanders through the western edge of Lexton. The two arms join some 500m north-west of the Co-op Store. Much of the original town centre is formed around the junction between the Sunraysia Highway and Waubra-Lexton Road. The town centre's eastern side is defined via a service road separated from the Sunraysia Highway by a concrete verge.

Despite this, many of the original shops on the east of the Sunraysia Highway are now in residential use with a mechanic's garage continuing to operate; while the Co-op Store and the Pyrenees Hotel form the social crux of the town centre. Further community assets are dispersed around the town, with the Lexton Recreation Reserve (including a football oval and golf course) south-west of the town grid and the Lexton Community Hall 1.5km west of the Co-op Store.

Wayfinding between these community assets has been identified as an important issue.



Housing is mostly concentrated around this centre, particularly to the east, west and north. Residential streets are mostly narrow carriageways, with generous verges up to 30m and an informal mix of exotic, deciduous and eucalyptus street tree plantings. Streets further to the south (such as Waldy Street and Robertson Street) are fringed with eucalypts that create an evocative bushland setting, somewhat reflective of more rural areas of the Pyrenees. Houses in these areas tend to be nestled behind tree growth on allotments above 2000m².

Vegetation plays an important role in defining Lexton's urban form. The Burnbank Creek's banks are dominated by red gums, which form a distinctive part of Lexton's imagery. The Sunraysia Highway includes plantings of deciduous exotic trees south of the town centre, as well as a distinctive planting of pine trees on the town's northern approach. This "hybrid landscape" gives the town a rich and distinctive variety of seasonal shades.

South of the town centre, fewer residential blocks are built on with a number used for grazing activity. Some blocks (particularly those within 100m of the banks of the Burnbank Creek) are encumbered by their inability to treat wastewater on site under Environmental Protection Authority regulations. This may have contributed to the hollowed out sections of the town's grid south of the General Store, along the creekfronts.

The town's southern approach is largely characterized by eucalypt dry-woodland style vegetation that is typical of the northern side of Toll Bar Hill. These plantings give way to a more formal row of exotics after the stone town entrance sign.



Heritage

Despite the town's rich history as one of Victoria's earliest settlements, Lexton was not studied as a distinct heritage precinct in Pyrenees Shire's previous heritage study (2001). There are currently no heritage overlays that apply to any places in Lexton and this plan will recommend that Heritage Studies be done to explore the significance of historic buildings in the town including churches, the Pyrenees Hotel and the creekline around the Burnbank Creek.



Two large homesteads south of Lexton, Ercildoune and Mount Mitchell, are both included on the Victorian Heritage Register and subject to Heritage Overlay policies in the Pyrenees Planning Scheme.



The Pyrenees Shire Heritage Precinct Study (2001) does identify a list of buildings of potential heritage significance in the town centre, and this plan recommends that the heritage significance of these places is reviewed. Of particular interest are the Pyrenees Hotel (built in 1852) and the former Shire Hall building.

Aside from reviewing heritage protections, there are opportunities to better tell the stories of the town's heritage, which will be further explored in subsequent sections of this plan.



Why do we need this plan?

Lexton, and the broader Pyrenees Shire, are becoming increasingly attractive places for people to live. They are also changing places, influenced by environmental, social, economic and geographical factors.

The Lexton Township Framework Plan is aimed at generating a partnership between community, Council and government agencies to own this change. It seeks to do this by engaging community aspirations and building from place-based research to achieve:

- Reform to policies in the Pyrenees Planning Scheme that guide the town's future development over the medium-long term.
- Short-to-medium term improvements in the town's design, put in place through an implementation plan included on page 24.

This plan takes a place-based approach, which recognises and seeks to foster Lexton's unique character and attributes into the future. These elements are valuable in further forming a proud, distinctive community.

This framework plan is vital in ensuring that growth and change does not overwhelm the town's character or its fabric, but rather contributes to it.

The plan's structure is based around:

- Seven themes identified through community engagement in Lexton;
- An ecological framework that Council is using for settlement planning as part of the Pyrenees Futures project. This framework recognises the multi-dimensional nature of our townships and seeks to respond to five overlapping factors that influence a town's dynamics: resilience, character, prosperity, wellbeing and connectedness. The framework provides a means for analysis of existing conditions and identify areas that planning needs to address.

Each of the plan's actions are formed around the seven themes identified through community engagement. These actions are grouped around:

- Planning policy reforms (also known as "statutory actions") that will lead to reform of the Pyrenees Planning Scheme, inform future land use and development decisions.
- Urban design interventions that relate to how Lexton looks, feels and works as a town.



What's driving change?

Changing function of the town: Lexton was originally established with a key role in regional governance. With the gradual centralization of institutions and the merger of the Lexton Shire into the Pyrenees Shire Council in 1995, the town's role has changed to be primarily that of a service centre for surrounding agricultural areas. Community engagement conducted as part of Pyrenees Futures revealed strong links between the town and its farming hinterland, while there is also evidence of people moving to the town because of its attractive natural landscape. This change from administrative centre to agricultural and lifestyle centre further amplifies the need for planning to carefully consider growth opportunities that respect key landscape characteristics, such as viewlines to the Pyrenees and native bushland.

Climate change: Modelling suggests that Lexton can expect more extreme weather as a result of climate change. Drier and warmer conditions may be exacerbated given Lexton's location north of the Great Dividing Range.

Climate modeling completed for the broader Pyrenees Shire completed as part of the *Future Landscapes* (Cunningham et al 2016) project suggests that:

- Mean annual temperatures will rise between 2°C (low emissions scenario) and 3.2°C (higher emissions scenario) by 2070. The increases in temperature will be higher in summer than winter, reflecting the potential for more extreme weather conditions.
- Many ecosystems (particularly grasslands) around Lexton will experience difficulty in adapting to climate change. Riparian forests in the area however should remain adaptable.
- Rainfall is likely to increase slightly across the Pyrenees by 2030, but may decline substantially by 2070 under a high emissions scenario. Rainfall in spring and winter will likely decline, with summer and autumn falls less certain.
- Most pasture species and wheat will remain viable around Lexton.



Population and demographic fluctuation: After a fall in population from the 1990s, Lexton's population has rebounded above 230 people, which is around the level of the mid-1950s. Demographics of the town have also changed significantly: in the 2016 Census, Lexton had a portion of its population aged 5-14 significantly above the Victorian state and Pyrenees Shire average. This suggests that young families are moving to the town, and has meant that local sporting clubs have fielded more junior teams. Community engagement conducted in the development of this plan suggested that new generations of families with ties to the district were choosing to live in town to start families of their own. At the same time, around 27 percent of the town's residents are aged 60-74, suggesting the importance of maintaining services, social opportunities and walkable areas around the town centre.

Moving town centre: With the opening of the Co-op Store on the western side of Burnbank Creek, the main focus of activity in the town centre has moved. It is vital that planning and urban design support the retention of the Co-op Store as a vital service in town, and that public realm improvements focus on making the town centre around the creek more attractive.

The findings in a nutshell...(7 themes)

This plan is centred on seven themes identified through community engagement in Lexton. A summary of the engagement findings is provided in the Appendix of this report. The themes are:

1. **Bringing Out the History**
2. **Located at the Crossroads**
3. **A Hybrid Landscape**
4. **More generous design / A caring, progressive town**
5. **Designing With Water**
6. **More Constructive Planning Policies**
7. **Finding the Way Between Two Bookends**

The plan is set out with actions distilled from each theme. These actions include core planning policy and strategy measures, urban design interventions and matters that can be addressed through Council advocacy or working with other agencies. These actions then flow through to an implementation plan, and new township planning policy that will be incorporated into Council's Municipal Strategic Statement to guide development and manage change.

These themes are explored in further detail from pages 11 to 18.

Current policies and strategic directions

A key plank in analysis and planning is an assessment of Lexton's strengths, opportunities, and threats facing the town. This assessment has been based on the Pyrenees Futures Ecological Framework, and informed by research and community engagement.

Research activities conducted as part of the Lexton Framework plan include:

- Audits of current planning policies.
- Reviews of policies, plans, written histories and archaeological documents.
- Data including ABS Census information and reviews of building permit data.
- Observational activity mapping in the town centre to better understand pedestrian movement.

Community engagement activity conducted as part of the plan includes:

- A township walk with local residents.
- A community drop-in session.
- Community surveys.
- Workshops with agencies and Council staff.

The next section includes a brief policy and literature review. A summary of community engagement findings was released in April 2018 and can be found in the Appendix of this report.

Documents have informed this plan's development, including:

- Current policies that influence local and regional land use planning in the Pyrenees Planning Scheme (including the Municipal Strategic Statement, Central Highlands Regional Growth Plan and an audit of current zoning and overlays). It should be noted that these policies are under review via the Lexton Township Framework Plan.

Existing documents that are guiding this project, including:

- Pyrenees Shire Council Plan 2017-2021.
- The Lexton Community Action Plan.
- Pyrenees Shire Council Heritage Precinct Study (2001).
- Dhelkunya Dja (The Dja Dja Wurrung Caring for Country Plan).

This literature review has further augmented engagement and research conducted as part of this plan's development.

Current spatial planning policy identifies Lexton as centre for an agricultural district specializing in fine merino wool production. It identifies the constraints created by the Burnbank Creek's flow through town, including potential flood risks, and discrepancies between development patterns and historic land zoning.

Current policies also:

- Seek to constrain development on hilly land outside the township
- Focus any residential development either side of the Sunraysia Highway and to the north of the township; while restructuring other land holdings.

Current policies also seek to introduce planning overlays to manage flood risks from the Burnbank Creek. This work has not yet been done, although it is recognised that current EPA regulations around wastewater treatment do constrain residential development in areas around the Burnbank Creek, due to the requirement for effluent treatment areas to be more than 100m away from the creekline.

Pyrenees Shire Council's Council Plan for 2017-2021 commits Council to reviewing its planning framework through Pyrenees Futures, as a settlement planning approach that is forward-looking and works with communities including Lexton.

The Lexton Community Action Plan 2010-2015 (CAP) has been produced through a partnership of community groups. It mostly focuses on social infrastructure projects that are outside the scope of this document, but also includes relevant directions that have informed this framework plan including:

- A strong position that growth is required if the town is to "survive and thrive into the future", with a focus on welcoming new community members.
- Guidelines or policy directions for building houses, developing businesses and retaining productive farms.
- Upgrading the Recreation Reserve as a key focal point for community activity.
- A desire for improved telecommunications services.

The Lexton Township Framework Plan is a vital plank in delivering reformed planning policies, identifying and facilitating opportunities for growth and to better integrating the Recreation Reserve into the town's fabric through wayfinding initiatives.

Opportunities and Threats

	STRENGTH/OPPORTUNITY	THREAT
Place character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Rich history and strong, evocative landscapes. ■ Major Mitchell Trail and the identity as the “crossroads of early Victoria”. ■ Red gums along creekline and hybrid landscape theme. ■ Foothills of Pyrenees Ranges to the west of town. ■ Opportunity to work with Dja Dja Wurrung around landscape stories. ■ Opportunity to strengthen links between town and creekfront/surrounding bushland. ■ Opportunity for placemaking projects to create a more attractive, defined town centre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lack of heritage policies protecting significant built form or landscapes. ■ Lack of interpretive signage/information regarding significant heritage assets or local stories. ■ Maintenance of sections of public/private space. ■ Hardness of design in the town centre (particularly concrete verges along service road).
Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strong levels of community volunteerism. ■ Strong links with surrounding farming districts. ■ Opportunities for small-scale food production (around farming areas in town grid). ■ Community groups (including sporting clubs). ■ Presence of Co-op Store and potential for this to function as more of a social hub. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Natural disaster risk (bushfires and flooding), potentially exacerbated by climate change, landscape character and location of town centre along creek frontage. ■ Dependence on Ballarat for a range of services. ■ Lack of public transport connections to surrounding towns. ■ Lack of sewerage infrastructure. ■ Need to protect Burnbank Creek’s role as part of a broad water catchment.
Economic prosperity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Potential to create activity hub around Co-op Store and Pyrenees Hotel. ■ Location at crossroads of major arterial roads (Sunraysia Highway and Beaufort-Talbot Roads). ■ Rainbow Serpent Festival – and potential for spin-off arts activities/exhibitions. ■ Opportunities for home-based businesses or portable traders to provide services. ■ Opportunities to reform planning policies to open up opportunities for housing growth away from creekline and away from bushfire-prone areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lack of commercial/industrial activity in the town centre. ■ Highly restrictive planning policies on fringes of original grid (application of Farming Zone and Restructure Overlay) may be restricting desirable opportunities for growth. ■ Constrained blocks along Burnbank Creek, particularly south of town centre.

Opportunities and Threats continued

	STRENGTH/OPPORTUNITY	THREAT
Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Access to walking trails in nearby bushland and surrounding town great for exercise and links to nature. ■ Constant connection to nature. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Need for further public transport connections to nearby centres. ■ Dependence on nearby centres for health, retail and education. ■ Limited footpath network. ■ Safety implications – traffic along Sunraysia Highway.
Connectedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Opportunity to plant themed avenues of vegetation between major destinations (for example, town centre and Recreation Reserve). ■ Opportunity to work with North Central CMA and Dja Dja Wurrung to develop an open space corridor along Burnbank Creek including walking trails and interpretive signage. ■ Opportunities for growth within walking distance (400m – five minutes walk) of town centre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lack of wayfinding (such as clear directional signs) makes Recreation Reserve in particular difficult to access. ■ Lack of coherence in street tree plantings makes town layout less legible. ■ Creekline/topography makes accessing Recreation Reserve from town centre challenging. ■ No defined sense of entrance to town around Robertson Street, which presents the key gateway to the Lexton Recreation Reserve. ■ Dispersed public infrastructure – including Lexton Hall and Lexton Recreation Reserve – located away from town centre.



Seven Principles for Managing Change

Bringing Out the History

Background



Lexton is one of Victoria's earliest settlements. The area is rich with many thousands of years of stories and while there is local pride in this history, many rightly feel its stories are not told in the urban landscape.

This history, combined with the beautiful natural landscape, provides rich cues to cultivate an even stronger sense of place in Lexton, and potentially attract important cultural, social and economic development opportunities.

Despite this rich history, there are currently no places subject to heritage protection under the Pyrenees Planning Scheme.



Strategies and Actions



Planning Policy Reform

- Commission an expert Heritage Study into the Lexton town centre, with particular reference to the shire hall and Pyrenees Hotel.
- Act on the study's recommendations by amending the Pyrenees Planning Scheme or referring recommendations to the Victorian Heritage Council, as appropriate.

Urban Design and Place Activation

- Draw on the town's historic links with the timber industry in the design of public infrastructure, including street furniture and fencing.
- Develop a material palette for urban design that includes raw timber effects, corten steel, red brick (notable in the Shire Hall) and cream render (notable in the Pyrenees Hotel).
- Work with community groups around a program of interpretive signage and/or exhibitions at the Lexton Co-op Store to better tell stories of the town's heritage.
- Work with the Dja Dja Wurrung in line with its Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan to tell the stories of key waterways, such as the Burnbank Creek.



Located at the Crossroads

Background



Referred to as the crossroads of early Victoria, the theme of junctions repeats in Lexton's urban form. The crossroads around the Sunraysia Highway and Beaufort-Lexton/Lexton-Talbot Roads follows from intersection points of historical tracks that ran into Victoria's inland. The form of these tracks is suggested in the meandering approach that these roads take into Lexton, and the town centre today is largely centred around this junction.

Today, this strategic location and Lexton's proximity to larger settlements provides important opportunities for the town's future. Lexton is also near Toll Bar Hill, which marks a point of landscape transition between the south and north of the Great Dividing Range. As the first town north of the divide, Lexton's location presents the opportunity to present a unique sense of place, based on the local landscape.

Strategies and Actions



Planning Policy Reform

- Focus residential growth within walking distance (400m-800m radius) and to the north-east of the main junction to ensure better access to the town centre, on blocks that can accommodate wastewater treatment.

Urban Design and Place Activation

- Beautify and soften the appearance of built form around the main junction, particularly the concrete service road barrier along the Sunraysia Highway.
- Work with the community to further explore the history of the crossroads tracks and investigate opportunities to revive and form new interpretative trails.
- Include a sculpture/public art point immediately north of the service road opening on the south-bound side of the Sunraysia Highway to create a sense of arrival in the town centre. This could be based on a crossroads theme or linked to the Burnbank Creek.
- Develop Williamson Street from its junction with Lexton-Ararat Road, Skene Street, as a civic spine with tree planting and seating.



A Hybrid Landscape

Background



Lexton's mix of exotic vegetation in the town grid and native eucalypts along the creekline creates an evocative landscape that changes with seasons and brings in many different shades of green. It is key to the town's sense of place and needs to be fostered.

Typical forms in the town include river red gums along Burnbank Creek's fringes, incomplete rows of oak trees and similar species along the Sunraysia Highway, dispersed deciduous plantings along built up residential streets around the town centre, and eucalypts fringing streets in the south of the town where there is a mix of farming land and dispersed dwellings.

Deciduous canopy trees in the town centre are important in providing shelter in summer, while letting in light in winter. Native vegetation is vital in providing a distinctive sense of place, as well as habitat for wildlife. Exotic species are particularly notable in their role in creating a sense of arrival along the Sunraysia Highway, although these plantings do not extend to the southern town boundary. Replicating this hybrid landscape theme of interspersed deciduous trees among eucalypts further south to Robertson Street is an important opportunity to create a stronger sense of arrival in the town.

Building on these themes through street tree planting and landscaping is important in strengthening this sense of place.



Strategies and Actions



Urban Design and Place Activation

- Foster the hybrid landscape theme by extending exotic street tree plantings to integrate with existing eucalypts along the Sunraysia Highway, from Russell Street south to Robertson Street.
- Introduce further canopy trees to provide shade in Toll Bar Park.
- Introduce native strappy vegetation in the median strip between Sunraysia Highway and the service road to replace the hard and weedy concrete edge.
- Fill in gaps in tree planting along Skene Street (particularly north of Williamson Street) and along Anderson Street between Skene Street and the Sunraysia Highway to improve residential amenity while preserving sight lines at intersections.
- As land north of Skene Street is rezoned, ensure tree planting continues further north to help form Skene Street as a secondary spine and encourage movement south toward Lexton-Talbot Road.



More generous design / A caring, progressive town

Background



Lexton residents are proud of being part of a caring community of people that pitch in. This characteristic can be further fostered through small-scale changes to urban design that provide more enjoyable places for people to gather.

Despite its attractive creekfront setting, the town centre (apart from Toll Bar Park) currently provides little incentive for people to stop, linger and socialise. In many areas, the design is hard and dominated by concrete and asphalt with little public seating or amenities.

There are significant opportunities to beautify the area and provide well-designed public amenities like seating, set up in configurations that encourage socializing. Public art that reflects the rich landscape and regional history can also create a sense of play and fun around the town centre. Parts of this work may be done in collaboration with the local community through a placemaking approach.

These two themes have been merged in this plan, because a more generous design can further contribute to Lexton's sociable, caring community feel.



Strategies and Actions



Urban design and place activation

- Work with the Co-op Store Committee to design and develop an outdoor seating area between the Co-op Store and the Burnbank Creek to act as a social anchor in the town centre. Retain the existing tree as a focal point providing shade and shelter.
- Provide socially-configured seating near the intersection of Williamson Street and Lexton-Ararat Road.
- Provide a walking path from the Lexton Community Hall, to the General Store and Toll Bar Park.
- Preserve the dappled viewline from the Sunraysia Highway west towards the Co-op store through the creekfront eucalypts.
- Earmark a site at the northern end of the junction between the Lexton-Ararat and Williamson Roads for a potential sculpture/public art installation and seating pod to create a sense of arrival in the town centre from the west.
- Provide a drinking fountain at the Toll Bar Park with an extra tap to fill dog bowls.



Designing With Water

Background



Lexton's development has historically been constrained by the conflict between the urban grid and the alignment of the Burnbank Creek that runs through the town centre. Community engagement has identified a history of localized flooding immediately around the Burnbank Creek and its tributary and a current lack of sewerage means some residential-zoned blocks around the main creek line are constrained due to an inability to treat wastewater onsite in accordance with EPA regulations.

The town's relationship to Burnbank Creek also brings about the potential for flooding. Community engagement conducted as part of Pyrenees Futures and further preliminary flood modelling commissioned by Council suggest that flood waters can rise and fall quickly. There is evidence of waters rising toward the steps of the Co-Op Store, and nearby houses.

Preliminary flood modelling conducted by Utilis Consultants suggests residential properties around Williamson Street, to downstream of Anderson Street, are at particular flood risk.

From a planning policy point of view, future development opportunities need to be identified away from the creeklines to minimise flood risk. Council is also conducting an investigation of flood modeling along the Burnbank Creek to determine if any further planning policies are required to mitigate flood risk.

Strategies and Actions



Planning Policy Reform

- Focus residential development opportunities more than 100m from any creeklines and within walking distance (around 400m-800m) from the town centre to avoid conflicts with the Burnbank Creek.
- Conduct further reviews of preliminary flood modelling to determine whether further planning policies are necessary to restrict development along creeklines.
- Consider revising Restructure Overlay application along creeklines only in the event that blocks are seweraged.
- Acknowledge that some blocks currently zoned for residential or township use that are immediately next to creeklines are constrained, in lieu of consolidation or sewer provision.

Urban design and place activation

- Consider water or creek-related themes in public art installations near the Burnbank Creek.
- Ensure street furniture near the creekline in the town centre is designed to be adaptive to inundation risk.
- Work with the Dja Dja Wurrung on potential opportunities to share stories and traditional knowledge relating to Lexton's waterways in the landscape.
- Review the potential for wetland plantings and revegetation on public land, particularly north of Lexton's town centre and around the Recreation Reserve.
- Work with Central Highlands Water to engage the community and develop a feasibility study around potential introduction of sewerage to Lexton.



More Constructive Planning Policies

Background



Community Action Plans and engagement conducted as part of Pyrenees Futures have identified a demand for planning policies that are more constructive in attracting more residents to Lexton. There are multiple spatial and policy factors that contribute to this dynamic, including:

- The confluence of creeklines and the town centre grid, which along with historical patterns of subdivision has led to constrained lots being produced. These lots are constrained in that they may be too small or located too close to the Burnbank Creek in order to treat wastewater onsite in line with current EPA restrictions.
- Bushfire-prone and steep land, particularly to the east of the township. These areas are particularly constrained and should not be developed.

Pyrenees Futures has identified the potential for growth in areas that are close to the town centre and a suitable distance from creeklines. In the short term, a further growth corridor can be considered to the north-east of Lexton, away from fire-prone land and on the fringe of the current township.

Current planning policies include a Restructure Overlay applied around the fringes to contain the township's growth and to encourage consolidation of blocks, many of which are in different ownership.

The Restructure Overlay currently prevents growth in some areas where housing is desirable, including the north-eastern and south-eastern edges of town where no flooding, environmental, vegetation or bushfire constraints to housing are present.

Many survey respondents expressed frustration with the constraints that a lack of sewerage has imposed on potential development. Reticulated sewerage provision may provide a range of benefits including freeing up constrained residential-zoned land, reducing environmental risks to the Burnbank Creek that may be posed by septic systems.

However, the introduction of sewerage infrastructure is likely to come at a significant cost. Given the potential costs and implications of introducing sewerage infrastructure, this strategy can only recommend a feasibility study be produced before further community engagement on the issue is conducted. This can be considered in the medium term (3-10 years).





Planning policy reform

- Focus residential development opportunities more than 100m from any creeklines and within walking distance (around 400m-800m) from the town centre to avoid conflicts with the Burnbank Creek.
- Encourage consolidation of residential-zoned blocks in the town centre to sizes that can accommodate on-site wastewater treatment.
- Recognise that historical subdivision and zoning patterns have led to a proliferation of constrained residential land.
- Direct short-term growth via rezoning to the north-east of the intersection between Skene and Nicholls Streets. Remove the Restructure Overlay from land between Skene Street and West Street and rezone to Low Density Residential Zone with a 0.4ha minimum size as a primary growth corridor.
- Before rezoning, develop an outline development plan for the site that will lead to a Development Plan Overlay being applied to the area. This will include directions to:
 - Require the north-east growth area to include a road network that reflects the area's topography and provides for a connected grid generally reflective of the rest of the township. grid road pattern, reflective of the rest of the township and connecting to the existing road network, without cul-de-sacs.
 - Include staging, beginning with areas closer to the township.
 - Ensure building envelopes are applied on lots with an emphasis on preserving side setbacks and open viewlines to the east and west.
 - Require street tree planting along Skene Street to encourage traffic to move to the south towards the town centre.
- Rezone land along Hall Street, east of Gladstone Street and west of Lexton-Ararat Road, to Rural Living Zone in recognition of the area's high-level of amenity and substantially rural-residential patterns of use.
- Following the release of land in the north-eastern growth area, rezone land north of the Lexton Ararat Road (shown on the framework map) to Rural Living Zone with a 2ha subdivision minimum, in recognition of the area's high amenity and lack of environmental constraints. This should only be done following an outline development plan for the area.
- In the event that sewer is provided, review Restructure Overlay controls in south of town.

Further actions

- Work with Central Highlands Water to commission a feasibility study of potential sewerage of residential blocks in Lexton, particularly surrounding the Burnbank Creek.
- Following the feasibility study, conduct a community engagement process that provides options around service levels and potential funding models.



Finding the Way Between Two Bookends

Background



While Lexton's grid should in theory make for a compact settlement form, the natural landscape and historic development patterns have led to a dispersal of community infrastructure throughout the town. The town centre and Recreation Reserve in particular form north-south "bookends" at opposite ends of the town and are both significant foci of activity. The Lexton Hall, to the north-west of the town centre, is another important location.

Signage and wayfinding between these locations is limited and confusing. Visitors in particular have understandably experienced difficulty getting to the Lexton Recreation Reserve along the Sunraysia Highway or from the town centre; which is a particular problem if you have a match to get to.

Public art, customized signage schemes, wayfinding information and urban design all have important roles to play in helping locals and visitors alike get around.

Strategies and Actions



Planning Policy Reform

- Ensure the whole Lexton Recreation Reserve and Golf Course are rezoned to Public Park and Recreation Zone to protect the function of the area.

Urban design and place activation

- Form a trail of sporting-themed signage or public art (football, netball, cricket or golf) running from the Co-op Store to the Recreation Reserve.
- Sporting-themed signage or public art (football, netball or golf) at the intersection of Sunraysia Highway and Robertson Street as a potential key access point to the reserve.
- Extend hybrid native-exotic tree plantings further south along Sunraysia Highway to Robertson Street to create a stronger sense of arrival before this junction.
- Work with the community to develop design cues at other key intersections leading to the reserve, and bring the theme of the recreation reserve into the township.



Land Demand Assessment

To understand potential growth pressures on Lexton, an assessment of indicative demand for residential land and dwelling construction has been done. This information is important in guiding potential future land releases.

The assessment has used current building permit data, current population information and regional population projections conducted through the Victorian Government's *Victoria In Future* (2016) report. In Lexton, the assessment has focused on housing because of the limited amount of commercial and industrial development that has occurred in recent years.

Current demand in Lexton is primarily driven by a mix of tree-change movers and families from surrounding farming districts.

Over 2014-2016, three building permits for houses were issued for houses in Lexton, all during 2016. Many of these dwellings were located around or north of the town centre, in areas away from creeklines.

VIF does not provide a full population or dwelling growth projection for Lexton. It does provide figures covering a broader region within Pyrenees Shire. This region takes also takes in Avoca, Amphitheatre, Moonambel, Landsborough and districts in between.

VIF report projects a demand for 36 dwellings across that region between 2016 and 2026 (or 3.6 per year). Given the low level of predicted demand, it should be noted that changes to planning policies on the fringes of Avoca and the ongoing westward growth of Ballarat may affect these projections.

On the basis of recent building permit data, Pyrenees Futures projects that Lexton will provide for around one-third of this demand. An annual demand for 1-2 new dwellings can be expected in Lexton over the next five years.

This can be accommodated primarily through infill development in the short-term, where blocks can be consolidated to achieve the sizes required for waste water treatment. Due to constraints on some township blocks relating to wastewater treatment, and the need to strengthen the town core, a staged incremental release of land in the north-east growth area over the next 5-10 years is desirable. This will ensure more housing development is directed to areas within walking distance of the town centre.

It should be noted that the low projections in VIF reports may change due to regional factors, so land releases should be reviewed every five years.

Place-based approach and Ecological Framework

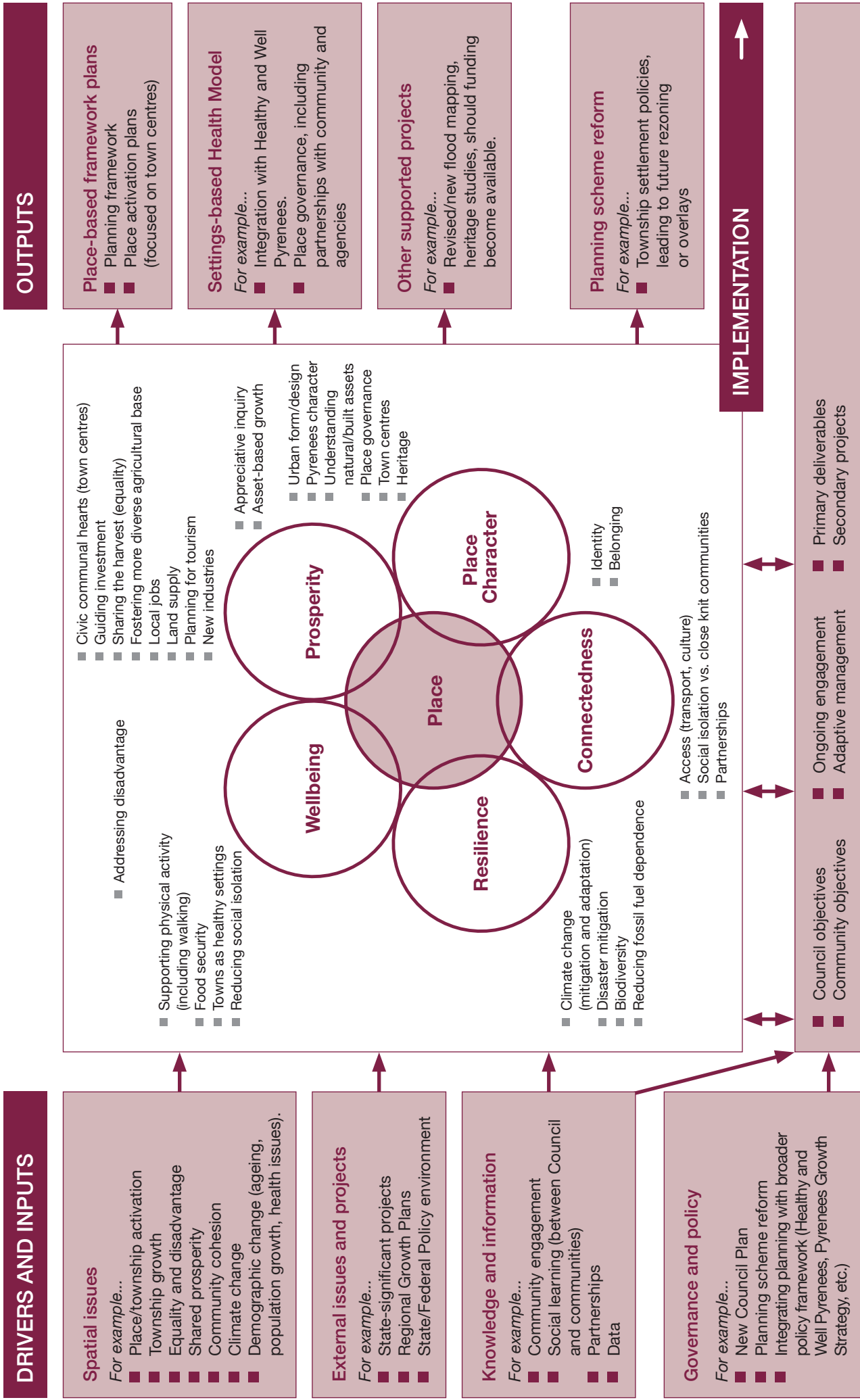
The Lexton Township Framework Plan is one of nine settlement plans Council is producing as part of the Pyrenees Futures project. Each settlement plan is based on an ecological framework that recognises five interlinked factors that sit at the heart of a place.

This framework sets the strategic environment in which the Pyrenees Futures strategy works and the broad areas that the Lexton Township Framework Plan will consider.

Page 20 *Pyrenees Futures Ecological System*
Page 21 *Existing Conditions Plan*
Page 22 *Framework Plan*
Page 23 *Place Activation*



Pyrenees Futures Ecological System

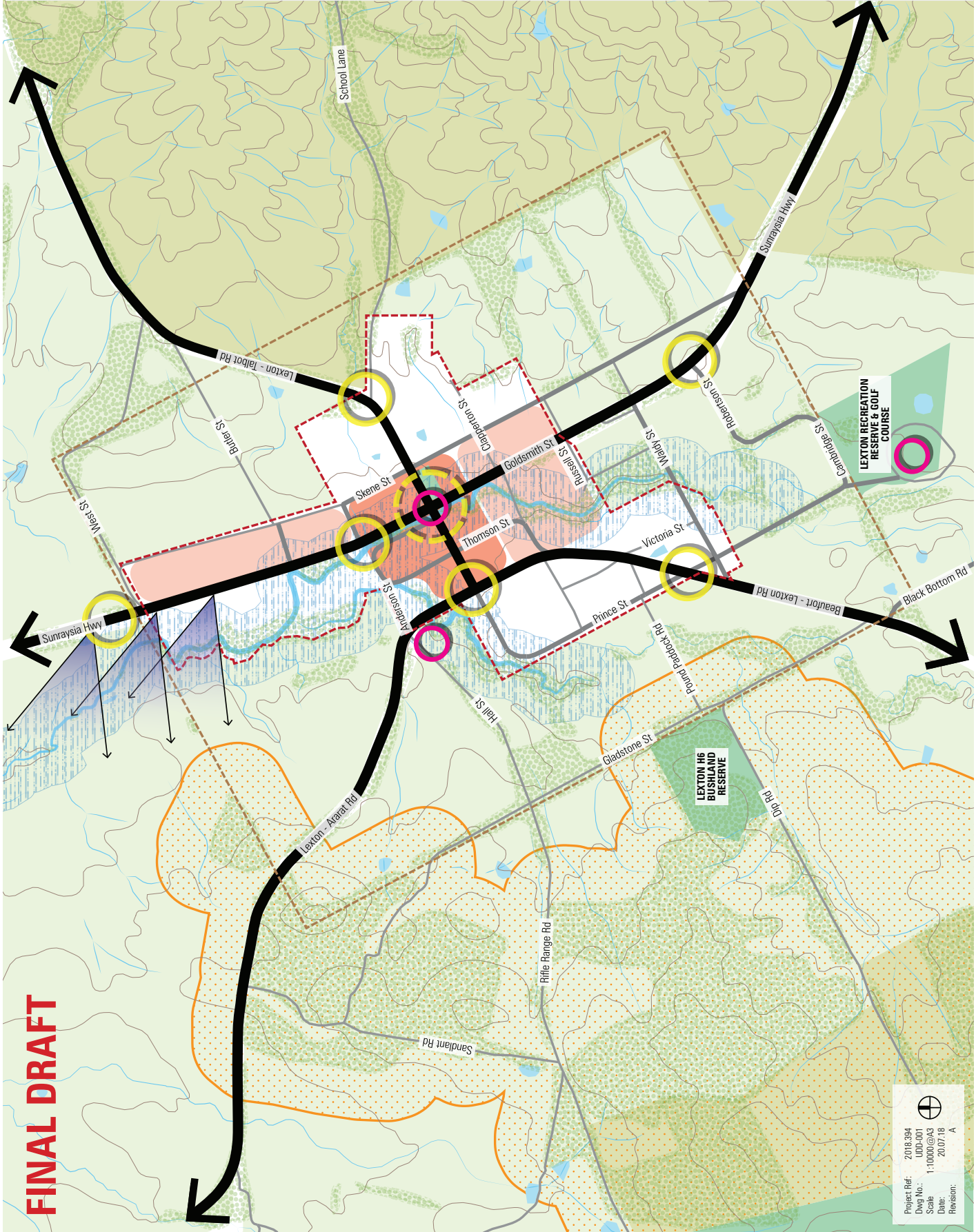




Pyrenees Futures:
Lexton

Existing Conditions
Plan

- Town boundary
- Historic boundary
- Town entry
- Crossroads
- Node
- Escaping views to hills
- Arterial road
- Local street
- Rural lane
- Core township area
- Township
- Public open space
- Existing heavily vegetated area
- Farming zone
- Rural conservation zone
- Bushfire management overlay
- Waterbody
- 100m buffer to watercourse
- Contour



FINAL DRAFT

Project Ref: 2018.394
 Dwg No.: UDD-001
 Scale: 1:10000@A3
 Date: 20.07.18
 Revision: A

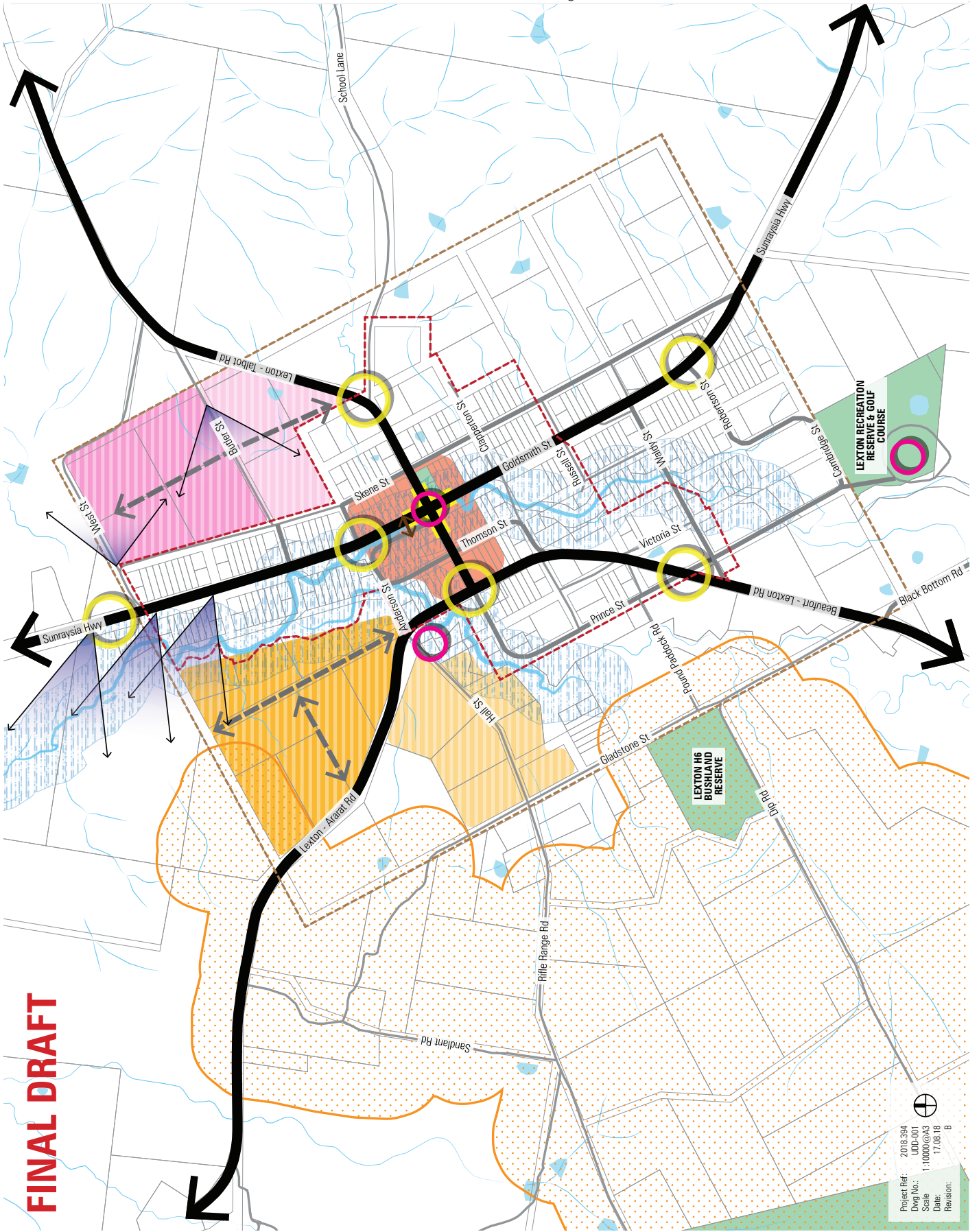


Pyrenees Futures: Lexton

Framework Plan

- Legend**
- Town boundary
 - Historic boundary
 - Town entry
 - Reinforce crossroads
 - Node
 - Escaping views to hills
 - Arterial road
 - Local street
 - Rural lane
 - Potential new road
 - Existing pedestrian bridge
 - Core township area
 - Stage 1 residential development (LDZ min 1ha)
 - Stage 2 residential development
 - Potential rural living zone (min 2ha)*
 - Rural living zone to reflect current development pattern
 - Remove structure overlay
 - Public open space
 - Bushfire management overlay
 - Waterbody
 - 100m buffer to watercourse

*Bushfire and flooding impacts subject to further investigation



Project Ref: 2018.394
 Dwg No.: UDD-001
 Scale: 1:10000@A3
 Date: 17/08/18
 Revision: B

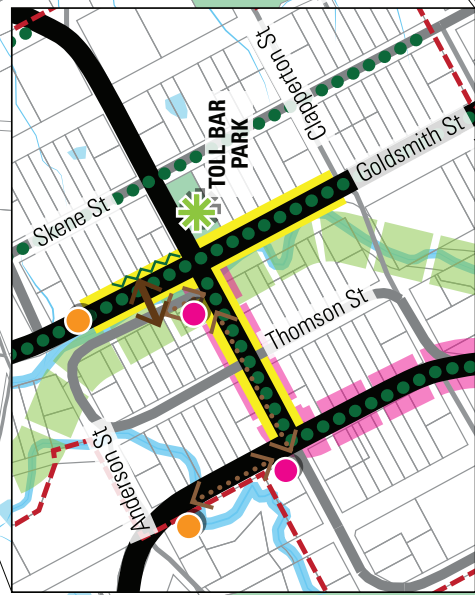
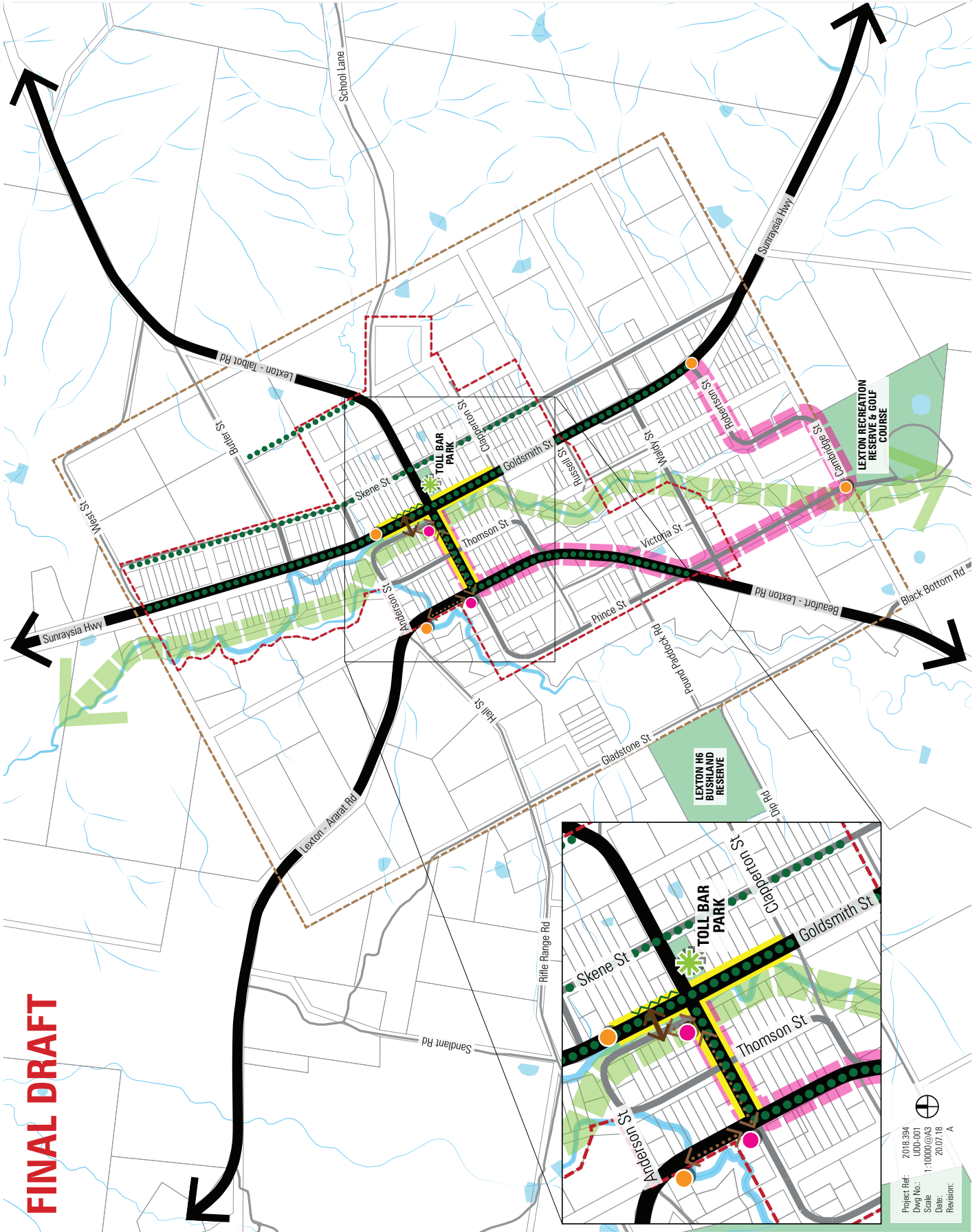
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Pyrenees Futures:
Lexton

Place Activation

- Legend
- Town boundary
 - Historic boundary
 - Local park
 - Seating node
 - Wayfinding / public art
 - Reinforce main street
 - Complete planting gaps
 - Soften edge to service road with low rise plantings
 - Arterial road
 - Local street
 - Rural lane
 - Existing pedestrian bridge
 - Potential pedestrian connection
 - Improve legibility and provide visual consistency
 - Potential green link
 - Public open space
 - Waterbody



Project Ref: 2018.394
 Dwg No.: UDD-001
 Scale: 1:10000@A3
 Date: 20.07.18
 Revision: A

Urban Design and Place Activation

ACTION	PRIORITY	TIMELINE	RESOURCES	COMMENTS
Develop an outdoor seating area outside the Lexton Co-op	High	1-2 years	<\$15,000	Work with the Lexton Co-op Store Committee and use existing trees/creekline amenity in design.
Replace current median break between Sunraysia Highway and service road with vegetated strip, using strappy native plantings and small (6-8m) Eucalypts where appropriate	High	1-2 years	\$20,000	Design in consultation with VicRoads
Develop a program of interpretive signage and an exhibition space around the Lexton Co-op Store, focusing on local arts and the town's heritage	High	1-3 years	\$10,000/in-kind work	Work with local community groups and the Lexton Co-op Store Committee
Introduce themed way-finding signage at key intersections to mark the way to the Lexton Recreation Reserve	High	1-3 years	<\$15,000	Work with Lexton Recreation Reserve Committee
Add a public drinking tap at the Toll Bar Park	High	1-2 years	\$5,000	Possible partnership with Central Highlands Water
Develop a sculptural point or wayfinding device to highlight the entrance to the Lexton Recreation Reserve	High	1-3 years	<\$20,000	Work with Lexton Recreation Reserve Committee
Develop a pedestrian path linking Lexton Hall, Co-op Store and Toll Bar Park	High	1-3 years	<\$20,000	
Develop Williamson Street, from the Lexton-Ararat Road to Skene Street, as a civic spine with consistent canopy tree planting and seating	Medium	1-5 years	<\$20,000	
Intersperse exotic plantings with existing eucalypts between Russell Street and Robertson Street along the Sunraysia Highway	Medium	1-3 years	<\$5,000	Work with VicRoads

Urban Design and Place Activation continued

ACTION	PRIORITY	TIMELINE	RESOURCES	COMMENTS
Develop a sculpture point at the northern entrance to the Sunraysia Highway service road	Medium	1-5 years	\$20,000	Grant and partnership opportunities
Fill in tree planting gaps along Skene Street	Medium	1-5 years	<\$10,000	
As land is rezoned, upgrade Skene Street's northern sections with tree planting and surface work as required	Once land is rezoned		TBC	

Further planning work

ACTION	PRIORITY	TIMELINE	RESOURCES	COMMENTS
Rezone the Lexton Recreation Reserve and Lexton Golf Course to Public Park and Recreation Zone	High (as part of shire-wide corrections amendment)	1-2 years	\$5,000 (for shire-wide public land corrections amendment)	
Review heritage controls in Lexton township	Medium	1-3 years	\$10,000	Potential further resource allocation for planning scheme amendments
Develop outline development plans and a Development Plan Overlay schedule for north-eastern growth area	Medium	1-3 years	\$15,000	Before land is rezoned
Indicative cost includes planning scheme amendment				
Run planning scheme amendment to rezone north-eastern growth area and introduce relevant overlays, and rezone land either side of Hall Street to Rural Living	Following DPO schedule development	2-5 years	\$20,000	

Advocacy

ACTION	PRIORITY	TIMELINE	RESOURCES	COMMENTS
Work with the Dja Dja Wurrung in line with its Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan to tell the stories of key waterways, such as the Burnbank Creek, through public art and landscape works.	High	1-3 years	TBC	Potential to seek grant opportunities
Work with Central Highlands Water towards a feasibility study regarding costs and options for sewer infrastructure in Lexton	Medium	1-3 years	TBC (depending on funding and grant opportunities)	This feasibility study should form the basis of a community engagement project that provides scenarios and funding models for potential sewer provision
Following the sewerage feasibility study, conduct a community engagement process that puts forward costs and options	Following feasibility study		TBC (depending on funding and partnership opportunities)	
Work with the North Central CMA to maintain river red gums in Burnbank Creek as required	Ongoing			



Urban Design Guidelines

These guidelines focus on the design of public realm in and around Lexton's town centre. They provide guidance for colour palettes, guidance on plant species selection, materials and themes for public art projects.

Colour Palette Design

Materials should focus on links to Lexton's timber town and farming heritage, as well as prominent colours and materials on public buildings (such as cream render, exposed timber and red brick).

Public Seating Design

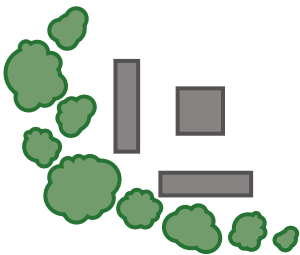
- Public seating in the town centre should be designed to encourage social interaction (including, for example, the use of benches at right angles to promote conversation).
- Public seating in the town centre should use the backs of seats or structures like fences to provide an edge, and take advantage of viewlines to the creek or surrounding hillsides.
- Permanent seats should include backs and focus on providing for ergonomic design.

- Temporary seats and tables can be used outside the General Store as a trial to assess optimal layout.
- Ensure street furniture near the creekline in the town centre is designed to adapt to inundation risk.

Public Art Themes

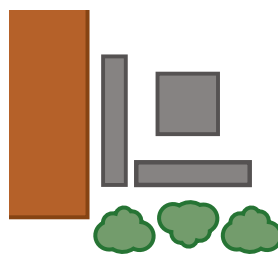
- Lexton's geography provides powerful cues for public art, including its location as the first town north of the Great Dividing Range, and at the confluence of early tracks and roads.
- In consultation with the Dja Dja Wurrung, interpretive sculptures and murals are encouraged to reference the town's waterways and evocative landscape of the Pyrenees hills.
- The town's timber and sheep grazing history.

Seating Concept 1



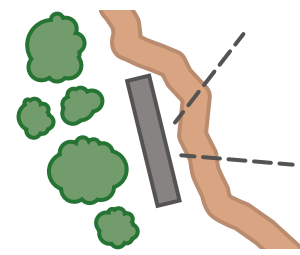
Benches placed at right angles with their backs to established vegetation, promoting social interaction and a safe edge.

Seating Concept 2



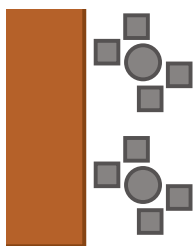
Benches placed at right angles to promote social interaction - one bench sitting against the wall of an established building, with plantings behind the second to provide a softer edge to roads or pathways. Potential for table in the middle.

Seating Concept 3



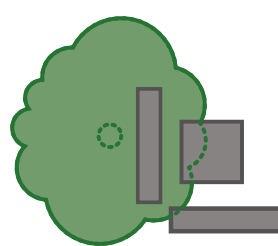
Lone bench placed along a path, facing an attractive landscape viewline. Single benches should be placed in locations that encourage contemplation and taking in an attractive view, but otherwise avoided.

Seating Concept 4



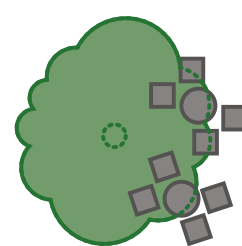
Temporary seats and tables can be placed in configurations that encourage social interaction, against building edges and oriented so minimise exposure to prevailing winds.

Seating Concept 5



Benches can be placed at right angles under canopy trees to provide shelter. Picnic tables may also be used. These benches should where possible be oriented to take advantage of viewlines and access to paths.

Seating Concept 6



Chairs and tables can be placed in social configurations under canopy trees. These should be oriented to take advantage of any available viewlines, pathway access and preferably provide shelter from the north-west.



Urban Design - Town Centre

- Encourage traditional construction materials including rough-hewn timber, exposed beams, cream render, red brick and non-zincalume sheet metal.
- Encourage signage to reflect colours of commercial and public buildings.
- Discourage the use of fences that obscure views of places or building frontages from the streetfront.
- Use strappy riparian vegetation to soften the edges of the service road barrier on the Sunraysia Highway (and replace agapanthus growing in the centre median).

Urban Design - Residential Areas

- Promote wide road reserves (15-20m) with swale drains in new residential development areas to preserve the openness of landscape character.
- Complete street tree planting on Skene Street, providing a north-south spine into new areas of subdivision.
- Promote social cohesion in new development areas by preventing culs-de-sacs or loop roads, and developing Skene Street/Lexon-Ararat Road as walkable corridors.
- Use deciduous street trees or 6-8m native species to fill planting gaps in residential areas north of Clapperton Street.

Species Guide

Tree planting within the town centre should focus on using exotic canopy trees to create a stronger sense of threshold, while using strappy green leafed vegetation to soften edges and promote a link to the town's creeklines.

Tree planting in residential areas should focus on Indigenous species in order to promote a sense of connection to native landscape.

Exotic/Canopy Species

- *Pyrus ussuriensis* (Manchurian Pear)
- *Quercus canariensis* (Algerian Oak)
- *Quercus Robur* (English Oak)
- *Quercus Coccinea* (Scarlet Oak)
- *Schinus mole* (Peppercorn)
- *Ulmus Glabra* (Scotch Elm)

Indigenous Species

- *Acacia dealbata* (Silver Wattle)
- *Acacia implexa* (Lightwood)
- *Acacia mearnsii* (Black Wattle)
- *Acacia melanoxylon* (Blackwood)
- (Drooping sheoak – replace)
- *Banksia marginata* (Silver Banksia)
- *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* (River Red Gum)
- *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* (Yellow Gum)
- *Corymbia Citriodora* (Lemon Scented Gum)
- *Eucalyptus Cladocalyx* (Sugar Gum)
- *Eucalyptus obliqua* (Messmate Stringybark)

References

- Cunningham, S; Hossain, H; Romeijn, H 2016 *Future Landscapes: Pyrenees Biodiversity Action Plan 2016*, Deakin University, Geelong.
- Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation 2014 *Dhelkunya Dja: Dja Dja Wurrung Country Plan 2014-2034*, Bendigo.
- Oulton, M 1995 *A Valley of the Finest Description: A History of the Shire of Lexton*, (3rd edition) Margaret Oulton and Pyrenees Shire Council, Pyrenees Shire.

Pyrenees Futures in Lexton: Your Views

What's this all about?

Over November and December 2017, Council worked with Lexton residents to inform a framework plan that will guide future development and urban design across the town.

These sessions revolved around people's direct experience of Lexton, what they love about the town, what characteristics need to be preserved or build on, and what people would like to see happen in the future.

This work is important because of the need to update planning policies that will guide and influence change in Lexton over the next ten years. This plan also seeks to deliver quick, low-cost improvements to the public realm in Lexton.

This process has involved more than 40 people in a range of forums including:

- Drop-in sessions at the Lexton Co-op Store
- A town walk involving a group of local residents
- Discussions with service authorities and Council staff
- Surveys run online and in hard copy at the Lexton Co-op Store.

This summary collates what we've heard into a series of themes that we're drawing on to produce a Framework Plan to guide future planning policy and land use; and Urban Design Guidelines that will focus on how the town looks, feels and functions. These themes are linked and form the basis of plans that will be placed on public exhibition.

The information from this engagement process will be blended with research and technical analysis Council has completed on a range of issues as the draft Framework Plan and Urban Design Guidelines are developed.

For more information, please visit our Pyrenees Futures website at www.pyrenees.vic.gov.au/futures or contact Council's Planning Department on 5349 1100 or via futures@pyrenees.vic.gov.au

Thanks to all who have been involved in helping shape this plan and Lexton's future.





Theme 1: Bringing Out the History

Established in 1846, Lexton is one of Victoria’s oldest towns – and the area’s Aboriginal heritage goes back thousands of years beforehand as Dja Dja Wurrung country.

Cues to these stories lie in the buildings and landscape. Local residents are proud of these stories but feel that more needs to be done to reveal and share it. Ideas include interpretive signage at key sites (including in the town centre) and historical town walks.

Theme 2: Located at the Crossroads

Lexton is known as the cross-roads of early Victoria because of its central and pivotal location in early European settlement. This theme repeats in Lexton’s fabric: from the cross-roads of the Sunraysia Highway and roads to Beaufort and Talbot, to the confluence of creeks near the town centre.

Today, residents appreciate being close to larger cities with their services, while being surrounded by peace and quiet and scenic landscapes. Planning must seek to preserve these traits that make Lexton a great place to live, while making the most of the town’s strategic location.

Theme 3: A Hybrid Landscape

Lexton is characterised by the red gums that fringe the town’s creeklines, which many people describe as majestic, and the eucalypt-dominated landscape of rolling hills around the town that begins to the north of Toll Bar Hill. This landscape that extends throughout the town and surrounding bushland is evocative, beautiful and widely appreciated.

While many residents value the ambience and character that the red gums bring to the town centre, others value the seasonality, shade and appearance that exotic trees like oaks give to parts of the town centre.

The town itself can be read as a hybrid native and exotic landscape; created by a scenic valley and defined by red gums along the creek line and exotic trees that are a defining feature at a number of points in the town grid. This provides a distinctive character that should be fostered into the future, particularly through further street tree plantings.

“ I love the picturesque scenery, fresh air, no pollution. Crossroads of Sunraysia Highway and Beaufort-Maryborough Roads. Open spaces and residential housing not overcrowded. Friendly faces, a history of community co-operation.” - Survey response

“ I love the views. We’re in a valley with great hilly views right around.” - Survey response



Theme 4: More generous design

Public realm in the town centre has, over time, been neglected with few places to sit and gather apart from Toll Bar Park (which itself could have better amenities). There are opportunities for landscaping to soften, beautify and better define the town centre along the highway. There are also opportunities to introduce seating around the Co-op store to make the most of its creekfront location.

There are opportunities for Council and community to partner in beautifying and maintaining public spaces so that they “give back” more. This means more attractive landscapes, more places to sit and meet and more opportunities to enjoy Lexton’s attractive natural setting and gather in the town centre.

Theme 5: Designing With Water

Lexton was built on and around creeklines, which contribute to the town’s beauty but also pose challenges and potential constraints to growth. The Burnbank Creek has flooded in the past, most recently in 2011 where water lapped at houses and the general store. There is a need to better understand the nature of flooding in the town.

The Burnbank Creek’s path through the middle of town also constrains the ability for some residential blocks to be built on, due to current planning regulations and statewide regulations around the treatment of wastewater. Some want sewer brought to the town, while there is also a desire for more residential land to be available for development without constraints or impediments.

Theme 6: More Constructive Planning Policies

While working with environmental constraints, some see current planning policies affecting Lexton as being too restrictive, impeding the town’s future development. Planning will need to consider options for policy reform that take advantage of the town’s opportunities while preserving landscape character, local biodiversity and catchment water quality.

Theme 7: Finding the Way Between Two Bookends

Lexton’s main centres of activity are scattered around town, but generally concentrated around the general store/pub and the Recreation Reserve at the south-western edge of town. The Recreation Reserve has become a particularly valued gathering place, and yet the way there from the Co-op store or the main highway is not clear - indeed there have been examples of visiting teams struggling to find their way to matches!

Because forfeits are not always ideal, there’s a need to introduce better wayfinding across town to better link community facilities and gathering points.

Theme 8: A Caring, Progressive Town

The sense of community and the willingness of local people to get involved is widely appreciated. This sense of community extends from the town itself into surrounding farming districts, which retain a strong link to Lexton. This can be further supported through a more inviting public realm that provides places to gather and things for people of all ages to do.



PYRENEES
SHIRE



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