



Greater Shepparton City Council

Toolamba Growth Plan

Conversation Report

Pre-draft Engagement

May 2019

ETHOS
URBAN



GREATER
SHEPPARTON

About the Toolamba Growth Plan

The Toolamba Townships (Toolamba and Old Toolamba) are located approximately 20km south-west of Shepparton, adjacent to the Goulburn River and Shepparton Regional Park. At the 2016 Census, the district had a population of 769, with a median age of 40 years. The community is served by a local shop/post office, the Junction Hotel, the Toolamba primary school, the Colaura Gardens and Playground, and a recreational reserve that includes an oval and Community Hall.

Greater Shepparton is continuing to grow, and there has been substantial interest in larger scale development in Toolamba in recent years. Further, the proposed development of the Goulburn Valley Highway Shepparton Bypass is expected to have a significant impact on the townships, affecting access and potentially increasing demand for housing. Such demand could result in considerable change in a relatively short period, in contrast to previous patterns of expansion. Although timeframes for development of the Bypass are as yet unknown, it is important that this growth is strategically planned to ensure that the character of the townships is retained in the coming decades.

Greater Shepparton City Council (Council) is working with Ethos Urban to preparing the Toolamba Growth Plan (the Growth Plan) to integrate environmental, social and economic considerations, and provide a framework for appropriate and successful future development, balancing the needs of the community with the constraints of the locality.

Pre-draft Consultation

Pre-draft Consultation was undertaken with referral agencies, landowners and the community to ensure that all of the factors that may impact Toolamba's future were fully understood prior to beginning work on the Growth Plan.

Consultation at this early stage enables an exchange of information between Council and stakeholders, to assist understanding about what may happen, and to obtain comments on ideas and proposals to guide decision-making. Community members are important stakeholders within Greater Shepparton, and Council are keen to ensure that their views and preferences are taken into account in planning for growth over the coming decades.

This report provides a summary of the comments and insights received throughout the consultation activities.

Acknowledgements

We, Greater Shepparton City Council, acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land which now comprises Greater Shepparton. We pay respect to their tribal Elders, we celebrate their continuing culture and we acknowledge the memory of their ancestors.

Greater Shepparton City Council gratefully acknowledges the assistance of local government and service agencies, and the Toolamba community in the preparation of the Toolamba Growth Plan.

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About the Townships

Toolamba is located approximately 20km south-west of Shepparton, surrounded by a rich agricultural landscape that is complemented by the Goulburn River and the Shepparton Regional Park. Old Toolamba lies approximately 3 km to the south-west of Toolamba.¹

The townships' population was recorded as 769 persons in 2016. This was made up of 216 families and 295 private dwellings, equating to 2.8 persons per household.

Toolamba township offers a range of facilities for its residents, including a general store, hotel, primary and preschool, community gardens, a playground, and a recreation reserve including an oval, community centre, and tennis courts. It also hosts CFA, CWA, Lions Club, football, netball and fishing clubs.

Old Toolamba is largely residential, with no commercial centre or community facilities.

The townships can be accessed from the Goulburn Valley Highway via Bridge Road to the east, or the Midland Highway via Toolamba Road on the western side.

The Toolamba community is tightly-knit and has shown a keen and active interest in the future development of their townships. Previous engagement has found that the community is open to growth, but wish to ensure that the small town character and identity of Toolamba is retained and protected.

The Toolamba Growth Plan seeks to frame the community's spirit and vision for their townships, providing important structural elements and guidelines to ensure appropriate and successful growth over the next 30 years.

¹ The Australian Bureau of Statistics includes both townships as a single State Suburb for the collection of Census data. Consequently, for the purposes of the Plan, the townships are referred to collectively unless otherwise noted.

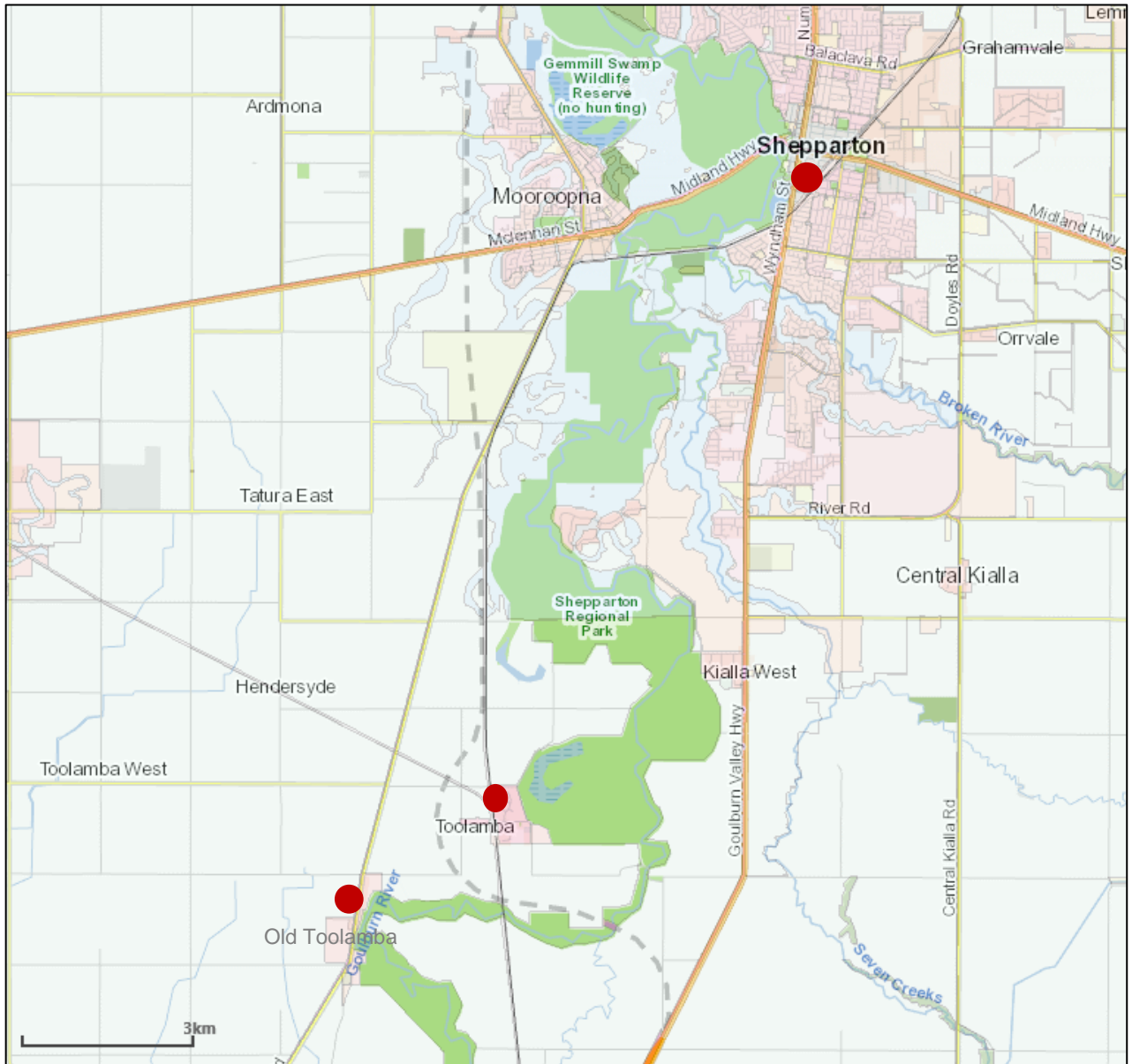


Figure 1. Map showing location of Toolamba and Old Toolamba in relation to Shepparton.

Pre-draft Consultation

Council and Ethos Urban undertook public consultation activities in late April and May 2019. A range of activities were scheduled to ensure that all stakeholders were provided with an opportunity to provide their input, as outlined in Table 1, below.

The submissions received are outlined in the following section.

Table. 1. Pre-draft Consultation Activities

Activity	Purpose	Timing	Notes
<i>Project Webpage (see Appendix A)</i>	Provide project information/updates and contact details for the duration of the project.	3 May 2019 – Ongoing	Council recognises that Toolamba’s progress may be of interest to the wider community of Greater Shepparton.
<i>Online submission form (on project webpage)</i>	To enable comments from the community.	3 May – 27 May 2019	Comments were also received via email and post.
<i>Flyer (see Appendix A)</i>	To ensure all residents were aware of the development of the growth plan and the opportunities to provide input.	Late April 2019	Posted to all residents of Toolamba, Old Toolamba and the surrounding areas. Also published in the Toolamba Primary School weekly newsletter.
<i>Referral Agencies Workshop</i>	To identify opportunities or concerns at an early stage of planning to gain support for the project.	9 May 2019	Held at the Greater Shepparton Council offices.
<i>Landowner and representative interviews</i>	To include prospective development plans in consideration for the Growth Plan.	9 May 2019, 4, 6 and 14 June 2019	Held at the Greater Shepparton Council offices and via teleconferences.
<i>Community Drop-in Session</i>	To enable community members to provide input to the draft Growth Plan. To enable discussion of issues between residents, Council and Ethos Urban.	9 May 2019	Advertised with media release and through Council’s social media. Held at the Toolamba Community Hall between 3pm and 7pm. Attended by approximately 70 people. Included children’s survey.

What we heard

Referral Agencies Workshop

A number of issues were discussed at the Referral Agencies Workshop that was held at Council offices, and included representatives from:

- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
- Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority
- Goulburn Valley Water
- VicTrack
- Environmental Protection Authority

Infrastructure

The provision of reticulated water and sewerage services was the main topic for discussion, as a key issue in determining the amount and type of growth in the Toolamba Townships. Careful planning is required, as the potential for growth will affect whether the cost of additional infrastructure is warranted.

While provision of these services is supported in principle, the capacity of existing infrastructure to accommodate increased demand will need to be assessed, as well as the construction costs and timing of new facilities.

Settlement Patterns

The provision of reticulated sewerage services will further impact the size of future dwelling lots, shaping Toolamba's settlement patterns. Having smaller lots raised concerns about the potential loss of significant portions of the existing vegetation.

Measures to protect heavily treed areas will need to be investigated.

Sustainability

The possibility of Toolamba accessing solar energy resources to the north was discussed,

to enhance the towns' environmental sustainability.

Railway Land

VicTrack are the owners of the portion of land that previously accommodated the Toolamba Railway Station, which was closed and removed in 1988. There are no current plans to reopen the station or develop the land, so VicTrack are interested in rezoning for other uses.

Landowner and Representative Interviews

To date, three local landowners have expressed interest in subdividing their land for residential purposes, including one who has prepared a Precinct Structure Plan. A Planning Scheme Amendment would be required to rezone the subject land so that these developments could be undertaken. Interviews with individual landowners who have expressed interest in or are exploring proposals to develop their land were undertaken. These prospective developments include:

- A proposed development at 335 Rutherford Road includes the provision of reticulated sewerage to Toolamba, and the subdivision of approximately 44 hectares into lots of 800-1200m². The landowner has produced a precinct structure plan to demonstrate the layout and staging of their proposal, which has been noted by Council and is the subject of Amendment C168 to the Greater Shepparton Planning Scheme.

A subdivision of 30 hectares at 155 Rutherford Road into X lots of 2,000-3,500 square metres is awaiting the outcome of the previous proposal, as lots of less than 4,000m² are dependent on the provision of reticulated sewerage services. The landowner has emphasised their perception that the character of Toolamba is derived from house size and the natural amenity of the area rather than lot size. They propose that to achieve a coherent design, they will include covenants on the title to protect environmental assets and include design guidelines for development.

- A third landowner is proposing to subdivide 17 hectares at 115 Rutherford Road in the medium term future, to create 29 lots of 4,000m².



Community responses

Community members were asked to respond to the following questions:

- **What do you love about Toolamba townships?**
- **What physical characteristics would you like to see retained in the future?**
- **What words describe how you imagine Toolamba townships in 2050?**
- **What changes would make Toolamba Townships even better in the long term?**

Written Submissions

Eight written submissions were received, via the online submission form and at the Community Drop-in Session (see Table 2, below).

Community Drop-in Session

The Community Drop-in Session was held at the Toolamba Community Hall to enable the community to ask questions, discuss local matters with Council officers and Ethos Urban staff, and to provide their insight and feedback. Each of the questions above were printed on a large poster, and attendees were invited to add their comments to the posters using sticky notes.

Approximately 70 people attended the session. A total of 182 sticky notes were affixed to the posters, providing more than 400 suggestions, ideas and comments. Six responses to the children's survey were also received, with 19 comments and ideas. (See Figures 4-7, below.)

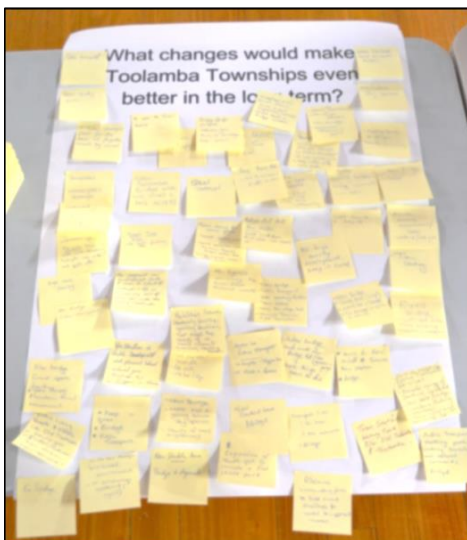


Figure 2. One of the posters used in the drop-in session to gather community input for the Growth Plan.



Figure 3. The drop-in session at Toolamba Community Hall, where community members talked to Council officers and Ethos Urban staff.

Table 2. Summary of written submissions.

Submission #	What do you love about Toolamba townships? What physical characteristics would you like to see retained in the future?	What words describe how you imagine Toolamba townships in 2050?	What changes would make Toolamba Townships even better in the long term?
1			Aussie Rules football club.
2	The pub, parkland, school, kinder and oval.	Keep Toolamba as a low density country town with a vibrant community.	A railway stop, and shared trail along the river to Murchison.
3	Large blocks with backyard and room for a shed should be retained, nothing smaller than a quarter acre [approx. 0.1 ha or 1,000m ²], or larger than 20 acres [approx. 8 ha].	A large Rural Living centre with the required services.	The Bypass, upgraded bridge, and continuing use of the river and bushland.
4	Safe and friendly environment, especially for kids, small enough to know lots of people. Minimal retail shopping.		Public transport connection to Shepparton.
5			Walking path between Toolamba and Old Toolamba.
6	School, kinder, trees, community garden. Size and location, proximity to other places. Perfect for raising a family.	Remains a charming little community that attracts families. Minimum 1 acre [approx. 4,000m ² or 0.4 ha] block size for new subdivisions.	Minimise change but improve facilities. More areas for children, more bushwalking paths, a town pool and a larger hall.
7	Wide streets, vegetation and parks, general store, proximity to river and bushland, native flora and fauna. Small and quiet, with a sense of community. Must keep environmental values.	Small and quiet, with a bustling railway station and improved water supply.	Railway station, new bridge and access roads, mains water extending to Old Toolamba.
8	Rural feel, no 'hustle and bustle'. Character of town, development that has blended in. Smaller lots close to town, bigger lots as you move out of town. Interplay between natural, built, social, and cultural conditions.		Growth that fits into the existing character, with large lots.

What do you love about Toolamba Townships?

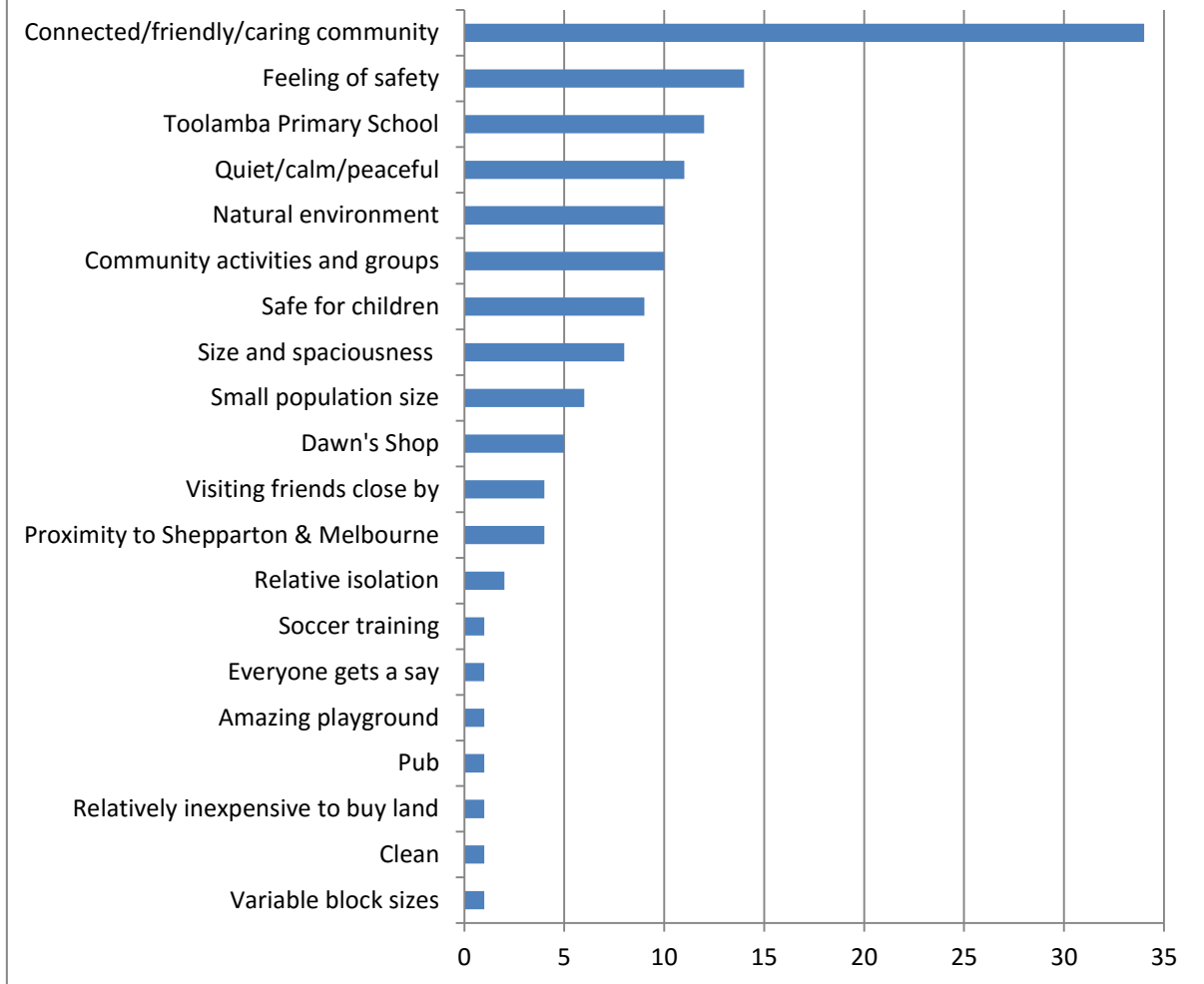


Figure 4. Responses to 'What do you love about Toolamba Townships?' (39 notes)

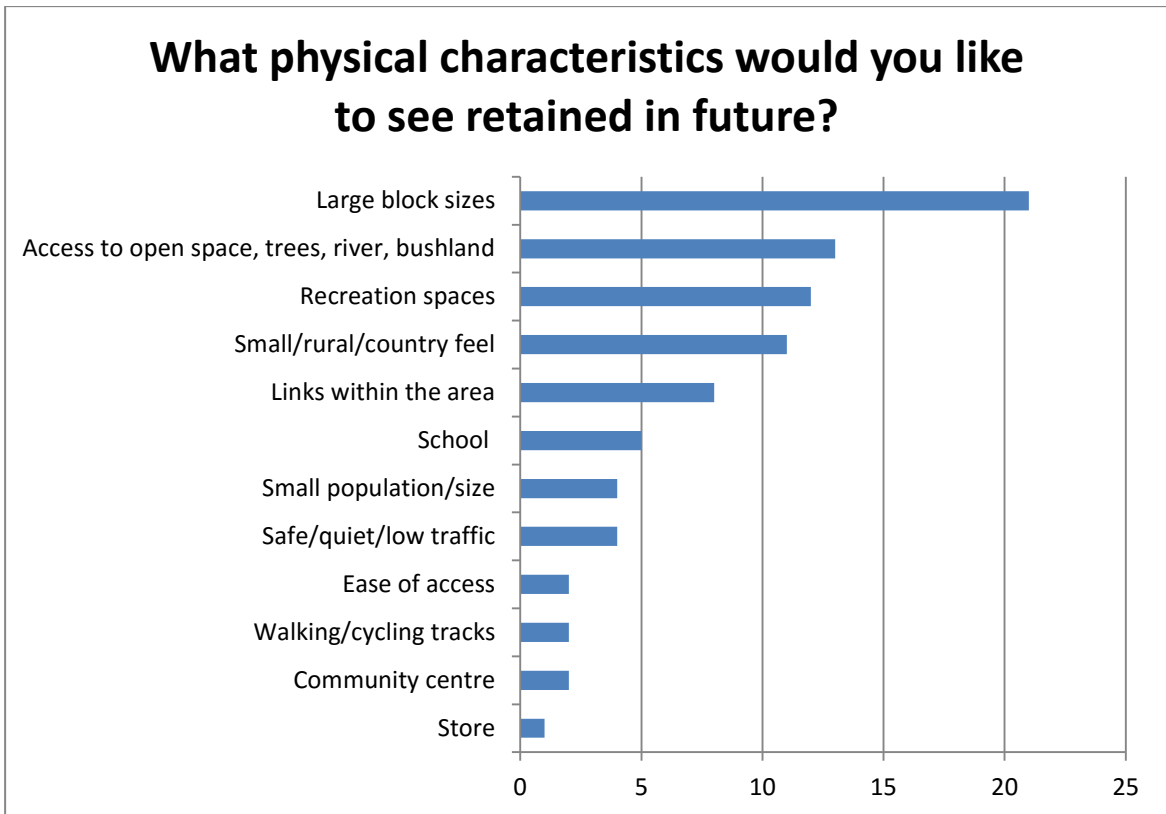


Figure 5. Responses to 'What physical characteristics would you like to see retained in the future?' (40 notes)

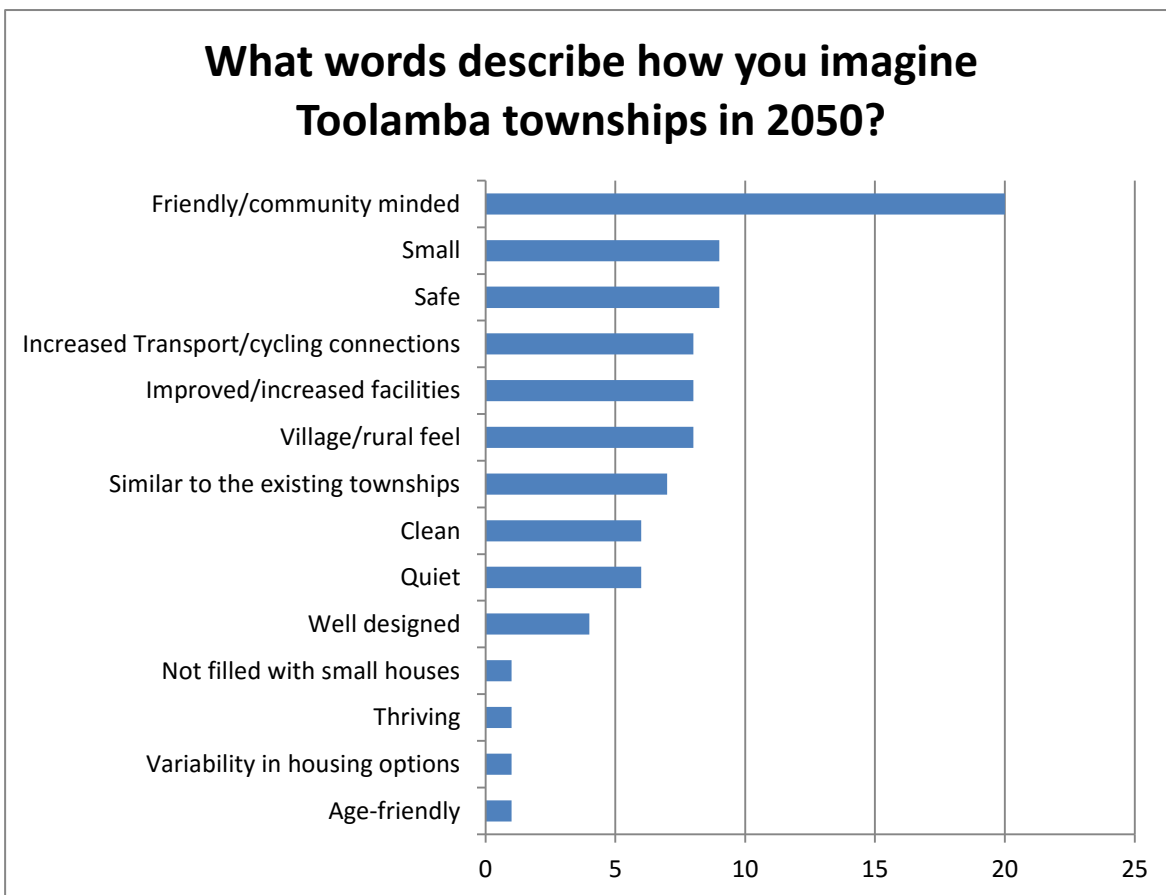


Figure 6. Responses to 'What words describe how you imagine Toolamba townships in 2050?' (32 notes)

What changes would make Toolamba townships even better in the long term?

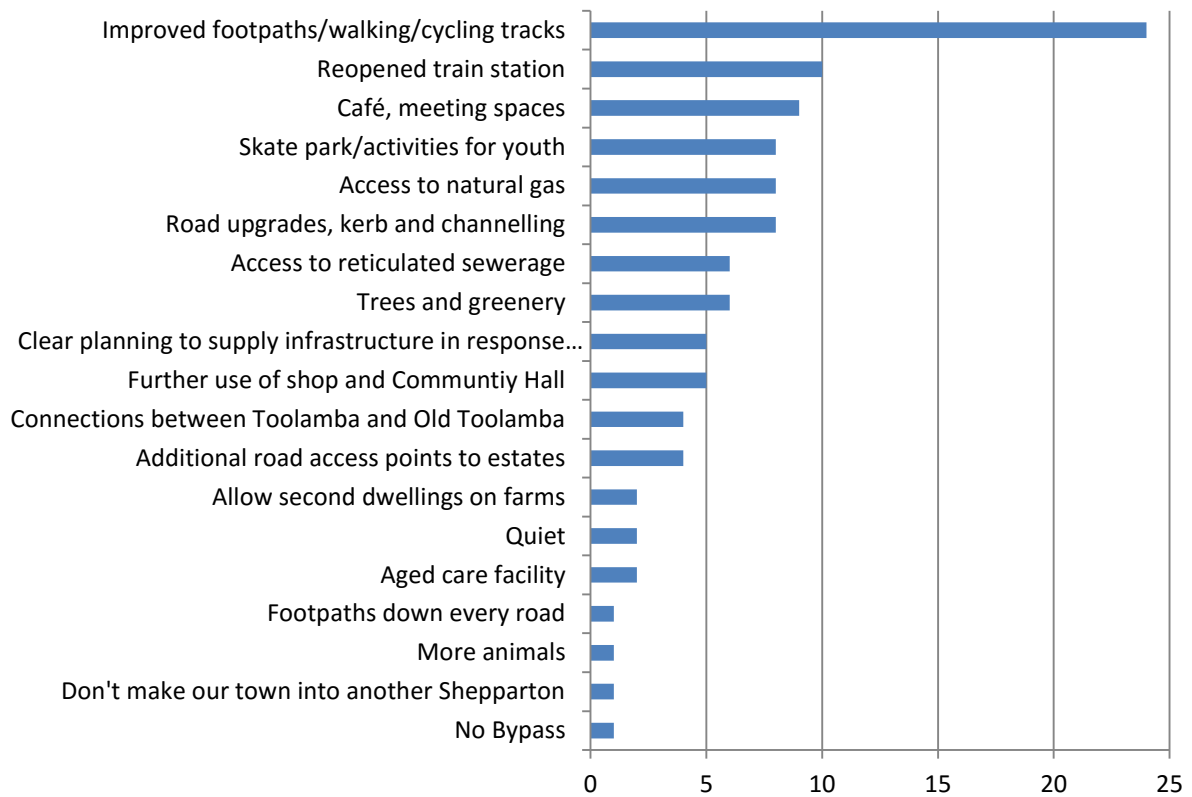


Figure 7. Responses to 'What changes would make Toolamba Townships even better in the long term?' (61 notes)



Key Points

The following key points will inform the Toolamba Growth Plan.

Housing

The following elements are or would be valued by the community in relation to Housing:

- The townships' small size
- The quiet, peaceful 'rural' feel
- The sense of safety, especially for children
- The larger block sizes
- Spaciousness
- Relatively inexpensive to buy
- Increased variation on housing supply

Open Space

The following elements are or would be valued by the community in relation to Open Space:

- Surrounding bushland
- Proximity to Shepparton Regional Park and the Goulburn River
- Daunts Bend
- Local flora and fauna
- Walking and cycling tracks
- Tree-lined streets
- Recreation spaces

Access and Transport

The following elements are or would be valued by the community in relation to Access and Transport:

- Easy access to Shepparton and Melbourne (while retaining a 'rural' atmosphere and proximity to the natural environment)
- Walking and cycling tracks
- Reduce traffic in Wren St by connecting Bitcon Road and Bridge Road
- More access points to/from residential estates
- More public transport, including train station

- Keep connections between Toolamba and Old Toolamba

Facilities

The following elements are or would be valued by the community in relation to Facilities:

- Toolamba Primary School and Kindergarten
- The general store
- The Junction Hotel
- Sports precinct
- Community Centre
- Playground and barbeque pavilion

Facilities such as the school and Community Centre are important in maintaining the strong community ties that shape the townships, providing venues for group meetings and activities.

Infrastructure

The following elements are or would be valued by the community in relation to Infrastructure:

- Refurbished Bridge with increased load limit
- Improved drainage
- Paved roads and footpaths
- Access to natural gas and reticulated sewerage services
- Upgrades to water mains

Future Aspirations

As well as maintenance and upgrades to existing features, the following elements would contribute to the amenity of the townships:

- An aged care facility
- A skate park/youth facilities
- Meeting spaces
- More walking and cycling paths

Next steps

All of the responses received during the pre-draft consultation will be considered as part of the development of a draft Toolamba Growth Plan.

Referral Agencies, landowners, residents, and community members will have further opportunity to provide input when the draft Growth Plan is exhibited for public comment and feedback.

Following any further revisions in response to public comments, the final *Toolamba Growth Plan* will be considered for adoption at an Ordinary Council Meeting, before being incorporated into the Greater Shepparton Planning Scheme through a Planning Scheme Amendment.

