



Strategic Community Plan



Strategic Community Plan

Community consultation process and outcomes summary

In September 2018 the Shire of Mingenew identified that it wished to undertake a review of the Strategic Community Plan. The successful tenderer for the role was Lateral Aspect who partnered with Sue Middleton, who is a regional community development specialist.

This document is a summary of the community consultation process and outcomes, and captures the feedback from both the local and regional community members involved in the process.

The Council and community both expressed a strong desire to review the Strategic Community Plan (SCP) to be able to deliver on their growth objectives for their community. The SCP developed in 2011 was no longer delivering desired outcomes for the community, and in particular delivering on aspirations related to growth and development as a community.

This review process is therefore a major reset of community expectations and has resulted in the re-development of a vision for the future of Mingenew. That vision is aligned with the community expectations and the Shires leadership and management aspirations in 2018.

The plan will assist Council to determine affordable and achievable priorities that will respond to the needs and aspirations of the community. It provides both an engagement point for the Council working with the community on the choices it faces to drive growth and provide services for the community, and an opportunity to share the challenges of balancing aspirations and delivering a sustainable financial future for the Council.

Consultation Process

Three groups of stakeholders were consulted to develop the data on which the SCP is based. They included:

- Council and Council Staff (CEO and CDO)
- Community - represented by 40 members of the community at an engagement workshop on the 18th of October and individual interviews of community members (8)
- Regional Community member interviews(6)

The information from each of those processes is presented under three report sections:

1. Council and Staff
2. Community Workshops results
3. Community Interview summary
4. Regional Stakeholder Interview summary



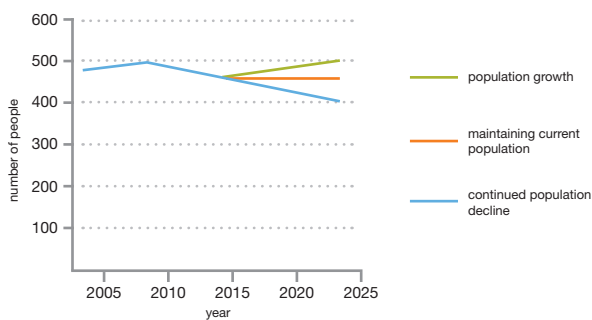
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Council and staff

Current Growth Trajectory of the Shire

The Shire currently has a population under 500 and is continuing to decline. According to Councillors this has halved in the last 40 years and is a long-term trend. The major impact comes from the changing nature of the agriculture industry, changing farming systems, and increased efficiencies that have meant less farm labour is required.

Population Mingenew 2005 to 2018 (with 3 scenarios): source ABS Census Statistics



Shires Vision for Growth

Shire would like to identify the unique advantages that we have and how to maximise their impact. Ideas included:

- Tap into tourism industry potential
- Develop pop up businesses
- Grow businesses through an incubator
- Bring new people and capital into town
- Tap into potential tree-changers/telecommuters
- Do more with the satellite tracking facility
- Fill business gaps with an attraction strategy
- Develop industrial land and opportunities
- Continue the focus on marketing the community (See you in Mingenew)

What are the Economic Drivers Impacting the Shire?

This question was broadly answered and picked up a good range of challenges/local drivers. They included:

- Lack of suitable housing, lack of motivation to invest, capital growth stagnation, lack of rental properties
- Older generation using Mingenew as a base (lock up and go, downsize)
- Capacity to source labour (eg for shire, more attractive to work on farms or mining than Council)
- Movement of retirees – baby-boomers/grey nomads – source of tourism revenue
- Increasing aged community – industry/service opportunity



What are the opportunities for the Shire?

- Tourism – flowers, astro, science/satellite, events, sport, history, walking trails, RV friendly, farmstays
- Science/research – satellite tracking, ag research- MIG partnerships, Rural innovation hub
- Telecommuting tree changers – promote to potential permanent residents (target tourists)
- GBH supernet, digital farms
- EV charging network
- Incentive programs for businesses
- Increased housing

What Capacity exists in the Community to support this plan?

There are 32 active community groups and there is a level of volunteer exhaustion. Is there an opportunity to consolidate or bring together groups to reduce the load from all running incorporated organisations? It was observed there are many outstanding community groups that go beyond the call of duty and are tackling issues that are broader issues than those impacting Mingenew.

Regional organisations to consult: North Midlands Project, Dept Sport and Rec, MWDC, MWCCI and RSM Business Local.

Documents to reference?

Mid West Blueprint and DSR Blueprint for region (authors note: Blueprint has been operationalised into a annual Business Plan that can align with).



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Community workshop results

40 members of the community attended a Community Workshop on the 18th of October 2018, to share their views.

The workshop was designed to gather community ideas on their vision for a preferred future, their view on the population scenarios they believe are achievable for the community, and to brainstorm the strategy areas they believe will create that vision/outcome.

Preferred Future – the community brainstormed the key ideas that captured their view of a preferred future – concepts included:

- Happy
- Healthy
- Well-being
- Broadacre farming area
- Diverse Economy
- Thriving business
- Profitable
- Innovative
- Unencumbered
- Sustainable (triple bottom line)
- Right to farm
- Connected
- Educated

Vision

Our vision is to be a connected, dynamic and thriving community in which people can be happy, healthy and belong. We do this by creating opportunities, being innovative and being a learning community that pushes the boundaries. Mingenew is entrepreneurial and welcomes change.

What the Community thought about Population Scenarios

The community members all agreed that continued population decline (blue line) was not a preferred scenario. It would make it difficult to continue to maintain services and keep a critical mass of population in Mingenew.

NOT PREFERRED

Community members agreed the scenario to maintain current population was more preferred, but that this would take a reasonable effort as the current trend line was for future decline, so halting this decline and reversing it to just maintenance of current population would take a reasonable clear development effort. **PREFERRED**

Some community members wanted to strive for Population Growth (the grey line) whilst noting this would involve more aggressively targeting growth and development. To achieve this would take over 11% growth rate over the next 7 years. In real terms it is 50 to 60 people, which is 25 new families, which is 3 to 4 new families a year (with no net loss of population). **ASPIRATIONAL**



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With the preferred scenario in mind, the community considered the strategy areas that had already been considered from Council ideas and then brainstormed the following ideas (sorted into groups and prioritised):

Attract and build Industry (37)
Engage local businesses
More services for Agriculture eg. mechanical, good health services, good sporting facilities
Opportunity for more businesses to capitalise on wildflower tourism generally
Get a community bank - Bendigo Bank
Become a solar town
Locally grown produce eg. fruit, vegies, honey sold to the local businesses
Farmers brewing a local beer, sold @ expo, local main events and the Mingenew Hotel
Affordable groceries that allow us to buy local on a budget
Incubator to support new industry - trades and any other identified needs
Social enterprises

Centre of excellence of ag education (to take over from Muresk, Marcus Oldham of WA)
Training for new entrants - farming and business
Scientific facts vs unsubstantiated statements

Employment (17 votes)
Create more local employment opportunities
Local businesses and industry - encourage them to grow to employ more
Town employment impacted by lack of housing
Keep services local eg. teachers, police

Childcare (13 votes)
Access to childcare 5 days a week with spots available
Become a Satellite town for health services (13 votes)

Housing (27 votes)
Cheap Housing and Maintaining Housing
Become a tidy town - everyone can participate, draw attention to town, relatively low cost
The weakness of our biggest competitors - the cities (price of housing?)



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Community Facilities (19 votes)

- Mains water pressure too low on south area
- Central community/business hub
- Fast reliable internet
- Improved internet
- Grey nomad type retirees village
- Skatepark refurb
- Consolidate facilities to save cost of assets
- Prioritise and deprioritise roads to better maintain them
- Health care to support aging population and attract older tree changers

Tourism (15 votes)

- Agriculture and Wildflower tours by knowledgeable people
- Develop Mingenew Hill access urgently
- Agri-tourism (tours, education)
- Adventure Tourism
- Advertise people's stories eg. retirees buying the Mingenew Hotel (ad in Saturdays west)
- Natural assets - business/innovation/education (We have flies/dungbeetles/insects, solar/heat power, water)
- Good health services - doctor, ambulance, silver chain

Streamlining volunteers (10 votes)

- Streamlining of volunteer/community workforce so we have more time to be entrepreneurial

Innovative and Positive thinking (13 votes)

- Embrace innovative thinking (stop the blockers/negative Nancy's)
- Community Unity



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Community interview summary

In addition, 8 local community members were identified and interviewed to deepen the analysis of growth opportunities or constraints for the community. Community members were also asked what other innovation or disruption processes could create opportunities.

Ideas from the Interviews included:

- Making the town a great place, cohesive and connected for those that live here is vital
- Access for young families to have a good life and pursue their careers is important eg. Access to childcare facilities really critical to young women
- Need more opportunities for the arts and culture
- Too many associations – there is an AGM every night for 2 weeks – must be a better and more efficient way to run this, can we have Football, netball, hockey as a combined committee
- Need to work better with the region
- Shire could 'second' roles to the community and pay those groups to achieve the same outcomes
- Get the Railway Centre going – North Midlands Project idea to build exchange, museum, hub, artist in residence space
- Get a better approach to events management – monetise some of the work and take the load off the community – get them doing more entrepreneurial things with their time
- Build on more history and culture for tourism, build farm tourism, do more ag advocacy
- Capture more value in ag eg. MIG's north south beef alliance, do innovative things with labour supply eg refugee labour market
- Do more with the crops we grow eg. Lupin flour
- Connectivity big barrier to basing business here and trying to bring your job with you
- Need co-working space in town, somewhere with common user space
- Growing other types of crops eg hemp
- Developing irrigated projects - find competitive advantage in climate, transport, position in value chain eg fodder potential
- Potential to develop micro brewery to value add grains
- Lack housing – critical to address this – need to develop project to activate the housing market
- Could change expo to become more of an event manager and change the event itself to a market type field day with demos
- Tell more of the community narrative in the promotions that we are doing – good marketing but tell more of the local story
- Get more out of CBH – biggest footprint in town, but we don't capture any value from them
- Need to slow the export of wealth to the coast from the Shire, attract people back to be involved



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- Have more communication forums with the key groups, would like more interactive opportunities to discuss the future plans and projects with the CEO, would also like Shire to use Social media better
- Tourist and Promotions needs some growing space to capture more value from interactions with tourists
- Promote “Top 5 Things to do in Mingenew”
- Develop Ag incubator
- Town needs a good outdoor space eg. Kalbarri nature playground
- Need one co-working space that could be like Carnamah exchange space
- Seniors need access to simple programs eg. Staying on your feet

What the regional community said

CEO's or Manager of key Regional Stakeholder organisations were interviewed to develop the background context on opportunities and challenges for Mingenew. All of the organisations interviewed have an active role in working with the Shire of Mingenew, its community or its organisations.

Consultation interviews were held with:

- Gavin Treasure, CEO, Midwest Development Commission
- Joanne Fabling, CEO, Midwest Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Mike Purslowe, Manager, RSM Business Local
- David O'Malley, CEO, Coral Coast Tourism
- David Bowman – Bright, Founder North Midlands Project

Overall the consultations revealed that Mingenew is seen externally as a forward looking, good community and Shire. Regional stakeholders were highly supportive of developing a growth narrative for Mingenew and each organisation felt they could play a role in assisting that for Mingenew.

The challenge for the region is nearly all of the shires are currently experiencing negative growth. There is a belief that they are also constrained by a lack of strategic thinking and capacity to work together. Shifting the dial on this challenge is critical for the region. All regional stakeholders are interested in working in a strategic way with the community and Shire of Mingenew.



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Key themes to emerge from regional consultations:

Mingenew has good natural and human assets for Tourism:

- Coalseam is seen as one of the three tourism hot spots in the region (Leseur and Kalbarri National Park are other two)
- Depot Hill is also rated as a good location for wildflowers
- The community could develop more formalised approach to tours using Geraldton and Dongara as the “local” market, and could do more structured ‘hinterland’ type tourism development as in other coastal regions across Australia (day trip hinterland).
- Night time star experiences (Astro Tourism) are also a key opportunity for Mingenew to extend stays and build more depth in visitor experience. This could be done by building some low key infrastructure in key spots and creating interactive experiences.
- Could build off European Space Facility (noting no one interviewed knew what happened here or what the specific opportunities were).
- Mingenew needs to build more depth into the Tourism product to extend the tourism visitation window and ensure the community has a product in dry years (when wildflowers not so good). Could deepen the product at places like Coalseam with more natural and cultural history, to build international tourism numbers. One example is having a season round display of wildflowers eg in a dome or developing gardens around town like Kings Park have done. Planting everlastings with a council truck to water at planting assists (majority of tourists want the carpets of plants).
- Also need to link with towns in the ‘trail’ from Perth through to Exmouth so product is linked and co-promoted.
- The community could tell more of its history and promote its identity more. For example Japanese tourists love honey, they love to pick things, they would like to feed an animal. Work with local farmers to build farm experiences that can tie in with the season that are group focussed and not require a full time tourism business.
- One of key issues for tourism is the lack of accommodation outside of the Van Park, which is very hard to solve because of seasonality. To justify the investment, it would need to be multipurposed. Need 20 good standard rooms to be able to hold groups moving between Perth and Exmouth. At the moment all groups pass through to Geraldton.
- Railway Station is believed to be a unique asset within region and could be developed as a studio, artist in residence space, project hub, place making activity space and/or visitor space to help tell the stories of the local community, and be a place that locals use.



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Mingenew has comparative advantage in Agriculture, and is not necessarily utilising all its assets:

- Mingenew has the largest grain holding facility in the southern hemisphere and hasn't been able to leverage this asset (noting that CBH has a role to play in achieving this). Identify value adding opportunities for agriculture, particularly in relation to this asset.
- Grower groups have done some regional planning and thinking about how to collaborate at scale. MIG is seen as progressive, a leader and is supporting the collaborative approach. How can this be leveraged for greater value for the community? What are the research and development issues that you can solve here, that offer value to agriculture (or the world?).
- Horticulture is a potential area of opportunity, and a Water for Food project assessment has been done on the water resource between Mingenew and Three Springs. Freight location may not be ideal, but the climate has proved ideal for growing vegetables and some fruits near Geraldton. Is there any comparative advantage with energy costs? Common packaging facility is in early discussion stages (developing near Geraldton) for the existing growers. What opportunities are there for Mingenew?
- Water supply opportunities – it was noted the Karara water pipeline travels through Mingenew and they are seeking additional water licence holdings and would need to gain the support of the neighbouring communities. Water pricing is always an issue in horticulture, could there be a partnership in relation to water useage for Mingenew.
- Some dry land aquaculture being developed at Morawa (qld groper) in Yarra Yarra Drainage system to convert salt water into more productive purposes.
- Corporatisation in agriculture could be a negative trend, but not sure of exact figure for Mingenew.

Supporting Business in Mingenew will take some concerted action in partnership with the community and region:

- Industry development could be more prospective through active approach to commercial/industrial land development opportunities.

New Economy opportunities need to be on the table:

- Digi farms project for North Midlands area is estimated to be around \$500,000, deployment estimated for North Midlands to be around late 2019.
- Could develop a vision to become a renewable power town and to use solar power. Three Springs in the best comparative position to sell renewable power back into the grid. Hydrogen a potential area of opportunity for Midwest but not Mingenew.
- Health and well-being area is a growing area and there could be jobs in this area for a community like Mingenew. Mingenew community is aging, could develop a strategy for positive aging in place and having an action plan for aged living.



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Constraints to Growth are real but manageable:

- Proximity to the coast makes it possible to live on the coast and work in Mingenew. What is preventing people from moving to Mingenew if they work here?
- One of the constraints mentioned was Mingenew is “the regions best kept secret” and needs to be better promoted to communities outside of the region.
- Digital infrastructure is critical.
- Need a regional education plan to help transition kids from year 6 into senior school, and link to schools where secondary students are going.
- All businesses need quality workers, could develop regional project to attract labour to the region through a BBRF (building better regions fund) project.
- Building retail food offering linking across the region and considering models for how to create the best and widest offering in each community.
- Volunteer burnout is an issue – instead of having 40 presidents, 40 treasurers, 40 secretaries can groups be amalgamated or consolidated so can transform those hours into services or activities delivered to the community.

What next – what is going on in region that Mingenew should be a part of?

- Mid West Transport Strategy has not been publicly released, and contains some good analytics around Ag Freight. What role for Mingenew given it has a uniquely large grain holding capacity?
- Health Strategy for Midwest not adopted by Government, but WACHS is pursuing key initiatives identified. Scanning the key projects and programs and understanding their impact for Mingenew?
- North Midlands Project Super Region concept – looking at region as population of 6000 rather than 4200, encouraging working together as Shires, and understanding the outcomes the communities want to achieve and building and strengthening community capacity to support achieve that. Build an active partnership with this organisation.
- RSM Business Local is keen to engage with local business development opportunities and projects.
- Opportunity to develop more impact from Tourism but need to develop more depth, breadth and experiential components of existing (and potentially new) assets.



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How does all this information get used?

The following flowchart shows you how it gets turned into the pieces of your Strategic Community Plan.

