

MERRIGUM COMMUNITY PLAN 2026-2030

Striving for the future



WHAT IS COMMUNITY PLANNING?

Community Planning is planning for the future of an area that is led by the community. The purpose of Community Planning is to give local people greater ownership over their small town or neighbourhood, by empowering them to take a proactive role in shaping the future of the areas in which they live. Community Plans, led by Community Planning Groups, are established to drive these local priorities.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS OF COMMUNITY PLANNING?

The Community Planning Program is a three-phase process:

- **Phase 1: Planning** - This phase focuses on understanding the community's needs, strengths, and priorities. It involves gathering ideas through conversations, workshops, surveys, and local knowledge. The community works together to identify key issues and opportunities, and these insights are used to develop a shared vision and a set of actions for the Community Plan.
- **Phase 2: Implementing** - During this phase, the community begins putting the agreed actions into practice. This includes partnering with varied levels of government, local groups and business to seek funding, organise events and advocate for priorities. Implementation is a collaborative effort where community members, volunteers, business and agencies work together to bring the plan to life.
- **Phase 3: Reporting** - The reporting phase involves reviewing progress, celebrating achievements, and identifying what still needs attention. Updates are shared with the community to keep everyone informed and engaged. This phase also helps assess what is working well, what challenges exist, and what adjustments may be needed for future actions.



ABOUT MERRIGUM

Merrigum is an attractive small town located 30 kilometres west of Shepparton and 200 kilometres north of Melbourne, in the heart of the Goulburn Valley. The town is supported by strong agricultural industries, with fruit growing and dairy farming forming the backbone of the local economy.

While some residents work within Merrigum, others commute to nearby centres including Shepparton, Tatura, and Kyabram. The town offers preschool and primary education locally, with secondary and tertiary education available in Kyabram or Shepparton. At the time of the 2021 Census, Merrigum was home to 679 people.

Merrigum is widely recognised for its friendliness, kindness, and strong community spirit. Residents take pride in supporting one another, participating in local groups, organisations, and working together to address community issues. The town's peaceful, tranquil atmosphere is also highly valued, contributing to the overall quality of life enjoyed by those who call Merrigum home.

Merrigum is poised for meaningful growth, making it essential to plan proactively for the community's future. Updating the Community Plan will help ensure local services, infrastructure, and facilities evolve in step with this growth, while protecting the township's unique character and supporting the priorities that matter most to residents.





ABOUT MERRIGUM COMMUNITY PLANNING GROUP

Merrigum Community Group Inc. was formed in 2004 to provide a “mechanism for community members to contribute to and actively promote the revitalisation and development of the township of Merrigum in a positive way.”

The group’s most recent Merrigum Community Plan, produced in September 2018, set the scene for a further eight years of community-driven actions. Having now expired, the group have sought to update their town plan. Supported by Greater Shepparton City Council, the group consulted with the community to understand community priorities over the next 4 years.

The Merrigum Community Plan 2026–2030 is a guiding document that outlines the aspirations, priorities, and actions for the town over the next four years. Developed in collaboration with residents, community groups, and stakeholders, this plan aims to support the growth and wellbeing of Merrigum through targeted projects and initiatives.

The plan reflects the voices of the Merrigum community and provides a framework to guide decision-making and advocacy priorities. This document remains as a living document that will be reviewed and adapted as new opportunities and challenges arise.

MERRIGUM COMMUNITY PLANNING GROUP CONTACT INFORMATION

If there are any actions in the Community Plan that you wish to contribute to, please contact the Merrigum Community Group: merrigumcommunitygroup@gmail.com

OUR VISION for the Future



Merrigum envisions a vibrant, inclusive rural community where residents have access to diverse programs, services and facilities that enhance their quality of life, allowing them to fully engage in Work, Leisure, Community and Social activities locally

DEMOGRAPHICS

Merrigum Demographic Snapshot (2021 Census – ABS):

- **Population:** 679 people
- **Gender split:** 52.6% male, 47.4% female
- **Median age:** 47 years (notably older than the Victorian median of 38)
- **Indigenous population:** 3.2% identify as Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander
- **Households:** Average household size: 2.3 people
- **Dwelling characteristics:** 320 private dwellings; average 2.1 motor vehicles per dwelling
- **Age structure highlights:**
 - Strong representation in older cohorts (55–69 years)
 - Smaller proportion of young children (0–9 years) compared with state averages



Source: <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/SAL21665>

ACHIEVEMENTS

The following are achievements from previous community plans. These achievements began as identified priorities from the community that were added to the community plan and later achieved. The Merrigum Community Group worked in partnership with Council, funding bodies, residents and other organisations to deliver on these actions.

- **Footpath:** completed the construction of a new footpath on the northern side of Andrews Road.
- **Reserve Lighting:** night lighting delivered to the Recreation Reserve grounds
- **Council Depot:** Implemented screen fencing to enclose the existing Council depot site.
- **Car Park:** Formalised and extended the existing car park near Judd Park.
- **Public Toilets:** Completed construction of new unisex public toilets, including a visitor information board.
- **Judd Park:** Upgraded Judd Park with new tree planting, irrigated grass and park furniture.
- **Town Entrance Sign:** Enhanced the visibility of the town entrance sign.
- **Rubbish:** Provided additional rubbish bins and signage around town.
- **Mooving Art Cows:** Mooving Art cows brought to Merrigum.
- **Pool:** Splash Park constructed at the local pool.
- **Netball Court:** Upgrade of the netball courts at the Recreation Reserve.
- **Three-Point Basketball Court:** Completed the construction of a new basketball court.
- **Events:** Organised social, educational, seasonal, cultural and sporting events to attract families. Neighbours Day in Judd Park, Santa on the Move and Youth Spot activation event at the new Basketball court.
- **Shade Sails:** Installation of shade structures over the playground at Judd Park.
- **Activities in the Park / Youth Activities:** Organised more activities and youth-focused events.
- **Aboriginal Art Installation:** Installation of Aboriginal art at the skate park on Morrissey Street.
- **Ticket Box:** Construction of a new ticket box at the Recreation Reserve.
- **Stage 2 Corner Park Development:** Completion of Stage 2 of the Corner Park Development.
- **Picnic Settings:** Relocated picnic settings from the bushland site to Corner Park.
- **Playground Seating:** Seating installed at the Judd Park playground.
- **Merrigum Hall:** Repainted the hall to reflect different building eras and improve historic appreciation.
- **Bushland Site / Walking Track:** Revegetation works completed in the bushland site and along the walking track.

Development of the 2026-2030 Community Plan

To establish the priorities for the 2026-2030 Community Plan, a range of consultation methods were undertaken. This process ensured meaningful input from residents, business, and key stakeholders in shaping the plan.

To ensure broad community engagement, the following methods were used:

- **In- Person Consultation:** A community meeting was held at Merrigum Town Hall, where residents had the opportunity to discuss key priorities and share their ideas.
- **Business Outreach:** Flyers were distributed to local business, encouraging business owners and employees to contribute their perspectives.
- **Online Engagement:** A Facebook consultation was conducted to allow community members to provide feedback and suggestions online.



What We Like About Merrigum

Survey respondents were asked to identify what they like most about Merrigum. A strong community spirit was identified by respondents as a positive attribute of the town, as well as its quiet, peaceful feeling.

The top ten responses to this question included:

- People – friendly, kind, neighbourly
- Quiet, peaceful, tranquil nature of the town
- Strong community spirit / involvement by residents
- Small, compact town and community
- Strong clubs and organisations
- Clean, tidy and well-maintained environment
- The park and playground
- Good facilities, including sports facilities
- Proximity to other towns for work, school, shopping, etc.
- Family environment of the town

Community Priorities

To achieve the vision, our community has identified several key priorities that reflect what matters most to residents. These priorities will guide our collective efforts and ensure that Merrigum continues to grow as a safe, connected and thriving place to live. We will know we have achieved our vision when Merrigum is:

- Safe and resilient
- Accessible
- Environmentally sustainable
- An all-age active community

To achieve this, our community's strategic priorities are to:

- Ensure Merrigum is safe and resilient during emergencies
- Enhance essential community facilities and improve accessibility
- Foster an active and family friendly community
- Create an appealing, sustainable community
- Support schools and young residents while improving safety.

Pillar Structure – Community Plan



A pillar structure organises the community's priorities under key themes to improve clarity, efficiency, and accountability. Each pillar serves as a broad category that groups together related issues, actions, or focus areas, making it easier to understand and work toward shared goals.

Pillar 1: Safety and Emergency Preparedness

Objective: Prepare Merrigum to be safe and resilient before and during emergencies.

This pillar focuses on safety and emergency preparedness, which is vital for communities to reduce the impact of disasters whilst protecting lives, infrastructure, and mental wellbeing. Proactive planning fosters resilience, allowing faster, more effective responses to extreme events.

Pillar 2: Infrastructure Business, and Connectivity

Objective: Enhance essential community facilities and accessibility.

The pillar focuses on infrastructure, business and connectivity, which is vital for community development, acting as a foundation for economic prosperity, improved quality of life, and social cohesion.

Pillar 3: Recreation and Community Well-Being

Objective: Foster an active and family friendly community.

This pillar focuses on recreation and community wellbeing initiatives that are essential for developing stronger, safer, and healthier communities.

Pillar 4: Beautification and Environment

Objective: Create an appealing and sustainable community.

This pillar focuses on the beautification and environmental initiatives that are vital for building sustainable, healthy, and cohesive communities.

Pillar 5: Youth and Education

Objective: Support schools and residents while improving safety.

This pillar focuses on creating a safer, more supportive and opportunity rich environment for children and young people across the community.

Plan Implementation

The Merrigum Community Planning Group meet monthly to work collaboratively towards positive outcomes for Merrigum, through the progression of community priorities outlined in the action plan.

The Community Plan will continue to guide future projects and activities, all of which will require additional research, planning and advocacy. The Community Planning Group will also seek funding opportunities from a range of stakeholders to support project implementation.

The Action Plan will be reviewed every four years to ensure it remains current and continues to reflect the priorities and needs of the Merrigum community.



Merrigum Community Plan Actions 2026-2030

Pillar 1: Safety and Emergency Preparedness

Objective: Ensure Merrigum is safe and resilient during emergencies

Action	Stakeholders	Priority
Develop a community watch program to enhance local safety	- Neighbourhood Watch - Victoria Police	High
Develop and implement a comprehensive community disaster preparedness plan that includes updated flood overlays for Merrigum, accurate mapping for flood risk, and clear evacuation procedures with defined roles, responsibilities, and emergency protocols	- Greater Shepparton City Council - Local Emergency Services	High
Address speeding concerns with additional signage and speed limit reviews	- Greater Shepparton City Council - VicRoads - Victoria Police	Medium
Plant and renew appropriate trees in open spaces and urban settings as a climate change mitigation measure	- Greater Shepparton City Council - Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA)	Medium

Pillar 2: Infrastructure, Business and Connectivity

Objective: Enhance essential community facilities and accessibility

Action	Stakeholders	Priority
Support the community in applying for funding for the Merrigum Hall and investigate ways to maintain and increase hall usage through community events, programs, and partnerships	- Local volunteer groups - Greater Shepparton City Council	High
Investigate the possibility of establishing an RV stop and implementing a dump point to attract tourists and travellers	- Greater Shepparton City Council - Caravan and Motorhome Club of Australia	High
Upgrade and support the facilities at the Recreation Reserve with a focus on safety improvements	- Merrigum Recreation Reserve Committee - Greater Shepparton City Council	High
Advocate for extended post office opening hours	- Local Business - Australia Post	High
Advocate for renovations and improved accessibility at the Merrigum Pool, including longer opening hours	Greater Shepparton City Council	Medium
Install an EV charging station to promote sustainable travel	- VicRoads - Greater Shepparton City Council	Medium

Pillar 3: Recreation and Community Wellbeing

Objective: Foster an active and family-friendly community

Action	Stakeholders	Priority
Upgrade the skate park for youth recreation	- Local volunteer groups - Greater Shepparton City Council	High
Install exercise equipment in public spaces to promote physical activity	Greater Shepparton City Council	Medium
Develop a shared path connecting key community locations	- Goulburn Murray Water - Parks Victoria - Greater Shepparton City Council	Medium
Improve the Merrigum Senior Citizen building to be suitable for community use	Greater Shepparton City Council	Medium
Enhance the fishpond as a recreational and aesthetic feature, increasing open hours	- Goulburn Murray Water - Burnanga Indigenous Fishing Club - Dunyak Moira	Medium

Pillar 4: Beautification and Environment

Objective: Create an appealing sustainable community

Action	Stakeholders	Priority
Develop mosquito suppression measures to improve mosquito borne disease suppression	- Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) - Greater Shepparton City Council	High
Implement a town beautification program, including murals, artwork, landscaping, and developing attractive parks and open spaces	- Greater Shepparton City Council - Local Volunteer Groups	Medium
Install additional seating areas in parks and along walking paths	Greater Shepparton City Council	Medium
Plant drought-resistant landscaping to conserve water and improve greenery	- Greater Shepparton City Council - DEECA - Local volunteer groups	Medium

Pillar 5: Youth and Education

Objective: Support schools and young residents while improving safety

Action	Stakeholders	Priority
Support Merrigum Youth SPOT and alternative sport and recreation opportunities	- Greater Shepparton City Council - Merrigum Primary School - Local volunteer groups	High
Address traffic issues near schools with additional signage, pedestrian crossings and seating	- Merrigum Primary School - Merrigum Preschool - Greater Shepparton City Council - VicRoads - Local volunteer groups	Medium
Implement speed deterrents on identified Merrigum roads	- Greater Shepparton City Council - VicRoads	Medium