21.05 STRATEGIC ISSUES

As a result of several community forums held through 2005 and 2006, together with careful monitoring of trends, a number of key strategic issues have been identified.

21.05-1 Issue – Regional Centre Role

- There is an emerging realisation that Wodonga has grown from being a country town into a major regional centre in Victoria.
- Wodonga is a major service centre for the Upper Murray and North East region of Victoria providing a role as the major employment, educational and health centre.

21.05-2 Issue – Albury Wodonga

- Albury and Wodonga exist as neighbouring regional cities with quite separate administrations at the state and local level. This provides for a healthy, economically competitive situation that delivers the benefits of strong employment and growth.
- Gateway Island presents an opportunity to link the cities providing a cultural and recreational heart for Albury Wodonga.
- Wodonga must be planned for in the broader context, ensuring there is:
  - A quality and diversity of residential development;
  - Clean industries;
  - A vibrant revitalised CBA;
  - A focus on good urban design outcomes with areas being well planned and focus on gaining built forms that contribute to the positive presentation of the city;
  - Preservation of the natural setting – the river floodplain and
  - Hillsides; and,
  - The continued pursuit of industrial growth and expansion that capitalises on the competitive location on the main national transport route.

21.05-3 Issue – Albury Wodonga Corporation (AWC)

- The AWC is no longer a land developer and is in the mode of winding down as an entity. In the future, it will operate as a land manager and wholesaler of broad hectare development land. The sale of its assets, given its previous planning and development role, requires careful management and oversight to ensure there are limited impacts on the local property market and that the sale of land occurs in a strategic manner that benefits the orderly planning and growth of the city.
- In its past role, the AWC has added greatly to the growth and development of Albury Wodonga. Its diminishing role provides the challenge of ensuring land zoned for its benefit, when it was operating under the Federal Growth Centres’ Policy, is reviewed to respect the current strategic planning directions of the Wodonga Council.

21.05-5 Issue – Facilities and Presentation

- Wodonga lacks the range of facilities and level of presentation in the CBA that is typically representative of a regional centre. This is due to the rapid transition of Wodonga from a small country town to one of Victoria’s fastest growing regional
centres. The focus of any planning strategy must facilitate a positive transformation in the major facilities provided in the city and in leading the redevelopment of the CBA.

- Wodonga is challenged with the issue of developing the facilities and quality of services to meet its role as a leading regional centre.
- The development of new, and improvement of existing, public and civic spaces are integral to the positive transformation.
- There is clear recognition that the trend for development to ignore the public realm is undesirable and practices such as lining major streets with car parks rather than the frontage of buildings or blank walls instead of active shop fronts.

### 21.05-6 Issue – Wodonga Central Business Area (CBA)

- The revitalisation of the CBA is a community priority.
- The removal of the railway is viewed as an essential element and catalyst in achieving the revitalisation of the CBA.
- Community surveys have consistently provided strong support for the redevelopment of the CBA, inclusive of hotel accommodation and cinema entertainment facilities.
- Visionary planning and a proactive approach are required to improve the CBA and provide a framework to facilitate development.
- An emphasis needs to be placed on the design of new development to ensure it contributes to the streetscape and adds to a character that distinguishes Wodonga from other retail centres. Streets in the CBA are to be lined with glazed shopfronts rather than car parking areas or blank walls.
- There should be a move away from the mall style of developments to main street environment that encourages development that fosters activity in the street.
- Wodonga needs to develop a stronger and more vibrant retail base.
- The CBA should offer a location for a vibrant mixed use environment, integrating retail business and residential uses.
- Traffic management works are required to improve the amenity of the CBA for pedestrians and shoppers.
- Provision of adequate and well located car parking.
- The funding of additional road and parking infrastructure required to support the redevelopment of the Central Business Area.

### 21.05-7 Issue – Community Attitudes

- The community is optimistic about the future of Wodonga and affirms that it is a positive place to live and invest.
- The community recognises the importance of planning for the future and working towards better outcomes.

### 21.05-8 Issue – The Hillsides

- The hillsides are seen as part of the identity and character of Wodonga.
- The community has expressed clear support for the protection of the hillsides from intrusive development, insisting that the hills which overlook the urban and future urban areas remain free of development.
There are environmental issues with the protection of the hills including:
- Land management responsibilities;
- Weed control and feral animals;
- Public access;
- Private versus public ownership;
- The cost of maintenance; and,
- Management of public land being considered by the community to be under resourced and uncoordinated.

21.05-9 Issue – Inner City Residential Development

There is increasing pressure and divergence of views concerning the redevelopment of sites generally within one kilometre of the CBA. More certainty should be provided through the planning scheme to determine areas where redevelopment will be encouraged and to define and guide appropriate forms of development.

- There is recognition that Wodonga lacks a definable neighbourhood character.
- The vision for how the central area of Wodonga will redevelop over time needs to be clarified.

21.05-10 Issue - Rural Land and Rural Residential Development

- The policy of protecting the Farming Zone from small lot subdivision should be maintained, together with an approach that directs small rural lots to the designated rural living zones.
- Subdivision of land for rural residential development should be undertaken in strategically identified areas and not in ad hoc locations.
- The Farming Zone should perform the function of being a holding zone for future urban development or used for farming activities.

21.05.11 Issue - Native Vegetation Retention

- It is difficult to ensure the protection of remnant native vegetation on land already zoned for urban development. In future, the practice should be to fully investigate future development land to identify significant native vegetation prior to re-zoning.
- To overcome the challenge of remnant native vegetation protection in urban areas, the focus needs to be directed toward retaining larger remnant patches within reserves that are linked to a larger network of habitat corridors, well ahead of land being identified for urban development. Isolated paddock trees are unlikely to be retained within an urban development context.

21.05.12 Issue - Sustainable Development

- There is recognition that future growth in Wodonga needs to respond to the challenges of climate change, scarcity of water, energy consumption and the building of a cohesive community.
21.05-13 Issue – Future Urban Growth

- The future growth of Wodonga should be directed to the Middle Creek Valley (Leneva) between South Wodonga and Baranduda. Further industrial growth should be directed toward existing zones and generally in the corridor between Bandiana and the existing Baranduda Industrial Park, Enterprise Park in West Wodonga and Logic at Barnawartha North.