

Ballarat West Growth Zone: Vision and Pathways to Achievement

VISION

The Ballarat West Growth Zone on Ballarat's western perimeter will provide the city and region's next major opportunities for economic activity, infrastructure, and residential and social development. The integrated developments will help establish the region as a highly appealing place to work, live and play for the coming generations of people in and beyond the city and region.

The Committee for Ballarat, in collaboration with the City of Ballarat, is defining its vision for this zone. We are engaged with a range of other stakeholders in the refinement and achievement of the vision. The Committee has undertaken high priority project work in this area since 2007 and the City of Ballarat has had a variety of projects in the precinct over the past several years.

COMPONENTS OF THE VISION

ECONOMIC: Strong *economic activity* is essential in the zone, as a source of employment, prosperity, social development and community wellbeing for the region and nation. It will be facilitated by City of Ballarat and neighbouring shires' enabling policies, and provision of integrated infrastructure and a strategic range of appealing, available commercial and industrial sites. The initial economic zones will include the north and south Ballarat airport zone sites¹, the Carnham Road east site, the re-zoned livestock selling site², and retail and commercial activity centres throughout the zone. Economic activity in the zone will complement that elsewhere in the city and region, and focus on diverse and numerous employment opportunities, high value adding and return on investment, and sustainability.

INFRASTRUCTURE: The *infrastructure* will be integrated, and provided to create best practice economic and social development - rather than respond to each. It will also be designed to be proactive on, and/or responsive to international imperatives associated with sustainability, including early control of global warming. As examples of proactivity on these issues, the zone, alone or in collaboration with partners, will aim to generate sufficient renewable energy and potable/potable-substitute water for its needs, and 'export' surpluses to the grids.

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY: *Social development and community wellbeing* will be prime considerations in their own right as well as outcomes from employment and economic activity, and an integrated focus in the conception, design and development of the zone. Residential development will encompass sustainable design and living principles, and population growth will be designed to have low or zero impact on the region's sustainability. Where adverse impacts are non-zero, plans will be developed to reduce them towards zero as early as possible. The zone will be an appropriate place to work, live and play, and be designed to have high ongoing appeal for people and businesses from beyond it, the city, region and nation.

PRIORITY

Early preparation and implementation of the zone are high priority. Reputable population projections, for example by Victoria in Future 2008, indicate very significant growth in the coming decades. Committee's view is that these estimates may under-state the actual growth because of Ballarat's attractiveness and proximity to Melbourne, and Melbourne's increasing levels of compromise, for example with transport congestion and urban sprawl. Even with the existing accepted population growth, in the absence of careful planning for increased job numbers and economic growth, there is a risk that our population growth will outstrip the region's capacity to fund appropriate social development and community services. *Committee for Ballarat advocates urgent proactivity in the development of the Ballarat West Growth Zone.*

¹ Referred to by Committee for Ballarat since 2007 as the Ballarat West Employment Zone

² And another site, yet to be identified for industrial category 1 land

ACHIEVING THE VISION

Pre-requisites and catalysts for creation and subsequent independent operation of the zone include: the provision of appropriately zoned land for commercial, industrial and residential development; the availability of infrastructure and services; definition of the principles for excellence in business and residential activity in the zone; conditions appealing enough to attract viable businesses and investors; and State and Federal Government support for fast tracking the development. Some of the planning and zoning steps are time consuming, and have become increasingly so with recently implemented compliance measures. Others require collaboration, integration and goodwill from infrastructure and service providers. Notwithstanding its good intentions, the City of Ballarat is unlikely to be able to permit or facilitate the commencement of on-the-ground developments within the next two years.

Another set of catalysts (additional to the City's proactivity and other governments' support) are the 'driving' components of the Growth Zone – the *Western Road Link*³ and the *Ballarat West Employment Zone*. These are highest priority components. Together they will create starting points and momentum for employment, economic and social activity. The road link will create local city transport links and new inter-regional opportunities. The employment zone will be an early way to create substantial new sustainable employment opportunities that have been so-far undefined and/or hampered by the unavailability of suitable land, and create momentum for new business activity following the global financial crisis.

Committee for Ballarat is seeking *accelerated development*. This is in view of: the need for balanced, globally competitive economic and social development to fast-track emergence from the global financial crisis; the very high loss of employment in Ballarat and the region, and associated collateral damage; our knowledge that the global financial crisis has hit regional locations harder than others; the current absence of a full range of appropriate land zoned for industrial activity - e.g. larger industrial 3 allotments and industrial 1 land; and imminent population growth imperatives and priorities.

GOVERNMENT INPUT

The Victorian Government:

- Assist with the earliest possible approvals of land zoning within the precincts;
- Transfer otherwise unencumbered Crown Land on the Ballarat airport site to the City of Ballarat, for its early release for jobs creation and economic activity;
- Facilitate early resolution of potential native title questions on Crown Land on the airport site, and transfer to the City, as above;
- Assist in choosing, and support approval of the model to release land for development of the Ballarat West Employment Zone;
- Advocate infrastructure/service providers' collaboration in providing best practice, integrated infrastructure to lead and stimulate developments in the Growth Zone;
- Contribute to funds for infrastructure and/or services;
- Facilitate land zoning and public acquisition overlays for the Western Road Link alignment, and contribute to funding the construction of the road. Committee is grateful for the State's contributions for planning to date;
- Subject to its viability, support relocation of rail freight activity from its central Ballarat location to a new site incorporating an intermodal freight hub or village;
- Contribute to funding for the freight hub/village.

The Commonwealth Government:

- Fund the initiative as a stimulus for new, sustainable jobs growth in the region;
- Contribute to funds for infrastructure and/or services;
- Contribute to funding the construction of the western road link;
- Subject to its viability, contribute to funding for the freight hub or village;
- Support policies for an intermodal freight hub/village in the national freight agenda.

D Lloyd, CEO, for
Committee for Ballarat

³ This has previously been referred to as the (future) Western Arterial Road Link.