

B KEY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Seymour is facing a number of challenges and opportunities that will affect its future planning and development.

The opportunities and challenges for Seymour were determined based on research and investigations undertaken by the consultant and project teams, including desktop analysis, site visits, specialist reports, and community and stakeholder engagement. These are summarised in this section.

These opportunities and challenges have been aligned to the Structure Plan elements.

Demographics

Key demographic highlights are summarised as follows:

- The median age (42 years of age) in Seymour is significantly older than in the Shire of Mitchell (37) and Victoria (37);
- Median weekly household income (\$829) is significantly lower than that of Mitchell Shire (\$1,170) and Victoria (\$1,216);
- The proportion of persons aged 15 and over and married in Seymour (41.8%) is significantly lower than in Mitchell Shire overall (49.3%) and Victoria (49.1%). In contrast, the proportion of persons aged 15 years and over and divorced (11.0%) or widowed (8.1%) are higher than in Mitchell Shire overall (8.6% and 4.8%) and Victoria (7.8% and 5.6%) respectively;
- The proportion of residents born in Australia in Seymour (83.4%) and Mitchell Shire (83.2%) is higher than in Victoria overall (68.6%);
- Seymour contains a significantly higher proportion of persons identifying as Labourers (17.3%) than Mitchell Shire overall (11.5%) and Victoria (9.0%). In contrast, the proportion of persons identifying as Professionals is lower in Seymour (12.1%) and Mitchell Shire (12.8%) than in Victoria overall (22.3%);
- There is a higher proportion of one parent families in Seymour (24.6%) than in Mitchell Shire overall (16.7%) and Victoria (15.5%);
- The proportion of households in Seymour renting (27.6%) is higher than in Mitchell Shire overall (21.8%) and Victoria (26.5%).

Character and Identity

Key issues and opportunities include:

- The Goulburn River and its floodplain which provides a significant natural setting for the town, an important habitat and recreation resource and a critical visual reference and link to the history of the township, although some regard it as underutilised.
- Seymour's location at the confluence of several landscape character areas including riverine floodplains, dry forest and grassy woodlands.
- Three levels of interrelated arrival experiences; outer arrival, township arrival, and town centre arrival. These are generally experienced along key arterial roads.
- The historical settlement pattern and location of Seymour along the railway line and the Goulburn Valley Highway.
- Railway history including the Seymour Railway Station and Seymour Railway Heritage Centre.
- Military history including the Vietnam Veterans Commemorative Walk and the Australian Light Horse Memorial Park.
- Aboriginal heritage sites and post contact heritage sites including heritage buildings and places.
- The friendly 'country feel' of Seymour and recognised the distinctive attributes of the Goulburn River.
- An enhanced physical appearance could be a positive change and improve people's perception of the town.
- An increased civic presence and places for the community to come together such as a civic space.

Activity Centres

- Seymour has three distinct activity centres - the Seymour Town Centre, the Anzac Avenue Activity Centre and Emily Street.

The Town Centre

- It is located on the north side of the railway line and is the primary retail area within Seymour. It has an irregular layout which responds to the natural constraints including topography, flooding risks and major infrastructure such as the railway line, Emily Street and Goulburn Valley Highway.
- A single sided 'main street' and a lack of a clearly identifiable town centre heart.
- A well located railway station, generating activity to support the town centre.
- A mix of architecture from varying eras including examples of well-maintained heritage buildings, particularly along Tallarook Street and Station Street.
- Fine grain retail (smaller shops) along the northern side of Station Street with major retail uses and car parking located along Wallis Street.
- While the overall retail offering in Seymour was considered reasonable, there was some concern that the town centre isn't immediately apparent to visitors arriving by car and that the town centre itself is somewhat fragmented.
- Generally good pedestrian amenity including wide footpaths (along Station Street), laneway connections, weather protection, tree planting and pedestrian crossings located along Station Street and Wallis Street.
- Recent public realm investment including footpaths, signage and seating, particularly along Station Street.
- Poor pedestrian connections between the three supermarkets.
- Blank walls, poor built form, underutilised or vacant sites, backs of buildings or loading areas which have a negative impact on the appearance of the town centre.

Anzac Avenue Activity Centre

- Three separate retail clusters located along Anzac Avenue which provide a range of local services to the surrounding residential neighbourhood. The retail clusters operate separately rather than as a connected group of retail facilities.
- While largely occupied, there are opportunities to utilise land more intensely for employment generating uses.
- Good access to nearby but dispersed amenities and services including Chittick Park, Seymour Sports and Aquatic Centre, Seymour College, a kinder, maternal and child health centre and senior citizens centre.

- Single storey built form with weather protection along the street edge and activated frontages.
- Some street tree planting along the roads edge and significant tree planting within the central median along Anzac Avenue. Sections of the median are also protected by a heritage overlay.
- Pedestrian crossings that could be better aligned with pedestrian desire lines.
- Concerns over the appearance and retail offering of the centre

Emily Street

- Acts as an entry point for visitors to the town arriving and departing via the Hume Highway or Goulburn Valley Highway (to Shepparton).
- Unlike, the Town Centre and Anzac Avenue retail clusters, the Emily Street area is in the Commercial 2 Zone and is therefore limited in the type of retail uses that can operate. The applied zone encourages bulky goods style retail outlets, along with highway service uses and light industrial uses.
- Emily Street is transitioning from its former role as a major highway service centre. The bypass of Seymour, which opened in 1982, has seen the significance of the Emily Street precinct diminish.
- Emily Street includes several heritage buildings and access points for the Goulburn River. As Emily Street is dual carriageway, access and connectivity is relatively poor to those areas of interest that may otherwise act as 'attractors'.
- The built form along much of Emily Street is uninspiring.



Emily Street, looking north west.

Employment and Economic Development

Key issues and opportunities include:

- State Government support for Seymour to develop into a significant employment centre over the next 30 years, as part of the Hume Regional Growth Plan.
- The town's role as a service centre for the surrounding district. The town acts as a strong convenience-based retail centre with a substantial supermarket offering.
- The town's strategic location at the junction of the Goulburn Valley Highway and Hume Highway helps it to retain a key role as a highway service centre, particularly along Emily Street but also within the town centre.
- Emily Street (formerly the Hume Highway), provides a mix of commercial and light industrial uses. A number of heritage places and tourist destinations are also located along or within close proximity to Emily Street.
- Employment in cafes, restaurants and takeaway food services is above the Mitchell Shire and state averages.
- Public administration and safety and agriculture are also strong sources of employment.
- The defence sector remains an important part of the local economy owing to the presence of Puckapunyal Army Base.
- Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE, an important tertiary education facility in the region, providing a range of VET accredited courses. This is the only TAFE in Mitchell Shire.
- Job containment is relatively high with 72% of residents also working in Seymour.
- Median household income is significantly below the Mitchell Shire and state averages, reflecting above average unemployment, a reliance on lower paid jobs and an aged population.
- A significant proportion of the town's current zoned employment (industrial and commercial) land supply faces various development constraints in the form of extensive native vegetation, steep gradients (which add to the cost of development), flooding and underdeveloped infrastructure and services (e.g. sealed road networks, public realm infrastructure, etc.).
- The proportion of overnight trip visitors to Seymour and surrounds for holiday purposes is significantly lower than the average for Regional Victoria but the friends and family visitor sector is stronger.
- The future Inland Rail interstate freight rail corridor and also the High Speed Rail from Melbourne to Sydney.
- Tourism events as opportunities to attract people (i.e. Alternative Farming Expo, Seymour Show) as well as the tourism potential of Emily Street, given its location between the Town Centre and the Goulburn River.
- An established equine industry with the Seymour Racing Club and trainers operating in town.

- Logistics, equine, food and wine, Mangalore Airport and the Goulburn River offering potential opportunities for economic growth and development.
- The strong agricultural industry, with local farmers having adapted their farming patterns and diversified their product offer.
- The opportunity to create a unique brand for Seymour, building upon it's location in the region, to help promote its agricultural produce and the town and its natural assets as unique tourism attractions.

Residential Development

Key issues and opportunities include:

- State Government support for significant change and growth as part of the Hume Regional Growth Plan.
- An aging population which is likely to require an increased diversity of housing product.
- A significant proportion of residential zoned land supply faces development constraints in the form of extensive native vegetation and steep gradients (which add to the cost of development).
- Available broad-acre (greenfield) residential development opportunities are relatively fragmented in terms of ownership.
- Adequate capacity for existing utilities such as water, power, and gas to accommodate projected population growth.
- The character of existing residential areas, which is influenced by the treatment of the public and private realm and natural elements such as topography, open space and waterways.
- The relative affordability of housing.
- The character of existing heritage dwellings as a defining feature of the town.

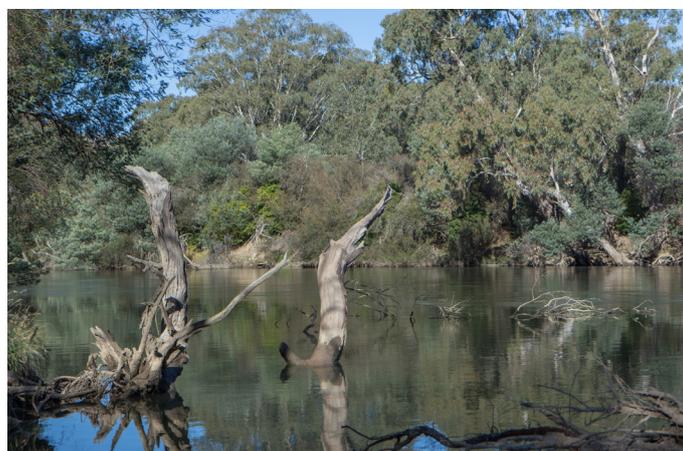


Example of original Victorian housing in Seymour

Natural Environment and Landscape

Key issues and opportunities include:

- Seymour's physical and visual relationship to the Goulburn River and the surrounding elevated hills to the south, east and north.
- Seymour Bushland Park and the Australian Light Horse Memorial Park are key environmental areas.
- Remnant native vegetation (Environmental Vegetation Classes) within the study area which includes Box Ironbark Forest, Floodplain Riparian Woodland, Creekline Grassy Woodlands and Grassy Woodlands.
- A number of suitable habitats for several fauna species of national, state and regional conservation significance.
- Climate change which is likely to result in environmental and landscape changes including increased temperatures, increased risk of drought and flooding, vegetation change, increased fire and erosion potential.
- Flooding risks from the Goulburn River and Whiteheads Creek which currently constrain the development of large areas of Seymour. The Seymour Flood Levee Project aims to reduce the flood risk associated with the Goulburn River.
- A number of community led initiatives, focused on improving sustainability, have been undertaken in Seymour, such as the conversion of older housing to make them more energy efficient.
- Wildfire Management Overlays (WMO) affects large areas of residential land adjoining the Goulburn River, along Hume and Hovell Road, with some smaller areas affected along Goulburn Valley Highway.



The Goulburn River

Community Facilities and Open Space

Key issues and opportunities include:

- The role that Seymour plays for meeting both local community facilities and open space needs and the regional role for attracting communities from nearby smaller towns.
- The park system and existing sporting facilities, which includes local and neighbourhood parks, linking spaces and active parks.
- The design, quality and amenity of some parks could be further enhanced to reflect the specific qualities of the site, the wider environmental setting and values and specific community recreation needs; with Goulburn Park and Kings Park being two good examples of what can be achieved.
- The Seymour Flood Levee project. This provides opportunities to unlock land surrounding the river which may be used for a range of purposes including new and enhanced parks, linear trails and environmental reserves, as well as the potential development of tourism destinations.
- A wide range of community facilities. In some instances the existing supply of infrastructure exceeds projected demand by the future population i.e. Australian Rules / cricket ovals, tennis courts and bowling greens.
- A need identified for additional netball courts, residential aged care services, youth facilities and school aged child care.
- Many existing facilities that are stand alone or in need of an upgrade including the middle and senior buildings at Seymour College, the library, maternal and child health services and kinder.
- Population estimates indicate the number of elderly people living in Seymour will increase in the future. Additional need for residential aged care services has been identified and future increases may impact capacity and demand for other services.
- A number of active community groups, which contribute positively to the town's character and local pride.
- Improving connectivity between the town centre and the Goulburn River, especially along Emily Street which 'turn their back' on the river.

Movement and Access

Key issues and opportunities include:

- Pedestrian paths which are provided throughout most of the town but lack some critical connections
- Key recreational trails including the Goulburn River Trail which provides access along parts of the Goulburn River and the Great Victorian Rail Trail that provides a link between Mansfield and Tallarook (just south of Seymour), but does not extend into Seymour.
- Limited on street bike lanes (marked lanes are provided along Tallarook Street only), missing links and end-of-trip bike parking facilities. Anzac Avenue includes a line marked kerbside lane shared between cyclists and on-street car parking however its configuration and narrow width presents potential safety issues.
- The VicRoads Strategic Cycling Corridor (SCC) plan for Seymour. This identified a series of proposed on-road lanes (Emily Street, Tallarook Street, High Street, Wallis Street, Station Street, Crawford Street, Anzac Avenue) and proposed off-road paths (Goulburn River and Whiteheads Creek) with Anzac Avenue and Crawford Street forming a strategic cycling corridor.
- The railway station which provides frequent services to Melbourne, Sydney and Shepparton. Proposed upgrades identified by V/Line include the provision of cycle parking, the relocation of the staff car parking and general improvements to the station.
- The railway line which bisects the town. Road crossings of the railway line are limited and include an underpass at Anzac Avenue (Goulburn Valley Highway) and a level crossing at High Street. Two other pedestrian only crossings, which are uninviting, are also provided.
- The PTV Network Development Plan – Metropolitan Rail that outlines the medium to longer term opportunity to divert Seymour regional services via the Upfield line, reducing the pressure on the Craigieburn Line, improving travel times for services and enabling additional short-starter regional services to be introduced from Wallan.
- Limited public transport services to Yea and Puckapunyal, as well as limited services at night and on weekends.
- High use of private motor vehicles within Seymour including for short trips.
- The road layout and traffic conditions of Emily Street which reflects its historic highway function as a part of the Hume Highway. Emily Street continues to prioritise the flow of through traffic and freight over local pedestrian and cycle connections, especially from the Vietnam Veteran Commemorative Walk to the Goulburn River and Lions Park.
- Poor street legibility which can make it hard for visitors to navigate through Seymour.
- Excellent road links to Melbourne and Sydney, and surrounding areas.
- A lack of adequate walking and cycling facilities, paths and trails in Seymour.
- A lack of accessibility for people of all abilities, to make it much more cycle friendly and to encourage sustainable modes of transport (i.e. walking and cycling, as well as public transport).



Seymour Railway Station provides an interchange for people travelling between Shepparton and Benalla, and Melbourne.



Recently upgraded footpath network extends along Station Street



Tallarook Street

Services and Utilities

- Seymour's major drainage network is generally the overland flow paths along streets / reserves, while the minor drainage network is generally the underground piped system.
- Seymour is significantly constrained by the flooding from the Goulburn River and Whiteheads Creek. The Seymour Flood Levee Project is a planned project that aims to protect the Seymour town centre from 1 in 100 flood events associated with the Goulburn River. The levee may enable the removal of flood planning controls for the areas that are proposed to be protected from inundation.
- Utilities such as water, power, and gas have ample capacity to accommodate projected population growth based in current trends.
- The stormwater drainage network has evolved over many years and to varying standards of construction and capacity which is typical of a rural township. As a result, there are a number of drainage trouble spots throughout the town which are prone to inundation during moderate rainfall and flash flooding events.
- A high pressure gas pipeline is located to the east of the study area. The pipeline is located within a 35m wide easement and includes a 260m buffer. Development within the easement is prohibited, while uses such as schools, hospitals, shopping centres and high density development are to be sited outside of the buffer.

C COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Community feedback gathered through the community consultation process has informed a number of the key strategies and actions within this draft Seymour Structure Plan. Consultation included:

Stage 1 Consultation - Issues and Opportunities (October 2015 to March 2016)

The purpose of Stage 1 consultation was to raise awareness of the Project and to relay the communities' top priorities back to the Project team to ensure what the community wants and the issues that matter most to the town are reflected throughout the process.

Maintaining and optimising the critical feedback loop between the community and the Project team was central to ensuring information gathering and exchange was meaningful and brought utility to the preparation of the Emerging Ideas Paper (Stage 2) over the ensuing months.

Stage 1 consultation included a variety of consultation methods that delivered a higher than expected level of engagement:

- Online Forum
- Face to face surveys
- Community events
- Community Workshops
- School visits
- Stakeholder meetings
- Community liaison group
- Submissions
- Service and facility provider emergency workshops



Consultation Stage 1 - Responses To Blackboard Questions as part of the 'Tastes Of The Goulburn' Event, Seymour 18-19 October 2015.

As part of Stage 1 Consultation, the following key findings emerged:

- The Goulburn River – Many respondents have identified that the River presents a significant opportunity for Seymour. It is generally underutilised by local residents and visitors, and can play a key role for the future of Seymour.
- Access – Seymour is well located within the context of Melbourne, regional Victoria and beyond. The town also has good rail and highway links to Melbourne and surrounding regional areas.
- Perception – There is a general feeling that there is a negative perception of Seymour as a place to come live and invest.
- Youth activities – Need for more activities for youth. A range of opportunities have been suggested, including indoor recreational/play centres, adventure activities, cinema, youth meeting spaces etc)
- Better variety of housing – Whilst there is a reasonable amount of housing availability within Seymour, this could be improved by providing a wider range of housing to cater for individuals of all ages and abilities.
- More jobs - Further employment opportunities within Seymour should be encouraged and supported. Employment opportunities will assist with the retention and attraction of people to live in Seymour, and address youth unemployment issues. The need to reinvigorate the employment areas and attract business investment was seen as a priority.
- Better education – There is a need to improve the educational facilities currently available within Seymour, namely the secondary school facilities.
- Military history – Seymour has a strong military history background which should be protected and promoted. The historical offer of Seymour could form part of a bigger tourism strategy for the town.
- Natural landscapes – Seymour has a great country feel and benefits from the surrounding beautiful natural landscape; and it is important that this is protected.
- Disconnected town centre – There is a need to create a more pedestrian friendly shopping environment and ensure that future development is appropriately located to encourage this to take place.
- Connection – Many Seymour residents highlighted the need for more connected walking trails, footpaths and cycle networks to take advantage of the natural features of the town centre (river, parks etc) and connection to the town centre and other locations.

Stage 2 Consultation - Emerging Ideas (April 2016 to August 2016)

Council took the Emerging Ideas Paper to the community for Stage 2 consultation which involved a variety of engagement methods and ran for a five-week period during June and July 2016. The community attended events, drop-in sessions and provided feedback in the following ways:

- Written surveys
- Online surveys
- Social media commentary
- Written postcard responses
- Formal submissions
- Face-to-face discussions

The engagement methods adopted enabled the project team to gather a significant range of information and feedback from a broad spectrum of the community.

A total of 240 people attended events and drop-in sessions, and 1,960 people visited the Project website resulting in a total of 1,345 general comments and/or recommendations about the Vision, Themes and Key Principles being gathered.



Seymour Innovates - Emerging Ideas Business Networking Event, Seymour 16 June 2016.

Overall, participants described that they had a deep sense of pride in being part of the Seymour community; however they were aware of improvements that could be made.

The community outlined that they were very proud of their military and rail heritage, and were seeking to respectfully upgrade these centres to maintain their significance within the town. In addition to this, they mentioned that key streetscape upgrades encompassing street tree planting, rubbish and graffiti removal, landscaping and civil realm upgrades, and better pedestrian and cycle networks could facilitate increased use of these key heritage sites. These civic and public realm upgrades was part of a desire to increase the use of larger public spaces for events, and further encourage walking and cycling within Seymour, in addition to creating a more pleasant gateway/entry into the township.

Key to this improvement was a clear wayfinding strategy, which could provide directions to a series of new pedestrian and cycle connections and destinations, including:

- A future boardwalk expansion along the Goulburn River (location subject to sensitive biodiversity sites),
- A location to recognise aboriginal heritage within Seymour,
- An improved public space for large events and community gatherings,
- A 'community safe zone' for the community to congregate in emergency situations,
- Connections to the Great Victorian Rail Trail, and
- Improved links to the railway station.

Particular actions included increasing the tree canopy cover of streets (additional tree planting), traffic calming measure for vehicles, streetscape upgrades in particular to Emily Street, Anzac Avenue, Wallis Street, Oak Street, and Tallarook Streets, improved facilities within existing parks and civic areas, open space improvements to promote nature-play (in particular around Chittick Park and Kings Park), increased respect for existing large old trees, and an improved perception of safety around the railway underpasses.

In addition to this, the community were interested in future housing for Seymour, and where locations for additional medium density, conventional density, and low density housing should be located. While there was general consensus that additional housing would be needed in the future, there was less agreement on the desired location. Comments ranged from no medium density, to facilitating down-sizing home owners, to specific locations for potential medium density housing. Others wanted to restrict residential development near Whiteheads Creek, to protect that area as a landscaped entry into Seymour.

For further details regarding the Stage 2 Community Consultation process or to view the Seymour Structure Plan – Community Consultation Findings Report, please visit www.seymour3660.com.au.

D INDICATIVE CROSS SECTIONS

The following indicative cross sections provide opportunities for local street improvements that can be implemented incrementally through capital works and community led programs.

Emily Street

Emily Street has a wide 35.9 metre reserve, and is dual carriageway along Emily Street with two lanes of traffic in each direction. There is a desire for Emily Street to provide greater amenity as the 'gateway' to Seymour and to improve pedestrian and cyclist amenity.

The Structure Plan provides two options for Emily Street which should be investigated further as part of the Riverfront and Emily Street Masterplan. The two options include:

Emily Street Option 1 (refer to Figure 32)

- Minimises the extend of asphalt by providing only 1 lane of traffic in each direction supported by on street parallel parking.
- Provides on street cycle lanes along both sides of the street.
- Widens footpaths along both sides of the street to enable off road cycle access and increased space for pedestrians.
- Allows for additional planting within a widened median and kerb outstands.
- Seeks to underground overhead powerlines to eliminate visual clutter and allow for streetscape planting.

Emily Street Option 2 (refer to Figure 33)

Maintains 2 lanes of traffic in each direction

- Maintains 2 lanes of traffic in each direction.
- Reduces width of on street parking.
- Provides on street cycle lanes along both sides of the street.
- Widens footpaths along one sides of the street to enable off road cycle access and increased space for pedestrians.
- Allows for additional planting within kerb outstands.
- Seeks to underground overhead powerlines to eliminate visual clutter and allow for streetscape planting.