

## 1. Introduction

The Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA), Northern Victoria Chapter thanks you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Draft Plan Greater Bendigo and Draft Plan Greater Bendigo Implementation Plan process. We have appreciated the opportunity to participate in the Plan Greater Bendigo process over the last year, and commend Council and the VPA on the constructive collaboration.

UDIA would like to reiterate our strong support for the following overarching issues:

- The need to reinforce the link between population growth, Plan Bendigo and the Housing Strategy being implemented;
- Recognition and understanding of the costs associated with providing infrastructure;
- Creating facilitative and enabling policies and systems; and
- Leading change through strong engagement and consistent messaging.

## 2. Comments and Recommendations

### Linking with population growth and the Housing Strategy implementation

We are pleased to see a more clearly notated explanation of the link between Plan Greater Bendigo and future population growth as envisaged in CoGB's endorsed Housing Strategy. Regular and clear links back to the intent and purpose of the Housing Strategy throughout the document and website will assist people's understanding of the interconnectivity of population growth, housing, jobs growth and infrastructure needs.

However, the evaluation criteria for the list of infrastructure investment could better align with the Housing Strategy intent. Crucial population growth infrastructure, that will be instrumental to the success of a Compact Bendigo, is missing from the list, for example:

- Upgrades to existing water and sewer infrastructure
- Road, parking, footpath upgrades to cope with the increased use associated with double the population
- Power lines underground
- Network of bike/footpath options

These infrastructure needs are less glamorous for the purposes of seeking funding, but nevertheless should be noted as fundamental requirements for future successful city growth.

### Understanding the costs

Ambiguity on the costs of infrastructure, or the efficient delivery of funds, will create frictions in the community and risk towards investment. As such is critical that items included in the infrastructure list are not only supported by planning policy but funding sources can be clearly identified and quantified. These details are still absent for the draft documents, which is a cause for concern.

#### Implementation – regulatory change

Regulatory changes and simplification of the planning approval process is a cost-effective measure to ensuring the delivery of projects. Understanding the early planning of what, when and where infrastructure is to be invested to support employment, commercial, industrial and residential development is critical in establishing that balance.

We note that regulatory change will require time and funding, and recommend that this be included as a crucial requirement for achieving the desired implementation.

#### Change leadership strategy

Throughout the Plan Greater Bendigo process, the CoGB and VPA have provided an important and valuable platform for community discussion. The UDIA commends this approach, as we continue to advocate for community education outside of the statutory planning process, engaging the community with a clear intent, using non-planning terminology, and explaining the need for processes and concepts in a manner that is easy to digest.

If the CoGB does not lead the ongoing theoretical discussion on Bendigo's growth, the statutory planning process and the development industry will become the unfortunate lightning rod for negative community sentiment. This will lead to further risk, costs and delays for individual projects in the future.

Regular and clear links back to state government population growth intent, and regional development evolution throughout the document, website and all supporting media will support and lead discussions towards delivering the intended outcomes within the strategy.

#### Support for projects

The UDIA Northern Chapter was very pleased to note the evolving structure of Plan Greater Bendigo. It has been clear that VPA and City of Greater Bendigo have modified their approach and incorporated submissions and comments as they have been made throughout the process.

Although some of the incorporated projects are not those supported by UDIA in our submission to the Discussion Paper, we note the projects that are most relevant and deliverable have been included within the umbrella categories. Projects for which UDIA offers strongest support are:

- Bendigo Airport;
- Bendigo metro rail;
- Bendigo Railway Station Activity Centre;
- Gov Hub;
- Bendigo Creek Improvement (including accessibility);
- Better use of existing water resources; and
- Plan for renewable energy future.

Our submission to the Discussion Paper included some suggestions for additional projects, none of which have been taken up. We re-state those suggestions here, and encourage Council and VPA to incorporate at least the intent of these suggestions within the written documentation:

- Establish a 50+ year growth corridor, of targeted non-sensitive land, between Bendigo and Castlemaine, focusing on strengthening existing settlements and utilising existing infrastructure;
- Adopt decentralisation policies; and encourage State Government to do the same; that actively seek to redirect and facilitate population growth from outer Melbourne to regional areas;
- Identify and establish urban renewal areas inside the UGB, encouraging private developer lead consortiums and/or public/private funding;
- Release/rezone additional land that can demonstrate viable infrastructure provision schemes; and
- Include private sector involvement as a function of Plan Greater Bendigo, with an indicative list of possible short and long term projects that should be supported by Council and by appropriate policy, and a clear indication that private development is likely to be the main provider of housing to accommodate the growth envisaged by Plan Greater Bendigo.

### Privately led

The draft Plan still does not adequately consider or embrace the opportunity presented by private investment, and that in fact many of the major projects listed will ultimately be privately led. Their viability will depend on state and local government support for innovative change that will disrupt the status quo, but will also lead to improved infrastructure efficiency and feasible housing outcomes to support population growth without resorting to urban sprawl.

## 3. About Us

### Urban Development Institute of Australia (Victoria)

The Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA) is the peak industry body for the urban development sector, representing over 320 member companies in Victoria alone.

The UDIA Northern Victoria Chapter represents landowners, developers, consultants and contractors who work directly with a number of regional councils and water authorities.

Together we drive industry discussion and debate and inform all levels of government to achieve successful planning, infrastructure, affordability and environmental outcomes.

## 4. Contact

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