



June 2021

East Gippsland Shire

Shaping the Future

Our Community Vision 2040

Our Vision

In 2040 our people, place, environment, and economy will be connected, in balance and resilient. Our unique and diverse communities will be accessible, inclusive, well connected and safe. We will value and care for each other and our natural environment. Our economy will support existing and emerging industries by being agile, innovative, and sustainable.

Acknowledgement

Aboriginal People and Communities

East Gippsland Shire Council acknowledges the Gunaikurnai, Monero and the Bidjil people as the Traditional Custodians of this land that encompasses East Gippsland Shire, and their enduring relationship with country. The Traditional Custodians have cared and nurtured East Gippsland for tens of thousands of years.

Council value their living culture and practices and their right to self-determination. Council pays respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in East Gippsland, their Elders, past, present, and future.

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A Message from the Mayor

On behalf of the East Gippsland Shire Councillors I am proud to present you with our refreshed Community Vision 2040 for East Gippsland Shire.

A Community Vision developed by the community for the community.

Our refreshed Community Vision 2040, Shaping the Future was informed by a wide community engagement program that captured the aspirations and priorities of over 470 of our citizens and stakeholders; local people representing diverse backgrounds, local areas, and communities.

The work of the Community Panel was central in developing the Vision before you. Fifteen local community representatives worked closely together to create the Community Vision values and priorities. Their task was a challenging one; they had to understand what members of the broader community had told us; analyse information and data; and collectively develop a long-term vision that could meet the current and future needs of our municipality.

I congratulate them for developing this Community Vision that will serve as the road map for East Gippsland Shire in the future.

Mayor Cr Mendy Urie



Our Vision

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The role of the Community Vision

Our Community Vision 2040 expresses the aspirations, values, and priorities of the East Gippsland community, and will help shape what we want achieved in our community by 2040.

No one area of Council, community, agency or other levels of government can help to achieve the Community Vision alone. It extends beyond Council's jurisdiction, and provides a platform for collaboration with community, municipal and regional partnerships, and advocacy. It is, in part, an expression of how Council will work with the community to apply and direct resources under its control towards achieving our desired future.

As our community evolves, the Community Vision will be reviewed and updated to reflect community aspirations, to ensure it maintains relevance.

Under the Local Government Act 2020, the Community Vision will guide Council's work through the development and implementation of its Council Plan and other strategic plans.

Process for refreshing Our Community Vision

Our Community Vision 2030 was reviewed in 2012 with six strategic themes identified by the community as critical to the future of the East Gippsland Shire including:

- Natural Environment
- Local Economy
- Community
- Land use and the Built Environment
- Infrastructure and Governance

With this context, a refresh of our Community Vision has been undertaken in 2020/21 alongside the development of the Council Plan.

Council acknowledges the contribution of the Community Panel volunteers from across the municipality. They are from all walks of life and had lived experience in our unique and diverse townships and settlements. These volunteers represent a range of community perspectives from different demographics, sectors and/or interest groups and contributed many hours to develop a set of evidence-based recommendations for the revised Community Vision. They embraced this challenge with enthusiasm, respect, integrity, and passion. Council is proud of the vision they have created.

“We look forward to working together to bring this vision to life by leading with the values and priorities (on behalf of the community) provided in Our Community Vision 2040.”
Community Panel

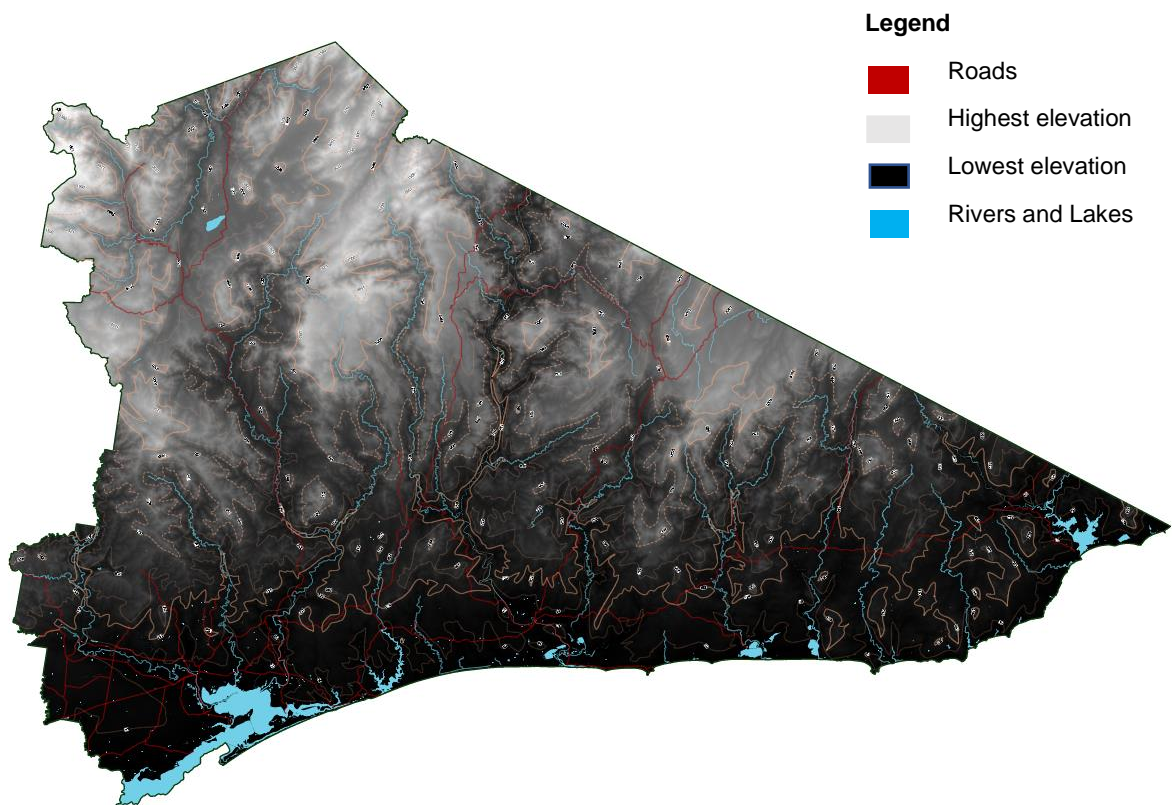
Council would also like to acknowledge over 470 community members, community groups, community recovery committees, and other stakeholders who participated in a variety of engagement activities to share their views and aspirations for the future of East Gippsland.

Council thanks you all for contributing your time and effort to help make East Gippsland Shire such a special place now and into the future.

Snapshot of East Gippsland

Located at the most eastern end of the region of Gippsland, the municipality of East Gippsland is both geographically and socially diverse. As Victoria's second largest Shire, East Gippsland covers 10 per cent of Victoria with 20,940 square kilometres from Providence Ponds to the New South Wales border. Almost 80 per cent of its area (16 578 km²) is crown land inclusive of 39 per cent National Parks (6 474 km²) with the remaining State forests, parks and reserves. This amount of forested area within catchments is uncommon.

The Shire's large natural footprint boasts a number of Australia's significant natural assets including: The Gippsland Lakes System, iconic rivers including the Mitchell and Snowy Rivers, Ninety Mile Beach and the Australian Alps. These support natural systems and biodiversity that are recognised as unique. Our environment features an extensive coastline, lake and river systems with diverse landforms and distinct vegetation types. It encompasses alpine and sub-alpine environments, forested hills, fertile river valleys, lakes and beaches and extensive Red Gum plains.



Map 1. Topography of East Gippsland Shire

Map 1. above shows the topography and elevations of East Gippsland Shire. The lighter colour is the highest elevation and the dark colour is the lowest elevation. Intact alpine peaks of the high country to the north, where the headlands of our waterways originate. The many streams and rivers are shown running through these mountains valleys towards the lakes system and ocean.

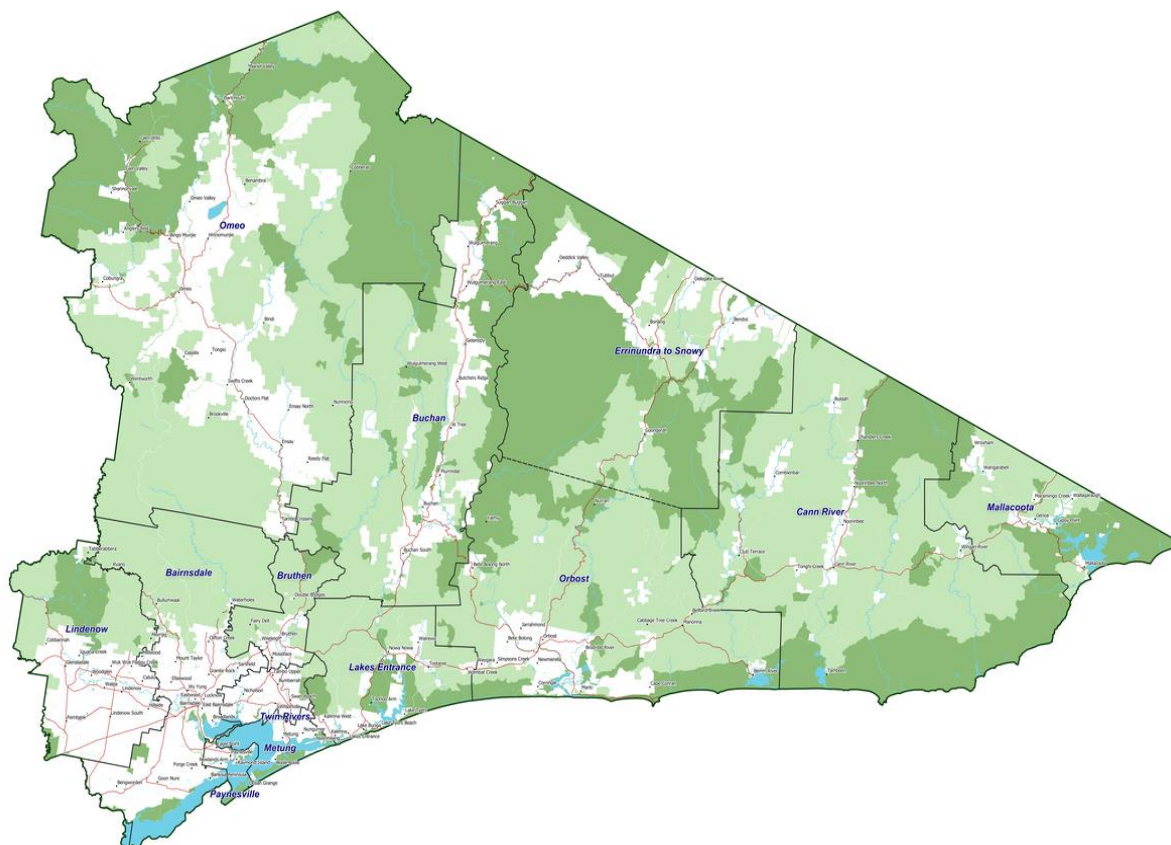
The extent and diversity of these ecosystems make East Gippsland one of the great reservoirs and refuges for native biodiversity in the country. The pattern of the landscape is

also the opposite to that of most of the rest of Victoria; here, settled areas are islands within a sea of natural environments, rather than the other way around. Unsurprisingly, 77 per cent of surveyed community members told us they strongly value the natural environment in which they live.

East Gippsland has the second largest population of Aboriginal people in the state of Victoria, with 2.9 percent of our population compared with .08 per cent for Victoria. The First people of East Gippsland understand their relationship with place and the intrinsic connection between the environment (Country) and those that live within it and rely upon it.

Residents of East Gippsland both new and old continue to understand the importance of place and our direct relationship to where we live. No one 'place' is the same, with 171 localities making up the Shire. These localities connect to form larger districts where existing social and trade routes have developed over time. Rivers, roads and mountains have shaped the connections between these human settlements creating a patchwork across the varying landscapes of the high country, coast, inland water ways and rivers and the Gippsland Plains.

To understand and respond to the different needs of our communities, Council has developed a hierarchy of place, featuring a 12-district system. This hierarchy identifies localities, remote and rural settlements, towns, service towns, suburbs and the municipal centre.



Map 2. East Gippsland's dispersed localities and 12 districts

Map 2. Demonstrates the dispersal of localities across the municipality. The remoteness of our places and its people have led to the creation of distinct communities, each with its unique culture and strengths, relationships and settlement characteristics.

These strengths are drawn on to provide voluntary support, service and leadership within these communities. Approximately 41 percent of the community surveyed told us they highly value their longstanding connections and sense of community and belonging.

Our current population of 47,725 is expected to grow to 57,799 by 2040, with a higher than State average proportion of people over the age of 60. The continued growth and ageing of our population will create challenges and opportunities for our communities into the future.

Since 2012, our municipality has experienced a cascading series of natural disasters and events that have impacted both the natural landscape that we live in and the people who live, love, work and play in East Gippsland. 2017 was the start of a drying landscape and below average rainfall, which led to governments, agencies and community's coordination of a drought response. The quantity of water in reserves became concerning as dam water levels decreased. The 36 months preceding the fires were the driest on record. Record drought preceded record bushfires.

The Black Summer bushfires (2019-2020) flame impacted 51 percent of the Shire during the height of its busy tourism season, with some 30,000 visitors evacuated during the event. The extensive cost included loss of human life and property, livestock, wildlife, damage to the natural environment and resources, livelihoods and consumer confidence, and to air quality and emissions. Three people died, an estimated 410 residential properties, 15 commercial properties and 29 farming properties were damaged or destroyed. 56 percent National Parks and conservation reserves, 12 percent other conservation reserves, 11 percent other State forests and 67 percent other public land was burnt.

The recovery and impact from these fires has been stalled by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has seen our communities locked down and isolated, borders closed, and businesses already impacted by the bushfires unable to reopen. This has delayed the economic and social recovery of the municipality. While the recovery of public assets and, to some extent, rebuilding of dwellings has progressed, expert advice is indicating that COVID-19 has significantly delayed the social and wellbeing recovery process, possibly by 6 to 9 months.

As the impacts of a changing climate cause a hotter and drier climate in East Gippsland, the result is more frequent and intense natural events including floods, fires and droughts. These will continue to be experienced across the municipality. All communities will need to draw from their previous experiences and resilience around natural disasters to adapt and change how they live in this dynamic environment.

Our Communities will include, encourage, respect and value everyone

- What we value

- The variety and diversity of our people as our greatest asset
- Our local identity and connection to the places where we live. Their distinctive history, landscape, economic strengths, and connections through sporting competitions, creativity, the arts, cultural events, and other recreational activities
- Our inclusive, diverse, and respectful communities that encourage belonging and understanding of all people
- The contribution of our passionate and hardworking volunteers across the region
- The spirit, support, and kindness of our communities during tough times
- The strength of our older population who are engaged, self-reliant, community leaders
- The East Gippsland community and the cooperation, support, information and skill sharing that occurs between communities and individuals
- Families and children and their contribution to our community

- Our priorities for the future

- The involvement of and contribution by the Shire's Aboriginal community is increasingly recognised, and its cultural heritage and role in decision-making about the future of the area are respected and protected.
- Independence and resilience in the face of natural disasters and unexpected impacts on the community
- Communities are inclusive and there is an even higher level of tolerance and appreciation of difference.
- The unique character and history of local communities is celebrated
- The community is supported to come together to create local solutions to local problems
- Opportunities for community participation in creative activities at all levels are supported, to build community cohesiveness, resilience and identity.
- The need for vulnerable members of our community to be given special assistance to readjust to any major changes to their lives or livelihoods is recognised.
- Increasingly flexible and innovative delivery of health and community services at the local level is developed to meet the needs of all East Gippsland residents.

Our Place will be accessible, safe, connected, and healthy

- What we value

- The local history, heritage and architecture that shapes our towns and landscapes
- Our relaxed way of life and the freedom for all our communities to enjoy the natural surrounds and high-quality lifestyle options
- The variety and diversity of climate and landform that support a wide range of land use and development
- Our highly productive land, resources and infrastructure that support these activities
- Community infrastructure and facilities are designed and maintained to meet the changing needs of the community

- Our priorities for the future

- The viability, diversity and attractiveness of our dispersed settlement pattern is maintained through focusing on the strengths and abilities of local communities
- New forms of transport to support efficient movement in and between small and dispersed townships and throughout the Shire
- Improved networks of paths and trails to encourage cycling and walking for pleasure and for day-to-day activities
- Planning for future land use balances local priorities with environmental capacity
- Community infrastructure and facilities are designed and maintained in line with the Principles of Universal Design
- High quality communications networks need to be expanded to enable all communities, businesses and services in the Shire to access new sources of information and take advantage of advances in electronic commerce.
- Population growth is planned and managed with a focus on attracting and retaining young people and families
- The municipalities road, rail, air, water, transport, power and telecommunications infrastructure systems meet the future needs of the community, businesses, industries and visitors.

Our Environment will be managed and preserved for all generations

- What we value

- The ecological diversity and beauty of East Gippsland's national parks, forests, waterways, beaches, and oceans that makes us unique
- The traditional owners' connection to the land, identification with 'country' and awareness of the natural rhythms of the environment
- East Gippsland's place as an outstanding reservoir of biodiversity in temperate Australia
- Our rare places of relative wilderness and pristine waterways, our heritage rivers, and internationally recognised alpine and coastal wilderness landscapes
- Extensive areas of forests and other natural areas that provide the many plants and animals existing here more room to adapt to changes in climate and to the increased frequency of fires, storms, and floods.
- East Gippsland's weather and its distinct seasons

- Our priorities for the future

- Innovation to reduce emissions and waste including more local solutions for waste reduction
- Utilise principles of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals¹ to guide decisions that impact climate change
- The ecological diversity and beauty of East Gippsland's national parks, forests, waterways, beaches and oceans is managed and any potentially adverse impacts from human activity and natural events is minimised
- The resilience of our ecosystem is enhanced through management of the impact of growth and minimisation of fragmentation of important habitats and vegetation corridors.
- The community is more involved in planning to adapt to a changing environment and the impact of catastrophic events
- Sustainably managed agricultural land is protected to preserve the productive capacity of our rural industries

¹ United Nations Development Program, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

Our Economy will be sustainable, innovative, and supportive of existing and emerging industries

- What we value

- Diversity and inclusive employment opportunities and economic activity that provides protection from adverse external influences
- Our existing industrial activity, local retailers and employers and their entrepreneurial spirit
- Untapped potential for new business and tourism opportunities
- Our growing service sector
- Proximity to major cities and key markets
- Sustainable management of our natural resources to support primary production and nature-based tourism
- Our unique tourism offerings and the potential for adventure and eco-tourism
- Our small towns that are increasingly viable because of innovative approaches to the provision of services and goods at a community level.

- Our priorities for the future

- A diverse mix of economic activity and a broader industry base that maximises the synergies between the various industry sectors
- A collaborative and integrated approach to industry development and marketing
- Local enterprise is encouraged and supported
- The unique tourism offerings in towns across the Shire are leveraged to create a connected experience
- The region's agri-food production capabilities and efficiencies, and continued growth and expertise in environmentally friendly production practices is promoted
- Investment is in future industries, including education and innovation
- Education and workforce development for all levels of community and the skills identified to support the many business across the Shire
- Younger members of our community are attracted and retained through improved education and employment opportunities and experiences.
- More cost-effective and efficient freight and passenger transport services
- Natural resource-based industries value-add in a range of innovative ways
- Our energy-driven economy is transformed to one where alternative energy sources are preferred, to ensure that East Gippsland is recognised and marketed as an environmentally sustainable business location

- Opportunities are identified and developed for natural resource-based industries to value-add in a range of innovative ways
- Water for agriculture and industrial processing to be secured through adoption of 'best practice' techniques to minimise demands for fresh water and maximise water reuse and recycling

Monitoring Progress

Our Community Vision 2040 highlights the values of our communities as well as identifying their priorities for the future. Council, together with our communities, government, and community organisations, all have a role to play in achieving Our Community Vision.

Council will work towards Our Community Vision through the development of four yearly Council Plans, which describe what Council will do towards the vision and priorities within the corresponding four-year term. Implementation of the Council Plan will be achieved through Annual Action Plans and subsequent Annual Budgets. A set of indicators are included in the Council Plan that will be used to measure Council's contribution to the Community Vision strategic themes and priorities.

Council commits to updating the community on the implementation of Our Community Vision 2040 through a range of communication methods, including quarterly Council Plan progress report and an extensive report included in the Annual Report each year.

Community members will also be involved in the Annual Community Satisfaction Survey which collects data about life in the municipality and satisfaction with Council services. This data will help to track the implementation of Our Community Vision 2040 and Council's contribution via the Council Plan as well as support the development of annual actions and continuous improvement of services.

A summary report of results will be available every year. In addition, every four years, in line with the development of a new Council Plan following Council elections, the community will have their say on what Council should focus on over the following four years to continue implementing the vision for Our Community Vision 2040. Council will also check back in with community members to gauge how Council is tracking with Our Community Vision and to ensure it is still representative of community needs, aspirations values and priorities.

At a community level, community members can influence their Community Recovery and or place-based Community Plans to implement the Community Vision. District community plans are the platform where community actively implement their visions and that of the municipality, working from the strengths and diversity of each district in the municipality and the people that live there.

Contact us

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