

Hilltops

Community Strategic Plan 2042

2025 Revision



Acknowledgement
of country

Hilltops Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians, the Wiradjuri and Ngunnawal People, of the land and water within the Hilltops region. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging, and also pay respect to the knowledge embedded forever within the Aboriginal Custodianship of Country.

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Welcome

We are delighted to share our community’s vision for the next 18 years; the Hilltops Community Strategic Plan 2042. This Plan presents an inspiring roadmap for our region as we move towards 2042 that captures a clear vision and compelling goals for our residents, businesses, community organisations and many partners and collaborators. It is the key strategic plan that will guide us as we work together to achieve great things for Hilltops.

Since the first Community Strategic Plan (Plan) was developed over a decade ago, it has been used by Council to inform decisions and set the agenda for long-term planning of projects, infrastructure and services. Hilltops Council has a custodial role in initiating, preparing and maintaining this Plan. Its implementation draws on the continuing partnerships with all levels of government and agencies, non-government organisations, businesses and the community.

With the election of a new council in September 2024, NSW Integrated Planning and Reporting legislation requires that this Plan be reviewed and updated to ensure it reflects the community’s priorities. This updated plan builds on the 2022 Community Strategic Plan, and considers the information gathered from engagement activities that took place in 2024. Your contributions have highlighted the strengths of our region and identified the key challenges we face.

This Plan emphasises the importance of maintaining Hilltops strong sense of community, where friendly people, a vibrant community spirit, and a focus on family and neighbours are cherished. It aims to support economic growth, improve infrastructure, and ensure that our natural and built environments are protected. The Plan also addresses the critical need for accessible housing, quality health services, and public administration that reflects the community’s needs and aspirations. It seeks to enhance the simplicity and quality of life in Hilltops while fostering inclusivity, connectivity, and well-being across the region.

Delivering this vision is not something we can achieve in isolation. Shared decision making and effective working partnerships with government agencies, non-government organisations, business and, of course, our community will be critical to our success.

The unique nature of this Plan is that it is a document for the whole community. If we are to succeed in creating the community we have envisioned with this Plan, we need to work together, and everyone is encouraged to play an active role in whatever way we can. This Plan is designed to encourage commitment to our future and a sense of common purpose and responsibility.

This is the Plan for Our Hilltops, and we are committed to working with our community to reach our goals.

Vision

The Hilltops is a thriving region offering a relaxed country lifestyle and diverse economy.

We value and protect our friendly community spirit, pristine natural environment, and deep cultural heritage.

We have strong connections, making the Hilltops region a vibrant place to live, work, play and invest.

Our plan

About our plan

The Hilltops Community Strategic Plan (CSP) documents the aspirations and priorities of our community. It sets out a long-term vision for the region to 2042 and identifies the key priorities and strategies for achieving this.

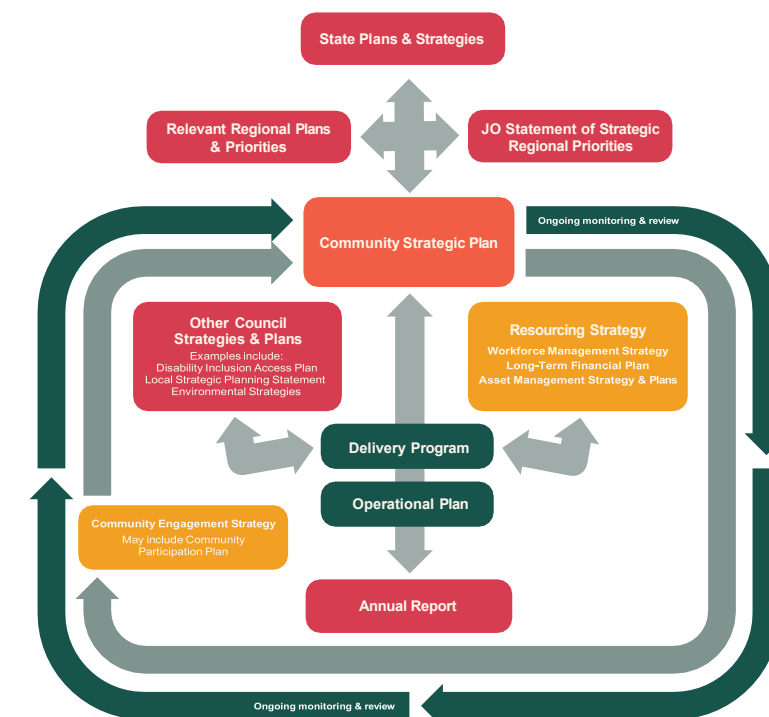
It is the community's plan for the future, not a council plan. Hilltops Council is the custodian of the CSP; however, many other external agencies and stakeholders also lead and support the vision and strategic priorities.

Businesses, industry groups, community groups, individuals, service providers and government agencies all have a role to play in reaching our shared vision.

Integrated Planning & Reporting Framework

An integrated approach to planning and reporting is required under the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework set out in the *Local Government Act 1993* and the *Local Government General Regulation 2021*.

This framework requires that the Council develop a series of plans, strategies, and reports linked to the community vision and priorities set out in the CSP. The Community Strategic Plan is based on the social justice principles of equity, access, participation and rights.



Our Hilltops

The Hilltops region features the towns of Boorowa, Harden and Young and surrounding villages. Situated within four hours of Sydney and 90 minutes from Canberra, Hilltops is a well suited agricultural region with a diverse economy and a strong rural base that offers a relaxed, country lifestyle with all the benefits and diversity of regional centres.

A resource rich environment, Hilltops supports and offers its community strong, unique and sustainable ventures through a variety of tourism, seasonal, cultural and innovative industries.

Total population
19,255

SEIFA index*
954

Top industries of employment

- 1 Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
- 2 Health Care and Social Assistance
- 3 Retail trade
- 4 Construction
- 5 Education and Training

*Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) is score that ranks areas in Australia according to relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage in terms of people's access to material and social resources, and their ability to participate in society.

If Hilltops consisted of 100 people, there would be:

5
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

8
born overseas

5
speaking languages other than English at home

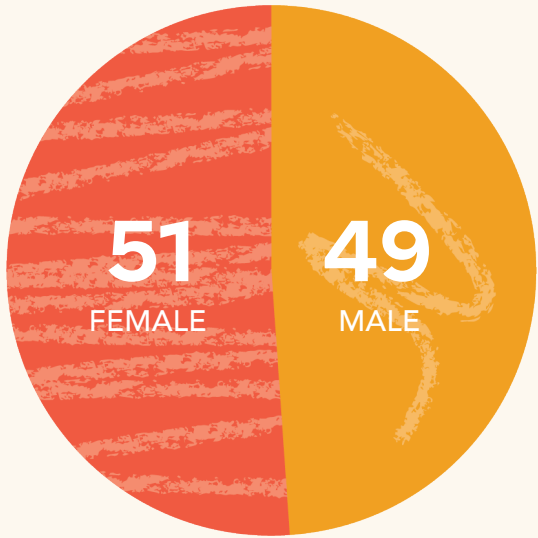


25
with an individual income less than \$400 per week



42
that completed higher education

55
that did not complete year 12



25: 0 – 19 years 44: 20 – 59 years
31: 60+ years



33
living by themselves

67
living in families



3
unemployed and looking for work

18
who volunteer

32
working part time

57
working full time



14
care for someone with a disability

7

have a disability



70
who own, or pay a mortgage on a house

23
who rent



71
who drove to work

5

who walked to work

Source: ABS Census. profile.id. economy.id. BOSCAR, NSW Health stats. NSW Population Health Survey.

Community engagement

What we asked

- 1. How do you feel about the vision in the endorsed CSP?
- 2. How are we tracking with the existing CSP?
- 3. What makes your community a great place to live?
- 4. What do you think are the main challenges facing your community?
- 5. What have you seen in another area/shire that you think would work well in your community?
- 6. What is one thing you would like to see achieved in your community in the next ten years?
- 7. What services or projects do you think Council should be prioritising or lobbying other levels of government for?

How did you get involved

- Virtually – surveys.
- On paper – drawing sheets.
- In conversation – discussion guides.

Participation

Over 500 people from Hilltops participated in the Towards 2042 Stage 1 engagement from 1 February to 15 March 2024.



* The Regional Wellbeing Survey, conducted annually by the University of Canberra, measures the wellbeing and quality of life of people living in rural and regional Australia.

Community engagement

What is important to you

When we asked the community what makes Hilltops a great place to live, they told us that living in a community with friendly people, strong community spirit, and a sense of community was extremely important. Respondents valued the different cultures, and the volunteers who manage community groups and bring people together. The community was referred to as affordable, with people valuing the simplicity and quality of lifestyle, great businesses, and freedom that comes with a country life. There was also a strong focus on family and neighbours.

Main challenges

The Hilltops community faces several challenges, including concerns about the rising cost of living pressures and worsening housing affordability, exacerbated by interest rate increases and a shortage of rentals and social housing. The financial sustainability of the Council, affordable rates are significant concerns. Additionally, there is a perceived increase in crime, particularly family violence, youth crime, drug use, and anti-social behaviour. Employment opportunities, particularly full-time work for women and young people, are perceived to be lacking, and access to health and medical care is inadequate, with difficulties in securing appointments with doctors and specialists, long travel distances for care, under-resourced hospitals, and insufficient mental health support.

Key priorities

People who took part in the engagement indicated they prioritise:

- Sports and recreation facilities, including a heated indoor pool, cycling paths, and winter exercise options.
- Economic growth, focusing on filling empty shops, attracting businesses, supporting small enterprises, and boosting agribusiness.
- Infrastructure, with emphasis on securing a reliable water supply, supporting growth, improving road conditions, and enhancing flood mitigation and footpath networks.
- Housing, with a top priority on affordability, availability, and reducing homelessness.
- Improved public administration and enhanced governance and leadership.



Council's role

Council is committed to understanding the community's priorities, concerns and needs in critical services, facilities and programs.

Whilst Hilltops Council is the custodian for the Community Strategic Plan, all levels of government, businesses, industry groups, community groups and individuals will share the responsibility for achieving our long-term community goals.

The Plan describes Council's role in the delivery of each priority using the following terms:

Provide

Services, facilities, infrastructure, programs, planning, and engagement.

Collaborate

Partner with the community, business and industry, other councils, and other tiers of government.

Advocate

Amplify the voice of our community to get the best possible outcomes.

Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, United Nations Member States, including Australia, adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which outlines 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals serve as a global blueprint for peace, prosperity, and sustainability for people and the planet, now and into the future.

As responsible global citizens, we have integrated the principles of the SDGs into the development of this Community Strategic Plan. By aligning our local strategies with these global goals, we ensure that our community not only addresses local priorities but also contributes to the broader vision of sustainable development worldwide.

These are the seventeen SDGs we have considered in the formulation of our strategies:

The goals include:

1. No poverty
2. Zero hunger
3. Good health and well-being
4. Quality education
5. Gender equality
6. Clean water and sanitation
7. Affordable and clean energy
8. Decent work and economic growth
9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure
10. Reduce inequalities
11. Sustainable cities and communities
12. Responsible consumption and production
13. Climate action
14. Life below water
15. Life on land
16. Peace, justice and strong institutions
17. Partnerships for the goals



Plan

The Hilltops Shire CSP consists of five themes:

CO. Our community

We are a network of inclusive and diverse communities who value our country lifestyle, strong connections and quality of life.

EC. Our economy

Hilltops is a connected and growing agricultural region, driven by a culture of innovation and collaboration strength.

EN. Our environment

We are custodians of our natural environment and landscapes and will protect and improve them for future generations.

IN. Our infrastructure

Our community is well serviced and has high quality and equitable connectivity to social, built and communications infrastructure.

LE. Our Leadership

We are an engaged and informed community involved in effective and ethical decision making to achieve our collective aspirations.

Each theme outlines the objectives, strategies for achieving them, important partners and collaborators, and the specific role of the Council. A separate section explains the review and reporting process, and measures to track progress. The strategies in this Plan have been developed with careful consideration of the quadruple bottom line (QBL) and is grounded in Social Justice Principles.



CO. Community

Objective 1. Our community enjoys a country lifestyle, connected relationships, and an exceptional quality of life.

Strategic objectives	Strategies	Council's role	Our partners
Our community are supported to live healthy and connected lives.	CO1 Increase the capacity and resilience of our people and community organisations.	Provide Collaborate	Community members Community organisations Service providers NSW Government Australian Government
	CO2 Ensure all community members have equitable access to services, resources, and opportunities	Collaborate Advocate	
	CO3 Provide access to medical and health facilities and services.	Advocate	
	CO4 Enhance our region's ability to nurture and encourage family life and social connections.	Provide Collaborate Advocate	
	CO5 Encourage the development of facilities and services to assist our most vulnerable	Advocate	
Value our historical significance and vibrant cultural traditions	CO6 Support a resilient and vibrant events, arts and cultural sector across our region.	Provide Collaborate	Community members Community organisations Traditional Owners and First Nations groups Business and industry NSW Government
	CO7 Support and nurture Aboriginal cultural heritage and values.	Collaborate	
	CO8 Protect and enhance our built, cultural and natural heritage.	Provide Collaborate	
Enhance the safety of our communities.	CO9 Enhance community safety within our neighbourhoods, public spaces, and places	Advocate	Community Organisations NSW Government Australian Government
	CO10 Reduce crime, anti-social behaviour and improve community safety.	Advocate	



EC. Economy

Objective 2. Our economy is a stable and growing agricultural region, driven by a strong culture of innovation and opportunity.

Strategic objectives	Strategies	Council's role	Our partners
Promote economic stability by supporting businesses and diversifying industries.	EC1 Support businesses to be resilient and succeed in a competitive market.	Provide Collaborate	Business and industry NSW Government Australian Government RDA Southern NSW and ACT
	EC2 Attract new business and industry to diversify the local economy and ensure long-term resilience.	Collaborate	
	EC3 Identify and promote regional economic opportunities to create a robust, interconnected economy.	Collaborate	
Our key industries are resilient and strong	EC4 Maximise tourism opportunities and create a welcoming environment for investment by promoting the region as a great place to live, work, invest and visit	Provide Collaborate	Business and industry NSW Government Australian Government
	EC6 Providing leadership on economic development and tourism initiatives in the region	Provide	
Quality learning and employment opportunities for our people	EC7 Encourage more affordable childcare places and after school programs to support working parents.	Advocate	Education and learning providers Business and industry NSW Government Australian Government Canberra Region Joint Organisation
	EC8 Deliver clear education, training and learning opportunities that meet skills gaps in our key industry sectors.	Advocate	
	EC9 Provide employment pathways for young people	Advocate	



EN. Environment

Objective 3. Our environment is protected, managed, and enhanced to ensure resilient custodianship for future generations.

Strategic objectives	Strategies	Council’s role	Our partners
Protect and maintain the integrity of our natural environment	EN1 Protect and enhance our biodiversity and natural environment in balance with other considerations.	Provide Collaborate Advocate	NSW Government Local Land Services Landowners Business groups Community groups Rural industries CRJO
	EN2 Improve environmental stewardship through awareness, education, and hands-on opportunities.	Provide Collaborate	
	EN3 Effectively manage weeds and waterways.	Provide Collaborate	
	EN4 Encourage environmentally sustainable farming practices.	Provide Collaborate	
	EN5 Effectively manage our waste streams to minimise landfill and promote reuse and recycling.	Provide Collaborate	
Respond to our changing environment	EN6 Adapt to the impact of climate change	Provide Collaborate Advocate	NSW Government Community members Community groups CRJO Emergency services Business and industry
	EN7 Improve resilience to shocks and natural disasters.	Provide Collaborate Advocate	
	EN8 Maximise renewable and affordable energy resources.	Provide	
Minimise the environmental impact of growth and development.	EN9 Plan future growth to preserve local character and ensure sustainable and thoughtful development.	Provide	Community Organisations NSW Government Australian Government
	EN10 New developments are assessed fairly, with a focus on community needs and sustainability.	Provide	
	EN11. Enable diverse, sustainable and affordable housing options.	Collaborate Advocate	



IN. Infrastructure

Objective 4. Our infrastructure is reliable and helps us to live well, move around with ease, and connect with each other.

Strategic objectives	Strategies	Council's role	Our partners
Our community is easy to get around	IN1 Provide road solutions to enhance safety and minimise congestion.	Provide Advocate	Community organisations NSW Government Australian Government
	IN2 Increase accessibility and walkability of our towns and villages.	Provide Advocate	
	IN3 Public and community transport gets people where they need to go.	Advocate	
Equitably deliver and maintain quality and efficient social infrastructure	IN4 Offer high-quality sports and recreation facilities that promote active lifestyles and inclusive participation for all age groups.	Provide	Community organisations Sporting groups and clubs NSW Government
	IN5 Ensure community facilities are ongoing cultural, recreational and learning centres for the community.	Provide Advocate Collaborate	
	IN6 Manage green spaces and reserves to enhance the community wellbeing.	Provide Collaborate	
	IN7 Develop and sustain lively parks, gardens, and playgrounds that provide enjoyable areas for relaxation, play, and social interaction.	Provide	
	IN8 Ensure our town and village streetscapes are well-designed, welcoming, and practical.	Provide	
Provide and maintain reliable and efficient built infrastructure	IN9 Secure quality potable water supply to our towns and villages and increase access to water infrastructure and utilities for emergency services.	Provide	Business and industry NSW Government
	IN10 Protect and improve water catchments across the region.	Advocate	
	IN11 Sustain sewerage wastewater quality to meet industry best practice.	Provide	
	IN12 Maximise stormwater management aligned to best practice.	Provide	
	IN13 Deliver reliable mobile telephone and high-speed internet services.	Advocate	



LE. Leadership

Objective 5. Our leadership is ethical, responsible, and engages our community in decision making to achieve collective aspirations.

Strategic objectives	Strategies	Council's role	Our partners
A leading and responsive Council.	LE1 Lead, govern, and regulate with integrity, fairness, transparency, and accountability.	Provide	Community members NSW Government CRJO
	LE2 Foster strong partnerships with industry organisations and government to advocate effectively for our communities.	Collaborate	
	LE3 Ensure that the Council maintains responsible financial, employment and management practices.	Provide	
An informed and engaged community.	LE4 Ensure residents have timely access to relevant and accurate information on issues that impact them.	Provide Collaborate	All community
	LE5 Empower our community to actively engage and shape the region's future.	Provide	



Our progress

Working together

This Community Strategic Plan outlines our collective vision for the future. We must work together to guide and implement strategies that move us towards these goals.

Council is proud to act as the custodian of the Community Strategic Plan, ensuring that the aspirations and priorities of our community are meaningfully documented and elevated among our partners.

Council's commitment in responding to this plan is reflected in the Delivery Program, which translates strategic objectives into actionable plans over a four-year term, aligning with the Council election cycle.

Review

To ensure accountability and transparency, the plan is reviewed every four years in line with the Council term. This regular review allows the plan to adapt to changing circumstances and emerging community needs.



Reporting

Reporting on our progress is a key component of this process.

Council will prepare the State of the Shire Report in the year in which an ordinary election of councillors is held. This Report outlines the implementation and effectiveness of the Community Strategic Plan in achieving its objectives, and will be presented and endorsed to the second meeting of a newly elected Council.

Measures

The following tables outline the measures for determining whether the objectives of this plan are being achieved. They are not measures of Council's performance, but a gauge for stakeholders to determine whether the community is moving closer to, or further away from, the vision.

Measure	Source	Baseline	Desired trend
Community			
Personal Wellbeing Index	UoC Regional Wellbeing Survey 2021	75.9	Stabilise
Community Wellbeing Index	UoC Regional Wellbeing Survey 2021	5.5	Increase
Sense of Belonging Index	UoC Regional Wellbeing Survey 2021	5.6	Stabilise or increase
Median Household Income (weekly)	ABS Census 2021	\$1128	Increase
Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSED)	ABS SEIFA 2021	976	Increase
Equity and Inclusion Index	UoC Regional Wellbeing Survey 2021	3.9	Increase
Percentage of children developmentally vulnerable on 1 or more domains	Australian Early Development Census 2021	17.4%	Decrease
Life expectancy at birth for all persons	Health Stats NSW 2020	83.3 years	Increase
Persons with a long-term health condition as a percentage of total population	ABS Census 2021	62.2%	Decrease
Persons with a mental health condition as a percentage of total population	ABS Census 2021	9.5%	Decrease
Voluntary Work for an organisation (all persons)	ABS Census 2021	17.6%	Increase
General Psychological Distress	UoC Regional Wellbeing Survey 2021	10.2	Decrease
Crime and Safety Index	UoC Regional Wellbeing Survey 2021	4.0	Decrease
Mortgage costs >30% of income	Profile ID	11.4%	Decrease
Rent costs >30% of income	Profile ID	31.5%	Decrease
Access to general health services	UoC Regional Wellbeing Survey 2021	5.0	Increase
Access to specialist health services	UoC Regional Wellbeing Survey 2021	3.4	Increase
Access to mental health services	UoC Regional Wellbeing Survey 2021	3.8	Increase

Measure	Source	Baseline	Desired trend
Economy			
Gross regional product as a % of total State Gross Regional Product 2024	Profile ID 2024	0.17%	Increase
Total GST registered businesses 2023	Profile ID 2024	2358	-
Total tourism sales as a percentage of NSW's total tourism sales 2022-23	Profile ID 2024	0.1%	Increase
Percentage of persons ages 15-64 years with a non-school qualification at Certificate III or above	ABS Census 2021	49.4%	Increase
Persons with no non-school qualifications	ABS Census 2021	46.2%	Decrease
Quality of local schools	UoC Regional Wellbeing Survey 2021	5.2	Increase
Total unemployed looking for work	ABS Small Area Labour Markets 2024	3.5%	Decrease
Environment			
Landscape and Aesthetics Index	UoC Regional Wellbeing Survey 2021	5.7	Increase
Perceived Environmental Health Index	UoC Regional Wellbeing Survey 2021	3.6	Increase
CO2e emissions per capita	Snapshot Climate - Australian Emissions Profiles 2021-22	44.9 tonnes	Decrease
Average Development Application lodgement time	NSW Planning Portal 2023-24	12 days	Stabilise
Average assessment days for Development Applications	OLG Your Council Report 2022-23	77 days	Decrease



Measure	Source	Baseline	Desired trend
Infrastructure			
Road length per capita	OLG Your Council Report 2022-23	142.8 kms	-
Quality of local roads	UoC Regional Wellbeing Survey 2021	2.7	Increase
Access to public transport	UoC Regional Wellbeing Survey 2021	2.5	Increase
Greenhouse Gas Emissions - Total water and sewer	NSW Water 2022-23	330 CO2eq	Stabilise
Recycling Rate	OLG Your Council Report 2022-23	50.8	Increase
Access to Telecommunications Index	UoC Regional Wellbeing Survey 2021	3.5	Increase
Number of public halls	OLG Your Council Report 2022-23	16	-
Number of public libraries	OLG Your Council Report 2022-23	3	-
Open public space	OLG Your Council Report 2022-23	385.6 ha	-
Number of public swimming pools (including tidal and rock pools)	OLG Your Council Report 2022-23	4	-
Leadership			
Operating Performance Ratio	OLG Your Council Report 2022-23	-7.3	Increase
Average residential rate	OLG Your Council Report 2022-23	\$667.74	-
Typical residential bill for usage of water and sewerage	NSW Water	\$1684.16	-
Infrastructure backlog ratio	OLG Your Council Report 2022-23	5.5	Decrease
Community Leadership and Collaboration Index	UoC Regional Wellbeing Survey 2021	4.7	Increase
Elected Female Councillors	OLG Your Council Report 2022-23	33	Increase
Having a Say and Being Heard Index	UoC Regional Wellbeing Survey 2021	4.1	Increase

Acknowledgements

The Hilltops Community Strategic Plan 2042 has been developed in partnership with the Hilltops community, Hilltops Council, the Canberra Region Joint Organisation, and Projectura.

Hilltops Council wish to thank the community members who gave their time and thoughts during the engagement process to inform the strategy.