

Berry Community Strategic Plan

The Berry Forum - September 2016



The Berry Forum

Berry Strategic Plan

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All images in this document
are provide by Chris Jallard -
Red Berry Photography

Introduction

Purpose

The “Berry Community Strategic Plan” has been developed by the Berry community and its visitors to provide a foundation for future efforts to maintain and improve the community aspirations in a co-ordinated and collaborative way.

The Plan is based on the collective knowledge of the community, input from one of the town’s biggest assets, tourists, and from the direct input of all those who have participated in various forums.

The purpose of the Plan is to provide ongoing engagement with the community through the Berry Community Consultative Body (the Berry Forum) and its representative sub-committees, Shoalhaven City Council (Council) and others as required on Berry’s priorities for the future.

Plan Preparation Process

The Berry Community Strategic Plan process commenced in late 2015 with initial planning for the project (phase 1 below). The project quickly moved into a phase of engagement around ideas generation (phase 2), with 540 surveys completed by residents, businesses and visitors. Outcomes were organised into seven themes. A community forum attended by 200 identified the highest priorities (phase 3).



This Community Strategic Plan is the outcome of these processes. In reviewing the information gained, a close link has been sought between the core themes presented in this document, and the structure of Council and its Community Strategic Plan from which it sets its own priorities. This should help to facilitate smoother implementation.

The themes that have been established are:

- Town Centre Improvements
- Infrastructure and Assets
- Recreation, Community and Cultural Facilities
- Town Planning
- Sustainability
- Tourism
- Business and Employment

Each of these themes are further detailed later in this document.

Acknowledgements

The Berry Forum acknowledges the assistance of Council and the NSW State Government in providing funding for the project to proceed in a timely and comprehensive way. Thanks also to Chris Jallard from Red Berry Photography for the use of the images used in this document.

Vision Statement

A vision statement has been developed based on the strategic themes and priorities identified by residents and visitors through the strategic planning process. The vision captures the reasons why Berry is seen as a highly desirable place to live and visit. It also sets out how Berry residents aspire the town “to be” and “be perceived” in the future. The purpose of the vision is to act as an overarching direction for the community - a Vision for Berry.

Berry is highly valued by both its residents and its visitors for its location and its heritage village atmosphere. Idyllically situated in a rural landscape, surrounded by rolling hills and with the escarpment as a backdrop, Berry's historic character is enriched by quality retail outlets and eateries, a full calendar of community and cultural events and a diverse offering of recreational activities and experiences.

The Berry Bypass brings a quieter main street, an increase in public spaces and a network of paths and trails. Berry residents can now plan improvements to the amenity of their town, emphasising its importance as the gateway to the Shoalhaven. Future development, infrastructure improvement and growth of tourism will be carefully balanced with a heightened focus on Berry's unique historic charm, rural character and renown as "The Town of Trees".



Strategic Themes

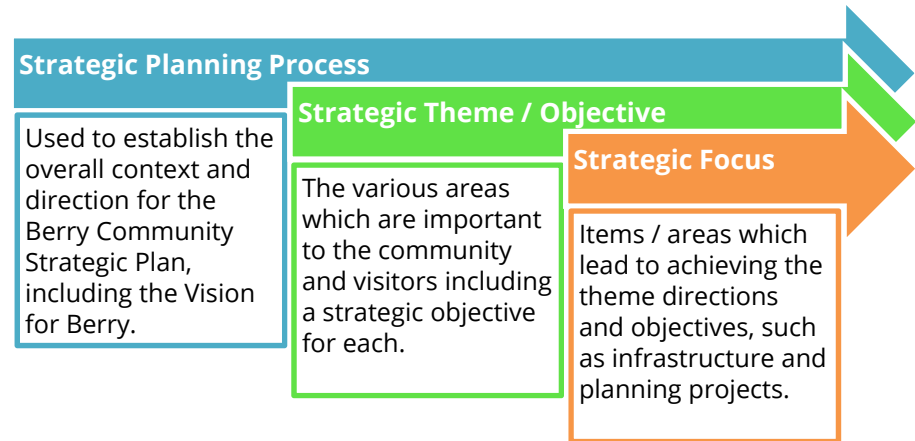
The strategic planning process allowed the community to identify seven "Strategic Themes", each with a stated objective. Further consultation led to the identification and prioritisation of items, listed under Strategic Focus, suggested to accomplish each of these objectives.

Working towards achieving each strategic objective will move the community closer to realising the Vision for Berry.

This section summarises:

- The seven Strategic Themes and the objective for each theme; and
- The six areas of Strategic Focus across all themes that the community identified as "very high priority".

All areas of Strategic Focus for each theme, including those of high and medium priority, are detailed later in this document. Plans are also provided at the end of this document which identify the location of many of the landmarks and project locations identified in this Plan.



Strategic Theme Summaries and Objectives

Theme 1 - Town Centre Improvements

Objective: To develop an inviting town centre that highlights Berry's atmosphere and appeal, providing a pleasurable experience for both residents and visitors.

Improving the town centre is particularly important to the community, being one of the key benefits or outcomes of the by-pass. Preparing a "Town Centre Improvement Plan" was the single highest priority at the community prioritisation event. This project should be undertaken in a way that incorporates other related areas of Strategic Focus across all Strategic Themes. In particular the community has identified as priorities the preserving of the heritage character of Berry and enhancing the concept of the "Town of Trees" by further landscaping and planned planting of trees.



Theme 2 - Infrastructure and Assets

Objective: To provide a high level of well maintained infrastructure appropriate to the needs of both the local community and visitors arriving at the gateway to the Shoalhaven.

Establishing and maintaining an appropriate level of infrastructure is also particularly important to the community. In particular preparing plans for cycle and walking paths in and around Berry and the planting of trees and landscaping are identified as very high priorities. This seems to capture the desire by the community for an accessible town that is well connected for both pedestrians and cyclists. Public car parking and toilets are priorities for many people, especially visitors. Roads, kerbs and guttering and telecommunications and banking are also priorities.



Theme 3 - Recreation, Community and Cultural Facilities

Objective: To build a strong and engaged community through the provision of quality sporting, leisure and cultural facilities and activities.

The importance of recreation, community and cultural facilities is expressed by the community's support of a large range of sporting, health and well-being captured in this Strategic Theme. The design and implementation of the Adventure Playground proposal is one of the very high priorities in the Strategic Plan. The planning of this playground should be incorporated into the planning for the District / North Street Park along with a number of other priorities such as a dog off leash area. Preserving, improving and making better use of existing facilities such as School of Arts, Museum, other public buildings, the Berry Pool and Berry Showground are priorities. Providing facilities and opportunities for Berry's youth and family friendly attractions and activities are seen as important. The provision of facilities such as a theatre, a library and a potential high school and developing the regional equestrian centre are all priorities in this theme.



Theme 4 - Town Planning

Objective: To maintain the history, setting and unique character of the Berry area through careful planning and development.

Town Planning is an important theme for many people. In particular, the preservation of the town's heritage character and "village feel" is one of the very high priorities in the Strategic Plan. This prioritisation of heritage character is echoed by heritage related priorities in other strategic themes. In addition to the built character, the protection of the "village feel", including the context of the town within the surrounding rural landscape, is important to many. Housing affordability was also identified as an important issue.



Theme 5 - Sustainability

Objective: To establish Berry as an environmentally aware community looking to adopt sustainable practices.

The Sustainability theme is important to many people. Advocating for improved recycling and green waste infrastructure is a very high priority for the community. There are a number of priorities such as encouraging and supporting local food production, becoming plastic bag free and encouraging renewable energy that will rely primarily on community support. However priorities such as the improvement of waterways and public transport will require government support.

Theme 6 - Tourism

Objective: To promote Berry as a tourist destination through the planned provision of a broad range of activities, experiences and information.

The town of Berry is very well known as a tourist destination, serving as the gateway to the Shoalhaven. The importance of the Tourism theme is evidenced by the priority given to ensuring that the town and the town entry is well presented. The importance of providing positive and memorable experiences for visitors will be enhanced by encouraging more activities and events as well as providing easy access to up-to-date information for visitors.

Theme 7 - Business and Employment

Objective: To strengthen the local economy by encouraging innovation and growth of the business and industry sector.

Creating successful businesses and employment opportunities is an important theme. It is mostly reliant on those involved to create strong connections between the local community, tourists and businesses. Exploring ideas such as a “Buy Local” card and establishing a creative or entrepreneurs' hub are seen as priorities. Encouraging a more diverse retail offering is also seen as important.



Very High Priority Strategic Focus Items

The following table summarises the six Strategic Focus items across all Strategic Themes that were given a very high priority ranking from the strategic planning process.

Strategic Focus	Description	Theme
Prepare a Town Centre Improvement Plan	Develop options for comprehensive changes to the way the town centre is used. Implementation to consider other Strategic Focus areas, as well as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ exploring traffic flow and vehicle access options ○ options for increasing pedestrian priority and connections ○ utilising more public art and creating lively spaces ○ opportunities for a town centre green space and/or formal town square ○ locations for additional seating and street furniture ○ tree planting and landscaping ○ potential for planters and heritage lighting 	1 - Town Centre Improvements
Prepare cycle and walking path priority plans	Build a connected and healthy community by planning and constructing cycle and walking paths: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ around the town centre and connecting the town centre to the surrounding residential areas ○ linking the areas close by, but outside the urban area, such as the Sport and Recreation Centre ○ accessing the beach and other areas outside the town, including the "Berry Estate Trails" project 	2 – Infrastructure and Assets
Undertake tree planting in the urban area to emphasise Berry as "The Town of Trees"	Prepare a Street Tree Master Plan to establish agreed street tree locations, species and priorities for implementation of a consistent "The Town of Trees" approach - with a view to marketing this as part of the town's identity.	2 – Infrastructure and Assets

Strategic Focus	Description	Theme
Design and implement the "Adventure Playground"	Undertake detailed design and implementation of the proposed Adventure Playground located on North Street. Actively promote it as a major lifestyle attraction for both residents and visitors.	3 - Recreation, Community and Cultural Facilities
Preserve the town's heritage character and "village feel"	Ensure that the town's planning controls and any proposed CBD developments retain existing character buildings and reflect the heritage appeal. This is approached from a planning and development consent perspective and should be viewed in addition to directions and actions to preserve heritage buildings (see Strategic Focus 3.2) and character improvements of existing buildings (see Strategic Focus 1.2).	4 - Town Planning
Advocate for improved recycling and green waste infrastructure	Advocate for Council to provide green waste bins as part of kerbside collection and to provide recycle bins in public places, leading to increased reuse and recycling of products rather than waste going to landfill.	5 - Sustainability



Strategic Focus Tables

Theme 1 - Town Centre Improvements

Objective: To develop an inviting town centre that highlights Berry's atmosphere and appeal, providing a pleasurable experience for both residents and visitors.

All strategic focus areas for this theme are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Town Centre Improvements

Strategic Focus	Description	Priority
1.1 - Prepare a Town Centre Improvement Plan	Develop options for comprehensive changes to the way the town centre is used. Implementation to consider other Strategic Focus areas, as well as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ exploring traffic flow and vehicle access options ○ options for increasing pedestrian priority and connections ○ utilising more public art and creating lively spaces ○ opportunities for a town centre green space and/or formal town square ○ locations for additional seating and street furniture ○ potential for planters and heritage lighting 	Very High
1.2 - Build upon Berry's reputation as a heritage town	Reinforce the heritage character of the town, by identifying strategies such as shop-front improvements and consistency in colours and signage. Co-ordinate with Town Planning Theme Strategic Focus 4.1.	High
1.3 - Upgrade Broughton Mall	Upgrade Broughton Mall to make it a more attractive place to gather and linger in addition to its function as a thoroughfare. Ensure co-ordination with Town Centre Improvement Plan (Strategic Focus 1.1)	Medium

Theme 2 - Infrastructure and Assets

Objective: To provide a high level of well maintained infrastructure appropriate to the needs of both the local community and visitors arriving at the gateway to the Shoalhaven

All strategic focus areas for this theme are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Infrastructure and Assets

Strategic Focus	Description	Priority
2.1 - Prepare cycle and walking path priority plans	Build a connected and healthy community by planning and constructing cycle and walking paths: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ around the town centre and connecting the town centre to the surrounding residential areas ○ linking the areas close by, but outside the urban area, such as the Sport and Recreation Centre ○ accessing the beach and other areas outside the town, including the “Berry Estate Trails” project 	Very High
2.2 - Undertake tree planting in the urban area to emphasise Berry as "The Town of Trees"	Prepare a Street Tree Master Plan to establish agreed street tree locations, species and priorities for implementation of a consistent “The Town of Trees” approach - with a view to marketing this as part of the town’s identity.	Very High
2.3 - Increase the availability of public car parking	Identify locations for provision of more car parking in and around the town, particularly for visitors, and including a dedicated long vehicle parking area.	High
2.4 - Increase availability of public toilets	Identify sites and provide additional public toilets in and around the town centre to meet the high demand for amenities.	High
2.5 - Roads, including kerb and gutter, asset planning	Establish and prioritise a publicly available database identifying where improvements to footpaths, kerb and guttering, road repair and maintenance are needed. Lobby and work with Council to develop a works program and a timetable for implementation.	High

Strategic Focus	Description	Priority
2.6 - Advocate for improved telecommunications and banking facilities	Identify town priorities for telecommunication and banking facilities and advocate for issues such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Establishing a free Wi-Fi hot spot ○ Improving banking infrastructure ○ Getting access to the National Broadband Network ○ Improved mobile coverage 	High



Theme 3 - Recreation, Community and Cultural Facilities

Objective: To build a strong and engaged community through the provision of quality sporting, leisure and cultural facilities and activities.

All strategic focus areas for this theme are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3: Recreation, Community and Cultural Facilities

Strategic Focus	Description	Priority
3.1 - Design and implement the "Adventure Playground"	Undertake detailed design and implementation of the proposed Adventure Playground located on North Street. Actively promote it as a major lifestyle attraction for both residents and visitors.	Very High
3.2 - Preserve and improve public buildings	Prepare a prioritised plan for preserving, maintaining, improving and making better use of Berry's heritage buildings including the School of Arts, Museum and others.	High
3.3 - Improve swimming pool facilities	Assess the facilities provided at Berry Pool and advocate for improvements. Investigate possible community access to the Sport and Recreation Centre's facilities.	High
3.4 - Provide facilities and opportunities for Berry's youth	Establish a plan to involve and provide for young people in the town, through infrastructure (such as a youth hub/centre), events and employment opportunities.	High
3.5 - Provide a town theatre or cinema	Investigate options and develop business plans to facilitate the introduction of a permanent or seasonal, indoor or outdoor theatre - potentially within the School of Arts or at the Showground.	Medium
3.6 - District Park (North Street) design and implementation	Advocate for Council to finalise the Berry District Park Master Plan (North Street) and to prioritise implementation of detailed design and construction (to be co-ordinated with Strategic Focus 3.1 above).	Medium
3.7 - Provide a suitable dog off leash area	Identify a new area for an appropriately fenced and designed off leash facility, preferably still on North Street, and lobby Council for its construction.	Medium

Strategic Focus	Description	Priority
3.8 - Undertake improvements to the Showground	Encourage greater use and integration of the Showground to the town centre – including playground upgrade, parking, improved maintenance and use for events. Investigate the need to renew and update the Berry Showground Plan of Management, now more than 10 years old.	Medium
3.9 - Promote family friendly attractions and activities	Identify, map and promote to both residents and visitors family friendly areas and activities, updating this information when necessary. Encourage and support additional venues and activities with family appeal.	Medium
3.10 - Investigate feasibility for provision of a high school in Berry	Investigating the feasibility of a high school to be established in the town to provide for the Berry population, as well as surrounding areas such as Shoalhaven Heads, Gerringong and Gerroa.	Medium
3.11- Improve provision of library service within the town	Investigate and advocate for improved services such as the provision of a small library service in conjunction with other town facilities (such as a visitor centre, public building or youth centre) or other more flexible community based arrangement.	Medium
3.12 - Develop the regional equestrian centre	Advocate for the implementation of plans for the regional Equestrian Centre of Excellence at the Schofields/Andersons Lane site and promote it to residents and visitors as a key sporting facility.	Medium

Theme 4 - Town Planning

Objective: To maintain the history, setting and unique character of the Berry area through careful planning and development.

All strategic focus areas for this theme are outlined in Table 4.

Table 4: Town Planning

Strategic Focus	Description	Priority
4.1 - Preserve the town's heritage character and "village feel".	Ensure that the town's planning controls and any proposed CBD developments retain existing character buildings and reflect the heritage appeal. This is approached from a planning and development consent perspective and should be viewed in addition to directions and actions to preserve heritage buildings (Strategic Focus 3.2) and character improvements of existing buildings (Strategic Focus 1.2).	Very High
4.2 - Define the edge of the town	Provide a distinct town edge that retains views to the escarpment to the north and minimises residential subdivisions and housing release at the rural interface.	High
4.3 - Explore ways to improve housing affordability into the future	Examine options for promoting improved housing affordability within the town whilst retaining key attributes of the town in terms of heritage retention (Strategic Focus 4.1) and definition of the town edge (Strategic Focus 4.2).	Medium
4.4 - Update planning controls	To acknowledge changes brought by the bypass and to ensure that the character both within and external to the town is retained and reinforced, review and update relevant planning controls and strategic documents to reflect the desired future of the town.	Medium



Theme 5 - Sustainability

Objective: To establish Berry as an environmentally aware community looking to adopt sustainable practices.

All strategic focus areas for this theme are outlined in Table 5.

Table 5: Sustainability

Strategic Focus	Description	Priority
5.1 - Advocate for improved recycling and green waste infrastructure	Advocate for Council to provide green waste bins as part of kerbside collection and to provide recycle bins in public places, leading to increased reuse and recycling of products rather than waste going to landfill.	Very high
5.2 - Encourage and support local food production	Encourage and promote local food production. Supporting strategies could include street planting of fruit trees, community gardens, farmers markets, a permanent fresh produce store, promotion of wineries and an eat local philosophy, etc.	High
5.3 - Improve waterways and riparian areas	Improve access between the town and its waterways as part of the paths and trails project (Strategic Focus 2.1). Raise awareness of the community's responsibility to these areas, promote and support the work of bush care, land care and park care groups, lobby council for control of weed infestations.	High
5.4 - Advocate for better public transport	Advocate for a range of public transport, such as retention of existing train services, bus or community transport, taxi services and carpooling.	High
5.5 - Become a plastic bag free town	Determine ways to measure the level of support in the community and from business owners for a plastic bag free town. Identify community members to build community support and to develop a plan for implementation.	Medium
5.6 - Encouraging renewable energy	In the short-term, and ultimately as a long-term plan for the town to be "carbon-neutral", take steps to encourage and act on opportunities to reduce the environmental footprint of the town in terms of energy use and carbon production, including for example electric car charging points.	Medium

Theme 6 - Tourism

Objective: To promote Berry as a tourist destination through the planned provision of a broad range of activities, experiences and information.

All strategic focus areas for this theme are outlined in Table 6.

Table 6: Tourism

Strategic Focus	Description	Priority
6.1 - Improve the appearance of the town entry	Working with Council and the Shoalhaven Tourism Board, promote Berry as "The Gateway to the Shoalhaven". Design, construct and landscape entrances to the town that reflect its importance in drawing tourists to Berry and the wider Shoalhaven area.	High
6.2 - Encourage more activities for tourists	Broaden the current focus on the town character, shopping and food by promoting a more diverse offering of activities, such as heritage / estate trails, walking and riding trails, street entertainers and night activities, etc. Encourage longer stays through the promotion of nearby attractions and local excursions.	High
6.3 - Undertake a comprehensive Berry Tourism Plan	Develop a Tourism Plan for the area to identify priorities and co-ordinate actions to ensure long-term success of the sector.	Medium
6.4 - Encourage more events	Centralise and promote a calendar of events on the Shoalhaven and Berry Tourism websites to support planning and to attract new events. Co-ordinate with Strategic Focus areas 6.2 and 6.3.	Medium
6.5 - Develop an improved range of tourist information	Provide quality, up-to-date information that reflects the importance of tourism to the Berry economy and supports sustained growth of the sector. This could include improved signage to and around the town, information boards, a tourist information centre, pamphlets / brochures, websites or applications.	Medium

Theme 7 - Business and Employment

Objective: To strengthen the local economy by encouraging innovation and growth of the business and industry sector.

All strategic focus areas for this theme are outlined in Table 7.

Table 7: Business and Employment

Strategic Focus	Description	Priority
7.1 - Provide for more employment opportunities	Continue to provide for employment for both young and old alike, likely to result from a strong tourism industry, expansion of employment land (along Creamery Lane for example), and through other business support mechanisms.	Medium
7.2 - Establish a “buy local” card	Encourage the local community to support local business, and for local business to recognise the value of the local community through establishing a “buy local” card or similar that promotes local spending and economic benefits within the area.	Medium
7.3 - Establish a creative or entrepreneurs hub	Create a central point for home businesses, entrepreneurs and those looking to build a long-term presence in the town to connect with those that are looking to collaborate, assist in developing new business opportunities and to provide a starting point for new ideas.	Medium
7.4 - Encouraging a more diverse retail offering	Where possible, encourage local business to provide for a greater range of retail offerings, including those aimed at local community.	Medium

Implementation

Interested in being involved?

The Berry Forum is the Community Consultative Body (CCB) that has been nominated by Shoalhaven City Council as its community liaison group. The Berry Forum will establish working groups to implement this Berry Community Strategic Plan and its outcomes. If you would like to be involved, there are many ways that you can help to implement the plans.

In the first instance, contact the Berry Forum - <http://berryforum.org.au/> who will be able to let you know who the key contacts for themes or strategic directions which may be of interest.

