

ARART RURAL CITY COUNCIL

Annual Plan

2026/2027



Ararat Rural City

1. Growing Our Place

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| 1.1 Develop a strategic land use planning framework with annual targets to support sustainable urban growth. | 1.1.1 Champion coordinated planning between housing development and major project delivery to support a well-timed, market-responsive supply pipeline. | 30/06/2027 |
| | 1.1.2 Position the municipality to attract investment in sustainable industries, including agribusiness, circular economy and tourism, to grow the local economy over the long term. | 30/06/2027 |
| | 1.1.3 Advance policy and strategic planning work to promote well-planned, thoughtful infill and townhouse-style housing that makes efficient use of existing infrastructure. | 30/06/2027 |
| 1.2 Support innovative housing models that work to overcome market failure and create the capacity to increase the population of Ararat Rural City. | 1.2.1 Advocate for investment in enabling infrastructure to unlock development-ready land and support housing and employment growth. | 30/06/2027 |
| | 1.2.2 Encourage and support the activation and adaptive reuse of underutilised land and buildings to deliver additional housing supply. | 30/06/2027 |
| | 1.2.3 Foster partnerships between developers and community organisations to deliver diverse, community-responsive housing solutions (MPHWP 4.3). | 30/06/2027 |
| 1.3 Work with other levels of government, business, educational institutions and not-for-for profits to develop programs to increase in-migration to Ararat Rural City to grow our population. | 1.3.1 Elevate Ararat as the leading destination for lifestyle and work-from-home movers by showcasing the Ararat Digital Hub & Co-Working Space to visitors and tourists | 30/06/2027 |
| | 1.3.2 Improve family liveability, local workforce participation and early childhood education outcomes in Lake Bolac by delivering a new childcare centre | Ongoing |
| | 1.3.3 Strengthen partnerships across local community, health, education, and State and Federal Governments to attract, expand and sustain migrant settlement capacity in Ararat Rural City | 30/06/2027 |

2. Building Robust Local Economies

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| 2.1 Partner with Federation University Australia to deliver the Ararat Jobs and Technology Precinct with a focus on engaging with local agribusiness, industry and community. | 2.1.1 Partner with Federation University, industry and government to develop and progress a strategic roadmap to expand the Precinct as a regional innovation hub. | 30/06/2027 |
| | 2.1.2 Activate the Precinct as a knowledge hub through delivery of a series of public research talks and events. | 30/06/2027 |
| | 2.1.3 Drive the expansion of TAFE course delivery at the Precinct to meet emerging regional skills needs and support local industry growth. | Ongoing |
| 2.2 Work with other levels of government, local business, and private investors to develop a business park within Ararat Rural City, focused on agricultural value adding and advanced manufacturing, potentially leveraging “behind the meter” power. | 2.2.1 Engage with Invest Victoria, Regional Development Victoria and private sector partners to develop plans for the ARCC Circular Economy Precinct. | Ongoing |
| | 2.2.2 Support Valorify P/L to develop a biogas plant in Ararat which uses straw as the major input. | Ongoing |
| | 2.2.3 Accelerate the evolution of the Ararat Renewable Energy Park into a regional hub for renewable and circular economy industries through targeted investment attraction and strategic partnerships. | Ongoing |
| 2.3 Engage with Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism and local businesses to improve the quality of experience and drive growth in high yield tourist outcomes. | 2.3.1 Collaborate with Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism to curate, package and promote Ararat Rural City’s unique visitor experiences to increase visitation, length of stay and visitor spend. | 30/06/2027 |
| | 2.3.2 Identify and implement targeted initiatives that increase visitation and visitor yield by analysing spending trends and market data. | 30/06/2027 |
| | 2.3.3 Enhance the attractiveness, accessibility and activation of town centres to improve visitor experiences, increase dwell time, and encourage local spending. | 30/06/2027 |

3. Preserving Our Environment

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| 3.1 Position Ararat Rural City Council as a prime mover in driving circular economy policy in waste management, including local processing and management of recyclables, and in use of renewable energy for Council purposes. | 3.1.1 Assess the feasibility and strategic value of becoming a sub-regional leader in the processing and management of recyclable materials. | 30/06/2027 |
| | 3.1.2 Explore opportunities to recover additional reusable and recyclable materials from the general waste stream to increase diversion from landfill. | 30/06/2027 |
| | 3.1.3 Pursue funding opportunities to install solar and battery systems across community facilities to strengthen disaster resilience and enhance sustainability. | 30/06/2027 |
| 3.2 Develop innovative energy solutions utilising locally produced waste. | 3.2.1 Investigate options to use municipal FOGO waste to generate energy for council facilities and reduce operating costs (Environmental Strategy 2024-34, 3.1, 3.3, 3.4). | 30/06/2027 |
| | 3.2.2 Identify and quantify high-volume waste streams that may be suitable for waste-to-energy solutions to attract commercial development opportunities (Environmental Strategy 2024-34, 3.3, 3.4). | 30/06/2027 |
| | 3.2.3 Advocate for greater policy confidence and support for renewable gas generation. | Ongoing |
| 3.3 Partner with local organisations and scientific experts to implement the Environment Strategy 2024-34, with a focus on circular economy, emissions reduction and sustainable management of Council assets. | 3.3.1 Review emergency management processes, policies and procedures with vulnerable community members to support adaptation and mitigation to climate change risks (Environmental Strategy 2024-34, 1.3 and Priority 2 of the Disability Action Plan Discussion Paper). | 30/06/2027 |
| | 3.3.2 Work with Ararat Landcare Group and other groups to increase canopy cover in urban streets (Environmental Strategy 1.3, 2.3). | 30/06/2027 |
| | 3.3.3 Investigate opportunities to embed the use of recycled and reused materials in the construction and maintenance of council assets (Environmental Strategy 2024-34, 3.3). | 30/06/2027 |

4. Developing and Maintaining Key Enabling Infrastructure

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| 4.1 Ensure that asset development and renewal during the planning period matches that identified in Council’s Asset Plan 2025-2035. | 4.1.1 Upgrade the pool surface at the Lake Bolac and Willaura swimming pools (Sport & Active Recreation Strategy: Action Plan, 1.3). | 30/11/2026 |
| | 4.1.2 Upgrade public amenities and increase the number of accessible facilities | 30/06/2027 |
| | 4.1.3 Deliver the Local Roads Data Reconciliation Project | 30/06/2027 |
| 4.2 Work directly with asset users to manage and develop new and existing assets. | 4.2.1 Partner with Grampians Community Health to progress plans and advocate for the A&J McDonald Community Centre Redevelopment (MPHWP, 3.3, Advocacy Priorities 2026). | Ongoing |
| | 4.2.2 Advocate for the delivery of priority projects identified in the Alexandra Sports Precinct Masterplan, including a new indoor sports facility and Olympic pool upgrade (Sport & Active Recreation Strategy: Action Plan, 1.2, 1.4, Advocacy Priorities 2026). | Ongoing |
| | 4.2.3 Reconvene the Rural Roads Group to identify strategically critical freight routes for future major upgrades (Asset Plan 25-34, 1.2) | 31/12/2026 |
| 4.3 Deliver infrastructure outcomes that support economic growth, are mindful of intergenerational equity and enhance community wellbeing and safety. These approaches will explore strategic use of debt to fund long-term assets and ensure Council’s financial sustainability. | 4.3.1 Deliver safety treatments and hazard removal on high-risk rural corridors (Road Safety Strategy, Goals 1 and 2). | 30/06/2027 |
| | 4.3.2 Improve safety at high-risk intersections and protect vulnerable road users in townships (Road Safety Strategy, Goals 3 and 4). | 30/06/2027 |
| | 4.3.3 Deliver the 2026/27 Capital Works Program | 30/06/2027 |

5. Enhancing Community Life

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| 5.1 Open up Council’s arts and culture assets to greater community participation, ownership and engagement in decision-making. | 5.1.1 Enhance and expand education outreach activities at Ararat Gallery TAMA to increase engagement, visitation and participation. | 30/06/2027 |
| | 5.1.2 Engage with community organisations and groups to identify opportunities to activate underutilised community spaces, such as the Gum San Great Hall. | 30/06/2027 |
| | 5.1.3 Strengthen regional promotion of major Ararat Town Hall events and Art Gallery TAMA exhibitions through Visit Grampians to maximise attendance and drive increased tourism and visitation. | 30/06/2027 |
| 5.2 Develop models of volunteering that recognise, support and properly utilise the skills that community volunteers bring to community life. | 5.2.1 Empower young people to shape their own futures and contribute to the future of the municipality through programs such as the YEAH Crew and through the Crazy Ideas College. | Ongoing |
| | 5.2.2 Strengthen social connection and inclusion by promoting and improving access to volunteering opportunities (MPHWP, Objective 1). | 30/06/2027 |
| | 5.2.3 Celebrate and acknowledge the contributions of volunteers to show our appreciation, foster community pride, and encourage greater participation in volunteering. | 30/06/2027 |
| 5.3 Partner with community groups, not-for-profits, and Traditional Owner organisations to develop Ararat Rural City into a more inclusive, welcoming, tolerant and diverse community. | 5.3.1 Partner with Traditional Owner organisations to support the development of First Nations–led enterprises, contributing to economic self-determination, shared regional prosperity, and advancing meaningful | Ongoing |
| | 5.3.2 Advocate for a Changing Places facility in Ararat (Disability Action Plan: Discussion Paper, immediate priority 1). | Ongoing |
| | 5.3.3 Deliver and support multicultural events and initiatives that strengthen inclusion, cross-cultural understanding, and stronger community connection. | 30/06/2027 |

6. Strong and Effective Governance

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| 6.1 Deliver responsible budget outcomes linked to strategy, that deliver value, innovation and rating fairness. | 6.1.1 Improve data accuracy and actionability through data cleansing to support cost-effective asset management and decision-making on future upgrades (Asset Plan, 2.1). | 31/12/2026 |
| | 6.1.2 Develop and implement a Smart Cities Strategy that delivers optimised services and cost efficiencies. | 31/03/2027 |
| | 6.1.3 Develop a ten-year plan for development and redevelopment of key community assets, including funding models and strategic approaches to advocacy (Asset Plan, 4.1). | 30/06/2027 |
| 6.2 Ensure appropriate risk management is applied to Council and organisational decisions. Council's internal function is applied to areas of perceived risk. | 6.2.1 Strengthen cyber security as a core strategic risk priority to support organisation resilience, data protection and business continuity. | 30/06/2027 |
| | 6.2.2 Assess priority Councils assets for climate change readiness, and identify adaptation actions to improve resilience safety and service continuity. | 30/06/2027 |
| | 6.2.3 Drive a strategic, risk-based approach to internal controls and planning, with a clear focus on high-risk areas to support robust oversight, accountability and long term organisation resilience. | 30/06/2027 |
| 6.3 Continuously improve Council's community engagement process and practices in line with deliberative engagement practices, while ensuring that Councillors' roles as elected community representatives are understood and reflected in decision-making. | 6.3.1 Develop digital and permit applications forms to provide more options for community to interact with Council at times and in ways that suit them. | 30/11/2026 |
| | 6.3.2 Convene a community asset forum to support evidence-based budget planning and align investment with community-identified needs and priorities (Asset Plan, 1.1). | 31/12/2026 |
| | 6.3.3 Explore innovative approaches to community engagement in planning new and upgraded public spaces to ensure user insight and everyday use are captured in the design. | 30/06/2027 |