

2010-2014

INDIGO
SHIRE
COUNCIL

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES' PLAN





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Why we need a Healthy Communities' Plan

Indigo Shire Council is serious about its responsibility to influence and create a range of healthy environments within the Shire. We accept that we cannot simply deal with illness or ill health after it appears when the environment in which people live or work gives them little or no choice or support. Instead, we must plan in advance to make informed decisions around social, economic and physical environments that directly affect the health and wellbeing of all communities.

To be a healthy community we must plan to keep people safe, well and capable of living a full life. We need to think about things such as access to health services, availability of housing, being able to get around the community, building opportunities to meet others socially, looking after our environment and having a job. We see good health as an important resource for everyday life, a positive concept that embraces not only a healthy lifestyle but also social and personal wellbeing.

Indigo Council recognises that good health is the responsibility of everyone. Our approach to maintaining a healthier community is multi faceted and involves a range of partnerships. It enables everyday people to increase control over and improve their own health.

All Councils in Victoria are required under legislation to prepare a four year *Municipal Public Health Plan*. This plan must outline what Councils are going to do to promote good health and prevent ill health in their communities. Indigo's plan sits alongside other health agencies' plans including those developed through the Indigo Health Consortium and the Upper Hume Primary Care Partnership (PCP), and has been written as a direct action from the *Council Plan 2010 to 2014*. It draws upon extensive community feedback that was gathered during consultations in the lead up to the *Council Plan* in early 2009. Under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*, our Healthy Communities' Plan is required to provide information about:

- What the Indigo Shire community looks like;
- How healthy we are and what health issues we face;
- What Council is going to do in the next four years to address these issues and improve our health;
- Who Council is going to work with to achieve better health outcomes; and
- How Council is going to monitor the performance of this plan.

The Indigo Shire *Healthy Communities' Plan* then is not just about responding to disease. Instead, it looks at the bigger picture of what is going on in our community that influences, or even contributes to, local health problems. By addressing these concerns through strategic planning, policy making and partnerships, we can build a stronger, healthier community into the future.





What our community looks like

We are rural

The Shire of Indigo is located in the north east of Victoria and is named after the Indigo Valley and Indigo Creek. It is predominantly rural in nature with supporting services spread throughout small towns. Indigo Shire was created in November 1994, following the amalgamation of the former districts of The United Shire of Beechworth, the Shire of Chiltern, the Shire of Rutherglen, and the Shire of Yackandandah.

The municipality includes the localities of Allans Flat, Baarmutha, Back Creek, Barnawartha, Beechworth, Bells Flat, Black Springs, Brimin, Browns Plains, Bruarong, Carlyle, Charleroi, Chiltern, Chiltern Valley, Christmastown, Cornishtown, Dugays Bridge, Gooramadda, Great Northern, Gundowring, Huon, Hurdle Flat, Indigo, Indigo Upper, Indigo Valley, Kergunyah, Kiewa, Lilliput, Norong, Norong Central, Osbornes Flat, Prentice North, Red Bluff, Reids Creek, Rutherglen, Sandy Creek, Silver Creek, Stanley, Tangambalanga, Wahgunyah, Woolshed, Wooragee. and



We are proud of the variety of land types the Shire offers for agricultural purposes, our small towns full of built heritage and natural settings, our rural living areas with rich and varied landscapes, and our recreation and tourist areas and facilities. Our economy is based on these features by value-adding to a range of local primary produce, including milk, cereals and grapes, as well as providing services to people, including tourism.

Over the last 15 years, Indigo has attracted a certain demographic that lives in the Shire but commutes to the larger centres of Albury- Wodonga and Wangaratta for work ¹. As a result, we now have a large proportion of young families in the area and have experienced relatively a steady average annual population growth rate since the 1980s. This pattern of growth in the presents a range of community development issues for the future of Indigo associated with service provision and adequate infrastructure planning.

We are spread out

Our Shire covers a vast geographical area of 2,016km². Although we are driven by this large locale, we have a relatively small rate base which provides some challenges for Council. The diverse landscape takes in a variety of environments including national parks and state forests, Lake Hume, historic gold mining areas, the Murray River and wineries. Indigo's setting is bounded by the Murray River in the north/west, the city of Wodonga to the north, Towong Shire to the north and east, and Alpine Shire to the south. To the south and south/west are the Rural City of Wangaratta and the Shire of Moira. Over 50 per cent of our people choose to live in the districts of Beechworth (4,183 people), Yackandandah (2,103 people), Rutherglen (2,502 people), Chiltern (1,063 people) and Tangambalanga/Kiewa (704 people).²



We are resilient

In the past few years, people living in the Indigo Shire have experienced dry autumns, prolonged periods of heat, devastating bushfires, severe storm damage, low water supplies and the fallout from the economic downturn. There have been serious implications of these events on the short, medium and long term health and wellbeing of communities especially those that were fire affected in fires in 2002/03, 2006/07 and 2009. Many people are still recovering financially and emotionally.

However, there is also a positive feeling of community that exists here; we have the potential to respond and get back on our feet. We feel connected to our community and know that we could get help from family, friends or neighbours if we needed it. We are more inclined to work as a volunteer, be involved in an organised community group, attend a community event and contribute to community decisions than our counterparts in other regional Victorian areas⁶.

We are a great place to visit

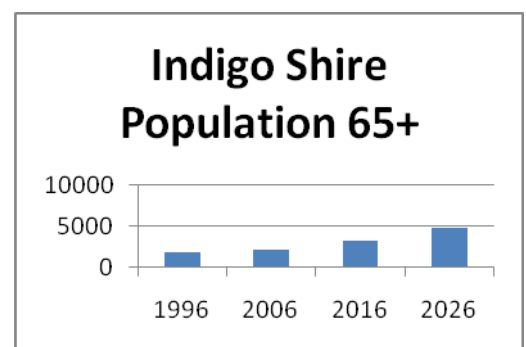
Our rich history, picturesque towns and wide range of festivals have enabled our Shire to build a strong cultural tourism focus. Our location, stretching from the Hume Weir in the east to the Ovens River in the west, with the Murray River forming much of our northern boundary, places us within the Legends Wine and High Country tourism region. Today we boast a marvellous range of natural and built heritage including the National Trust town of Beechworth, the century old streetscapes of Chiltern and Yackandandah, one of the country's newest national parks, the Chiltern Box Iron Bark National Park, the world renowned wine region centred on Rutherglen and a landscape setting equal to any in the state. We have a reputation as a provider of high-quality boutique food, wine, retail and accommodation services, and still manage to maintain a strong sense of local community.

Tourism is a major contributor to our economic, social and cultural wealth. Visitors spend around \$35.3 million per annum within the Shire, and our area attracts 1.3 million domestic overnight visitors per annum³. Directly, 417 people are employed full-time within the Indigo Shire's tourism industry and it is estimated indirect employment accounts for a further 1,500 jobs. The majority of visitors come from Melbourne, Albury/Wodonga and Southern NSW. They are more likely to take short trips with an average stay of three nights for Melbourne visitors, and less than three for visitors from Albury/Wodonga and southern NSW.

We are ageing

Indigo's population, like most parts of Australia, is ageing. Between 1996 and 2006, the numbers of people aged 65-and-over increased by 329, that is from 13.2% of the population in 1996 to 14.3% in 2006¹. This ageing trend is projected to continue, but at a higher rate as the baby boomers enter old age. Between 2006 and 2026 Indigo's population aged 65-and-over is projected to increase from 2,198 to 4,839. By 2026, 27.1% of the population is projected to be 65-and-over. The number of people aged over 85 is projected to double from 2006 (260 people) to 2026 (538 people) in our Shire⁴. These projections are consistent with other municipalities in our region.

This pattern will have a significant impact on the lifestyle and health of the Indigo population into the future. As a community, we will need to consider how we can plan ahead for the increasing challenges associated with an ageing population.





How healthy are we

Council understands that people's behaviours are shaped by their environment and, healthier environments ultimately lead to healthier behaviours. To find out how healthy we are in the Indigo Shire compared to the rest of Victoria, Council has looked at a range of statistical reports and data from the Department of Human Services (DHS), Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD), Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and Community Indicators Victoria (CIV). From this information, a broad community health profile has been built, and priorities have been established by understanding our key health trends. We are then able to make informed decisions about policies and programs that are based on the best local evidence.

Our strengths

- **We feel part of our community** – A higher percentage of people in Indigo feel valued by their community when compared with others in the region and state. The average community connection score for Australians is about 70⁶. Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with feeling part of the community and answers are presented according to a one to 100 range. People living in Indigo rate their satisfaction with feeling part of their community as 78.7. Over 76% of our residents feel they belong to an active community compared to 72% state wide⁵. We also have high rates of participation in volunteering, membership in organised groups and attendance at community events⁶.
- **We feel safe** - When walking alone at night, 85.2% of people in Indigo feel safe or very safe compared to 58.2% in Wodonga and a state average of 66.5%⁵. There are also fewer crimes committed in the Indigo Shire. The rate of crime against the person is 284 per 100,000 in the Indigo Shire compared to 818 in Victoria. The rate of crime against property is 1,718 per 100,000 in Indigo Shire and 5,358 in Victoria⁵. In 2007/08, there was a lower family violence incident call-out rate of 388 per 100,000 people in Indigo Shire compared to 603.8 for Victoria⁷.
- **We live comfortably** - The Indigo Shire is more advantaged in terms of socioeconomic disadvantage (SEIFA) than Victoria, ranking 7th on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is most disadvantaged⁸. In terms of 'Education and Occupation' disadvantage, the Indigo Shire is also ranked 7th on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is most disadvantaged. Towns in the Indigo Shire do not appear in the list of the 40 most disadvantaged post code areas⁸. Over 82% of our people said they could raise \$2000 in two days in an emergency compared to 70.8% in other regional Victorian areas⁶.
- **Our children are immunised** - Based on 2006 figures, the percentage of children aged 12 to 15 months who were fully immunised in Indigo was 91.3%. This was similar to the rates of metro Victoria and rural Victoria. Indigo was ranked 45 out of 78 local government areas (LGAs) on the percentage of children immunised in this age group. A rank of 1 was assigned to the area with the highest percentage of children fully immunised⁹.
- **Our children go to kindergarten** - Attendance at a quality preschool program is considered to have a number of benefits for children, including better intellectual development and independence, sociability and concentration, cognitive development in the short term, and preparation for success in school. Indigo preschools have enrolments of 93.2% of the population compared to 92.7% in rural Victoria⁹.



- We lead the way in breastfeeding rates** - Based on the 2005/06 figures, the percentage of infants fully breastfed at 3 months in Indigo (70.8%) was more than the percentage fully breastfed at 3 months in metropolitan Victoria (51.7%) and more than the percentage fully breastfed at 3 months in rural Victoria (52.2%). Indigo was ranked 3 out of 78 local government areas on the percentage of infants fully breastfed at 3 months and 3 for the percentage of infants fully breastfed at 6 months. A rank of 1 was assigned to the area with the highest percentage of infants fully breastfed⁹. Recently this figure has dropped slightly with 2007/08 records showing that the percentage of 3 month old infants fully breastfed at 62.1%¹⁰.
- We enjoy a good work/life balance** - More residents in Indigo (63.2%) feel they had a good balance of work and family than the Victorian average of 53.0%. They disagree that their work and family life often interferes with each other⁵.
- We are employed** – Indigo’s employment rate sits at 96.4% compared to the state average of 94.6%². Over 15% of our people are employed in the manufacturing industry followed by nearly 13% in health care and social assistance and 11% in agriculture and forestry¹². Given the fickle nature of the manufacturing industry, these employment figures can change significantly in times of economic stress. Currently, the Indigo Shire enjoys one of the lowest unemployment rates in rural Australia. Yet, such high employment rates can also cause enormous strain on the availability of local skilled and unskilled labour.
- We embrace diversity** – People living in Indigo agree that it is a good thing for a society to be made up of people from different cultures. Over 90% of our residents embrace cultural diversity compared with 82.9% in the Hume Region⁵. However, our community is largely made up of people born in Australia who speak only English. As at the 2006 Census, 23.9% of Australia’s total population and 23.8% of the population of Victoria were overseas-born. This compares to just 7.8% of people in the Indigo Shire being overseas-born². Of those 7.7% of overseas-born Indigo residents, 82% of them speak only English. This compares to 40.7% of overseas-born people Victoria-wide².
- We have a healthy environment** – People living in the Indigo Shire generally enjoy a pleasant physical environment with good to very good air quality and visibility. Days where there are events such as bushfires and dust storms can significantly affect the quality of the air however. The quality of the drinking water in Indigo is also generally very good. Stream conditions in the Shire have been assessed in the past as high quality with parts of the Kiewa River and Hodgson’s Creek considered as excellent¹.





Our challenges

- **We are living longer and getting older** – Between 1996 and 2006, life expectancy at birth for Victorians increased significantly, by 2 to 4 years, for both males and females, regardless of socioeconomic status. In rural Victoria, for both males and females, life expectancy is significantly lower than the state estimate. In fact, life expectancy for males living in the Indigo Shire (75.5 years) is significantly below the state of average of 79.3 years. Life expectancy for females in the Indigo Shire (84.3 years) is not significantly different to the state average of 84.0 years¹³.

In 2006, the median age for persons living in the Indigo Shire was 42 years compared with 37 years for Victoria². While longevity is generally viewed in a positive light, it also brings with it increased rates of chronic disease and the health and wellbeing challenges associated with an ageing population.

- **We are concerned about our health** - In 2007, 53.6% of persons living within the Indigo Shire reported that their health was either excellent or very good⁵. This was below both the regional and state averages of 54.3%.
- **We have high incidence of some diseases** – The Victorian Burden of Disease Study found that rural communities in Victoria have a lower health status than metropolitan areas. People living in rural Victoria have higher rates of disease burden due to cardiovascular disease, cancer, neurological and sense disorders, chronic respiratory diseases, musculoskeletal diseases and injuries¹⁴. These are often referred to as chronic diseases. In 2007-08, over half of the total number of hospital admissions was for diabetes complications¹⁵. Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and congestive cardiac failure were the second and third highest causes of admissions.

'Rurality'— living in a rural or remote location - also creates a higher risk of suicide. Suicide rates for males in rural and remote communities have increased steadily over the past 20 years, with rates for young males consistently higher in small rural communities than in metropolitan and regional areas. Rural Australia, in fact, has one of the highest rates of youth suicide in the world. Rural people are twice-as-likely to die or suffer injuries as a result of road trauma, suicide and drowning than city people¹⁶.

- **We should be more active** - In our region, 35% of males and 39% of females fail to meet the physical activity guidelines set out by the Department of Health and Aged Care¹¹. These percentages, while lower than the state average, are linked closely to levels of healthy weight. Evidence indicates that 35% of adults in our region are overweight and 19% are obese¹¹. Regular exercise protects against heart disease and, by limiting obesity, reduces the onset of diabetes. It promotes a sense of wellbeing and protects older people from depression. Furthermore, only 76.1% of people in Indigo say they have easy access to recreation and leisure facilities compared to 91% in Wodonga and 78.5% in the Hume Region⁶.
- **We are still smoking** – Smoking patterns in Indigo reveal that approximately 1 in 5 (19.7%) males are current smokers and 18% of females are smoking daily or occasionally¹¹. While these figures are similar to the rest of Victoria, we need to address smoking as the main cause, or a significant cause, of many diseases including cancer and cardiovascular disease.



- Our men are more likely to binge drink** – Survey results from 2007 show that the rate of alcohol consumption on a weekly basis, at a level for short-term risk of harm, was significantly higher for males (17.6%) from the region than the rate for females (5.4%). The percentage of male drinkers was higher than the state average of 13.8% while the percentage of female drinkers was lower (6.6%). Females (22%) from the region were significantly more likely than males (12%) to be abstainers (never/no longer consume alcohol)¹¹.
- We do not eat enough fruit and vegetables** - In 2007, only 51% of females and 33% of males in the Hume Region met the dietary guidelines for fruit of 2 or more serves per day. Worse still, only 12% of females and 5% of males met the recommended vegetable intake of 5 or more servings per day. These percentages were lower than the state average. Out of our children, 23.5% of 3.5 year olds were considered overweight or obese which is consistent with Victoria. In 2006, over one third (35%) of adults in our region were considered overweight and 20% were obese¹¹. Local community data from 2008 identified access to healthy eating venues and ideas as a main concern for local residents.
- We are more likely to have oral health problems** - Children who live in rural and regional areas in Victoria are more likely than those living in metropolitan areas to have had toothache, a filling, dental treatment in hospital under general anaesthetic or a tooth extracted because of a dental problem¹⁷. As there are no dentists or dental services in our Shire, this risk is increased. Fluoridated drinking water helps provide protection against tooth decay. The extension of water fluoridation is a key strategy to reduce the burden of chronic disease and to close a critical gap in the dental health of children living in rural Victoria. While much of rural Victoria has a fluoridated water supply, our Shire remains not fluoridated in many parts¹⁸. Towns with fluoridated water use Wodonga reservoirs. These include Chiltern, Barnawartha, Kiewa and Tangambalanga.
- We find it difficult to recruit and retain GP's** - The Rural Doctors Association of Victoria warns that there is a major crisis in progress in rural Victoria¹⁹. For some time now it has been recognised that there is a mal-distribution of GPs, favouring metropolitan areas and disadvantaging country areas²⁰. Towns are losing resident doctors and conditions can be particularly difficult for GPs in towns without hospitals caring for acutely ill patients as in our Shire. In Victoria, the core group of trained and experienced rural GPs is ageing into retirement, with an average age over 50. Present conditions do not encourage recruitment from Victorian Regional GP Training Programs and as a result Australian trained doctors are not entering rural practices in significant numbers¹⁹.





- **Women can be disadvantaged** – Despite women making up over 60% of the people in the Indigo Shire holding a diploma, degree or higher, they earn significantly less than men. The March 2008 Poverty Line for a single person was \$378 per week. More than half of Indigo Shire women (52%) had a gross individual income of below \$400 in 2006 compared to 33% of men. Of people in Indigo Shire earning more than \$1,000 per week, 68% are male⁷.
- **Young people don't stay in our Shire** – Only 9.6% of our total population is made up of young people aged 15 to 24 years². The percentage of young people has steadily declined since the 1980s. School leavers are not as engaged as those from other localities⁵. Indigo has 17.1% of school leavers disengaged from work or non-school study which is higher than Victoria (15.4%) and higher than Wodonga at 16.1%. We lose our young people to Albury-Wodonga, Wangaratta and metropolitan areas¹.
- **We lack control over work** - Job security in our Shire in manufacturing, tourism, retail and construction industries has decreased due to the current economic climate and as a consequence of the bushfires in early 2009²¹. Job insecurity impacts on mental health, self-reported ill-health, heart disease and risk factors for heart disease.
- **We find it difficult to access services** - Despite the Indigo Shire having an ARIA (Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia) or remoteness score of 1.3 indicating it is 'Highly Accessible' with relatively unrestricted accessibility to a wide range of goods and services and opportunities for social interaction, there is a lack of adequate infrastructure⁷. Of particular concern is the lack of broadband and mobile coverage in many areas, the lack of suitable public meeting spaces, the scarcity of suitably developed industrial land and the need to upgrade many local sporting and recreational facilities⁶. In Indigo in 2007, 46.7% of people lived in houses that had home internet access via a broadband connection compared to the state average of 61.1%⁵. Lack of information about relevant health and support services available across the Shire, especially for newcomers, was identified as a major concern for residents in 2008 consultations for the Indigo Shire *Council Plan 2009-2012*.
- **We find it difficult to get around** – More people in Indigo experience transport limitations than their Victorian counterparts. Over 28% of people here were restricted in their day-to-day travel in the previous 12 months compared to 20.2% state wide⁵. Local community data from 2008 identified transport connections between towns as a key issue for the Shire.
- **Our climate is changing** – The future climate of our region is expected to be hotter and drier than it is at present. Droughts are likely to increase in frequency by between 10% and 60% by 2070 depending on our rate of emissions. According to DSE data, our Shire is also likely to experience an increase in fire danger and the number of 'extreme' fire danger days will generally increase by between 5% and 40% by 2020²². This will impact on the agricultural landscape of the region and the health of particularly vulnerable groups within our Shire¹. Access to water will also continue to be a major issue.



How we can plan for a healthy future

Health plans were once thought to be only about providing medical care when ill health arose. While this is important, it is only part of the story. Paying attention to the other factors that influence health can help avoid the need for such care. We now know that people's lifestyles and the conditions in which they live and work strongly influence health. We know that a healthy environment is important for the production of quality and healthy food products. We also know that, along with poor economic circumstances, the social meaning of being poor, unemployed or socially excluded can be harmful to our health. As people, from early childhood onwards, we need to feel valued and appreciated. We need friends, we need to feel useful and we need meaningful work. Without these, we become more prone to depression, drug use, anxiety, hostility and feelings of hopelessness, which all impact on our physical health. We know that by tackling some of these issues and planning ahead for good health, this plan will not only improve health and wellbeing in our Shire, but will also address a range of other social problems that flourish alongside ill health.

We follow good models

To plan for this, we follow the social model of health as outlined by the World Health Organisation. Our *Healthy Communities' Plan* is based on the following beliefs.

- People who are poor and socially excluded are at greater risk of health problems: Our plan embraces those who are poor and discriminated against.
- Stressful circumstances make people feel worried, anxious and unable to cope, damaging their health: Our plan supports programs and initiatives that promote good mental health.
- A good start in life means supporting mothers and young children: Our plan promotes positive environments for early childhood.
- People who have more control over their work have better health: Our plan considers healthy workplaces.
- Unemployment puts health at risk: Our plan supports projects that increase job security and job satisfaction.
- Belonging to a social network makes people feel cared for and improves their health: Our plan encourages the building of social networks within the community.
- Alcohol dependence, illicit drug use and cigarette smoking lead to health problems: Our plan addresses the social circumstances that generate drug use.
- Protection from public health risks improves our sense of wellbeing and wellness: Our plan considers healthy environments and the need to address public health issues.
- A good diet and adequate food supply are central for promoting health and wellbeing: Our plan advocates for ways of providing healthy food for all.
- Healthy transport means less driving and more walking and cycling, and better public transport: Our plan considers healthier ways to get around the Shire.

The key actions of the Ottawa Charter further support Indigo's approach to healthy communities. The *Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion* is a 1986 document launched at the first international conference for health promotion held in Ottawa, Canada. It calls on the World Health Organisation and other organisations to advocate for the promotion of health by enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health. Indigo Shire Council is committed to the five action areas identified by the charter: building healthy public policy, creating supportive environments, strengthening community actions, developing personal skills and reorienting health services.



We partner with others

The key to successful planning is understanding what issues need to be considered by asking the right questions to the right groups that may experience health and wellbeing inequalities. In recent times, we have used a number of forums to ask our communities about their issues and concerns and health priorities for the future. We will continue to partner with our communities to further understand and address these priorities over the next four years.

Indigo Shire Council, together with the other key providers of health within our Shire; Indigo North Health, Beechworth Health Services and Yackandandah Bush Nursing Hospital; are part of the Indigo Health Consortium and have been working together over the last three years on a range of activities including early years planning, health promotion and planned activity groups.

We will partner with other organisations to put into action our *Healthy Communities' Plan*. These include:

- Albury Wodonga Health
- Gateway Community Health
- Upper Hume Primary Care Partnership
- Regional GP Network
- Upper Murray Family Care
- Department of Human Services/Health

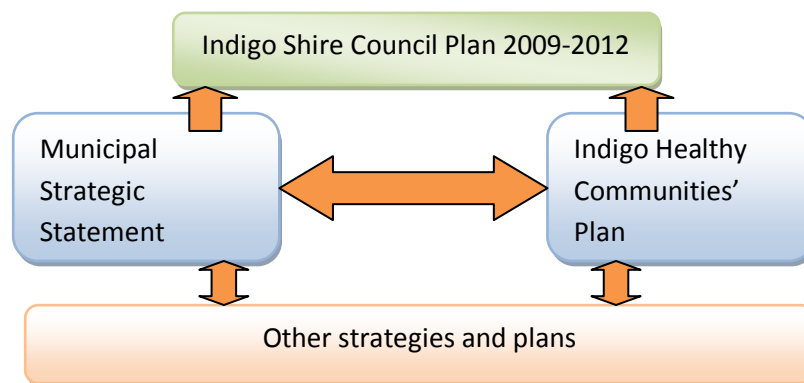
We have also worked with neighbouring Shires, Wodonga Council and Towong Shire Council, to develop an agreed framework that helps us to work together with a common purpose and shared commitment to positive health outcomes for our communities. Our approach towards planning and service delivery allows Council to work in a leadership role and/or a delivery role.

This plan has clear links with other health agencies' plans including those developed through the Indigo Health Consortium and the Upper Hume Primary Care Partnership (PCP). This means that we all speak the same language and share the same vision so that health initiatives can be rolled out across the Shire in a coordinated and meaningful way.

We identify key priorities

Enjoying good health and wellbeing is not just good luck; it involves long term planning and community consultation to find practical solutions to local health issues.

In the past, we have used a number of public plans to outline our commitment to health and wellbeing. The Indigo Shire Council now will use this *Healthy Communities' Plan* in conjunction with the *Municipal Strategic Statement* and the *Council Plan 2009 to 2013* to set priorities and identify key strategies to plan for better health outcomes into the future. In this way, we can capture all 'action areas' that will impact directly or indirectly on health and wellbeing in the one health plan.





Other strategies that have informed our health priorities include the *Healthy Children and Families Plan, Rural Land Use Strategy, Road Management Plan, Strategic Bicycle Plan, Recreation Plan, Communication and Engagement Strategy, Waste Management Strategy, Disability Action Plan, Playground Strategy, Tree Management Strategy, Economic Development Action Plan, Tourism Strategy, Environment Strategy, Stormwater Management Strategy, Greenhouse Action Plan* and *Emergency Management Plan*.

We think ahead

As a Council, we know that we can directly influence the health and wellbeing of our community by planning and thinking ahead. We can do this by considering:

- Altering our surroundings through buildings, parks and facilities, roads, paths and other infrastructure. This is planning ahead for **healthy spaces and places**;
- Creating opportunities for people to get involved in their community. This is planning ahead for **healthy neighbourhoods**;
- Looking after our way of life so that it continues to nurture us. This is planning ahead for **healthy lifestyles**;
- Increasing ways to access what we have to offer. This is the planning ahead for **healthy services and supports**; and
- Providing opportunities for job creation, training and mentoring. This is planning ahead for **healthy economies**.

Given the diversity of our community, it is important that we have a good understanding of our needs and strengths now so we can move into the future. Indigo Council's *Municipal Strategic Statement* clearly outlines plans for a Shire intrinsically linked to the health and wellbeing of its communities. It foresees a Shire that:

- Offers residents a high level of health and safety, resilience and connectedness to their communities;
- Promotes governance, decision-making processes and management that reflect the needs, aspirations and expectations of our community;
- Offers a strategic and sustainable long-term land use direction based on an integrated approach to the natural and built environment;
- Expands long-term employment and economic opportunities whilst continuing to maintain and promote our environment; and
- Provides a place of attraction by integrating sustainable natural resource management into all of our activities.

To ensure Indigo's *Healthy Communities' Plan* remains relevant and meets the changing needs of our community, indicators which identify the success of the plan will be established at the beginning of the planning period. An implementation committee will be formed to monitor and review the plan on behalf of Council. This will be made up of both service providers and community members.

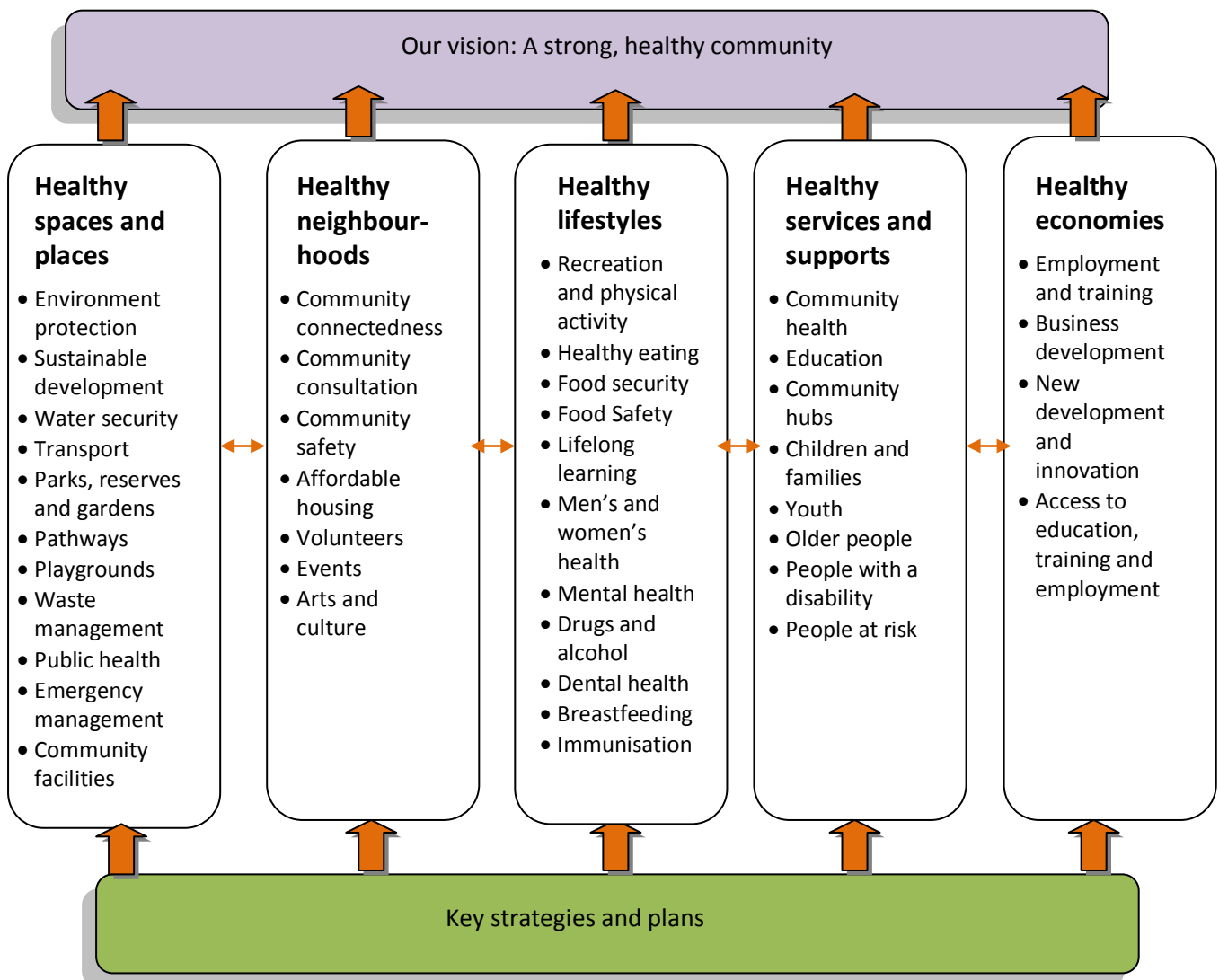


What we are going to do

To promote a healthy community across the Indigo Shire means planning for action. Our action plan is framed by five key factors. Together, these factors combine to uphold our vision of a strong, healthy community. Each addresses different aspects that affect the health of people in our Shire.

- Healthy spaces and places
- Healthy neighbourhoods
- Healthy lifestyles
- Healthy supports and services
- Healthy economies

By looking closely at each factor and considering our strengths, challenges and government health priorities, we can plan actions to improve Indigo's public health status over the next four years.





Factor 1: Healthy spaces and places

Why we need healthy spaces and places

We know that healthy communities are shaped by the environments in which people live. How we plan our buildings, parks, facilities, roads and pathways impacts on the way we participate in our community and affects our health and wellbeing. Where we live forms the backdrop to our lives, so it is important that, as a Council, we plan ahead for healthy spaces and places.

What we will do in the next four years

Key priorities

1. Increase transport options
2. Improve access-to and use-of public spaces
3. Upgrade sports and leisure facilities
4. Plan for climate change



Key priorities	Existing plans and strategies	Actions
Increase transport options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Strategic Bike Path Plan • Cycle Tourism Strategy • Council Recreation Plan • North East Transport Connections Project Action Plan • Council Healthy Children and Families Plan • Cross Indigo Integrated Health Promotion Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the North East Transport Connections Project to develop innovative approaches to improving local transport • Implement the priorities from the Strategic Bike Path Plan and Cycle Tourism Strategy • Support the Indigo bicycle reference group • Continue involvement in Murray to Mountains Rail Trail and High Country Rail Trail projects • Advocate for improved public transport networks • Maintain and develop walking tracks, bike paths and footpaths which connect communities as well as within communities • Work with community organisations to develop an equitable approach to community transport across the Shire • Support Beechworth Health Service to further develop their Active Transport Program
Improve access-to and use-of public spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Playground Strategy • Council Recreation Plan • Council Healthy Children and Families Plan • Council Footpath Strategy • Cross Indigo Integrated Health Promotion Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement recommendations from the Playground Strategy • Maintain and renew footpaths • Maintain a 'green park' in each of our communities • Consider the Cancer Council Victoria Shade Policy Framework for local government and implement appropriate elements • Promote the use of public spaces to the community • Promote access to sustainable and locally provided physical activity options



Key priorities	Existing plans and strategies	Actions
Upgrade sports and leisure facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Recreation Plan • Cross Indigo Integrated Health Promotion Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide appropriate infrastructure to support physical activity equitably across the Indigo Shire • Maintain and enhance public meeting places in Tangambalanga, Beechworth, Yackandandah, Stanley and Bruarong • Implement recreation capital works as approved • Maintain and upgrade municipal pools in Rutherglen, Tangambalanga, Yackandandah, Chiltern and Beechworth • Provide support to volunteer committees of management for recreational reserve facilities
Plan for climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Environment Strategy • Council Heatwave Plan • Council Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP) • Municipal Strategic Statement • Indigo Sustainable Water Use Plan • Hume Sustainable Communities Strategy • Cross Indigo Integrated Health Promotion Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Councils and groups in our region as a member of the North East Greenhouse Alliance to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change • Support the work of the Indigo Environment Advisory Committee • Implement climate change strategies from Council's Environment Strategy • Implement actions from Council's Heatwave Plan • Reduce Council's carbon footprint by reviewing fleet management practices; sustainable use of utilities; green purchasing and general resource management • Investigate partnering with other Councils to roll out alternative solar power technology • Respond to climate change events in the MEMP • Work with local water authorities and neighbouring Shires to support the Low Water Future Project • Audit all outdoor play areas to ensure they are climate appropriate with shade sails and taps • Continue to implement the Indigo Sustainable Water Use Plan to achieve a 20% reduction in water consumption from 2000-01 base year levels by 2015 • Establish sustainability principles for implementation of sustainable building design (including new buildings) and lifestyle practices • Support Beechworth Health Service in their work with local primary schools to promote environmental physical activities • Support Beechworth Health Service's roll out of Cool Relief Centres in Indigo Shire



Factor 2: Healthy neighbourhoods

Why we need healthy neighbourhoods

People have a sense of wellbeing if they are connected to others in their community and feel like they belong. We need to feel safe, work in a meaningful way, earn enough money to live, feel valued and have time to spend with others. By planning ahead, Council can create opportunities for people to actively participate in community life.

What we will do in the next four years

Key priorities

1. Enhance the feeling of community connectedness
2. Value cultural diversity including ethnicity and lifestyles
3. Build social networks



Key priorities	Existing plans and strategies	Actions
Enhance the feeling of community connectedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Plan • Council Healthy Children and Families Plan • Cross Indigo Integrated Health Promotion Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and support community strengthening projects across 12 townships • Host community forums every month • Keep the community informed using the Indigo Informer newsletter, town information boards and a range of media that are appropriate and accessible • Support the provision of planned activity groups • Manage the youth centre in Beechworth • Support various activities at neighbourhood centres • Plan ahead using service planning processes that seek to identify and reflect community needs • Support Beechworth Health Service's role in connecting fire affected communities
Value cultural diversity including ethnicity and lifestyles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Access and Inclusion Plan • Council Arts Strategic Plan • Council Tourism Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support events and festivals that appeal to a diverse range of people within the community • Provide opportunities for people with diverse abilities and from different cultural backgrounds to fully participate-in and contribute-to their communities through community strengthening projects
Build social networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Healthy Children and Families Plan • Council Youth Strategy • Cross Indigo Integrated Health Promotion Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide social activities and venues which enable people to connect and which are inexpensive and child friendly • Support community centres in community projects • Support the Men's Shed at Chiltern • Provide opportunities for volunteering through advisory committees, volunteer services • Support volunteering through community grants program • Increase the ability of service providers and community members to identify and respond appropriately to those who are most vulnerable to social isolation • Support Beechworth Health Service's role in building social networks in fire affected communities • Promote use of phone trees for vulnerable community members on Code Red days



Factor 3: Healthy lifestyles

Why we need healthy lifestyles

A healthy community supports healthy choices and a healthy lifestyle. By eating well, participating in physical activity and exercising our brains, we can live longer, feel better about ourselves and strengthen our links within the community. Council has an important role in planning for opportunities that support healthy lifestyles for all community members.

What we will do in the next four years

Key priorities

1. Promote regular exercise
2. Encourage healthy eating
3. Improve oral health
4. Promote good mental health
5. Address smoking/alcohol abuse as major contributors to poor health



Key priorities	Existing plans and strategies	Actions
Promote regular exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Recreation Plan • Council Bicycle Strategy • Council Healthy Children and Families Plan • Cross Indigo Integrated Health Promotion Plan • PCP Integrated Health Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and improve pathways and trails • Provide a range of recreation facilities across the Shire • Support sporting organisations through committees of management • Support health agencies in health promotion initiatives around healthy exercise such as the Active Transport Project
Encourage healthy eating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Healthy Children and Families Plan • Cross Indigo Integrated Health Promotion Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support healthy eating outlets • Support breastfeeding initiatives through MCH • Support health agencies in health promotion initiatives around healthy eating eg. Start Right Eat Right program • Continue Council's role in food premises inspections • Promote Farmers' Markets and local produce
Improve oral health		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for increased dental health services in the Shire • Deliver community education around oral health through Council's MCH service • Continue to support Smiles for Miles Project in preschools.
Promote good mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Youth Strategy • PCP Integrated Health Promotion Plan • Cross Indigo Integrated Health Promotion Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide incidental access to information around mental health in family oriented public venues across the Shire • Promote the Council staff health and wellbeing program • Encourage integrated mental health team representation on the community recovery committee • Offer post natal depression assessments and referrals through Council's maternal child health service • Support health services' work re fire affected communities
Address smoking as a major contributor to poor health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PCP Integrated Health Promotion Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide incidental access to information around smoking in family oriented public venues across the Shire • Offer referrals to the QUIT program through Council's maternal child health service • Partner with VicHealth to deliver drug and alcohol free FReeZA events



Factor 4: Healthy services and supports

Why we need healthy services and supports

We know that to be a healthy community, we need access to a range of health and community services. By building partnerships with other organisations and thinking about ways to improve pathways into our own services, Council can plan for healthier outcomes across the Shire.

What we will do in the next four years

Key priorities

1. Plan for our ageing population
2. Improve access to health services
3. Support services for children and families



Key priorities	Existing plans and strategies	Actions
Plan for our ageing population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Ageing Strategy • Council Heatwave Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update Council Ageing Strategy • Deliver home support services to eligible residents • Develop and update senior registers • Provide messages to the elderly about health care during a heatwave • Support Primary Care Partnership initiatives around the aged
Improve access to health services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Plan • Council Healthy Children and Families Plan • Council Access and inclusion Plan • Cross Indigo Integrated Health Promotion Plan • Indigo North Health Strategic Plan • Upper Hume Primary Care Partnership Health Promotion Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the Primary Care Partnership to review existing service providers to secure integrated health services into the future • Source and provide the community with clear information about health services available in the Shire • Partner with the Indigo Health Consortium to enhance the health of the community through the principles of equity, person-centred care and community engagement • Offer referrals to health services through Maternal Child Health and Home and Community Care services as required • Provide and support community transport services • Advocate for access to bulk billing medical provision in all communities • Lobby government for appropriate provision and access to health services in all our communities
Support services for children and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Plan • Council Healthy Children and Families Plan • Council Recreation Plan • National Immunisation Schedule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and promote immunisation programs • Support and promote accessible, affordable and flexible child care options across the Shire • Support breastfeeding friendly practices and programs • Promote key age stage visits • Provide the community with information about child friendly places • Support the Early Years Service Provider Network • Investigate employment of a children's services officer



Factor 5: Healthy Economies

Why we need a healthy economy

A healthy economy contributes to our health and wellbeing by providing opportunities for us to develop new skills, work or be involved in the community, have enough money to participate in life and have access to goods and services locally. We know that to build a healthy economy Council must encourage economic development through job creation, training, mentoring and providing concessions and rebates for people on low incomes.

What we will do in the next four years

Key priorities

1. Recruit and retain health professionals
2. Create employment opportunities for youth
3. Increase training opportunities for women
4. Improve job security
5. Attract new businesses with a healthy focus



Key priorities	Existing plans and strategies	Actions
Recruit and retain health professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigo North Health Strategic Plan • Beechworth Health Service Strategic Directions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote a culture of research and learning • Partner with health services and division of general practice to lobby government for more health professionals in the Shire
Create employment opportunities for youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Youth Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate targeted measures to retain and attract young people to the Shire • Support the development of the i86 Youth Action Committee • Discuss employment opportunities for youth with i86 Youth Action Committee members
Increase training opportunities for women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide access to specific training and development for women through Council's centralised training program • Continue to support leadership programs for women • Support business development activities for women implemented by Business Professional Women groups
Improve job security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Economic Development Action Plan • Council Tourism Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify economic development opportunities and threats in the Shire • Ascertain the key drivers to maximise the retention of existing small businesses • Engage and liaise with the agricultural, viticultural and horticultural sector within the region to enhance their viability into the future • Develop strategies to assist large scale agricultural and business employers in retaining employees
Attract new businesses with a healthy focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Economic Development Action Plan • Council Tourism Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish appropriate business incentive programs to entice new small business to the Indigo Shire • Work directly with existing tourism and Chamber of Commerce groups to attract new businesses • Identify innovative forms of businesses with a healthy focus



How we plan to keep on track

Indigo Shire Council has followed an action planning model in the development of the *Healthy Communities' Plan*. This framework has kept the project on track and encouraged a continuous cycle of planning, consultation and evaluation. Future reviews of the *Healthy Communities' Plan* will use this model to guide evaluative processes.

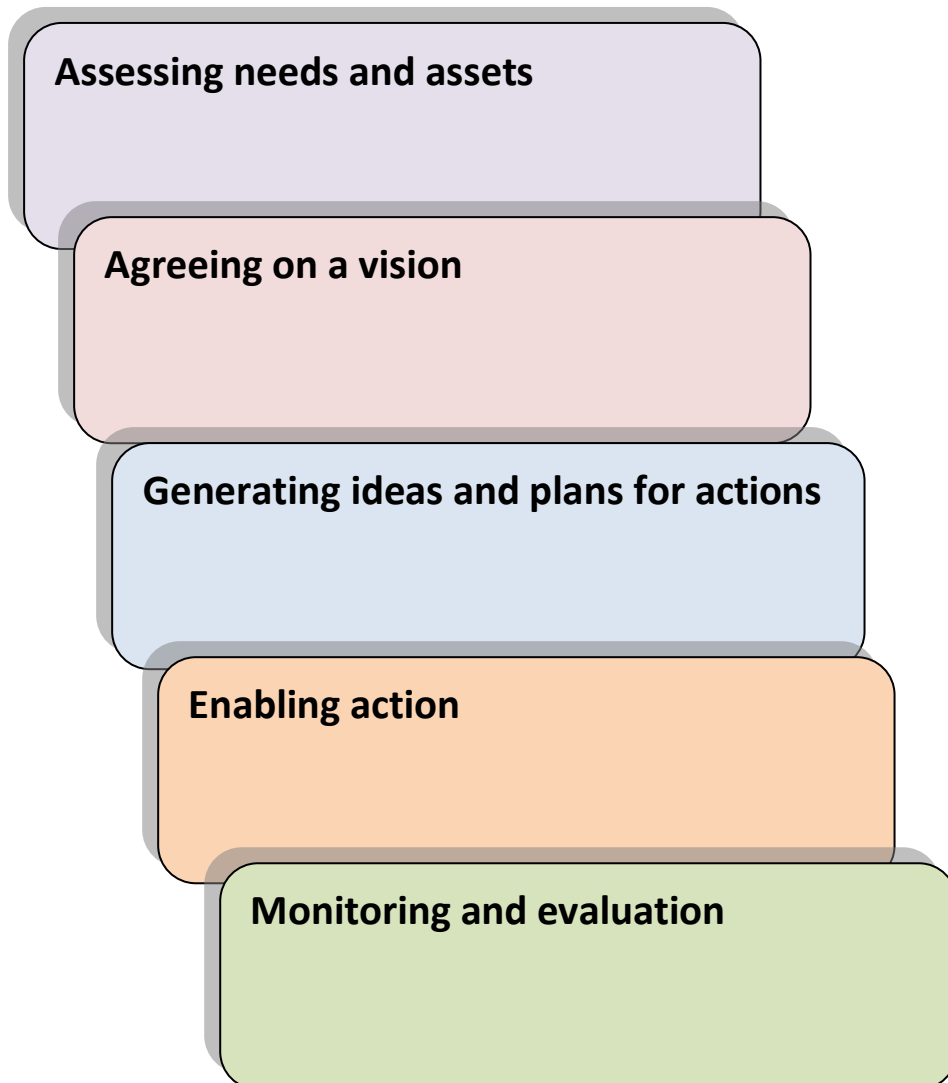


Figure 5: Action planning model

To further ensure Indigo's *Healthy Communities' Plan* remains relevant and meets the changing needs of our community, community signposts which identify the success of the plan will be established at the beginning of each action planning period. An implementation committee will be formed to monitor and review the plan on behalf of Council. This will be made up of both service providers and community members. This model highlights the importance of involving our communities actively in identifying needs, defining priorities, taking action, evaluating and monitoring progress so that we can move towards a healthy and sustainable future in the Indigo Shire.



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