

CITY OF WHITEHORSE



Whitehorse Economic Development Strategy

2008 -2013



Welcome Message

Whitehorse is a great place to live, work and invest – offering a skilled labour force, a strong stable economy, and fantastic infrastructure. Whitehorse City Council is a proactive council, interested in and committed to supporting local businesses and a sustainable economy. We understand that economic growth and prosperity are key elements to providing a high quality of life for the entire Whitehorse community.

The City of Whitehorse is fortunate to have the most diverse economy of all municipalities in Victoria. This provides our community with a diversity of products, services and employment opportunities not experienced in other municipalities. Such diversity also shields us from the dramatic booms and busts that can be associated with a reliance on a limited business and industry base.

With such diversity comes a need to target limited resources and to carefully plan our efforts. This is the purpose of the Whitehorse Economic Development Strategy.

Whitehorse, like many prosperous municipalities cannot afford to be complacent about the performance of its economy. Continued effort is required to support, encourage and facilitate continuing growth and this can only be achieved through a collaborative effort between the strategy's stakeholders – all levels of government, business and the community.

We are committed to ensuring the continued prosperity of our City. Like our business community, we understand the need to think locally and act both regionally and globally if we are to achieve a sustainable city. We are confident that this strategy builds upon the successes of our Economic Development Strategy 2001-2006 and continues our journey along a path of economic prosperity and sustainability.



Chief Executive Officer
Noelene Duff



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Council acknowledges that businesses in Whitehorse make a valuable contribution to the vibrancy and sustainability of our City, and are an important partner in achieving a high quality of life for our residents and community well being.

1 Introduction

The Whitehorse Economic Development Strategy has been prepared to provide continued certainty around the role Council provides in supporting and directing business activity to ensure a strong economic future for our City.

The strategy recognises that economic development is integral to facilitating a sustainable city and as such also has to be managed in the context of the wider social and environmental outcomes sought by Council for the Whitehorse community. Council acknowledges that businesses in Whitehorse make a valuable contribution to the vibrancy and sustainability of our City, and are an important partner in achieving a high quality of life for our residents and community well being.

Partnerships are critical to future economic prosperity ensuring a sharing of vision, harnessing of resources, building of capacity, and continued development of skills and innovation.

This new Economic Development Strategy is a five-year plan that will direct economic development activities in Whitehorse from 2008 - 2013 and builds on the past successes of our 2001 - 2006 Economic Development Strategy.

Prepared by Council, the strategy also draws on the expertise provided through a number of key reports commissioned to analyse the current economic health of the City, likely investment pressures, future challenges and opportunities for the local economy, and the business community's customer satisfaction with regard to Council's current economic development work program.

1.1 Why we have an Economic Development Strategy

Legislative Framework

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) acknowledges that soundly based economic and regional development is fundamental to the wellbeing of Australian communities, and that effective local government participation is vital to the success of economic development initiatives.

This view is well founded both in practice and as required by legislation. In seeking to achieve the primary objective of a council and in accordance with the Victorian Local Government Act 1989, a council must have regard to the following facilitating objectives (inter alia):

- to promote the social, economic and environmental viability and sustainability of the municipal district
- to promote appropriate business and employment opportunities
- to improve the overall quality of life of people in the local community

In seeking to achieve these objectives, the role of Council is further specified within the Act as providing leadership by establishing strategic objectives and monitoring their achievement. Importantly, the development, implementation and evaluation of an Economic Development Strategy provides this framework.

Good Governance

Council's sustainability outcomes are clearly outlined in our key corporate documents – Council Plan 2006-2010 and Our Vision 2006-2016. These documents draw on the detailed work contained in the Municipal Public Health Plan, EcoVision Strategy and Economic Development Strategy 2001-2006, so it is important that these documents are actively implemented and regularly reviewed.

It is within this governance framework that this new Economic Development Strategy has been developed.

The development, implementation and evaluation of an Economic Development Strategy provides the framework to guide leadership and to establish, monitor and achieve strategic objectives.



2 Whitehorse Economy

The future prosperity of the Whitehorse economy will be determined by the ability to create and maintain a sustainable standard of living and a high quality of life for our residents. To meet this challenge the Economic Development Strategy provides a context to position Whitehorse within the wider economy and to understand the unique structure of the local economy.

2.1 Melbourne's South East Regional Strategy

The need to consider regional linkages and economic interdependencies is reflected by Council's involvement in the Melbourne South East (MSE) regional group, which consists of representatives from 14 organisations including local, state and federal government as well as utilities. MSE operates collectively to facilitate a collaborative approach to economic development issues and ongoing support of the associated Regional Economic Strategy. This region is an expansive and diverse area with an economic profile ranging from nationally significant manufacturing hubs, to science and technology precincts, to areas of enviable residential amenity and tourism potential.



Overall Melbourne's South East is home to approximately one third of Melbourne's population and 37% of its business entities. The Regional Economic Strategy for Melbourne's South East (2003-2030) identifies the following issues as being of fundamental importance to the region's future economic prosperity:

- recognition that the region's export income and economic drive is essentially provided by a series of industry and activity areas
- identification of the current and likely increasing disparity between areas of employment growth and areas of population growth
- the need to improve intra-regional accessibility to facilitate journeys to work and the integrated development of the region
- confirmation of the manufacturing significance of the region in a national context, and the need to provide a secure future for ongoing industry development and investment, based on the recognition that future industry development will be increasingly linked to a range of knowledge-based services
- the need to provide quality environments for business services and manufacturing development within improved activity centres and new employment nodes
- the need to foster a partnership approach between the region's education and research resources and its manufacturing and business community, to add value to the region's export capacities through value-added innovation, research and intellectual development building on existing strengths and capabilities
- recognition of the need to improve the region's amenity, livability and image as integral components of a balanced approach for the long-term sustainability of the region

The framework for economic development initiatives and strategic priorities in Whitehorse need to be linked to issues and approaches at the regional level while defining the contextual role of Whitehorse within the region. These regional factors lend further weight and validity to the general approach and project focus taken within this Economic Development Strategy.

(Regional Economic Strategy for Melbourne's South-East, Ratio Consultants, 2003)





2.2 Composition of Local Economy

Structure

The Whitehorse economy has a number of economic strengths that have been consolidated over the past five years:

- A \$6 billion economy that is strategically integrated within the wider regional economy
- About 60,000 jobs supported by a large proportion of the resident workforce
- Over 8,000 businesses – a large proportion of which operate in high output areas such as property and business services (25% of output) and manufacturing (20% of output)
- High levels of economic diversity (the highest in Melbourne) that shield the economy from major fluctuations
- A strong economic backbone in Box Hill Transit City and Whitehorse Mega Mile
- A highly educated and skilled population that also has above average levels of medium and high income earners and high capacity to innovate with presence of two tertiary institutions
- A property market that continues to strengthen
- Prevalence of most lifestyle facilities and strategic infrastructure that are geographically accessible to residents
- One of the lowest cost rating Councils in Melbourne

While Whitehorse has great potential to grow, it has not achieved the level of growth in prosperity that it could have achieved had it not adopted such a cautious low-risk approach to its economy, generally favouring lifestyle outcomes at the expense of income and employment. In developing economic strategies for the next five years, Whitehorse will need to consider whether higher levels of growth might be achievable with higher but still acceptable levels of risk. The main actions that need to be addressed are in facilitating investment in high output and value added sectors.

The following charts show the diversity and strength of the local economy. The charts list 17 industry sectors and considers four values within each sector. The comparisons are made in:

- total output – all revenue generated by each industry sector within Whitehorse
- value added – the value that is added by industry sectors in Whitehorse to intermediate inputs
- employment – total number of employees by industry sector whose place of work is located within Whitehorse
- salaries and wages – the value of wages and salaries paid by each industry sector in Whitehorse to its employees

The top performing industry sector changes depending on the value considered. Manufacturing in Whitehorse, despite its decline over the past five years as presented in the next section, remains to be the sector that generates the most output by dollar value. Property and Business Services lead the way in value added services and income, while retail provides the highest levels of overall employment.

City of Whitehorse Economic Position Report, NIEIR, August 2006, p7 Ibid, p13

Chart 1 – Estimated Output by Industry Sector in Whitehorse

(All revenue generated by industry sector in \$mil)

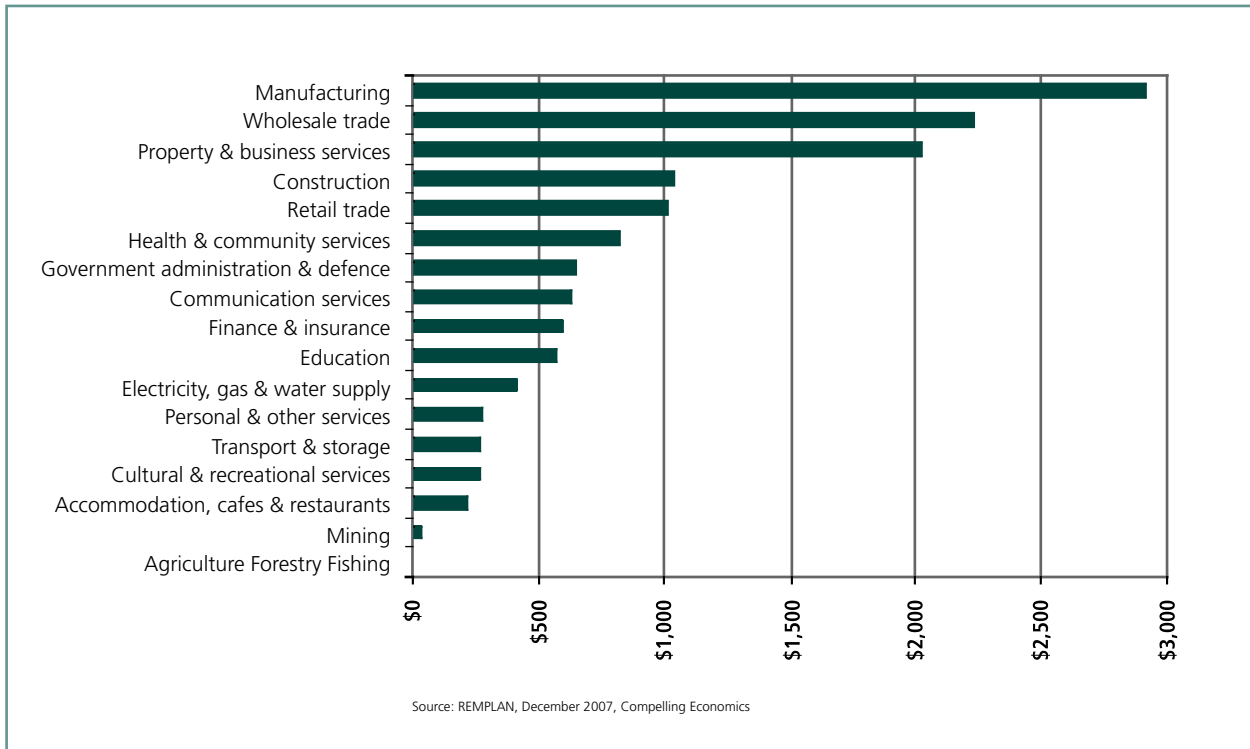


Chart 2 – Estimated Value Added by Industry Sector in Whitehorse

(Value that is added to products/services in \$mil)

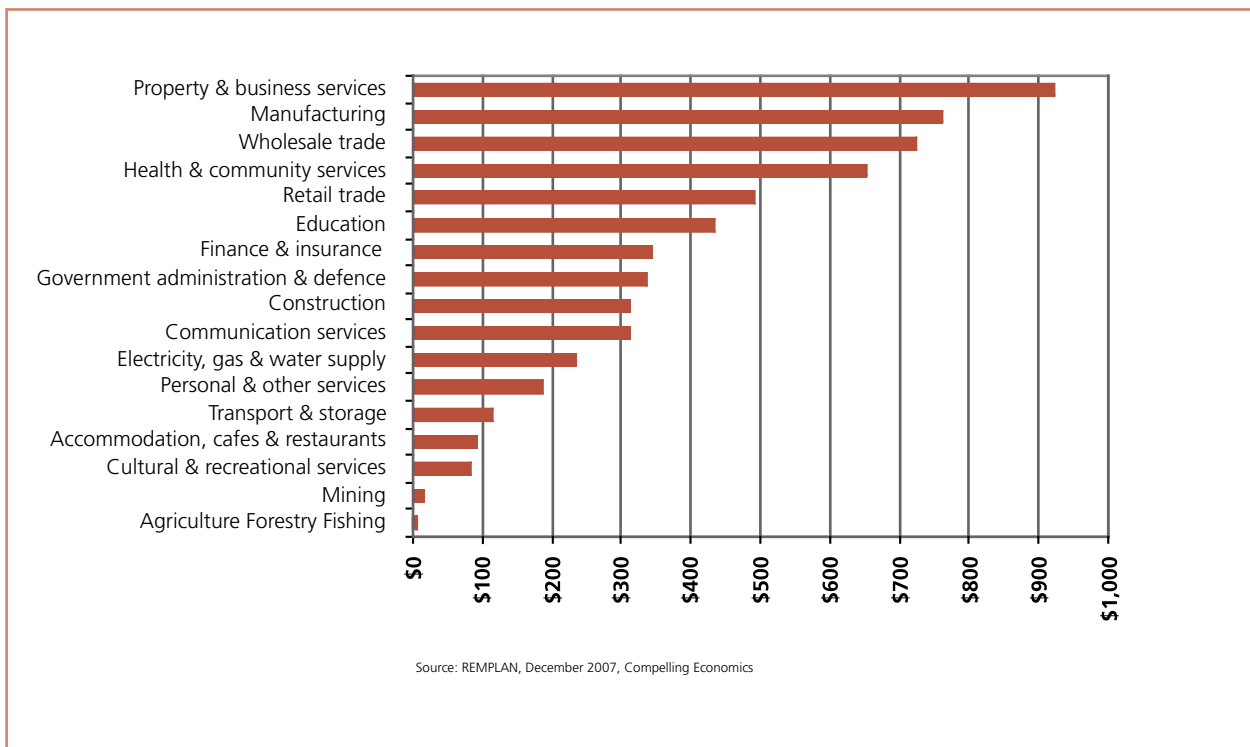
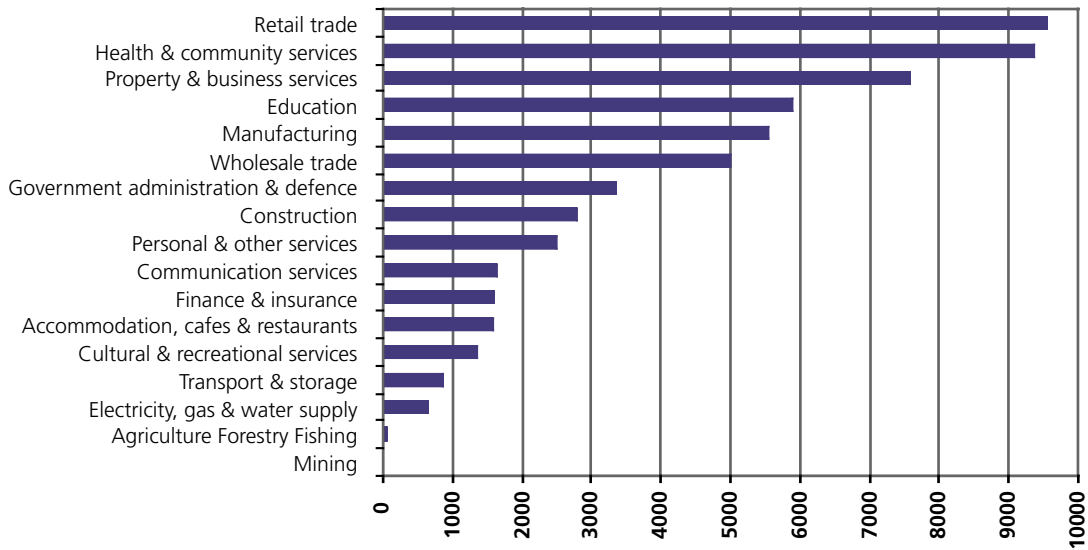


Chart 3 – Estimated Employment by Industry Sector in Whitehorse

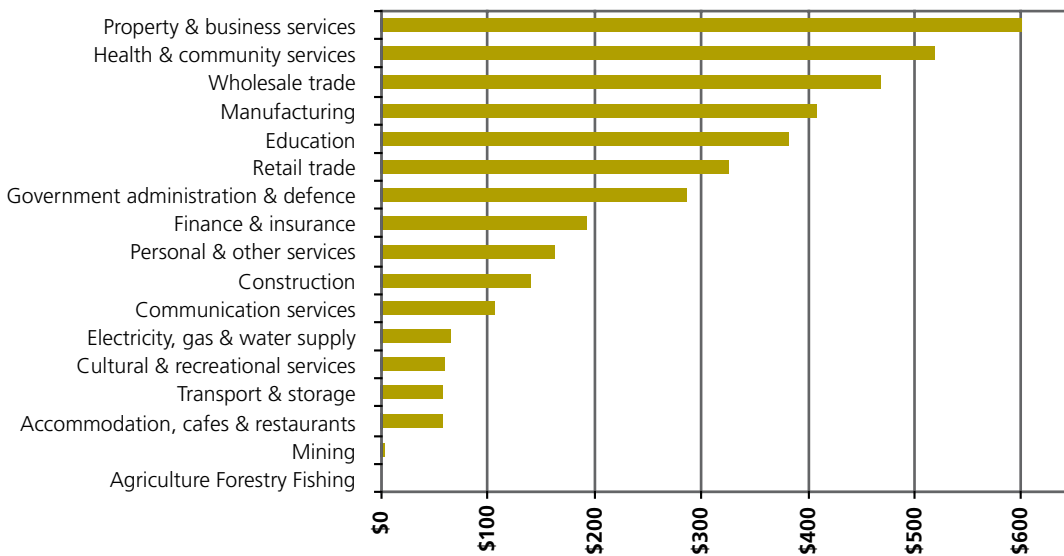
(Number of employees – part time and full time)



Source: REMPLAN, December 2007, Compelling Economics

Chart 4 – Estimated Income by Industry Sector in Whitehorse

(Value of wages and salaries paid to employees)



Source: REMPLAN, December 2007, Compelling Economics



Changes from 2001 to 2006

Table 1 at right presents changes that have occurred in six industry sectors in Whitehorse from 2001 to 2006. The industry sectors selected represent the top six industry sectors based on estimated output in 2006. The comparisons are made using the same four values as the previous section:

Total Output **Value Added** **Employment** **Wages and Salaries**

The manufacturing sector has experienced a decline in each value. Although this has occurred and represents a potential significant restructure of the local economy, the manufacturing sector is still the sector that contributes the most in terms of total output.

Wholesale trade has significantly increased across all values. This may be due to wholesale/warehouse businesses locating within the traditional industrial areas and replacing the industrial businesses. This trend could continue as these areas may not meet the zoning requirements of manufacturing i.e. limited office requirements or the physical infrastructure may no longer be appropriate for expanding manufacturing businesses.

The property and business services are relatively stable. These businesses contribute to the office market in Whitehorse, which is the largest metropolitan office market outside of the Melbourne CBD and St Kilda Rd. This stability may reflect strong office demand within a market that has had limited growth in new/expanded office stock. This presents a major opportunity for the redevelopment of major sites and activity centres.

The construction industry has grown which could be due to a number of factors including strong growth in the property sector generally and significant infrastructure projects in and around Whitehorse.

The retail sector has experienced a decline in each value. The strength of the retail sector is in the levels of local and accessible employment as retail provides a variety of full time, part time and seasonal employment. This sector generally reflects the health of a local economy as opposed to manufacturing which drives growth. The decline in retail could be related to a number of factors such as a decline in manufacturing creating reduced discretionary expenditure and high employment levels making it difficult for the retail sector to find employees and therefore not meet the demand.

The health and community sector has also experienced a high rate of growth although most of this growth has come from the health sector. The health sector in Whitehorse is strong, particularly in the Box Hill medical precinct.

Although this information presented is not exhaustive it presents a reasonable indication of the changes in some key industry sectors.

TABLE 1: Comparison of Changes in Industry Sectors from 2001 to 2006

MANUFACTURING		2001 ¹	2006 ²	Change
Total Output:		\$3618.05 mil	\$2911.97 mil	-20%
Value Added:		\$817.15 mil	\$762.05 mil	-7%
Employment:		7230	5552	-23%
Wages and Salaries:		\$455.67 mil	\$407.82 mil	-11%

WHOLESALE TRADE		2001 ¹	2006 ²	Change
Total Output:		\$1295.41 mil	\$2227.36 mil	72%
Value Added:		\$529.52 mil	\$723.73 mil	37%
Employment:		4595	5014	9%
Wages and Salaries:		\$337.08 mil	\$468.42 mil	39%

PROPERTY AND BUSINESS SERVICES		2001 ¹	2006 ²	Change
Total Output:		\$1971.23 mil	\$2019.08 mil	2%
Value Added:		\$899.63 mil	\$923.05 mil	3%
Employment:		7510	7574	0%
Wages and Salaries:		\$604.86 mil	\$601.79 mil	-1%

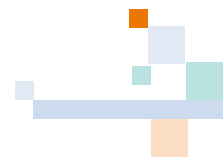
CONSTRUCTION		2001 ¹	2006 ²	Change
Total Output:		\$837.65 mil	\$1036.51 mil	23%
Value Added:		\$262.12 mil	\$314.44 mil	20%
Employment:		2572	2778	8%
Wages and Salaries:		\$124.45 mil	\$139.78 mil	12%

RETAIL TRADE		2001 ¹	2006 ²	Change
Total Output:		\$1076.30 mil	\$1014.30 mil	-6%
Value Added:		\$521.88 mil	\$491.56 mil	-6%
Employment:		10204	9560	-7%
Wages and Salaries:		\$346.18 mil	\$326.34 mil	-6%

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES		2001 ¹	2006 ²	Change
Total Output:		\$665.14 mil	\$817.73 mil	23%
Value Added:		\$529.76 mil	\$651.07 mil	23%
Employment:		7565	9354	24%
Wages and Salaries:		\$423.60 mil	\$518.27 mil	22%

Source: 1. REMPLAN (Oct 2007) Compelling Economics 2. REMPLAN (Dec 2007) Compelling Economics

Note: Oct 2007 version of REMPLAN incorporates 2001 ABS Census data, Dec 2007 version of REMPLAN incorporates 2006 ABS Census data.



Business Outlook

The importance of the Whitehorse industrial sector has not been highlighted in the past. Its contribution to output and wages and salaries make it a major contributor to the Whitehorse economy, however it is also the sector most likely to experience job losses and decline. The pressures for industrial building stock will continue to be small industrial units (less than 1,000m²) and the continued shift of large industrial operators to Melbourne's outer eastern and south eastern industrial areas.

A major issue for the industrial and office property market in Whitehorse is the age of the stock. Appropriate land use zoning, the provision of infrastructure, refurbishment and redevelopment will be required to ensure tenancy occupancy and retention rates.

A growth in the outsourcing of industrial and warehouse functions overseas with the retention of associated office functions (marketing, administration etc.) in Australia could see even higher demand for suburban offices.

Demand is strongly directed to business park office facilities with 75% of total office completions in the suburbs in the last six years occurring in business parks. Success of the Whitehorse office market will continue to rely heavily on the health of the small to medium size businesses particularly in the sectors that add higher value (manufacturing, wholesale trade, property and business services) that are more likely to locate in the areas that were once traditional industrial areas.

The office sector will seriously need to be considered in order to maintain a healthy level of office stock and to provide new office stock to take advantage of a number of factors that exist in Whitehorse including the strength of business development linked to the higher education sector, the strength of Box Hill (Prospect Street), Tally Ho and other office precincts, the growth of home-based businesses which require options for office facilities as these businesses grow.



Retail will experience growth in areas where the catchment is growing in population and/or wealth. Most retail centres that provide products and services to a local catchment will be more sensitive to changes in the characteristics of the neighbourhoods they serve compared to the larger centres which draw upon a larger market. As there are not many greenfield retail sites in Whitehorse, retail development is likely to be associated with redevelopment and refurbishment of existing centres. Based on the retail composition this development is expected to attract a different market compared to traditional centres.

The exception to this is the development of Burwood Square at the corner of Burwood Highway and Middleborough Road. This development will consist of 35,000 sq. m of predominantly lifestyle, leisure and entertainment based retail mixed with an amount of traditional retailing. There will also be cinemas, restaurants, commercial and residential development.

In order for Whitehorse to maintain a diverse and strong local economy, the emphasis over the next five years should be to ensure the environment is appropriate to maintain as much manufacturing as possible, while facilitating the development of an increased number of businesses in other higher value sectors to ensure the overall value of output, value added production/services, employment and salaries and wages that is lost in manufacturing is maintained by growth in other sectors. In order to achieve this the following should be done:

- Work to ensure the infrastructure is appropriate to maintain as many manufacturing businesses as possible
- Ensure the land use zoning in industrial and commercial areas is appropriate to attract higher value businesses and the value of land is not diminished resulting in lower value activities
- Facilitate the improvement of infrastructure required for higher value businesses





Council is committed to a set of priorities for future action. These priorities cover the four key elements of our community, that is, the environment, the community, the economy and local governance.

3 Vision and Principles

3.1 Our Vision for Whitehorse – Corporate Framework

The Economic Development Strategy is dynamically aligned to the Whitehorse City Council Plan (and annual budget) which supports our Vision to 2016. Council's Vision is that Whitehorse will continue to:

- be a vibrant, active community
- boast a regionally significant economy
- be recognised as the most liveable city in metropolitan Melbourne
- become a leader in sustainable practices

This vision represents Council's goals and aspirations for the future of our community. It commits Council to a set of priorities for future action. These priorities cover the four key elements of our community, that is, the environment, the community, the economy and local governance.

The strategic directions in the Vision for 2016 have been reflected in the Council Plan as the following five key strategic directions:

- Providing responsible leadership
- Foster our local economy
- Support our community
- Protect and enhance our natural environment
- Create sustainable urban environments





3.2 Economic Development Strategy Vision

Council is committed to playing a key role in facilitating a thriving and sustainable local economy. Council will work in partnership with the local community to:

- Increase investment and employment opportunities that enhance the local economy, natural environment and quality of life for existing and future residents
- Enable appropriate growth of existing and future businesses in order to achieve economic well-being

Council seeks to establish a regionally significant local economy that is characterised by:

- A high level self-containment in the provision of commerce, retail, education and health services whereby escape expenditure is minimised and a full range of products and services is available for residents and businesses
- The capitalisation on increased expenditure by the wider community on leisure, entertainment and cultural activities
- A high representation of businesses involved in key growth sectors of the economy
- A high representation of businesses committed to delivering world's best practice and actively involved in import replacement and export delivery
- A high level of business investment in education, research and development and the adoption of new technology
- A high level of business investment in the development of new and refurbishment of existing premises
- An efficient transportation, communication and utility infrastructure
- Employment rates equal to or greater than the metropolitan average
- The maintenance of a residential environment that provides accommodation for people with a variety of skills and provides options for reduced travel times to work

3.3 Principles and Strategic Objectives

In achieving this vision, the following principles and strategic objectives will guide Council's economic development program.

Guiding Principles of Economic Development

A comprehensive new model³ is emerging which provides for 15 common principles for building prosperous and liveable communities, and hence the development of economic development strategies. These principles are referred to as the 'Ahwahnee Smart Growth Principles' and recognise the economic value of natural and human capital and focus on the most critical blocks for success – the community and the region. They emphasise community-wide and regional collaboration for building prosperous and liveable places. These principles are presented below and have been adapted to reflect the local conditions and role of Council in economic development.

3 Ahwahnee Principles for Smart Economic Development Growth: An implementation guide book, (Cole, Kelly, Corbett and Sprowls) 2001



1. Integrated Approach

Government, business, education, and the community should work together to create a vibrant local economy, through a long-term investment strategy that:

- encourages local enterprise
- serves the needs of local residents, workers, and businesses
- promotes stable employment and revenues by building on local competitive advantages
- protects the natural environment
- increases social equity
- is capable of succeeding in the global marketplace

2. Vision and Inclusion

Communities and regions need a vision and strategy for economic development according to these principles. Visioning, planning and implementation efforts should continually involve all sectors, including the voluntary civic sector and those traditionally left out of the public planning process.

3. Skills Matching

Both local and regional economic development efforts should be targeted to promoting jobs that match the skills of existing residents, improving the skills of low-income individuals, addressing the needs of families moving off welfare, and insuring the availability in all communities of quality affordable child care, transportation, and housing.

4. Local Focus

Because each community's most valuable assets are the ones they already have, and existing businesses are already contributing to their home communities, economic development efforts should give first priority to supporting existing enterprises as the best source of business expansion and local job growth. Luring businesses away from neighbouring communities is a zero-sum game that doesn't create new wealth in the regional economy. Community economic development should focus instead on promoting local entrepreneurship to build locally based industries and businesses that can succeed among national and international competitors.

5. Industry Clusters

Communities and regions should identify specific gaps and niches their economies can fill, and promote a diversified range of specialised industry clusters drawing on local advantages to serve local and international markets.

6. Wired Communities

Communities should use and invest in technology that supports the ability of local enterprises to succeed, improves civic life, and provides open access to information and resources.



7. Long-Term Investment

Publicly supported economic development programs, investments, and subsidies should be evaluated on their long-term benefits and impacts on the whole community, not on short-term job or revenue increases. Public investments and subsidies should be equitable and targeted, support environmental and social goals, and prioritise infrastructure and supportive services that promote the vitality of all local enterprises, instead of individual firms.

8. Human Investment

Because human resources are so valuable in the information age, communities should provide life-long skills and learning opportunities by investing in excellent schools, post-secondary institutions, and opportunities for continuous education and training available to all.

9. Environmental Responsibility

Communities should support and pursue economic development that maintains or improves, not harms, the environmental and public health.

10. Corporate Responsibility

Enterprises should work as civic partners, contributing to the communities and regions where they operate, protecting the natural environment, and providing workers with good pay, benefits, opportunities for upward mobility, and a healthful work environment.

11. Compact Development

To minimise economic, social, and environmental costs and efficiently use resources and infrastructure, new development should take place in existing urban areas. Local and regional plans and policies should contain these physical and economic development planning principles to focus development activities in desired existing areas.

12. Liveable Communities

To protect the natural environment and increase quality of life, neighbourhoods, communities and regions should have compact, multi-dimensional land use patterns that ensure a mix of uses, minimise the impact of cars, and promote walking, cycling, and transit access to employment, education, recreation, entertainment, shopping, and services. Economic development and transportation investments should reinforce these land use patterns, and the ability to move people and goods by non-automobile alternatives wherever possible.

13. Activity Centre Focus

Communities should have an appropriately scaled and economically healthy centre focus. At the community level, a wide range of commercial, residential, cultural, civic, and recreational uses should be located in activity centres. At the neighbourhood level, neighbourhood centres should contain local businesses that serve the daily needs of nearby residents. At the regional level, regional facilities should be located in urban centres that are accessible by transit throughout the metropolitan area.



14. Distinctive Communities

Having a distinctive identity will help communities create a quality of life that is attractive for business retention and future residents and private investment. Community economic development efforts should help to create and preserve each community's sense of uniqueness, attractiveness, history, and cultural and social diversity, and include public gathering places and a strong local sense of place.

15. Regional Collaboration

Since industries, transportation, land uses, natural resources, and other key elements of a healthy economy are regional in scope, communities and the private sector should cooperate to create regional structures that promote a coherent metropolitan whole that respects local character and identity.

Our Economic Development Strategy Principles

Building on the broad principles of economic development outlined above the following criteria are presented below to provide a context for how business and economic development in Whitehorse can positively influence business development and employment opportunities while contributing to social and environmental outcomes. These principles also build on the strategic directions outlined in Council's corporate documents providing clear principles that will drive the action areas identified in the Economic Development Strategy 2008-2013.

These principles are to:

- Provide responsible leadership that is characterised by:
 - Integrated approach
 - Vision and inclusion
 - Local focus
 - Long-term investment
 - Regional collaboration
- Foster our local economy using:
 - Industry clusters
 - Wired communities
 - Activity centre focus
- Support our community through:
 - Human investment
 - Liveable communities
 - Distinctive communities
- Encourage sustainable businesses through encouraging:
 - Environmental responsibility
 - Corporate responsibility
 - Compact development

Strategic Objectives

The strategic objectives that have been developed to set the direction for business and economic development are:

- To provide a framework to assist Council decision-making relating to economic development – which supports business development and recognises the contribution made by business to community well-being
- To maintain a strong business climate by allowing innovative businesses to develop through the use and application of Whitehorse's infrastructure and social capital
- Support positive change that provides benefits to, and opportunities for, local businesses and employment growth
- Promote Whitehorse as a desirable business location that supports high-quality and innovative local businesses and leading international companies



4 Implementation

The Business and Economic Development Unit works within two frameworks: the legislation of the Local Government Act in the first instance and within the context and direction of this Economic Development Strategy in the second instance.

The Whitehorse Economic Development Strategy commits Council to leading, stimulating and facilitating local economic development in partnership with business and community networks. Council's key roles in supporting economic development are in the areas of:

1. Strategic planning and policy development

Implementation of structure plans for activity centres, retail and commercial areas and ensuring Council business development initiatives are structured within and satisfy the requirements of the Local Government Act.

2. Investment and development facilitation

Facilitating appropriate physical development which involves identifying future development patterns, infrastructure requirements and business formats.

3. Networking and strategic business partnerships

Supporting strong local business networks and working with those groups that demonstrate a consistent approach with Council's direction as presented within this strategy.

4. Business research, information and promotion

Ensuring up-to-date information is available that provides businesses with the ability to make decisions about business development that leads to increased local investment.

5. Promotion of local businesses

Promote the requirements, achievements and services offered by local business by providing methods of promotion that provide benefit by making information available to markets that individual businesses may not have access to.

The implementation of the Economic Development Strategy has six strategic project areas:

1. Retail activity centres
2. Box Hill activity centre
3. Business development
4. Partnerships and networking
5. Communication, seminars and events
6. Environmental sustainability

These six strategic project areas include background, rationale and objectives and a list of actions to be delivered over the five year period of the strategy. It is important to note that although the delivery of the strategy will be overseen by the Business and Economic Development Unit, it is not a mutually exclusive strategy as it also has links with other strategies across Council.

The actions listed under the strategic projects areas will be reviewed annually to identify progress that has been made and to ensure compatibility with Council’s strategic direction as contained within the Council Plan.

Priorities have been associated with each action and are defined as follows:

PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME
Short term	Less than 2 years
Medium term	2 to 4 years
Long term	4 to 6 years
Ongoing	Significant actions that have an ongoing role in the delivery of services.

The priorities have been set based on a combination of factors including Council’s strategic direction, the progression of projects required to ensure effective implementation of actions and resources. Over the five year period of this strategy, action priorities may change to reflect a change in priority of Council or further progress in the delivery of services.



The implementation of the Economic Development Strategy has six strategic project areas:



- 1. Retail activity centres*
- 2. Box Hill activity centre*
- 3. Business development*
- 4. Partnerships and networking*
- 5. Communication, seminars and events*
- 6. Environmental sustainability*



4.1 Retail Activity Centres

Background

Activity centres are usually commercial centres where the predominant business activity is retail. The Whitehorse Economic Development Strategy 2001 – 2006 identified retail as one of the five key roles in setting the conditions for a thriving and sustainable economy, as they provide a high proportion of services to surrounding residents.

Rationale

Within Whitehorse there are approximately 85 shopping centres or activity centres. The number businesses contained within these centres can range from two to over 100. The combination of business turnover and movement within centres and competition between centres contribute to constant changes in the composition of businesses. "Retail development generally follows the trend of refurbishment every five years and additional floor space associated with population increases"⁴.

Areas likely to experience significant population growth during the term of this strategy will require increased level of attention as pressures arise from conflicting land uses as retail activity centres are more likely to be associated with refurbishment rather than significant expansion beyond the current activity centre boundaries.

A significant component of the Australian economy is dependant on consumer expenditure and, as a result, the retail sector is well researched and understood. In order to maximise resources that are allocated to centres, both in the forms of private and public investment, the dynamics of and between retail in Whitehorse needs to be better understood with respect to the local catchments and markets.

Objectives

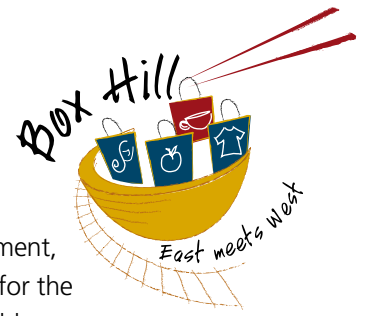
- Conduct research that provides a better understanding of the retail hierarchy and associated consumer expenditure in Whitehorse
- Identify land use and infrastructure requirements in centres
- Work with trader associations, property owners and developers to assist in appropriately guiding the ongoing changes within activity centres

Source: 4. Whitehorse Economic Development Strategy 2007 - 2011 Background Report, The Planning Group, January 2007, p29

Retail Activity Centres

Strategy	Actions	Department Liaison	Priority
4.1.1 Ensure the prosperity of retail centres in the City of Whitehorse.	A. Implementation of plans (structure, framework, etc.), as developed for selected retail centres (subject to funding including State and Council).	Strategic Planning, Statutory Planning, Urban Design, Local Laws, Rates, Community Development	Ongoing
	B. Conduct research that identifies and assesses the characteristics of shopping centre catchment areas.		Medium term
	C. Maintain a database of shopping centres that incorporates relevant information from Council departments.		Short term
	D. Utilise the database to promote shopping centres on wbiz.com.au and other relevant channels where the database can be used effectively.		Ongoing
	E. Introduce a retail monitor to benchmark the health of and measure the changes in the City's retail economy – address retail mix, catchment, etc.		Medium term
	F. Prepare and implement a City of Whitehorse Retail Strategy.		Medium term
	G. Work in conjunction with other Council departments to maintain appearances and accessibility of shopping centres and to promote the requirements of businesses and business associations as appropriate.		Ongoing
	H. Provide support to retail development through retail seminars and training (Whitehorse Business Week, Whitehorse Business Group, government funded business programs).		Ongoing
4.1.2 Maintain a variety of retail options for residents and ensure activity and retail centres are attractive for business to locate in.	A. Review the current retail hierarchy for Whitehorse and revise, if required, to reflect changes in retail catchments.	Strategic Planning, Statutory Planning, Urban Design, Local Laws	Short term
	B. Provide input into development proposals to ensure effective retail development is achieved.		Ongoing
	C. Update research conducted on the Mega Mile including an assessment of business turnover and market catchment.		Medium term
	D. Continue to promote Mega Mile as a premier bulky goods centre and support business initiatives that increase the exposure.		Short term
4.1.3 Provide effective support to local business associations	A. Provide support in establishing and renewing special rate/charge schemes for retail centres.	Strategic Planning, Statutory Planning, Urban Design, Local Laws	Ongoing
	B. Prepare a policy on the establishment of special rate/charge schemes for marketing and promotion.		Short term
	C. Provide business associations with data on catchment areas obtained from research.		Medium term
	D. Review options for providing business associations with support for the preparation or review of business plans.		Short term
	E. Inform business associations of proposed developments within or in close proximity to centres that may impact on retail centres.		Ongoing
	F. Provide support through the implementation of the Christmas Decoration Policy.		Ongoing

4.2 Box Hill Activity Centre



Background

Box Hill is the main activity centre in Whitehorse. It provides retail, education, civic, employment, medical, community service, transportation, entertainment and recreational opportunities for the regional population, as well as being a hub for local community activities. Box Hill is arguably the main driver of socio-economic wealth in the City of Whitehorse. Its strength, particularly its clusters of economic activity and transport facilities can be built on to provide increased opportunities for businesses and residents.

Rationale

The Box Hill Activity Centre is an essential community focal point and provides an important sense of place. Council has adopted three major studies to guide the development of Box Hill:

- Box Hill Transit City Activity Centre Structure Plan (2007) – builds on previous work and provides a vision and framework for development and the future use of the Box Hill Activity Centre
- Box Hill Urban Design Framework (2002) – creates a design vision, with recommendations for key sites as well as streetscape and general development aims for each precinct
- Box Hill Transport Interchange Concept Design (2002) – considers a commercially and community viable option for a transport interchange maximising the benefits to public transport users, the retail and commercial stakeholders and the local community

In Melbourne 2030, the State Government's Metropolitan Strategy released in October 2002, Principal Activity Centres, such as Box Hill, are highlighted as the focus of major change in metropolitan Melbourne over the next 30 years. Melbourne 2030 anticipates that activity centres will have higher density development, pedestrian friendly environments, be well connected to public transport and provide a range of activities and services. Box Hill is also a Transit City, one of only nine in the Melbourne metropolitan area.

Council supports the strategy and recognises that Box Hill has the scope to accommodate substantial growth, as well as the opportunity for improved amenity to complement this growth. Council has adopted a structure plan for the centre which is aimed at:

- Providing clarity as to the expectations of appropriate development and facilitate the development process
- Improving infrastructure and services to enable intensive development and support new activities within the public realm
- Managing transitions between low-density and higher-density and the evolution of development

Objectives

- Position Box Hill as a model activity centre in Melbourne
- Continue to develop the public realm in addition to seeking opportunities to work in partnership with government and private industry sectors to fully achieve best practice and increased prosperity in business and the urban environment
- Improve the quality of visitations to Box Hill and the opportunities for the Whitehorse community

Box Hill Activity Centre

Strategy	Actions	Department Liaison	Priority
4.2.1 Manage the implementation of the Structure Plan for Box Hill.	A. Schedule regular updates on the status and expected completion of the Structure Plan to enable immediate transition to the implementation stage.	Strategic Planning	Short term
	B. Continue to review the implementation plan for Box Hill.	Various	Ongoing
	C. Conduct regular meetings with internal stakeholders to progress the implementation plan for Box Hill.	Urban Design/ Strategic Planning	Ongoing
4.2.2 Address barriers to growth/ development of Box Hill through policy and actions.	A. Continue to advocate to secure external funding opportunities for Box Hill activity centre capital works.	Strategic Planning	Ongoing
	B. Identify opportunities for appropriate development of Council owned land.	Urban Design/ Strategic Planning	Medium term
4.2.3 Work with stakeholders to ensure businesses in the Centre are supported.	A. Establish the Box Hill Strategic Development Group to work closely with significant property owners and stakeholders.	Strategic/ Statutory Planning	Short term
	B. Investigate further opportunities to provide relevant information to Box Hill businesses.	Communications	Medium term
	C. Continue to work with the Box Hill Retail Breakfast Group to address concerns affecting the public space management and specific issues (including policing).	Youth Services	Medium term
4.2.4 Provide attractive environments within Box Hill for business and community activities.	A. Continue to support and assist with the Box Hill laneways revitalisation.	Urban Design	Medium term
	B. Continue to support and assist with the Box Hill Urban Treatments manual and Wayfinding Strategy	Urban Design	Medium term
4.2.5 Continue to seek funding towards infrastructure and environmental projects which will make life in Box Hill more sustainable.	A. Promote the Travelsmart program to Box Hill visitors and regular students/workers travelling to Box Hill.	EcoVision	Medium term
	B. Encourage sustainable business practices.	EcoVision	Medium term
4.2.6 Promote Box Hill as a premier place to visit, live, study and work.	A. Develop the Box Hill Activity Centre website.	Communications	Short term
	B. Develop a coordinated approach to marketing Box Hill Activity Centre.		Short term
	C. Investigate opportunities to work with the Box Hill Institute of TAFE to encourage greater links for the benefit of local businesses and students studying in the Centre.		Medium term
	D. Highlight Council achievements and successes in Box Hill.		Ongoing

4.3 Business Development



Background

Business sectors in Whitehorse are very strong. The strength of industry in Whitehorse is due to the diversity of small manufacturers that are suppliers to larger manufacturers. This allows for a more adaptable approach to the structural trends occurring within the economy. Commercial office precincts such as Tally Ho and Box Hill combined with the strength of micro businesses throughout the municipality represent a locational advantage Whitehorse has in terms of access to a skilled employment base, business infrastructure and transportation access.

Rationale

In order to maintain flexible and diverse manufacturing and commercial sectors, land use and infrastructure requirements need to be in place to allow a continuous level of investment that supports business investment.

The importance of the Whitehorse industrial sector has not been highlighted in the past. Both its contribution in output and floorspace make it a major contributor to the Whitehorse economy, however this strength can also be its weakness, as structural changes are also likely to result in job losses and disinvestment.

As Whitehorse becomes a desirable location for increasing levels of commercial activity sites that are underutilised will be considered for redevelopment. To ensure a level of consistent and sustainable commercial development is achieved, there is a need to provide support and direction for future redevelopment in and around areas such as Box Hill, Deakin University, Tally Ho, and other designated activity centres. Uses that will further contribute to the growth of education and business services and facilities should also be encouraged.

The growth of commercial activity in Box Hill and along Burwood Highway would also benefit from a strong transport network that services activity centres in Whitehorse. Encouraging appropriate development will also contribute to the increased use of public transport and minimise traffic congestion.

Objectives

- Ensure development provides relevant infrastructure and an appropriate mix of facilities that provide a variety of locational options for businesses
- Ensure the designated activity centres are developed in a way that will build upon and provide benefit to established education and commercial sectors
- Work with the business, development and education sectors to identify and facilitate development opportunities

Business Development

Strategy	Actions	Department Liaison	Priority
4.3.1 Maintain a flexible and diverse manufacturing sector.	<p>A. Establish and maintain database of industrial land values.</p> <p>B. Review land use zones in industrial areas to minimise land use and development conflicts.</p> <p>C. Prepare an audit of infrastructure in industrial areas to determine infrastructure bottlenecks that could impede industrial growth and/or redevelopment.</p> <p>D. Prepare an industrial areas strategy that provides direction for future industrial growth.</p>	Strategic Planning, Statutory Planning, Communications, Engineering & Environmental Services	<p>Medium term</p> <p>Long term</p> <p>Medium term</p> <p>Medium term</p>
4.3.2 Facilitate commercial development consistent with supporting the established education and commercial sectors.	<p>A. Establish and maintain database of commercial land values.</p> <p>B. Support appropriate commercial development in established activity centres that supports and does not detract from retail trade.</p> <p>C. Facilitate commercial development in designated activity centres including Box Hill, Tally Ho and Burwood Heights.</p>	Strategic Planning, Statutory Planning, Communications	<p>Medium term</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
4.3.3 Provide support to the growth and development of micro (home based) business.	<p>A. Support the Whitehorse Business Group in conducting research on home based businesses in Whitehorse.</p> <p>B. Assist the Whitehorse Business Group in delivering information, seminars and training for home based businesses.</p> <p>C. Identify and support funding applications that can assist in the delivery of programs and projects to home based business.</p>	Internal departments as required	<p>Short term</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
4.3.4 Work in conjunction with relevant groups to attract business to Whitehorse.	<p>A. Host investment delegations in association with Whitehorse Business Group and State and Federal Government business investment departments to promote Whitehorse to business.</p> <p>B. Prepare prospectus to attract industrial development and investment.</p> <p>C. Prepare prospectus to attract investment in commercial development.</p>	Strategic Planning, Statutory Planning, Communications	Medium term
4.3.5 Establish the Deakin/Tally Ho Knowledge Precinct as a knowledge/ research/ employment node.	<p>A. Conduct a feasibility study to determine the potential for appropriate redevelopment of sites along Burwood Highway between Deakin University and Tally Ho.</p> <p>B. Prepare a Deakin/Tally Ho marketing and promotional campaign with support from business, education and property owners.</p> <p>C. Identify funding sources and support projects that encourage the use of public transit within the Deakin/ Tally Ho Knowledge precinct.</p>	Strategic Planning, Statutory Planning, Communications, Engineering and Environmental Services	<p>Medium term</p> <p>Long term</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

4.4 Partnerships and Networking



Background

Within Whitehorse there are a number of both formal and informal business networks. Council has played a direct role in supporting networking activities through the delivery of Whitehorse Business Week, the establishment and ongoing support of the Whitehorse Business Group and providing support for business associations in retail centres.

Rationale

It is recognised that services related to the development of supportive business networks/ associations and the provision of information forums that demonstrate local business achievements and services are valued amongst the business community. Networking takes many forms and can achieve simple but effective results such as establishing communication networks that result in increased business opportunities to more formal 'strategic alliances' that focus on a commercial outcome such as a joint venture to win a large contract. Networks are good for individual businesses and they assist to develop regional economic growth as well.

In order to continue on the achievements of the past, it is imperative to recognise Council's role in the promotion and support of local business networks through:

Creating Partnerships

Continuing to build strong partnerships with government agencies (federal and state), industry associations and tertiary institutions will assist in identifying innovative practices that assist in growing businesses, developing training solutions and providing industry updates and knowledge.

Business Networking

Continuing to support and assist local informal business networks and business associations to create closer ties and understanding the requirements of local business.

Objectives

- Continue to deliver projects and services that support informal and formal local business networks
- Provide information that makes businesses aware of and allows businesses to participate in networks
- Play a role in balancing the various requirements of businesses by providing forums that allow information to be shared and exchanged

Partnerships and Networking

Objectives	Actions	Department Liaison	Priority
4.4.1 Support the Whitehorse Business Group to become the pre-eminent business network in the Melbourne South East Region.	A. Increase the profile of the Whitehorse Business Group in business and economic development promotions.	Whitehorse Business Group	Short term
	B. Work with the Whitehorse Business Group to increase the value of membership.		Ongoing
	C. Work in conjunction with the Whitehorse Business Group to attract a diversified range of funding sources for the groups operation.	Internal departments as required	Ongoing
4.4.2 Provide relevant and effective support to local Business associations.	A. Work in collaboration with business associations to increase awareness of the role that a local Business association has within their local business area.	Local Laws, Traffic, Planning, Urban Design	Short term
	B. Support and develop closer relationships with businesses in key retail and commercial centres including Mega Mile.		Ongoing
4.4.3 Provide relevant and effective support to local business groups.	A. Increase the profile of businesses and services available in Whitehorse through involvement with business organisations that represent business interests compatible with Council's objectives.	Internal departments as required	Ongoing
	B. Support and develop closer relationships with business groups in key commercial centres including Tally Ho.		Ongoing
4.4.4 Build on existing partnerships and relationships with State and Federal Governments.	A. Work with the Victoria Business Centre in Vermont on business attraction, development and promotional initiatives.	Customer Service	Ongoing
	B. Provide a referral point for businesses to obtain up-to-date information to the available business services and funding from the various levels of government.		Ongoing
4.4.5 Build on existing partnerships with the Melbourne South East Network.	A. Continue to participate in regional projects to provide opportunities and business benefits within the City of Whitehorse.	Internal departments as required	Ongoing
4.4.6 Build on existing relationships with Tertiary Education Sector within the City of Whitehorse.	A. Work with the Box Hill TAFE and Deakin University on business development, research and promotional initiatives.	Internal departments as required	Ongoing

4.5 Communication, Events and Seminars

Background

The Business and Economic Development Unit has established effective communication channels to local businesses that provide information on Council projects, services, policies, programs via a range of media formats. The various forms of communication have also resulted in Council facilitating communication network between businesses through wbiz.com.au and facilitating networks through associations such as the Whitehorse Business Group.

Rationale

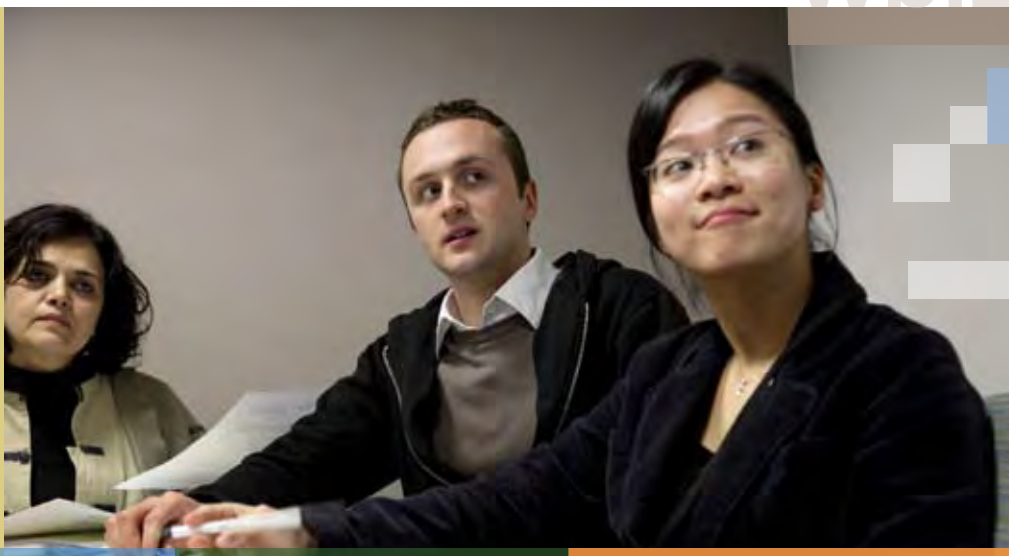
Prior to the 2001 – 2006 Whitehorse Economic Development strategy, the Down to Business Newsletter and the Business and Economic Development Units website wbiz.com.au were established to form stronger communication channels with local businesses. Since the inception of the wbiz.com.au its function has progressively evolved from a local business directory to a business promotion and networking portal. Changes in business requirements and the Internet, and related technologies, have highlighted the need for communication flexibility and responsiveness to continue to remain relevant to local business.

In response to this, the new brand 'wbiz' has been updated reflective of the need to be relevant for businesses. The wbiz branding is becoming recognised for the delivery of promotional and informal networking functions for businesses in Whitehorse. By providing local businesses with relevant communication and promotional value, wbiz is able to promote opportunities that are directly relevant to local businesses whilst building positive relationships with Council.

Objectives

- Increase in the local business community's awareness of resources that are available to assist businesses
- Ensure that business communications remain to be timely and relevant
- Provide value to businesses by promoting local achievements and case studies that represent best practice

wbiz.com.au



Communication, Events and Seminars

Objectives	Actions	Department Liaison	Priority
4.5.1 Use the wbiz website as the key communication tool for businesses in Whitehorse.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Encourage businesses to register and update their details on wbiz. B. Provide the ability for promotional and networking activities that create value for local businesses. C. Frequently audit website to ensure that it is easy to navigate and the information remains relevant to the local business community. D. Produce an annual report that measures the use of the website. 	Internal departments as required	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Medium term</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
4.5.2 Make Down to Business a premier business information tool.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Promote local achievements and case studies that represent best practice. B. Prepare an annual plan that ensures content covers relevant topics. C. Review the Down to Business distribution strategy to ensure that the publication is delivered to as many Whitehorse businesses as possible. 	Internal departments as required	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
4.5.3 Position Whitehorse Business Week as the key local networking and training week.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Ensure that the content of Whitehorse Business Week remains responsive and relevant to local business needs. B. Discover new/innovative ways of marketing Business Week to attract and retain a wider audience. C. Prepare a debriefing report and review delivery of Business Week on an annual basis to identify options for increasing local business participation. 	Internal departments as required	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
4.5.4 Provide businesses with relevant ongoing training opportunities to help shape business strategies and decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Identify a method for Council to deliver other high profile events during the year that will complement Whitehorse Business Week and other seminars held locally. B. Prepare an annual calendar of events in association with local business groups (i.e. Whitehorse Business Group). C. Maintain relationships with other government agencies to auspice training programs. D. Promote local business seminars through a variety of communication channels. 	Internal departments as required	<p>Medium term</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
4.5.5 Conduct research and disseminate information and research relevant to businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Prepare a Whitehorse Business and Economic Development Communication Strategy. B. Disseminate research and information conducted by Council departments that would provide relevant information to businesses. C. Provide business groups with information regarding proposed developments and changes in policy that may influence locational decisions or business processes. D. Ensure internal communications with other departments are maintained to ensure coordinated cross organisational delivery of projects that affect local businesses. 	Internal departments as required	<p>Short term</p> <p>Short term</p> <p>Short term</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

4.6 Environmental Sustainability

Background

In 2008 Council adopted the Whitehorse Sustainability Strategy 2008 - 2013: Our EcoVision, which enables the City and the community to embrace the principles of ecological sustainability. The progression of the EcoVision Strategy is now at a stage where groups, organisations and businesses within Whitehorse need to be further encouraged to embrace environmental sustainability.

Rationale

Environmental sustainability is an outcome that should be incorporated into every business practice. Information on environmental sustainability is now widely available and accessible and as a result every business from small to large can implement simple practices (purchasing power saving devices, green electricity and using recycled office supplies) to implementing comprehensive environmental management systems.

Although the knowledge is available, businesses have often needed assistance in the form of information or expertise to implement environmental sustainable practices. To assist with this, it is important for Council to work with businesses by developing strategic partnerships, identifying incentives and involving businesses in projects that help to reduce waste and water consumption and improve energy efficiency.

It is also important for Council to work with land owners and developers to implement environmental sustainable design principles in the early stages of design, development and retro fitting of commercial, industrial and retail properties within Whitehorse.

Objectives

- Increase in the local businesses awareness of environmental sustainable business practices
- Encourage the implementation environmental sustainable business practices
- Promote local achievements and case studies that represent best practice in environmental sustainability



Environmental Sustainability

Objectives	Actions	Department Liaison	Priority
4.6.1 Retail Activity Centres.	<p>A. Identified programs that can be delivered to assist businesses in activity centres.</p> <p>B. Identify programs that promote environmental sustainable in retail activity centres as a point of competitive differentiation.</p>	Internal departments as required	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Medium term</p>
4.6.2 Box Hill Activity Centre.	<p>A. Identified programs that can be delivered across activities in Box Hill that deliver environmental sustainable outcomes.</p> <p>B. Encourage the inclusion of ecologically sustainable development principals on redevelopment sites.</p>	Internal departments as required	<p>Short term</p> <p>Medium term</p>
4.6.3 Business Development.	<p>A. Encourage the inclusion of ecologically sustainable development principals on redevelopment sites.</p> <p>B. Promote programs in industrial and commercial areas that contribute to the reduction of the greenhouse footprint.</p> <p>C. Encourage development in relevant areas that contributes to the increased use of public transit.</p>	Internal departments as required	<p>Medium term</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Medium term</p>
4.6.4 Partnerships and Networks.	<p>A. Work with existing local business networks that implement and deliver environmental sustainable initiatives.</p> <p>B. Promote case studies of local examples that demonstrate best practice in environmental sustainability.</p>	EcoVision	<p>Short term</p> <p>Short term</p>
4.6.5 Communication, Events and Seminars	<p>A. Print all hard copy communications publications on recycled paper and where possible, reduce the printing of hard copy publications.</p> <p>B. Encourage seminars and events that inform and involve businesses in environmental sustainability.</p>	Internal departments as required	<p>Medium term</p> <p>Medium term</p>



5 Conclusion

This strategy has built upon the previous Economic Development Strategy and the associated projects that were identified and been delivered since its adoption by Council in 2001.

In achieving Council's vision and role in local economic development that has been presented in this strategy, Council continues to recognised the importance of the role of business in contributing to a quality and sustainable lifestyle for residents, by Council working with business in the areas of:

- Retail activity centres
- Box Hill activity centre
- Business development
- Partnerships and networking
- Communication, seminars and events
- Environmental sustainability

Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that Council has an extremely diverse economy across a number of sectors including but not limited to:

- Manufacturing
- Wholesale trade
- Property and business services
- Construction
- Retail trade
- Health and community services

More specifically this strategy has highlighted the significance of and need to direct efforts towards those higher value added sectors in order to maintain Whitehorse's economic strength.

Through the implementation of this strategy it will ensure that the strengths of industry and business are maintained and that Whitehorse continues to be recognised for its leadership as a proactive council in business development, environmental sustainability and social awareness.

CITY OF



WHITEHORSE





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