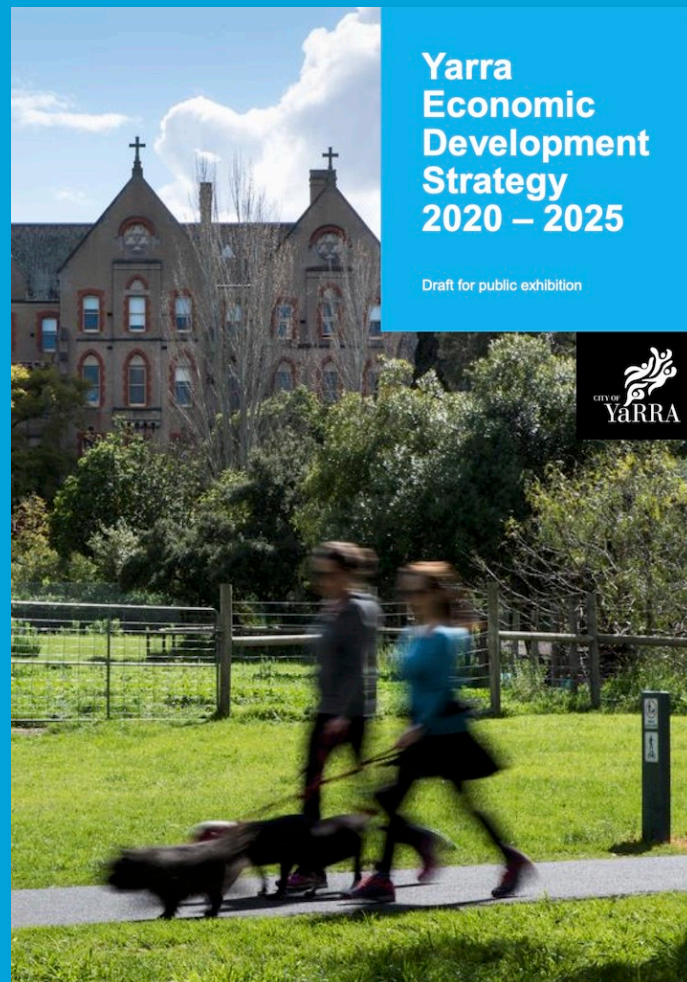


# Draft Economic Development Strategy



*Image credit: City of Yarra*



Prepared by: Streets Alive Yarra  
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## Foreward

Streets Alive Yarra is a non-profit, volunteer, resident and ratepayer action group with a [vision](#) for more trees, wider footpaths and vibrant businesses in thriving [neighbourhoods](#). We see our streets being used by people from [all ages](#), irrespective of whether they choose to walk, cycle, use public transport or drive. Residents and shoppers are able to move safely, comfortably, and conveniently around Yarra; and can easily find a park near shops.



*Image credit: OCULUS Landscape Architecture and Urban Design*

Streets Alive Yarra was founded in 2017 and now has over 2,500 likes on Facebook. A network of local champions develops concepts and proposals for how to improve their local street or precinct. Streets Alive Yarra is also Yarra's Walkability Action Group (WAG) representative for Victoria Walks.

Further information is available at: [streets-alive-yarra.org/about](https://streets-alive-yarra.org/about).

## Summary

Streets Alive Yarra recommends that the economic development strategy highlight the role of Council as delivering essential infrastructure, and to define actions to monitor & forecast utilisation levels of essential infrastructure, which can then guide Council budget allocations for capital works.

The strategy would benefit from acknowledging that the primary cause of economic growth in Yarra is our proximity to the CBD. With this context, Council doesn't need to support economic development, but rather focus on delivering essential infrastructure, which enables private enterprise and the free market to deliver growth.

## Trends

We suggest that the draft strategy fails to highlight the most important trends that could negatively impact upon economic activity in Yarra, compared with other municipalities, including:

- Congestion on our transport infrastructure, which affects access to businesses for customers and goods.
- The cost to purchase or rent land or office space.

These trends can be monitored, forecasted and mitigated, which is what the strategy should be focussed on.

## Council's role

We agree with the definition that states “work collectively to create better conditions for economic growth”. The key issue is how best to allocate limited funds. We suggest that Council should focus on roles that deliver the highest value, such as delivering infrastructure that is essential to economic activity, including the ability of people and goods to access properties. To do this, Council needs to:

- Monitor utilisation levels (or congestion) of essential infrastructure such as footpaths, bicycle lanes and vehicle lanes.
- Forecast utilisation levels via population trends for residents & workers, via applications for planning permits.
- Plan and invest in essential infrastructure to ensure utilisation levels remain below acceptable thresholds.

Regarding the cost to purchase or rent land, warehouse or office space, the best opportunity for Council is to publish and administer a clear planning scheme, to:

- Enable private enterprise to know what can be built on each title.
- Enable private enterprise to properly value land and to secure finance for development.
- Expand the supply of warehouse & office space in Yarra, and by extension, to mitigate the increase in rental prices.

If Council delivers these, we believe that economic activity will flourish in Yarra.

## Response to COVID-19

The draft strategy includes a brief section addressing COVID-19, but fails to highlight the key way that Council can help, which is to invest in infrastructure for walking and cycling to enable people to transition from public transport (high infection risk) to walking and cycling (low infection risk), recognising that we don't have enough street space for everyone to drive and park.

## General feedback

### Actions, targets and monitoring

It would be helpful to overhaul the tables which refer to "Targets", "Monitoring" and "Indicator". These appear to be mixed up and conflated. Each action should be associated with an objective measure of success, and articulated in a manner that is specific, measurable, assignable, realistic and time-related.

### Businesses

We suggest that it is less important to know many businesses we have, and more important to track how many people we have, including residents, visitors and workers. It is the number of people which affects the utilisation levels of essential infrastructure, and thus provides information on where investment is required. The economic strategy should support a process of investment planning via the existing LAPM process, and be updated to show forecasts for the growth in the number of residents, visitors and workers in each LAPM area, together with forecasts of the utilisation levels of essential infrastructure in each LAPM area.

### Visitation

This section offers useful data on the total number of visitors. The strategy should be updated to show forecasts for the growth in the number of visitors to each LAPM area, to help guide infrastructure investments in each LAPM area.

### Demographic growth

This section offers useful data on population growth. The strategy should be updated to show forecasts for the growth in resident population of each LAPM area, to help guide infrastructure investments in each LAPM area.

### Yarra's housing profile

Council can help economic growth by altering the Yarra Planning Scheme to catalyse an increase in the number of households (e.g. townhouses, units, apartments) in Yarra, thus decreasing the cost of rental accommodation (compared with business as usual), thus making it easier to both live and work in Yarra, thus attracting businesses to Yarra.

### Key trends influencing the economy

This section fails to include the key trends identified in this submission, which we believe are:

- Congestion on our transport infrastructure, which affects access to businesses for customers and goods.
- The cost to purchase or rent land or office space.

## Vision

We suggest that the vision can be simpler and more concise “The City of Yarra is a place where business prospers”.

What is missing is the mission and the strategy. The mission is to provide essential infrastructure. The strategy is to monitor trends and plan infrastructure investment via a design process that collaborates with residents & ratepayers.

Following on from the mission and strategy, the actions are to:

- Monitor utilisation levels of essential infrastructure.
- Forecast utilisation levels via population trends and planning applications.
- Review all 21 LAPM precincts within each 4-year term of Council.
- Use citizens’ juries to resolve contentious issues.
- Help fund LAPMs via an expanded developer contribution scheme.
- Publish structure plans and planning controls for the entirety of Yarra.

## Actions

We support the following actions:

Collaborate with IMAP councils, industry partners and internal advisory groups to identify strategies and campaigns (shop local) to encourage patronage back to Yarra's retail and services precincts.	Economic Development / Communications	Short term
Investigate and implement improved pedestrian space and cycle routes to local activity centres.	Economic Development	Immediate
Monitor the growth and change in Yarra's employment precincts by monitoring changes in commercial office floorspace, employment growth and planning permit activity.	Strategic Planning	Ongoing
Strengthen the economic role and function of Yarra's Activity Centres by developing structure plans which build on the unique character of each precinct.	Strategic Planning	Short Term
Prepare the Cremorne Place Implementation Plan in partnership with the VPA	Strategic Planning	Short Term
Prepare planning controls for guiding development in Yarra's activity centres that support predictable decision making.	Strategic Planning	Short Term
Prepare structure plans for Yarra's Major Activity Centres. Ensure that the plans consider the current economic role and function, land supply and demand for land use.	Strategic Planning	Ongoing
Develop new and support implementation of existing streetscape masterplans for activity centres, to provide a design direction and forward programme for future capital works.	Urban Design	Ongoing
Encourage residents, visitors and workers to use public and active transport modes by promoting the benefits of sustainable transport through supporting participation in events such as Ride-to-Work and Walk-to-Work Days.	Economic Development	Ongoing
Promote initiatives/programs that aim to support businesses to improve accessibility (e.g. Design for Dignity Retail Guidelines).	Economic Development	Ongoing



## Concluding remarks

In our view, the strategy would benefit from:

- Highlighting that the primary economic driver is our proximity to the CBD.
- Defining the role of Council as delivering essential infrastructure .
- Including actions to:
  - Monitor utilisation levels of essential infrastructure.
  - Forecast utilisation levels via population trends and planning applications.
  - Review all 21 LAPM precincts within each 4-year term of Council.
  - Use citizens' juries to resolve contentious issues.
  - Publish structure plans and planning controls for the entirety of Yarra.

Streets Alive Yarra would be delighted to provide further detail or explanation of the themes raised in this document.

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