



Prepared for Eltham Chamber of Commerce & Industry

ECCI BUSINESS PLAN 2021 – 2026

ACRONYMS

ECCI	Eltham Chamber of Commerce & Industry
MAC	Major Activity Centre
TRA	Tourism Research Australia
VFR	Visiting Friends and Relatives

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Introduction

In June 2016, the Nillumbik Shire Council declared a Special Rate under section 163(1) of the Local Government Act 1989 for the purposes of defraying promotional, advertising, marketing, business development and other incidental expenses associated with the encouragement of commerce and retail and professional activity and employment in the Eltham Town Centre.

The Council resolved to appoint the Eltham Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ECCI) to be the agent of the Council in order to administer the expenditure of the proceeds raised by the Special Rate for the purposes generally outlined above, and including other additional in-kind contributions to the scheme made by the Council.

The current agreement commenced on 1 July 2016 and will end on 30 June 2021, with the special rate levy raising \$130,000 per year, a total of \$650,000 over the five-year period.

Renewal of the special rate levy has been endorsed by Council with the commencement of a new five-year period on 1 July 2021.

The purpose of this plan is to direct expenditure of the special rate proceeds over the five-year period, (approx. \$143,000 per year raising a total of \$715,000 over the five-year period) ensuring the plan fulfils the requirements of the Funding Agreement between Nillumbik Shire Council and Eltham Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ECCI), whilst delivering effective marketing and business development strategies to maximise the benefits of the scheme to the entire precinct.



Methodology

The Plan, prepared by Destination Yellow, was developed to guide and support ECCI into the future whilst acknowledging the difficulty and uncertainty of recent times for local businesses.

The plan takes a holistic approach and considers a broader range of factors affecting businesses, encompassing the triple bottom line philosophy.

- Social
- Environment
- Economic

An extensive research piece prepared for ECCI preceded the development of this plan and data from this document was utilised for this plan.

An important feature of this plan was to ensure extensive consultation was undertaken with key stakeholders. Consultations took the form of individual face to face interviews, telephone interviews, workshops, emails and surveys. All ECCI members were invited to provide feedback throughout the development of the plan via an online survey or direct contact with the consultant. Whilst ECCI members did participate the overall level of engagement was low.

Consultation included:

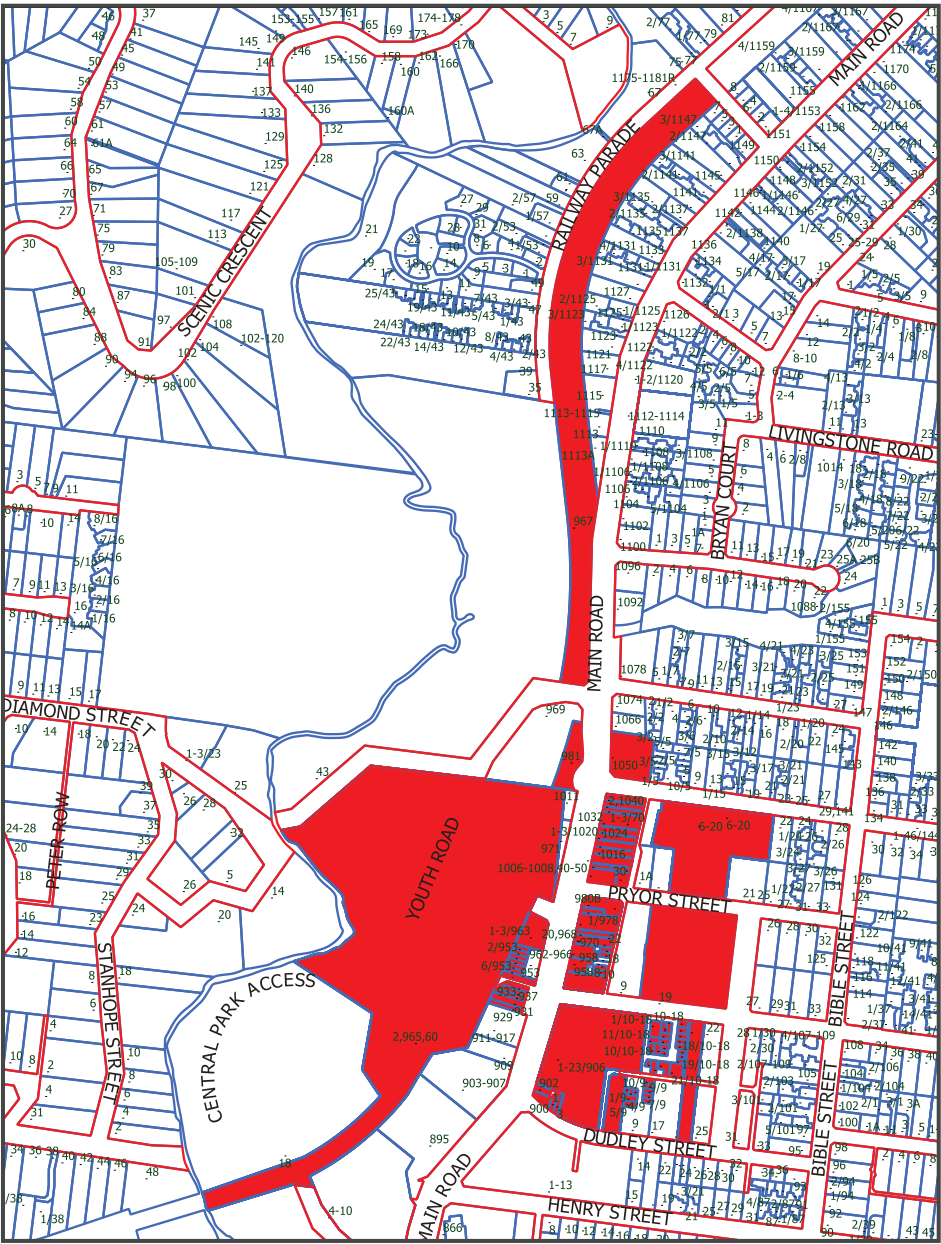
- ECCI members (traders) online survey
- Customer online surveys
- One on one trader interviews (face to face/phone)
- ECCI committee workshops
- Meetings with key stakeholders (Council, Mayor, Councillor's, traders, club/groups).

Data collected from surveys (consumer and members) and consultations, both qualitative and quantitative, was also used to formulate the plan.

In addition, a desktop/literature review of all relevant plans, policies and projects was also undertaken.

Project context/background

Eltham Town and the special rated area is part of the larger Eltham Major Activity Centre (MAC). The special rated area and its boundary are located within the MAC and are highlighted in the map below.



Special Rate Property Boundary Road Boundary

There are currently 178 special rated PROPERTIES – as the special rate is apportioned to buildings or the premises and not the business itself. Therefore; the number of businesses within the special rated boundary precinct fluctuates due to seasonal leases, rentals, vacancies and turnover of shops.

To understand the business mix and key industries within the special rated area, businesses were segmented into 13 categories (table 1).

Based on information obtained from ECCI database and the rated businesses within the precinct, the top four industries as categorised by us (based on business counts of approximately 190) are:

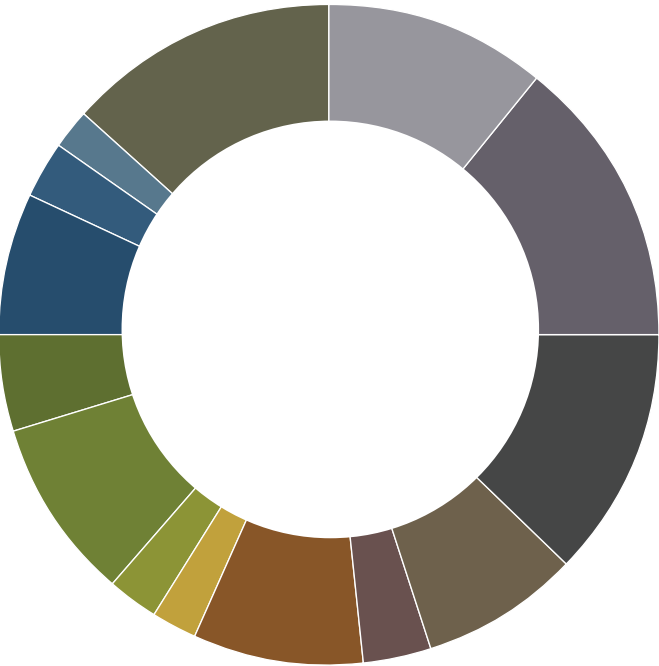
- 1. Cafes/restaurants/bars – 14%
- 2. Food/liquor/takeaway – 12%
- 3. Retail – 11%
- 4. Business & Professional Services – 9%

Cafes/restaurants/bars and food/liquor/takeaway account for just over a quarter (50 or 26%) of all businesses in the rated area.

When we add all service businesses together, being Business and Professional, Financial and general Services, these industries combined account for nearly 20% of the precinct businesses, highlighting, and reinforcing the large number of professionals that live and work in Eltham.

INDUSTRY	NO.	%
RETAIL	21	11%
CAFES/RESTAURANTS/BARS	27	14%
FOOD/LIQUOR/TAKEAWAY	23	12%
HAIR & BEAUTY	15	8%
REAL ESTATE	6	3%
SERVICES	16	8%
FASHION, FOOTWEAR & ALTERATIONS	4	2%
SPORT & FITNESS	5	3%
BUSINESS & PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	17	9%
MEDICAL & DENTAL	9	5%
HEALTH & WELLBEING	13	7%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	5	3%
TRAVEL	4	2%
UNCATEGORISED	25	13%

Table 1: ECCI Business Mix
Note: the above table was calculated and based on business counts of approximately 190 in the precinct. This number will always be fluid depending on current operating status of businesses.



Strategic context

The Business Plan is in line with broader economic development goals of Nillumbik Shire Council and consistent with State government plans for the Precinct. Aligning strategically will further enhance opportunities for growth and prosperity for all ECCI members.

The key strategic documents related to this plan are:

- *Plan Melbourne*
- *Nillumbik Shire Council Plan*
- *Nillumbik Shire Economic Development Strategy 2020-2030*
- *Eltham Structure Plan.*

PLAN MELBOURNE

The Victorian Government’s *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050* recognises Eltham as a Major Activity Centre (MAC). *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050* is the current metropolitan strategy for Melbourne that aims to support growth outside of the central city, developing a network of activity centres linked by transport as a means to improve access to jobs across Melbourne and to deliver more housing closer to jobs and public transport.

COUNCIL PLAN

Councils vision for Nillumbik Shire is to be Australia’s most liveable Shire. Economic prosperity is one of the five strategic objectives outlined in the *Nillumbik Shire Council Plan 2017-2021, Living in the Landscape*.

#4 A PROSPEROUS ECONOMY: A strong local economy that supports business growth, jobs and community wealth.

Underpinning this objective are a range of strategies to support Council to achieve their goals, with the below strategies relating to Eltham and the Eltham Activity Centre:

4.1 Encourage investment and development within the Shire to increase economic development and local employment, and broaden the rate base while at the same time preserving the Green Wedge

4.2 Develop and market the tourism industry in Nillumbik

4.3 Review existing precinct structure plans within activity centres to encourage investment and development

4.4 Develop a visionary plan for Precincts 3 and 4 in the Eltham Activity Centre, including the former Shire Office site and transport modal interchange.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Strategy 4.1.1 of the Council Plan lists the formation and adoption of the *Nillumbik Economic Development Strategy 2020-2030*. The strategy identifies four key strategic objectives:

1. Improve economic development practices and programs to assist local businesses
2. Create vibrant activity centres and employment precincts in Eltham and Diamond Creek
3. Facilitate economically and environmentally sustainable use of land within the Shire’s green wedge
4. Enhance the visitor economy showcasing natural, recreational and cultural strengths.

ELTHAM STRUCTURE PLAN

At a local level activity centres are critical to Nillumbik’s economic future and the *Eltham Major Activity Centre (MAC) Structure Plan* provides the following vision for the Eltham activity centre:

VISION: Eltham (MAC) will be a focus for community life, and provide a wide range of residences, shopping and professional services, and places to meet and recreate. Residents, workers and visitors will enjoy an attractive, distinctive, indigenous, safe and highly accessible urban environment.

COVID-19

Whilst aligning the Business Plan strategically will support ECCI to achieve its goals, the plan must be fluid to respond to changing market conditions – and over the past 18 months there has been none bigger than COVID-19.

The outbreak of this world-wide pandemic has caused economic hardship, significant changes to consumer behaviour and continues to affect the way we do business.

Although COVID-19 is increasingly becoming under control day by day, no new or COVID-19 specific strategic plans have been, or will be, put in place by Council to address this issue at a business level. A more ad-hoc approach to business support has been implemented at an operational level and will be used into the future.

Council has a RESPOND>RECOVER>THRIVE mantra to business support and economic development for COVID-19. This is a fluid document which includes all economic development actions for implementation on a daily basis but responds to the changing needs of the business community in relation to COVID-19 and its ongoing challenges. Actions directly support traders. Council encourages traders to provide feedback and liaise with them on a regular basis and welcomes the opportunity to connect more in future.

Council will continue to use the *Economic Development Strategy* as its guiding document for economic development in the next 10 years and the *Eltham Structure Plan* for the precinct specifically.



ECCI

The Eltham Chamber of Commerce and Industry is a body of volunteers from within the local business community which represents the views, concerns and interests of Eltham businesses, at Local, State and Federal government levels.

Its mission is to represent all businesses within the 3095 postcode and provide them with the best opportunities to increase business, whilst generating tourism, foot-traffic and local spending in Eltham. Within the association, there is scope for a paid position to support ECCI in achieving its goals and this is currently serviced by X2Marketing.

CURRENT ROLE

The primary role of ECCI is to market and promote the precinct. In its current format ECCI delivers a range of marketing initiatives and activities such as:

- media advertising
- promotions
- performances and exhibitions
- business networking
- public events
- decorations
- direct mail
- online media
- publications
- the engagement of a Centre marketing officer/ coordinator
- the provision of in-centre communications
- collaborative marketing activities such as The Artisan Hills campaigns.

Whilst the rate levy is intended to finance and drive marketing initiatives and activities for the precinct, consultation with ECCI members has uncovered a stronger need for representation and advocacy on all precinct matters – not just marketing and promotion. ECCI's current goals and objectives are not reflective of this and are not addressing all members' or traders' needs.

REPRESENTATION

ECCI represents all businesses in Eltham Town and this number is higher than the actual rated properties and is more realistically around 190 businesses. This includes all rated properties/buildings and multiple businesses, and some businesses outside the rate boundary, of which currently there are five businesses that are members of ECCI who reside outside the special rate boundary zone.

ECCI members/businesses make up approximately 8% of all businesses in Eltham and just over 3% of all businesses within the Shire.

8%

ECCI represents just over 8% of all businesses in Eltham

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

Current ECCI objectives are strongly geared towards marketing and are listed below:

Objective 1: Increase visitation to Eltham by 20%

Objective 2: Increase traders' participation by 10%, through e-News, digital and face-to-face communication

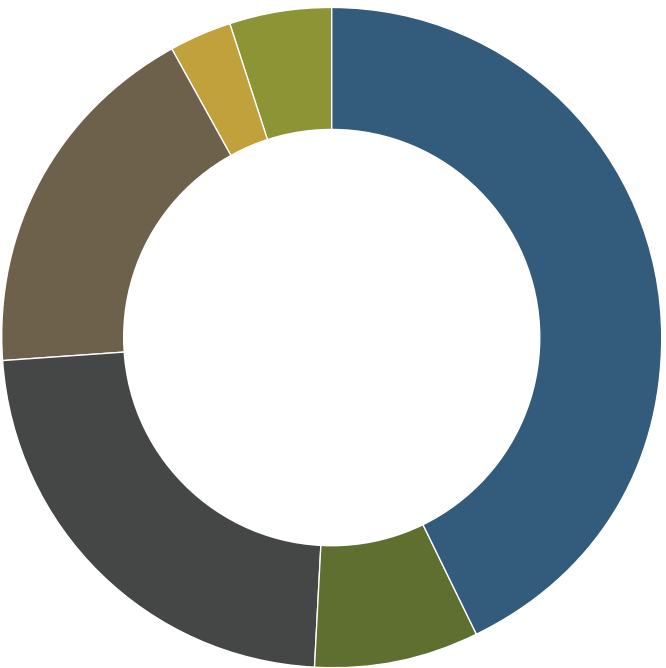
Objective 3: Increase Eltham Town's brand awareness outside the Nillumbik Shire to increase spending within a 50km radius of Eltham

Objective 4: Increase awareness and encourage community members to 'buy local' and 'spend local'.

It's no surprise then that a large portion of the ECCI budget and resources are predominantly spent on marketing activities and initiatives such as activations, events, campaigns and digital marketing. We can see from the chart below a further breakdown of ECCI activities and where the budget is spent.

Approximately half the budget (51%) is spent on administration, primarily the marketing coordinator, which is necessary to support the volunteer committee, undertake the day-to-day tasks of running ECCI and implement the marketing activities. There is very little spent on professional development, industry development activities or business improvement programs. In addition, communication and engagement and member-based activities appear to be limited with hardly any resources allocated to them.

The priority in the past has been marketing and should continue to be a feature in the future, however it's become apparent that ECCI must adapt to suit the changing needs and priorities of its current members.



ECCI Activities: 2020/21

ADMIN (HR)	43%
ADMIN (GENERAL)	8%
MARKETING - CAMPAIGNS/EVENT/ACTIVATIONS	23%
DIGITAL MARKETING	18%
NETWORKING/MEMBERSHIP	3%
SHOP LOCAL - COVID SPECIFIC CAMPAIGN	5%
ADVOCACY	0%

MEMBER AWARENESS

Currently ECCI operates according to its model rules and part of that is representing all businesses in the 3095 postcode, however current membership and activities are not really reflective of that.

Feedback from traders during development of this plan highlighted the lack of awareness of ECCI, what its role/ purpose is, what it stands for and what it does amongst other things.

Communication, connectivity and consistency were continually raised as areas of improvement and development for ECCI to become a strong and united association, along with aligning to model rules to ensure ECCI is representative of all 3095 businesses.

It should be noted that this is not just reflective of the current committee and appears to be long-held views from many traders over the years.

FUTURE ROLE

Whilst it's clear that marketing and promotion must remain a key priority for ECCI, there is a distinct need to broaden the scope of ECCI and its activities in the future to meet member needs. In addition, ECCI must understand the role Council plays and that with limited resources it does not fulfil all the needs of local businesses as other more well-resourced economic development units might. Therefore, ECCI has an even greater responsibility to fill this gap and help businesses grow, develop and thrive in the Eltham.

ECCI members were asked to rank the activities ECCI should be focused on in the future, with marketing coming in at number one. The top five ranked activities are listed below:

- 1. **Marketing**
- 2. **Communication with traders/businesses**
- 3. **Events**
- 4. **Streetscape/image/cleanliness**
- 5. **Attracting business/investment.**

These key priority areas will help guide the plan and future ECCI activities.



IN THE NEXT 5 YEARS ECCI WILL:

- Achieve something for its members
- Provide value and benefits to its members.

ECCI WILL BE REMEMBERED FOR:

- Strong support of traders
- Strong business association that people want to be a part of
- Development of a thriving business precinct for all 3095 businesses.

The above statements will drive all ECCI decisions and also form the basis for ECCI's mission, vision and values. It's time to focus on building the foundation – cementing those foundations first and then building upon in the years to come. A fresh start – look towards the future, not the past.

Critical success factors

What does a successful shopping precinct look like and has ECCI achieved that? According to ECCI members the following attributes are critical to the success of a thriving shopping precinct.



So how is Eltham Town tracking against these critical success factors? We've used the traffic light system to easily illustrate the progress/ level of each critical success factor in the precinct. According to research¹ the precinct's performance in each of these areas is listed below.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTOR	PROGRESS
CONVENIENCE	<div></div>
FOOD/DINING/ENTERTAINMENT	<div></div>
GOOD BUSINESS MIX	<div></div>
ONE STOP SHOP	<div></div>
INDEPENDENTS	<div></div>
HIVE OF ACTIVITY	<div></div>
STREETSCAPE - LOOKS APPEALING	<div></div>
STRONG, CLEAR IDENTITY	<div></div>
DESTINATION	<div></div>
CONSISTENT LOOK/FEEL	<div></div>
GREAT ATMOSPHERE	<div></div>
COMMUNITY SPIRIT/PERSONAL TOUCH	<div></div>
EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER SERVICE	<div></div>

KEY

- Success
- Satisfactory - room for improvement
- Needs attention and should be a focus area

From this analysis you can see the areas Eltham Town is performing well in and the areas that need improvement or attention and should be a focus moving forward.

These areas are only reviewed at a broad level and can be quite complex. In addition, they are not all the responsibility of ECCI and therefore the onus to improve areas must be a combined or partnership approach with all key stakeholders.

The above will also help shape the key focus areas and actions/activities for this business plan over the next five years.

¹ Stakeholder interviews March 2021, customer and trader research online surveys December 2020 and general observations of precinct September 2020 – March 2021

Markets

As identified in the Research Report² its clear that locals are the key market for Eltham Town – accounting for the majority, if not all of the business’s customers.

Whilst visitors was listed in recent ECCI Business Plans as a target market, realistically it’s not a large portion of the current market, however there is certainly opportunity in the future to tap into this market and expand market share.

Current markets are summarised below.

CURRENT		
LOCALS	TRADERS	CLUBS
Families, elderly, children, single, professionals, farmers market shoppers, customers, schools, employees.	Body corporates, retail, health, beauty & wellness services, hospitality, boutique, real estate agents.	Rotary, football, netball, mens shed, Lions, basketball, scouts/girl guides, tennis, swimming, gym.

Whilst these markets should determine and drive marketing strategies and activities, previous plans have not always aligned activities with key target markets. Future initiatives should be targeted to ensure these markets are well supported.

Some of the current markets will naturally continue to grow, however others will require some strategic thinking and targeting to ensure their numbers do not diminish in coming years.

Markets that may require some development are summarised below.

DEVELOPMENT	
LOCALS	FAMILIES
With low population growth and an aging population, these primary or core markets may not naturally grow like other regions.	Increased competition and offerings from neighbouring and larger activity centres means this market must continue to be targerted with key initiatives to support this critical group.

² ECCI Research Report, January 2021

Whilst there is modest positive population growth forecast for Nillumbik Shire (8%) and stronger growth for Eltham (33%), some locales within the Shire will experience negative growth in coming years. Businesses must be mindful that this market may not naturally continue to increase and some development will be required to support long-term economic sustainability. In addition, with the primary catchment area not growing as fast as Melbourne, the existing local market must be nurtured and targeted to ensure numbers remain strong.

Families as we know are already a key market and demographic for the area, the lifestyle the region provides

is a popular reason why so many families choose Eltham and Nillumbik. Considering over 60% of all Eltham families have children, be that established couples, older couples or maturing couples; the family market cannot be underestimated neither can the competition from other major activity centres.

Whilst these markets should remain a focus for ECCI, there are a number of new, emerging and untapped markets that Eltham Town and the broader area should focus on to increase visitation and ensure long-term sustainability. The Research Report³ highlighted a number of these and they are summarised below.

EMERGING/UNTAPPED	
LOST LOCALS	DESTINATIONERS
Locals who currently don’t shop local - main reason locals shop now is because of convenience, so convert these locals to shoppers (quick win).	Visitors - mostly VFR and new tourists, people in the broader North region. Must give them a reason to come to the region - food, art, nature, etc.
WORKERS	HOME BASED
Current workers who come to the region each day - give them a reason to come back with families and others to explore at their leisure outside work hours.	With such a high existence of home-based businesses and the trend towards even more in the future, this captive market must be tapped in to.

³ ECCI Research Report, January 2021

LOST LOCALS

We know from the research that the main reason locals shop at Eltham Town is because of convenience, however there is a portion of locals, for one reason or another, that don't shop locally.

The challenge, yet opportunity, will be to target this missing or untapped market and convert them into local shoppers. A change in locals shopping habits is required and COVID could be the catalyst to change this markets behaviour. With such high escape expenditure, a focus should be on trying to redirect some of that expenditure locally and hence why COVID has been a blessing for some businesses as its forced people to shop local and perhaps 'rediscover' their local shops. Don't lose the momentum that COVID may have created by compelling locals to shop local (who wouldn't normally do so).

DESTINATIONERS

This market is more traditionally known as tourists or visitors, however the reason behind this market's motivation is that they will see Eltham as a 'destination' to visit and come from outside the Shire. Destinationers will be looking for a unique experience, a point of difference, a reason to travel afield and venture out. Visitors will most likely be coming to see friends and family (number one reason they visit the Shire) and will look to share local experiences together.

Previous positioning from ECCI appeared to list these potential target markets but initiatives and activities did not support this. In the past few years these markets have continued to grow and Council has identified the visitor economy as a key industry for investment moving forward. In addition, research revealed that visitors tend on average to spend more per transaction than residents, so targeting this market, predominantly the domestic market and strong VFR market, should be a focus for the future.

WORKERS

Whilst we know that just over half (54.5%) of Nillumbik Shire's local workers were residents, on the flip side it means that approximately 45% of workers come from outside the shire to work – so an opportunity exists to encourage this group of people to come back and explore with their friends and family at another time.

HOME-BASED

With COVID having such a profound effect on how and where, and the way businesses operate, the trend towards home-based businesses is likely to continue. With such a strong home-based business sector (71%) in Nillumbik local businesses must tap into this growing market.



SWOT: Situation analysis

A detailed SWOT analysis was undertaken of the activity precinct. Utilising key consumer and business research and feedback, the table below provides a snapshot of strengths, areas of improvement, future opportunities and threats. Whilst not exhaustive, the summary highlights potential areas of focus for ECCI.

STRENGTHS	
Traders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Great businesses▪ Long term traders▪ New traders▪ Independent stores/boutique▪ Variety of stores▪ Staples – banks/services▪ ECCI – good business nous
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Open/spacious▪ Beautiful outlook/landscape▪ Greenery
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Lots of people▪ Loyalty of local community/repeat visitors▪ High socio-economic area/high disposable income/people willing to spend▪ Strong and diverse community▪ Supportive, highly engaged community▪ Desirable place to live
Strategically a Major Activity Centre (MAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Good location▪ Strong public transport links▪ Parking▪ Health services▪ Well known/has a profile
Village feel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Inviting▪ Unique▪ The feeling when you come here▪ Ambience▪ Little bit rural – not a shopping land

AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT	
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Time limits, fragmented (doesn't allow customers to stay longer/spend more)
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Businesses tend to compete with each other rather than feed off each other▪ Some traders not engaged or enthusiastic/in their own bubble/set in their ways/project negativity
Activations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Empty shops/vacancy rates▪ In all 'sub-precincts' not just highly visible ones
Lack of development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 90% of Shire is green wedge – business growth and activity is restrictive▪ Lack of progress- some segments of the public fear of over development or any development
Business support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Support networks from Council not there▪ Council – red tape, inaction, businesses not a priority, a general feeling of lack of support for small business▪ Training/business development▪ Landlords – not always supportive of local businesses
Local market	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Reduce escape expenditure▪ The precinct is not always locals first option – if they think of us first they won't go elsewhere▪ Not enough focus on locals
Business development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Businesses don't always market themselves well - don't understand their market/local market▪ Customer service varies business to business▪ Digital marketing – adjust to market changes
Placemaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Welcome signage/sense of welcome – lacking and not conducive to stopping and shopping▪ Located on a hill – layout not so conducive/easily accessible to all▪ Beautification/streetscape▪ Tired looking, rubbish▪ Disjointed/confusing layout/flow – hinders meandering▪ Lack of signage – especially on Main Rd (if you don't live here/local you wouldn't know there are shops behind▪ Main Rd and entering from railway station.▪ No way-finding strategy/connection▪ Traffic flow▪ Pedestrian safety/accessibility/condition of walkways
ECCI	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Very little awareness of ECCI▪ Lack of engagement and connection with ECCI/not a lot of buy in from traders▪ Advocacy – on a strategic level▪ Need clear direction/goals/leadership – need action▪ Current ECCI activities not beneficial to traders▪ Strategic alliances (eg: Eltham Village Shopping Centre)
Business mix	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ No anchor employer▪ Nothing to keep you here – doesn't appeal as a 'day out
Branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ No unified look or feel to the precinct▪ No clear brand/identity – disconnect between Eltham identity and Eltham Town

OPPORTUNITIES	
Professional development program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Networking▪ Training▪ Business improvement
Activation of vacant shops	
COVID impacts:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Made people shop local – keep the momentum▪ Wanting to spend more locally▪ Wanting to support local shops▪ Wanting to stay local▪ New customers working from home regularly▪ Reduce escape expenditure
Sector specific focus - Home-based, tradies	
Collaboration - with local businesses and local organisations, including volunteers	
Discover new customers – appeal to broader reach	
Stronger chamber	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Tiered membership/sub-groups for key issues▪ New energy & optimism within ECCI▪ New members/traders▪ Engaged traders▪ Extend rate base
Potential for new business/ investors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ More ‘destination’ businesses▪ Complementary businesses to existing businesses (add to current mix)▪ Incentives to come here/invest▪ Business mix – can be built on
Activation of all space within precinct	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Use the town square more – great space▪ Revitalisation of walkways/arcades/laneways – all connectors to the town centres
Strengthen ties with Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Use as a conduit/support for traders▪ Advocate for businesses and algin priorities with local, state and federal govt policies▪ Opportunity to align with key strategic documents already developed:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Eltham Major Activity Centre (MAC) Plan▪ Nillumbik Shire Economic Development Strategy 2030
Brand refresh – clear identity for the future and consistent in application across the board	
Tourism/day trippers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Yarra Valley Tourism (YVT) partnership▪ Day trippers growing market (be open/give them something to visit▪ Capitalise and tap into the arts/heritage/culture market
Markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Leverage off the various markets within the area▪ Twilight market
Green branding and ethos – capitalise and build on this (green/nature/trees/etc)	

THREATS
COVID
Council – lack of understanding, support and engagement
Lack of business growth/development
Competition from larger shopping centres (eg: Doncaster)
Low population growth
Change in demographics and locals shopping habits
New locals leaving the area for their shopping needs

“

Businesses in Eltham need to thrive or Eltham won’t thrive

”

“

Geographically it is the centerpiece in a region of tranquil and inspiring natural attractions.

”

The future: connectedness

A key feature of this plan is connectedness. Research uncovered both consumers and traders felt a clear sense of dis-connect on many levels, therefore the actions and activities of ECCI over the next five years will be driven by the need **to connect, be connected and stay connected.**




ECCI and its' members must connect with their own business, their neighbours, Council, the brand, the precinct and its customers to have a stronger, united and successful ECCI and a thriving precinct well into the future.





The ability to work together and create meaningful partnerships will see ECCI deliver a successful plan for all members.

Mission/Vision

MISSION OF ECCI

-  To provide value to all members
-  To strengthen our offering for all members
-  To build upon and strengthen what we have

VISION

-  To be a one-stop-shop where locals think Eltham first
-  To be a thriving, bustling destination offering a unique shopping experience

OUR VALUES

-  Integrity
-  Community
-  Engaged
-  Inclusiveness
-  Representative of all



Focus areas

Historically ECCI has focused on marketing as its key priority and whilst this should continue to be a key focus in the future, the scope of activities and initiatives that ECCI delivers for its members will need to expand to meet needs and expectations.

ECCI must adapt to be more than a marketing organisation and rise to the challenge to create, and retain a thriving and sustainable precinct well into the future. It's role and place in the Eltham business landscape is even more critical than before considering the current economic climate.

Thus, combining all research and relevant feedback the following four focus areas have been developed to guide the strategic directions of this plan.

1. LEADERSHIP & ENGAGEMENT

ECCI must strengthen its resolve as an organisation and advocate for all its members on issues that affect them. It must engage at a deeper level, and on a more regular basis with members and increase its awareness in the marketplace as an industry body representing Eltham businesses. Strengthening strategic partnerships to provide greater economic benefits to members should also be a focus.

2. MARKETING

Continue to build on current marketing actions and initiatives already in place and develop more targeted marketing campaigns to meet niche target markets. Grow digital platforms and build brand awareness to encourage increased visitation from local and new markets. Embrace the emerging tourism market.

3. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Focus should be on developing an ongoing and expansive business development and improvement program to meet business needs. Provide learning, training and networking opportunities for all businesses. Upskill businesses and provide them with the tools and capacity they need to improve their businesses and provide an outstanding customer experience.

4. PLACE

Support works to improve the overall visitor experience of the precinct. Improving the sense of arrival and welcome to the precinct, connecting sub-precincts ensuring an accessible and inclusive experience for all. In addition, addressing the empty shops and general streetscape and beautification, along with the visual appeal of individual businesses should be a focus to support the precinct to become a destination.

Action plan

The following strategies and goals (Action Plan) are aligned to each of the four focus areas and have been developed to support businesses grow, develop and thrive post COVID.

To deliver this plan and associated actions everyone has a role to play – ECCI, the committee, members, paid resources, key stakeholders, community and customers. It’s a team effort and everyone must play their part.

The first three years of the plan are focused on demonstrating the value of ECCI and building on its foundations, then it will look to expand and grow significantly in subsequent years.

Budget figures are indicative only and suggest that some redirection of funds from other more traditional areas of focus in the past will be needed.

KEY: PRIORITY

Strategies and actions have been allocated a priority for implementation.

- SHORT

1-2 years
- MEDIUM

3-4 years
- LONG

4-5 years

LEADERSHIP & ENGAGEMENT				
STRATEGY	#	ACTIONS	PRIORITY	BUDGET
Build a strong, united, and thriving ECCI representing all members and advocating for their businesses needs.	1.1	Create an advocacies agenda and share with Government agencies (including Council) and key stakeholders to ensure they understand, and are aware of ECCI/trader priorities. Be the voice of Eltham businesses at a strategic level.	SHORT	Within resources
	1.2	Prepare and distribute an advocacies agenda and progress report each month so as to inform all ECCI businesses which issues ECCI are advocating for and their progress (could be an extra section in the suggested business newsletter). Continue to advocate on issues affecting businesses such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none">RubbishAppearance/tidying up of buildingsSignageCleanlinessParking/parking designEtc.	SHORT	Within resources
	1.3	Review the Business Plan/Action Plan at the end of each financial year to ensure KPI's have been met and assess current strategies/actions meet ECCI needs and objectives	SHORT	Within resources
	1.4	Determine level of investment and commitment to the annual Eltham Jazz Festival. To what extent should ECCI be involved, both financially and resource wise and is it a key priority for members.	MEDIUM	Within resources
Improve participation in ECCI activities	2.1	Investigate the possibility of forming theme based or location based sub-committees on ECCI to distribute workload, increase efficiencies and ensure greater representation across the precinct	SHORT	Within resources
	2.2	Investigate the possibility of changing ECCI committee meeting time/date to encourage greater participation and attendance by ECCI members	SHORT	Within resources

STRATEGY	#	ACTIONS	PRIORITY	BUDGET
Increase awareness of ECCI from current members through a range of awareness programs	3.1	<p>Develop and implement an 'ECCI Awareness' Program for all businesses in the 3095 postcode. Develop promotional material of ECCI and its achievements to distribute to current and potential members.</p> <p>Focus should include but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ECCI role/purpose ECCI committee profiles ECCI achievements Measurements/outcomes Successes. 	SHORT	\$2K
	3.2	Develop a range of initiatives and portals for ECCI businesses so they learn who, and what businesses/products are in Eltham Town/precinct and can refer customers to them, keeping them in the area longer and potentially reducing escape expenditure.	MEDIUM	\$2K
Improve communication and engagement with ECCI members	4.1	<p>Improve digital communication with ECCI businesses.</p> <p>Development of a digital newsletter distributed online via portals such as Mail chimp, enabling more efficient use of resources and more timely and regular information to ECCI businesses.</p>	SHORT	\$1K
	4.2	Undertake a 'Pound the Pavement' type campaign to develop greater relationships with, and understanding of ECCI members and their needs.	SHORT	Within resources
Increase membership	5.1	Develop a formal ECCI welcome pack for new members – consisting of more than just forms to sign and rules of association. Define and market the benefits of being/becoming an ECCI member through a professional welcome kit.	SHORT	\$2K
	5.2	Actively seek new ECCI members by engaging with all Eltham (3095) businesses.	MEDIUM	Within resources
	5.3	Expand ECCI membership base beyond Eltham Town. Seek a formal review of the rate levy boundary in preparation for next rate renewal in 2026. This will ensure all 3095 businesses are represented and marketed. Further, it will present opportunities to increase budget and grow ECCI membership considerably.	LONG	Within resources

STRATEGY	#	ACTIONS	PRIORITY	BUDGET
Develop and further strengthen key strategic partnerships to yield greater economic outcomes for the area	6.1	Further develop and strengthen partnerships with key community stakeholders and groups to deliver an enhanced activity centre for locals and visitors to enjoy.	SHORT	Within resources
	6.2	<p>Work closely and strategically to integrate further with the two major shopping centres (Coles and Woolworths).</p> <p>Encourage them to invest and enhance the appearance of the centres, improve the retail offer and better integration into the precinct.</p>	MEDIUM	Within resources
Support initiatives to improve the current businesses mix within the precinct and further develop Eltham as a destination	7.1	<p>Encourage investment into the precinct, in line with brand and Council's strategic economic vision for the area.</p> <p>Encourage Council to produce a business investment prospectus for the area.</p>	MEDIUM	Within resources
	7.2	Engage with landlords to advocate for and support more complementary businesses and investment within the precinct.	MEDIUM	Within resources

MARKETING

STRATEGY	#	ACTIONS	PRIORITY	BUDGET
Increase brand recognition of Eltham Town with the intention to raise awareness of the precinct to attract new/ more markets	8.1	Revitalise and update the Eltham Town branding to create a stronger, clearer and more unified precinct identity.	SHORT	\$10-20K
	8.2	Distribute brand materials and associated marketing collateral to encourage ECCI members/traders to utilise and leverage off the updated precinct brand.	SHORT	\$5K
	8.3	Investigate the possibility of formalising sub-brands within the precinct, to allow for easier identification of areas for customers and more targeted marketing opportunities	MEDIUM	Within resources
	8.4	Encourage and facilitate stronger collaborative marketing with ECCI members, utilising key brand attributes to build brand and destination awareness	MEDIUM	Within resources
Increase visitation to the precinct through a range of targeted marketing initiatives	9.1	Continue to roll out Shop Local campaigns designed to engage 'new' locals or locals whose shopping habits may have changed in recent times	SHORT	\$20-30K
	9.2	Develop a marketing campaign designed to engage the cycling/walking/trail customer	MEDIUM	\$10K
	9.3	Develop a specific marketing campaign to target the increased number of home-based businesses in the area	MEDIUM	\$10K
	9.4	Develop sector specific campaigns highlighting the range of products and services available in the precinct. This could include but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Hospitality (food & beverage)RetailHealth & WellnessCreative industriesEtc.	MEDIUM	\$20-30K
	9.5	Develop seasonal campaigns, capitalising on the changing seasons and leveraging off the area's key strengths	MEDIUM	\$5K
	9.6	Consider the continuation of free ECCI vouchers/ gift cards for customers who can spend at any ECCI business	MEDIUM	\$4K
	9.7	Continue to run competitions and provide real value offers to customers to entice them into the stores to stay longer and spend more	MEDIUM	\$5K
	9.8	Investigate the possibility of incentive or loyalty-based programs for the precinct	MEDIUM	Within resources
	9.9	Create a new angle and marketing campaign by leveraging off, and highlighting the arts/heritage/ culture aspect of the area	MEDIUM	\$5K

STRATEGY	#	ACTIONS	PRIORITY	BUDGET
Build on established digital platforms to increase digital footprint and reach new markets	10.1	Formalise and build on current digital media activities by developing a comprehensive and integrated Social media strategy. Key considerations should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Use of bloggers and influencersPartnershipsPaid SEOOnline campaigns targeted to target marketsIntegrated campaigns.	SHORT	\$10-20K
	10.2	Distribute social media snapshots/ statistics to all businesses on a regular basis – could be done as a regular feature in the proposed newsletter	SHORT	Within resources
	10.3	Build online visitor interaction and engagement through a range of online 'call to action' activities such as competitions, discount vouchers or special offers – whilst driving online traffic back to the precinct	SHORT	Within resources
	10.4	Targeted social media marketing every month – demographics, location, activity, event	SHORT	Within resources
	10.5	Educate businesses to connect/plug into all ECCI social media portal/platforms to enhance impact and reach of social media. Engage businesses to participate and get involved with all ECCI branding/ hashtags/social media.	SHORT	Within resources
	10.6	Develop promotional videos/vox pops profiling local businesses and business owners	MEDIUM	\$10-20K
	10.7	Develop a visual image library for use on all digital platforms. Engage a professional photographer (in conjunction with Council) to capture the true essence of the precinct to entice visitors from further afield to visit.	MEDIUM	\$5K

STRATEGY	#	ACTIONS	PRIORITY	BUDGET
Encourage repeat visitation and increased spend within the precinct through a range of coordinated events and activations	11.1	In conjunction with Council, develop a series of coordinated activations/events that occur on a regular basis in and around the precinct such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Music (eg: Rotunda) ▪ Art exhibitions ▪ Street performers ▪ Dances/groups ▪ Community groups ▪ Kid's entertainment ▪ Performances/plays (eg: Shakespeare in Garden) ▪ Movie nights ▪ Long table luncheons. <p>As part of these activations roving entertainment should be considered to highlight the whole precinct.</p>	SHORT	\$20K
	11.2	Develop a calendar of events flyer that benefits the entire Centre – digital and print version for distribution on all digital platforms and through businesses.	SHORT	\$1K
	11.3	Continue event activations celebrating traditional holidays and events such as Easter, Mother's Day, Christmas, etc.	SHORT	\$5K
Strengthen partnerships with community organisations to develop new initiatives and increased support for traders	12.1	Build strategic partnerships with community groups to support and develop mutually beneficial projects. Groups to consider but are not limited to are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sporting ▪ Rotary ▪ Men's shed ▪ Lions ▪ Scouts ▪ Volunteer groups ▪ Schools ▪ Etc. 	MEDIUM	Within resources
	12.2	Consider special offers/rewards/packages tailored towards community groups to encourage increased spending and visitation to the precinct	MEDIUM	\$5K

STRATEGY	#	ACTIONS	PRIORITY	BUDGET
Embrace the emerging tourism market to increase customer base	13.1	Support traders to further develop product offerings and visitor appeal to entice the day tripper market.	MEDIUM	Within resources
	13.2	Leverage off Council's strategic partnership with Yarra Valley Tourism (YVT) by encouraging businesses to partner with YVT and enjoy member benefits such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 50% discount to all Eltham businesses to join ▪ A business listing on all digital kiosks in region ▪ Opportunity to showcase your business and be part of regional famils ▪ Being aware of, and involved in regional tourism marketing campaigns and initiatives. 	MEDIUM	Within resources
	13.3	Develop a VFR (Visiting Friends and Family) campaign designed to encourage locals to stay local (shop and spend) in the precinct when they have visitors	MEDIUM	\$3K
	13.4	Support investment in, and development of tourism/visitor focused businesses	LONG	Within resources
Develop product packages to enhance precinct offerings and increase expenditure	13.5	Visitor experience mapping - undertake an external visitor experience mapping project to ascertain visitor patterns and behaviours.	MEDIUM	\$5-10K
	14	Support and encourage traders to work collaboratively to develop market ready packages improving the offering to both locals and visitors.	MEDIUM	Within resources

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGY	#	ACTIONS	PRIORITY	BUDGET
Upskill businesses and equip them with the tools, knowledge and capacity to deliver consistent, quality experiences through a range of industry development activities	15.1	Development of a business improvement program and package for all ECCI members.	SHORT	Within resources
	15.2	Develop a training program designed specifically for local businesses in Eltham. Topics could include but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing Social media Customer service Accessibility Visual merchandising. Training could also be sector based such as retail, fitness, or the like. The program should be delivered in a variety of formats including face to face and online to be as accessible as possible to all businesses.	SHORT	\$20K
	15.3	Develop a series of pilot programs and support/ subsidise a select number of businesses to complete the program - focusing on key issues raised by the consumer and trader feedback.	SHORT	\$25K
	15.4	Support businesses at a granular/grass roots level by offering free or subsidised one on one mentoring – tailored to suit their needs.	MEDIUM	\$10K
Learn about businesses professional development needs to tailor training to suit their needs	16	Undertake an annual survey to communicate and engage with ECCI businesses to better understand their professional development needs.	SHORT	Within resources
Support and facilitate networking activities between traders	17.1	Develop a series of networking events (both formal and informal) to facilitate introductions, knowledge sharing and encourage collaboration between local businesses.	SHORT	\$2K
	17.2	Host a meet thy neighbour themed event – designed to break down barriers between sub-precincts and encourage greater awareness of precinct businesses/ operators.	SHORT	\$1K
Improve the customer experience and service delivery by understanding market needs	18	Undertake a series of customer experience audits within the precinct to identify gaps in the customer experience and in turn support operators to improve their delivery in the future.	MEDIUM	\$10K

PLACE

STRATEGY	#	ACTIONS	PRIORITY	BUDGET
Address the issue of empty shops within the precinct by undertaking a range of short-term activations	19	Implement a vacant shop strategy within the precinct. The following should be considered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with council on strategy Engage a Project Manager to oversee program/ develop program Create small pop ups/art in windows Short term programs/short term leases Work with landlords/owners to facilitate this Signs in vacant shops – to direct to open ones, where things are, events, etc. 	SHORT	\$2-5K
Support strategic transport projects to improve traffic flow and movement in and around the precinct	20	Support implementation of the State Governments congestion-busting upgrades to Fitzsimons Lane and Main Road corridor in Eltham. The funding boost will allow Nillumbik Shire Council to plan and deliver a variety of traffic and pedestrian upgrades to the corridor, Eltham Town Centre and the surrounding area.	SHORT	Within resources
Create a clearer and welcoming sense of arrival in the precinct	21.1	Work in conjunction with Council to develop more distinctive branded signage at key entry points to the precinct.	MEDIUM	\$20K
	21.2	Commission local artists to create an arrival artwork at main entrances to the precinct. Ensure artwork is reflective of local history and precinct branding.	MEDIUM	\$1K
Support initiatives that promote an inclusive precinct for all abilities	22.1	Ensure the precinct is accessible for all ages and abilities and continue to advocate for, and implement initiatives that support and encourage ease of access and ease of use for all customers to the precinct.	MEDIUM	Within resources
	22.2	Continue to develop and upgrade way-finding signage to support greater awareness of shops and services within the precinct and easier navigation to each sub-precinct. Focus on key entry points including the railway station and Main Rd (ensuring adequate directions to shops behind)	MEDIUM	Within resources
	22.3	Investigate the possibility of bike parking stations or improved bike parking within the precinct to support and encourage more cyclists to visit the precinct on a regular basis	MEDIUM	Within resources/ grant opportunity
	22.4	Encourage businesses and Council to implement more dog friendly initiatives to support customers bringing their pets to the precinct	MEDIUM	Within resources

STRATEGY	#	ACTIONS	PRIORITY	BUDGET
Create a visually appealing and aesthetically pleasing precinct that encourages customers to stay longer and ultimately spend more	23.1	<p>Work with businesses to develop a trader’s program to improve street and shop appeal at ground level.</p> <p>Traders need to look appealing and should take a holistic approach to this program and consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Visually appealing shops/shop fronts▪ Modern look and feel▪ Upgrading their look▪ Windows▪ Signage▪ Etc.	MEDIUM	\$5-10K
	23.2	<p>Support initiatives, in line with precinct brand, to beautify the streetscape such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Murals▪ Art/art installations▪ Bins▪ Road art/stencils▪ Furniture/seating – in tune with environment▪ Indigenous artwork/connection.	LONG	Within resources
Leverage off the green ethos and green branding of the Shire to target the green market	24	<p>Investigate options to implement a range of green initiatives, utilising the ethos of the green wedge shire to trader’s advantage. Initiatives could include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Renewables▪ Bio-degradable banners▪ Sustainability▪ Recycling▪ Organic▪ Flora fauna▪ Community gardens in the street▪ Electronic car charging stations▪ Etc.	LONG	Within resources/ grant opportunity





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