urban planning economics+tourism
enterprise

WHITEHORSE INVESTMENT & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2023-2027:
COMMUNITY AND INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT REPORT

FINAL REPORT

WHITEHORSE CITY COUNCIL | OCTOBER 2022

AUTHORS

Jonathan Rochwerger (Senior Associate)

Julia Cretan (Consultant)

FILE	
VERSION	1
DISCLAIMER	
COPYRIGHT	

CONTENTS

FIGURES

TABLES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROJECT SCOPE AND BACKGROUND

To help inform the development of a new *Investment and Economic Development Strategy (I&EDS) 2023-2027*, the City of Whitehorse (Council) commissioned Urban Enterprise to consult with key community, business and government representatives from across the municipality.

The purpose of this process is to understand the local issues and opportunities relating to economic development in Whitehorse and ensure that the I&EDS reflects local values and considers industry needs.

This is the second stage of the I&EDS process, building on the findings of the *Whitehorse Economic Analysis Report*, which identifies the key economic and demographic trends influencing economic development in the region.

CONSULTATION SUMMARY

An extensive consultation process was undertaken to inform the community and industry engagement report, which included over 280 participants across a number of engagement formats, including:

- Industry and community survey (84 participants);
- Project reference group workshop (10 participants);
- Community pop up sessions (70 participants);
- Small business focus groups (17 participants);
- Council (47 participants); and
- External Presentations (62 participants).

To assist with the consultation process, Council undertook a marketing campaign to promote the I&EDS and encourage buy-in and participation from stakeholders. consultation summary.

Survey Questions

The survey included 32 questions covering the following topics:

- Home-based businesses;
- Business operations and performance;
- Business development;
- Business support;
- Economic development; and
- Visitor economy.

Consultation Discussion Points

The consultation discussed the following subjects and topics to stakeholders to help them consider the priorities for economic development in Whitehorse:

- Project Drivers and Objectives;
- Competitive Strengths and Key Assets;
- Issues and Barriers to Growth;
- Growth and Development Opportunities; and
- Priorities for Economic Development.

CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

The outcomes from the consultation process were distilled into several core themes, based on common principles and topics identified by stakeholders. These themes are summarised below.

Further information for each theme is detailed later in this report, which help to identify the strengths, issues, opportunities and priorities for economic development.

Theme 1: Supporting Activity Centres and Shopping Precincts

Local shopping precincts and large activity centres were identified as critical assets for the community and economy. They are key attributes for the City that drive local consumption, support business activity, generate local job creation and provide services and amenity for residents.

Therefore, supporting activity centres and shopping precincts are important for economic development in Whitehorse. They provide unique economic and social benefits, including a sense of place and community.

Theme 2: Enhancing Liveability Outcomes

Maintaining a high-quality of life in Whitehorse is key enabler of economic development and a core value for residents. This includes provision of amenity, services, infrastructure, as well as leisure and recreation facilities that promotes community wellbeing, engagement and connections.

With a culturally and linguistically diverse community, ensuring economic outcomes align with community needs and aspirations is critical to support long-term growth.

Theme 3: Accessing a Skilled and 'Job-Ready' Labour Force

Establishing a productive and engaged workforce is seen as a positive outcome for the community and businesses. This includes providing opportunities for residents of all backgrounds – through skills development and training – to join the local workforce.

Attracting suitable workers to the municipality will also achieve positive outcomes for businesses – many of which are struggling with labour shortages.

Theme 4: Supporting a Productive and Innovative Business Community

Providing support for the business community, to encourage growth, productivity and development, is a key priority identified by stakeholders. Particularly as the economy undergoes transition post-COVID, combined with global economic uncertainty, it is important that there are opportunities for existing businesses, as well as new businesses, to develop, collaborate, innovate and contribute to economic and employment growth.

Enhancing the sustainability of the business community was also identified as an important outcome, to ensure that future business activity aligns with the environmental goals of Whitehorse.

Theme 5: Fostering Visitor Economy Growth

The visitor economy was recognised as an important component of the broader economy, providing a significant contribution to many businesses. In particular, the large contingent of international students, as well as visiting friends and relatives of migrant communities, drives the local visitor economy.

Providing ongoing support for tourism will help the industry to recover from the impacts of COVID, support a more diverse economic base and promote expenditure and employment across the municipality.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. PROJECT SCOPE

To help inform the development of a new *Investment and Economic Development Strategy (I&EDS) 2023-2027*, the City of Whitehorse (Council) commissioned Urban Enterprise to consult with key community, business and government representatives from across the municipality.

The purpose of this process is to understand the local issues and opportunities relating to economic development in Whitehorse and ensure that the I&EDS reflects local values and considers industry needs.

This included a variety of consultation formats to broaden the reach and obtain buy-in, including:

- Surveys;
- Workshops with Council officers and industry groups;
- Interviews with key community and industry stakeholders; and
- Drop-in sessions at key locations to engage with residents.

The key findings from this consultation process, including the key issues, opportunities and priorities for economic development, have been incorporated into a *Community and Industry Engagement Report*.

1.2. PROJECT BACKGROUND

1.2.1. PROCESS

This is the second stage of the I&EDS process, building on the findings of the *Whitehorse Economic Analysis Report*, which identified the key economic and demographic influencing economic development in the region.

Following the preparation of the economic analysis report, Urban Enterprise undertook community and industry engagement to test the economic report findings, as well as identify the local issues and opportunities for Whitehorse communities and industry.

The process is illustrated in Table T1, which demonstrates the steps required to complete a robust strategy for Council.

T1. INVESTMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY PROCESS

Stage	Output	Description
1	Economic Analysis Report (completed)	Provides an up-to-date overview of the key demographic and economic trends for the City of Whitehorse
2	Community and Industry Engagement Report (in progress)	Summarises the key economic development themes and priorities for the community and local businesses
3	Investment and Economic Development Strategy (to be completed)	Provides a strategic framework for Council – including priority projects and initiatives – to help achieve economic outcomes that meets the needs of the municipality

1.2.2. OBJECTIVES

This staged process helps provides contextual analysis for the local economy, as well as a supporting evidence base, to guide the development of the I&EDS, which is designed to achieve the following objectives:

- Retention and expansion of local businesses;
- Business attraction that contributes positively to the overall enhancement of the local economy;
- Investment facilitation and advocacy;
- Promote sustainable development and innovation;
- Promotion of social, economic and environmental viability and sustainability of the City of Whitehorse; and
- Support and promote quality of life for the Whitehorse community.

These objectives have helped frame and guide the direction of the report outputs:

1.3. REPORT STRUCTURE

The report is structured as follows to demonstrate the relevant background information and consultation findings to support the development of the I&EDS:

- Summarise the **project context and supporting information** that will influence future economic development in Whitehorse, including
  - The key macroeconomic influences;
  - The relevant economic and demographic trends; and
  - Strategic and policy setting.
- Detail the **consultation process** and discussions undertaken;
- Outline the **consultation outcomes** by relevant themes, focusing on the issues to be addressed and opportunities for further consideration; and
- Identify the resultant **strategic considerations** for the municipality and potential areas of focus for future economic development, to inform the development of the I&EDS.

2. SUPPORTING INFORMATION AND CONTEXT

2.1. OVERVIEW

The following supporting background information, relating to the Whitehorse economy, provides context for the consultation process and outcomes. This includes a review of relevant strategies, macroeconomic influences and key demographic and economic trends.

The material included in this section is drawn from the Whitehorse Economic Analysis Report (September 2022), prepared for Council by Urban Enterprise.

2.2. CITY OF WHITEHORSE

The City of Whitehorse is a major commercial and residential municipality located in Melbourne's east, approximately 15 km from Melbourne's CBD (see Figure F1). The municipality is a mix of quiet residential streets and vibrant activity centres. Residents and businesses are supported by a range of quality facilities, services and amenity, including major retail centres, tertiary institutions, as well as state of the art health care facilities.

Major economic and employment areas, including the Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre, Major Activity Centres (Nunawading[1], Burwood East, Burwood Heights – Tally Ho and Forest Hill Chase) and industrial precincts, are significant drivers of local consumption, business growth and investment attraction in the region.

Whitehorse is a unique municipality that includes a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) population, highly liveable suburbs, as well as a comprehensive transport network including roads and public transport, that promotes access for businesses, workers and residents.

It will be important for future economic development to leverage these strengths, help the municipality to respond to external economic challenges, whilst also maintaining Whitehorse's unique identity.

F1. CITY OF WHITEHORSE
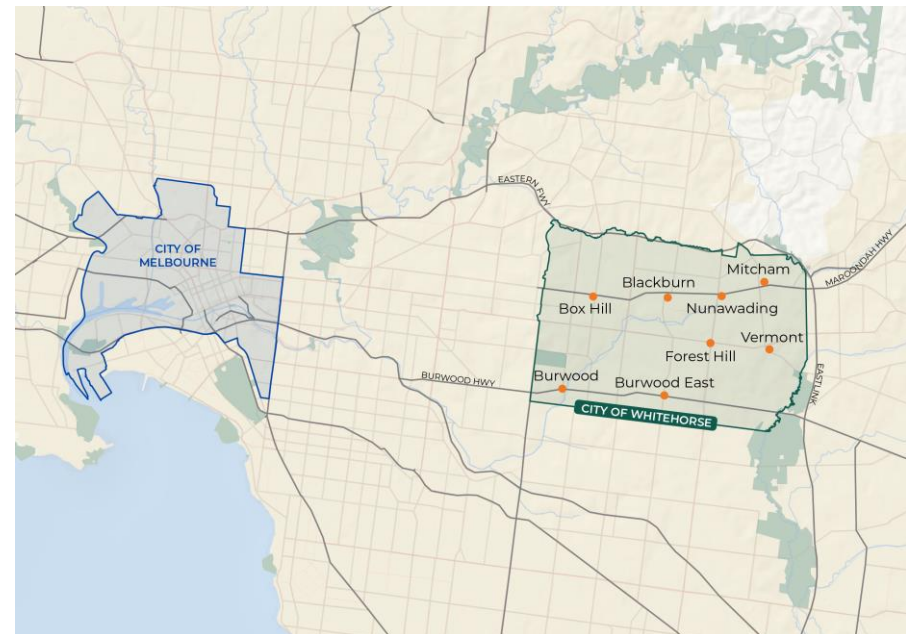
Source: Urban Enterprise, 2022

---

[1] The Nunawading Activity Centre incorporates the MegaMile

2.3. MACROECONOMIC CONTEXT

The future growth and development of the Whitehorse economy will continue to be heavily influenced by the following external economic factors. These are likely to shape the short and long-term decision-making for residents, workers and businesses within the municipality.

COVID-19 and Business Recovery

- Rise of remote and flexible working arrangements
- Increasing demand for co-working spaces
- Transition to innovative business practices
- Continued uncertainty on business operations and workforce

Workforce Shortages

- Impacting business operations for consumer-facing industries and social services
- Impacting Healthcare, Hospitality, Construction, Manufacturing

Global Economic Uncertainty

- Price volatility of commodities
- Business and consumer fatigue (war, lockdowns, etc.)
- Supply shortages (inc. fuel, energy and tradeable goods)

Cost of Living Pressures

- Rising inflation and interest rates
- Reducing commercial and business activity
- Decreasing discretionary income and consumer confidence

Growth of Advanced Manufacturing

- More innovative manufacturing methods to increase sectoral competitiveness and produce goods locally
- Emerging trends including robotics and advanced technology requires highly skilled workers

Construction and Housing Market

- Supply-side constraints (materials and labour)
- Rising construction costs
- Softening demand in residential and non-residential property

Climate Resilience

- Promotion and adoption of environmentally sustainable practices (e.g. circular economy)
- Net zero emissions by 2050

Transition of Retail

- Outlook for household consumption is unclear (following strong demand post-COVID)
- Shift in consumer behaviour towards e-commerce
- Growth of 'buy local' campaigns

Innovation and Technology

- Increasing use of data and technology – by both Councils and businesses
- Improving the efficacy of operations and decision-making

Growing Demand for Healthcare

- An ageing population will increase demand for healthcare and aged-care services
- Subsequent growth in healthcare-related spending and workforce requirements

2.4. DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC PROFILE

The following demographic and economic characteristics provide a snapshot of the local population and economy, which will influence future economic development.

A snapshot of the demographic and economic profile is shown in Figure F3, with key points outlined below.

The data included in this section has been compiled by Urban Enterprise from a combination of sources including Profile ID, Forecast ID, Economy ID, REMPLAN, ABS Census data, the Victorian Valuer-General and Tourism Research Australia.

Population

Current 2021	169,346
Projected 2036	196,112 (+26,766)

Growth by Age Groups

Seniors (70+ years) +14,792

Parents & homebuilders (30-39 years) +12,453

Top Ethnicities

55% Australia

13% China

3.9% India
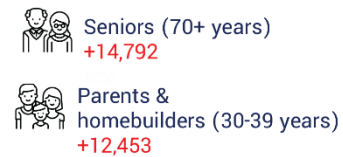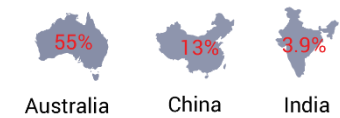
Property Market Indicators
(5 year average annual growth)

		Sales (2020)	Median Prices (2020)
Houses		1,201 13% (▼)	$1.7m 2.6% (▲)
Apartments		982 17% (▼)	$730k 5.0% (▲)

Economic Snapshot

$11.9b Gross Regional Product 2021

$22b Economic Output 2021

$5.2b Regional Export Value 2021

72,416 Local Jobs (2021)

17,577 Registered Businesses (2021)

27% Job Containment Rate (2016)

Top Industries

by Employment
1 Health Care & Social Assistance 13,533 (19%)
2 Education and Training 9,192 (13%)
3 Retail Trade 7,810 (11%)

by Output
1 Construction $2,642m (12%)
2 Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services $2,519m (11%)
3 Manufacturing $2,163m (10%)

by Businesses
1 Professional, Scientific & Technical Services 2,945 (17%)
2 Construction 2,640 (15%)
3 Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services 2,151 (12%)

Visitor Economy

427K Total Visitation

$129m Total Visitor Spend

2.4.1. KEY DEMOGRAPHIC FINDINGS

- Whitehorse has recorded moderate population growth over the past five years. While projected growth in population (and dwellings) is expected to continue at relatively slow rates, high growth rates are forecast in the Box Hill area, which will impact localised demand for housing, services and infrastructure.

- Strongest growth is projected for older cohorts (70+ years) to 2036, followed by younger couples and family cohorts (30-39 years).

- Whitehorse has a culturally diverse population, which impacts the needs and expectations of the community. This provides challenges for Council in encouraging community engagement and inclusivity.

- High median house and apartment prices and declining property sales reflect low levels of housing availability and affordability, which is a barrier for resident and worker attraction.

- Maintaining the relatively high-level of socio-economic advantage and ensuring community outcomes align with economic growth (e.g. income, employment, education) will be a key priority for Council.

2.4.2. KEY ECONOMIC FINDINGS

- The Whitehorse economy is driven by public sector and knowledge-based industries (public administration, health and education), as well as professional services and population-driven industries (retail, hospitality, construction).

- Another specialisation is industrial sectors (manufacturing, wholesale trade and transport + logistics), which are supported by the industrial precincts.

- Whitehorse provides an important source of labour for the Melbourne CBD and inner-metro suburbs – with 70% of resident workers commuting outside the municipality for work.

- The large proportion of micro/small businesses will require ongoing support to promote business resilience, investment and growth.

- The visitor economy is driven by the VFR and international market, given the high proportion of CALD communities and tertiary institutions.

2.5. POLICY CONTEXT

The **Whitehorse City Council Plan 2021-25** guides Council's approach to working with the community, key stakeholders and other levels of government, which informs the future directions and priorities for economic development.

The vision for the Whitehorse Community, as outlined in the **Whitehorse 2040 Community Vision**, is as follows:

> *"Whitehorse is a resilient community where everyone belongs. We are active citizens who value our natural environment, history and diversity. We embrace sustainability and innovation. We are dynamic. We learn, grow and thrive."*

The Council Plan includes the following eight strategic objectives to support this vision:

💡	Innovation, Transformation and Creativity
📈	A Thriving Local Economy; Business, Employment, Education and Skill Development
👥	Our Diverse and Inclusive Community
🏘	Our Built Environment, Movement and Public Places
🌱	Sustainable Climate Change and Environmental Care
💬	An Empowered Collaborative Community
💗	Health and Wellbeing
🏛	Governance and Leadership

Whilst all strategic directions will be considered in the development of the I&EDS, the most relevant strategic direction is 'A Thriving Local Economy; Business, Employment, Education and Skill Development', for which the following objectives and strategies were identified:

- **Job creation and providing facilities** to support local business and attract new business investment and innovation;
- Work with businesses and local communities to support and promote the **growth of local businesses** in the municipality;
- **Local Law and parking service** provision that is designed to **support and assist businesses**;
- Council will promote and work with businesses to encourage more **outdoor trade**;
- **Attract new local business** and support existing through Council's procurement opportunities;
- Encourage the businesses and community members to **shop local** for goods and services;
- Support young people with **education, employment and training** pathways;
- Facilitate equal opportunity for **worker skill development** including for employees and the self-employed;
- Council will explore partnerships with other organisations to encourage **social enterprises, micro businesses and start-ups**;
- Support **local business leadership groups** to lead innovation and creativity initiatives, events, awards and programs;
- Support high-quality, accessible, and affordable **education** within the municipality; and
- Partner with the education sector to engage, promote and advocate for improved learning and **educational opportunities for individuals and local businesses**.

As part of the strategic context review, Urban Enterprise also examined over 30 local, regional, state and national strategies and policy documents that are considered relevant to economic development in Whitehorse. This helped identify existing work that can be leveraged to achieve economic development outcomes to inform potential opportunities.

A detailed summary of each document and relevance to economic growth in Whitehorse can be found in Appendix A

3. CONSULTATION SUMMARY

3.1. OVERVIEW

The following summarises the consultation undertaken with community, business and government stakeholders to better understand the issues and opportunities for economic development in Whitehorse.

3.2. CONSULTATION SCHEDULE

A rigorous consultation process was undertaken to inform the community and industry engagement report (see Table T2). In total there were over 280 participants in engagement activities, including workshops, pop-up sessions, focus groups and surveys.

Prior to undertaking consultation, Council undertook a marketing campaign to promote the I&EDS and encourage buy-in and participation from stakeholders. This included:

- Distribution of 2,500 postcards to businesses across all sectors and an additional 1,000 postcards translated into simplified Chinese distributed to relevant businesses;
- Social media posts across the Whitehorse business (18 posts, host 9 events) and Whitehorse corporate (1 post, co-host 5 events) pages;
- Promotion and detailed information displayed on Wbiz website and *Yoursay* platform;
- Promotion featured in Down to Business (June, July and August);
- Promotion featured in Whitehorse News (June and July);
- Promotion featured in Asian Multimedia (July); and
- Promotion through key organisations (e.g. Whitehorse Business Group, trader groups and key business contacts).

T2. CONSULTATION SUMMARY

Engagement Activity	Description	Participants
Industry and community survey	1 online survey open for 6 weeks	84
Project reference group workshop	1 online workshop with representatives from: • Deakin University • Box Hill Institute • Epworth Eastern • Asian Business Association of Whitehorse • Saward Dawson • Health Ability • Frasers Property Australia • World Vision • Whitehorse Business Group	10
Community pop up sessions	4 community pop up sessions located at: • Brentford Square • Britannia Mall • Box Hill Mall (Mandarin and Cantonese interpreters present) • Blackburn Station Craft Market	70
Small business focus groups	• 3 online focus group sessions • 1 in-person focus group session in Box Hill (Mandarin and Cantonese interpreters present)	17
Council	• 1 workshop with Executive Leadership Team • 1 presentation to Councillors • 3 workshops with Council Staff	47
Presentations	• 1 presentation at the Whitehorse Business Group Economic Development Breakfast • Deakin Economic Update seminar	62

3.3. QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION POINTS

3.3.1. SURVEY QUESTIONS

The survey included 32 questions covering the following topics:

- Home-based businesses;
- Business operations and performance;
- Business development;
- Business support;
- Economic development; and
- Visitor economy.

In total, the industry and community survey received **84 responses**, including 22 responses from business owners.

3.3.2. CONSULTATION DISCUSSION POINTS

The consultation posed the following range of subjects and questions to stakeholders to help them consider the priorities for economic development in Whitehorse:

Project Drivers and Objectives

- What do you hope the Strategy will achieve?
- What are the desired outcomes for Economic Development in Whitehorse?

Competitive Strengths and Key Assets

- What are Whitehorse's competitive strengths and key assets?
- How can these strengths be maximized and/or leveraged to achieve economic development outcomes for the City?

Issues and Barriers to Growth

- What are the key issues and barriers for economic growth in Whitehorse?

Growth and Development Opportunities

- What are the opportunities for economic development in Whitehorse?

Priorities

- What are the priorities for economic development in Whitehorse?

4. CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

4.1. OVERVIEW

The key outcomes from the consultation process are detailed in this section, with findings collated and categorised to help inform the economic development process.

4.2. KEY THEMES

The consultation outcomes have been distilled into several themes, based on common principles and topics identified by stakeholders. These themes, and the importance to Whitehorse, are outlined below.

Theme 1: Supporting Activity Centres and Shopping Precincts

Local shopping precincts and large activity centres were identified as critical assets for the community and economy. They are key attributes for the City that drive local consumption, support business activity, generate local job creation and provide services and amenity for residents.

Therefore, supporting activity centres and shopping precincts are important for economic development in Whitehorse. They provide unique economic and social benefits, including a sense of place and community.

Theme 2: Enhancing Liveability Outcomes

Maintaining a high-quality of life in Whitehorse is key enabler of economic development and a core value for residents. This includes provision of amenity, services, infrastructure, as well as leisure and recreation facilities that promotes community wellbeing, engagement and connections.

With a culturally and linguistically diverse community, ensuring economic outcomes align with community needs and aspirations is critical to support long-term growth.

Theme 3: Accessing a Skilled and 'Job-Ready' Labour Force

Establishing a productive and engaged workforce is seen as a positive outcome for the community and businesses. This includes providing opportunities for residents of all backgrounds – through skills development and training – to join the local workforce. Attracting suitable workers to the municipality will also achieve positive outcomes for businesses – many of which are struggling with labour shortages.

Theme 4: Supporting a Productive and Innovative Business Community

Providing support for the business community to encourage growth, productivity and development, is a key priority identified by stakeholders. As the economy undergoes transition post-COVID, combined with global economic uncertainty, it is important that there are opportunities for existing businesses, as well as new businesses, to develop, collaborate, innovate and contribute to economic and employment growth.

Enhancing the sustainability of the business community was also identified as an important outcome, to ensure that future business activity aligns with the environmental goals of Whitehorse.

Theme 5: Fostering Visitor Economy Growth

The visitor economy was recognised as an important component of the broader economy and provides a significant contribution to many businesses. In particular, the large contingent of international students, as well as visiting friends and relatives of migrant communities, drives the local visitor economy.

Providing ongoing support for tourism will help the industry to recover from the impacts of COVID, support a more diverse economic base and promote expenditure and employment across the municipality.

4.3. KEY CONSULTATION FINDINGS

The key consultation findings for each theme have been categorised into the following broad topics (drawing on the discussion points), which have been used to identify the issues, opportunities and priorities for economy development:

- **Where are our strengths?** – The competitive advantages and attributes of Whitehorse that make it unique and can help facilitate economic development.

- **What do we want to achieve?** – The identified outcomes and strategic directions to pursue to help ensure Whitehorse is a great place to live, work, visit and invest.

- **What do we need to work on and improve?** – The barriers impacting Whitehorse's growth and development, and areas that require further work.

- **What are the opportunities to achieve our goals?** – Opportunities, including initiatives, projects and activities for achieving economic development objectives.

Note: The following provides a summary of the key points identified during the consultation and survey process. Individual statements have been amalgamated and categorised where appropriate.

A more detailed summary of the outcomes can be found in Appendix B (detailed consultation findings) and Appendix C (survey results).

THEME 1: SUPPORTING ACTIVITY CENTRES AND SHOPPING PRECINCTS

Where are our strengths?

- Whitehorse has a vibrant **network of activity centres** and shopping precincts that supports liveable communities, business activity and jobs – including a metropolitan activity centre (Box Hill), four major activity centres (Nunawading, Burwood Heights, Burwood East – Tally Ho and Forest Hill Chase) and 60 smaller neighbourhood activity centres.
- **Box Hill** metropolitan activity centre is one of the key assets of Whitehorse. It's role as **a hub** of economic, employment and community activity includes the following:
  - o A renowned destination for Asian dining and cultural events;
  - o Supports international investment, tourism and migration to the area; and
  - o Provides key health, education and retail services.
- Whitehorse comprises a **diverse range** of activity centres and shopping precincts that supports a range of communities and facilitates local economic and social connections.
- **Connectivity** to central Melbourne, regional Victoria (via public transport services and major arterial roads) helps establish thriving activity centres

What do we want to achieve?

- Establish the Box Hill activity centre as **'Melbourne's second CBD'** and gateway to the Eastern suburbs
- **Increase visitation to retail centres** to support businesses recovery and growth.
- **Promote placemaking** activities and investment to foster a strong sense of place, improve community engagement and increase dwell time for residents, workers and visitors.
- **Leverage major government investments** such as Suburban Rail Loop and North-East Link to generate economic activity within activity centres, particularly in Box Hill and Burwood. Ensure that businesses are supported during the construction process.
- **Grow the night-time economy** by supporting and facilitating night-time entertainment and activities within activity centres.
- **Develop a clear and defined identity** for smaller neighbourhood centres and strip shopping centres to increase activity.
- Encourage **collaboration** between traders to help activate activity centres and shopping precincts, as well as build the capacity of business owners.
- **Encourage residents to spend locally** by providing diverse retail and dining options across smaller activity centres.

What do we need to work on and improve?

- **The night-time economy within Box Hill is constrained** by the lack of leisure, entertainment (other than food and beverage) and the State Government 'dry area' designation which prevents the consumption of alcohol outside a restaurant setting.
- **Visitation to Box Hill is limited** by poor parking options, congestion, as well as a perceived lack of safety, particularly at night.
- **The performance of retail business and activity centres** has been affected by structural changes in the retail sector (e.g. shift to online shopping), COVID-19 and cost of living increases.
- **There is a gap in the supply of 'big box' retail in Box Hill**, leading visitors to be drawn to competing shopping centres in surrounding municipalities (e.g. Westfield Doncaster, Eastland, Chadstone).
- **Residential and commercial developments in Box Hill and Burwood have caused disruptions to retail activity**, which will continue (and likely increase) during the SRL construction phase.
- **Increase retail demand from tourists and international students** as COVID-related travel restrictions are removed.
- **The retail offering in smaller activity centres** is homogenous and the quality can be inconsistent, which discourages some residents from shopping locally

What are the opportunities to achieve our goals?

- **Implement and deliver strategic placemaking initiatives – including streetscaping and activation programs** – that supports visitation and local consumption across activity centres. There is a need to ensure placemaking is culturally specific and inclusive of Whitehorse's diverse cultural backgrounds.
- **Support the night-time economy in activity centres** through late night trading, policy changes (e.g. Box Hill's dry area designation) and the delivery of safety initiatives (e.g. lighting).
- **Encourage traders in smaller activity centres to form strategic partnerships** to promote collaboration, build business capacity, increase local activity and attract investment.
- **Deliver more festivals and events** to improve the vibrancy of activity centres, including additional cultural events in Box Hill.
- **Deliver advocacy and marketing activities to encourage visitation to Box Hill and Burwood**, particularly during the SRL construction phase. Encourage businesses that plan to leave these activity centres during this time to relocate to other activity centres in Whitehorse.
- **Provide quality and contemporary retail, entertainment and leisure** to support visitation and capitalise on the return of international students to Deakin.

THEME 2: ENHANCING LIVEABILITY OUTCOMES

Where are our strengths?

- **Whitehorse's population is supported by a high level of amenity and services** including green open spaces, activity centres and public transport.
- Residents have access to **high quality health services** (e.g. Box Hill Hospital, Epworth Eastern, medical specialists) and **education facilities** (e.g. Box Hill Institute, Deakin University, high quality schools).
- **Whitehorse is a large and culturally diverse** municipality, which creates a thriving culture and lifestyle for residents.
- **Highly educated resident and workforce base**, including a large proportion of professionals, students and skilled migrants.
- **Residents are well connected to the CBD, Eastern suburbs and regional Victoria** due to Whitehorse's strategic location and connections to road and public transport infrastructure.
- **The Whitehorse Performing Arts Centre Redevelopment** will deliver a world-class facility for large-scale performances, events and education to the area.

What do we want to achieve?

- **Improve liveability for residents and protect Whitehorse's desirable lifestyle attributes**, by promoting an attractive, appealing and comfortable environment.
- **Improve standard of living** for the entire Whitehorse community.
- Promote the concept of **20-minute neighbourhoods** to encourage access to services and amenity for all residents.
- Ensure that the **supply of services, amenity and retail is sufficient** to meet the needs of Whitehorse's growing population, particularly in areas of high-density residential development.
- **Provide support for new migrants** to ensure they feel safe and well-connected to the community.
- Increase and enhance the number of **green spaces and sport and recreation opportunities** to promote health and wellbeing outcomes, as well as community engagement.
- Ensure that a **diverse range of housing stock** is available in Whitehorse to meet the needs of different demographic groups, ranging from students to families to retirees.
- **Increase the availability of safe and reliable transport options**, including active transport, public transport and parking.
- Develop **community, arts, cultural and recreation** assets for the community.

What do we need to work on and improve?

- The **culturally and linguistically diverse community** historically presents barriers for community engagement and Council outreach, with community members disengaged from Council and activities and support services.
- **Housing availability and affordability** excludes some people from the municipality and generates difficulties for new migrants.
- There is a **lack of mid-range residential development** (5 to 10 stories) to support housing diversity.
- **Disruptions during the SRL construction phase** will affect liveability and create congestion for residents in Box Hill and Burwood.

What are the opportunities to achieve our goals?

- Encourage **medium to high-density housing** to increase supply for residents and workers.
- **Encourage mixed use development in residential areas** to support the 20-minute neighbourhood concept and provide amenity for residents and workers.
- Invest in **shared pathways and active transport** to promote health, wellbeing and recreation.
- Utilise a range of social media platforms in different languages to connect with **CALD communities** (e.g. WeChat).
- Investment in **recreation facilities and programs** to support resident health and wellbeing, particularly for high-density residential areas
- **Leverage the new Whitehorse Performing Arts Centre** as a location for community events and festivals, to foster engagement, inclusivity and enhance leisure and recreation in Whitehorse.
- **Deliver high quality personal and aged care services** to support Whitehorse's ageing population. In particular, explore opportunities for an aged care offering specifically tailored to migrant communities.
- **Invest in recycling centres and promote improved waste collection practices** to minimise the high level of waste associated with high-density residential living.
- **Activation and utilisation of open spaces** around Whitehorse, which can encourage passive recreation and improve environmental interpretation.

THEME 3: ACCESSING A SKILLED AND 'JOB-READY' LABOUR FORCE

Where are our strengths?

- **Whitehorse's large and diverse industry base** supports a variety of job types across multiple sectors – providing substantial employment opportunities.
- Whitehorse has a high concentration of **educated residents**, as well as **international migrants and students**, which supports a relatively large and skilled workforce.
- The presence of **major health and education institutions** provides a range of employment opportunities to residents and surrounding regions. These facilities also promote **skills and training opportunities** to create a capable workforce that can support these industries.
- There is high-quality infrastructure – including digital connectivity and office spaces – to support **remote working** in the municipality.

What do we want to achieve?

- Establish Whitehorse as a **desirable place to work** – including for residents and non-residents.
- Develop a **skilled and 'job-ready'** workforce that can support industry and contribute to a productive local economy.
- Increase the rate of **local jobs growth** and grow employment opportunities for local workers.
- Ensure businesses have **access** to a skilled local workforce to sustain industry and support economic activity.
- Foster a collaborative environment **between industry, education providers and government** to deliver workforce development initiatives and pathways.

What do we need to work on and improve?

- **Workforce shortages and recruitment difficulties** are impacting business operations and growth across a range of sectors.
- **Lack of affordable rentals and housing** impacts the ongoing ability to attract key workers, migrants and students.
- **Traffic congestion and parking shortages** act as barriers to attracting resident workers, particularly across larger activity centres.
- Ensure there is sufficient **amenity and services** to support workforce attraction and encourage local expenditure.

What are the opportunities to achieve our goals?

- **Leverage the presence of Box Hill Institute and Deakin University** to deliver education and training that meets the needs of the workforce and industry.
- **Improve the attractiveness of Whitehorse to workers** through placemaking and activation initiatives that promote retail and hospitality offerings.
- **Increase the availability of diverse and affordable housing for workers**, to encourage local employment and to support key workers (teachers, nurses etc.). Provide **short term accommodation** options to encourage potential residents to experience living and working in Whitehorse.
- **Promote active transport options and provide parking** to ensure Whitehorse is accessible to workers.
- **Grow the number of co-working hubs and the availability of meeting and conference spaces** to support the growing remote workforce.

THEME 4: SUPPORTING A PRODUCTIVE AND INNOVATIVE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Where are our strengths?

- **Established business associations** (including the Whitehorse Business Group and the Asian Business Association of Whitehorse) provide training, support and networking opportunities for the business community.
- Whitehorse supports a **diverse business base** across multiple industries, including commercial, industrial and professional sectors.
- A vast network of **metropolitan, major** and **neighbourhood activity centres** supports business investment and operations.
- Whitehorse's **strategic location** and large resident, student and local worker base provides opportunities for businesses to access consumption and export markets.
- The **industrial employment precincts** across Whitehorse are unique attributes that support business investment across industrial-based sectors.
- **Whitehorse's strategic location** and proximity to business owners' place of residence is a key motivator for choosing to operate a business in Whitehorse.

What do we want to achieve?

- **Support existing businesses to grow and attract new business investment** in Whitehorse, to meet the needs of residents, workers and visitors.
- Facilitate the **ongoing recovery** of businesses and promote **resilience** against current and future economic 'shocks'.
- Establish a **collaborative** and **supportive** business environment amongst local traders within Whitehorse.
- **Improve sustainable business practices** to help meet environmental goals, including renewable energy, recycling opportunities, waste recovery, and other circular economy initiatives.
- Ensure businesses have access to **professional development** and **networking** opportunities to support growth.
- Provide **support for small and innovative businesses**, including digital enterprises, multi-cultural and migrant entrepreneurs, and start-ups.
- Re-assess the focus and purpose of **industrial precincts** and attract suitable businesses that will generate sustainable economic growth for Whitehorse.
- Ensure **economic development** considers the needs and priorities of local businesses.

What do we need to work on and improve?

- **Reductions in consumer sentiment and discretionary spending** caused by rising costs of living, have affected business revenue, particularly for consumer facing businesses.
- **Commercial rental pressures** are impacting the ability of Whitehorse to retain small businesses.
- The **high proportion of CALD and migrant business owners** presents challenges for business engagement and collaboration.
- The **lack of vacant and suitable industrial land** is a constraint for business investment and attraction.
- **Planning processes** can be a barrier for businesses seeking to invest or grow within Whitehorse.
- To support businesses, there is the need for **ongoing business support and education**, **coordinated marketing**, better **Council processes and infrastructure provision** (e.g. parking, recycling bins).
- The main **constraints to business growth** identified through the survey were government barriers, attracting skilled employees and labour costs.

What are the opportunities to achieve our goals?

- **Provide incentives for start-ups, including innovative and digital enterprise**, to invest in Whitehorse, and explore the opportunity to create an industry-specific hub within Whitehorse.
- **Deliver suitable office spaces** (i.e. coworking spaces, temporary office space) for small businesses, to foster investment, networking and collaboration.
- **Ensure businesses across the CALD community have access to training and professional development programs** to improve financial literacy and understanding of any legislative and administrative requirements.
- **Collaborate with chambers of commerce, consulates and trade commissioners in Asian countries** to market Whitehorse internationally and support local exporters.
- Generate businesses activity through **'buy local'** campaigns.
- Develop a more **sustainable** and **innovative** business base through:
    - **Financial incentives** for businesses that use renewable energy or implement other sustainability initiatives;
    - **Training programs** for businesses to learn about sustainable business practices and reducing waste; and
    - Identify opportunities to **attract green industry** to Whitehorse, leveraging the municipality's strategic location.
- **Capitalise on research and development facilities (including Deakin University and Box Hill Institute)** to attract future and emerging industries, including digital enterprise, advanced manufacturing, etc.
- **Attract diverse entertainment, hospitality and retail businesses to Burwood** (around Deakin University) – capitalising on the large student population – to promote local consumption and business activity.
- **Reduce red tape** and **streamline the planning process** to enhance opportunities for business growth and investment.
- Repurposing **industrial precincts** to attract innovative and suitable businesses to Whitehorse to foster sustainable and diverse growth.
- **Deliver support or advocate for the programs and infrastructure required by home-based businesses**, including high speed internet and business networking opportunities.
- **Attracting skilled labour and developing local skills** will be important to support business productivity and facilitate the growth of local businesses, particularly during periods where economic recovery is driving labour force needs.
- **Enhance the level of business support** in Whitehorse including training, networking events, access to local grants and provision of co-working spaces.
- **Provide training to businesses** in the topics of marketing, digital marketing (social media and online platforms), business planning, staff recruitment and exporting.

THEME 5: FOSTERING VISITOR ECONOMY GROWTH

Where are our strengths?

- A **high-value international visitor market**, driven by visiting friends and relatives of CALD communities, as well as international students.
- **Asian cultural product offerings and major events** – particularly around Box Hill – are a major drawcard of visitation to Whitehorse.
- **Local sporting events in Whitehorse attract visitors** from Melbourne, regional Victoria and interstate.
- **High quality road and public transport connections** provide convenient access to Whitehorse for visitors from surrounding municipalities and regions.
- The new **Whitehorse Performing Arts Centre** will attract visitors for arts and cultural events, which will help diversify Whitehorse's visitor base.
- Popular attractions within Whitehorse include **parks and reserves**, **restaurants and cafes, retail** and **waterways.**

What do we want to achieve?

- **Better understand and define the role of the visitor economy** in Whitehorse.
- Enhance the status of Whitehorse as an **attractive tourist destination** for domestic and international visitors.
- Create a vibrant and diverse **events calendar**.
- Return the visitor economy to **pre-COVID visitation and spend levels**, particularly for the international market.
- Leverage Whitehorse's **unique strengths and assets** to achieve visitor economy growth.

What do we need to work on and improve?

- **Lack of contemporary and diverse accommodation** to support the growth of the visitor economy and attract overnight visitors, particularly boutique hotels, serviced apartments, etc.
- **COVID-19 related travel restrictions reduced international visitation** to Whitehorse, which disproportionately impacted the tourism sector.
- **Lack of large-scale indoor event spaces and function rooms** to attract conferences and business events.
- There is a lack of **diverse and commissionable** tourism product and experiences, which constrains visitor attraction and yield.
- **The lack of spend opportunities around Deakin University** impacts on student amenity and represents a missed opportunity to generate spend from international student visitors.

What are the opportunities to achieve our goals?

- **Grow and enhance the events sector**, including arts, culture and music events, to drive visitation and support recovery for the tourism and events sector.
- Develop **consistent and cohesive marketing and promotion** for visitor destinations, products and experiences in Whitehorse.
- Provide opportunities to **grow visitor yield**, including through the attraction of quality dining, entertainment and leisure products.
- Develop Box Hill as a suitable destination for **business events and conferences** to attract the business market.
- Support the investment of **suitable accommodation** to convert daytrips into overnight visits and increase spend.
- **Leverage the new Whitehorse Performing Arts Centre** to attract visitors to the City. Ensure there are sufficient **spend opportunities** for visitors to this facility, through the development of ancillary products and experiences (e.g. food and beverage, accommodation, etc.).
- Support the **return of international students** – including through collaboration with Deakin – to grow the visitor economy to pre-COVID levels.
- Support or advocate for **private sector investment in visitor economy product**, experiences and infrastructure, to enhance the visitor experience.

5. STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

5.1. OVERVIEW

This section draws on the emergent themes identified through the consultation process and summarises the alignment to economic development in Whitehorse, as well as the implications for the future development of the I&EDS.

The information included below is based on the consultation and survey findings, as well as the key demographic and economic trends identified in the *Whitehorse Economic Analysis Report*.

5.2. SUPPORTING ACTIVITY CENTRES AND SHOPPING PRECINCTS

Alignment to Economic Development

The network of activity centres and shopping precincts across Whitehorse are critical to economic development, as they:

- Support employment across the municipality.
- Provide key health and education services.
- Provide key retail, hospitality and personal services to meet the needs of residents, visitors and workers.
- Contribute to local consumption and business activity.
- Support a 'live local' environment with residents having access to commercial businesses.
- Contribute to visitor amenity as a driver of visitation.

Key Considerations for the development of the I&EDS

- Encourage a genuine mix of uses in Major and Metropolitan Activity Centres to foster investment across a range of sectors, including retail, hospitality, office, health, education, community, entertainment and civic.
- Support investment in industrial precincts – through appropriate development and planning – to promote investment in primary industries and trade.
- Leveraging the proposed Suburban Rail Loop and new stations in the Box Hill Activity Centre and Burwood, to enhance the role of these precincts as key commercial and transport hubs, to benefit businesses and the local economy.
- Identify and support the strategic roles of the Major Activity Centres, to meet the needs of consumers and industry.
- Foster collaboration amongst businesses to coordinate activities that enhance shopping precincts, increase utilisation and grow commercial activity.
- Support for placemaking and activation initiatives across activity centres to increase dwell time, stimulate consumption and support business trading.
- Support for retail businesses to adapt and thrive in a changing environment.
- Identify clustering opportunities to create future areas of strength and support business investment and workforce attraction.

5.3. ENHANCING LIVEABILITY OUTCOMES

Alignment to Economic Development

A well-supported and connected population base is a contributing factor to economic growth and prosperity.

In addition, it is vital that residents continue to have access to high-quality services (e.g. education, health), infrastructure, housing and amenity, as these indicators support Council aims for community wellbeing.

Therefore, for future growth to be sustainable, economic development should be aligned with liveability outcomes. This will ensure residents have opportunities to access services, employment and consume locally to support the business base.

Key Considerations for the development of the I&EDS

- Promote community engagement and inclusivity, particularly for CALD communities.
- Promote social equity and ensure residents have access to essential services, employment opportunities and housing.
- Develop arts and culture experiences, particularly through community events, exhibitions and theatre performances, to showcase diverse cultures and communities (this could be delivered through the future Whitehorse Performing Arts Centre).
- Promote higher density living in strategic areas to meet demand for residents and workers (offset affordability/availability issues)
- Efficient road and public transport to promote access to businesses and employment areas.
- Provide high-quality recreational product and community infrastructure, including sport/recreation facilities, community centres, etc.
- Ensure access to quality education, health and aged care services to promote community health and wellbeing.

5.4. ACCESSING A SKILLED AND 'JOB-READY' LABOUR FORCE

Alignment to Economic Development

Having access to a skilled and 'job-ready' workforce is critical to economic development in Whitehorse. Business productivity and growth are often dependent on recruiting skilled employees that are 'job ready'. This also allows for effective business operations and provision of services to meet the needs of residents and visitors.

Key Considerations for the development of the I&EDS

- Collaboration with industry and employment providers to identify workforce shortages and encourage workforce attraction to meet industry needs.
- Engaging with businesses to understand the specific skills that they require.
- Investigate training programs that could be initiated by the private sector to promote up-skilling and professional development.
- Engaging with local employment service providers to identify the issues that are common across the labour force and developing strategies to address specific skills shortages.
- Investigate opportunities to leverage the large migrant and CALD community to attract a skilled migrant workforce.
- Meeting with local secondary and tertiary institutions to identify opportunities to further develop skills across younger aged cohorts (particularly in line with industry needs).
- Advocating for increased Government support for social issues such as disengaged youth and mental health through programs/initiatives and supporting/partnering with community organisations.

5.5. SUPPORTING A PRODUCTIVE AND INNOVATIVE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Alignment to Economic Development

Business support and supporting business attraction is Council's core roles in economic development. This is critical to achieve positive economic outcomes, as a well-supported business base will stimulate business growth and investment, which will help create employment growth outcomes.

In addition, focusing on the development of new, emerging industries will help establish a more sustainable economy, as a diverse industry builds economic resilience and avoids over-exposure to macro shocks (such as increasing interest rates).

The creation of a more innovative and sustainable business base is important for economic development, as it will support evidence-based decision making, as well as more efficient business operations. This will help achieve long-term growth for Whitehorse, including economic and employment outcomes.

Key Considerations for the development of the I&EDS

- Targeted support for the large volume of non-employing businesses and SMEs– including engagement, communication, promotion, networking and training to promote business resilience, productivity and growth.
- Attract businesses seeking to decentralise/re-locate away from the CBD.
- Leverage rise in remote working and home-based businesses – via temporary office infrastructure (e.g. co-working spaces) and defined hubs/precincts – to attract innovative start-ups and digital enterprises.
- Support businesses with access to skilled labour (and help overcome workforce shortages).
- Target new, innovative and diverse industry sectors that are suited to Whitehorse to support investment, employment growth and diversity.
- Collaborate with the existing tertiary institutions and research and development resources to deliver technological advancements and support future industries.

- Identify global trends and emerging, innovative industries that could be attracting to Whitehorse.
- Deliver infrastructure that is innovative and based on available evidence to maximise its effectiveness for residents and businesses.
- Invest in smart technologies that improves future planning and decision-making.
- Encourage business sustainability through promotion and adoption of circular economy practices.

5.6. VISITOR ECONOMY GROWTH

Alignment to Economic Development

A strong visitor economy provides important economic stimulus through direct spend that flows through a variety of industries (i.e. retail, hospitality, accommodation, transport). Tourism is also critical for economic growth, as it stimulates business investment, supports new local jobs and promotes economic diversification.

Key Considerations for the development of the I&EDS

- Growth in the visitor economy could be achieved through investment in products and experiences that enhance the visitor experience and grow Whitehorse's status as a visitor destination.
- Provision of contemporary commercial accommodation to attract overnight stays.
- Leveraging activity centres to improve visitor amenity, including through high quality food, retail and entertainment, which will help increase visitation and local spend.
- Harnessing the diversity of the Whitehorse community to establish unique arts and cultural activities and events.
- Support growth of the international student market to pre-COVID levels, which will grow the value of the visitor economy and increase local consumption.

- Identify target visitor markets and provide consistent and coherent marketing, branding and promotion of Whitehorse – in collaboration with local industry and operators – through a range of communication platforms.
- Support (and advocate for) private sector investment in product, experiences and infrastructure that meet the needs of existing visitors and future target markets.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A POLICY CONTEXT

Local Context

Document	Summary and Alignment to Economic Development in Whitehorse
Whitehorse 2040 Community Vision	The Whitehorse Community Vision 2040 was developed in 2020 in collaboration with the local community. The vision for Whitehorse is: *"Whitehorse is a resilient community where everyone belongs. We are active citizens who value our natural environment, history and diversity. We embrace sustainability and innovation. We are dynamic. We learn, grow and thrive."* The following key priority areas outline focus areas for Council to achieve the vision: • Job creation and providing facilities to support local business and attract new business investment and innovation; • Facilitate equal opportunity for worker skill development including for employees and the self-employed; • Foster knowledge and resource-sharing between students, business and the rest of the community; • Create low-traffic neighbourhoods where people can move safely. We should aim to create 20-minute neighbourhoods; • Provide community and business with access to cohesive and vibrant spaces to encourage innovation and creativity, including art, craft and innovative practices. Seek ideas from local residents to address community issues; and • Enable the community to reduce, reuse, recycle using circular waste principles.
Whitehorse City Council Council Plan, 2021-25	The Whitehorse City Council Plan 2021-25 was developed to guide Council's approach to working with the community, key stakeholders and other levels of government, with the aim of delivering the Whitehorse Community Vision. The following strategies are outlined in the Plan, and are relevant to investment and economic development in Whitehorse: • Work with businesses and local communities to support and promote the growth of local businesses in the municipality; • Council will promote and work with businesses to encourage more outdoor trade; • Attract new local business and support existing through Council's procurement opportunities; • Encourage the businesses and community members to shop local for goods and services; • Support young people with education, employment and training pathways; • Council will explore partnerships with other organisations to encourage social enterprises, micro businesses and start-ups; • Support local business leadership groups to lead innovation and creativity initiatives, events, awards and programs; • Partner with the education sector to engage, promote and advocate for improved learning and educational opportunities for individuals and local businesses; and • Identify, promote and implement viable recycling and resource recovery opportunities.

Document	Summary and Alignment to Economic Development in Whitehorse
City of Whitehorse Investment and Economic Development Strategy Extension (I&EDSE), 2020-2022	The Whitehorse Investment and Economic Development Strategy Extension (I&EDSE) was developed in 2020, with the aim of updating the previous I&EDS 2014-2019. The purpose of this document is to improve the quality of life for people living, working, studying and visiting the City of Whitehorse. The following strategic project objectives were recommended in the Strategy: *Innovation* • Monitor and support innovation and emerging sectors; • Promote Whitehorse's growing knowledge economy focussing on the leading sectors; • Continue to advocate for appropriate infrastructure provisions across the municipality; • Maintain and grow existing partnerships and relationships across all levels of government; and • Advocate for investments in quality transport infrastructure that will support innovative, knowledge based business and commercial activity. *Priority Places* • Foster the shared vision for Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre (MAC); • Identify and address barriers to growth and development of Box Hill MAC through policy and action; • Advocate for Whitehorse as a destination choice to visit, live, study and work; and • Collaborate with major stakeholders and businesses throughout Whitehorse to facilitate sustainable investment and economic viability within the municipality. *People, jobs and industry development* • Provide relevant and effective support to local businesses and business associations (i.e. Whitehorse Business Group); • Promote and support ongoing prosperity of retail activity centres, industrial precincts, and business parks; • Provision of up to date information on business services, funding and grants to local businesses; • Facilitate opportunities for businesses to connect; and • Advocate for appropriate land uses and quality open spaces to attract skilled residents and employers to the municipality. *Regional Development and Advocacy* • Monitor and support Whitehorse industry sectors, and identify potential impacts from infrastructure projects • Leverage opportunities and advocate for positive outcomes relating to major projects that will have an impact on existing Whitehorse industries (i.e. Suburban Rail Loop). • Provide relevant and effective support to regional business, and economic development associations.
Whitehorse Sustainability Strategy, 2016-22	The Whitehorse Sustainability Strategy outlines Council's sustainability agenda for the 2016-2022 period, with the aim of achieving long term sustainability and liveability in Whitehorse. The following objective are relevant to investment and economic development and have been considered in developing this report. • To continue to promote and support local businesses; and • To encourage an increased shift toward public transport by advocating for the provision of improved infrastructure and services, in combination with information to the community regarding transport choices available throughout the municipality and education about the benefits.

Document	Summary and Alignment to Economic Development in Whitehorse

City of Whitehorse Climate Response Plan, 2020-22	The City of Whitehorse's Interim Climate Response Plan (2020-22) was developed to guide Council's continued responses to climate change, prior to the release of a new plan in 2022. The following actions were outlined in the plan and are considered relevant to Council's investment and economic development program:
	• Develop and implement a coordinated calendar of community events.
	• Review the Green Travel Policy and update it to incorporate:
	   o Remote working arrangements to limit travel;
	   o Incentives for cycling/walking/catching public transport; and
	   o Longer term goals for zero emissions fleet management and transport.
	• Continue to work with the Eastern Transport Coalition (ETC), Eastern Regional Trails Strategy Working Group and Eastern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (EAGA) to advocate on key sustainable transport initiatives.
	• Pilot a program to reduce energy costs and increase energy independence for local businesses, supporting them in their recovery from the economic shocks of the COVID 19 Pandemic. The program will offer trustworthy advice, products and associated services.
	• Deliver an energy advice program to residents and businesses to ensure they have access to the information and support they need to make decisions to improve the comfort and performance of their buildings
	• Develop an Integrated Water Management (IWM) Plan that allows Council to proactively manage increased rainfall intensity and declining supply. The IWM Plan will identify a suite of priority projects to be staged through capital works funding.
	• Pilot a program to improve waste management, resource recovery and boost the circular economy with local businesses, supporting them in their recovery from the economic shocks of the COVID 19 Pandemic.

Whitehorse Health and Wellbeing Plan, 2021-2025	The Whitehorse Health and Wellbeing Plan describes the work Council will undertake in partnership with the community and with key State and local organisations over the 2021-2025 period, with the aim of improving the health and wellbeing of people in Whitehorse. Key strategies outlined in the plan, as relevant to investment and economic development, are listed below: • Encourage more small-scale opportunities such as local Repair Cafés and neighbourhood collaborations; • Plan, develop and partner to create built environments and programs that enable the community to be active; and • Provide information about how to be more resilient to the impacts of climate change, in homes, workplaces and businesses.
Whitehorse Arts & Cultural Strategy, 2014	The purpose of Whitehorse City Council's Arts & Cultural Strategy is to encourage the municipality to be a creative community that is vibrant, diverse and engaged through arts, culture and heritage. Recommendations from the strategy have been considered during the process of undertaking this report are listed below: • Need for increased arts and cultural facility provision; • Attract more people to the Box Hill town hall; • Review Council's festivals program to assess how well it meets the community cultural needs of Whitehorse, including a review of festival locations; • Increased awareness and use of the Whitehorse Artspace; and • Promote professional arts practice as a legitimate and valuable contributor to the economic and tourism opportunities of the City.

Document	Summary and Alignment to Economic Development in Whitehorse
City of Whitehorse Rubbish to Resource Waste Management Strategy, 2018-2028	Whitehorse City Council's Waste Management Strategy was developed in 2018, with the aim of identifying actions to minimise waste to landfill, maximise resource recovery and tackle challenges related to waste. The following opportunities for investment and economic development are outlined in the Strategy: • Continue to capture methane gas for energy at our closed landfill in Clayton South and investigate forms of renewable energy as a future use of the site; and • We will work with partners to explore the different advanced waste technologies to inform decisions and secure alternatives for waste that goes to landfill.
Box Hill MAC Integrated Transport Strategy, 2020	The Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre (MAC) Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) aims to ensure Box Hill has an integrated, safe and accessible transport system, providing a range of sustainable and efficient ways for people and goods to move around, allowing and promoting Box Hill to thrive as the pre-eminent urban centre for Melbourne's east. The following outcomes to achieve this vision are considered relevant to investment and economic development in the Box Hill MAC: • Accessible and integrated walking, cycling and public transport network; • Allocation of street space to more efficient and sustainable modes of transport; • Efficient and reliable public transport; • An efficient and reliable transport network encouraging travel to, not just through; • A welcoming safe and vibrant activity centre; • Upgrade Box Hill transport interchange; and • Support emerging and niche transport types.
Whitehorse Industrial Strategy, 2011	The purpose of the Whitehorse Industrial Strategy (2011) is to establish a framework for ongoing employment and business investment within the City's eight industrial precincts, and specifically to identify an appropriate market position for each precinct. The vision for industrial precincts is to: • Continue to evolve as important locations of economic activity that benefit from a unique location in Melbourne's industrial land supply, and which contribute significantly to Whitehorse's economic diversity and value; • Recognise and continue to support the operation of existing industries and the high level of demand for industrial land in Whitehorse, and avoid the encroachment of residential and other sensitive uses that could undermine the long term viability of Whitehorse's industrial precincts; and • Reinforce the roles of each precinct as hubs of advanced manufacturing, production support and regional services and provide flexibility for a wider range employment generating uses. The strategic direction and role of Whitehorse's industrial precincts will be reflected in the strategic considerations for investment and economic development.

Document	Summary and Alignment to Economic Development in Whitehorse
City of Whitehorse Retail Strategy Review, 2010	The City of Whitehorse Retail Strategy Review was undertaken to guide the development of Whitehorse's retail centres and to inform a future retail policy framework. The Strategy Review details that retail development in the city should be guided by the following objectives: • Maintain a retail centre hierarchy which strengthens existing retail and commercial areas; • Continue to strengthen the Box Hill CAD as the major shopping and business centre in the region; • Encourage the provision and distribution of local and neighbourhood shopping centres to serve local communities; • Maximise the efficient use of existing and planned infrastructure; • Encourage landlords to increase investment and encourage retail tenants to remain in Whitehorse; • Improve the potential for multi-purpose trips to maintain or increase market share; • Introduce design guidelines to maintain and improve the appearance and operation of existing and future development; and • Improve access, connectivity to public transport, and in some cases, parking in line with consumer requirements.

Additional local policy and strategic documents were also reviewed (but not summarised above):

• Policy for Special Rate/Charge Schemes in Retail/Commercial Precincts or Centres, April 2014

• Whitehorse Open Space Strategy Part One: Background and Overall Strategy Recommendations, 2007

• Whitehorse Open Space Strategy Part Two: Precinct Recommendations, 2007

• City of Whitehorse Recreation Strategy, 2015-2024

• Whitehorse City Council Urban Forestry Strategy, 2021-2031

• Whitehorse Industrial Precinct Review, 2019

• Whitehorse Integrated Transport Strategy, 2011

• Whitehorse Cycling Strategy, 2016

• Box Hill Activity Centre Demand Report, 2019

• Review of Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre, 2018

• Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre to 2036 Draft Structure Plan, 2021

Regional Context

Document	Summary and Alignment to Economic Development in Whitehorse
Eastern Region Group of Councils Strategic Plan, 2021-25	The Eastern Group of Councils (ERG) comprises Knox, Manningham, Maroondah, Monash, Yarra Ranges and Whitehorse, who collaborate and partner on shared priorities. The ERG Strategic Plan outlines economic objectives for the region, as listed below: • Encourage working locally to retain local economic benefits and reduce congestion; • Support regional economic development and investment attraction through data, analysis and research; and • Utilise shared service opportunities to support economic growth, Better Approvals, and deliver campaigns.
Melbourne East Regional Plan, 2020	The Melbourne East Regional Plan 2020 articulates a strategic roadmap for Melbourne East for achieving economic growth, addressing challenges and fostering a strong businesses and investment environment. The Eastern Region includes the LGAs of Boroondara, Knox, Manningham, Maroondah, Monash, Yarra Ranges and Whitehorse. This vision for Melbourne East is "*Australia's premier lifestyle and business destination*". The Regional Plan outlines the following regional priorities to achieve the vision: • Communicate the Melbourne East value proposition as Australia's premier lifestyle and business destination; • Extend the availability of suitable and affordable accommodation to meet growing demand (student, business population growth); • Promote targeted place-based investment attraction that leverages existing strengths of activity centres, knowledge, R&D precincts etc.; • Promote soft and hard infrastructure that supports and sustain jobs of the future, along with the liveability and amenity of the region; • Encourage work placements, internships, graduate placement (career readiness with the right skills for future jobs); and • Enable targeted high value import replacement (e.g. professional services currently imported into significant business precincts).
Metropolitan Partnerships – Eastern Metro Region, 2018	The Eastern Metropolitan Partnership is an advisory group established by the Victorian Government. The Partnership is a way for local communities to engage directly with state and local governments, and advise the Victorian Government of the top priorities for jobs, services and infrastructure across the region. The Eastern Partnerships vision is for a region with excellent connections between people places and jobs, which will be achieved through the following six priority outcomes: • *Regional Resilience and Economic Recovery:* Support the social and economic recovery of the region in response to the impacts of the pandemic; • *Regional Connectivity:* Make it easier to get around the region especially by public and active transport; • *Integrated Health & Social Services:* Ensure easy, affordable, seamless access to the full range of services needed by the region's most vulnerable people; • *Jobs for Youth:* Improve the transition from secondary school to meaningful training and employment for the region's young people; • *Social Housing:* Ensure all people in the region have a safe and affordable place to live; and • *Social Inclusion:* Address social isolation and loneliness across the region and provide opportunities for all members of the regional population to participate in community life.
Plan Melbourne, 2017-50	Plan Melbourne is a long-term plan to accommodate Melbourne's future growth in population and employment. The following outcomes to drive Melbourne as a competitive, liveable and sustainable city are relevant to the City of Whitehorse: • Melbourne is a productive city that attracts investment, supports innovation and creates jobs; • Melbourne provides housing choice close to jobs and services; • Melbourne has an integrated transport system that connects people to jobs and services and goods to market; • Melbourne is a distinctive and liveable city with quality design and amenity; • Melbourne is a city of inclusive, vibrant and healthy neighbourhoods; and

Document	Summary and Alignment to Economic Development in Whitehorse
	• Melbourne is a sustainable and resilient city. Box Hill is one of nine existing Metropolitan Activity Centres designated in Plan Melbourne 2017-2050. Additionally, Box Hill Hospital and Box Hill TAFE Precinct are outlined as key health and education precincts that are supported by the Plan.
Inner Metropolitan Melbourne Local Jobs Plan (2021)	The Inner Metropolitan Melbourne Local Jobs Plan identifies the key priorities for the Inner Metropolitan Region of Melbourne, with a focus on creating employment opportunities, meeting local employer demand and better skilling local job seekers. The following local priorities for the partnership region were identified in the document: • Create employment and training pathways into growth industries including for Construction, Civil, Health Care, Digital and Professional Services, Warehousing, Transport and Distribution sectors; • Facilitate opportunities to fill apprenticeship and traineeship positions predominately in Carpentry, Joinery and Cabinetmaking, Clerical/Administration, General Mechanical and Technical Trades, Gardening, Plumbing and Electrical; • Support industries to rebuild their workforce following the impacts of COVID-19, especially Hospitality, Retail, Tourism and Events, Creative Industry and the Health Care sectors; • Connect jobseekers to upskilling and reskilling opportunities to meet the needs of local employers; • Reduce the labour market disadvantage and generate opportunities for Youth, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD), Mature Aged and Indigenous Australians in the region; and • Strengthen existing micro businesses and support pathways to self-employment through the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS).

State Context

Document	Summary and Alignment to Economic Development in Whitehorse
DJPR Strategic Plan, 2021-25	The DJPR Strategic Plan is focused on growing Victoria's economy and ensuring it benefits all Victorians, with the aims to: • Create and maintain jobs; • Foster a competitive business environment; • Be a globally connected economy; • Build prosperous and liveable regions and precincts; • Grow vibrant, active and creative communities; • Support the transition to a sustainable economy; • Facilitate shared economic prosperity; and • Foster a fair and inclusive society.
Infrastructure Victoria 30-year Strategy	Infrastructure Victoria's 30 year Strategy aims to help Victoria address existing infrastructure pressures, emerge stronger from the COVID-19 pandemic and be prepared for the future, with goals to: • Prepare for population change; • Foster healthy, safe and inclusive communities; • Reduce disadvantage; • Enable workforce participation; • Lift productivity; • Drive Victoria's changing, globally integrated economy; • Promote sustainable production and consumption; • Protect and enhance natural environments; • Advance climate change mitigation and adaptation; and • Build resilience to shocks.
Creative State, 2025	Creative State was developed with the vision of fostering *"a state where creative people ideas and enterprises thrive, and where everyone has equitable access to and benefits from a rich creative culture."* The following objectives are outlined to achieve this vision: • More and better job opportunities and pathways; • Innovative creative products and experiences; • Innovative creative products and experiences; • Industry stability and growth; • Equitable access to the creative industries; and • New audiences and markets.

Document	Summary and Alignment to Economic Development in Whitehorse
Victorian Visitor Economy Recovery and Reform Plan, 2021	This report was developed in response to COVID-19's significant negative economic impact on the Victorian visitor economy. The goal of the plan is for the industry to reach $35 billion in annual visitor spend and generate 300,000 additional jobs by June 2024. The key themes identified in the plan as enablers of the visitor economy are: • Products and infrastructure; • Industry strengthening; • Destination marketing; • Events; • Strategic collaboration and planning; and • Data and insights
Victorian Visitor Economy Master Plan Directions Paper, 2022	The Victorian Government released a directions paper in 2022, providing a high-level summary of the vision, mission, and the strategic directions for Victoria's visitor economy to test with stakeholders and seek public feedback, prior to developing the final Visitor Economy Masterplan. The seven strategic directions for Victoria's visitor economy are listed below: • Draw people to Melbourne by building on its unique experiences and liveability, supporting its role as a gateway; • Position Victoria as Australia's premier destination of choice for wellness travel; • Curate a diverse range of arts and culture experiences across Victoria to create an all-encompassing `living gallery'; • Be led by Victoria's first peoples' communities to support distinctive and authentic first people's experiences; • Deliver unique food and drink experiences that showcase Victoria's quality produce and provenance; and • Build on Victoria's one-of-a-kind expertise in delivering events.

APPENDIX B DETAILED CONSULTATION FINDINGS

Theme 1: Supporting Activity Centres and Shopping Precincts

Objectives	Strengths	Issues and Barriers	Opportunities and Priorities
• Leverage major government investments such as suburban rail loop and north east link to improve activity centres. • Build council capacity for placemaking across various departments. • Promote strategic, all-encompassing place making in activity centres. • Support and facilitate night time visitation in activity centres. • Assess the focus and purpose of industrial activity centres and attract the right mix of businesses. • Give more of an identity to smaller activity centres and local shopping strips. • Sustain Tally Ho as an office location. • Attract visitation back to retail centres in a post-COVID-19 environment. • Use Parramatta in Sydney as a case study for Box Hill • Create vibrant commercial centres.	• Box Hill is a gateway to the Eastern suburbs and a second CBD for Melbourne. Many people would prefer to visit Box Hill than travel to the CBD. • Activity centres such as Box Hill and Burwood East – Tally Ho are well connected to transport. • Box Hill has a reputation as a hub for cultural dining and major cultural events (e.g. lunar new year). • There is strong diversity in activity centres throughout the municipality. • Box Hill provides a one-stop location for people to do business, shop and eat. • Mitcham Social Bar is widely popular and located in a current industrial area.	• Deakin University and the surrounding area in Burwood have very few retail or hospitality businesses, despite being a major education and employment area for Whitehorse. This impacts on student life and represents a missed opportunity for commercial activation. • Ageing industrial and commercial precincts are a barrier to investment, there is a strong need to re-do streetscapes, pavements and to re-assess the retail mix in these precincts. • Box Hill and Burwood are experiencing disruptions due to residential development, which will continue (and be exacerbated) during the SRL construction process. • The level crossing removal in Mont Albert is causing disruptions to foot traffic and retail trade in the area. • Suburban Rail Loop will fundamentally change the profile of Box Hill. • There is a lack of collaboration between traders within activity centres. The ability for special rate schemes or trader's associations to be effective depends on the level of engagement from traders, which is currently lacking. • Box Hill's dry area designation prevents entertainment and bars operating at night, which impacts the vibrancy of the night time economy.	• Implement traders' associations and special rates schemes to coordinate strip centres and areas outside of Box Hill and explore innovative partnerships to deliver good outcomes for traders. • Make Burwood (around Deakin University) a student hub, with more night life and social spaces. • Implement placemaking and public realm beautification programs to encourage activity in smaller activity centres • Encourage businesses and restaurants to open late, to support the night time economy. • Develop a framework for the revitalisation of smaller shopping strips. • Differentiate Box Hill as a retail destination so that it can compete with other shopping centres in surrounding municipalities (e.g. Eastland, The Glen, Chadstone etc.). • Explore Tally Ho as a development site opportunity. • Take advantage of the decentralisation of government services to attract people to activity centres. • Revitalise industrial areas in Burwood. • Create clusters of innovation, advanced manufacturing, science and research and development businesses.

Objectives	Strengths	Issues and Barriers	Opportunities and Priorities
		• There is a lack of entertainment and "big box" retail in Box Hill, other than restaurants. • Retail shopping strips are inconsistent and have a homogenous retail offering (e.g. too many coffee shops). • The high level of cultural diversity is a barrier for Council engaging with businesses. • The lack of late night trading in activity centres is a missed opportunity for the retail industry. • COVID-19 related nervousness in the CALD community has greatly affected retail activity, particularly for Box Hill. • Increases in cost of living and the higher prevalence of online shopping are accelerating structural changes in shopping centres. • The train line dividing the north and south of Blackburn creates a disconnect in the area that affects retail traders. • Empty retail shop fronts and high vacancy rates in commercial and industrial areas is unappealing and reflects the need for re-investment. • There is a perceived sense of unsafety in Box Hill, largely due unsociable people occupying the area at night. • There is a lack of free parking around Box Hill, making it difficult for the activity centre to compete with other retail centres. • Students are not studying on campus at the rates they were pre-pandemic,	• Collaborate with neighbouring municipalities to leverage off of growth in existing industrial precincts. Assess future patterns of travel to consider how Whitehorse might better connect to the Monash National Employment and Innovation Cluster (NEIC). • Council-led advocacy and marketing to encourage visitation to Box Hill and Burwood during the SRL development process. • Encourage businesses that plan to leave Box Hill or Burwood because of SRL to relocate elsewhere in Whitehorse. • Convert industrial spaces to other uses, such as gyms. • Reinvest and reconsider the focus of the Nunawading (inc. Megamile) activity centre. • Create better connections between experiences within activity centres, such as restaurants, bars, entertainment, retail and transport. • Deliver more festivals and events for young people. • Increase "Whats on in Whitehorse" style promotion of events and activities. • Improve lighting and run education campaigns and community support programs to improve perceptions of safety in Box Hill and encourage people to dwell at night. • More multicultural and culturally specific events and street art within activity centres.

Objectives	Strengths	Issues and Barriers	Opportunities and Priorities
		which affects retailers and the vibrancy of activity centres. • There is an opportunity to grow the number of retail and hospitality businesses operating in industrial areas.	• Explore the opportunity to turn Burwood East – Tally Ho into a health manufacturing hub. • Create a state of the art bus terminal in Box Hill. • Establish Box Hill as a hub for start-ups and digital enterprise. • Sustain Tally Ho as an office location. • Link the new Whitehorse Performing Arts Centre with supporting product in activity centres (e.g. restaurants). • Plan for the SRL construction period to minimise disruptions for businesses. • Encourage retailers in strip shopping centres to become more engaged. • Ensure there is a sufficient supply of retail in residential areas outside of Box Hill. • Encourage residents to spend locally. • Link open space uses to commercial opportunities.

Theme 2: Enhancing Liveability Outcomes

Objectives	Strengths	Issues and Barriers	Opportunities and Priorities
• Improve quality of life for residents in measurable ways. • Ensure that the community and local residents have the skills they need to thrive. • Encourage people to live and work locally. • Maintain an environment that's attractive, appealing and comfortable to live in. • Drive safety objectives to support businesses and residents. • Ensure there are sufficient services and amenity in box hill as the population grows. • Help new migrants feel safe and connected to the community. • Promote the importance of sport and recreation to the community. • Consider the impact of high rises on waste, consumption and circular economy.	• Deakin University and Box Hill Institute are key educational institutions that can be leveraged to deliver job creation and training. • Cultural diversity is a significant contributing factor to Whitehorse's identity and vibrancy. • Open space is well-connected with commercial areas. • Box Hill has major hospitals, as well as a significant number of medical specialists. • Whitehorse is well connected to Melbourne and Regional Victoria through major arterial roads and public transport infrastructure. • The new Whitehorse Performing Arts Centre is currently under construction, and will deliver a major theatre, performance, event and educational space to the community. • Whitehorse is a large and diverse geographical council. • Whitehorse's liability attributes are driven by the large provision of green open space, proximity to the CBD and regional Victoria and the high quality schools and hospitals. • Whitehorse's migrant population are primarily students, highly educated or sponsored employees. • Whitehorse is home to Burwood Brickworks, which is the most sustainable supermarket in the world.	• Cultural diversity can create issues for engaging with and providing support to the community. It can be difficult to connect new migrants with Council and the broader community. • The development that occurs within Council does not always align with Council's objective. • High property prices exclude some people from the area. • Improvements to shared pathways and active transport is needed. • There are a number of developers sitting on large parcels of land. • There is a lack of mid-range residential development (5-10 stories). • The SRL construction process will cause disruptions for the Box Hill and Burwood communities. • New migrants often struggle to find housing. • There is a need for a greater diversity of public transport options.	• Leverage Whitehorse's cultural diversity to deliver liveability improvements. • Prioritise job creation and affordable housing provision to support economic development. • Better link green open spaces to commercial opportunities. • Encourage the 20 minute neighbourhood concept through planning support for mixed use development. • Utilise social media (in different languages) to connect with migrant communities (e.g. Wechat). • Increase the number of recreation opportunities and facilities. • Utilise the new Whitehorse performing arts centre for community events, seminars and functions. • High quality personal and aged care is a significant opportunity for Whitehorse, given its geographical location and demographic composition • Consider opportunities to deliver aged care that is specifically tailored to the Chinese community. • Create a sporting hub to support people living in high density areas, collocating allied health and sporting facilities. • Increase the provision of recycling bins. • Ensure that amenity, infrastructure and service provision keeps pace with population growth in key residential areas.

Theme 3: Accessing a Skilled and 'Job-Ready' Labour Force

Objectives	Strengths	Issues and Barriers	Opportunities and Priorities
• Drive job creation through workforce development and increased job retainment. • Encourage residents to live and work locally. • Encourage local businesses to grow to drive job creation. • Promote an integrated approach to workforce development, through work placement and employment pathways.	• Box Hill has a young and educated demographic. • Key education providers (Deakin University and Box Hill Institute) already have strong connections to local employment providers (e.g. hospitals). • Box Hill is known internationally as a destination for migrants. • The return of international students in 2023 is expected to exceed pre-covid levels, which will boost the local labour force.	• Workforce shortages affecting all sectors of the economy, particularly for service industries (hospitality, retail, healthcare). • Affordable housing is a barrier to attracting key workers and international students. • Greater resident amenity is needed to compliment and encourage workforce attraction and expenditure across the municipality. • Environmental overlays in Box Hill and Blackburn are affecting housing affordability and availability. • Traffic congestion and parking issues are barriers to attracting resident workers, particularly for Box Hill.	• Increase the provision of co-working spaces to support residents working from home. • Provide short term accommodation to encourage people to join the workforce and allow them to see the benefits of living in the area. • Create a youth employment skills hub to ensure education and training meets industry workforce needs, and to connect local workers with employment opportunities. • Develop specific strategies to support the employment of migrants in their actual area of qualification. This would likely attract strong partnership support from Vic Multicultural Commission, Dept Families, Fairness and Housing or Universities. • Encourage people leaving Hong Kong to settle in Whitehorse. • Develop a Charter or strategy for international students to set the minimum standards/support available for international students, notably their engagement at work. • Ensure there is sufficient provision of affordable housing for key workers (teachers, nurses). • Ensure the ATO office stays in Box Hill so that workers can continue to support the Box Hill Activity Centre.

Theme 4: Supporting a Productive and Innovative Business Community

Objectives	Strengths	Issues and Barriers	Opportunities and Priorities
• Deliver goals to unify business activity and strengthen economic activity. • Support the growth of innovative small businesses. • Promote local businesses through "buy local" campaigns. • Provide resources and education to grow the capacity and skills of businesses. • Promote business recovery and support existing businesses. • Nicer environments and places to facilitate business activity. • Grow the business community and encourage collaboration. • Engage with emerging multi-cultural entrepreneurs and small businesses • Support businesses adapt to climate change. • Explore opportunities to attract social enterprises to Whitehorse.	• Whitehorse's existing business associations provide training and networking support for local business owners. • Whitehorse's location near north east link and the M3 makes it a great location for distributing goods.	• High rents are a barrier to business retainment. • Consumer facing businesses have been highly affected by inflation. • Difficulties engaging with and supporting businesses run by CALD or migrant business owners.	• There is an opportunity for start-up, disrupter type businesses in Box Hill. • Deliver co-working spaces to support home-based businesses and remote workers. • Encourage businesses to collaborate/network, which will help foster innovation. • Support businesses in emerging industries - e.g. online start-ups. • Provide a welcome package for new businesses, and offer regular touch points with Council. • Provide incentives to attract businesses, such as discounts on rates for a period of time. • Encourage Deakin University to work with council and businesses to improve the financial literacy of multi-cultural business owners. • Opportunity for Council to work closely with chambers of commerce, consulates and the equivalents of Austrade/Trade commissioners from Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, Malaysia, China to market Whitehorse overseas and support exporters. • Attract sustainable and circular economy businesses. • Encourage collaboration with Deakin and Box Hill for attract businesses from future and emerging industries. • Attract more migrants to address skills gaps.

			• Leverage Whitehorse's proximity to the CBD to attract recycling facilities. • Encourage businesses to adapt more sustainable practices (e.g. recycling, reuse, reinvestment) through education and training. • Better communication to CALD communities of environmental rebates and incentives. • Establish a demonstration precinct for circular economy or future/advanced manufacturing in Whitehorse. • Provide education and resources for small and emerging businesses. • Devote more time to supporting CALD business owners who don't feel comfortable communicating with Council. • Provide more guidance for new businesses about better ways to reduce waste, clean supply chains, buy local etc.

Theme 5: Fostering Visitor Economy Growth

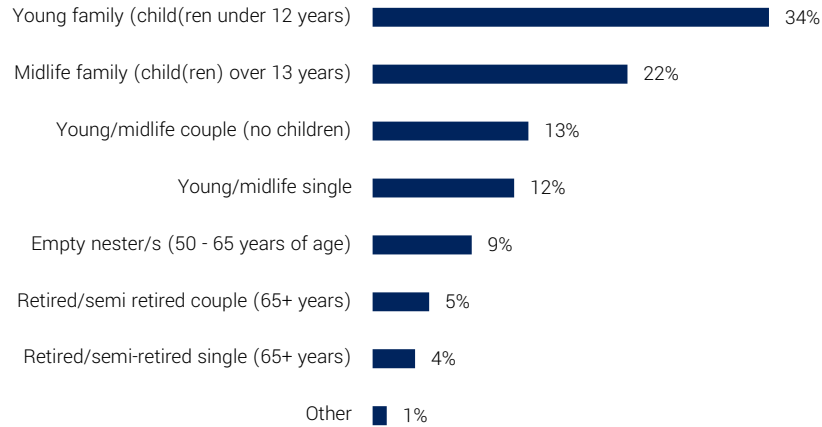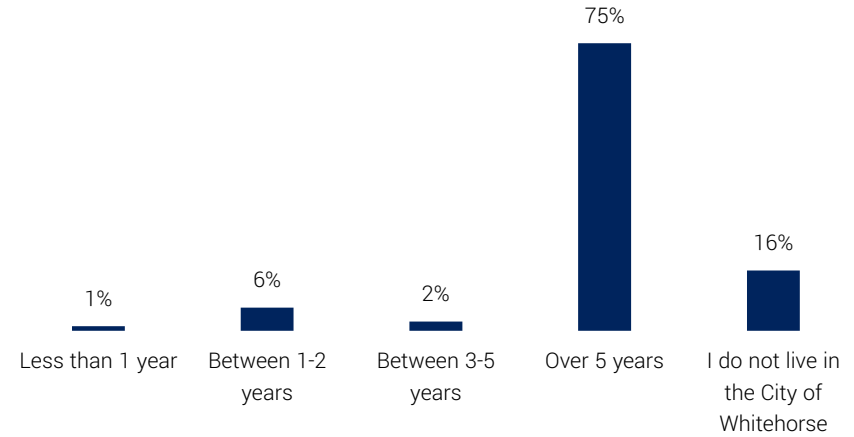| Objectives	Strengths	Issues and Barriers	Opportunities and Priorities
• Better understand and define the role and objectives for the visitor economy is in Whitehorse. • Understand how tourism objectives within economic development can influence state government support and funding.	• Leverage the new Whitehorse performing arts centre. • Visitation to Whitehorse is supported by strong transport connections, including road and rail. • Whitehorse has clear and strong links with Asia and China, which is the primary driver of international visitation. • Box Hill has a reputation as a hub for cultural dining and major events (including lunar new year). • There is already a high level of visitation for sporting events from interstate and other municipalities within Melbourne.	• Lack of hotel and short stay accommodation to support visitor economy growth. • Lack of international travel due to COVID-19 has greatly impacted Whitehorse's visitor economy. • There is a lack of indoor event spaces/business functions rooms to attract conferences and business events to Whitehorse.	• Explore opportunities to attract international visitors as travel restrictions ease. • Improve active transport provision to better support visitors. • Improve visitor marketing and increase provision of visitor information services. • Promote Box Hill as an accommodation alternative to the Melbourne CBD, Glen Waverley or Monash. • Encourage business events to be held in Whitehorse rather than CBD, through the promotion of comparative advantages in parking and access. • Attract music festivals to the municipality.

WHO RESPONDED?

The industry and community survey received 84 responses, including 22 responses from business owners. As shown in Figures 4 and 5, the majority of survey responses were from young and midlife families, couples and singles, who have lived in Whitehorse for over 5 years.

F4. HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

Household type	%
Young family (child(ren under 12 years)	34%
Midlife family (child(ren) over 13 years)	22%
Young/midlife couple (no children)	13%
Young/midlife single	12%
Empty nester/s (50 - 65 years of age)	9%
Retired/semi retired couple (65+ years)	5%
Retired/semi-retired single (65+ years)	4%
Other	1%

Source: Whitehorse I&EDS Industry and Community Survey, Urban Enterprise, 2022. Q1. "Which of the following best describes your household?"

F5. YEARS LIVED IN WHITEHORSE

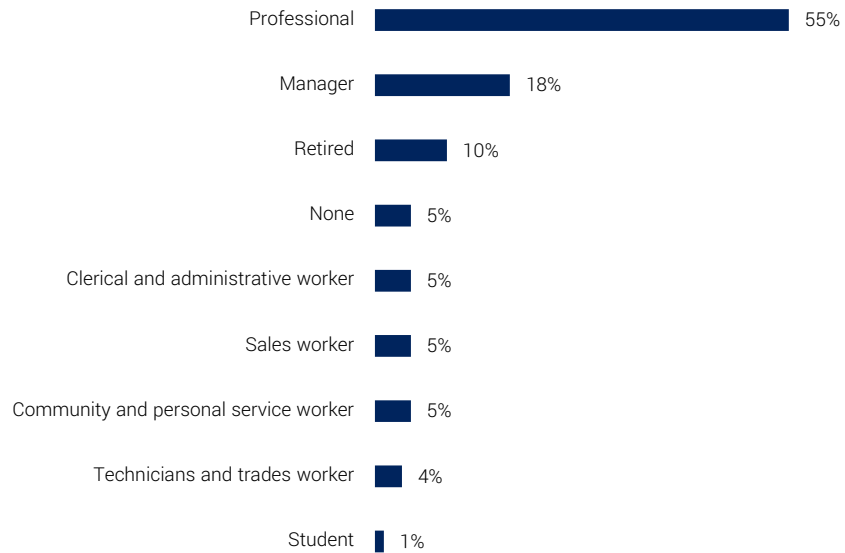| Years	%
Less than 1 year	1%
Between 1-2 years	6%
Between 3-5 years	2%
Over 5 years	75%
I do not live in the City of Whitehorse	16%

Source: Whitehorse I&EDS Industry and Community Survey, Urban Enterprise, 2022. Q2. "How many years have you lived in the City of Whitehorse?"

The most common occupation among survey respondents was professional (55%), followed by manager (18%). This reflects Whitehorse's highly educated and affluent demographic.
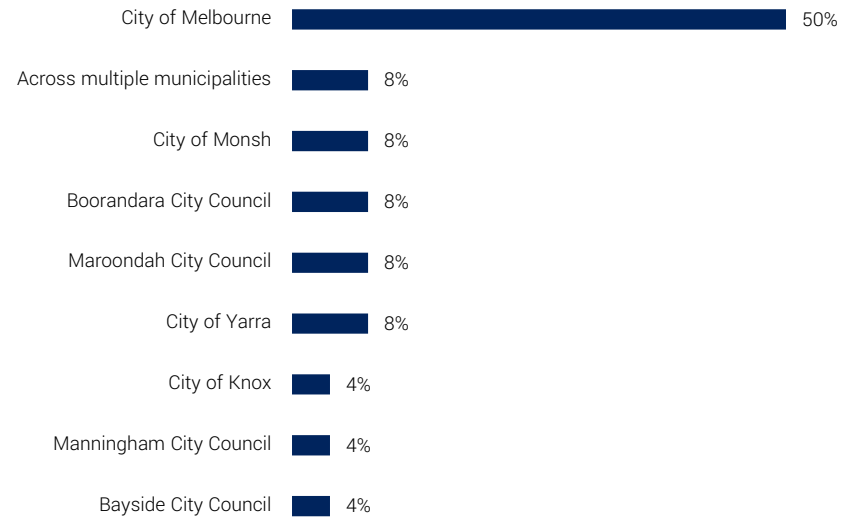
18% of survey respondents indicated that they work in the City of Whitehorse, whilst 34% work in other municipalities. As shown in Figure F7, half of all respondents who work outside of Whitehorse are employed in the City of Melbourne. The high availability of jobs in the Melbourne CBD, and its proximity to Whitehorse, are likely key drivers of residents out-commuting for work.

F6. OCCUPATION

Occupation	Percentage
Professional	55%
Manager	18%
Retired	10%
None	5%
Clerical and administrative worker	5%
Sales worker	5%
Community and personal service worker	5%
Technicians and trades worker	4%
Student	1%

Source: Whitehorse I&EDS Industry and Community Survey, Urban Enterprise, 2022. Q3. "Describe your occupation."

F7. LOCATION OF EMPLOYMENT, OUT-COMMUTING WORKERS

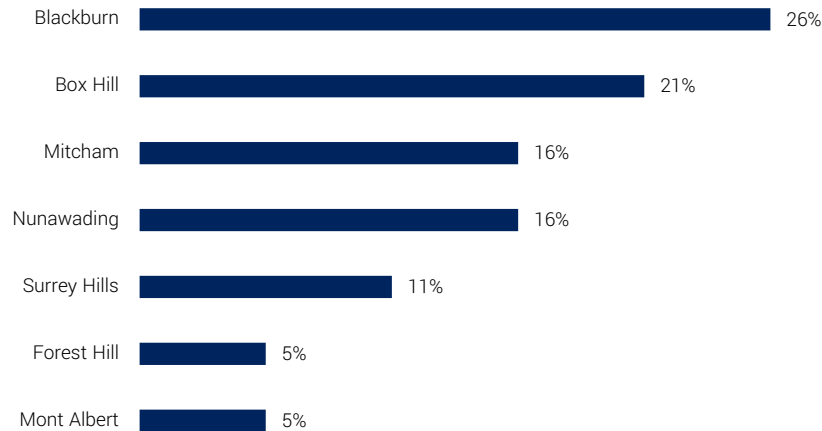| Location	Percentage
City of Melbourne	50%
Across multiple municipalities	8%
City of Monsh	8%
Boorandara City Council	8%
Maroondah City Council	8%
City of Yarra	8%
City of Knox	4%
Manningham City Council	4%
Bayside City Council	4%

Source: Whitehorse I&EDS Industry and Community Survey, Urban Enterprise, 2022. Q5. "If you answered 'no, I work outside of the City of Whitehorse' to Question 4, which municipality do you work in?"
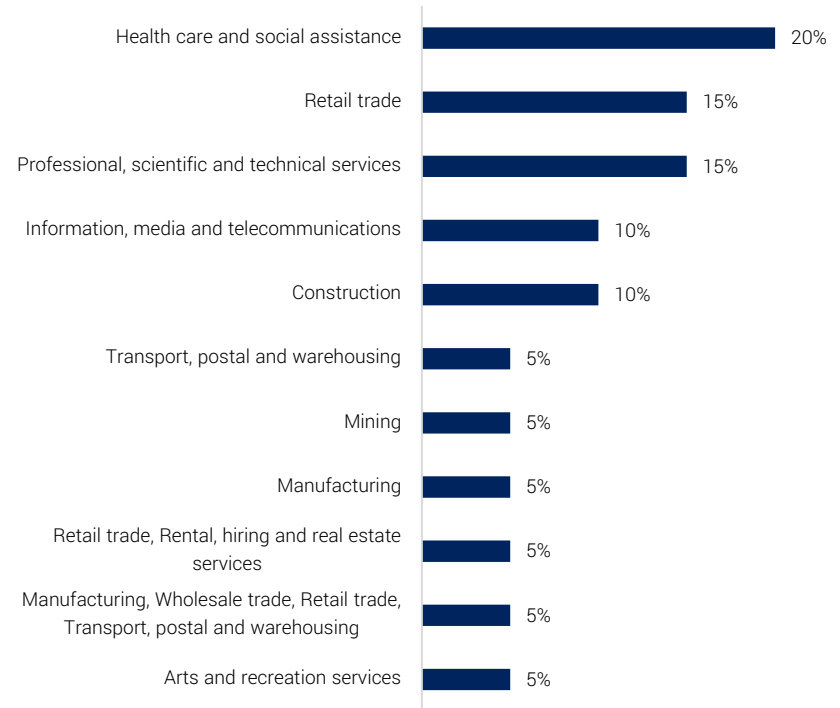
BUSINESS PROFILE

94% of business owner respondents have been operating their business for over 5 years, with the remaining 5% operating between three to five years. As shown in Figure F8, responses were received from business owners from a range of locations, predominantly Blackburn (26%) and Box Hill (21%). The majority of responses were from health care and social assistance, retail trade and professional services businesses, which aligns with Whitehorse's industry specialisations.

F8. BUSINESS LOCATION

Location	%
Blackburn	26%
Box Hill	21%
Mitcham	16%
Nunawading	16%
Surrey Hills	11%
Forest Hill	5%
Mont Albert	5%

Source: Whitehorse I&EDS Industry and Community Survey, Urban Enterprise, 2022. Q8. "Location of your business."

F9. BUSINESS BY INDUSTRY

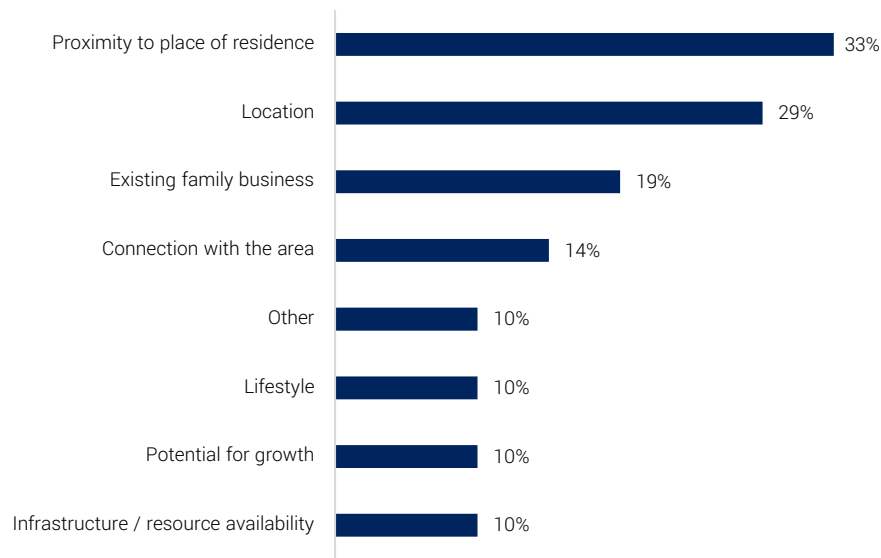| Industry	%
Health care and social assistance	20%
Retail trade	15%
Professional, scientific and technical services	15%
Information, media and telecommunications	10%
Construction	10%
Transport, postal and warehousing	5%
Mining	5%
Manufacturing	5%
Retail trade, Rental, hiring and real estate services	5%
Manufacturing, Wholesale trade, Retail trade, Transport, postal and warehousing	5%
Arts and recreation services	5%

Source: Whitehorse I&EDS Industry and Community Survey, Urban Enterprise, 2022. Q10. "Which industry most accurately describes your business? (select all that apply)."

As shown in Figure F10, business owner respondents indicated that Whitehorse is an attractive operational site primarily due to its location (29%) and proximity to owners' place of residence (33%). A number of business owners also choose to operate in Whitehorse due to an existing connection to the area (14%).

F10. REASON FOR CHOOSING WHITEHORSE AS BUSINESS LOCATION

Source: Whitehorse I&EDS Industry and Community Survey, Urban Enterprise, 2022. Q10. "What was / were the reasons for choosing the City of Whitehorse as the operational site for this business? (Select all that apply)."

HOME-BASED BUSINESSES

Seven home-based businesses owners responded to the industry and community survey. The most common reasons for choosing to be home-based are flexible work hours (71%), less travel (71%) and low costs (71%).

As Shown in Figure F11, home-based businesses indicated that the services and facilities that would most benefit them are high speed internet (71%) and business networking opportunities (43%).

**F11. PREFERRED BUSINESS SERVICES AND FACILITIES**
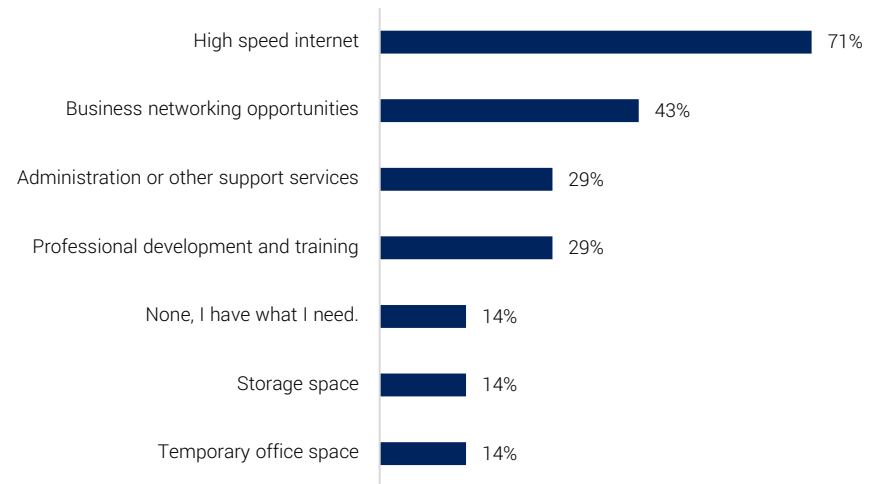
Source: Whitehorse I&EDS Industry and Community Survey, Urban Enterprise, 2022. Q15. "As a home-based business, which of the following services or facilities would benefit your business? (select all that apply)."
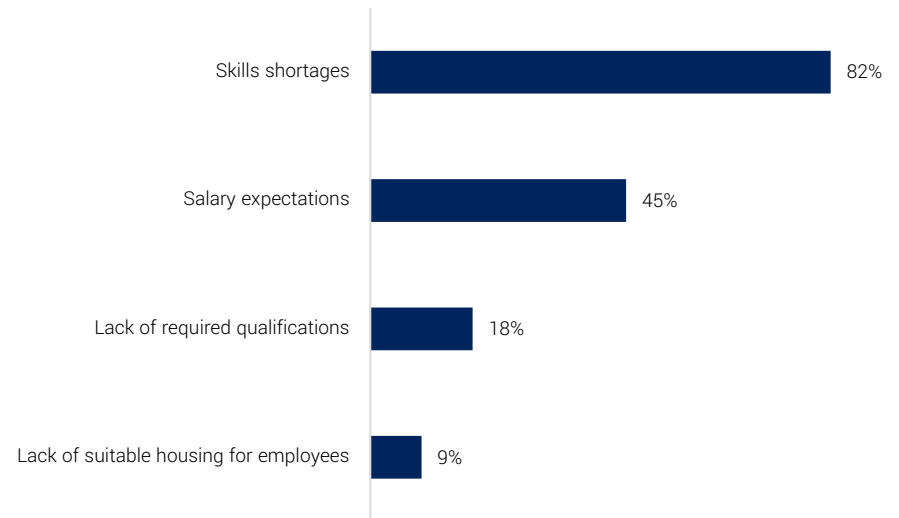
BUSINESS OPERATIONS AND PERFORMANCE

95% of business owner survey respondents indicated they employ staff. As shown in Figure F12, most businesses primarily employ full-time and part-time workers. **58% of business respondents reported difficulties recruiting staff**, the main reasons for which include skills shortages and salary expectations.

F12. STAFF BREAKDOWN

■ Yes ■ No.

	Yes	No.
Volunteers	29%	71%
Casual	53%	47%
Part-time	73%	27%
Full-time	80%	20%
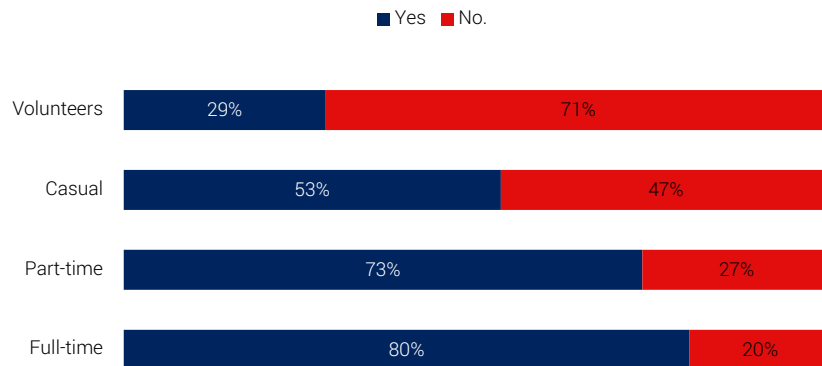
Source: Whitehorse I&EDS Industry and Community Survey, Urban Enterprise, 2022. Q19. "Does your business employ staff?"

F13. RECRUITMENT DIFFICULTY REASONS

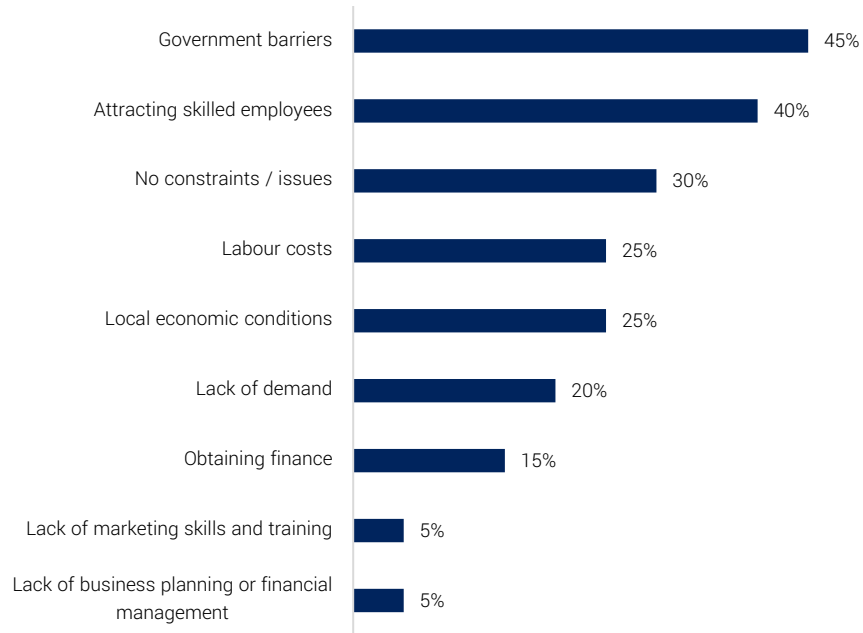|	
Skills shortages	82%
Salary expectations	45%
Lack of required qualifications	18%
Lack of suitable housing for employees	9%

Source: Whitehorse I&EDS Industry and Community Survey, Urban Enterprise, 2022. Q21. "What are the main reasons you have found it difficult to employ staff? (select all that apply)"

The main constraints to business growth identified through the survey were government barriers (45%), attracting skilled employees (40%) and labour costs (25%).

Despite these barriers, **65% of business survey respondents reported having plans to expand their business in the next three years** (e.g. open new stores, increase size of current premises or move to a larger premises).

F14. KEY CONSTRAINTS TO BUSINESS GROWTH

Government barriers — 45%
Attracting skilled employees — 40%
No constraints / issues — 30%
Labour costs — 25%
Local economic conditions — 25%
Lack of demand — 20%
Obtaining finance — 15%
Lack of marketing skills and training — 5%
Lack of business planning or financial management — 5%

Source: Whitehorse I&EDS Industry and Community Survey, Urban Enterprise, 2022. Q22. "What are the main constraints to business growth or key issues facing businesses"
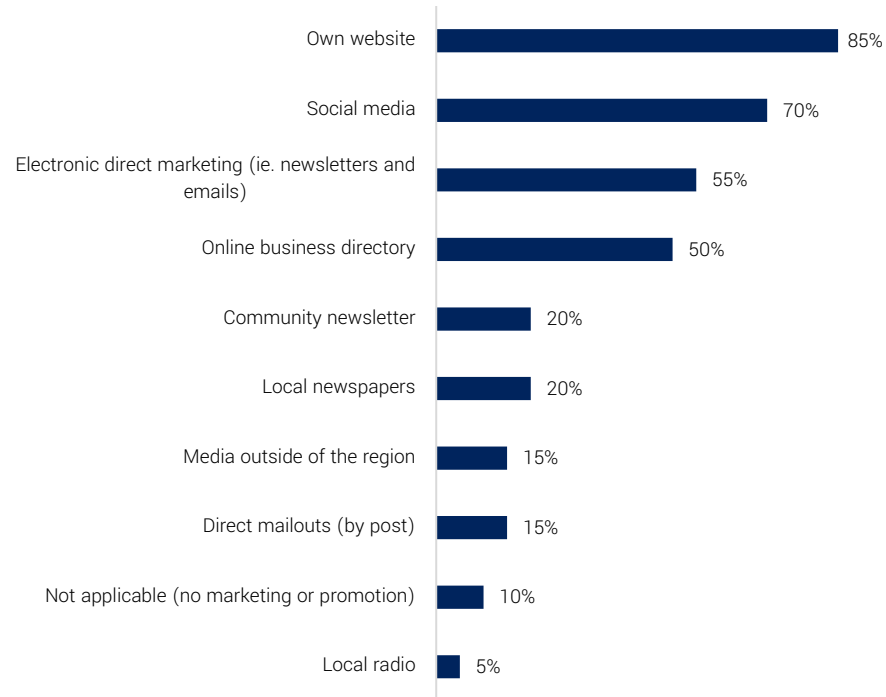
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

57% of business owner respondents are members of local industry networks or associations, including:

- Australian Dental Association;
- Celebrant Associations;
- Australian Cheer Sport Alliance;
- Victorian Chamber of Commerce;
- Whitehorse Business Group;
- Australian Cosmetic Chemist Association;
- Business Boroondara;
- Property Council of Australia;
- Shopping Centre Network;
- Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers;
- Whitehorse Neighbourhood Houses;
- Network of Inner Eastern Community Houses; and
- National Electrical and Communications Association.

As shown in Figure F15, online marketing is the most common promotion activity undertaken by business respondents, including marketing through business' own website (85%), social media (70%) and electronic direct marketing (55%).

F15. CURRENT MARKETING ACTIVITIES

Activity	Percentage
Own website	85%
Social media	70%
Electronic direct marketing (ie. newsletters and emails)	55%
Online business directory	50%
Community newsletter	20%
Local newspapers	20%
Media outside of the region	15%
Direct mailouts (by post)	15%
Not applicable (no marketing or promotion)	10%
Local radio	5%

Source: Whitehorse I&EDS Industry and Community Survey, Urban Enterprise, 2022. Q28. "Do you currently undertake any marketing or promotion of your business? (select all that apply)"

BUSINESS SUPPORT

Business owners were able to submit open-ended responses regarding key issues they believe council should be aware of, as displayed in Figure F16. Responses reveal the need for ongoing business support and education, coordinated marketing, better Council processes and infrastructure provision (e.g. parking, recycling bins).

F16. KEY ISSUES FOR BUSINESSES

Businesses were also asked to detail the key opportunities that Council should consider to better support businesses in Whitehorse. As detailed in Figure F17, these include training, networking events, co-working spaces and grants.

F17. KEY OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUSINESS SUPPORT

Source: Whitehorse I&EDS Industry and Community Survey, Urban Enterprise, 2022. Q31. "What are the key opportunities that Council should consider to better support businesses?"

Source: Whitehorse I&EDS Industry and Community Survey, Urban Enterprise, 2022. Q30. "What are the key issues facing businesses that Council should be aware of?"

Survey respondents were asked to rank the business development topics they would most like to receive training in. The top five topics are as follows:

1. Marketing;
2. Digital Marketing (social media and online platforms);
3. Business planning;
4. Staff recruiting; and
5. Exporting.

Council should consider avenues to connect businesses with training and development opportunities.

As shown in Figure F18, the most preferred method of receiving information about business support and development services from Council is via email.

F18. PREFERRED COMMUNICATION METHOD
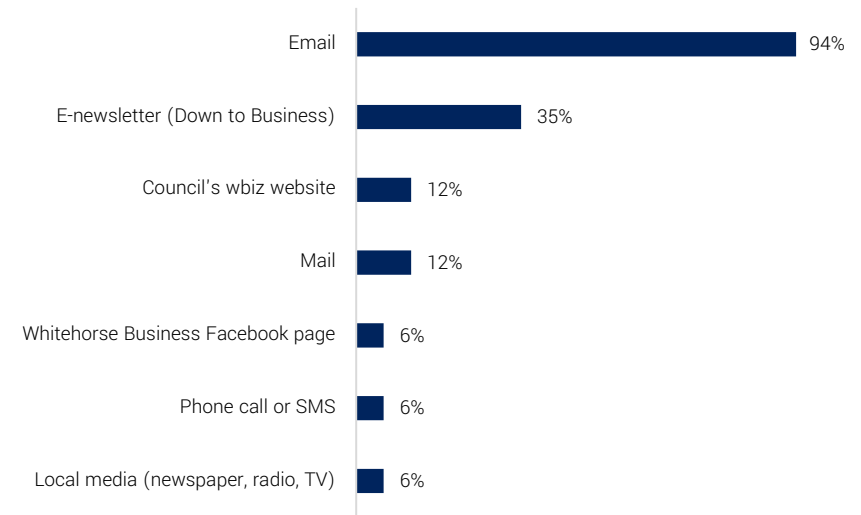
Source: Whitehorse I&EDS Industry and Community Survey, Urban Enterprise, 2022. Q32. "How would you like to receive information from Whitehorse City Council about business support / development services? (select all that apply)?"
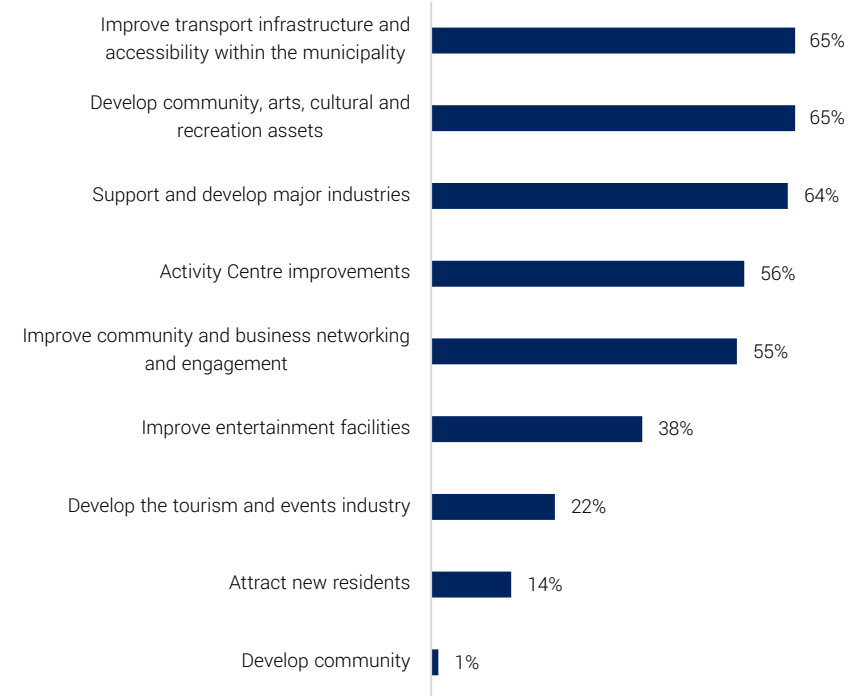
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

76% of survey respondents indicated they have never been in contact with Council's Economic Development Unit. Survey respondents were asked to prioritise statements relating to Council's role in economic development, as listed below (highest priority = 1 to lowest priority = 5).

1. Improve standard of living for community.
2. Supporting existing business.
3. Attracting new business and investment.
4. Attracting residents.
5. Growing the visitor economy and tourism industry.

Figure F19 displays the key economic development initiatives that respondents indicated would make Whitehorse a more prosperous and better place to live. The most common responses were improve transport infrastructure and accessibility within the municipality (65%), develop community, arts, cultural and recreation assets (65%) and support and develop major industries (64%).

**F19. PREFERRED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITATIVES**

Source: Whitehorse I&EDS Industry and Community Survey, Urban Enterprise, 2022. Q35. "Which of the following economic development initiatives do you think would make the City of Whitehorse a more prosperous and better place to live? (select all that apply)"

VISITOR ECONOMY

Figure F20 demonstrates that the most common attractions that survey respondents take friends and relatives to see in Whitehorse are parks and reserves (47%), restaurants and cafes (18%), waterways (18%) and retail (14%). This reinforces Whitehorse's key visitor economy strengths in dining, nature-based and retail attractions.

F20. TOP WHITEHORSE EXPERIENCES/ATTRACTIONS
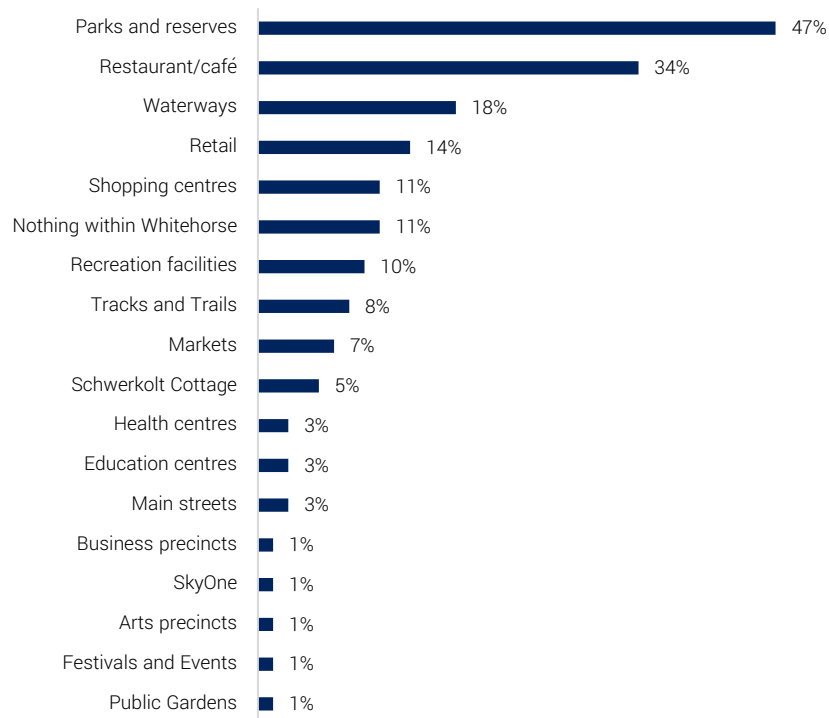
Respondents were also asked to rank experiences and attractions that could be enhanced to attract more visitors to Whitehorse and grow the visitor economy. Responses are listed below (highest priority = 1 to lowest priority = 7):

1. Business events.
2. Food and beverage experiences.
3. Leisure and recreation events.
4. History and heritage attractions.
5. Retail.
6. Outdoor recreation and sport.
7. Arts and culture.