Rural City of Wangaratta

Economic Development & Tourism Strategy

2024-2029





We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands of the Rural City of Wangaratta, and pay our respects to their elders past present and emerging, recognising their continuing connection to land, waters and culture.



I am excited to present our Economic and Tourism Development Strategy, our roadmap to a prosperous, vibrant and sustainable Wangaratta.

The creation of this strategy was informed by extensive consultation with local community, business, and industry stakeholders. We are appreciative of the valuable input and insights provided, which have been crucial in shaping our forward path. This collective input has ensured that the strategy is not only robust but also reflective of the diverse needs and aspirations of our community and economy.

The Wangaratta region thrives on a unique blend of tradition and progress. Our traditional industries (including agriculture and manufacturing) are our foundation and as the region evolves, new industries with strong growth prospects, including healthcare, sustainability and tourism, will play a larger role in supporting and growing our economy.

We see the Wangaratta of the future as a diverse region, a place where anyone can live, work and enjoy our wonderful region – a place of innovation and inclusivity. Throughout our development, we will maintain the essence of Wangaratta, which makes our region special; our country town feel, supportive communities, natural beauty, and welcoming villages.

Environmental sustainability will be fundamental to our growth. We will establish and expand sustainable industries in our economy, proving job opportunities to residents and contributing to the preservation of our region's environment and the de-carbonisation of the world.

I am proud to endorse this roadmap to Wangaratta's future. Together, we will continue to shape the success story of Wangaratta.

Sincerely,
Councilor Dean Rees
Mayor of Wangaratta



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Our Vision

"We are an inclusive, courageous and compassionate community, that has built our future on a respectful balance between the urban and the rural. We are known for our natural beauty, access to opportunities and innovation, our resilience, and our community strength. We have a mature and healthy landscape that supports our wellbeing and forms a strong part of our identity. We are the place where everyone has the ability to engage, to prosper, to be supported, and to grow."

Wangaratta Community Vision (2033)

This strategy will build upon five key principles to achieve Wangaratta's Community Vision (2033):

Vibrant: Open hospitality and retail businesses make the city and townships feel welcoming and inviting. The region is bustling with active, connected, and involved residents, businesses, and visitors. Wangaratta is an exciting place to live and for visitors to come back to.

Sustainable: The region supports environmental protection and growth through sustainable practices and initiatives to avoid harmful activities whilst retaining thriving industry activity. This ethos is led by Council through their ongoing commitment to sustainable practices and policies.

Diverse: A broad range of people, businesses and industries are present and feel a strong sense of belonging, inclusiveness, equity, and connectedness within the region.

Prosperous: Residents feel economically secure, local businesses are thriving and the region attracts targeted businesses and investment supporting local priority industries.

Safe: Residents feel safe in the region with positive workplace cultures, low crime rates, adherence to safety guidelines, and strong planning, preparedness, and support for natural disasters. Our growth will support and enhance this local attribute.

Where We Are Going

Current Economy	Future Economy
Business as usual approach	Forward-thinking, embracing change
Reliant upon a few key industries	A vibrant and diversified economy
A traditional economy	Circular, green economy

Current Liveability Environment	Future Liveability Environment
A lively community	A vibrant and diverse community
A tight housing market	Strong supply of affordable and diverse housing
Underdeveloped and sparse nature spaces	Vibrant and frequent public greenspaces

Current Tourism Economy	Future Tourism Economy
Seasonal tourism offering	Year-round tourism destination
Some product and activity offerings	Recognised tourism brand and offering
A 'stop-over' destination	A premier 'end-point' tourism destination

Our Strategic Alignment

The goals of this strategy are well aligned with existing local, regional, state and national strategies, policies and plans across the following areas:

- Jobs growth and skills development to maintain low unemployment levels.
- Funding and development of enabling infrastructure.
- Economic growth with diversification of the economic landscape and value adding industries.
- Accessible and equitable public infrastructure, public transport and broader social safety.
- Population retention and attraction.
- Enhanced tourism brand, increased visitation, and increased length of stay and spend.
- Improved environmental sustainability to support decarbonisation targets.

The local, regional, state and national strategies, policies and plans with which this strategy aligns are listed on Page 44.

About Wangaratta

Wangaratta is a vibrant region comprised of a number of quaint and picturesque townships and the modern and thriving Wangaratta City. Wangaratta serves as a regional center for the Oven-Murray Region and offers strong education, health, recreational, commercial and tourism facilities and services.

Wangaratta has a long history of manufacturing and though the economy has diversified significantly, manufacturing in Wangaratta remains a specialty of the region.

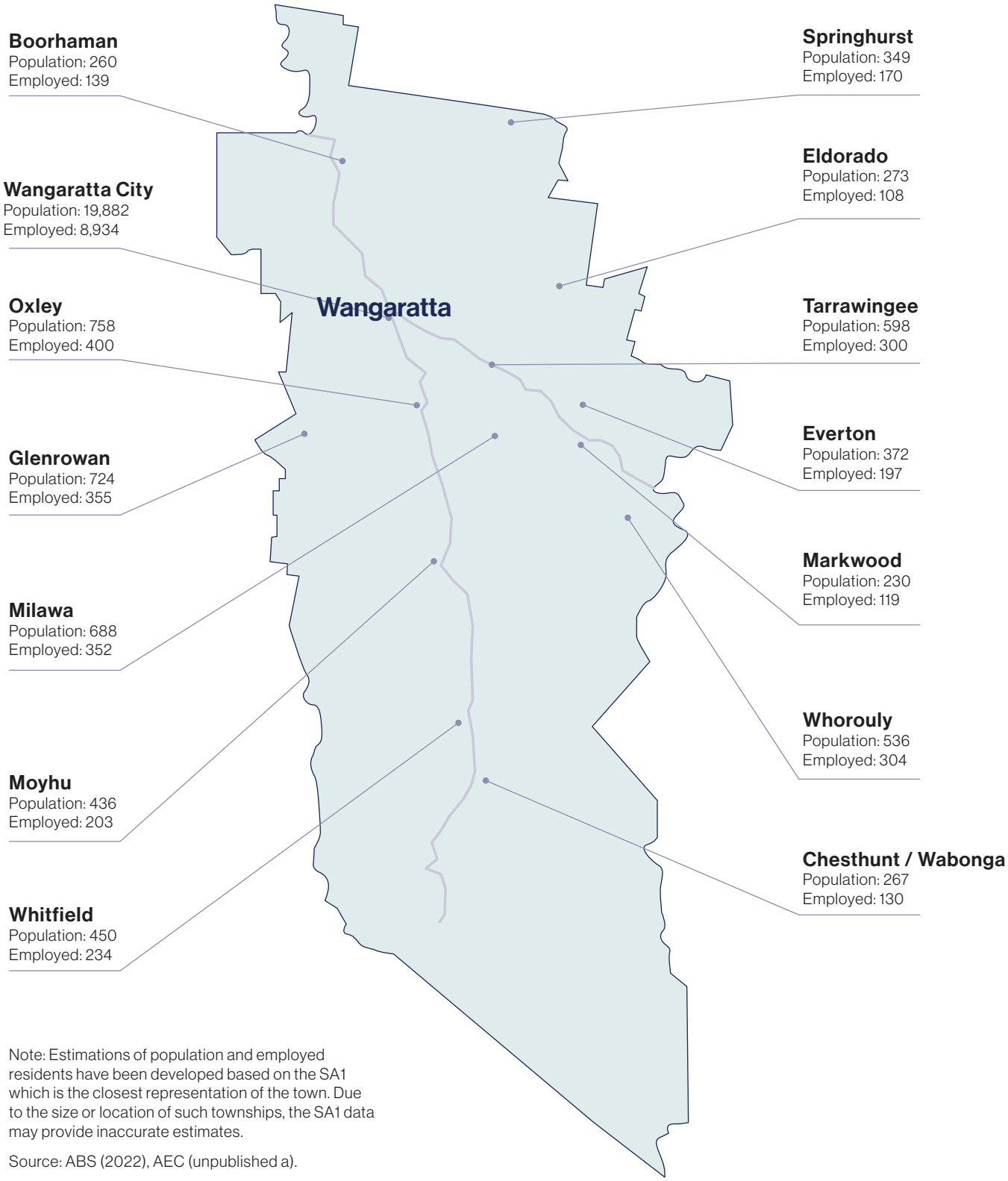
The region is now known for its agricultural sector, the lifeblood of the community and a key tourist attraction. From vineyards producing world-class wines and other niche industries, to staple industries like cattle, lamb and cereal crops, agriculture is an important contributor to Wangaratta's economy and community.

Located in the Victorian High Country and on the Ovens River, Wangaratta is a place of exceptional natural beauty. The region offers a range of outdoor activities to nature lovers and adventure tourists alike.

Wangaratta is home to engaged communities who are invested in the region and its future. This Strategy aims to capture the goals of this community and articulate how they will be achieved.

Our Townships

Wangaratta is comprised of several townships, each bringing unique characteristics and contributions to the local economy, cultural identity, and overall community development of Wangaratta. While having a unified vision, this strategy values the unique nature of each township and aims to enhance the strengths of each.



Note: Estimations of population and employed residents have been developed based on the SA1 which is the closest representation of the town. Due to the size or location of such townships, the SA1 data may provide inaccurate estimates.

Source: ABS (2022), AEC (unpublished a).

Our Socio-Economic Environment

The industries which contribute most significantly to Wangaratta's economy are healthcare and social assistance, manufacturing, construction, and agriculture. Healthcare and social assistance is also the top employer in the region, followed by retail and education.

People

29,900
Population (2022)
Annual growth from 2001
Wangaratta: 0.6%
Victoria: 1.6%

43.5 yrs
Average Age (2021)
Increase from 2016
Wangaratta: 0.4 years
Victoria 0.7 years (to 39)

45.9%
High School Completion (2021)
Change from Dec 2016
Wangaratta: 4.4 ppt
Victoria : 4.0 ppt (to 63.3%)

Economy

$1.9B
GRP (2021-22)
Annual growth from 2011-12
Wangaratta: 1.0%
Victoria: 2.5%

3.3%
Unemployment (Dec 2022)
Change from Dec 2019
Wangaratta: -0.6 ppt[1]
Victoria : 1.5 ppt (to 3.5%)

14,200
Jobs (2021-22)
Annual growth from 2006-07
Wangaratta: 0.9%
Victoria: 2.1%

Property

$525,000
Median House Price (2022)
Annual growth from 2017
Wangaratta: 14.0%
Victoria: 3.9% (to $722,000)

$350
Median Rental Payments (2021)
Annual growth from 2011:
Wangaratta: 5.2%
Victoria 2.0% (to $390)

$82.9M
Residential Building Approvals (2021-22)
Value in 2020-21: $93.8 million

$37.0M
Non-Residential Building Approvals (2021-22)
Value in 2020-21: $63.3 million

[1]percentage point change

Source: ABS (2022), ABS (2023a), ABS (2023b), ABS (2023c), AEC (unpublished a), AEC (unpublished b), Jobs and Skills (2023), Victorian Department of Transport and Planning (2019), Victorian Government (2023), Victorian Government (2021).

Our Visitor Economy

Wangaratta's wine industry, natural amenities and outdoor activity offering provide a hotspot for tourism. Wangaratta's strategic location on the Hume Highway makes it an ideal road trip stop and its proximity to surrounding tourism regions makes it a great service center for tourists in the Ovens Murray region.

Wangaratta's key tourism areas include King Valley, Glenrowan, Milawa and Eldorado.



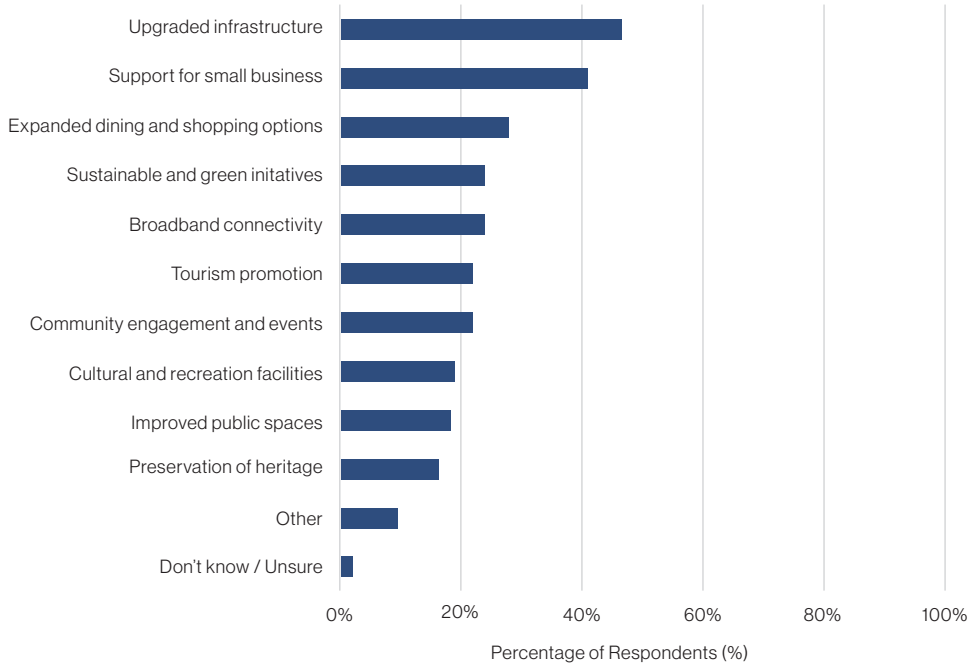
Key Attractions



What You Said

In developing the Strategy, community consultation was undertaken to understand your ideas about the future of Wangaratta. A series of individual consultations, community workshops, and an online survey were held to attain community and business feedback to inform the development of the Strategy.

Improvements/ Additions to Enhance Wangaratta as a Place to Live and Visit



Steps to Promote Local Entrepreneurship and Support Small Businesses



How You Feel About Wangaratta

Wangaratta's wine industry, natural amenities and outdoor activity offering provide a hotspot for tourism. Wangaratta's strategic location on the Hume Highway makes it an ideal road trip stop and its proximity to surrounding tourism regions makes it a great service center for tourists in the Ovens Murray region.

"I love Wangaratta and it has so much going for it already. Friendly people and beautiful walks along the river and bike rides. Look forward to seeing what the future brings."

"Our region is filled with tourism, food, and wine-based businesses..."

"Wangaratta has a-lot of young families recently moved here from city regions during covid or for lifestyle reasons..."

"I enjoy the country lifestyle of the Rural City of Wangaratta ..."

"... well placed for a weekend trip from Melbourne / Rural Vic / South NSW..."

Source: Business and Community Survey.

Your Vision for Wangaratta



Our Strengths

Liveability: The natural beauty, sense of community, proximity to services, short commute time, cultural and sporting facilities, safety, streetscaping, and recreational opportunities contribute to residents' high satisfaction with living in the region

Access to Services: Wangaratta is a regional center of the Ovens Murray Region, providing a range of education, sporting, retail, and medical services to residents across the region.

Healthcare and Social Services: Wangaratta provides quality healthcare and social services, supporting the well-being of residents and making the region attractive to families and retirees.

Educational Facilities: As an educational hub for the border region, Wangaratta provides well-resourced and high-quality educational institutions for primary and secondary schooling.

Country Living: Life in Wangaratta is a blend between city life, with access to services, and country living, with welcoming villages, a supportive community and slower-paced lifestyle.

Natural Amenity: Wangaratta is surrounded by picturesque landscapes, including the Victorian Alps, the Warby-Ovens National Park (Green Listed) and the King Valley, which enhance liveability and tourism opportunities.

Community Cohesion and Engagement: Liveability is enhanced by residents' connection to Wangaratta, their willingness to participate in community initiatives and the strong community cohesion. Businesses benefit from community support and a collaborative business environment.

Strategic Location: Wangaratta acts as a gateway to Melbourne and Albury-Wodonga and the eastern Ovens Murray Region, making it a desirable place to do business and draw investment. Wangaratta also acts as a service center for the surrounding tourism regions.

Agricultural & Horticulture Diversity: Wangaratta's economy is founded on a strong agriculture and horticulture sector. The region is well-suited to a diverse range of agricultural products, providing resilience against economic and commodity fluctuations and supporting local consumption and export opportunities. The Livestock Exchange also provides a social benefit to farmers and attracts visitors.

Employment Opportunities: With proximity to major cities like Melbourne and Albury-Wodonga, residents can access urban employment opportunities while enjoying the benefits of a rural lifestyle, striking a balance between work and leisure.

Economic Opportunity: Wangaratta has economic strengths across a number of industries including manufacturing, agriculture, tourism and health. Businesses tend to stay in Wangaratta and there is significant opportunity for business establishment and expansion.

Economic Resilience: Wangaratta has a resilient economy and experiences a lower impact to employment and industry value added activity in response to external events than the State. Further, the value of exports from Wangaratta are substantially larger than imports.

Collaborative Economic Initiatives: Wangaratta's community, economic development organisations, and local government often collaborate on initiatives to support innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic growth.

Lower Cost of Living: Housing in Wangaratta is more affordable than in metropolitan regions.

Land for Residential Development: There is a substantial amount of land available for retail, residential and industrial use.

Outdoor Activities: Wangaratta has a broad and high-quality range of outdoor activities including water sports (kayaking, fishing and whitewater rafting), hiking/ walking, mountain and gravel biking, and wine tours and tastings.

Growing Wine Industry: Wangaratta's wineries produce high-quality wines, attracting tourists and enthusiasts.



Our Challenges

Accessibility: Public transport is limited within Wangaratta and to surrounding regions and Melbourne. Travel and tourism within Wangaratta are hindered by road quality and inaccurate road condition information.

Digital Connectivity: Access to reliable high-speed internet and telecommunications infrastructure is limited in some areas, impacting liveability, business and tourism.

Health Care Accessibility: Residents struggle to access health care due to the shortage of local practitioners, the lack of affordable options, and the concentration of services in Wangaratta City rather than more rural townships.

Infrastructure: Infrastructure investment is low in Wangaratta with specific deficiencies in infrastructure for sewage, water for agricultural use, and healthcare.

Public Spaces: The quality and quantity of public spaces is a challenge for Wangaratta.

Recreational Opportunities: Recreational opportunities for young people and families are limited and can be costly, particularly indoor opportunities.

Youth Retention: Young people leave the region in search of a better lifestyle, education and career opportunities.

Shopfronts and Retail: There are fewer small retail businesses in the region and an increase in franchise shopfronts. Trends moving to online sales will impact shopfront occupancy in the future.

Education: Primary and secondary schools in Wangaratta are largely at capacity and do not cater to the diverse needs of students. Tertiary education and work experience offerings are limited.

Isolation: Residents face difficulty accessing services concentrated in Melbourne and pay high freight costs.

Awareness and Perception: Awareness of Wangaratta is limited due to lack of promotion and reporting of weather events has led to a negative perception. Residents rarely travel within the region.

Climate Change: Climate-related factors such as floods, droughts, bushfires, and changing weather patterns could pose risks to the health and wellbeing of residents and to industries including agriculture and tourism.

High Construction Costs: The long-term cost of input goods in housing construction are expected to stay high, decreasing housing affordability.

Market Competition: Wangaratta will face competition from other regions aiming to attract tourists and investors, requiring a strong differentiation strategy.

Workforce: Industry development is impacted by difficulty recruiting and retaining workers. Childcare and housing shortages impact labour force participation and attraction. Specalised roles filled from outside the region impact prospects for residents.

Skills gap: Wangaratta has a relatively low high school completion rate and is facing a skills shortage, particularly in the healthcare and welfare support industries.



Our Challenges, cont....

Housing Shortage: Wangaratta has an insufficient number and variety of houses including for new residents, down-sizers, and temporary workers. There is insufficient affordable housing to own and rent.

Land Available for Development: There is limited land available for industrial and retail use.

Bureaucracy: Lack of investment in industrial land planning and timeframes for approvals hinder investment and development.

Forward-Thinking Businesses: Willing investors with an appetite for risk and an entrepreneurial spirit would enhance Wangaratta's development.

Attraction and Activity Investment: Tourism in Wangaratta City would be enhanced by increased investment in activities and attractions, including weekend retail and water attractions.

Economic Dependence: Reliance on certain industries such as agriculture and tourism could make Wangaratta economically vulnerable.

Investment Attraction Framework: Publicly visible investment/ business attraction policies, procedures and programs may attract help to attract new businesses to Wangaratta.

Tourism Recovery and Spend: Visitation to Wangaratta has not yet recovered to pre-pandemic levels and visitor spend is relatively low.

Tourism Seasonality: The seasonality of tourism presents challenges to the industry in securing and retaining staff and enhancing service quality.

Visitor Accommodation: Accommodation options in Wangaratta City and the key tourism regions are limited.

Environmental Impacts of Tourism: The growing tourism industry will have impacts on the natural environment. It will be important for Wangaratta to understand the impact of increased visitation on its natural resources and mitigate the impacts where possible.

Our Opportunities

Infrastructure & Services to Support Growth:

Improved Transport & Accessibility: Improve public transport in and around Wangaratta City and the townships, road safety and train services from Melbourne. Establish a well maintained and utilised airport, electric vehicle charging/ hydrogen refueling stations, a bus loop for tourists and signage/ wayfinding.

Housing Developments: Expand sewage capacity to support residential development, focusing on diverse and affordable housing that fits the region's character.

Improved Digital Infrastructure: Upgrade digital connectivity to boost Wangaratta's digital economy and foster productivity and innovation.

Enhanced Health Services: Address the needs of the ageing population with improved healthcare services and structures, along with housing options for healthcare professionals.

Water Infrastructure: Improve water infrastructure to increase rainwater utilisation in the region.



Community & Business Activation & Capacity Building:

Activation of City & Townships: Enhance liveability and tourism by looping Ovens River Walk, increasing riverside attractions, creating green spaces, expanding indoor recreation opportunities, improving retail options, and beautifying towns.

Community Building: Strengthen the community through sports, arts, culture, and local clubs. Promote migration to the region through outreach and integration programs.

Education & Training: Partner with educational institutions for specialised training programs aligned with emerging industries and in-demand skills, and supported by local businesses. Specialised training through university or technical colleges may improve local youth retention.

Economic Expansion (Specialisation & Diversification):

Horticulture Specialisation: Establish a horticulture institute to position Wangaratta as Victoria's horticultural hub.

Sustainable Industries: Invest in sustainable industries to create a diversified economy which is resilient to future trends including through leveraging upcoming renewable energy projects, developing innovative recycling infrastructure and supporting/ promoting regenerative agriculture. Transition to a circular and 'net zero' economy and support economic growth and diversification.

Economic Expansion & Diversity: Capitalise on innovative technologies (including for e-commerce) and local strengths to expand industries including textile and other manufacturing, agriculture, transport and warehousing, and professional industries.

Expanded Retail & Local Business Opportunities: Launch a 'Buy Local' campaign, explore the idea of a homemaker center and local produce market, and boost retail trade.

Increased Marketing & Awareness: Redefine Wangaratta's brand and maintain consistent messaging across platforms and organisations. Utilise innovative promotion methods and incorporate digital innovation in tourism marketing to improve engagement and reach.

Climate Adaption: Explore industries, activities, infrastructure or services which will be required under the changing climate in Wangaratta and in the regional, state and national context. Prepare Wangaratta for the required adaption and explore associated economic opportunities.

Tourism Development:

Accessible Tourism: Improve the number and quality of attractions accessible to all abilities to open Wangaratta to a diverse demographic of tourists with longer stays and high spending. Businesses may need financial support for accessible infrastructure.

High Value Tourism: Enhance King Valley attractions and accommodation to elevate the visitor experience.

Arts and Cultural Tourism: Boost cultural tourism by expanding arts and cultural attractions, experiences and events (including First Nations attractions, experiences and events).

Historical Tourism: Capitalise on Wangaratta's cultural heritage, including its Ned Kelly connection and historic railway, for historical tourism.

Agricultural/ Culinary Tourism: Promote local produce and culinary experiences to tap into the food and wine tourism trend.

Eco-Tourism/ Nature Tourism: Attract eco-conscious travelers with nature-based experiences, utilising bike trails, proximity to ski fields, and river/ water activities, while highlighting sustainability efforts.

Council's Role

Councils have five core functions relating to economic and tourism development, which are to:



Councils sometimes also directly invest.

In addition to these core functions, the following initiatives will be prioritised for socio-economic and tourism development in Wangaratta:

Establish and Facilitate Strategic Direction: Determine Wangaratta's weaknesses, comparative advantages and priority industries. Commit to a compelling vision for Wangaratta and actively support it with marketing and advocacy and a detailed action plan. Perform case studies on successful regions comparable to Wangaratta.

Investment attraction: Market Wangaratta to priority industries and make investment easy. Provide incentives for investment (particularly for priority industries) and encourage innovation.

Community/ Business Engagement: Ensure residents and business owners/ operators are heard and considered with frequent consultation opportunities.

Infrastructure: Advocate for investment in expanding enabling infrastructure (including sewage systems, roads, housing, transport, digital connectivity, electric vehicle infrastructure) and maintain investment in current assets.

Tourism attraction: Determine tourism pillars, which will inform the development of new attractions and marketing.

Business Services/ Support: Provide financial and non-financial support for businesses, which encourages entrepreneurship and innovation. Establish a business development officer to provide business advisory services and proactively connect businesses with services, networks and information.

Planning and Regulation: Strategy and planning as well as applications and regulatory support will be important for residents and businesses in Wangaratta going forward, including:

- Simple, efficient and supportive approvals processes with online and in-person capabilities.
- Relevant bodies are informed of upcoming developments or development goals.
- Regulations are specific to the region and should prioritise environmental impacts.
- Council continues to work with statutory bodies to identify land for development priorities (i.e. business, industrial or residential use).

Placemaking: Creatively improve the region with thoughtful community building and town planning. Ensure unique features of townships and communities are maintained and ensure parks and nature are prioritised.

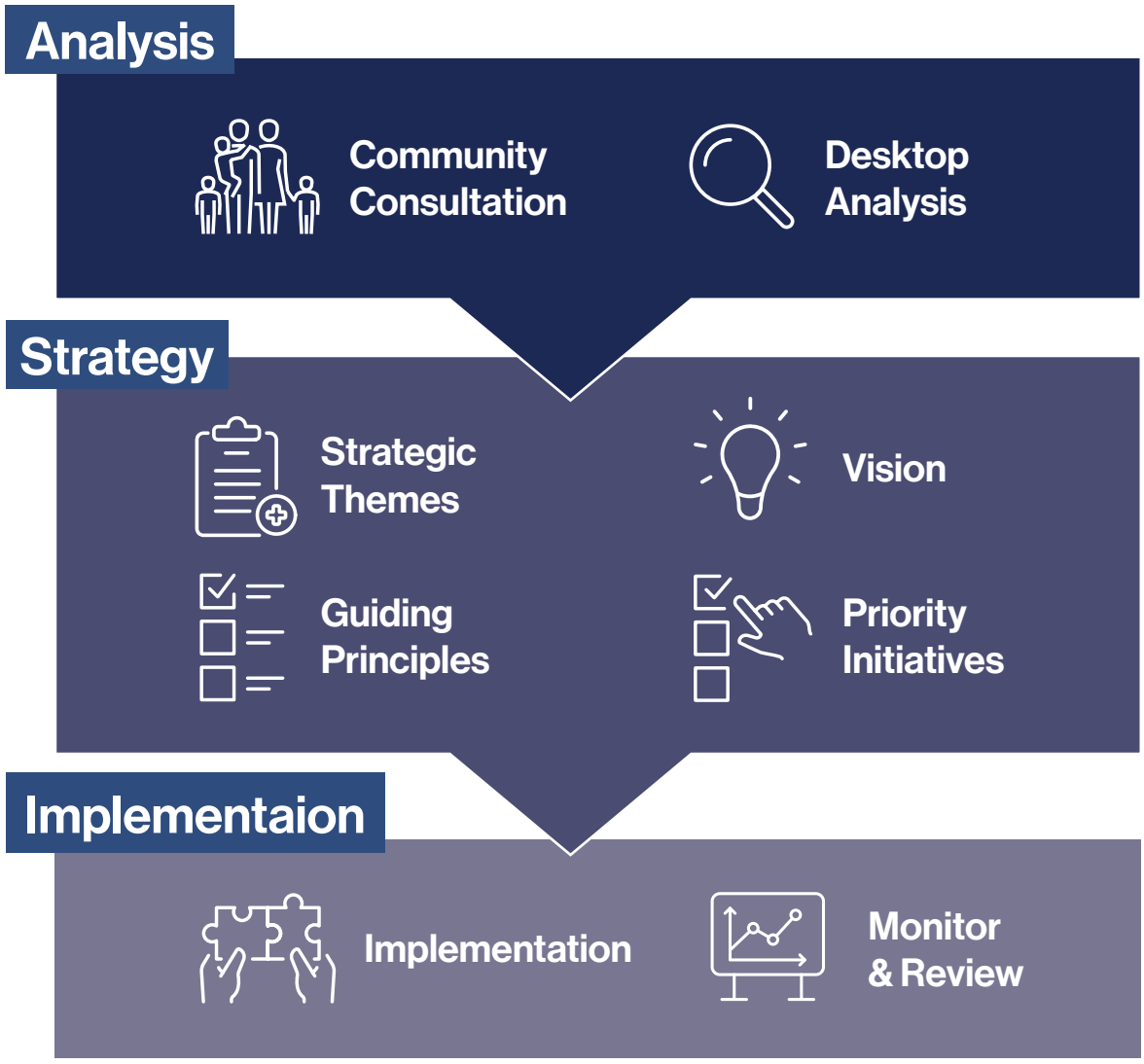
Climate Adaption: Support businesses and industry to adapt to the challenges of the changing climate including climate variability and the increased severity and frequency of weather events.

Forming the Strategy

The Strategy was developed through a process that included community consultation, socio-economic data analysis and a review of regional planning and development strategies and policies in alignment with the vision set out by Council.

Community consultation and input formed the cornerstone of this strategy, incorporating valuable insights from residents, stakeholders (including community, regional and industry leaders), and local businesses through one-on-one discussions, workshops, and a public-facing online survey. The prioritisation of community insights in the development of the Strategy reflects Council's vision that Wangaratta is a *...place where everyone has the ability to engage, to prosper, to be supported, and to grow* (Wangaratta's Community Vision, 2033).

In addition to community consultation, a broad evidence base was collated using relevant socio-economic data on Wangaratta's population, economy, visitor economy, and liveability. Through the analysis of current data and anticipated future trends, this evidence base provided the context with which specific opportunities and challenges within Wangaratta could be identified.





Strategic Themes

Investment Attraction & Local Business Support

Supporting the retention and growth of existing businesses and creating an environment that is attractive for new business investment to encourage diversification that is aligned with the community's long-term vision, innovative culture and environmental sustainability goals to provide a prosperous future.

Guiding Principles: Prosperous, Diverse.

Infrastructure & Planning

Accommodating Wangaratta's growing population and facilitating regional growth through appropriate land use and infrastructure planning, thereby establishing a pipeline of developable land and infrastructure projects, including both hard and soft as well as enhanced and new infrastructure.

Guiding Principles: Sustainable, Prosperous, Safe.

Tourism Development

Leveraging Wangaratta's natural beauty, strategic location, and range of established attractions to expand and diversify the tourism sector to attract a wider range of visitors year-round, encourage longer stays, and increase overall economic impact while ensuring environmental protection.

Guiding Principles: Prosperous, Vibrant, Diverse, Safe, Sustainable.

Skills & Workforce Development

Providing access to targeted skills and workforce development programs for youth and local workers to ensure workforce capabilities are better aligned with local business requirements and to improve the retention of youth and young professionals in the region.

Guiding Principles: Prosperous, Diverse.

Township Activation

Utilising placemaking principles to transform the city and unique townships of Wangaratta into vibrant destinations that reflect the overall nature and thematic of the Wangaratta vision.

Guiding Principles: Vibrant, Safe.

Priority Initiatives

1. Infrastructure and Service Enablers

Enhancement of services and infrastructure to support growth:

- Supporting to improve local bus networks (connecting townships within Wangaratta and connecting Wangaratta to surrounding regions)
- Advocate for improved internet and telecommunications infrastructure (improving coverage and quality)
- Advocate and plan to expand sewage capacity to enable population growth
- Continued enhancement and advocacy for road infrastructure to improve road safety and connections to markets
- Support and embrace renewable energy infrastructure including electric vehicle charging and hydrogen refueling stations
- Encourage and embrace a circular economy and expand recycling infrastructure to support industry and the community.

2. Major Tourism Product Development Plan

Exploration of tourism initiatives to increase the visitor economy:

- Cultural and arts activities, attractions and events
- Mountain biking attractions and events
- Health and wellness attractions
- Community events (including markets and festivals)
- Agricultural tourism attractions
- Eco tourism attractions
- Active recreation opportunities
- Accessible tourism
- Local food and wine trails (including specialist artesian producer clusters).

Ensure the sustainable development and operation of the tourism products, mitigating impacts to the environment. Links between Wangaratta City and townships to the products should be made available.

3. Sustainable Low Impact Health and Wellness Retreats

Support the development of health and wellness tourism in Wangaratta through planning and investment attraction, targeting retreats located in nature and around national parks. Wangaratta is well-suited for health and wellness escapes due to its:

- Accessibility from Melbourne with an isolated feel
- Clean air
- Natural beauty and environment
- Fresh local produce
- Sustainable focus.

Health and wellness tourism will provide an opportunity for Wangaratta to expand its luxury travel sector in a way that is consistent with its values and natural advantages

4. Township Activation

Wangaratta's townships present an opportunity to create active tourism hubs, each with a unique identify and an associated style and offering. Activating townships will also improve liveability for residents.

Build townships' character and tourism appeal by:

- Improving connectivity and wayfinding between townships and to Wangaratta City
- Develop physical and digital tracks and trails
- Engage businesses in activation to improve weekend and night-time hospitality and retail offering
- Expand attractions and activities in and around townships (including events and festivals)
- Expand high-quality accommodation offering in key tourism areas.
- Expanding and enhancing green spaces.

This supports the CBD Masterplan and Walking and Cycling Strategy 2020-2030.

5. Ageing Community Infrastructure

Support to strengthen aged care services and support in Wangaratta.

Wangaratta has an ageing population and will require additional infrastructure to support residents. Such developments may also attract retirees to Wangaratta and expand its healthcare sector, providing opportunities for skilled work.

Aged care can occur at different levels for different care requirements, including:

- Home Care – enabling people to live at home while still receiving the support required.
- Short-term Care – providing care for a designated period (e.g., after illness or hospital treatment or while families are unable to provide support).
- Residential Care – for those who require a high level of support and cannot live independently.



Implementation Plan

How we support your business and the local economy.

The Economic Development and Visitor Services Team is dedicated to fostering a thriving business environment in the Rural City of Wangaratta. Some of the ways we assist are:

- Collaborate with local business groups to deliver network events and opportunities.
- Deliver skill-building workshops to stimulate entrepreneurship and collaboration.
- Offer a concierge service to assist business and industry to navigate the regulatory processes.
- Deliver 'Buy and Shop Local' campaigns in collaboration with local businesses.
- Encourage diversity in housing developments to provide a variety of housing options for residents.
- Delivery promotional advertising campaigns to encourage visitation, business attraction and to attract labour to our municipality.
- Deliver Visitor Services to provide visitors with a depth of local experiences.
- Collaborate with education providers to deliver skills training that supports local businesses and industry labour force needs, with a focus on youth retention.
- Collaborate with health providers to support their recruitment and retention programs.
- Connect business and industry with State and Federal initiatives and programs.
- Support innovation and entrepreneurship through targeted workshops and network experiences.
- Promote the winners of Business Awards of Excellence through Council's social channels.
- Support export industries to enter international markets.
- Provide local data and statistics on the local economy.
- Identify and advocate for enabling infrastructure to support business and industry growth.
- Maintain the Wangaratta Aerodrome to support aviation business, leisure flights and emergency services.



Implementation Plan

Objectives



Investment Attraction & Local Business Support

Strengthen and diversify the local economy with a growth in Gross Regional Product of 3% per annum.



Infrastructure & Planning

Increasing housing diversity, particularly for key workers and affordable housing to support labour attraction.



Tourism Development

Increase in Wangaratta's share of total nights spent in Victoria 0.1%



Skills & Workforce

Generate employment growth in key sectors and retain an unemployment rate lower than the Victorian regional average.



Township Activation

Increase liveability and growth of regional townships by achieving resident population growth of 1% per annum on average by 2029, whilst maintaining or improving the median income of Wangaratta.

Implementation Plan

Investment Attraction & Local Business Support

#	Objective	Action	Timeframe
1.1	Retain and grow existing businesses and encourage a supportive environment to cultivate innovation and entrepreneurship.	**1.1.1:** Conduct a Business Health Check survey to assess the needs and challenges of existing businesses and develop appropriate support measures.	Short Term and Ongoing
		1.1.2: Encourage businesses to embrace technology and sustainable practices into their operations to increase their efficiency, expand their offering and transition to lower carbon producing activities.	Short Term and Ongoing
		1.1.3: Assist businesses to participate in state and national procurement programs including for major infrastructure or service projects.	Short Term and Ongoing
		1.1.4: Assist businesses to explore export opportunities	Short Term and Ongoing



#	Objective	Action	Timeframe
1.2	Attract new business investment that addresses identified local needs, supports priority industries, upholds the guiding principles of the strategy, and expands supply chains – be ready when investors arrive (they will not wait).	**1.2.1:** Develop and implement a comprehensive Investment Attraction Framework that targets the priority industries (advanced manufacturing, sustainable agriculture and horticulture, healthcare, tourism, renewable energy). The Investment Attraction Framework should include eligibility criteria based on priority industries and support mechanisms such as application support, introductions and network support, and application process efficiencies.	Short Term
		1.2.2: Develop a Business Welcome Package, which may include a welcome letter, a guide to doing business in Wangaratta and information regarding the relevant services available to the business. Council to meet with the new business as soon as the establishment/ investment is identified to understand any additional support Council may provide.	Short Term (development) Short Term and Ongoing (implementation)
1.3	Encourage collaboration and networking amongst local businesses (including new businesses) to expand local supply chains.	**1.3.1:** Connect businesses to share resources, from commercial real estate opportunities to supply chain contacts and contractor/ supplier needs.	Medium Term

Timing Legend:

- **Short Term** - Refers to action that is high priority for the Shire or acts as a crucial step in achieving medium/ longer term outcomes and should be undertaken within 1-2 years.
- **Short Term and Ongoing** - Refers to action that should be commenced within 1-3 years and is conducted regularly over time.
- **Medium Term** - Refers to action that is of lower priority compared to the short-term actions, but still contributes to achieving longer term outcomes, and should be undertaken within 3-5 years.
- **Long Term** - Refers to action that is related to infrastructure upgrades/ large scale delivery, supported by the short- and medium-term actions.

Implementation Plan

Infrastructure & Planning

#	Objective	Action	Timeframe
2.1	Plan for future population growth through sustainable development/ expansion of transport/ connectivity, sewerage, digital, health and liveability infrastructure.	**2.1.1:** Facilitate the upgrade and expansion of critical infrastructure within infrastructure planning to work towards a longer term goal to accommodate needs (including sewage systems, roads, housing, transport, and digital connectivity).	Long Term
2.2	Facilitate an efficient and healthy housing market through optimised land use planning and zoning regulations.	**2.2.1:** Encourage housing developments that meet sustainability or affordability criteria	Short Term
		2.2.2: Monitor and report on the anticipated years supply of zoned available land to inform Council and the broader development market.	Medium Term and Ongoing
2.3	Improve enabling infrastructure to support business and industry growth and sustainable operations.	**2.3.1:** Review (and update as required) the Industrial Land Use Strategy and allocate space for emerging and priority industries (e.g., advanced manufacturing, sustainable agriculture and horticulture, healthcare, tourism and renewable energies). Explore the potential benefits of co-location of industries and enable/ incentivise such co-location where relevant.	Short Term and Ongoing
		2.3.2: Advocate for funding from the Victorian Government for water infrastructure, to increase available water in the region for agricultural and industrial use.	Short Term (Identification) Medium Term (Implementation)
		2.3.3: Explore the demand for, and feasibility of, developing recycling/ re-use infrastructure in Wangaratta with a view to transitioning Wangaratta into a circular economy. This will support Council's Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy.	Medium Term
		2.3.4: Identify locations for electric vehicle charging stations in preparation for the increased prevalence of electric vehicles, engage with private sector providers for their delivery. Explore the feasibility of, and demand for, hydrogen re- fueling opportunities at service stations. This will support Council's Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2021-2026.	Long Term



Implementation Plan

Tourism Development

#	Objective	Action	Timeframe
3.1	Expand and diversify product offering in agri-tourism, eco-tourism, health and wellness, food and wine tourism), arts and cultural tourism, and sports tourism, including consideration of all abilities access and digital capability.	**3.1.1:** Conduct detailed market research to identify gaps and opportunities in agri-tourism, eco-tourism, food and wine tourism, arts and cultural tourism, historical tourism, sports tourism and high-value tourism. Consider how Wangaratta's current offering can be enhanced to support such opportunities (including enhancing natural amenities).	Short Term
		3.1.2: Facilitate collaboration between local tourism and transport businesses to develop a range of tours or holiday packages.	Medium Term
		3.1.3: Encourage local tourism businesses to review, reflect on and consider what is required to enhance their service and make it more accessible (e.g. marketing, physical access, opening times). Support businesses to make the necessary changes by providing/ upgrading infrastructure or advocating for the funding required.	Long Term
		3.1.4: Encourage local tourism businesses to consider how their offering could be enhanced or expanded by technology. Support the businesses to acquire and apply the technology required.	Long Term
		3.1.5: Explore development of a Tourism Catalyst Investment Program to support existing local tourism businesses to enhance or expand their offering and support prospective tourism businesses to get started.	Medium Term
3.2	Increase visitor engagement (i.e., increase length of stay and induce additional spending locally).	**3.2.1:** Facilitate the delivery of the Wangaratta Events & Attraction Strategy to expand existing events and increase the number of large and small events and festivals to encourage year-round visitation and community engagement (through the night and weekend economy).	Short Term and Ongoing
		3.2.2: Increase and enhance Wangaratta's wayfinding to encourage stopover visitation and increase awareness of the region.	Short Term and Ongoing

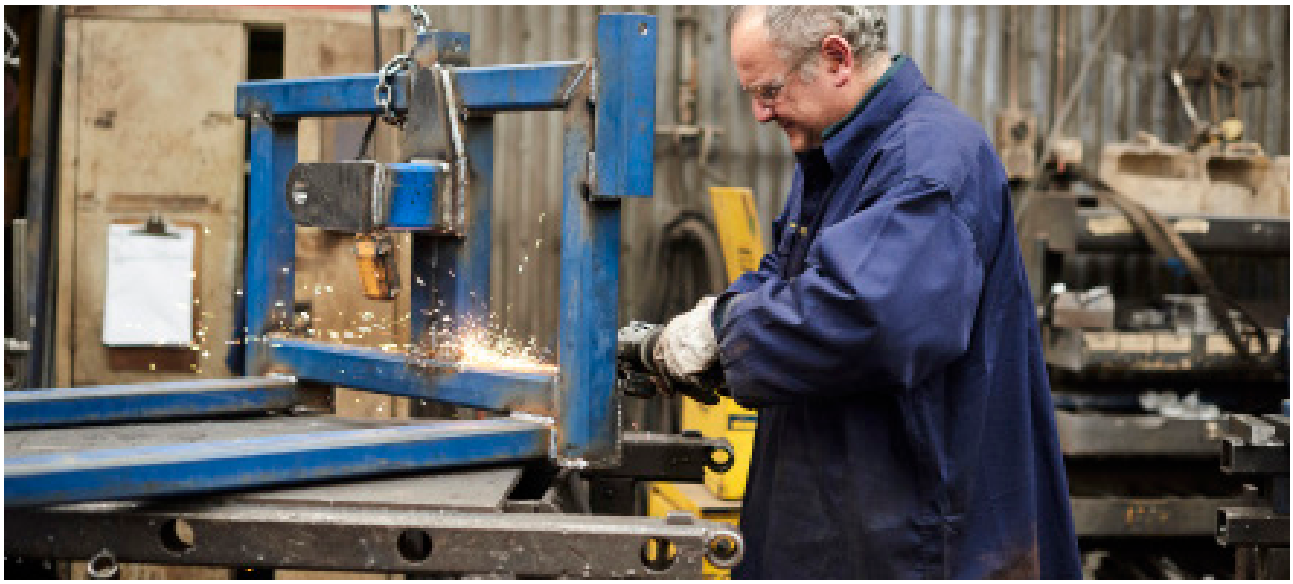


#	Objective	Action	Timeframe
3.3	Improve enabling tourism infrastructure and service levels.	**3.3.1:** Conduct a short-term accommodation demand study to examine and identify gaps in the market (in terms of quality and quantity) and areas for improvement.	Medium Term
		3.3.2: Develop a long-term Visitor Experience Survey, which is used to understand visitor behaviour/ experiences and ultimately extend their length of stay and likelihood of repeat visitation.	Short Term and Ongoing
		3.3.3: Advocate for road condition improvements to key tourism destinations. Work with the Department of Transport and Planning to address the identified issues in priority order.	Short Term
		3.3.4: Advocate for funding to support the development of the Creative Precinct to enhance cultural experiences for visitors and artists.	Short Term
		3.3.5: Develop a strategy to improve the resilience of tourism infrastructure and attractions to adverse events.	Medium Term
3.4	Conduct a united and expanded regional marketing and promotion program, which promotes the unique aspects of each township and Wangaratta within the broader North East region.	**3.4.1:** Revise the Marketing & Branding Strategy to reflect each township's unique aspects and identity and season's attractions.	Short Term
		3.4.2: Partner with neighbouring LGAs and the Regional Tourism Organisation to deliver an integrated marketing campaign to leverage off High Country promotions.	Medium Term
3.5	Develop tourism "Tracks and Trails" between key precincts that stimulates commercial investment, private sector activation and health and wellbeing outcomes. This supports the Walking and Cycling Strategy 2020 to 2030.	**3.5.1:** Identify potential walking, cycling/ trail riding and driving routes connecting key attractions and precincts for the development of trails and tracks. The routes may use existing infrastructure or may require the development of additional trails. Consider methods to mitigate the environmental impact where required.	Short Term
		3.5.2: Engage with local businesses along proposed routes to tailor their product/ service offering to anticipated track and trail user groups.	Medium Term
		3.5.3: Develop a supporting interactive signage strategy/ program (including QR codes along the trails) to provide track/ trail users with information and promote local businesses.	Medium Term
		3.5.4: Create linkages between nature, arts or cultural experiences to create eclectic experience trails or packages.	Long Term

Implementation Plan

Skills & Workforce Development

#	Objective	Action	Timeframe
4.1	Facilitate access for youth and local workers to training and skill development facilities/ programs (including secondary, tertiary and industry led).	**4.1.1:** Partake in collaboration between GO TAFE's development of the Wangaratta Tech School and local businesses to develop vocational and academic programs tailored to the goals of student and needs of local businesses.	Short Term and Ongoing
		4.1.2: Explore the feasibility and demand for a Workforce Mobility Program to assist residents in traveling to education/ training locations through a business/ investment case. This may involve Council encouraging ride share transport opportunities or collaborative business transport arrangements.	Short Term (identification) Medium Term (implementation)
4.2	Align skills of youth and the local workforce with local business needs, to create an industry-ready workforce.	**4.2.1:** Support the establishment of a series of industry-specific job fairs with State and National training facilitation organisations, which connect businesses with local current and future employees.	Medium Term
4.3	Enhance the volume and variety of local employment opportunities.	**4.3.1:** Conduct a regular skills gap assessment to identify the labour and skills gaps of local businesses and to assist in facilitating connections to people looking for work.	Short Term and Ongoing
4.4	Retain young workers and professionals in the region.	**4.4.1:** Perform a Demand and Supply Analysis for childcare in Wangaratta. Where needed, facilitate the development of outside school hours and vacation care options across the region to support parents to stay in the labour force.	Short Term (Identification) Medium Term (Implementation)
		4.4.2: Facilitate a 'Young Professionals Network' aimed at peer-to-peer networking and professional development and hold regular meetings. Promote mentorship opportunities by hosting experienced professionals from within and from outside the region as guest speakers.	Medium Term



Township Activation

#	Objective	Action	Timeframe
5.1	Improve the appeal of townships to residents and visitors through a program of placemaking and beautification initiatives.	**5.1.1:** Review the Rural Placemaking Plans to guide activation of townships and the enhancement of urban realm utilising the CBD Masterplan to guide planned infrastructure provision over the next 20 years.	Long Term
		5.1.2: Engage with artists for murals and active/ participatory sculptures in public spaces to showcase the local environment, culture and township identify.	Medium Term
		5.1.3: Enhance/ expand the attractions and activities alongside the Ovens River to improve resident and visitor experience of the river.	Medium Term
		5.1.4: Perform reviews and site options analyses to identify opportunities to enhance and increase green spaces in townships.	Medium Term
5.2	Enhance connectivity between townships through active transport trails, tracks and experiences.	**5.2.1:** Develop and promote active transport routes linking key areas within and between townships, including well-marked bicycle lanes and pedestrian paths as well as bushwalking hiking trails, mountain biking and rail trails.	Long term
		5.2.2: Explore the feasibility and demand of increasing public transport options within and between townships and to surrounding regions.	Medium Term
5.3	Promote the city and townships as unique destinations which align with a broader brand for Wangaratta.	**5.3.1:** Establish and maintain a Local Stories campaign, featuring testimonials from residents about what makes their township special.	Short Term and Ongoing
5.4	Promote local business to business engagement and participation in activation programs/ events which enhance the night and weekend economy.	**5.4.1:** Explore the demand for, and feasibility of, launching a coordinated (across region) twilight/ evening trading/ activation campaign in which local businesses extend their hours on a specified day (e.g., each Friday or the last Friday of each month) to encourage additional activity and induce a festival/ market style activity.	Short Term
		5.4.2: Launch an activation campaign with local traders to draw consistency and collaboration around weekend, evening, and event trading.	Medium Term

Monitoring and Reporting

In addition to monitoring the implementation plan throughout the delivery and achievement of key actions, the success of the strategy will be measured through the following:

	Macro Measures	Micro Measures
Investment Attraction & Local Business Support	• Business counts by industry • Number of local jobs • Gross regional product	• Approvals processing times • Innovation hub membership • Business health check results • Business resource webpage followers
Infrastructure & Planning	• Value of construction (residential) • Value of construction (non-residential)	• Level of forward supply of available zoned land (residential, industrial, commercial) • Number of electric vehicle charging/ hydrogen refuelling stations • Number of houses meeting sustainability/ affordability criteria
Tourism Development	• Visitation • Average visitor length of stay • Average visitor spend	• Number of packages/ tours on offer • Number of accessible tourism attractions • Number of digitally interactive attractions • Number of tourism events • Number of additional signs
Skills & Workforce Development	• Employment rate • Self sufficiency rates • Labour force participation • Migration • Average wages	• Participation in work-based training • Proportion (and number) of school leavers staying in region • High school completion and non-school qualification rates
Township Activation	• Jobs • Population • Visitation to regional Wangaratta	• Number of events (weekend, night) by township • Number of murals/ sculptures • Business health check results • Number of local stories in campaign

Our Partners

We invite our local community, businesses, broader region, State, and Federal Government to partner with us in working towards our future vision:

- Australian Government
- Business Wangaratta
- Community
- Education Institutions (Secondary Schools, TAFE, Universities, RTOs)
- E-Transport companies
- Local Tourism Businesses
- North East Careers Network
- Parks Victoria
- Private Enterprise
- Public Transport Victoria
- Surrounding Council's
- Tourism Groups
- Tourism North East
- Transport Businesses
- Victorian Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
- Victorian Department of Planning and Transport
- Victorian Government
- Visit Victoria

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- Council staff.

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Appendix – Strategic Alignment

This strategy aligns with the objectives many local, regional, state and national strategies, including the following:

Economy:

- Wangaratta Economic Development Strategy 2018-2023 (2018).
- Wangaratta Industrial Land Use Strategy (2017).
- Ovens Murray Regional Economic Development Strategy (2022)
- Ovens Murray Digital Plan (2021)
- Ovens Murray Regional Skills Demand Profile 2023 (2023)
- Hume Regional Growth Plan (2014)
- Advancing Victorian Manufacturing (2017)
- Stronger, Innovative, Sustainable: A New Strategy for Agriculture in Victoria (2020)
- Digital Foundations for Agriculture Strategy (2022)
- National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy (2019)
- Reforms to Meet Australia's Future Infrastructure Needs (2021)

Tourism:

- Wangaratta Visitor Services Strategy (2021)
- Tourism North East – Three-Year Strategy 2019-20 to 2021-22 (2020)
- Wangaratta Activating King Valley, Prosecco Road Plan (2021)
- Victorian Visitor Economy Masterplan (2022)
- Victorian Visitor Economy Recovery & Reform Plan (2021)
- Wangaratta Council Plan 2021 – 2025 (2021)

Cultural & Social:

- Wangaratta Council Plan 2021 – 2025 (2021)
- Residential Growth Areas (2023)

Environmental:

- Wangaratta Council Plan 2021 – 2025 (2021)
- Wangaratta Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2021 – 2026 (2020)



How to Get Involved

This Economic Development and Tourism Strategy is more than just a vision, it is a collective commitment to shaping the bright future of our region.

The participation of our community is vital to the success of the strategy. We invite you to get involved through attending meetings, supporting local businesses, sharing ideas, and staying informed.

Council's Economic Development Team is here for you too. Whether you need advice on how to start a new business, connections with businesses in your industry, or you have ideas about the way Wangaratta can move forward, Council's Economic Development Team can help.

Let's talk!

For more information, please contact:

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Rural City of
Wangaratta