

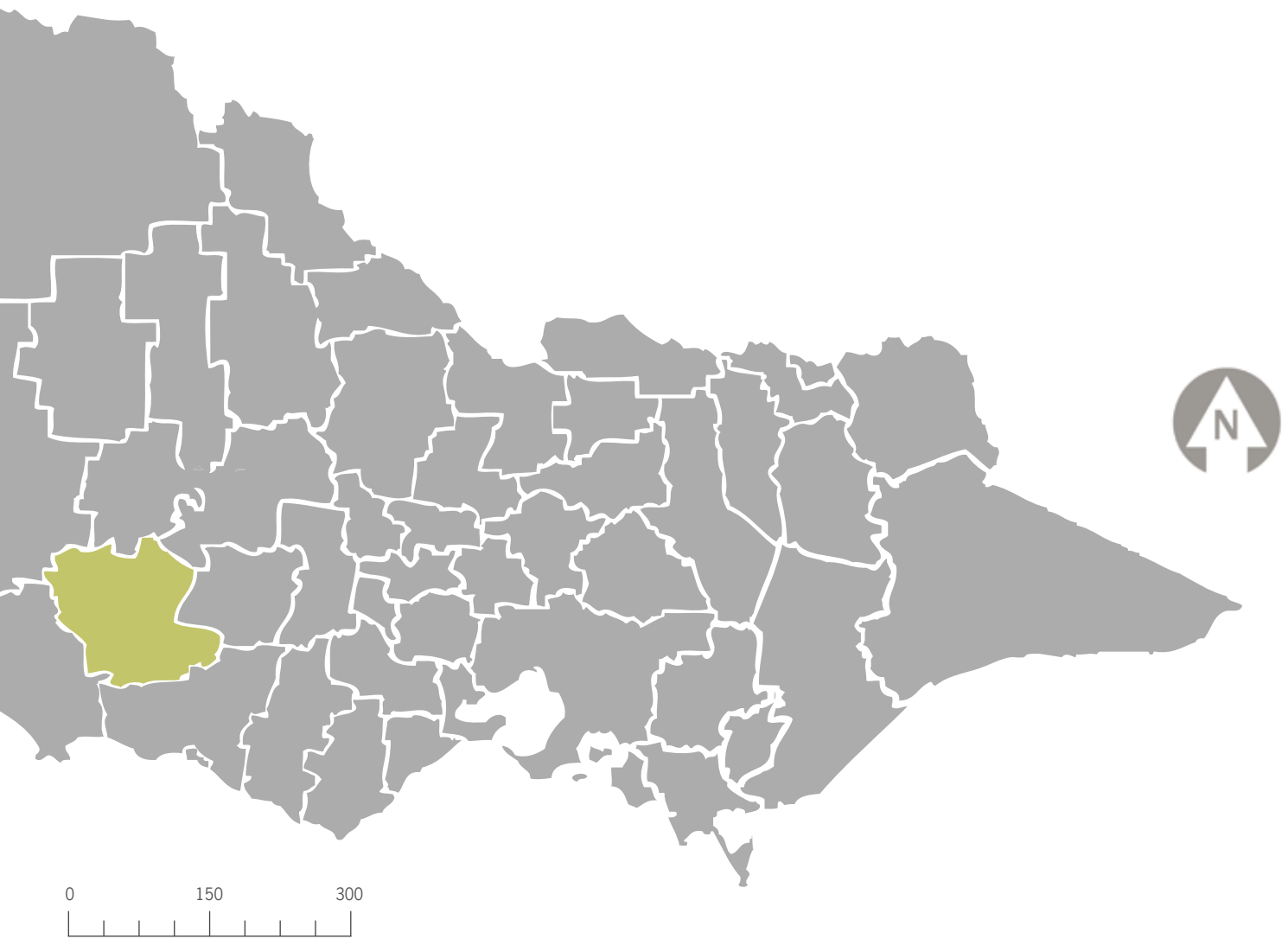
Southern Grampians Shire



Southern Grampians
SHIRE COUNCIL

Economic Development Strategy 2011-2021

Unlocking our Growth Potential



We wish to acknowledge the support of Regional Development Victoria in the development of this strategy

Acknowledgements

Prepared by Geografia and Tim Nott.



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The Southern Grampians has rich natural assets, a proven resilience to tougher economic times, many emerging opportunities and a commitment to sustainable growth. We have bred many successful entrepreneurs, and their legacy continues to define parts of our economy. A robust policy framework and a continuation of this tradition can help us overcome our challenges and maximise today's and our future's economic opportunities.

Mayor's Foreword

Our fertile soils and reliable weather, high commodity prices and the innovations of our farming community have driven a resurgence in agricultural production – a trend we are keen to foster. We have an emerging mining and renewable energy sector and many of the region's timber plantations are ready for harvest – opportunities we are keen to build on. Our tourism sector is beginning to mature and manufacturing continues to punch above its weight – sectors we are keen to nurture.

We have a strong education and health sector, good air transport linkages, freight infrastructure and retail diversity – critical amenities and infrastructure that we aim to leverage from to drive investment. With the completion of the Hamilton Structure Plan, and the commencement of a similar process for our smaller towns, we are gearing up for growth – a message we are keen to spread.

Like many regional communities, however, we face challenges - from skilled labour shortages to an ageing population. Yet we strongly believe that these are not insurmountable. With smart planning and collaboration, we have the evidence and confidence to commit to numerous investments and catalytic interventions that will unlock our growth potential.

I invite current and past residents, business owners, potential investors and people considering a move to the Southern Grampians to read this Economic Development Strategy and join us in our journey to becoming the most liveable provincial community in Australia with a reputation as a place of economic opportunity.



Cr. Robert Penny J.P.
Mayor

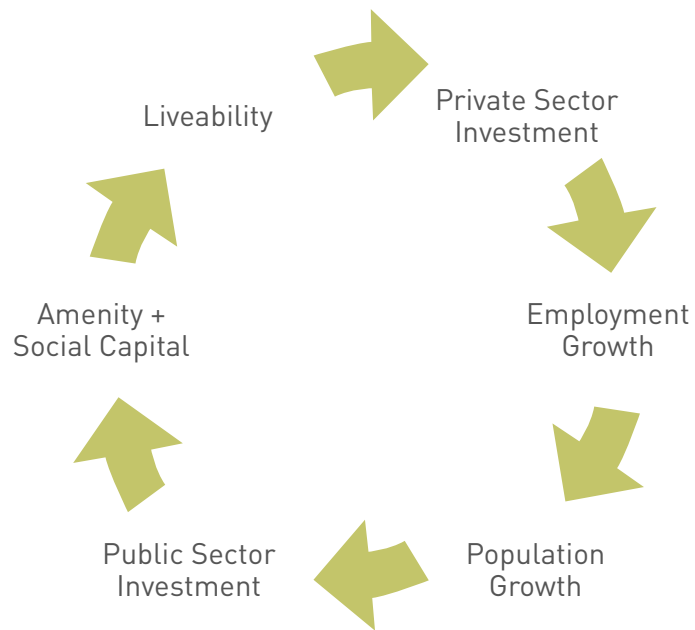
Council Vision

To be Australia's most liveable provincial community.

Economic Development Vision

A municipality known for its economic diversity, supporting amenities, welcoming investment environment, employment and growth opportunities.

Liveability attracts investment, which generates jobs. Jobs attract people and people attract funding. Funding creates amenity; amenity creates liveability; liveability attracts skills and skills generates investment.



Our Shire

Over 6,600 square kilometres taking in the majestic Grampians National Park, extinct volcanos, reliable rainfall and 466,000 hectares of some of the most fertile land under production in Australia, the Southern Grampians is endowed with enviable natural assets.



Our Shire

Over 6,600 square kilometres taking in the majestic Grampians National Park, extinct volcanos, reliable rainfall and 466,000 hectares of some of the most fertile land under production in Australia, the Southern Grampians is endowed with enviable natural assets, boasting:

- An agricultural sector worth around \$220 million per year at almost twice the profit per hectare as the State average;
- A state-of-the-art mineral sands processing plant producing 375,000 tonnes of rutile and zircon for export each year;
- A daily, scheduled air service to Melbourne and Adelaide;
- One of Victoria's most beautiful places in the Grampians National Park;
- Over 34,000 hectares of timber ready for harvest;
- Major wind farm developments, including the biggest in the Southern Hemisphere on our southern boundary;
- One of the most successful livestock exchanges in the country;
- The nationally regarded Hamilton Art Gallery;
- An abundance of education, recreation and health facilities and services; and
- A Council and community looking for new investors and residents to share in the growth.



Our Shire cont.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Southern Grampians is a Shire of diverse economic activity with an enviable level of natural and built amenity. Its future success relies on leveraging from these assets and continuing to develop its economic base.

One of the five core objectives for the Southern Grampians Shire Council is to “plan for and foster economic growth and prosperity”. An Economic Development Strategy is an important mechanism to help achieve this. It does this in three important ways.

1. The development of the Strategy involved considerable research, consultation and economic analysis. Understanding and communicating how a regional economy is tracking is an essential first step in successfully stimulating economic growth.
2. The Strategy provides both a flexible framework and specific actions to guide the efforts of Council staff in contributing to the development of the Shire’s economy.
3. The Strategy demonstrates and articulates the economic development objectives of Council to the community, current and potential investors.

With this in mind, the Economic Development Strategy, supporting background report and economic model aim to:

Develop a clear understanding of the Southern Grampians economy in order to identify the most effective way that the Council can contribute to expanding the economic base, attract and retain residents of all age groups and stimulate population growth.

This Strategy is to be a blueprint for the Shire’s role in economic development. Its principles, objectives and initiatives reflect all five core objectives of the Shire: to provide good governance; plan for and foster economic growth; ensure quality services are available; help the community feel strong and safe; and pursue environmental sustainability.



2. UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEXITY

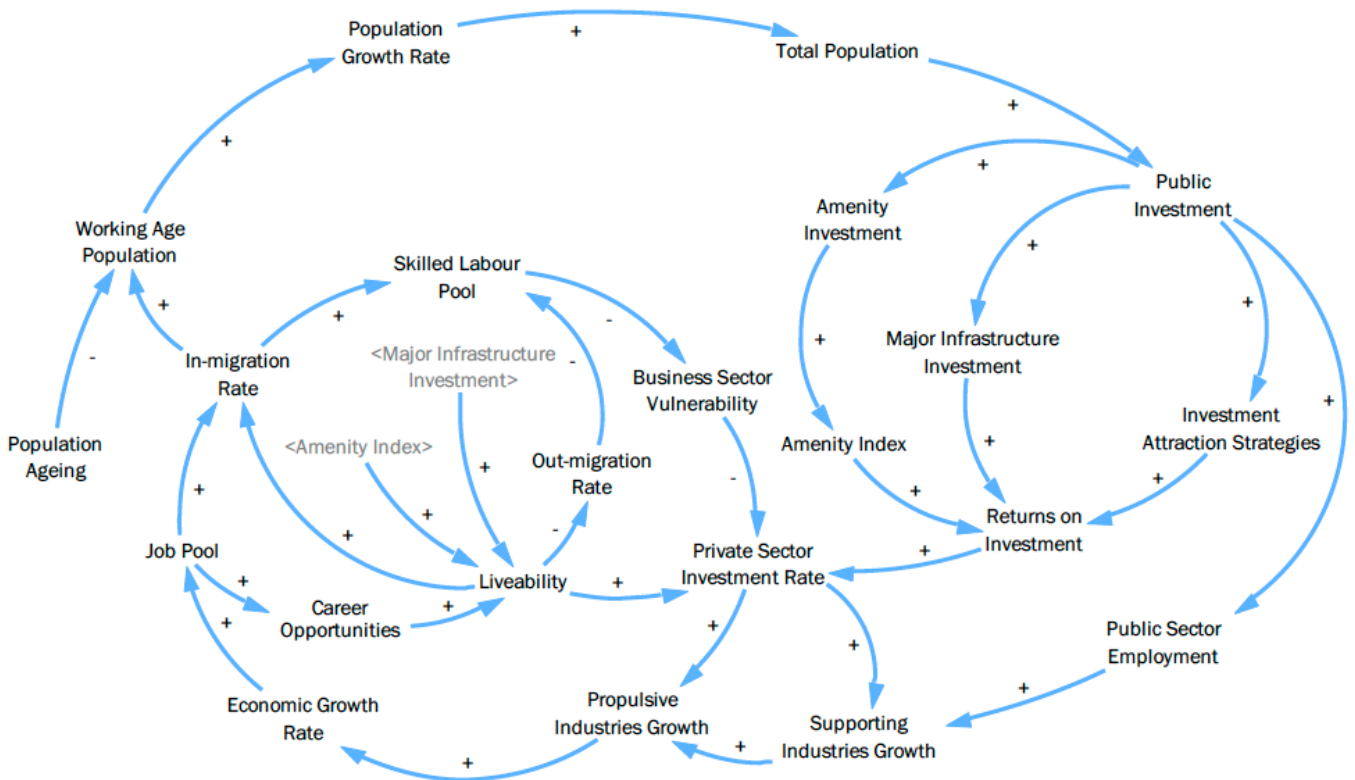
Local economies are complex systems. The Southern Grampians is no exception. Unravelling this complexity and understanding the most effective interventions to propel growth is the underlying objective of this strategy.

Our Shire cont.

The health of the Southern Grampians economy is dependent on the nature of interactions and feedbacks between major industry, business and public investment, liveability/amenity, the pool of available jobs, supporting infrastructure, skilled labour, broader social trends, demographic mix, global economic conditions and government policy (Figure 1).

Adding to this complexity are interactions between the local and regional economy. The accelerated growth of nearby coastal communities for example has, to some extent, come at the expense of the Southern Grampians. Yet as a functional economic region, the Southern Grampians has a reinforcing relationship with the Shire of Glenelg with nearly 350 people commuting for work between the two municipalities every day (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Economic Interactions in the Southern Grampians



Our Shire cont.

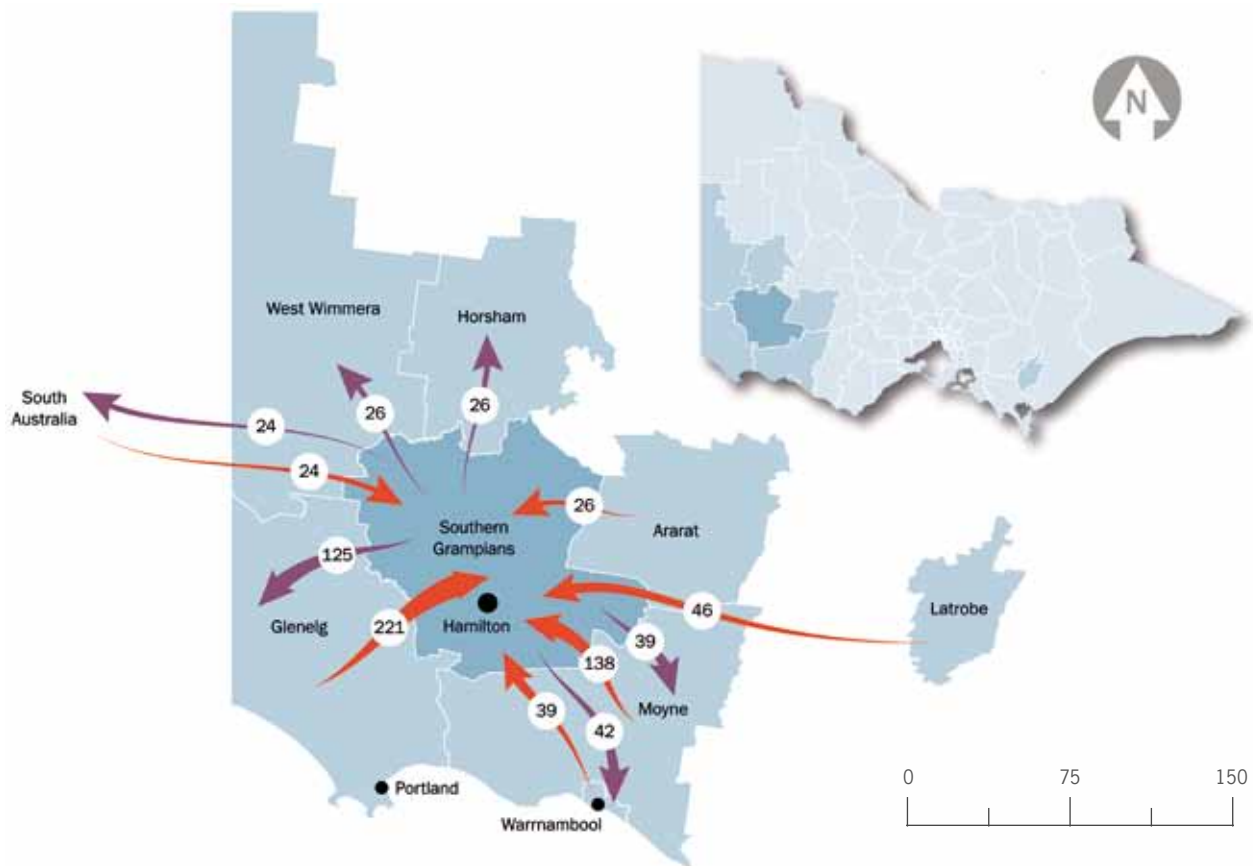
2. UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEXITY CONT.

There are also important interactions and flows of capital and people between the Shire's townships. Each town faces different issues and performs a different function – themes that will define the structure of the Southern Grampians settlement system and the future functional economic role of each town (Figure 3).

Sitting above this is a range of national and global influences. For example, commodity prices have stimulated investment in several major projects (mining and energy, Figure 5). The key to maximising these opportunities is to continue to build on the Shire's reputation as an affordable and liveable place to invest and diversify.

While the agriculture, manufacturing, retail and professional services sector are reasonably vibrant in the Southern Grampians, their growth potential is limited by skilled labour and thin labour markets. In turn, this is constrained by limited workforce promotion opportunities. This is an essential part of what makes a place liveable and it means that many reach a point in their career where they are compelled to leave for larger centres.

Figure 2: Regional Daily Commute Patterns

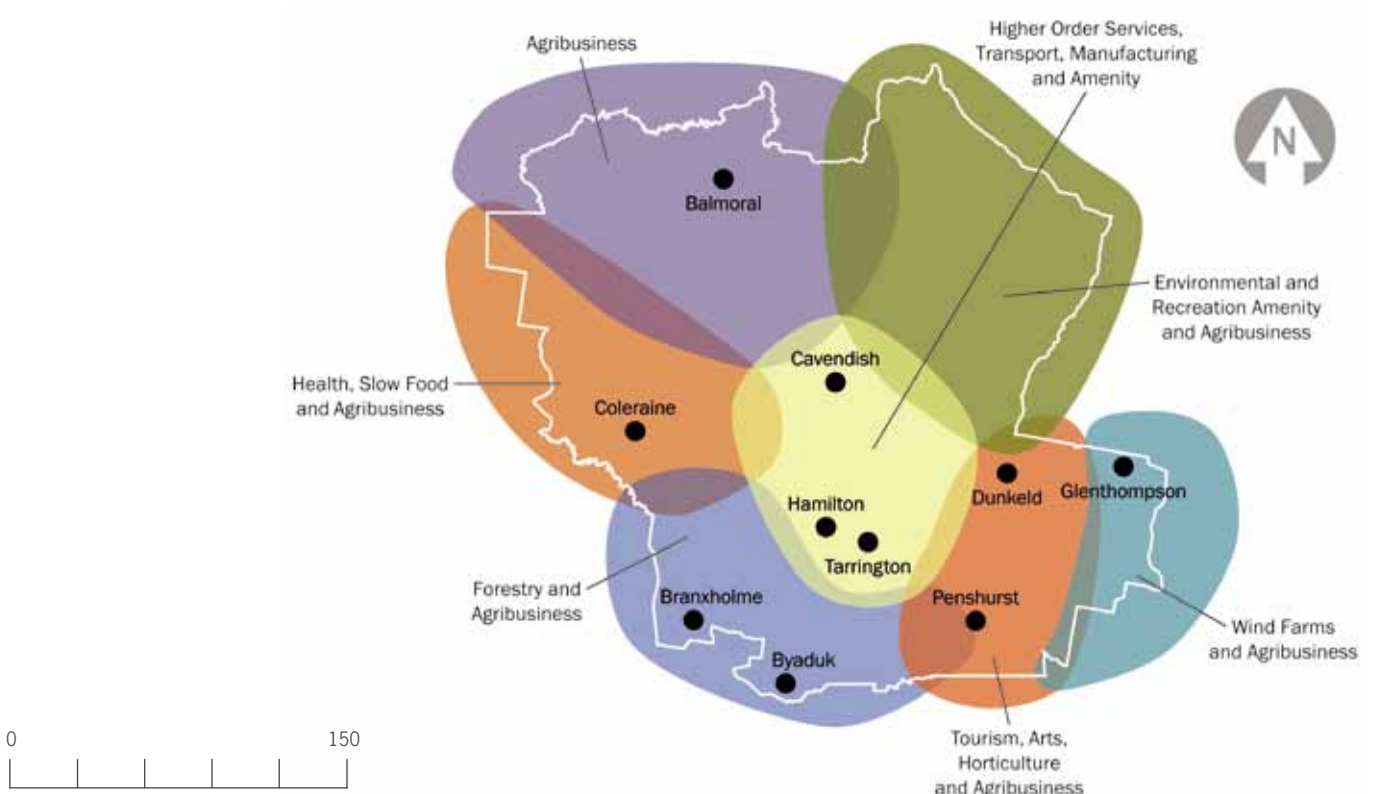


Our Shire cont.

While this trend is partly offset by local lifestyle and amenities such as health and education services, it is compounded by an ageing population. In combination these trends create a vulnerable business sector which limits investment and growth.

The emphasis needs to be on increasing the population growth rate – to stem the outflow of residents, attract new people, beef up labour markets and unlock the Shire’s growth potential. To achieve this will require collaborate effort across government and the business community.

Figure 3: Place Based Economic Development Drivers



3. GROWTH DRIVERS

Growth and diversification in the Southern Grampians will come through a combination of major project start ups; expansion of propulsive industries; amenity driven population increase; public sector investment; and a robust policy framework.



Our Shire cont.

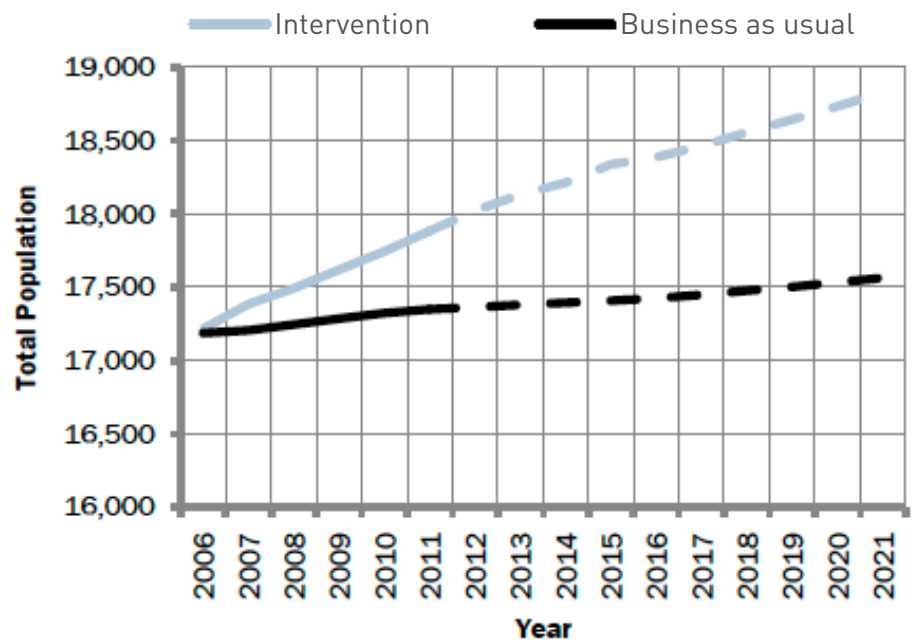
While the Shire has enjoyed growth and success in a range of economic fields (from a thriving agriculture sector to wind farm construction and the development of an internationally significant mineral sands processing plant), it faces complex challenges – most significantly stagnating population growth (Figure 4).

A whole of government approach working in partnership with the business community is required to address these challenges. The most likely growth drivers that will underpin these efforts are:

- Major project developments (Figure 5);
- Expansion of propulsive industries;
- Amenity driven population growth and change; and
- Major public investment.

This must be accompanied by realistic population targets.

Figure 4:
Southern Grampians
Population Projections



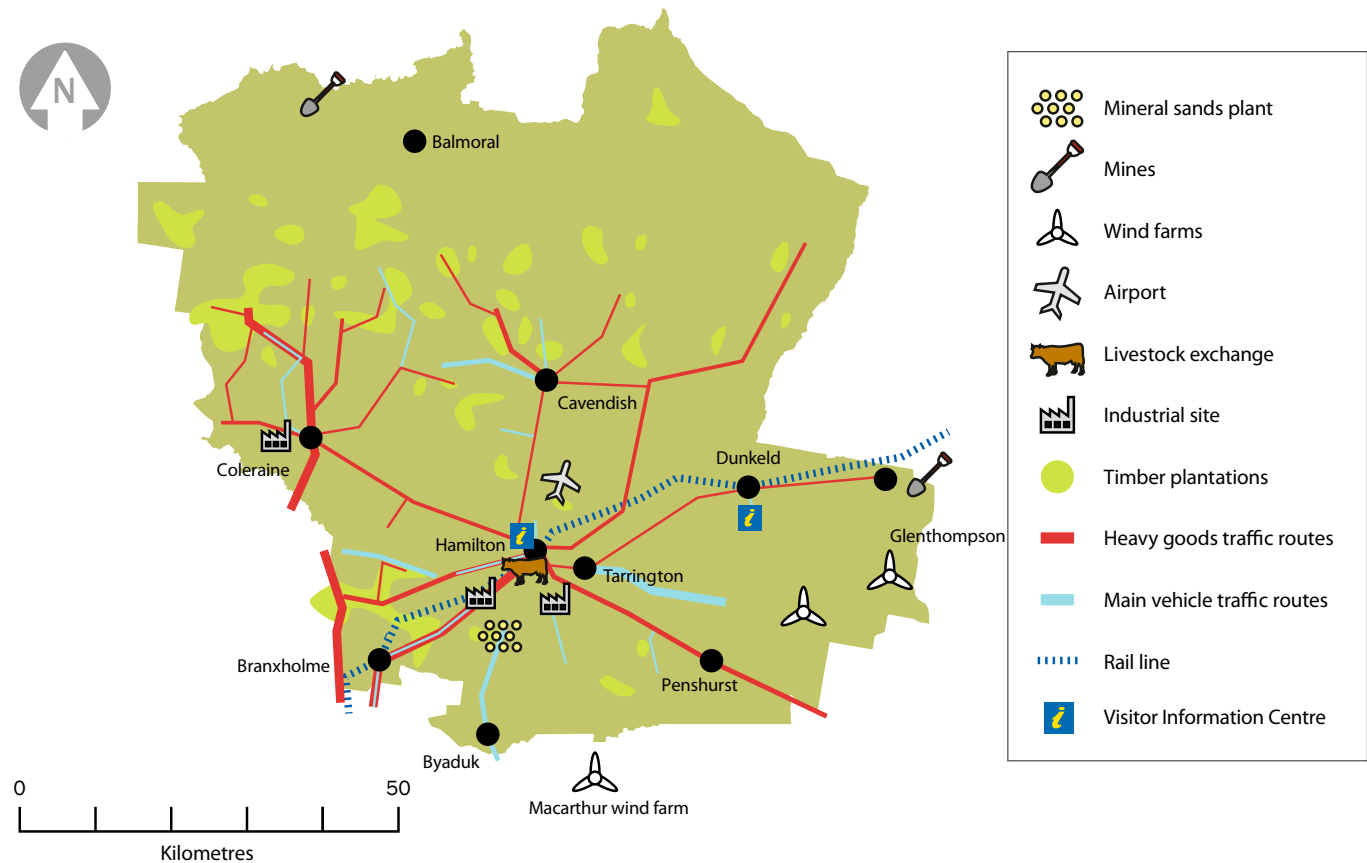
Our Shire cont.

3. GROWTH DRIVERS CONT.

The four main ways in which the Shire and its partners can stimulate these drivers are by:

1. Improving connectivity to other locations (e.g. via telecommunications and rail networks).
2. Improving liveability attributes that attract new enterprise and household investment.
3. Investing in basic infrastructure and improving existing business capacity (e.g. providing industrial land).
4. Improving governance to support and encourage economic growth and diversification (e.g. business capacity building).

Figure 5: Major Projects and Growth Drivers



A barista with dark hair, wearing a black uniform, is focused on operating a professional espresso machine. She is holding a stainless steel pitcher under the machine's spout. The machine is a dark-colored Breville model with a stack of white coffee capsules on top. The background is a blurred cafe environment with other people and warm lighting.

4. POLICY FRAMEWORK

Flexibility and adaptability are the bywords of this Strategy. The policy framework through which it will be implemented provides a clear structure and set of principles, as well as a mandate to be innovative. It includes an overarching intent, a set of core principles and key objectives.

Our Shire cont.

4. POLICY FRAMEWORK CONT.

Implementation of an economic development strategy should be based on an accurate and up-to-date understanding of the underlying issues that are driving change. It must retain the flexibility and adaptability to respond to emergent opportunities and have short, medium and long-term objectives.

This policy framework elucidates a robust set of principles and objectives. These are accompanied by a set of initiatives: an action plan that provides the details for Council intervention.

The Goal

The purpose of this Strategy is to provide a blueprint for Council action over the next 5-10 years. To do this requires two key steps:

1. To understand the Southern Grampians local economy.
2. To identify the most effective way that the Council can contribute to expanding the economic base, attract and retain residents of all age groups and stimulate above-trend population growth.

Core Principles

As conditions, people and opportunities change, so to must the actions taken to stimulate economic growth and diversification. Achieving the goal of economic growth and diversification relies on recognising this. At the same time, all successful enterprises, whether public or private, adhere to fundamental principles.

The principles outlined here are a reflection of the values of the community. They are drawn from the research and consultation undertaken during preparation of this Strategy. They are the foundation upon which the policy itself and future actions and operations are based.

1. Work as part of a team

The Economic Development Strategy should be implemented so that it contributes to the Council's five fundamental objectives outlined in the Council Plan. This can be achieved through collaboration across all divisions of Council. That is, the Economic Development Unit is not the only part of Council that should be involved in economic development. Council officers' skill base, professional development and its program of activity should focus on areas with the greater opportunity for leverage (e.g. planning, sport & recreation, community, development and

engineering services all have a role to play in economic development).

2. Ensure both flexibility and adaptability

A common error in strategic planning is an overemphasis on developing a detailed action plan and making fixed investments. Although clarity and specific actions are necessary, there also needs to be scope for both rapid response to newly emerging opportunities (flexibility) and the capacity to learn as new information comes to light and respond to this by changing interventions and investments (adaptability). This requires a capacity to take calculated risks and the implementation of continuous improvement mechanisms, including information collection and analysis. Without these, the Shire's efforts and economic development will not progress.

2. Use evidence-based planning

All of the actions outlined in this Strategy are based on evidence compiled during the background research. The compilation and thorough analysis of evidence, including quantitative modelling, provides greater certainty to support decision-making and avoids high risk policy missteps. It is an essential principle of Council operations.



Our Shire cont.

3. Focus on causes not consequences

Underlying features of the Southern Grampians economy will continue to generate the same outcomes if they are not addressed. Evaluating and testing the issues will help to reveal the causes of economic problems and thereby provide a pathway to a solution.

4. Facilitate the business community

With the exception of areas of intractable market failure, Council's role should be one of facilitation and capacity building in the business community. Council should be an important resource to support all local businesses and prospective investors. This requires ongoing and regular interaction with enterprises and, where relevant, governance structures that leverage from the business sector's skills. It also means redirecting Council's current efforts to include facilitation as a core principle.

Key Objectives

Our analysis identified seven objectives for the Strategy. These focus on the major growth bottlenecks and opportunities.

1. A commitment to understanding the economy

Reflecting the core principle of evidence-based planning, the Council will commit to understanding how the Shire's economy functions and how

this changes over time. This will require an investment in ongoing data collection, consultation and analysis.

2. Attracting and retaining a skilled labour force

Labour shortages are a growth impediment across the Shire's industries. Research has emphasised the importance of population growth to address thin labour markets and labour shortages. Without intervention, these problems will intensify due to low growth and population ageing. The research also shows that certain population thresholds can stimulate higher and/or more stable growth rates. Reaching certain labour market sizes results in more diverse and deeper labour pools.

3. Supporting and leveraging from major projects

Major projects are one of the four main growth drivers. With both positive and negative attributes they require an early and strong commitment to maximise the long-term returns to the community.

4. Supporting the propulsive industry sectors

Agriculture, transport, health, education, tourism, manufacturing, housing, the equine industry and professional services are all important propulsive industry sectors. They have growth potential or the capacity to stimulate growth elsewhere.

However, each sector faces constraints that Council has a role in addressing.

5. Creating and enhancing essential major infrastructure and assets

The Shire's major assets can encourage and impede growth. Planning, development and governance decisions with respect to them need to ensure the economic growth implications are factored in.

6. Supporting the social and economic development of all settlements

Each town in the municipality has a distinctive set of assets. Economic growth and development can be enhanced through an approach that emphasises the 'theme' of each.

7. Better governance

The manner in which economic development and other efforts are managed by the Shire will have a critical influence on whether outcomes are successful. The Council must be a leader, facilitator and committed to continuous improvement of how it provides for the governance of the people and enterprises in the Southern Grampians.

Our Shire cont.

5. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

Fifty two economic development and thirty five retail initiatives are outlined below. This is a plan of action for the next 10 years.

Objective 1: A commitment to understanding the economy

Turning policy into effective action depends on maintaining an understanding of how the economy and business community is evolving. The more future uncertainty can be anticipated, the more reliable strategic interventions will be.

Actions to ensure this are described below. They emphasise co-operation with regional institutions and neighbouring municipalities and address key data gaps. Also proposed is a schedule of data inputs to the Shire's economic model so that it can be applied to a range of future scenario planning exercises and cost benefit studies.

Initiative	Rationale
<p>1.1 Negotiate and roll-out an annual data collection and analysis program in collaboration, ideally via a Memorandum of Understanding with RMIT, State government agencies, community groups (such as Community Banks) and other partners. In the first year undertake:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A survey of current residents and business owners focusing on attitudes to amenity attributes in the Shire • A survey of road freight movements to inform a study of the impact of the shift from livestock to grain; • An exit survey of former Shire residents (focusing on identifying retention strategies); • A study into the potential for transitional telecommuters; and • A State-wide telephone survey to assess awareness of the Shire. 	<p>To gain and maintain awareness of reasons for entry and departure of residents and businesses; the potential for professionals to relocate (via transitional employment) to the Shire; and for ongoing renewal and enhancement of the economic model.</p>
<p>1.2 Partner with DPI to undertake a soil and water capacity study for agricultural potential throughout municipality.</p>	
<p>1.3 Carry out a detailed visitor survey at Dunkeld and Hamilton Visitor Information Centres (VIC) and over time an analysis of all key tourism sites.</p>	<p>Inadequate data available to assist agribusiness. This information is necessary if the Shire is to facilitate the expansion of more diverse and intensive forms of agriculture.</p>
<p>1.4 Review and refresh data collection schedule annually.</p>	<p>Lack of knowledge of visitor intentions can undermine the efficiency with which Council allocates resources to tourism services.</p>
	<p>Changing conditions may necessitate a refocus of priorities and new priorities will require new information sets.</p>



Our Shire cont.

Objective 2: Attracting and retaining a skilled labour force

Given that population growth (particularly amongst 25-44 year olds) will address many of the skilled labour shortages in the Shire, adopting a clearly articulated settlement strategy with growth objectives for each town is an essential first step in attracting and retaining skills. Many of the issues facing industry sectors are region-wide

(or beyond) and have unique causes and consequences. This makes collaboration (e.g. across the Great South Coast) with the education sector, businesses and major regional organisations necessary, along with a flexible and tailor-made approach to supporting enterprises in their search for skilled labour.

Initiative	Rationale
<p>2.1 Adopt population and labour market size targets for the municipality and its towns through a clearly articulated settlement strategy.</p>	<p>Reaching population size thresholds can trigger more stable/enhanced growth rates. Each settlement and the Shire in total can aim for target thresholds to assist with the overall objectives of sustainable growth. A settlement strategy provides a framework to prioritise these growth objectives and identify how they are to be achieved. It highlights to the State and Commonwealth, the innovative and progressive nature of the Shire's approach to economic and strategic planning.</p>
<p>2.2 Undertake collaborative efforts (with neighbouring councils and other State and regional agencies) to build on the regional nature of the economy including, for example, to address the spousal/partner employment issue.</p>	<p>The Shire's economy is closely connected to the surrounding region. Municipalities face common skilled labour issues which can be resolved at a larger, regional scale.</p>
<p>2.3 Promote the positive attributes of working in the Shire to prospective new employees and businesses through enhanced communication tools including a redesigned ED website and social media. Include co-ordination of joint advertisement of available jobs</p>	<p>There is limited awareness outside of Western Districts of career opportunities and amenity attributes of Southern Grampians. Young professionals and alumni networks can be leveraged from to address this.</p> <p>Additionally, small local firms unable to afford wide ranging advertising and Shire needs to widen the recruitment catchment area to include places such as Ballarat, Warrnambool, Mt Gambier, Geelong, South Australia and northern Victoria.</p>
<p>2.4 Partner with education providers to implement a marketing and promotion program to raise awareness amongst business owners of staff training options in region.</p>	<p>The Workforce Development Strategy found that the greatest impediment to building a more skilled workforce was lack of awareness of what training was already available in the region.</p>

Our Shire cont.

Objective 3: Supporting and leveraging from major projects

Major projects have substantial positive and negative consequences on population growth and living conditions. The key to successfully managing this is preparation. For example, the lack of awareness of locally available services and support has been a difficult challenge for major project

operators (particularly wind farm construction firms) and, at the same time, many local firms may not yet have the capacity to gear up to service major new clients. Actions to overcome these constraints are described below.

Initiative	Rationale
<p>3.1 Undertake pre-planning to support new industries, including for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forming a partnership with HRBA and other institutions to assist with capacity building of local business to allow them to service major project companies; and • Maintaining dialogue with mining companies to facilitate local development; • Identify major project land, labour and other input requirements in support of investment decisions by proponents. 	<p>The impact of major project developments can be rapid and opportunities can be lost to other regions. Council needs to have processes in place to ensure maximum returns for the local economy and smooth facilitation of investment decisions (see Governance).</p>
<p>3.2 Prepare a readily updateable, modular economic prospectus (hard copy and online) to promote local business, amenity and other important opportunities to prospective investors.</p>	<p>There is a reported lack of awareness of locally available services and other attributes (particularly amongst new and major project operators). An economic prospectus is a cost-effective way to address this and a natural extension of the current work to provide new business advice and assistance.</p>
<p>3.3 Investigate the potential for, and impact of, the relocation of a major State or Commonwealth agency to Hamilton (e.g. CFA, SES).</p>	<p>Relocation of public agencies can generate both direct and indirect growth, improve local service availability and provide stronger connections between the Shire, Melbourne and Canberra.</p>



Our Shire cont.

Objective 4: Supporting the propulsive industry sectors

There are several industry sectors in the Shire that have growth potential and the capacity to generate flow-on effects to other parts of the economy. This includes agribusiness, tourism, health, education and transport. Overcoming bottlenecks will help unlock this potential.

Initiative	Rationale
AGRIBUSINESS	
<p>4.1 Engage an Agribusiness Development Officer on a contract basis for an initial period of 12 months. Indicative work schedule to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with meat processing firms to identify prospects for establishment of a speciality kangaroo processing plant; • Liaise with meat processing firms to identify prospects for establishing a rendering plant; • Liaise with DPI and grain processing firms to identify prospects for establishment of grain processing (cleaning, sorting and packing); • Investigate potential for hydroponic farming in Hamilton using recycled water; • Using data from soil and water study, identify and protect high value agricultural land around townships as part of structure planning process and investigate feasibility of intensive horticulture (notably wine grapes); • Liaise regularly with agribusiness, other sectors (e.g. mineral sands, and eco-tourism), environmental, industry and funding groups; • Collaborate with DPI, RIST and farmers on succession planning exercises to identify emerging problems; • Develop an environmental accreditation framework for EU market 	<p>Although the largest industry sector in the region and potentially with significant growth capacity, agribusiness does not have substantial industry development support in the region.</p> <p>Additionally there are several potential value-adding opportunities that may arise from the availability of raw materials (grain and livestock); electricity, water and zoned land, as well as the timber harvest, including recycling of waste material.</p> <p>While the sector is effective in reacting to new environmental and market conditions, it is not as effective at long-term 'pre-planning'. The best way to support this is via the engagement of a dedicated agribusiness development officer (possibly in partnership with a neighbouring municipality such as Glenelg and with the assistance of RDV).</p>

Our Shire cont.

Objective 4: Supporting the propulsive industry sectors cont.

Initiative	Rationale
AGRIBUSINESS CONT.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In partnership with relevant bodies (e.g. DFAT, RIST) investigate new markets in Asia, for both produce and skills exports; and • Undertake a timber residue recycling investigation with industry, the Timber Harvest and Sustainability Co-ordinators. 	
TRANSPORT	
<p>4.2 Prepare a local transport policy to consider all transport related issues in the Shire.</p>	Oil prices (and price vulnerability), the need for community-run public transport to small towns and the freight needs of the transport sector are generating compounding transport-related issues for the Shire.
<p>4.3 Investigate the development potential for an intermodal transport hub adjacent the railway siding and industrial land SW of Hamilton.</p>	Growth in demand (from timber harvest, wind farms etc) is creating the need for truck servicing/ stopover area. It is in the long-term interests of freight rail to locate this adjacent to the rail line.
<p>4.4 Liaise with regional trucking firms to promote opportunities for servicing the Southern Grampians.</p>	There is a growing opportunity to develop North-South transport route.
<p>4.5 Consider the establishment of off-main street, single truck parking in Cavendish to allow short comfort breaks.</p>	Currently drivers cannot legally stop in Cavendish. This will improve safety and could generate local retail spend (in association with efforts to reopen the General Store).
<p>4.6 Liaise with the plantation and transport industry to determine the ideal location for truck parking and a fuel depot in Coleraine to service the timber harvest.</p>	The timber harvest sector would be well served by a site for maintenance of trucks and harvest equipment in this region. Amongst other things, it would ensure timber harvest crews and firms would consider basing themselves in the Southern Grampians. Site selection will need to be carefully considered, taking into account local needs as well as the logistical needs of the industry and harvest process.



Our Shire cont.

Objective 4: Supporting the propulsive industry sectors cont.

Initiative	Rationale
HEALTH	
4.7 Continue to collaborate with Western District Health Service to develop and secure funding for new programs (for both local and export services).	Council and WDHS already have a successful history of expanding services into new markets. This then generates capital returns that can be used to improve local health services.
4.8 Undertake a proof of concept study into the establishment and promotion of a health precinct in Hamilton including primary, aged and specialist care services.	Prior to committing resources to developing a health precinct, a proof of concept study should be undertaken, including case study review of experiences elsewhere.
4.9 Continue with regional collaboration on the partners employment issue.	Employment for partners of health workers is the most difficult issue when attempting to attract and retain people. A regional effort to address this is currently underway and should be continued.
EDUCATION	
4.10 Undertake a feasibility study into the relocation of SW TAFE to RMIT campus.	Subject to student number projections, SW TAFE may have reached physical capacity limits on its current site. A feasibility study will provide evidence for the merit of relocating to the RMIT campus and creating an Education Precinct. In view of the under-utilisation of the RMIT campus, this should be a matter of priority in partnership with SW TAFE and RMIT. Note that relocation also releases land for manufacturing at the current TAFE site.
4.11 Resolve the child care shortage issue in the smaller towns (e.g. via a single site service, mobile, Family Day Care or development of a multipurpose venue).	Lack of childcare has significant negative compounding effects on primary school enrolment and local retail expenditure. Resolving it needs to be a priority for Dunkeld and Penshurst.

Our Shire cont.

Objective 4: Supporting the propulsive industry sectors cont.

Initiative	Rationale
4.12 Collaborate with the Education Working Group to undertake a proof of concept of the Education Cluster idea.	<p>Beyond a physical precinct, the sector as a whole offers potential as a tool to raise awareness of what the Shire offers to prospective residents and businesses. The Cluster would include all education providers and share in the effort to promote excellence in education.</p> <p>Given the expectations of State and Commonwealth funding bodies and the investment cost implications, Council should undertake a detailed analysis of the returns on investment in a precinct. The Education Cluster Working Group is the ideal mechanism to further explore this concept.</p>
TOURISM	
4.13 Undertake a rebranding campaign to market Dunkeld as the Grampians destination.	Despite its proximity, Dunkeld is not as widely known as Halls Gap as being at the heart of the Grampians.
4.14 Develop infrastructure to more closely connect Dunkeld to the Grampians National Park.	Informal walking trails (that do not undermine the aesthetic, natural landscape) between Dunkeld and the Grampians are necessary to more closely connect accommodation sites with the Park.
4.15 Lobby for completion of the Grampians Walking Trail.	This is a priority concern for tourism operators in the region and requires consistent pressure on the State Government.
4.16 Assist in the provision of short-term/tourism accommodation in Peshurst (e.g. via assistance with re-opening of hotel rooms).	While unlikely to be a major growth driver, providing assistance for some accommodation may unlock longer-term potential (e.g. backpacker tourism) but also short-term accommodation for construction workers.
4.17 Undertake regular ongoing liaison with tourism operators.	As with all sectors, the tourism industry needs regular, one-on-one discussions to ensure Council remains aware of emerging constraints and opportunities and that all strategies continue to stay focused on priorities.



Our Shire cont.

Objective 4: Supporting the propulsive industry sectors cont.

Initiative	Rationale
<p>4.18 Review the Dunkeld and Penshurst caravan park capacity (in advance of construction workforce needs).</p>	<p>There are examples of mining and other major project companies contributing funds to provide accommodation in caravan parks during construction periods. These can then be gifted to Council and used to provide tourism accommodation in the long-run. Without prompt action, major project operators may look elsewhere to meet their needs.</p>
<p>4.19 Use Visitor Information Centre survey data to decide on reallocation of resources between two sites.</p>	<p>The volunteer status of Dunkeld VIC is potentially undermining the quality of visitor experience. These visitors are likely to be stopping at the Grampians, rather than passing through, and require high level service.</p>
<p>4.20 Prepare a plan to leverage from the Brown St Cultural Precinct (with a focus on night time activities).</p>	<p>This study and the Brown St project found that cultural activities for 25-44 year olds were limited. This demographic is key to the Shire's future success and the Cultural Precinct has exceptional potential to provide social and cultural opportunities (especially at night, e.g. live music).</p>
<p>4.21 Work with stakeholders to identify ways to enhance the tourism potential of Rocklands Reservoir and Black Ranges.</p>	<p>Uncertainty about the future of Rocklands Reservoir and untapped tourism potential in Black Ranges.</p>
<h4>MANUFACTURING</h4>	
<p>4.22 Release and promote to external businesses the availability of additional serviced industrial land.</p>	<p>Councils regularly develop and sell serviced industrial lots to attract new businesses. Rapid take-up of the Peck St serviced lots suggests healthy demand. If the SW TAFE campus were to be relocated, this would provide the appropriate land. However, other sites may also be considered.</p>

Our Shire cont.

Objective 4: Supporting the propulsive industry sectors cont.

Initiative	Rationale
HOUSING AND CONSTRUCTION	
4.23 Prepare a temporary accommodation plan as part of pre-planning for major project developments.	Tourism accommodation initiatives in Dunkeld and Peshurst may alleviate the accommodation bottleneck. This is one of the key concerns for the sector and for major projects firms locating operations in the Shire.
4.24 Work with Vicurban to revise the Lakeside land release plan.	The poor perception of lot size and other factors undermined the success of the land release.
4.25 Work with property owners to highlight the benefits/returns of higher quality (i.e. renovated) rental stock.	A perception exists that housing stock does not meet the expectations of potential incoming professionals.
EQUINE INDUSTRY	
4.26 Undertake a desktop analysis of the equine sector's prospects in the municipality.	Anecdotal evidence and the abundance of infrastructure indicate scope to expand the sector's presence. Prior to a major commitment of funds, a rapid desktop study will test this argument in a cost-effective manner.
RETAIL¹	
R1.1 Work with land-holders and potential investors to secure a site for a discount department store in the Hamilton town centre.	Discount Department Store a key gap in the retail mix in Hamilton. It will anchor further development.
R1.2 Identify other sites in the Hamilton town centre and its fringes for potential bulky goods/restricted retailing.	Demand for bulky goods and a commitment to renewal of the Hamilton CBD need to be addressed.
R1.3 Work with stakeholders to secure improved convenience retail facilities in small town centres commensurate with their role in the retail hierarchy.	All smaller retail centres should have a range of convenience goods and services available to allow local residents to access necessities without the need to travel to a larger centre.
R1.4 Work with others to secure investment in entertainment and other service sector activities as well as an increase in the number of dwellings in centres.	This will assist in revitalising the centres of each settlement.

¹ A separate Retail Strategy provides further details on strategic objectives and the rationale for these actions.



Our Shire cont.

Objective 4: Supporting the propulsive industry sectors cont.

Initiative	Rationale
<p>R2.1 Continue to implement the recommendations of the Southern Grampians Tourism Strategy and secure increased investment in tourism retail product</p>	<p>Tourism and retail are inter-related industries and the existing tourism strategy has clearly defined goals and objectives for enhancing the sector.</p>
<p>R2.2 Ensure that urban design frameworks for town centres cater for the needs of visitors.</p>	<p>Improving services to visitors has compounding benefits across the economy.</p>
<p>R2.3 Encourage investment in a wider range of food service outlets in Hamilton and other centres.</p>	<p>Diversity of options is a key part of the quality experience for retail.</p>
<p>R2.4 Investigate the provision of wi-fi services throughout Hamilton town centre.</p>	<p>This will add to the amenity and allow shopping to be both a functional and recreational experience.</p>
<p>R3.1 Implement urban design strategies for centres.</p>	<p>This will ensure appropriate development occurs.</p>
<p>R3.2 Work with stakeholders to improve the efficiency and access to car-parking in the Hamilton town centre, and this may include provision and promotion of an all-day car park for city workers.</p>	<p>Car parking is an essential part of the convenience of shopping in Hamilton.</p>
<p>R3.3 Ensure that, wherever possible, Council locates its services in activity centres in order to concentrate demand and generate new activity.</p>	<p>Centres rely on a concentration of activities to thrive both economically and socially.</p>
<p>R3.4 Ensure a rapid response to maintenance and safety issues within centres.</p>	<p>This will ensure the level of amenity is maintained.</p>
<p>R3.5 Ensure that, wherever possible, new development creates active frontages in centres.</p>	<p>Active frontages encourage pedestrian activity which improves amenity and safety.</p>
<p>R4.1 Identify vacant and under-used shop space in centres.</p>	<p>There is uncertainty over the status of some premises along main streets of most smaller settlements. A database is necessary prior to action to address vacancies to log the heritage status of relevant buildings.</p>
<p>R4.2 Work with owners and community stakeholders to identify potential activities.</p>	<p>A core principle of the Strategy is to work with the business and broader community to identify needs and opportunities.</p>

Our Shire cont.

Objective 4: Supporting the propulsive industry sectors cont.

Initiative	Rationale
R4.3 Identify urban design treatments that can be used to differentiate former shops that are now homes from vacant shops.	Main street residential is an acceptable part of the urban landscape. However, they can lead to the perception of high vacancy rates which can undermine the attractiveness of main streets.
R4.4 Consider promotion of vacant space as a whole to organisations that may take more than one shop-front	In some cases economies of scale are necessary to make it viable to open new retail premises.
R5.1 Convene a regular forum of land-holders in Hamilton town centre to identify efficiencies in land provision and opportunities for collaboration.	Addressing Hamilton's retail shortfalls will require close and ongoing co-operation of land-holders.
R5.2 Consider direct intervention (ie purchase of land) to secure appropriate investment; this could involve the provision of a rolling property investment fund.	The mix of land ownership can be an impediment to the timely redevelopment of CBD space. Councils across Australia take on the role of buying and consolidating land for major inner urban redevelopment.
R5.3 Undertake a car-parking strategy for the Hamilton town centre and identify areas that could accommodate new consolidated car parking including multi-storey parking.	This is the most efficient way to ensure car parking is sufficient but not intrusive in the town centre.
R5.4 Further investigate institution of a rolling property development fund as a means of improving the physical fabric of town centres.	This may enable sufficient capital to undertake ongoing redevelopment plans.
R6.1 Employ a place manager to coordinate Council investment in the Hamilton town centre and to implement and further develop Council policy.	When well executed, implementing a place management role is an efficient way to fast track the enhancement of CBDs.
R6.2 Coordinate and promote the calendar of events for the town centre.	This is an integral part of creating a sense of place in Hamilton.
R7.1 Consider the provision of funds towards the development of traders' organisations in Hamilton and the neighbourhood activity centres.	Supporting HRBA and other business associations is a key objective for this Strategy. It must include resources to develop a retail group that can represent the interests of the sector.
R7.2 Provide funds to traders' groups for the development of a business plan for each centre.	This will leverage from local knowledge and skills (the retailers) and help to provide a coherent and shared vision for the town centres.



Our Shire cont.

Objective 4: Supporting the propulsive industry sectors cont.

Initiative	Rationale
<p>R7.3 Consider the provision of funds to traders' organisations to help provide trader training (including hospitality, customer service, window displays and internet trading).</p>	<p>Improving the retail experience relies on continuously improving service and physical amenity.</p>
<p>R7.4 Provide funds towards promotional activities in individual centres, targeting those key markets identified in business plans.</p>	<p>As a network each centre has unique problems and assets. These need tailor-made, well-resourced promotional strategies.</p>
<p>R7.5 Ensure that each centre has a calendar of events and that these are coordinated across the Shire.</p>	<p>A calendar of events helps to co-ordinate activities to ensure they are leveraging from one another and maximising their promotion.</p>
<p>R7.6 Encourage the provision of a higher minimum level of service in Hamilton town centre across the weekend, including opening of cafes and post office.</p>	<p>As a regional service centre, Hamilton should continue on its path to higher level service provision.</p>
<p>R7.7 Encourage existing and new traders to invest in internet trading.</p>	<p>This will become an increasingly important part of the retail sector.</p>
<p>R7.8 Consider the introduction of a special charge scheme in Hamilton town centre to fund town centre development, trader training and promotion.</p>	<p>Funding will be necessary to implement many of the actions that will have a direct, positive impact of Hamilton-based retailers.</p>
<p>R8.1 Undertake coordination of regional promotion of the Shire's activity centres.</p>	<p>The Shire's catchment extends well beyond the municipal boundaries and this should be recognised in promotion exercises.</p>
<p>R8.2 Coordinate and promote calendar of events in the Shire's activity centres.</p>	<p>As with Hamilton, all towns require a coordinated calendar of events to improve the retail and tourism experience.</p>
<p>R8.3 Seek to develop new and complementary events in activity centres in conjunction with traders groups.</p>	<p>Changing demands and tastes require regular introduction of new ideas and activities.</p>
<p>R9.1 Prepare a retail development framework that is based on, and reinforces, the existing network of centres.</p>	<p>A planning framework will ensure the activity centre structure develops.</p>

Our Shire cont.

Objective 5: Creating and enhancing essential major infrastructure and assets

The Shire's major assets and amenity attributes both encourage and impede growth. Amenity is a particularly important attribute to attract investment and the skills. It also has an important role in retaining people once they have moved to the Shire to work. Council's planning and development decisions that

impact on all forms of amenity need to ensure the economic development outcomes are given priority. This includes zoning and other planning processes, major infrastructure funding and decisions with significant environmental impacts. Several additional initiatives with major infrastructure implications are to be found under Objective 7.

Initiative	Rationale
5.1 Engage in closer, ongoing liaison with relevant agencies (e.g. utilities providers, neighbouring Councils and State agencies) to develop major infrastructure.	Consultation revealed that many major institutions are open to more co-operative efforts to develop the Shire. This is endorsed by RDV who also encourage closer collaboration with neighbouring municipalities (e.g. Glenelg). However, the Council must take the initiative in this.
5.2 Support a Coleraine community initiative for waste water treatment plant in partnership with Wannon Water.	The community is keen to develop innovative uses of waste water (e.g. for mushroom growing and possible energy production). Wannon Water is open to co-operating in investigating opportunities of this nature.
5.3 Maintain an awareness of and promote best practice on-site sewage systems in small towns.	Sewage infrastructure in some smaller towns is an impediment to growth. In Penshurst it also limits the potential for use of groundwater for intensive horticulture.
5.4 Continue to support P&A and Sheepvention.	Sheepvention is a highly regarded, successful event. Its support should be continued and efforts taken to ensure its unique nature is not compromised. The P&A is the most appropriate entity through which to do this.





Our Shire cont.

Objective 6: Supporting the social and economic development of all settlements

Each town has a 'growth theme' with different levels and types of risk associated with their success. While many of these are caused by the large-scale

changes in how we live, there are interventions that can overcome some of the consequences and give each town a more sure footing into the future and some specific actions have already been proposed to address the urgent problems (e.g. childcare). Commercial revitalisation of main streets is another priority,

catalytic intervention and, in the longer term, a settlement plan will assist. There are also community development outcomes that are necessary to ensure the towns have sufficient social capital to build thriving local economies.

Initiative	Rationale
<p>6.1 Initiate a program to find community uses (groups, artists, cultural projects, art-in-windows) or small business opportunities for vacant buildings in smaller towns until they are either redeveloped or have a more permanent commercial use. Consider use of rates relief, small business grant program or similar incentives to encourage commercial occupancy.</p>	<p>Vacancies create the perception of dis-investment in small towns. Finding an interim community based use for vacant buildings addresses this.</p> <p>As a temporary measure, rates relief or similar incentives such as building permit waivers, can encourage new business start-ups as well as signal more widely that these towns are 'open for business'. The incentives should encourage investments that are in line with the planning objectives outlined in the structure planning and MSS work. This is particularly important in the smaller towns of Byaduk, Branxholme and Glenthompson.</p>
<p>6.2 Adopt development themes for smaller towns that build on their assets and existing economic strengths.</p>	<p>The Shire requires a formalised settlement system hierarchy that identifies long-term complimentary functions for each town. The planning already underway has commenced this process.</p>
<p>6.3 Invest in the development of a main street business incubator in Coleraine.</p>	<p>Coleraine has several vacant main street shops that could be converted to a business incubator. Local governments have a long, successful role in supporting business incubators and there are not-for-profit organisations that work with Councils in regional Australia to develop them.</p>





Initiative	Rationale
<p>6.4 As part of structure planning for the town, give consideration to rural living subdivision adjacent to Cavendish.</p>	<p>Cavendish is already becoming a 'dormitory suburb' for Hamilton. If planned well, it can continue to perform this function.</p>
<p>6.5 Investigate the prospects for a Penshurst community co-operative business venture.</p>	<p>There are businesses in Penshurst for sale and it has been suggested that a community enterprise could run these as a co-op venture. There are economies of scale in consolidating enterprises into the one business.</p>
<p>6.6 Continue to participate in strategic planning efforts by Council.</p>	<p>Strategic and structure planning have significant implications for the economy. The EDU has an important role in fully participating in all such work. This is already acknowledged in the current work plan.</p>

Our Shire cont.

Objective 7: Better governance

The manner in which economic development is managed will have a critical influence on its success. Several governance-related initiatives have been proposed. As a matter of principle, co-ordination across Council and between policies should be fundamental. It is the best way to use the resources at Council disposal: every Council staff member has a role to play in economic

development. Moreover, there is a large, and growing, resource in the business community, as well as community spirit that can help nurture the economy. Interaction between Council staff and the business community is, therefore, essential.

Initiatives involve changed governance arrangements for some key public assets; regular one-on-one meetings with all parts of the business community; regular information gathering and dissemination;

recognition that the Shire is part of a region and that many projects can and should be undertaken at the regional level; more partnerships with business groups to free up Council resources for new initiatives; and a commitment to addressing imminent environmental constraints via, for example, transport-oriented long-term planning and collecting and sharing information with, and providing a best practice example to, the community about energy efficiency.

Initiative	Rationale
<p>7.1 Review Council's procurement policy including an economic and financial cost benefit analysis of direct and indirect effects of a buy-local policy and impediments to local businesses servicing large clients.</p>	<p>As a major purchaser and employer, the Shire has a large impact on local economic transactions. An examination of local procurement may demonstrate the value in implementing a buy-local policy. The analysis should consider factors that impede local businesses from servicing larger enterprises (e.g. Risk and Tender Management procedures).</p>
<p>7.2 Investigate the establishment of Board of Management for key Council assets. Commence with the Airport.</p>	<p>There are successful examples of Council assets being run by independent Boards of Management (e.g. Mildura Airport and, more recently, Ballarat Art Gallery). It introduces entrepreneurial ideas into the running of these assets and can be a mechanism to build local entrepreneurial capacity by having younger representative 'apprenticed' to professional run boards (tying in with the Local Leaders Initiative).</p> <p>Creation of a Board of Management for the Airport should be incorporated into the ongoing rollout of the Airport Master Plan.</p>



Our Shire cont.

Objective 7: Better governance

Initiative	Rationale
<p>7.3 Reinvigorate business assistance via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with town development and similar community groups to ensure opportunities for growth are identified and acted upon. • Continuation of industry assistance meetings, seminars and workshops and business network assistance as required; • Regular contact with as many local enterprises as is possible through site visits by members of the EDU. Use findings to inform data collection agenda, seminar and workshop needs and so forth; • Working with HRBA to collaborate in a broader range of existing and new programs; and • Review and revision of the existing Industry and Business Assistance Policy as required. 	<p>There are approximately 2,000 business enterprises in the municipality. Despite extensive efforts for this and other studies, only a small proportion of these businesses are ever consulted. By becoming familiar with a broader range of businesses, the EDU will ensure Council's strategic priorities are relevant and responding to the key issues. Additionally, some tactical promotional efforts should be handed over to a more fully resourced HRBA to allow Council to take on a more strategic facilitation role. This will require some re-evaluation of existing policies.</p>
<p>7.4 Support HRBA to expand its capacity to meet different objectives, including: an ideas generation group or local think tank and industry sector sub-groups.</p>	<p>There are a number of highly successful business leaders with a connection/commitment to the Shire. Facilitating the establishment of a think tank that brings these people together with younger, emerging entrepreneurs may help to generate capital investment in new enterprises. HRBA has a role to play in the formation and running of this forum as well as in efforts to tailor support to different industry sectors.</p>
<p>7.5 Encourage businesses to liaise firstly with the EDU whenever they need to work with or through the Council (e.g. when commencing development or expansion plans requiring permits).</p>	<p>A core principle emerging from this study is that the entire Council has a role in economic development. This is reflected in the recent Best Value review which emphasised a whole-of-Council approach. With respect to economic matters, the EDU should be the shop front presence for businesses.</p>

Our Shire cont.

Objective 7: Better governance

Initiative	Rationale
7.6 Continue with investment attraction including liaising regularly with major investors, Ministers and organising Councillor visits and tours.	In addition to supporting the expansion of existing business, regular visits to potential new investors (including government) is a critical role for the Manager of Economic Development and relevant specialist staff.



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