

# Nillumbik Economic Development Strategy

2020-2030





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# Executive Summary

The Nillumbik Economic Development Strategy (the Strategy) aims to strengthen the economy and facilitate job creation over the next 10 years which is clearly stated in the vision;

**‘We will capitalise on our strengths to grow the economy through advocacy, collaboration, partnerships and innovation, compatible with the Shire’s unique natural environment.’**

In 2018, Nillumbik’s gross regional product was \$1.88 billion. There are four key industry areas within the economy. These are:

- Knowledge-based – education, health care and professional services
- Creative and culture – arts, culture, recreation and tourism
- Primary industry and trade – construction, agribusiness and manufacturing
- Population driven – retail and hospitality.

Strategic drivers of the economy were established through the use of industry data and research. These are identified as crucial focus for responding to challenges and opportunities relevant to locals, businesses and Council. These drivers are:

- Nillumbik residents have a high level of expenditure outside of the Shire
- Low population forecasts
- Dwelling growth is low and there is a need for diverse housing options
- Need to create local businesses and jobs.
- Opportunity to increase visitation and yield through showcasing Nillumbik’s recreation, cultural and tourism assets.

## The Strategy has four objectives:

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

Objectives and actions have been developed to implement the Strategy and achieve its aim.

Collaboration with strategic partners such as local businesses and associations, community, regional economic bodies and State Government will be key to success.

Annual implementation plans will be prepared and reported on through Council’s annual planning, budgeting and reporting processes.

This Strategy will provide direction over the next decade, with priorities determined every four years through the preparation of the *Council Plan*.

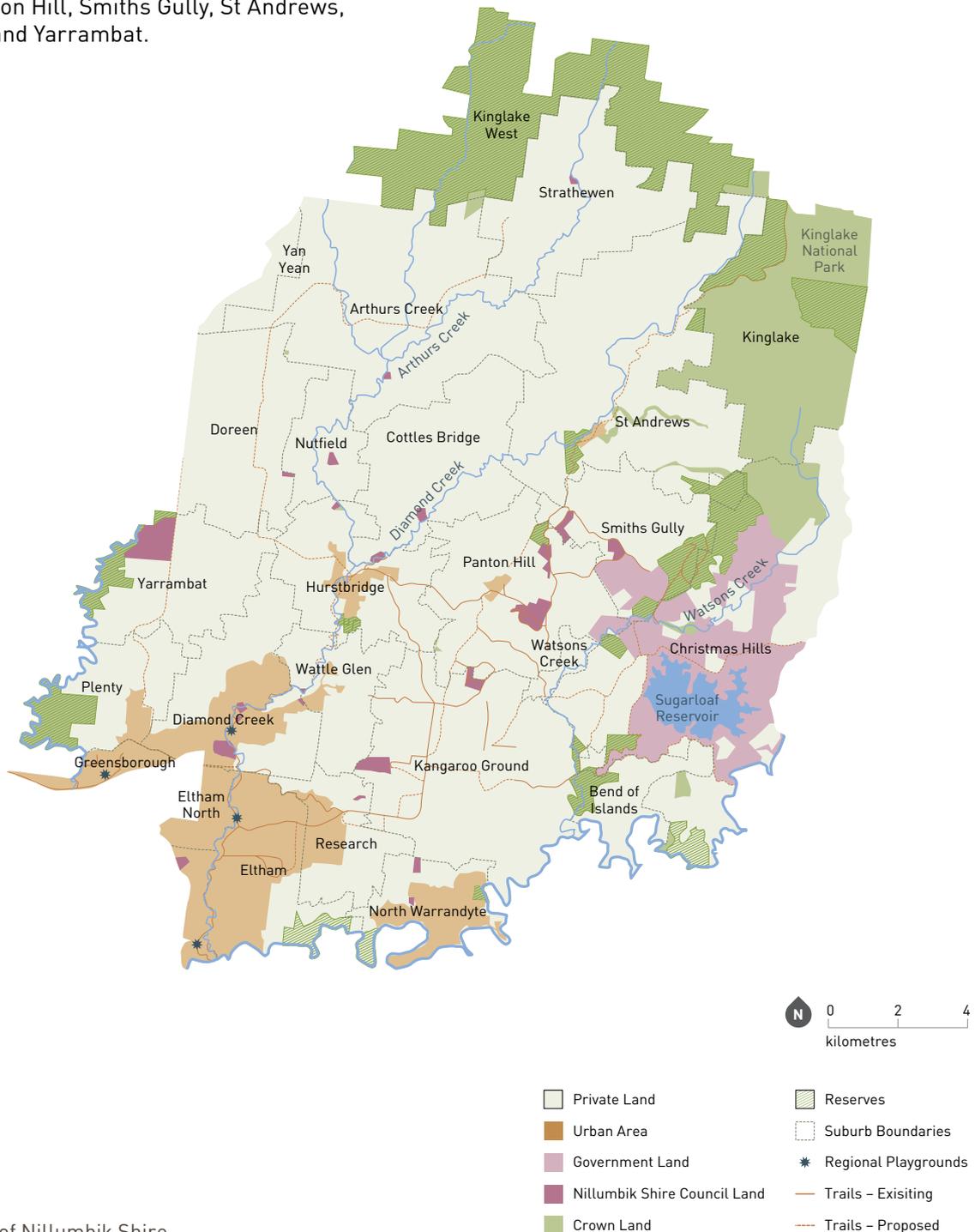
# Overview of Nillumbik



Nillumbik Shire is located on the north-east edge of metropolitan Melbourne with both activity centres approximately 25 km north east of Melbourne's CBD. The Shire is generally bound by the Yarra River to the south and Kinglake National Park to the north.

Nillumbik's key employment areas are predominantly concentrated in the Eltham and Diamond Creek activity centres. Further, there are neighbourhood centres such as Hurstbridge and the local centres of Christmas Hills, Kangaroo Ground, Panton Hill, Smiths Gully, St Andrews, Wattle Glen and Yarrambat.

Most of the Shire is semi-rural or rural in character. Nillumbik falls into one of 12 green wedges around metropolitan Melbourne. Green wedges are established, planned and protected by the Victorian Government's legislative and policy framework. In Nillumbik, the green wedge accounts for 91 per cent of the Council area<sup>1</sup> and 80 per cent of that area is privately owned.



**Figure 1.** Map of Nillumbik Shire

1 Green Wedge Management Plan, Nillumbik Shire Council, 2019

## Background and Context

The *Council Plan Living in the Landscape 2017-2021* lists action 4.1.1 as “Adopt a new Economic Development Strategy and create a set of indicators to measure success”.

This Strategy follows from the Nillumbik Economic Development Strategy 2011-2016. It is consistent with the Victorian Government’s *Plan Melbourne*, adopts the goals of the Shire’s *Council Plan 2017-21* and does not seek to change the Nillumbik Planning Scheme, which governs and guides land use and development.

## Melbourne’s north

Nillumbik sits within the Melbourne north region that encompasses six other Local Government Areas. This region consists of a diverse range of economic activities including education, food, fibre and beverages, digital and professional services, advanced manufacturing, health and well-being and freight and logistics which are well serviced due to the proximity to the airport and well-connected road networks.

The region is home to 75,000 local businesses that support 36,000 jobs.<sup>2</sup> It hosts some large employers including La Trobe University and RMIT, the Austin and Northern hospitals, Melbourne Wholesale Market.

There are a number of proposed infrastructure projects in the northern region that will create a positive economic impact for the Shire including:

- Hurstbridge rail line duplication
- North-East Link
- Eltham Community Hospital
- Yan Yean Road Stage 2
- Fitzsimons Lane upgrade.

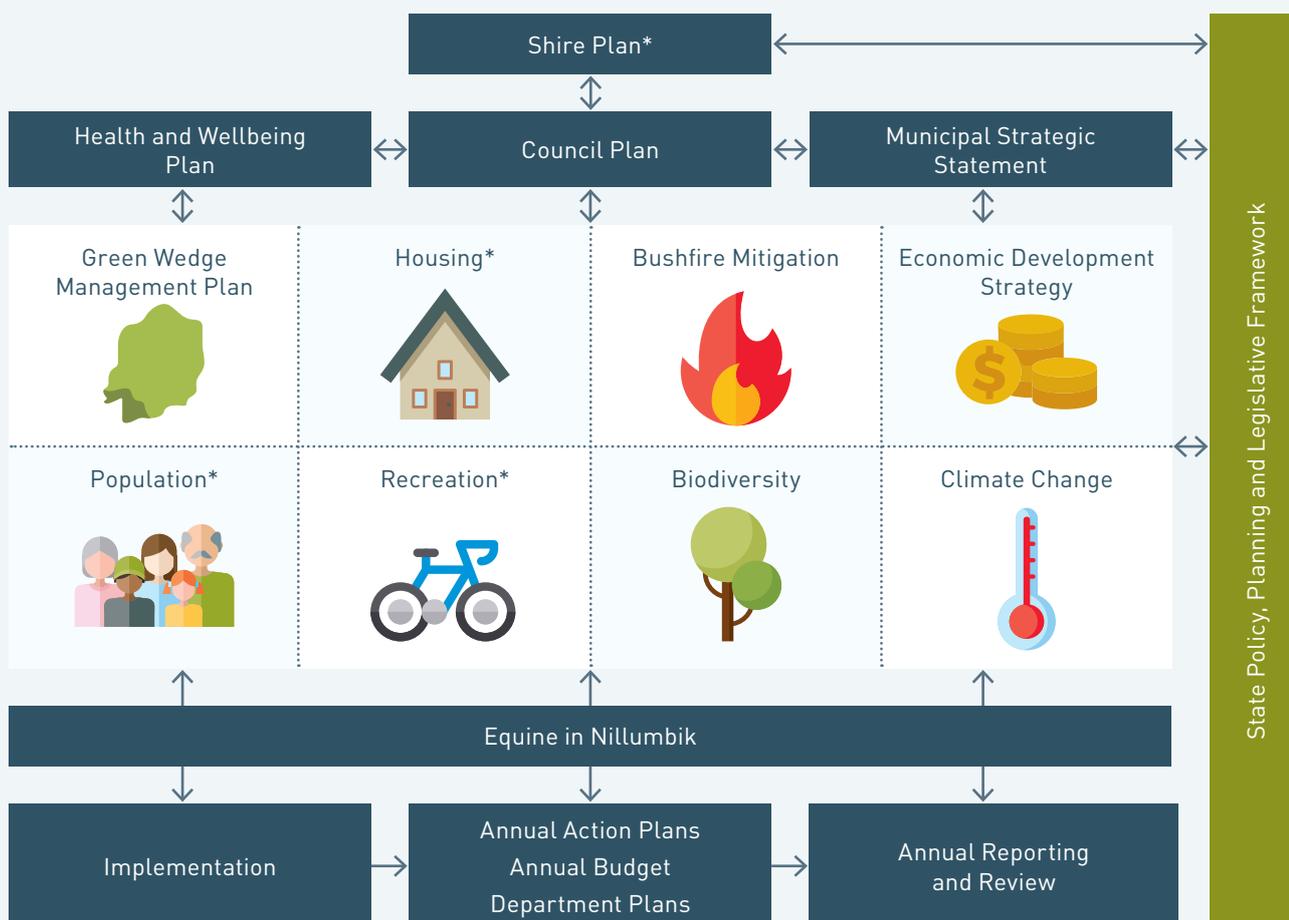
Key to realising this Strategy will be collaboration between state and local government and businesses within Nillumbik. Additionally, it will be important to continue to work with NORTH Link, a regional partnership of industry, education and government, to collaborate and advocate for economic development initiatives.



## Council's strategies and plans

This Strategy forms part of a suite of Council policies, plans and strategies that are intended to work together to realise economic, social and environmental benefits for the Shire. It will provide the economic direction for the next 10 years with priorities established every four years through the Council planning process and the four-yearly review of the Nillumbik Planning Scheme.

Annual implementation plans will be prepared and reported through Councils annual planning, budgeting and reporting processes. The Strategy will inform future versions of the *Council Plan*, *Municipal Strategic Statement* and other strategies including housing, positive ageing, arts and culture, climate change and recreation. It will also influence advocacy initiatives between Council and State and Commonwealth governments. The relationships between these documents and activities are outlined in Figure 2.



\* Under development or review

**Figure 2.** Nillumbik policy, plans and strategy framework

References below relate to Nillumbik at a Glance graphic on the following page

- 3 Population Forecasts, Forecast id, id Consulting 2018
- 4 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Population and Housing 2016 / Forecast id, id Consulting 2018
- 5 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Population and Housing 2016 / Forecast id, id Consulting 2018
- 6 <https://economy.id.com.au/nillumbik/housing-values>
- 7 Socio Economic Index of Areas, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016
- 8 National Economics, Australian Bureau of Statistics / Economy id, id Consulting 2018
- 9 Occupation, Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011 - 2016
- 10 Nillumbik Economic Profile, Economy id, id Consulting 2018
- 11 Nillumbik Economic Profile, Economy id, id Consulting 2018
- 12 Nillumbik Economic Profile, Economy id, id Consulting 2018

# Nillumbik at a glance

## Population<sup>3</sup>

**64,941**

[2018]

**70,391**

[Forecast Population 2036]



## Dwellings<sup>4</sup>

**22,005**

[2018]

**25,881**

[Forecast Dwellings 2036]



## Average Household Size<sup>5</sup>

**2.9** persons

[2018]



## Median House Price<sup>6</sup>

**\$944,462**

[2018]



## Socio-Economic Profile<sup>7</sup>

**Ranked 1st  
in Victoria**

[most advantaged]



## Gross Regional Product<sup>8</sup>

**\$1.88** billion

[2018]



## Most Common Occupations<sup>9</sup>

**Professionals**

[26%]

**Managers**

[16%]



## Number of Local Businesses<sup>10</sup>

**6,438**

[2017]



## Number of Local Jobs<sup>11</sup>

**16,510**



## Employed Residents<sup>12</sup>

**38,730**

[2018]



# Strategic Economic drivers



# Strategic drivers have been identified as opportunities to sustain and grow the Nillumbik economy.

## 1. Nillumbik residents have a high level of expenditure outside of the Shire

Nillumbik residents spend approximately \$1billion per annum outside the Shire, predominantly in Melbourne, Greensborough and Doncaster.<sup>13</sup> This leakage from the Nillumbik economy impacts the sustainability and mix of local businesses and, combined with online retail, limits investment attraction and job creation within the Shire. Addressing this escape expenditure is key to growing the number of local businesses and jobs.

## 2. Need to create local businesses and jobs

Develop the Eltham and Diamond Creek Activity centres as vibrant hubs of economic activity

The Eltham and Diamond Creek activity centres are important hubs for the creation of business opportunities and employment. Their design and operation will provide spaces where business can thrive, residents and visitors can congregate and people can live. These centres are critical to Nillumbik’s economic future.

### A growth in the number of businesses in emerging industries

The Shire has seen an increase in the number of businesses within the emerging industries which are considered new or restructured industries that are growing faster than the overall economy. This is particularly prevalent in townships that rely on visitors for economic sustainability. These businesses provide unique experiences for locals and visitors and require specialist support in order to become and remain sustainable.

### Support for businesses throughout the Shire

While the population is predominantly located near the two activity centres, Council needs to ensure the economic viability of the whole Shire. It is important that there is adequate support for businesses that service residents and visitors and provide local employment throughout the Shire.

### The business base is primarily small to medium enterprises

Ninety-nine per cent of businesses are either non-employing or employ less than 20 people.<sup>14</sup> The proliferation of small business in Nillumbik places a greater demand for business engagement to ensure that they receive the required support to operate productively.

A profile of businesses by size in Nillumbik is outlined in Table 1 below.<sup>15</sup>

	Number of businesses
Non-employing	3882
1 - 4 employees	2018
5 - 19 employees	439
20+ employees	77

**Table 1.** Registered businesses in Nillumbik by number of employees

### There is a low level of job containment within the Shire

Seventy-seven per cent of Nillumbik’s working residents are currently travelling outside the Shire for work.<sup>16</sup> There is an opportunity to grow jobs within the Shire through the implementation of major infrastructure projects such as the proposed Eltham hospital, investment attraction and facilitating an environment conducive to business creation.

13 Nillumbik Activity Centre Final Report: Land Use and Economic Capacity, Geographia 2019 (Spendmapp data 2018)  
 14 Business Entries/Exits, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2017  
 15 ABS Counts of Australian Businesses 2016  
 16 Journey to work, Census of Population and Housing, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016

### 3. Low population forecasts

#### Low projected population growth

The Shire has low projected population growth when compared with the state, nearby local government areas and the metropolitan Melbourne average.<sup>17</sup> This presents challenges for Nillumbik's economy to remain sustainable and attract investors. Low population growth may result in stagnant consumer demand.

#### A forecast higher proportion of senior residents in the next 20 years

The proportion of retirees and seniors is forecast to increase.<sup>18</sup> This will have implications for housing preferences including access to dwellings that facilitate ageing in place. Additionally, as the population ages the Shire may experience an exit of a proportion of the work force. Further, at retirement these persons may close their local business. As people age, their lifestyle and health needs change and they will require different products from local businesses.

### 4. Dwelling growth is low and there is a need for different types of housing

#### Low dwelling growth

The Shire has low dwelling growth when compared with the state, nearby local government areas and the metropolitan Melbourne average.<sup>19</sup> The lack of housing limits population growth and therefore local consumer demand.

#### A need for increased diversity of dwellings

The type, location and price of available housing will impact on the ability of Nillumbik's population to age in place in addition to attracting new residents to the Shire.

### 5. Opportunity to increase visitation and yield through showcasing Nillumbik's recreation, cultural and visitor assets

#### Enhance Nillumbik as a desirable place to establish a business, live, work and play

The Shire's proximity to Melbourne's centre and major transport infrastructure makes establishing and operating businesses efficient due to access to markets. This coupled with the natural environment and open spaces provides a desirable rural ambience for residents and visitors.

#### Locals and visitors value a semi-rural setting with open spaces

The green wedge and townships that have retained their rural characteristics are an attraction for locals and visitors. There is a need to ensure economic development aligns with the values of the green wedge while supporting appropriate local businesses and job creation.

#### A community desire for a sustainable economy

Community feedback from engagement activities carried out in the development of various strategies and plans highlights that the community values their natural environment, connectedness and an urban/rural lifestyle. These values create opportunities to trial initiatives that facilitate alternate energy sources, crop types, reduced food miles, reduced waste and the implementation of sustainable agricultural techniques.

#### Nillumbik offers many and varied recreation and cultural pursuits for locals and visitors

The Shire has a strong offering of sport and recreational activities and facilities throughout the municipality. Additionally, heritage, arts and culture play a role within the economy, particularly as it applies to visitor attraction. There is an opportunity to ensure these are strengthened as contributors to the economy, well-being of residents and attracting visitors and events.

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17 Population Forecasts, Forecast Id, Id Consulting 2018, derived by Urban Enterprise 2018

18 Age Profile Forecasts, Forecast Id, Id Consulting 2018, derived by Urban Enterprise 2018

19 Population Forecasts, Forecast Id, Id Consulting 2018, derived by Urban Enterprise 2018

# Objectives



**The Strategy has four objectives. Each objective will be implemented through the initiatives outlined below.**

**Objective 1:**

Improve economic development practices and programs to assist local businesses

**Objective 2:**

Create vibrant activity centres and employment precincts in Eltham and Diamond Creek

**Objective 3:**

Facilitate economically and environmentally sustainable use of land within the Shire's green wedge

**Objective 4:**

Enhance the visitor economy showcasing natural, recreational and cultural strengths



## Objective 1:

### Improve economic development practices and programs to assist local businesses

Council will deliver an economic development program of work centered on business engagement, collaboration and facilitation.

#### 1. Continue to engage with local businesses to understand and respond to opportunities

Business engagement and support is a core element of economic development at the local government level and an effective approach to promoting and facilitating local economic growth.

Council will progressively modernise its business engagement tools and techniques to better understand business needs and tailor future services so they can start, grow and prosper.

#### 2. Provide businesses with improved assistance with the planning process

Council will implement the State Government's *Better Approvals Project*. This will improve Council's interface with customers and the efficiency and effectiveness of administering local regulatory processes. Additionally, it will assist with improving the development of Council guidelines, policy and strategy.<sup>20</sup> Combined with the implementation of the Council's *Customer First Strategy 2019-2022*, this initiative will make customer service more service centric, modern and improve customers' experience in working with Council.

#### 3. Develop and implement a business education program focusing on priority needs

As 99 per cent of businesses in the Shire are considered small (i.e. employ less than 20 people),<sup>21</sup> supporting small businesses through targeted workshops and seminars and the provision of information will remain a priority.

Given the rate of technological change and its impact on running a business, such as the prominence of on line retailing, it is important that businesses continue to upskill and understand trends, identify opportunities and employ new and innovative ways of working and engaging with customers.

#### 4. Facilitate the creation and implementation of a business mentoring program

Council will facilitate a business mentoring program. The program will focus on starting a business through to improving marketing, financial management and strategy development and implementation.

#### 5. Facilitate networking, collaboration and partnerships between businesses and government

Local businesses indicate that they are interested in attending local business networking and collaborative events.<sup>22</sup> Council will facilitate networking opportunities for business-to-business and business-to-government connections and explore partnerships.

#### 6. Support businesses in emerging sectors

Council will facilitate tailored engagement that focuses on specific issues and opportunities for these businesses. These sectors include arts and culture, food and beverage, visitor attraction, sustainable agri-business and home-based businesses.

#### 7. Initiate the creation and implementation of a women's business network

Council will initiate the creation of a women's business network to help businesswomen connect to their peers. The network will be designed to encourage, showcase and empower women in business within Nillumbik.

#### 8. Facilitate jobs and training opportunities for people with a disability

Council will work with local groups within the disability sector, including support and employment services, and state and commonwealth governments to facilitate training and job opportunities. Council will participate and deliver on actions from Disability Services Networks that enhance the provision of disability support services, community education and opportunities within the local community.

#### 9. Create and implement a buy local campaign

Council will generate a campaign to encourage residents to support local businesses and promote the benefits of buying locally. Through collaboration with local business associations, the implementation of this campaign will raise awareness of businesses and their products, increase loyalty to local businesses and assist to decrease escape expenditure.

20 <https://djpr.vic.gov.au/what-we-do/small-business>

21 Business Entries/Exits, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2017

22 Nillumbik Business Survey, Urban Enterprise, 2016

## 10. Continue to advocate for projects within the Shire and strengthen strategic partnerships

Council will maintain and strengthen strategic partnerships with the State Government, surrounding councils and regional economic development bodies such as NORTH Link. The proximity of Melbourne Innovation Centre, La Trobe and RMIT Universities provides opportunity to collaborate on projects pertinent to advancing the economy such as innovation in agriculture and sustainability.

In particular, Council will advocate for the proposed Eltham Community Hospital to be located where it will clearly support the economic performance of the Shire. For example, the hospital could act as an anchor employer in one of the two activity centres.

Nillumbik is home to 4,653 home based businesses led by the Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (1095) followed by Construction (884). As the future of work continues to change Council will advocate for infrastructure and services that assist this trend such as telecommunications and co-working facilities.

Key projects include:

- North East Link
- Hurstbridge Rail Duplication
- Yan Yean Road Stage 2
- Fitzsimons Lane upgrade

## 11. Promote opportunities for youth employment

Council will continue to work with the Banyule Nillumbik Local Learning and Employment Network (BNLLEN) to assist in the establishment of partnerships and pathways to provide training and employment opportunities for local youths. A position will be created on the Economic Development Advisory Committee for a youth member, to provide a voice for local youth.

Council will provide opportunities for youth employment and training internally and seek to educate local youth of the careers paths available within the organization.





## Objective 2: Create vibrant activity centres and employment precincts in Eltham and Diamond Creek

Since 2002, the State Government's key policy to provide a successful and sustainable structure for metropolitan Melbourne is to require that activity centres are located across the city and are developed as highly functional and attractive hubs of social and economic activity, well-served by public transport. Under this policy, many of Melbourne's traditional town centres are activity centres including Eltham and Diamond Creek.

The State Government's current planning strategy for metropolitan Melbourne, *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050*, strongly supports activity centre policy, as does the State Planning Policy Framework within each metropolitan planning scheme. Metropolitan councils are required to support the policy, by providing a suitably current structure plans to guide development of each activity centre and by setting planning scheme provisions that implement each structure plan.

Council has consistently supported the growth of its activity centres and has long-standing structure plans for each. However, both of these structure plans are now dated and do not adequately respond to the considerable social, economic and environmental change experienced by Melbourne in the past 15 years. Considering this, Action 4.3.1 of the *Council Plan* is to review and update the structure plans.

A key aim of both the Diamond Creek and Eltham activity centre structure plans will be to encourage an anchor employer to locate in each centre. There are significant benefits with establishing anchor employers, particularly anchors which suit the skill and employment base of the local community. Examples of these benefits include an increase in job containment within the Shire, reduced escape expenditure during the working day, synergies with other businesses, positive redevelopment and activation of a key part of each centre, a greater vibrancy for the centre (e.g. through additional foot traffic in and around the centre), a raised profile for each centre and further, other potential anchor employers will likely be stimulated to consider locating to one of the centres. Examples of anchor employers that would be highly suitable for either centre are considered to be municipal offices, a major medical facility (such as the State Government's proposed community hospital) or a sizeable office facility for a business or public department.



## 1. Reduce escape expenditure

There is a high level of escape expenditure from Nillumbik including 70 per cent of all retail. Much of the escape spend is captured by Greensborough (\$157 million p.a.) and Doncaster (\$67 million p.a.), with the most significant escape expenditure categories being dining and entertainment (\$159 million p.a.) and professional services (\$121 million p.a.).<sup>23</sup>

The high level of escape expenditure is likely due to a combination of factors including:

- A high rate of commuting working residents
- Under utilisation of the activity centres
- Ongoing commercial investment in neighbouring activity centres and large shopping centres and their consumer pull impact drawing away spending
- Functional inefficiencies of Nillumbik's major activity centres,<sup>24</sup> resulting from an undulating topography, low-density development and traffic congestion.

Addressing escape expenditure is an effective way to increase demand and loyalty for local businesses. Additionally, it promotes investment attraction for the major activity centres.<sup>25</sup> Key opportunities are in dining and entertainment and specialised food retailing. Raising awareness of existing businesses and their products will be key to responding to this issue.

## 2. Activate and promote the night-time economy

The night-time economy generally involves social, cultural and business activities that take place from 6pm - 6am. The night-time economy is a key driver of growth, and a significant contributor to the economy.<sup>26</sup> Night-time activities are generally focused on dining, retail, accommodation, performance venues, film, theatre, music, cultural experiences, and sporting and leisure.

The most significant category for escape expenditure is dining and entertainment. Council will explore ways to develop a stronger night-time economy that will in turn enhance the vibrancy of activity centres.

23 Nillumbik Activity Centres: Land Use and Economic Capacity, Geografia, 2019

24 Nillumbik Activity Centres: Land Use and Economic Capacity, Geografia, 2019

25 Nillumbik Activity Centres: Land Use and Economic Capacity, Geografia, 2019

26 <https://www.lgns.gov.au/files/imce-uploads/100/Australian-Night-Time-Economy-2009-to-2015-FINAL.pdf>

### 3. Facilitate commercial land and office accommodation within the activity centres

Seventy seven per cent of employment in white-collar industries escapes to the City of Melbourne and other central Local Government Areas.<sup>27</sup> The lack of dedicated employment land is an ongoing challenge in supporting the provision of additional commercial office accommodation in the Shire. Future demand for additional floor space will need to be accommodated through innovative re-imagining of existing sites and/or improved zoning.

A number of local businesses identified that there is a shortfall of commercial floor space in the Shire.<sup>28</sup> The commercial property market in Nillumbik seems to be constrained by low supply and commercial rents are reportedly high, indicated by the lower number of businesses in offices, retail and medical/consulting space relevant to the neighbouring suburbs.<sup>29</sup>

Respondents to the Nillumbik Business Survey who currently utilise their residence as their primary business premises generally support the establishment of a co-working space in the Shire.<sup>30</sup> As the Melbourne Innovation Centre in Greensborough is operating close to capacity, there is an opportunity for Council to investigate supporting a further facility in Nillumbik.

### 4. Understand and support the economic capacity of Nillumbik's local centres

While the Eltham and Diamond Creek major activity centres are the two most significant centres in Nillumbik in terms of business, employment and visitation, Council will investigate the business and employment potential of smaller centres such as Hurstbridge, St Andrews, Research and Panton Hill. Place Audits will collect data on all aspects of Nillumbik's centres providing a useful guide to understanding economic inputs and outputs, infrastructure demands and planning community projects and activities.

### 5. Develop and implement the Nillumbik Housing Strategy

Council will develop and implement a housing strategy designed to provide an outline of housing supply and demand challenges and opportunities, and a framework for decisions affecting housing.

### 6. Implement the requirements of the Local Government Bill 2019

The Local Government Bill 2019 introduced a new requirement for all councils to have a long-term vision for the municipality, developed in consultation with the community. Council will fulfill its requirement by developing a Shire Plan 2040 based on current forecasts, future trends and community values.

27 Journey to Work, Census of Population and Housing, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2016

28 Nillumbik Business Survey, Urban Enterprise, 2016

29 Nillumbik Activity Centres: Land Use and Economic Capacity, Geografia, 2019

30 Nillumbik Business Survey, Urban Enterprise, 2016





### **Objective 3:** Facilitate economically and environmentally sustainable use of land within the Shire's green wedge

Nillumbik is one of Victoria's 12 green wedges around metropolitan Melbourne with 91 per cent of the Shire classified as green wedge.<sup>31</sup> Its productivity is important to the Shire's economy and Council will encourage projects that fit with the values of the community to improve the economy and create local employment.

Economic opportunities for the green wedge exist in agribusiness, tourism, recreation and sustainability including renewable energy. Council will encourage innovation in sustainable and regenerative agriculture. The Nillumbik *Green Wedge Management Plan 2019* provides a framework for its future management and pursuit of environmentally sustainable economic outcomes while respecting conservation values.

#### **1. Investigate and facilitate the creation of a green economy**

A green economy is defined by the United Nations environment programme as low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive. In a green economy, growth in employment and income are driven by public and private investment into such economic activities, infrastructure and assets that allow reduced carbon emissions and pollution, enhanced energy and resource efficiency, and prevention of the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services.<sup>32</sup>

Council will investigate how Nillumbik can facilitate an environment for a strong and diverse collective of start-ups and businesses that will form the basis of a green economy. Characteristics of a green economy include:

- Business operations with zero emissions powered by renewable energy
- Water and waste water infrastructure based on long-term sustainability
- Sustainable land use management
- Preservation and protection of ecosystems and biological diversity.

A green economy seeks to reduce environmental impacts and aims for sustainable development without degrading the environment, while providing for a transition to a low-carbon economy that is resource efficient and socially inclusive.

31 Green Wedge Management Plan , Nillumbik Shire Council, 2019

32 <https://www.unenvironment.org/regions/asia-and-pacific/regional-initiatives/supporting-resource-efficiency/green-economy>

## 2. Research, develop and pilot projects to increase sustainability as part of a green economy

Council will investigate opportunities for Nillumbik to establish pilot trials and a strong reputation in green niche markets for:

- Renewable energy through wind and solar
- Green building
- Water management
- Waste management
- Land management.

## 3. Explore and facilitate agribusiness opportunities

A barrier to becoming a larger food producer in Nillumbik is the availability of appropriately sized holdings of fertile land. Council will assist, consider and utilise research to identify areas within the Shire that are suitable for agriculture and understand the viability of emerging demand for different crops.

Additionally, given the impacts of climate change and a growing demand for food, it will encourage the assessment of new production methods such as permaculture, aquaponics and sustainable agriculture. A focus of this work will be how the Shire can more productively use land employing agritech while respecting conservation values associated with the green wedge.

Strengthening relationships with local education institutions, researchers, and northern Melbourne's independent food network will provide new opportunities for food and fibre production. Based on the findings, Council will develop an investment and advocacy plan that will highlight and promote the Shire's agricultural strengths including the quality of soils across the Shire and what agricultural activities can be conducted successfully, and with what technology.

Council will continue to develop and provide all agribusinesses educational opportunities, information and advice for land management and regenerative farming methods.

Council will investigate farm gate opportunities in consideration of the planning scheme and specific property use. This has benefits to land regeneration, tourism and sustainable food production providing local food for local people.





## Objective 4: Enhance the visitor economy showcasing natural, recreational and cultural strengths

In addition to vast open spaces including recreational reserves that accommodate both organised and unstructured sports and recreation, Nillumbik has long been recognised as a creative and cultural Shire.

In the early 1900s, Heidelberg School-era artists Clara Southern and Walters Withers resided in the area. Australia's oldest artist commune, Montsalvat, was founded in the 1930s and attracted significant artists and intellectuals. Creative industries include a broad range of disciplines and includes activities that are commercially-driven and community-based and experimental.

The Shire has many features that naturally lend themselves to recreational activities. The bushland, heritage walks and scenic settings such as Sugarloaf Reservoir Park, Kinglake State Park and the Panton Hill Bushland Reserves provide for picturesque exploration throughout the Shire. This is supported by facilities such as an extensive trail network that connect the townships. Additionally, the Shire is home to many sporting clubs with excellent facilities that support locals and visitors.

### 1. Create and promote visitor attractions

The Shire's close proximity to Melbourne, and tourism strengths in nature-based assets, food and wine, equine and arts and culture makes it well-placed to attract an increase in visitors who are seeking a unique semi-rural, nature-based experience.

Council will progress the proposal for a regional art gallery or a similar facility and provide support for local creatives through a range of community-based programs and initiatives. This will drive visitation and expenditure within the Shire. Council will explore opportunities to package arts and cultural events with other products such as dining experiences. Council will continue to monitor visitor data to use for developing and enhancing attractions and experiences and advocating for complementary services such as accommodation.

The Diamond Valley Miniature Railway is Nillumbik's most-visited paid attraction.<sup>33</sup> Council will explore how this attraction can be enhanced and maximise visitor dispersal.

Edendale Community Environment Farm is a key attraction for visitors and locals, particularly school groups looking for a unique educational experience. Council will continue to support the improvement of Edendale including new animal shelters, a permanent food premises and exploring new and improved events. There is also opportunity to package visiting Edendale with art and food experiences.

Council will continue to work with Yarra Ranges Tourism to promote Nillumbik as a destination. Additionally, it will collaborate with existing businesses to increase awareness of their products and facilitate the development of other opportunities related to nature and agriculture-based visitor attractions, wellness and recreation such as shared multi-use tracks and trails.

## **2. Promote Nillumbik as a visitor destination**

Council will implement initiatives that develop and promote natural and built experiences which strengthen the local visitor offerings. Working in partnership with the local business associations and regional tourism board Yarra Ranges Tourism, Nillumbik will become a recognised destination for boutique food events, wine and semi-rural experiences on Melbourne's fringe. These initiatives will grow awareness of offerings within Nillumbik such as a quality dining experiences, farmers' markets, cellar doors, breweries and distilleries. The new visitors and the visiting friends and relatives market will be key to establishing and promoting these experiences.

## **3. Document the presence, contribution and opportunity of equine within Nillumbik**

Council will develop an advocacy document, *Equine in Nillumbik*, to support equine activity in the Shire and identify the strengths and opportunities for the sector moving forward. Riders in Nillumbik and neighbouring municipalities share a passion for equine, with whom Council can collaborate to improve facilities for locals and visitors who ride competitively or for recreation.

## **4. Enhance and promote recreational and sporting opportunities and experiences for locals and visitors**

Council will explore ways to enhance the experience and awareness of recreational pursuits such as cycling, walking, hiking and camping within the Shire's open spaces. The Shire's vast open spaces and topography are well suited to these activities. Popular cycling routes will be checked for safety and improvement and digitally mapped including locations of en-route cafes and attractions.

Additionally, the Shire has a suite of excellent facilities across a number of sports that are capable of hosting local and regional sporting tournaments such as basketball, netball, lacrosse and hockey that will bring visitors to the Shire.

Opportunities exist to host sporting tournaments at these facilities. Additionally, it will work to increase both the awareness and visitability of Nillumbik, including the promotion of recreational and sporting activities such as the shared multi-use trails and sporting arenas.



## 5. Support artisan food and beverage producers

The manufacturing industry in Nillumbik includes small-scale food production. There is a growing number of artisan food and beverage producers in Nillumbik's green wedge and employment precincts.

Council will strengthen relationships with key festivals and restaurants, and leverage opportunities from events such as the Melbourne Food and Wine festival. Additionally, Council will partner with providers to investigate the development of new events such as farm gate and paddock to plate. Council will also explore destination development through venues such as wineries, distilleries and cideries. Opportunities in this space include food and beverage trails, meet the maker and packing experiences with the arts.

## 6. Deliver programs for the creative industries and promote cultural and heritage visitor attractions

Creative industries relate to a range of disciplines including visual arts, music, theatre, performance, literature, public art, design, fashion, filmmaking and craft.

Nillumbik has clear strengths in creative and cultural industries and Council will work with stakeholders to advocate for funding from the State Government to grow the sector.

Council will partner with stakeholders to facilitate:

- Festivals and events programs
- Indigenous cultural trails: celebrating and interpreting the region's indigenous heritage
- Sustainable business and living demonstrations and displays
- Leveraging Nillumbik's mud brick heritage.

## 7. Ecotourism within Nillumbik

Council will explore the opportunity to create ecotourism ventures within Nillumbik. As part of this process, the Shire will investigate Eco Destination certification from Ecotourism Australia because it will internationally recognise local product, assist in its marketing, and authenticate its development and management. Nillumbik has the natural assets to develop a reputation of ecologically based experiences including accommodation. The Shire will explore the development of unique offerings that may centre on scenery, land management, native flora and fauna and cultural heritage day tours that incorporate the natural environment. Council will also explore the wellness sector that is often coupled with, and has synergies to ecological settings. The ecotourism ventures will be encouraged to work with local businesses and the community to provide authentic experiences that are in harmony with the environment.



# Appendices



# Appendix A: Implementation principles

**The principles below provide a framework to guide how the Strategy will be implemented.**

## 1. Evidenced-based decision making

Decisions will be informed using research, data and information and will align with Council's and the State Government's existing strategies, plans and policies.

## 2. A "whole-of-Council" approach to facilitating economic development

Council will undertake a coordinated approach to the implementation of the initiatives within this Strategy to provide an efficient and effective service to customers including timely decisions within a framework of aligned strategies, plans and policies.

## 3. Collaborative approach

Council will form new and strengthen existing partnerships to deliver the Strategy. Collaborating with strategic partners including the community, local businesses, business associations, industry bodies and state and commonwealth government agencies to develop and implement initiatives.

## 4. Flexibility

Council recognises that strategic management is dynamic and a continuous process. It will remain flexible, making necessary adjustments as conditions change and opportunities emerge.

## 5. Balance economic, social and environmental needs

Council will deliver initiatives that balance these needs and provide harmony between economic growth, societal needs and the environment.

## 6. Monitor, evaluate and communicate progress

Council will monitor the progress of initiatives, report on these outcomes on an annual basis and update the action plan as necessary.

# Appendix B: Summary of actions to implement the Strategy

Outlined below is a summary of the key actions required to implement the strategy and realise the economic vision for Nillumbik over the next 10 years.

Short term (S) - one to three years

Medium term (M) - four to seven years

Long term (L) - eight to ten years

Ongoing – will occur over the life of the Strategy

Objective 1: Improve economic development practices to assist local businesses		
Actions	Measurement	Timeframe
Continue to engage with businesses to respond to opportunities and facilitate job creation and investment attraction.	Increased business engagement (minimum of 15 individual business interactions per month).	Ongoing
Council to implement the Nillumbik Customer First Strategy 2019-2022 and the State Government's Better Business Approvals Project. This will improve Council's interface with business customers and the efficiency and effectiveness of administering local regulatory processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver on Goal 1 from the Customer First Strategy Customer Focused Culture and Leadership action 1.6 One stop shop which streamlines customer experience and processes specifically for business.</li> <li>• Focus on and deliver Goal 5: Continuous Business Improvement and Innovation action 5.1 Organisational Continuous Improvement and Innovation approach to Process Management to ensure Council is providing businesses with a modern and convenient service.</li> <li>• Complete the Better Business Approval Project to reduce the regulatory barriers for small business and improve the experience to start and grow a business in Nillumbik. Implement project with year on year improvements to streamline the application process for business.</li> <li>• Establish start point for capture of information in Council's systems to verify business concerns and provide factual measures to learn from and continuously update processes to address valid concerns. Review of information captured and continuous improvements undertaken 3, 6, 12 months from information capture and yearly thereafter.</li> <li>• Undertake a yearly business survey to monitor usage of Council's economic development services and determine ways to improve services and implement projects.</li> </ul>	M

## Objective 1: Improve economic development practices to assist local businesses

Actions	Measurement	Timeframe
<p>Transform Council's method of business engagement to improve efficiency and effectiveness.</p>	<p>Implement the organisation wide Business Transformation project 2020 – 2022 which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new Electronic Document Management System (EDRMS)</li> <li>• Website update including new functionality and integrated tools for ease of use for customers</li> <li>• Expand features of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system</li> <li>• Upgrade of GIS Mapping System</li> <li>• A new Asset Management System</li> <li>• A new Project Management System</li> <li>• Centralised Business Intelligence and Reporting Suite</li> <li>• A new Finance System</li> </ul>	S
<p>Advocate to strategic partners for infrastructure projects and opportunities that will facilitate local business and jobs growth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to work with the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions and Northern Economy and Planning Working Group to plan, promote and advocate for emerging business opportunities to advance local job growth.</li> <li>• Advocate for a minimum of 3 key projects per year that will benefit job creation and economic prosperity for Nillumbik residents.</li> </ul> <p>Including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North East Link</li> <li>• Hurstbridge Rail Duplication</li> <li>• Yan Yean Road Stage 2</li> <li>• Fitzsimons Lane upgrade</li> <li>• Eltham Community Hospital</li> <li>• Regional Art Gallery</li> <li>• Inter-regional tracks and trails</li> <li>• Diamond Creek and Eltham Level Crossing Removal</li> </ul>	S
<p>Provide businesses with tools and guidance to simplify the regulatory processes.</p>	<p>Annually review the business kit and develop a set of fact sheets, videos, templates and digital checklists to assist business. These tools will be made available on Council's website.</p>	S
<p>Facilitate the development of a business mentor program for specialised assistance to existing and emerging businesses.</p>	<p>Mentoring program in place by 2025. Minimum 30 participants.</p>	M
<p>Continue to develop and deliver an annual business support and education program including seminars and workshops.</p>	<p>Deliver annual program including a minimum of 6 educational workshops each year. 20 attendees per workshop.</p>	Ongoing

## Objective 1: Improve economic development practices to assist local businesses

Actions	Measurement	Timeframe
Facilitate the support of SME's and home based businesses.	Growth in number of Nillumbik businesses. Target 10 new businesses per year.	S
Implement a buy local campaign.	Buy local campaign delivered by 2021 targeting and supporting Nillumbik residents. Feature and promote the campaign utilising a minimum of 3 different media forums aiming for a 75% positive response rate.	S
Continue to facilitate networking events.	Deliver an annual business networking event for minimum 80 participants.	Ongoing
Facilitate the creation of a women's business network.	Establish a Nillumbik Women's Business Network by 2022 providing valuable connection and business to business opportunities for local women.	S
Explore the creation of a Disability Services Network.	Establish a database for local disability services and service providers by 2022.	S
Continue support for the training and employment of local youth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing partnership with Banyule and Nillumbik Learning and Employment Network. Program delivery to support local youth be job ready including but not limited to:</li> <li>• Real Industry Job Interviews (minimum 60 students)</li> <li>• #findingtheirfeet (minimum 25 students)</li> <li>• industry tours (minimum 50 students)</li> </ul> <p>With an aim to engage all secondary schools in Nillumbik.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an ongoing youth role on the Economic Development Advisory Committee.</li> </ul>	S

## Objective 2: Create vibrant activity centres and employment precincts in Eltham and Diamond Creek

Actions	Measurement	Timeframe
Develop the vibrancy and viability of the Eltham and Diamond Creek activity centres including the implementation of strategies to secure large anchor tenants.	Implement strategies from the Eltham and Diamond Creek Structure Plans (2020 – 2030) within identified timeframes.	M
Conduct a waste review of major activity centres.	Waste review conducted in each of the major activity centres by 2022. Create an action plan to reduce waste in these centres and work with traders to implement the plan.	S
Collaborate with trader associations and local businesses to develop and implement a plan to address escape expenditure.	Regular buy local activations. Minimum 1 per year.	M
Facilitate and support the growth of a night-time economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investment prospectus developed to attract suitable businesses that will contribute to the night time economy.</li> <li>Assessment of suitable locations for activation included in Place Audits, which will determine how the activity centres are performing as a place for connecting community, providing services and engagement and ensuring inclusivity and accessibility for all.</li> <li>Undertake annual review of spend in Nillumbik to identify and establish spend trends and identify annual growth targets.</li> <li>Implement Structure Plan actions to establish appropriate conditions including urban design, trading hours, appropriate locations, appropriate traffic and pedestrian circulation and lighting to attract new business to facilitate growth in night time economy.</li> </ul>	M
Identify existing and potential employment land to accommodate future business and employment growth.	Map all available public land and develop an investment prospectus to attract suitable business.	M
Support the supply and diversity of housing stock in strategic areas to respond to changing market needs.	Complete and implement the Nillumbik Housing Strategy.	S
Strengthen Nillumbik as both a place to live and play for locals and visitors.	Working with Yarra Ranges Tourism focus on targeted promotion to the 'visiting friends and relatives' market. A minimum of two promotional activities per year.	S

**Objective 3:** Facilitate economically and environmentally sustainable use of land within the Shire's green wedge.

Actions	Measurement	Timeframe
Facilitate an environment for start-ups and businesses that will contribute to a green economy.	Partnership established with Melbourne Innovation Centres and a pathway for start-up businesses embedded into Council's business support program.	M
Facilitate research and conduct pilots and trials for businesses to increase environmental sustainability.	Established partnerships with educational institutions including but not limited to La Trobe University and RMIT University. 4 pilot projects delivered by 2025.	M-L
Facilitate an assessment of the quality of agricultural land.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate through the Conversations program of the adopted Green Wedge Management Plan new and emerging opportunities for agricultural land in the Shire. A minimum of 2 targeted conversations on the quality and opportunities of agricultural land.</li> <li>• Land Assessment completed and an action plan put in place to respond to the results. This may include activities such as regenerative farming and land management programs for land holders.</li> </ul>	M
Encourage and facilitate diversification of agricultural activities including the adoption of new technologies, sustainable agricultural practices, while respecting conservation values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proactively seek opportunities which align to the Green Wedge Management Plan and Nillumbik Planning Scheme that encourage diversification and alternative, regenerative farming methods. Minimum 4 opportunities considered.</li> <li>• Specific role for an agriculture representative created on the Economic Development Advisory Committee.</li> </ul>	M-L

**Objective 4:** Enhance the visitor economy showcasing natural, recreational and cultural strengths.

Actions	Measurement	Timeframe
Work with local businesses and Yarra Ranges Tourism to increase the awareness of Nillumbik as a visitor destination.	Ongoing partnership with Yarra Ranges Tourism. Encourage individual business partnerships.  Increase in awareness will be measured by an increase in visitation of 10% through Tourism Research Australia's Local Government Area Profiles and the International and National Visitor Survey.	S
Continue to assess the viability of a regional art gallery.	Viability to be determined by 2021.	S
Develop an Equine in Nillumbik statement highlighting the history and opportunities for this sector.	'Equine in Nillumbik' statement completed.	S
Explore ways to enhance and increase awareness of recreational and sporting opportunities and experiences for locals and visitors.	Quarterly media exposure that focuses on the recreational and sporting opportunities and experiences for locals and visitors this could include but is not limited to online publications such as One Hour Out, Space Magazine, Herald Sun Escape, Royal Auto magazine and community radio stations.	S-M
Advocate to Department of Transport (DoT) to improve the road shoulders on popular cycling routes to increase safety and enjoyment for riders.	Request made to DoT by way of a formal letter from Council to develop a road safety program to improve safety for all road users in particular cyclists and horse riders.	S
Prepare and publish information online that promotes cycling routes in Nillumbik, including characteristics such as GPS data and en-route attractions and cafes.	Accessible information published on Council's website and the Visit Nillumbik website utilising the latest technology.	S
Complete the trails audit to assess that they are fit for purpose.	Trails audit complete by 2022 as identified as an action in Council's Recreation Strategy.	S
Collaborate with the State and nearby municipalities to develop the <i>Outer Eastern Regional Mountain Bike Strategy</i> that will guide planning and development of facilities in the region.	Strategy complete 2025.	M

**Objective 4:** Enhance the visitor economy showcasing natural, recreational and cultural strengths.

Actions	Measurement	Timeframe
Strengthen relationships with businesses and festivals to showcase the Shire’s artisan food and beverage producers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generate awareness via media exposure for local producers in leading publications such as The Age Epicure, and 4 online features annually.</li> <li>• 2 events in the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival each year.</li> <li>• Minimum 75 per cent satisfaction amongst businesses with council’s facilitation and support.</li> </ul>	M
Develop and implement a plan to grow creative and cultural industries through programs and festivals which also act as a support for local artists.	Incorporate creative industries into the business support and education program providing targeted workshops. Measurement minimum 20 attendees per event.	M
Explore ecotourism, health and wellbeing tourism opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an investment prospectus for tourism business opportunities.</li> <li>• Increase in tourism businesses by 5 businesses per year.</li> </ul>	S

# List of figures

FIGURE 1: Map of Nillumbik Shire

FIGURE 2: Nillumbik policy, plans and strategy framework





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