

The Surf Coast Shire

Economic Development Strategy 2021 - 2031



Growing a
prosperous economy



Pictured is local business Built for Adventure.
Photo by Kornelia Pytlak @wetdogandco
Read their story and more on Inspired by Surf Coast





Acknowledgment of Country

Surf Coast Shire spans the Traditional lands of the Wadawurrung People and Eastern Maar People.

We acknowledge them as the Traditional Owners of this land, and pay respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

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Mayor's Message

The Surf Coast Shire Council Economic Development Strategy 2021-2031 lays out the future aspirations for our region's economic ecology.

A future that recognises a successful economy is a prosperous one. Prosperity is more than just material wealth – it speaks to our lifestyle, health and wellbeing, sustainability and how we thrive as a community.

The decisions we make for our economy should reflect our core values and build on our strengths to improve our quality of life.

Our collective capacity for creative thinking, our appreciation for our natural surrounds, and our unique small business profile provides us with a legitimate business case for creating a better future.

We, as the citizens of the Surf Coast, are regarded as one of the most creative and innovative hotspots in the nation, and have earned the right to become our own economic futurists.

An action in the first year of the strategy is to develop the new measures for economic success. They will be used as

a guide to track our progress. Future place-based community engagement will provide important qualitative data to support this.

How do we best use our finite resources for a more holistic approach to economics that leaves no-one behind, while still allowing us to prosper? We take an approach that actually fits comfortably with who we are as a group and the values we hold.

Many of our businesses live locally and think globally. The gears can turn slowly on economic development but the example we set now can provide a path for others to follow and lead us to a more prosperous future.

I trust you will enjoy learning more about Our Economic Story and will support us in the delivery of this very important strategy.



Cr Libby Stapleton

Mayor, Surf Coast Shire Council

Executive Summary

What is Economic Development?

“Local economic development is a way to build up the economic capacity of an area in order to improve quality of life”

- World Bank

The phrase that best describes much of the local economic development work is finding ways to ‘connect and thrive’.

Growing a Prosperous Economy

The Economic Development Strategy is focused on a growing a more diverse and sustainable economy for the Surf Coast, one that strengthens its vibrant local places and businesses, and nurtures new industries servicing national and global markets.

It improves on already strong foundations to support an economy that can thrive in what will inevitably be a dynamic and challenging future.

This Strategy is informed by many of the findings from a companion document titled **The Surf Coast Shire: A Prosperous Place – Our Economic Story**.

The Economic Story (pictured right) was developed as part of the Prosperous Places Project which uncovered new research on the emerging sectors of the local economy and included 1-1 engagement with many Surf Coast businesses and a Skills Reference Group. Much of this work was completed in 2019 and early 2020 prior to the Covid-19 outbreak.

This research and engagement identified the themes and direction for our strategy.

An analysis of local community values against the vision and strategic areas of our strategy has been completed in 2021 using data collected in response to the Council engagement for People, Place, Future – the community vision and Council plan.

Overleaf is the Economic Development Strategy summary.

This Strategy is informed by many of the findings from a companion document titled **The Surf Coast Shire: A Prosperous Place – Our Economic Story**.



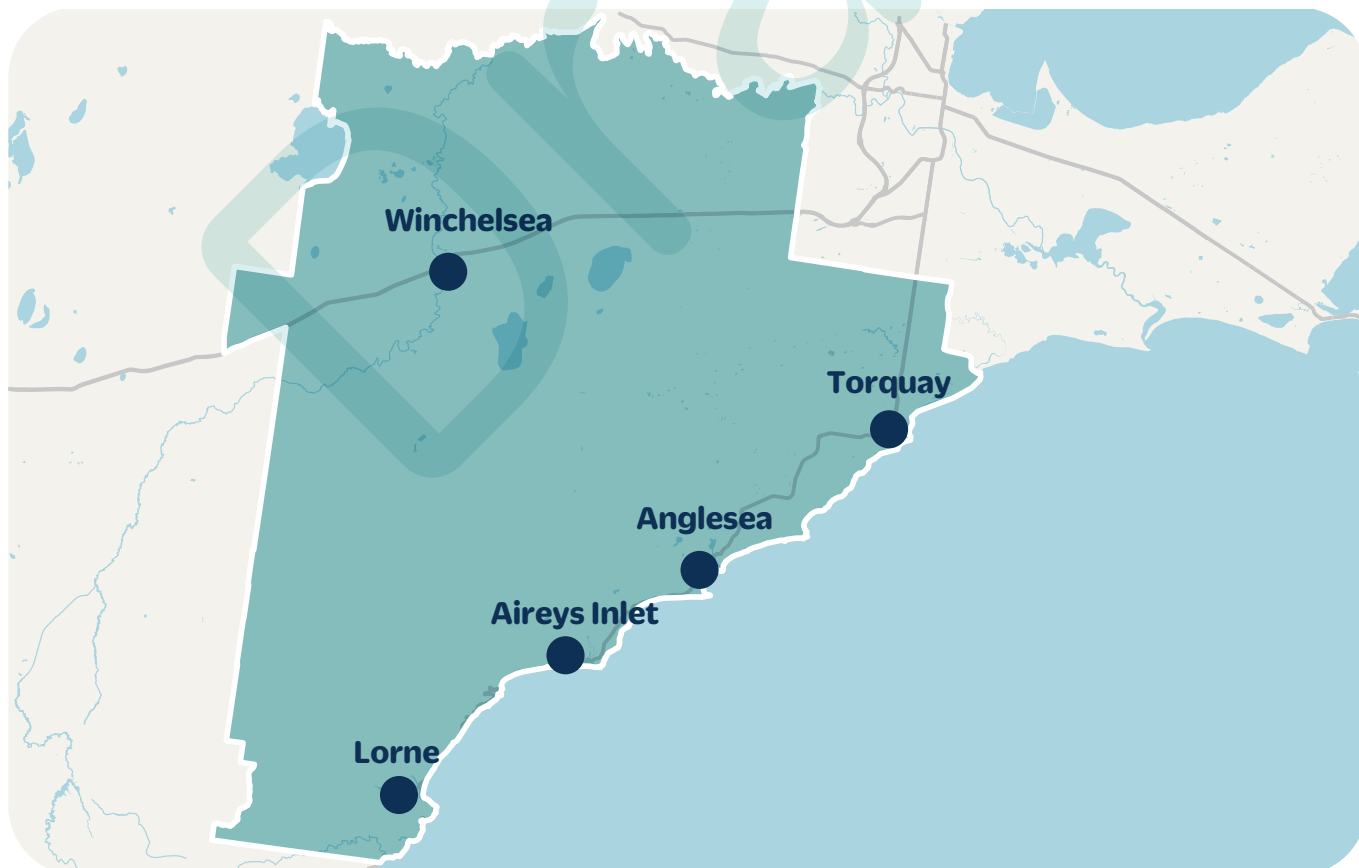


About the Surf Coast

The Surf Coast Shire is located in southwestern Victoria, 1 hour from Melbourne, 20 minutes south of Geelong and the official start of the iconic Great Ocean Road.

It is home to eleven distinct townships; Aireys Inlet, Anglesea, Bellbrae, Deans Marsh, Fairhaven, Jan Juc, Lorne, Moriac, Freshwater Creek, Torquay and Winchelsea.

Each of these townships has a keen sense of community, a unique identity and a strong desire to protect and nurture the environment. There is also a significant rural population including farming and rural/residential communities.



Strategy Summary

Prosperity is more than just material wealth.

The word contains a sense of optimism, sustainability and takes a long term view. A prosperous place is one that offers a good quality of life.

If we consider how our businesses, people and places can ALL thrive when faced with challenges or opportunities, that will create prosperous places and guide us towards the economy we need.



To show the path towards the economy we need, the strategy is guided by a vision, core principles, strategic areas and goals which are set out below and set the foundations of tracking our performance.


Vision:

The Surf Coast is prosperous and has shaped its own identity that successfully combines lifestyle, environment, business and a strong sense of place.

Principles:

Prosperity equals quality of life for community	Community is residents, businesses and visitors	The natural environment has an intrinsic value that cannot be replaced by economic development.	The Surf Coast has three separate and distinct local economies
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Strategic Areas:

Place 	People 	Business 
Goals:		
1. Events that create a sense of place, community connection and thriving businesses 2. Connected and inspiring Places	1. Slow and purposeful tourism 2. Our culture and identity is shared and celebrated 3. Jobs for current and future generations	1. A thriving, connected business network 2. A destination of choice for emerging and innovative industries 3. An economy with a conscience

Research and Community Engagement



The Prosperous Places Project

A very strong evidence-base guides this strategy from the Prosperous Places project that commenced in February 2019.

Prosperous Places Objective: to better understand how to positively and proactively shape the Surf Coast's future economic ecology delivered several reports including:

This phase of the project included
1,062 hours
of community engagement



Economic Situation Analysis:

a summary of many aspects of the economy drawn from State and National databases.

Skills & Emerging Industries Audit:

a State Government funded project that assessed the Surf Coast workforce and skills in more detail and provided new research on emerging non-traditional sectors that better describe how the Surf Coast economy is evolving.



Skills Reference Group:

four meetings of a Skills Reference Group formed to secure informed industry input into the analysis of employment and skills issues (current and emerging/future issues. Representation included industry sectors: Building & Construction; Retail; Tourism/Hospitality; Agribusiness; Health; Professional Services; Surf Industry; Trader Groups; Human Resources and Education.



Prosperous Places Community Engagement:

- Eight engagement sessions across the Surf Coast for businesses, residents and community groups to hear and comment on the economic insights found from the research.
- 95 one-to-one in-depth interviews with a wide variety of local businesses across the Surf Coast to discuss aspects of their business and the challenges or opportunities for economic development of the Surf Coast.
- A Discussion Paper, a series of project newsletters, social media posts, a project webpage, newspaper ads and media stories linked to an online survey.

All of this work informed the next step in the Prosperous Places project: an Economic Development Strategy for the Surf Coast. The most relevant information from this phase of the project is in the document: Our Economic Story – the Surf Coast Shire: A Prosperous Place.

The Prosperous Places project was paused at this point in March 2020 until February 2021 due to Covid-19.

The People Place Future Project:

Alignment with current community sentiment



Due to the delay between engagement and creation of the Economic Development Strategy caused by Covid-19, additional analysis of community sentiment has been completed using responses to the People Place Future project.

People Place Future Objective: to inform a long term community vision for the shire, plus a new four year Council Plan and Health and Wellbeing Plan, along with 10 year finance and asset management plans. The study focused on **Liveability** and sought to understand community values, neighbourhood liveability and investment priorities.

Council received more than 1200 responses in a six week period between January and March 2021.



1,193

Survey Responses



121

Online and other Submissions



997

Community Ideas

Overall when asked what people most valued in their community the top three responses were:

- 1. Protection and enhancement of the natural environment**
- 2. Managing growth in a sustainable way**
- 3. Community health and wellbeing**

When asked to comment on a 10 year vision for Surf Coast Shire most common themes were:

- 1. Retaining a small town feel**
- 2. Ensuring development did not adversely impact on township character and the natural environment**
- 3. A community that is welcoming and inclusive where people look out for each other**
- 4. Living and working in area of natural beauty**
- 5. Active and public transport**
- 6. Creative people, places and industries**
- 7. Tackling climate change**

Alignment with Economic Development Strategy

The Economic Development Strategy: outlines an economic vision; and demonstrates a strong correlation between quality of life and a strong economy, therefore the responses to People Place Future are highly relevant.

People Place Future categorised responses into one of 50 Place Attributes related to liveability. While the attributes are generic, they allow grouping of similar comments for analysis. Results from future Council Plan community engagement will enable us to track our progress on creating a prosperous economy.

Thirty five Place Attributes aligned directly with the Economic Development Strategy's Strategic Areas: People, Place and Business. The following summarises key results from this engagement through the lens of economic development.

Where Are We Now?

The Surf Coast community rated unique natural elements such as views, vegetation and wildlife, and the overall visual character of their neighbourhoods as the top contributors to liveability.

On average, the attributes associated with Place performed better than those associated with People and Business. Attributes associated with Business did not perform as well, with an average score of 6.9/10.

People

Attributes [# PX ranking]	Scores
Neighbourhood spirit/resilience (from external impacts, storms, economic downturns etc.) #6	7.9
Sense of belonging in the community #7	7.9
Sense of character or identity that is different from other neighbourhoods #10	7.8
Sense of neighbourhood safety (from crime, traffic, pollution etc.) #11	7.7
Welcoming to all people #16	7.7
Sense of connection to/feeling support from neighbours or community #17	7.7
Evidence of community activity (volunteering, gardening, art, community-organised events etc.) #28	7.2
Cultural and/or artistic community #30	7
Local history, historic buildings or features #43	6.1
Local education options (from elementary to adult education) #46	5.9
Local employment opportunities (within easy commute) #49	5.1

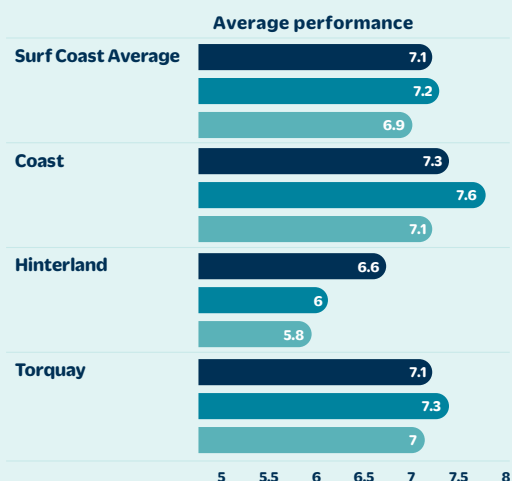
Place

Attributes [# PX ranking]	Scores
Elements of natural environment (natural features, views, vegetation, topography, water, wildlife etc.) #1	8.7
Overall visual character of the neighbourhood #2	8.3
Connectivity (proximity to other neighbourhoods, employment centres, shops etc.) #15	7.7
Landscaping and natural elements (street trees, planting, water features etc.) #19	7.6
Spaces suitable for specific activities or special interests (entertainment, exercise, dog park, BBQs etc.) #21	7.5
Walking/jogging/bike paths that connect housing to communal amenity (shops, parks etc.) #23	7.3
General condition of public open space (street trees, footpaths, parks etc.) #24	7.3
Spaces for group or community activities and/or gatherings (sports, picnics, performances etc.) #25	7.3
Landmarks, special features or meeting places #25	7.3
Protection of the natural environment #32	6.9
Access and safety of walking, cycling and/or public transport (signage, paths, lighting etc.) #34	6.8
Evidence of Council/government management (signage, street cleaners etc.) #35	6.8
Access to shared community and commercial assets (library, bike/car share, sport facilities/gyms etc.) #41	6.3
Unusual or unique buildings and/or public space design #48	5.7

Business

Attributes [# PX ranking]	Scores
Locally owned and operated businesses #8	7.8
Access to neighbourhood amenities (cafes, shops, health and wellness services etc.) #13	7.7
Local businesses that provide for daily needs (grocery stores, pharmacy, banks etc.) #13	7.7
Ease of driving and parking #29	7.1
Quality of buildings (design and construction of homes, shops, schools etc.) #33	6.9
Evidence of recent private investment (renovations, landscaping, painting etc.) #36	6.7
Sustainable behaviours in the community (water management, solar panels, recycling etc.) #36	6.7
Evidence of recent public investment (roads, parks, schools etc.) #39	6.4
Sustainable urban design (water sensitive design, transport-oriented design, sustainable building design, density etc.)	5.9
Things to do in the evening (bars, dining, cinema, live music etc.) #47	5.8

Community values for metrics associated with Economic Development



The Coast and Torquay's sub-economies are performing better than the Hinterland on average across all areas.

A score of 7/10 and above is generally considered good. Scores under this indicate room for improvement.

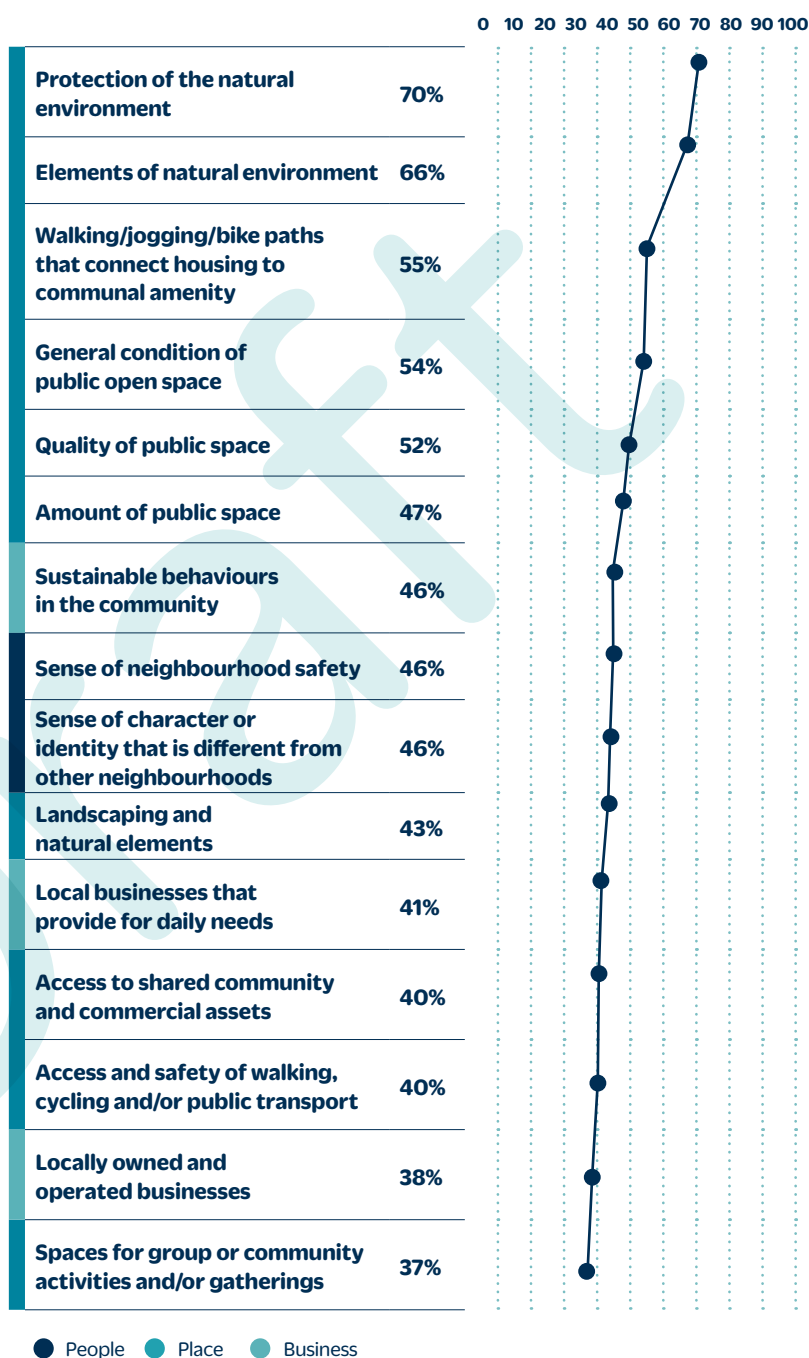
Where Do We Want To Be?

The Surf Coast community values sustainability and the protection of its unique natural environment, high quality and well-maintained public spaces that offer opportunities for the community to meet, and safe active, and public transport options that connect housing to locally owned and operated businesses, and shared community assets. All of which would contribute to the protection and celebration of a unique identity.

When asked about their vision for the future, 40% of community ideas related to environmental sustainability and nature, twice as much as ideas relating to Community, Management and Safety or Movement.

These values and ideas align with the economic development strategy's vision of the Surf Coast shaping a unique identity that combines lifestyle, environment, business and a strong sense of place.

Surf Coast Shire Top 15 Care Factors



A low Care Factor ranking does not mean a feature is not valued, but rather that the competing interest (other Place Attributes) are at this point in time more important from the community's point of view.

How Do We Get There?

When you combine the scores for attributes as they are now and where we want to be, we can see the attributes that are strong and should be maintained or protected.

Those attributes where the care factor is high, but the place score is low are the ones that provide the greatest potential return on investment to match economic success with community expectation.

The figure below identifies the different investment priority levels of the Place Attributes associated with the Economic development strategy.

The community identified the Surf Coast's unique connection to nature, local character, infrastructure that

supports our active, outdoor lifestyle and locally owned and operated businesses as key contributors to liveability within the economic development strategy framework.

In addition to protecting these features, future investment should focus on sustainability and improving the accessibility and safety to local town centres and shared community facilities such as libraries, schools, public meeting or event places.

Seeing businesses and buildings demonstrate sustainable behaviours was also highly desirable.

Although they are not high priorities for investment from the community's point of view, investing in 'Local employment opportunities' and 'Things to do in the evening' could significantly impact the liveability and prosperity of the LGA.

Investment Priority Levels by Economic Development Strategy theme (LGA average)

	Place Attribute	Priority level	Score /10
People	Sense of character or identity that is different from other neighbourhoods	Protect	7.8
	Sense of neighbourhood safety (from crime, traffic, pollution etc.)	Protect	7.7
	Local employment opportunities (within easy commute)	Medium	5.1
Place	Elements of natural environment (natural features, views, vegetation, topography, water, wildlife etc.)	Protect	8.7
	Landscaping and natural elements (street trees, planting, water features etc.)	Protect	7.6
	Walking/jogging/bike paths that connect housing to communal amenity (shops, parks etc.)	Protect	7.3
	General condition of public open space (street trees, footpaths, parks etc.)	Protect	7.3
	Overall visual character of the neighbourhood	Protect	8.3
	Spaces for group or community activities and/or gatherings (sports, picnics, performances etc.)	Protect	7.3
	Protection of the natural environment	High	6.9
	Access and safety of walking, cycling and/or public transport (signage, paths, lighting etc.)	High	6.8
	Access to shared community and commercial assets (library, bike/car share, sport facilities/gyms etc.)	High	6.3
	Evidence of Council/government management (signage, street cleaners etc.)	Medium	6.8
Business	Locally owned and operated businesses	Protect	7.8
	Local businesses that provide for daily needs (grocery stores, pharmacy, banks etc.)	Protect	7.7
	Sustainable behaviours in the community (water management, solar panels, recycling etc.)	High	6.7
	Sustainable urban design (water sensitive design, transport-oriented design, sustainable building design, density etc.)	Medium	5.9
	Things to do in the evening (bars, dining, cinema, live music etc.)	Medium	5.8

The Place Attributes that are not displayed either: do not require additional investment (low Care Factor and high score); or are low investment priorities from the communities' point of view (low Care Factor and medium to low performance).

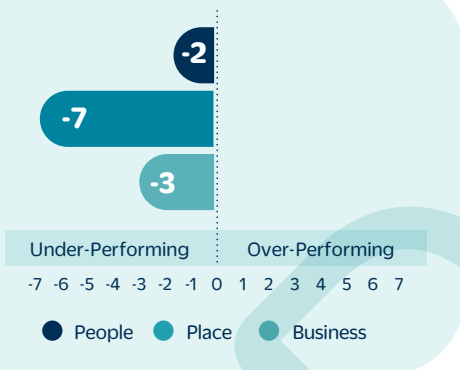
How Will We Know When We Reach Our Goals?

Future engagement for the Council Plan on liveability will reveal the impact of the Economic Development Strategy and related investments.

There are three ways by which success will be evaluated:

1. Meeting community expectations by achieving parity between 'care factor' and 'place' (Px) performance.

The aim is to achieve parity between community values and performance (or a score of 0).

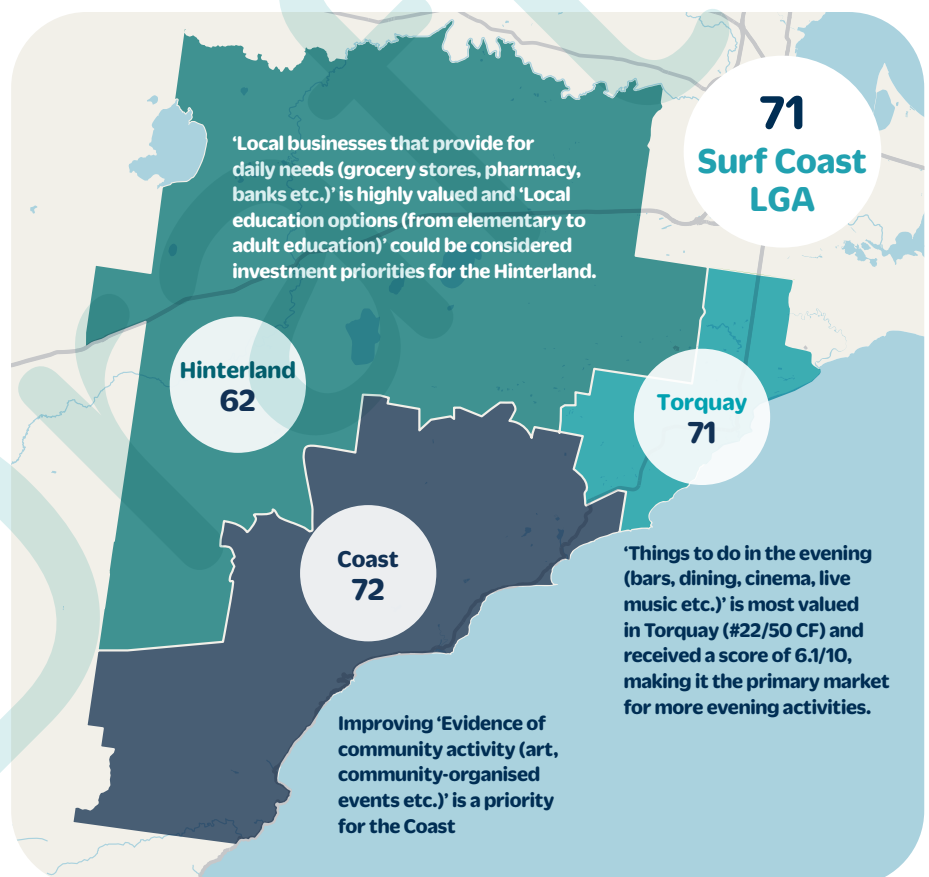


2. Increasing and retaining the number of Investment Priority strengths (ten) or reducing the number of areas requiring investment (four high priorities and five medium priorities).

3. Increasing the overall liveability score of the Surf Coast Shire LGA and its three sub-economies.

Economic development contributes to the liveability of the whole of the Surf Coast area. Therefore an increase in the overall PX score for Surf Coast Shire Council and its sub-economies can also indicate an increase in economic prosperity.

In terms of Economic Development the different communities of the Surf Coast share common values (for the most part) but have different place experiences.



The Coast and Torquay's sub-economies are performing better (72 & 71 out of 100) than the Hinterland (62) where 'access to daily businesses' and 'community assets' is not rated as highly.

The Hinterland community also has slightly different values from the other sub-economies with more Hinterland respondents selecting neighbourhood resilience and local history and heritage features as being important to them.

Comments On Economic Development Strategic Areas

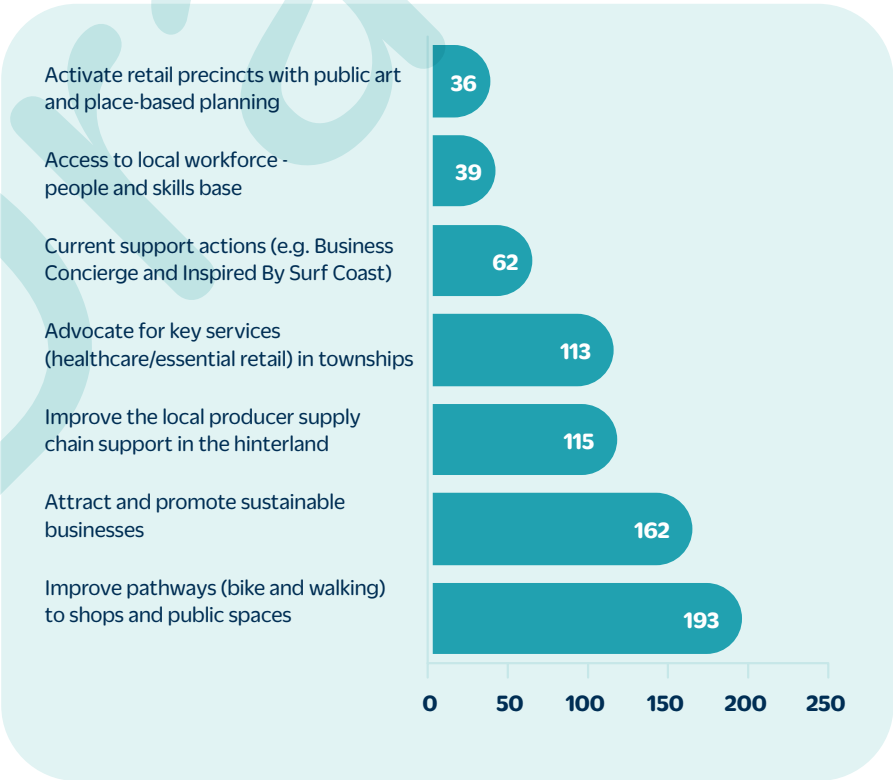
Further analysis of the People Place Future responses identified the most common ideas relating to the three units in the Economic Development & Tourism department at Council.

Traditional business support received the most mentioned (823), followed by visitor servicing (699), supporting creative and innovative business sectors (452) and Events (244). The top responses have been grouped and summarised below.

Traditional Business Support

Improvements to pathways to shops and public spaces for walking or bike riding was one of the most common ideas to improve support for local businesses (193 mentions). Suggestions to attract and promote sustainable businesses (162) and improving the supply chain of local producers (115) were also in the top three mentions.

Traditional Business Support Comments



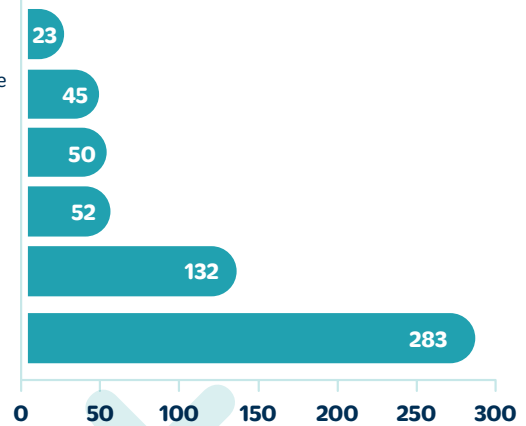
Visitor Servicing

In relation to tourism and visitor servicing, there were 283 comments recognising the value of the Surf Coast' natural environment and the need to promote the visitor experience in a sustainable manner.

There is strong demand (132) for more information on tracks and trails to support outdoor adventure activities and 50 mentions of the negative impact of high volume, low value tourism – this mostly related to day trip coach tours.

Visitor information and experience

Accessible tourism
Historical and cultural heritage tourism attractors
Negative impacts of high-volume/low value tourism
Sustainable tourism - public transport, Evs, and sustainability attractors
Promote active transport and trail tourism
Promote and protect natural environment attractions

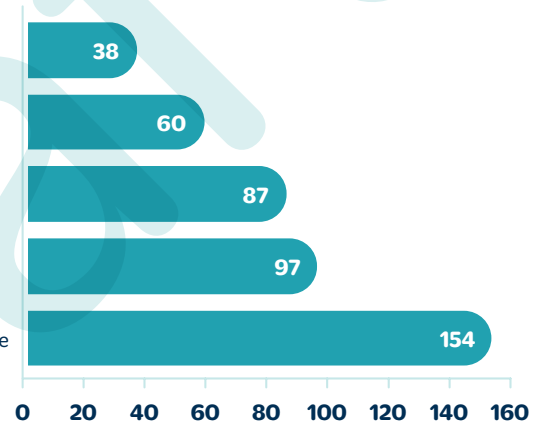


Supporting Creative and Innovative Business Sectors

There was strong interest in supporting businesses that are involved in our active outdoor lifestyle (154) or are tackling climate change. There were many suggestions around support for creative industries (87) as well.

Supporting emerging industries comments

Niche food processing
Health and Wellness
Creative industries
Reducing emissions and climate change
Active/outdoor lifestyle

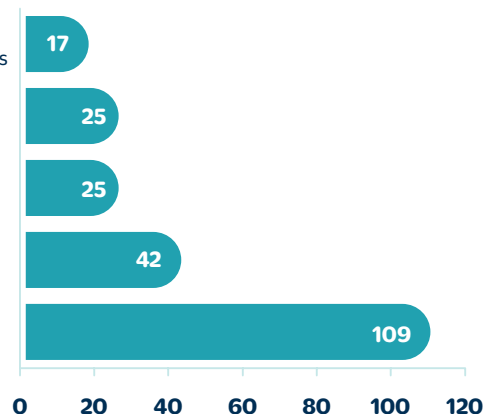


Events

The most interest in relation to events involved in the successful delivery and digital promotion of major and community events (109 mentions). The most popular events mentioned were either outdoor/active participatory events or (42) arts/cultural events (25). Some comments reflected a desire to see more sustainable event delivery (25) and events free of drugs or alcohol (17).

Events comments

Support/deliver alcohol and other drug-free events
Sustainable events (inc plastic-wise)
Arts/Cultural events
Outdoor/active events
Deliver and/or digitally promote events





The Economy We Have VS the Economy We Need

Where we are, where we are going

The Surf Coast is already a great place to live. There are many aspects of life and economic indicators that say that our quality of life is good. The Surf Coast is also a regional economy that is in transition.

There is population growth in some areas of the Surf Coast, but nowhere near the volume of growth in Geelong and Melbourne. There are concerns about losing our identity and character. The tourism market is also changing, with growth in day visitors and seasonal and spatial concentrations generating local

congestion issues. At the same time, tourism creates many jobs and provides us with lifestyle options that otherwise would not exist.

Local jobs have increased, but many of the additional jobs are lower skill and part-time. Many younger people of working age are leaving the Surf Coast as the career prospects are unclear. If we don't find ways to create new jobs in future, more people will need to travel outside of Surf Coast for work, which reduces their quality of life and forces our young people to leave in search of opportunity.

The surfing industry has experienced recent structural changes and the rapid growth of non-traditional sectors present new opportunities for work. People with industry experience are moving in for lifestyle reasons with the intention of running their business from the coast or creating new ventures.



If we don't find ways to create new jobs in future, more people will need to travel outside of Surf Coast for work, which reduces their quality of life.

There are strong positives for the future and an opportunity right now to consider: do we want to continue with the economy we have; or do we see greater opportunity for an economy we need?

The Economy We Have:	The Economy We need:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Has a traditional economic development focus (jobs & growth) – separate to the community. 2. Reliant on traditional industry sectors such as construction, tourism and retail for jobs and expenditure. 3. A history of innovation in surfing. 4. Deeply integrated with Geelong and Melbourne where our knowledge and skills are exported to for work 5. Attracts skilled people and business from Melbourne and beyond because of its lifestyle. 6. Has lesser known drivers such as home based businesses, surfing, creative and events. 7. Shows signs of a desire to be a more ethically conscious and environmentally sustainable 8. Dominated by summer day trip visitation that can cause congestion at peak times. 9. Situated between Melbourne's growth corridor and an internationally recognised visitor destination – The 12 Apostles – on an iconic Road. 10. Has under employment challenges due to the seasonality of key sectors such as tourism 11. Has a Hinterland that is capable of making a significant contribution 12. Tourism is our business and we invest in tourism marketing 13. Townships with limited commercial land 14. An increasing number of people who have to work outside the Surf Coast 15. Rapid home-based business growth in Torquay 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Delivers a contemporary economic development strategy which considers how the whole community can prosper as a result of economic development 2. Proudly Surf Coast – strong sense of place and shapes its own identity. 3. Combines lifestyle, environment and business successfully 4. Responds to the climate emergency and shows others what is possible. 5. Fosters innovative, niche industries and offers opportunity to scale up locally. 6. Has high quality, appropriate infrastructure 7. A globally connected Surf Coast 8. Recognises tourism is vital and inevitable. Balances its potential and mitigates challenges through clear policy and actions. 9. Has a strong creative and cultural sector that is a key driver of growth in jobs and output. 10. Supplies a stable workforce year-round. 11. Retains more skilled workers locally. 12. Maximise the productive capacity of our farmland for agribusiness, tourism and experiences. 13. Our reputation for innovation and entrepreneurship attracts like-minded investment 14. Non-traditional sectors such as home based businesses, surfing, creative and events provide our future jobs and output. 15. Leverage the benefits that close proximity to Geelong & Melbourne offer 16. Career progression in a range of industries is available



The Strategy

This document outlines Council's role in shaping our identity to achieve the economy we need.

Vision

By 2031, The Surf Coast is prosperous and has shaped its own identity that successfully combines lifestyle, environment, business and a strong sense of place.

We want to work together with the community and stakeholders to take deliberate steps towards growing the prosperous economy we need in the Surf Coast to improve our quality of life.



Principles

There are four principles that guide the vision, the strategic areas, goals and any actions.

1. Prosperity equals quality of life for community:

- There are three parts to our economy: **People, Businesses and Place.**

Each part of the economy prospers when connected.



The success of this strategy will be measured in terms of prosperity. The things that make our lifestyle great now, can't be lost. The actions taken will be done so with a view towards achieving a better quality of life, balance and a sustainable economy.

2. Community includes residents businesses and visitors:

- There are three parts of our Community: **residents, employers and visitors.**

Each part of the community prospers when connected.



The success of this strategy will be measured in terms of prosperity. The things that make our lifestyle great now, can't be lost. The actions taken will be done so with a view towards achieving a better quality of life, balance and a sustainable economy.



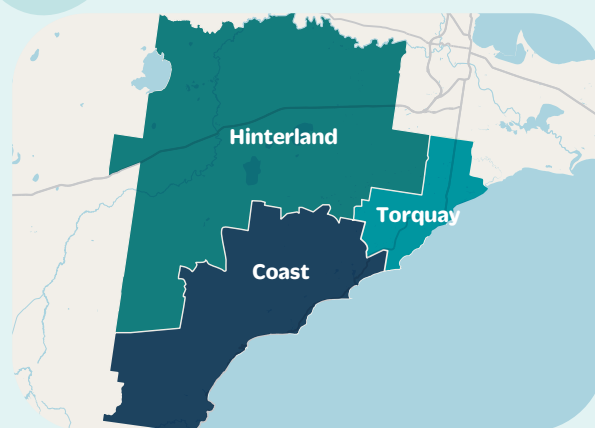
3. The natural environment has an intrinsic value that cannot be replaced by economic development.

- Our community values our connection to the natural environment. Human needs can be met in a way that sustains natural resources and the environment for future generations.

We are custodians. Our resources are finite and we need to look after our region for future generations to benefit.

4. The Surf Coast has three separate and distinct local economies

- The Surf Coast is one region with three separate and distinct sub-economies that have emerged as a result of long term growth patterns over the last 20 years. They differ in scale, population size, industry mix, growth trends and outlook. They have different challenges and opportunities that need to be understood and considered if they are to prosper.



The three areas are: **Torquay, Coast, and Hinterland.**

Their boundaries are based on the Statistical Area 2 (SA2) areas used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics to define significant urban areas and tourist regions.



Strategic Areas

The Strategy has been developed through three lenses, or strategic areas of the economy. Each of these allows a focus on a critical element of economic success.

The three strategic areas are:



Place

- The Shire is not a single place, rather it is a combination of distinct places – towns, villages, precincts and hubs, all within an amazing natural environment. Each place has a different character and identity. People live, work and visit these places and they have great meaning for the community.



People

- Nothing happens without people who are inspired, talented, experienced, supportive and willing to invest time and money. People are the lifeblood. More is achieved together and cooperatively, and relationships are critical.



Business

- Successful, profitable businesses are the cornerstones of the economy. Existing, new and emerging businesses will drive regional prosperity. They will attract desired and complementary investment and create jobs. They allow residents to maintain their Surf Coast lifestyle.

Goals have been developed to summarise actions that will be taken under these three strategic areas to support the economy we need.

Strategic Areas:

Place 	People 	Business 
Goals		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Events that create a sense of place, community connection and thriving businesses 2. Connected and inspiring Places 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Slow and purposeful tourism 2. Our culture and identity is shared and celebrated 3. Jobs for current and future generations 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A thriving, connected business network 2. A destination of choice for emerging and innovative industries 3. An economy with a conscience

Actions are listed on the following pages under each of the goals.

They are reasonably broad and describe Council's efforts to deliver the economic development strategy over the next 3-5 years.

The Strategy is designed to propel the Surf Coast Shire economy into the future for the next ten years.

During that time, we can expect more change, both incremental and disruptive. The Strategy must be strong, but flexible. It has 2 horizons. The detail of this strategy and actions focuses on the critical next 5 years.

• Years 1-5

Recovery from Covid-19 and setting a new direction and foundations for the economy we need. The actions proposed for this 5-year period will build the foundations for a prosperous longer-term future and recognise opportunities that need nurturing.

• Years 6-10

Reviewing and taking the next steps towards a resilient economy. This period would see a consolidation of the gains in the local economies from the first phase and the driving of growth in new and emerging industries.

After this time, there will be a review point. The strategic areas and goals are expected to remain the same, however the actions might be adjusted in response to new opportunities and challenges.

An implementation plan will be developed as an internal Council document capturing the actions we're committed to in any given year.



Actions are listed on the following pages under each of the goals.

They are reasonably broad and describe Council's efforts to deliver the economic development strategy over the next 3-5 years.

Measures of economic success



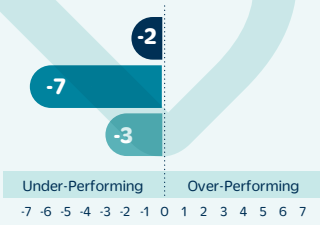

How do we measure prosperity?

In achieving the vision, the following measures will help to track our progress towards the economy we need.

They involve achieving slower and more meaningful tourism and ensuring job creation occurs in the emerging sectors where we believe there will be greatest benefit for the economy, community and environment.

The measures focus mostly on increased yield (benefit) from the activities delivered to support a better quality of life on the Surf Coast.

Several measures are new and benchmarks need to be established. This is especially true for choosing a benchmark to measure environmental / climate action from an economic perspective. These new measures of success for the economy will be finalised in the next 12-18 months.

Strategic Area	2021	By 2026	By 2031
People 	There are 9,300 jobs in the Surf Coast Domestic overnight visitation represents 38% of the total share of tourism visitation	The Surf Coast accommodates 10,100 jobs Domestic overnight visitation has risen to 40% of the total share of tourism visitation	The Surf Coast accommodates 10,800 jobs Domestic overnight visitation has risen to 42% of the total share of tourism visitation
Place 	Establish a benchmark for direct economic benefit for events Audience reach for major events is 12 million people 'People Place Future' Score community values are not matching current performance in the Strategic Areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People (-2), • Place (-7) and • Business (-3) 	Increased direct economic benefit of events by 10% Audience reach is increased by 5% Scores in all three Strategic Areas are -3 or better.	Increased direct economic benefit of events by 10% Audience reach is increased by a further 5% Scores in all three Strategic Areas are 0 or better. (meaning performance matches expectation)
			
Business 	Significance in contribution of emerging industries and non-traditional sectors established Establish a benchmark for measuring environmental/climate action from an economic perspective	The proportion of emerging industries and non-traditional sectors has increased by 5% of the total business mix. Surf Coast is recognised nationally for its sustainable economic leadership with a growing number of BCorp enterprises.	The proportion of emerging industries and non-traditional sectors has increased by 10% of the total business mix. Surf Coast has achieved an international standard in environmental accreditation for the economy

Place



Goal 1.

Events that create a sense of place, community connection and thriving businesses

Events on the Surf Coast play an integral role in creating a sense of place, inspiration, fun, pride, vibrancy and community connectedness in our townships.

They attract visitors and sustain local economies (particularly in the off peak periods) and create purposeful, high yield visitation.

We have an enviable calendar of events that aligns with our values and celebrates our natural assets. This is supported by outdoor active, ocean, culture, food and wine and community events that reinforce the aspects that are special to our community.

We will curate and promote a calendar of events that balances the needs of community, showcases the Surf Coast and maximises the benefits to the broader region.

Action - 3-5 years

- Deliver an Event Grants Program that aligns with Surf Coast's and quantify the benefits of these events.
- Invest in major events that celebrate our identity and align with our environmental values and key event strengths of surfing, trails, arts, food and community.
- Develop case studies to showcase the strengths of Surf Coast as a major event hosting destination.
- Identify event acquisition opportunities and secure a minimum of 2 additional national or international level off peak season events by 2026
- Good calendar management for events to encourage off-peak visitation.
- Leverage major events to increase the awareness of Surf Coast as a visitor destination including use of the Surf Coast Events platform.

Goal 2.

Connected and inspiring places

Our lifestyle is a key factor to prosperity on the Surf Coast. It is defined in part by our love of the natural environment and active, outdoor lifestyle.

Our public places and spaces can enhance our livability through integrated planning and a focus on equity of access and quality delivery. Space is limited so we need to make the best use of what we have.

Important attributes of place are: look and function, a sense of welcome, things to do, uniqueness and care. We need public meeting places that welcome residents, businesses, workers or visitors. Places that are well planned to support rich multi-layered experiences for shopping, dining, events, meeting-up and adventure.

Connections between these places will reduce our reliance on cars, encourage incidental exercise and promote the use of alternative transport within our desired 20 minute neighbourhoods. Well planned, multi-functional and high-traffic areas will take pressure off environmentally sensitive areas and improve overall connectivity and accessibility.

We will seek to have influence over planning, infrastructure, management, activation and wayfinding to deliver and promote great places and spaces.

Action - 3-5 years

- Develop thriving precincts within towns, in collaboration across Council and other agencies such as GORCAPA that support and connect the whole community to live, visit and play.
- Influence, develop and cost 'shovel ready' projects in our public realm and town centres to maximise potential grant funding opportunities.
- Invest in our pathways and off road infrastructure to create better connectivity between our homes, employment precincts, schools and key visitor destinations.
- Deliver high quality, place-appropriate infrastructure for our active outdoor lifestyle including:
 - o Prioritising the Surf Coast Walk and Anglesea MTB Trails identified in the Barwon South West Regional Trails Master Plan 2009.
 - o Designing open spaces and infrastructure with the flexibility to accommodate community and major events.
 - o Tourism products and experiences to support hinterland and off-peak visitation such as the Sea to Tree Horse Riding Trail.
- Deliver the Hinterland Futures Strategy and G21 Sustainable Agribusiness Strategy

People



Goal 1.

Slow and purposeful tourism

Tourism is a cornerstone to our economy and business creating and sustaining thousands of jobs.

Sustainable tourism is purposeful and benefits the destination and visitor. This type of tourism prioritises length of stay and authentic experience over mass visitation.

Effective visitor servicing connects people to places – sharing great quality, authentic experiences of our region. This in turn fosters a greater appreciation and respect for place.

We will manage the busy periods and encourage people to visit outside of peak times, to spend more and stay locally, helping preserve the lifestyle that attracted our residents. This will strike a balance between the benefits and the impacts of tourism.

Action - 3-5 years

- Implement a visitor servicing strategy with a focus on provision of digital visitor information and provide key information products online and in print.
- Invest in niche tourism marketing targeting audiences in the dreaming and planning phases of their journey, focused on our nature-based, event and cultural experiences to attract visitors for longer stays in region outside of peak times.
- Work in partnership with relevant organisations such as Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority (GORCPA) and Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism (GORT) for positive tourism outcomes at the State and Federal levels – including identifying pressure on infrastructure caused by day tour operators.
- Support tourism opportunities that deliver a quality, low impact, year-round experience, such as our nationally significant stories – the Australian National Surfing Museum (Torquay) and Great Ocean Road Heritage Centre (Lorne).

Goal 2.

Our culture and identity is shared and celebrated

The Surf Coast community has distinct values. Our connections with surfing and the natural environment, together with our focus on arts, health and wellbeing inspires our community. We have a history of innovation expressed through successful businesses including Bellroy, XTM, Yogi Peace Club and Rip Curl.

Our talented and creative people care deeply about our region and the stories we tell.

We will recognise our strengths and foster new talent to create future pathways for business and community connection.

We will provide opportunities and places for people to engage with and express their culture and creativity.

Action - 3-5 years

- Operate nationally significant stories at the Australian National Surfing Museum and Great Ocean Road Story to celebrate and promote the history and identity of the Surf Coast.
- Support the development of the Torquay Library and Cultural Facility to become the region's major cultural hub, supporting local creative industries, and as a tourism product and council asset telling regionally and nationally significant stories.
- Advocate for and deliver closer engagement with the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation and the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation representatives regarding tourism and cultural interpretation and celebration.
- Support the development of policy that allows greater investment into the creative sector and trial programs that encourage collaboration between businesses, public spaces, cultural and creative practitioners.

People



Goal 3.

Jobs for current and future generations

In order to maintain our quality of life as it is now, we need to create more local jobs. This will prevent more residents from having to travel outside of Surf Coast for work and career progression.

Geelong remains an important connection for education and workers.

Covid-19 has brought forward flexibility in workplace arrangements and new ways of working which may allow us to retain more skilled workers locally.

We will ensure that there is good connection between education providers and local businesses.

We will help deliver projects that create year round jobs for our community in the right places and sectors.

This will create opportunities for the next generation to develop careers locally.

Action - 3-5 years

- Secure key projects that generate year round employment opportunities in key sub economy sectors of agriculture, tourism, professional services, co working and health.
- Develop advocacy documents that support the need for job creating enabling infrastructure such as high speed broadband services and recycled water infrastructure.
- Facilitate links between education providers and business to create more local job opportunities for young people.
- Ensure adequately zoned land to cater for local business scale up, job creation requirements in our townships and the evolving needs of our emerging industries and businesses.



Covid-19 has brought forward flexibility in workplace arrangements and new ways of working which may allow us to retain more skilled workers locally.

Business



Goal 1.

An economy with a conscience

Many local businesses share a strong value set based around social, ethical, corporate and environmental responsibility. This reflects many of the key values of the broader community.

A key attractor for businesses to this region is the natural environment and lifestyle. We can't stuff it up.

We want to set in motion a ground swell of social, sustainable and environmentally-centred businesses.

We live local and think global. The example our businesses set can make a difference and have a broader positive impact across their workers, customers, suppliers, community and environment.

Businesses can be profitable and save the planet at the same time.

We will respond to the climate emergency through all economic activities including events, visitor information and business.

We will re-set the measures of success for economic development.

This will bring us closer to the economy we need.

Action - 3-5 years

- Develop new measures of success for the economy in the next 12-18 months based on prosperity and sustainability.
- Identify opportunities to reduce commercial waste and emissions to address the climate emergency.
- Seek accreditation that benchmarks the Surf Coast environmental and sustainable economic credentials.
- Share and celebrate examples of businesses setting new standards in social, ethical, corporate and environmental responsibility.
- Achieve recognition as a sustainable events destination by a recognised accreditation program.



Goal 2.

A thriving, connected business network

Businesses in the Surf Coast can start-up, adapt, grow and stay in the Surf Coast.

Small business are the resilient backbone of the modern Australian economy and with more than 90 per cent of registered businesses on the Surf Coast being small, it is vitally important for Council to deliver programs, initiatives and support for local business to enable them to grow, employ and thrive.

The innovative identity of the Surf Coast attracts a higher-than-usual proportion of people prepared to try something new or different to turn their passion into enterprise.

Our business owners are high performing, understand the 'business of doing business' and have a strong business support network.

We will provide support programs relevant to each phase of business, reducing red-tape and improving professional development and connections to help them to do their best.

Action - 3-5 years

- Provide support for businesses to start up, adapt and thrive such as; the Business Concierge program; business training; the Surf Coast Business Collective communications; and the Inspired by Surf Coast buy-local campaign.
- Provide services that support business expansion and retention in the Surf Coast.
- Provide tailored demographic and economic research to businesses considering relocating, for business planning or grant funding applications.
- Further develop relationships with state and federal governments to add value to business related grant programs through connection and advocacy.

Business



Goal 3.

A destination of choice for emerging and innovative industries

High-value, innovation-oriented emerging industries have the greatest potential to generate enduring career opportunities and higher paying jobs for the local community.

They have great capacity to enable the shift to the economy we need, play to our strengths in knowledge-based workers and will further attract and develop a highly skilled workforce.

The Surf Coast does not have large amounts of new land available for commercial and industrial purposes so job creation must come from doing better and smarter, not by doing more.

We will recognise these niche and emerging industries as priority sectors:

- Home based businesses
- Digital Nomads
- Knowledge based professionals
- Creative Industries
- Surfing
- Health & wellness

Action - 3-5 years

- Grow our reputation as a creative, entrepreneurial and innovative region by sharing Our Economic Story and seek new collaborations within the creative, innovative and entrepreneurial sectors e.g. UNESCO.
- Progress the delivery of high speed internet to support co-working, professionals and home-based businesses.
- Develop campaigns to promote the benefits of remote working from the Surf Coast.
- Strengthen linkages between existing education and research centres and Surf Coast businesses to support innovation in research and product development.
- Understand and support new ways of meeting and working, staying agile and open to future flexible workforce demands.

Conclusion

The Surf Coast is a great place to live. It is a place blessed with unique qualities – coastal and hinterland environments, towns and villages with their own character and lifestyles.

It has a special economic ecosystem that is highly connected to the prosperity and quality of life of our community.

We have living here people with a passion for the environment and an active outdoor lifestyle. Businesses servicing local, national and international markets. A history of innovation and entrepreneurship, and a strong visitor economy.

It is, more than ever, a place where people want to live, work and visit.

It is a prosperous place.

Council has a significant role to play in shaping our identity as a shire to achieve the economy we need now and for generations to come.

Prior to the onset of Covid-19, the Surf Coast shire had developed into a \$2.7 billion regional economy, with over 9,200 local jobs. It has three distinct local economies and strong connections to Geelong and Melbourne.

The natural environment and our active outdoor lifestyle are key attractors to new investment. Both must be valued and supported.

The region has a history of creativity and innovation. This has been associated with the surf industry and now continues with new industries emerging and a next generation of entrepreneurs moving in. This includes an increasing number of people involved in creative industries such as photography, music, art and fashion and in creative services such as graphic design, architecture and product design.

The current crop of emerging businesses has a connection to the coastal lifestyle and active experiences. They are in several industry sectors including: Food and drink production, wellness, active outdoor products and experiences, fashion, design and digital content.

The Surf Coast community values this regional context. The natural environment and lifestyle, the sense of connection and working together, the tradition of creativity and innovation and the opportunity to access local and global markets.

Ultimately, we want to strike the right balance where we continue to see innovative local businesses and skilled people with great job opportunities – all while retaining the coastal character and hinterland charm that our towns and communities are renowned for.

We need to carefully plan now for the future we want to see - to ensure everyone in the community enjoys prosperity, while allowing us to grow in a sustainable way.



“Local economic development is a way to build up the economic capacity of an area in order to improve quality of life”

- World Bank