

Yarra Economic Development Strategy 2026-2030

Stakeholder Engagement Report (FINAL)

Prepared by Urban Enterprise for Yarra City Council

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Acknowledgment of Country

Yarra City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and true sovereigns of the land now known as Yarra. We also acknowledge the significant contributions made by other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to life in Yarra. We pay our respects to Elders from all nations - and to their Elders past, present and future.

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Executive Summary

Overview

The Yarra City Council *Stakeholder Engagement Report* provides a summary of all engagement activities undertaken to support the development of the municipal-wide *Economic Development Strategy 2026-2030 (Strategy)*. This report reflects all stakeholder input – including business, community, industry, government and Council representatives.

The outcomes of this report, together with the *Background Report*, provides the evidence base to support the *Yarra Economic Development Strategy 2026-2030*.

Engagement Activities

Engagement occurred from June to October 2025, including a combination of Council workshops, industry workshops and broad community engagement through an online survey on the Your Say Yarra engagement platform. A total of 163 stakeholders participated in this engagement, as summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Engagement Undertaken

Activity	Format	Participants
Council Workshop	In-person workshop	28
7x Industry Workshops	Online workshop	30
Councillor Workshop	In-person	7
Broad Community Engagement	Online survey	98 responses

Summary of What We Heard

Key insights from the workshops and surveys are summarised below (with greater detail provided throughout the report).

Workshop Findings

The outcomes from the workshops (including Council, Industry and Councillor workshops) focused on obtaining stakeholder insights as related to the areas of focus included in the *Yarra Economic Development Strategy Background Report*. Outcomes from the workshops have been categorised by these focus areas – which are summarised below.

Community Wellbeing and Local Workforce Development

Supporting residents and workers in Yarra is critical for economic development. The primary concern of stakeholders is ensuring equitable access to services and infrastructure (including housing), which will support both social and economic inclusion. Additionally, encouraging education, training and skills opportunities for the workforce will support industry as well as improve employment outcomes for residents and workers.

Active and Connected Precincts and Places

Places and precincts in Yarra are facing critical challenges impacting utilisation and economic activity – including perception of safety, regulatory burdens, as well as the impact of broader economic conditions. Stakeholders identified the need for Council to support small businesses across retail shopping strips, particularly hospitality, retail and live music venues, as these contribute to the economic vibrancy and character of Yarra. Measures to activate activity centres and employment precincts, including through promotion, design, placemaking and events, were recognised as key opportunities to support the economic and social contribution of Yarra's places.

A Productive and Knowledgeable Business Community

Yarra is home to a specialised industry base – including creative and innovative industries, industrial, as well as key health, education and professional services. This provides a competitive advantage that should be leveraged to encourage business growth and development. Council support is needed to help address issues facing the business base and to encourage business productivity, sustainability and resilience. This includes providing direct support that promotes business investment, fostering business engagement and encouraging partnerships to create a connected and knowledgeable business base.

Broad Community Engagement Outcomes

The broad community engagement was conducted by Council and focused on obtaining general responses from the public to inform future economic development in Yarra. This engagement process attracted 98 responses, including businesses (N=55) and community members (N=43). The key survey outcomes, which focus on Council priorities to achieve economic growth, are summarised in Table 2. These findings demonstrate the following:

- Yarra's activity centres are a priority focus area for both businesses and community, reflecting the importance of places for both the economy as well as supporting liveability outcomes.
- Council initiatives to activate precincts and places (through events and placemaking activities) is a common theme articulated by businesses and community members, including creation of clean, safe spaces that encourages utilisation and investment.
- Supporting business growth and development, through policy efficiencies and provision of business support, is also a key priority for economic development.
- Enhancing Yarra's role as a hub for innovation and entrepreneurial activities was also identified as a key focus area and is a competitive advantage that should be leveraged to achieve positive economic outcomes.

Table 2. Summary Survey Outcomes

	Priority Areas for Council to help create a 'vibrant and thriving economy' (top 3)	Actions that Council could take to improve the local economy (top 3)
Business Responses	- Strengthening Yarra's main streets, through improved amenity, to attract more people to visit, spend time and shop. - Supporting and encouraging innovative and entrepreneurial activities. - Growing and protecting local creative industries and strengthen Yarra as a destination for arts and culture.	- Visitor attraction and visitor economy development. - Events and activation of precincts and places. - Policy and governance reform to support planning and development.
Community Responses	- Strengthening Yarra's main streets, through improved amenity, to attract more people to visit, spend time and shop. - Growing the night-time economy by managing safety and amenity challenges and supporting our live music venues. - Growing and protecting local creative industries and strengthen Yarra as a destination for arts and culture.	- Events and activation of precincts and places. - Precinct cleaning and waste management. - Rental reform to support housing affordability.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background and Scope

The Yarra City Council *Economic Development Strategy 2026-2030 (Strategy) Stakeholder Engagement Report* provides a summary of all engagement activities undertaken to support the development of the municipal-wide Strategy.

This report reflects all stakeholder input – including business, community, industry, government and Council representatives – to achieve the following outcomes:

- Examine the key findings and emerging themes from the *Yarra Economic Development Strategy Background Report* (prepared between July to November 2025);
- Gather strategic and localised insights into the issues, opportunities and priorities for the local Yarra economy;
- Ensure the Strategy reflects the needs and aspirations of all relevant stakeholders; and
- Help shape the strategic directions and actions that will inform the Strategy.

The outcomes of this report, together with the *Background Report*, provides the evidence base to support the *Yarra Economic Development Strategy 2026-2030*.

1.2. Report Structure

The Stakeholder Engagement report was prepared using the following approach:

Table 3. Report Structure

Stage	Description
Engagement Process	- Overview of engagement activities undertaken, including stakeholder groups that were consulted. - Summary of engagement topics and discussion points used to elicit stakeholder insights.
Workshop Findings	- Overview of engagement method and approach. - Feedback on emerging considerations and areas of focus identified in the Background Report. - Stakeholder insights and considerations with regards to economic development in Yarra.
Broad Community Engagement Outcomes	- Overview of survey structure and questions. - Summarise outcomes from business and community respondents. - Identify strategic considerations to inform the development of the EDS.

2. Engagement Process

2.1. Overview

This section summarises the engagement activities and approach undertaken with key stakeholder to obtain input to support economic development outcomes for the City of Yarra.

2.2. Engagement Undertaken

The stakeholder engagement occurred across September and October 2025, including a variety of workshops, as well as an online business and community survey (refer Table 4). A total of 163 stakeholders were reached.

Table 4. Engagement Undertaken

Activity	Description	Format	Participants
Council Workshop	1x in person workshop with Council officers from a variety of internal Council departments.	In-person workshop	28
7x Industry Workshops	Online workshops with key representatives, including: - M9 - Health - Creative, Arts and Digital Business - Traders Associations - Yarra Liquor Forum - Sustainable Business Collective	Online workshop	30
Councillor Workshop	Council officers conducted 7x one-on-one interviews with Councillors.	In-person	7
Broad Community Engagement	1x online survey open for 5 weeks via the Your Say Yarra platform. This includes: - Direct outreach by Council's Economic Development team; and - Direct engagement from staff members with individual traders through one-on-one visits to businesses in key precincts.	Online survey and in-person outreach	98 responses

Note: For confidentiality, individual businesses, business groups and business owners are not individually listed in this report.

Workshops

There were a total of 65 participants across all workshops sessions, comprising business owners, industry representatives, community members, government and Council representatives.

The workshop findings are provided in Section 3 of this report.

Broad Community Engagement

The broad community engagement was conducted through Council's *Your Say Yarra* online platform. This survey was promoted broadly to the community and businesses through Council's communications channels and directly to businesses by Council staff members through one-on-one visits to businesses in key precincts.

The survey received 98 responses, capturing broader community and industry input.

The survey outcomes findings are provided in Section 4 of this report.

3. Workshop Findings

3.1. Overview

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

3.2. Method and Approach

The engagement sessions sought to both inform key stakeholders of the role of economic development in the City of Yarra and call for insights to help shape the strategy. The material presented and discussed is summarised below.

Background and Approach

- An overview of the Economic Development Strategy scope of works;
- A summary of the project approach and stages undertaken by Council and Urban Enterprise; and
- Defining Economic Development and articulating the role of Local Government in pursuing and achieving economic development outcomes.

Context and Key Findings

A summary of key findings from the Background Report, including:

- The key assets and attributes of the municipality (e.g. activity centre network);
- The broader macroeconomic context and implications for the local economy; and
- The local economic, industry and population/workforce factors impacting economic development in Yarra.

Areas of Focus

The emerging economic development areas of focus (identified in the Background Report) were presented at each workshop, with stakeholder findings/insights categorised according to each area, to inform the strategic directions of the Economic Development Strategy (see Table 5).

Table 5. Yarra Economic Development Strategy – Areas of Focus

Community Wellbeing and Local Workforce Development
Supporting resident liveability through improving social equity and ensuring access to employment opportunities is critical for economic development. This includes providing access to services, infrastructure and education/skills, which will improve economic outcomes for residents and generate flow-on economic benefits for local businesses
Active and Connected Precincts
Yarra has a thriving network of activity centres and employment precincts – including a mix of commercial and industrial clusters. These areas support anchor institutions (e.g. hospitals and tertiary facilities) drive the economy, promote investment and provide local amenity and services. Supporting the activation and development of these ‘places’ as attractive destinations – where people want to live, work and play – will achieve economic development outcomes through increased utilisation, local consumption, business investment and employment. It will also foster community engagement and improve the social equity of residents.
A Productive and Knowledgeable Business Community
With a range of industry specialisations, including strengths in Professional Services, Knowledge-Based Sectors, Population-Driven Sectors, Manufacturing & Industrial, as well as Creative and Innovative Sectors, Yarra is well-positioned to attract and support diverse businesses. Leveraging its existing infrastructure, as well as access to labour and consumption markets across inner-metropolitan Melbourne, Yarra could continue to be a hub for business innovation, creativity as well as professional services. Business activity and investment is critical for economic development, as it supports job creation, investment in complementary sectors (e.g. retail, hospitality) and generates local consumption

Discussion Points

Stakeholder responses were gathered for each of the following discussion points (as they relate to the above focus areas):

- **Challenges:** What are the key barriers and issues facing the local economy?
- **Opportunities:** What are the opportunities to support and develop the local economy?
- **Role of Council and Stakeholders:** What should be the role of Council in supporting economic development outcomes? What are the future partnership and collaboration opportunities with Council?
- **Priorities:** What are the top priorities and outcomes you would like to see result from the Economic Development Strategy?

3.3. What We Heard

The workshop findings were subsequently categorised according to the *Challenges, Opportunities, Role of Council and Stakeholders* and *Priorities* for each of the areas of focus detailed in the Background Report. These are summarised below.

This information provides a synthesis of key points and outcomes identified by stakeholders during the engagement process. Individual statements have been amalgamated and categorised where appropriate. Key considerations for each focus area have also been provided to demonstrate the alignment to economic development, as well as articulate the implications for Strategy development and implementation.

Community Wellbeing and Local Workforce Development

Summary Findings

Supporting residents and workers in Yarra is critical for economic development. The primary concern of stakeholders is ensuring equitable access to services and infrastructure (including housing), which will support both social and economic inclusion. Additionally, encouraging education, training and skills opportunities for the workforce will support industry as well as improve employment outcomes for residents and workers.

Detailed Stakeholder Insights

Table 6 summarises the key outcomes and insights provided by stakeholders relating to this area of focus.

Table 6. Stakeholder Insights – Community Wellbeing and Local Workforce Development

Challenges
- Transport connectivity: There is limited transport connectivity both across Yarra and with neighbouring LGAs, particularly for north-south connections, which impacts accessibility for workers and residents. - Housing affordability and service delivery: Housing affordability is a key challenge, along with the provision of key worker housing. Decommissioning of public housing have also impacted service delivery for disadvantaged groups. - Safety concerns: Safety concerns for staff and patrons amid perceptions of crime, as well as concerns associated with homelessness throughout the community. Managing the safety impacts of concentrated construction activity in the pockets of the municipality was also raised. - Cost of living: High cost of living affecting the spending capacity (and confidence) of consumers and businesses.
Opportunities
- Advocacy for funding support: Potential to advocate for government funding and infrastructure support for residents and workers, including advocating for housing development to attract and retain talent. - Training and professional development: Training, upskilling and professional development for traders to support business growth and development. - Student retention and employment: Focus on retaining TAFE students within Yarra – through creation of youth employment opportunities – and increase dwell time of students in activity centres to promote location consumption.
Role of Council and Stakeholders
- Advocate for key issues: Advocate for key worker housing, community safety, enabling infrastructure, transport connectivity, precinct-specific funding and cost of living relief. - Facilitate training opportunities: Create opportunities for traditionally underrepresented cohorts to have equal access to training and upskilling. - Public amenities: Provision of amenities within new developments, such as public toilets, open spaces and public realm. - Road improvements: Improve road infrastructure to better cope with projected population growth and future development projects.
Priorities
- Community safety: Improve community safety and target crime reduction. Support marginalised communities through strategic partnerships. - Training and employment initiatives: Investment in workforce training and professional development initiatives. Bolster youth employment opportunities and target positive outcomes for youth. - Waste management: Focus on waste management and minimisation, including consolidated waste collection. - Enabling infrastructure: Advocate for enabling infrastructure and position Yarra, along with neighbouring inner-metropolitan Councils, as a growth region to unlock funding.

Key Considerations for the Economic Development Strategy

The following considerations reflect summary outcomes from the workshops and provide the qualitative evidence base that informs the strategic directions and themes in the Economic Development Strategy.

- Advocating for access (and improvements) to services, infrastructure and housing will support liveability outcomes and encourage economic inclusion of residents.
- Advocating for skills training for disengaged and/or disadvantaged communities to increase employment access for all residents.
- Promoting training and development opportunities will benefit industry as well as the local workforce, ensuring they have the relevant skills to meet industry needs.
- Collaboration with research and training institutions is critical to identify workforce trends and future skills required to support an innovative and future-focused economy.
- Engaging with local schools, tertiary institutions, businesses and employment providers to identify opportunities to further develop skills across younger aged cohorts (particularly in line with industry needs).

Active and Connected Precincts

Summary Findings

Places and precincts in Yarra are facing critical challenges impacting utilisation and economic activity – including perception of safety, regulatory burdens, as well as the impact of broader economic conditions. Stakeholders identified the need for Council to support small businesses across retail shopping strips, particularly hospitality, retail and live music venues, as these contribute to the economic vibrancy and character of Yarra.

Measures to activate activity centres and employment precincts, including through promotion, design, placemaking and events, were recognised as key opportunities to support the economic and social contribution of Yarra's places.

Detailed Stakeholder Insights

Table 7 summarises the key outcomes and insights provided by stakeholders relating to this area of focus.

Table 7. Stakeholder Insights – Active and Connected Precincts

Challenges
- Safety concerns: Anti-social behaviour, crime and homelessness concerns in night-time precincts impacting utilisation and dwell times. - Infrastructure gaps: Notable infrastructure gaps, particularly surrounding drainage and transport. Ageing infrastructure in key health and education precincts also limits activation potential. - Planning scheme challenges: Planning constraints on small venues and limited planning support for some businesses impacts business investment and activity. - Retail challenges: Ageing shopfronts and limited retail diversity in activity centres, coupled lack of retail anchors in some precincts, limiting retail growth. - High operating costs: Businesses face high operating costs and compliance burdens. - Live music pressures: Noise complaints and broader economic pressures impacting live music venues.
Opportunities
- Support for live music venues: Council support for live music venues through policy instruments and planning support. - Car parking reform: Investigate car parking around the municipality, including accessibility around retail precincts. - Targeted strategic planning: Strategically plan for the growth and development of key health and education precincts to attract further talent and investment. - Beautification and streetscape improvements: Placemaking interventions to improve safety and increase greenery within activity centres. Design streetscapes according to individual precinct culture. Consider pet-friendly spaces and further develop bicycle infrastructure. Activate shopfronts with artwork. - Marketing initiatives: Marketing precinct-specific strengths and encouraging cross-precinct collaboration for events and activations. - Strategic planning: Investigate strategic planning opportunities for smaller and neighbourhood activity centres. - Business incentives: Provide incentives for businesses to start up or move into activity centre precincts, including pop-up trials in vacant shopfronts. - Community safety: Conduct safety audits in local streets to support neighbourhood activity centres and markets. - Retail and hospitality activation: Encourage new casual food and drink establishments, along with complementary services in health and education precincts. - Business start-up support: Investigate how to make it easier to set up, start up and operate a business in Yarra.
Role of Council and Stakeholders
- Marketing: Encourage development of underutilised areas and precincts across Yarra. Clear communication of future activity centre growth and associated positive outcomes. Support a 'hub' approach to activity centres. - Advocacy: Advocate to state and federal government for funding and infrastructure improvements. - Placemaking: Adopt placemaking initiatives to activate key precincts and places, encouraging utilisation, investment as well as local consumption.
Priorities
- Attract users to commercial precincts: Support marketing and promotion efforts across the municipality and market key precincts to attract local and visitor utilisation. - Encourage events and activations: Streamline planning approvals, particularly for regular events/activations. - Waste management: Council adopting responsibility for waste from businesses and improving waste minimisation. - Beautification: implementing beautification and streetscape improvement measures, including graffiti management. - Increase 'stickiness': Through measures such as beautification, waste management and precinct activation, aim to increase visitor dwell time and encourage greater visitor spend such that activity centres evolve beyond thoroughfares. - Funding advocacy: Advocate for precinct-specific funding.

Key Considerations for the Economic Development Strategy

- Promoting and supporting the activation of activity centres is needed to achieve increased utilisation, attract investment, generate local consumption and enhance community engagement
- Creating safe, clean and vibrant places also enhances the liveability of Yarra and provides amenity (inc. services, infrastructure, housing and leisure) that supports residents, visitors and workers.
- Encouraging a mix of uses, including residential, commercial, industrial and other civic services will cater to the needs of residents, as well as a diverse range of consumers.
- Advocating for investment in key enabling infrastructure (e.g. transport) will improve accessibility and utilisation of activity centres.
- Placemaking is key to the vibrancy of places in Yarra, including through design, events/activities and improved public realm.
- Providing businesses with the tools to maintain and improve local precincts will support Council efforts.

A Productive and Knowledgeable Business Community

Summary Findings

Yarra is home to a specialised industry base – including creative and innovative industries, industrial, as well as key health, education and professional services. This provides a competitive advantage that should be leveraged to encourage business growth and development. Council support is needed to help address issues facing the business base and to encourage business productivity, sustainability and resilience. This includes providing direct support that promotes business investment, fostering business engagement and encouraging partnerships to create a connected and knowledgeable business base.

Detailed Stakeholder Insights

Table 8 summarises the key outcomes and insights provided by stakeholders relating to this area of focus.

Table 8. Stakeholder Insights – A Productive and Knowledgeable Business Community

Challenges
- Inter-Council competition: Competitive dynamics between Yarra and neighbouring Councils for workers and customers. - Operational and permit costs: Rising rates and other pressures including insurance costs, regulatory compliance and land tax impacting the viability of creative businesses and live music venues. - Digital adoption: Limited digital presence for some traders and challenges in generational transition for family businesses. - Skilled workforce demand. Businesses accessing skilled workers is a key challenge, particularly where there is high demand for technical and educated workers. - Economic conditions. Businesses are facing the effects of broader economic conditions that are impacting consumption, as well as business confidence, which is impacting the business activity and resilience.
Opportunities
- External partnerships: Cultivate stronger partnerships with neighbouring Councils, government departments, industry peak bodies, education providers and event companies. - Climate grants: Opportunities to target grants and funding in climate change and sustainability spaces. - Health technology specialisations: Leverage existing assets to attract investment in health technologies and innovation. Could involve greater collaboration with universities and hospitals. - Planning concierge: Improve the function of the planning concierge role within Council and encourage businesses to better utilise this existing service. - Planning reforms: Streamline planning approvals to encourage business investment and development. - Circular economy: Support circular economy initiatives to create a more sustainable and productive business base. - Local procurement: Focus on local procurement and other sustainable procurement measures to support local businesses.
Role of Council and Stakeholders
- Support for diversity: Support a diverse business community, which in turn can cater to the needs of diverse consumers. - Networking: Cultivate new networks among existing businesses in Yarra to encourage business development and knowledge-sharing, as well as to identify key issues and opportunities for business to grow. - Business conduit: Council functions as a conduit for businesses, including promotion of B2B connections. Council can also leverage the concierge role to support small business growth and development. - Interpretation: Celebrate the uniqueness of Yarra's businesses through storytelling, such as promoting iconic landmarks and spaces across the municipality.
Priorities
- Business support: Support small and medium businesses and creative industries. - Goal alignment: Align planning and innovation goals across the health precinct. - Creative industry support: Provide support for creative businesses and live music venues. - Business attraction: Engage in targeted attraction of businesses and industries and focus on small and medium businesses. Ensure that commercial areas are home to a mix of businesses (and uses) that cater to their surrounding areas. - Sustainability initiatives: Design and promote Council-led sustainability initiatives backed by stakeholder engagement.

Key Considerations for the Economic Development Strategy

- Targeted support for the large volume of non-employing/small businesses will enable business growth and development – including business engagement, networking and training to promote business resilience, productivity and growth.
- Attracting new, innovative and diverse industry sectors that are suited to Yarra will support investment, employment growth and diversity. Include targeting of those industries that can add-value or leverage existing strengths.
- Providing a more conducive environment for business development and investment is important, including through business support, streamlining planning support and other investment attraction mechanisms.
- Coordinating and enhancing Council representation across industry groups and government agencies will foster information-sharing on economic development priorities and highlight opportunities for collaboration.
- Encouraging the sustainability of the business and resident base, through promotion and adoption of circular economy practices, will ensure business growth and development also aligns with environmental outcomes.

4. Survey Outcomes

4.1. Overview

Alongside the workshops, Council ran a broad community engagement with businesses and community through the Your Say Yarra online engagement platform. This engagement was conducted prior to the development of the Background Report and focused on general responses to economic development priorities for Council consideration and action.

The broad community consultation was open for five weeks between Monday 16 June and Monday 21 July 2025. During the consultation, the Your Say Yarra page was seen more than 1,600 times by more than 1000 unique visitors and promoted through the following channels:

- Social media channels (including social media advertisements) reaching over 22,000 people.
- Council email newsletters including Yarra Life, Your Say Yarra email newsletter, Yarra Business News and the Sustainable Business email newsletter. This reached almost 28,000 subscribers.
- Promoted via Yarra News which is distributed to every household in Yarra (over 60,000 properties).
- News story on Yarra City Council's website and promoted on the homepage.
- Postcards and posters available at events and postcards were distributed to 23 Council venues. These include town halls, neighbourhood houses, seniors' centres, libraries and leisure centres.
- Direct outreach by Council's Economic Development team. Staff members engaged directly with individual traders through one-on-one visits to businesses in key precincts. Businesses visited were provided the opportunity to discuss their feedback directly or provided postcards with a QR code leading them back to the Your Say Yarra page with instructions on how to participate online.
- Outreach by Councillors through precinct visits and promotion via their social media.

The outcomes and insights from the broad community engagement process are summarised below.

4.2. Broad Community Engagement Objectives

The broad community consultation had the following objectives:

1. Inform the community of Council's current work within the business space and the achievements of the previous Strategy.
2. Identify business community priorities for Council to support the development of the Strategy.
3. Gather ideas from community members on Council priorities that can be included in the Strategy.
4. Collect information from a wide range of businesses to ensure diverse perspectives are captured.

4.3. Survey Structure

The survey attracted 98 responses from both businesses (N=55) and community members (N=43). The purpose of the survey was to broadly identify the ideas and priorities of key stakeholders, to be reflected in the Economic Development Strategy.

The survey comprised of 16 questions. Participants were first asked whether they own or operate a business in Yarra.¹ Those who answered “yes” were directed to the business-specific questions, while those who answered “no” were directed to the community-specific questions. The survey questions are summarised in Table 9 below:

Table 9. Survey Questions

Group	Questions
Business questions	- As a business owner or business operator, which of the following areas do you think Council should prioritise to help create a vibrant and thriving economy? - As a business owner or business operator, what actions do you think Council could take to improve the local economy? - What industry is your business in? - Where do you operate your business from? - What is the size of your business?
Community questions	- As a community member, which of the following areas do you think Council should prioritise to help create a vibrant and thriving economy? - As a community member, what actions do you think Council could take to improve the local economy?
Demographic information	- What's your connection to Yarra? - What gender do you identify as? - What is your age range? - What suburb do you live in? - Select all that apply. I am... - o Someone who speaks a language other than English at home. - o A person who was born overseas. - o A person living with a disability. - o A member of the LGBTQIA+ community. - o Someone of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. - o None of the above. - o I prefer not to say.
Contact and preferences	- What's your email address? - I would like to receive updates about this consultation - I would like to receive email updates about other consultations in Yarra

Source: Yarra City Council, 2025.

¹ Question 1: Do you own or operate a business in Yarra?

4.4. Outcomes

The full breakdown of survey results is provided in Appendix B, with key results summarised below.

Who We Heard From

Key demographic indicators of the total 98 respondents are as follows:

- 55 respondents were business owners, with 43 respondents from community members that did not own or operate a business.
- 46% identified as a woman, 43% identified as a man and 11% identified as 'self-described' or 'preferred not to say'.
- The largest proportion of respondents were aged between 35 to 49 (34%), followed by the 60-69 years group (32%) and the 50-59 years group (15%).
- 70% of total respondents are residents within Yarra, while 30% of respondents live outside Yarra.
- The suburb with the largest representation was Richmond (24%), followed by Fitzroy (13%) and Fitzroy North (8%).
- Respondents were diverse, with 17% identifying as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, 14% born overseas, 12% speaking a language other than English at home and 7% living with a disability. There were no respondents who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Business Responses

Of the 55 responses from the business community:

- The most represented industries among respondents were Hospitality (36%) and Retail (31%), followed by Creative Business (25%) and Trades or Service Provider (11%).
- 60% of respondents operated their business from a shopfront, while 29% of respondents operated their business either from home or from a formal office space.
- Most business were small in scale, with 51% of respondents employing less than 10 staff and only 4% of respondents employing 30 or more staff.

When asked to identify **priority areas for Council to help create a 'vibrant and thriving economy'**, businesses prioritised the following:

- Strengthening Yarra's main streets, through improved amenity, to attract more people to visit, spend time and shop (67% of responses);
- Supporting and encouraging innovative and entrepreneurial activities (53%).
- Growing and protecting local creative industries and strengthen Yarra as a destination for arts and culture (51%).
- Encouraging a resilient business community through business support programs (49%).²

When asked to share open-ended ideas regarding **actions that Council could take to improve the local economy**, unique responses (some of which are provided below) were consolidated into several categories:

² Note: The count of responses totals over 100%, as businesses could select multiple responses.

Visitor attraction and visitor economy development

“Increase Yarra’s focus on tourism and the visitor economy.”

“Run marketing campaigns highlighting local precincts.”

“Brunswick Street is a well known tourist destination, and it would benefit greatly from (appealing to)... visitors.”

Events and activation of precincts and places

“I’d love to see more linger nodes in main streets to help people want to visit and hang around.”

“Provide funding or logistical support for community events that activate commercial areas—live music, markets, and school holiday programs bring families out and encourage spending locally.”

Policy and governance reform to support planning and development

“Consider co-investment and support for homeless people through housing, Mental Health support.”

“Rate subsidies for businesses providing employment in the area.”

“Rezone Cremorne to mixed use.”

Beautification and streetscape improvements

“Invest in cleaner, safer and more attractive public areas – like seating, lighting, greenery and footpaths – which encourage people to spend more time in local precincts.”

“Beautification, accessibility and greening of streets, with more public infrastructure [...] Toilets, seating, specific places for e-scooter parking, better public transport between the Arts precincts (Collingwood Yards, Abbotsford convent, and commercial galleries).”

“Encourage landlords who own vacant premises in retail strips to keep them maintained, clean and graffiti free and presentable to the street frontage.”

Parking and accessibility reform

“More pedestrian led areas, bike lanes that are attractive and stand alone.”

“Free or low-cost short term parking can make a big difference for customer access.”

“Prioritising free parking (with time limits) instead of just permit zones close to Queens Parade.”

Streamlining planning approvals processes and other planning reforms

“Remove limitation and red tape on signage.”

“Red tape needs to drop around businesses setting up and growing.”

Business support, including grants and networking initiatives

“Supporting live music and hospitality venues through grants and legislative support.”

“Develop relationships with business owners. Divide the municipality up into zones and create a contact for each zone similar to the councillors. Walk the streets and visit businesses out of busy periods.”

“Offer small business and community impact grants that support social enterprises, migrant-led businesses, and organisations focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion.”

“Provide access to free or low-cost mentoring, training, and tailored advisory services, especially for migrant and underrepresented business owners who may face unique barriers to navigating the business landscape.”

Community Responses

When community members were asked to identify **priority areas for Council to help create a ‘vibrant and thriving economy’**, the following priorities were selected (based on 43 responses):

- Strengthening Yarra’s main streets, through improved amenity, to attract more people to visit, spend time and shop (88% of responses).
- Growing the night-time economy by managing safety and amenity challenges and supporting our live music venues (60%).
- Growing and protecting local creative industries and strengthen Yarra as a destination for arts and culture (44%).
- Supporting and encouraging innovative and entrepreneurial activities (42%).
- Encouraging sustainable and circular economy business practices across Yarra (42%).³

When asked to share open-ended ideas regarding **actions that Council could take to improve the local economy**, unique responses were again compiled and categorised as follows:

Events and activation of precincts and places

“Support the night time economy. Support venues to remain and thrive.”

“Greater opportunity for creativity: street art, stalls, crafts, farmers markets.”

“Encourage more community hubs. The high streets in City of Yarra are amazing. Lets encourage people to use them more.”

Planning reform

“Rezoned to ‘mixed use’ zoning on and surrounding retail high streets and remove heritage overlays, parking minimums, and setbacks to enable easier development opportunities to progress.”

“Reduce the red tape. Reduce or remove the cost for outdoor furniture, billboards etc. Improve processes and timelines so traders are not left waiting for approvals.”

“Expand the concierge into a single front door for all business interactions with Council (planning, building, health, signage, outdoor dining.”

Parking and accessibility reform

“Car-dependence limits customer supply because cars are so space-inefficient; by discouraging cars and increasing incentives for active transport you will allow more customers to visit businesses and create an attractive point-of-difference from other suburban business precincts.”

“Car free zones and more foot paths in key business/ retail areas to encourage more people. Parking near key business areas.”

Rental reform and support for housing affordability

“Negotiate with landlords on behalf of existing and new businesses along our shopping strips to help set and keep rents viable and reasonable for a vibrant business community.”

“Maintain planning controls and provide certainty to prevent ‘expectation value’ increases in property and land values, that price out lower order users.”

³ Note: The count of responses totals over 100%, as residents could select multiple responses.

Beautification and streetscape improvements

"Maintain the characterful streetscape."

"Improve the street scape on main roads to promote residents walking down the streets where shops are located."

Encouraging business diversity

"Liaising with landlords to open their premises for start up or as creative/business incubators, especially in Queens Parade."

"Encourage diversity in after hours small business times and locations. Too many same pubs and fast food outlets."

"Get empty shops populated with artists and artisans in pop-up studios, etc."

"More opportunities for co-working and support for people who work from home. Open library is a great start. I'd love more open working hubs."

Improving safety and the quality of public spaces

"I [...] think that safer streets for pedestrians and bike riders would make a big difference in how many people shop here."

"Keep precincts clean, lights working, graffiti removed and crossings safe."

"I would like to see more focus on liveable streets, where people can walk, roll and cycle without continually having to dodge car traffic."

These findings from businesses and community members were critical in supporting the development of the strategic framework and actions for the Economic Development Strategy.

4.5. Key Considerations for the Economic Development Strategy

The following considerations are used to inform the 'strategic directions and projects' included in the Economic Development Strategy.

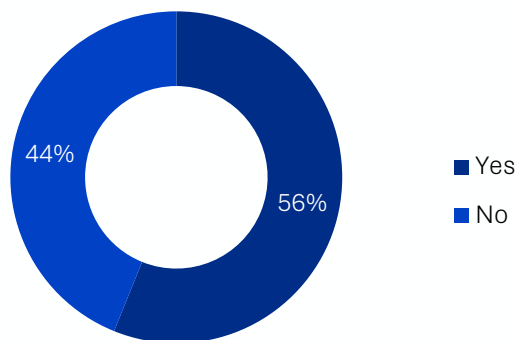
- Yarra's activity centres (e.g. shopping strips and commercial precincts) are a priority focus area for both businesses and community. This reflects the importance of places for both the economy as well as supporting liveability outcomes.
- Council initiatives to activate precincts and places (through events and placemaking activities) is a common theme shared across businesses and community members, including creation of clean, safe spaces that encourages utilisation and investment.
- Supporting business growth and development, through policy efficiencies and provision of business support, is also a key priority for economic development.
- Enhancing Yarra's role as a hub for innovation and entrepreneurial activities was also identified as a key focus area and is a competitive advantage that should be leveraged to achieve positive economic outcomes.

Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Results

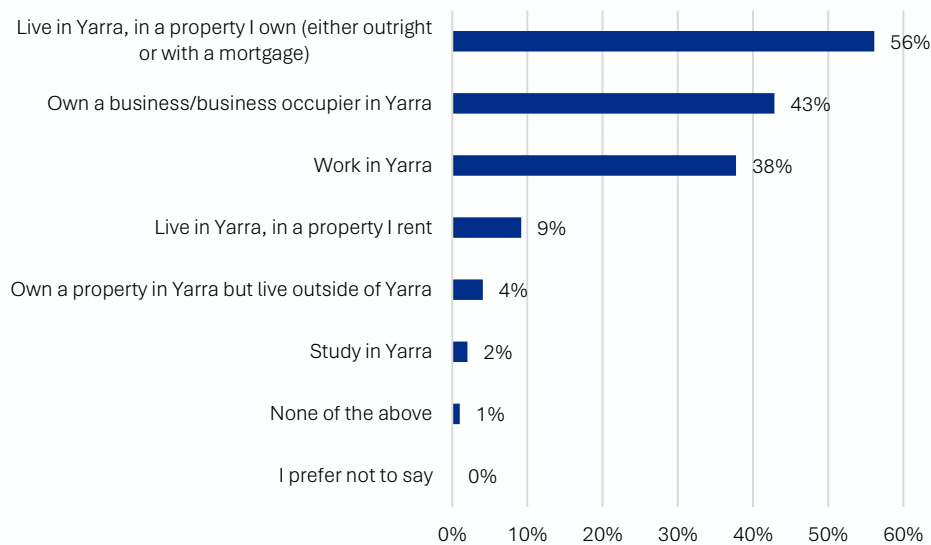
Demographic Information

Do you own or operate a business in Yarra?



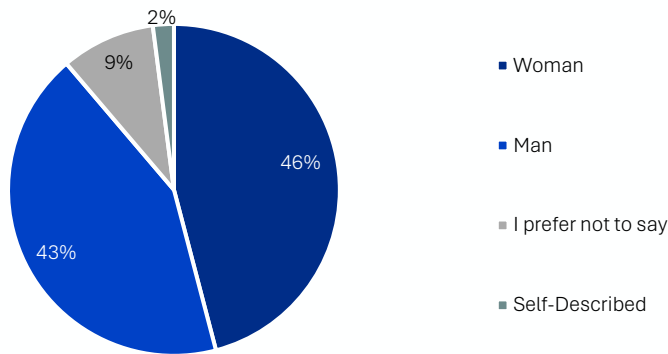
Source: Yarra City Council, *A strategy that supports our local economy*, Urban Enterprise, 2025. N=98.

What's your connection to Yarra?



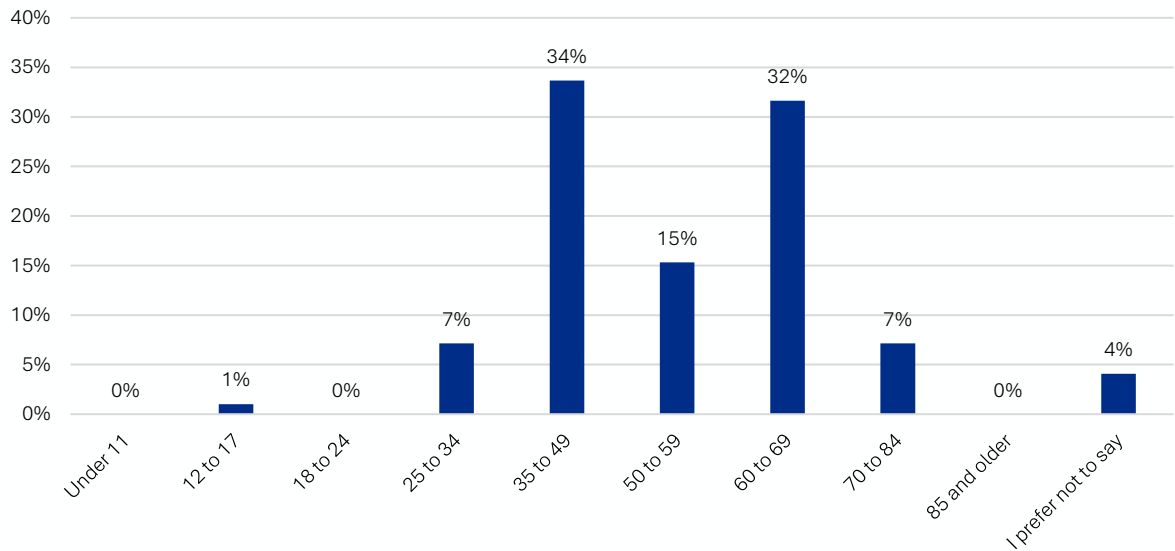
Source: Yarra City Council, *A strategy that supports our local economy*, Urban Enterprise, 2025. N=98.

What gender do you identify as?



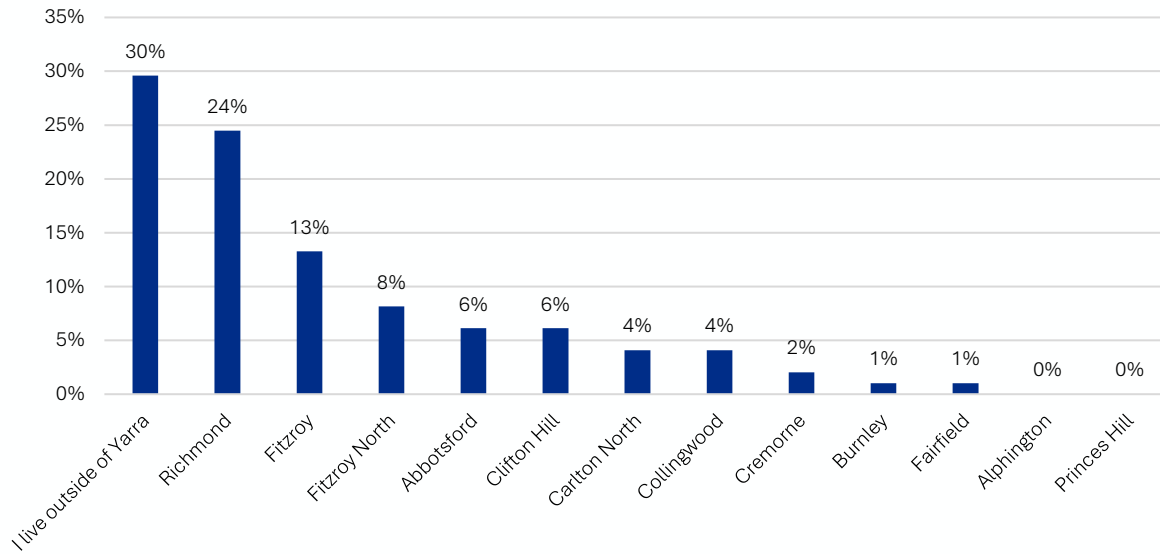
Source: Yarra City Council, *A strategy that supports our local economy*, Urban Enterprise, 2025. N=98.

What is your age range?



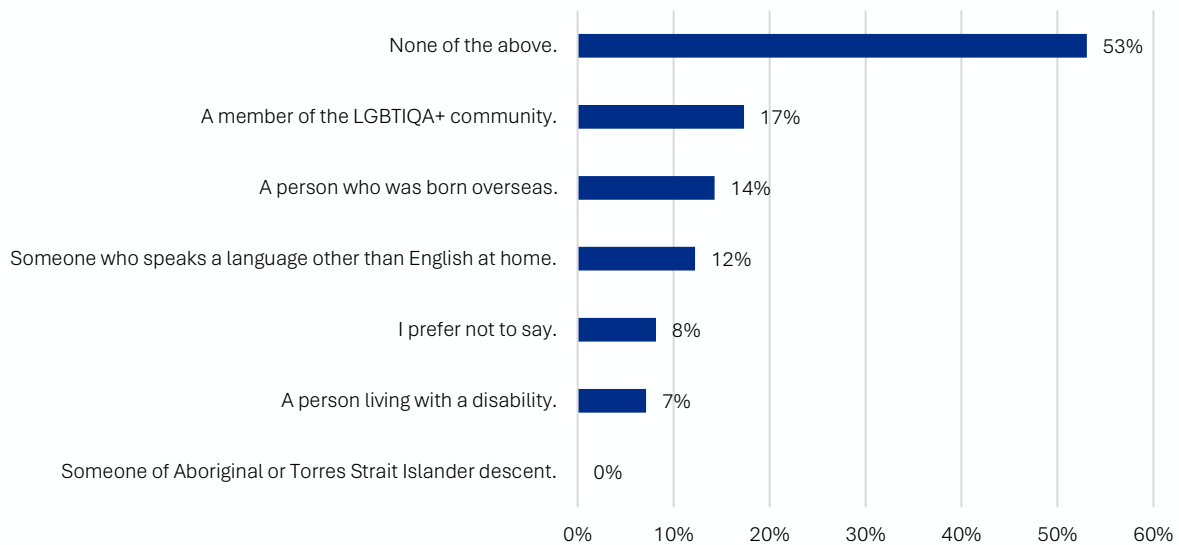
Source: Yarra City Council, *A strategy that supports our local economy*, Urban Enterprise, 2025. N=98.

What suburb do you live in?



Source: Yarra City Council, *A strategy that supports our local economy*, Urban Enterprise, 2025. N=98.

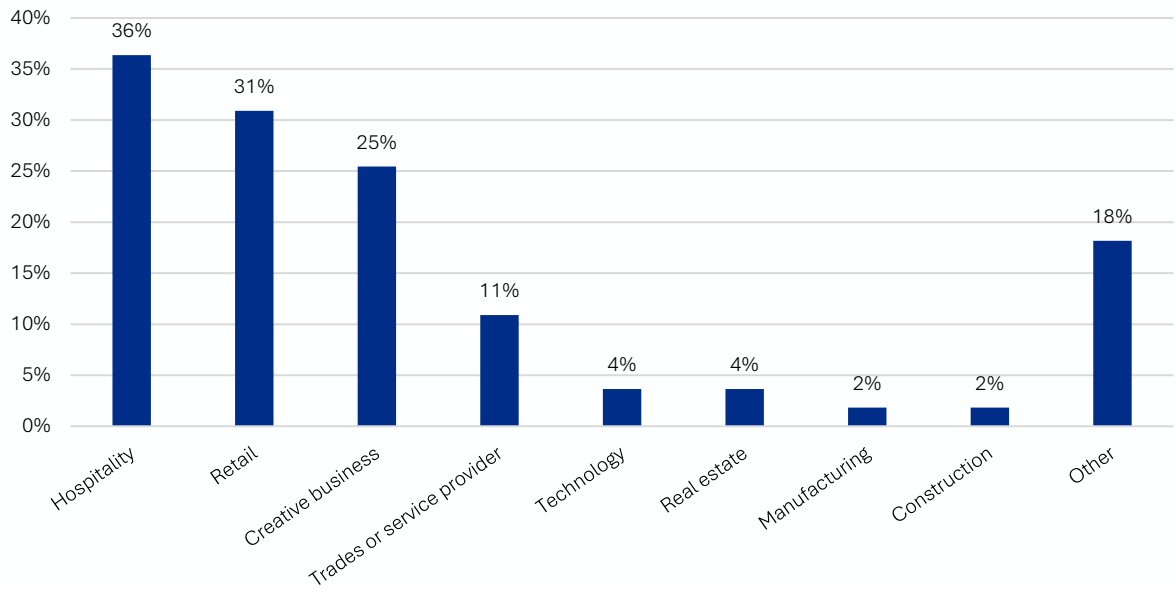
I am...(select all that apply)



Source: Yarra City Council, *A strategy that supports our local economy*, Urban Enterprise, 2025. N=98.

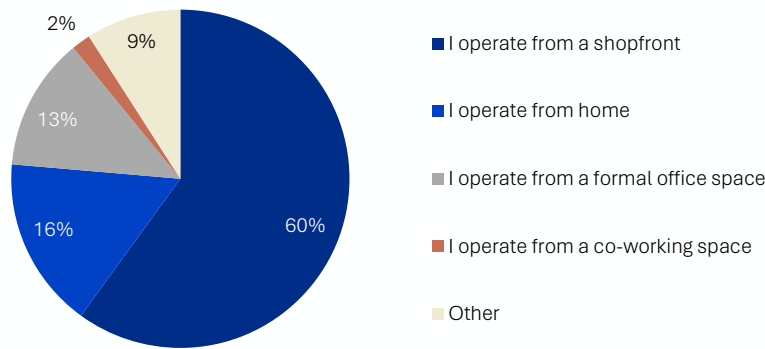
Business Respondents

What industry is your business in?



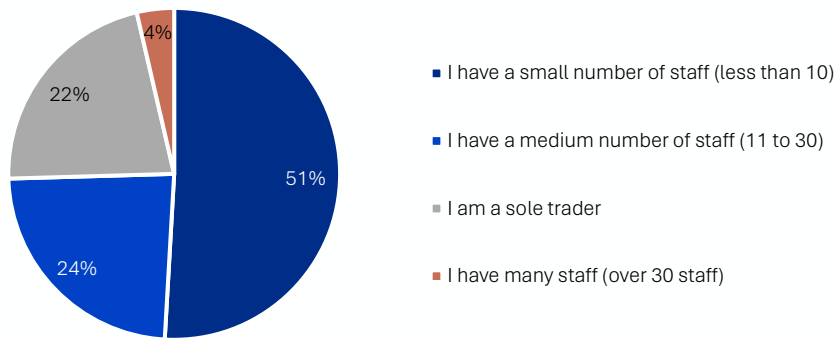
Source: Yarra City Council, *A strategy that supports our local economy*, Urban Enterprise, 2025. N=55.

Where do you operate your business from?



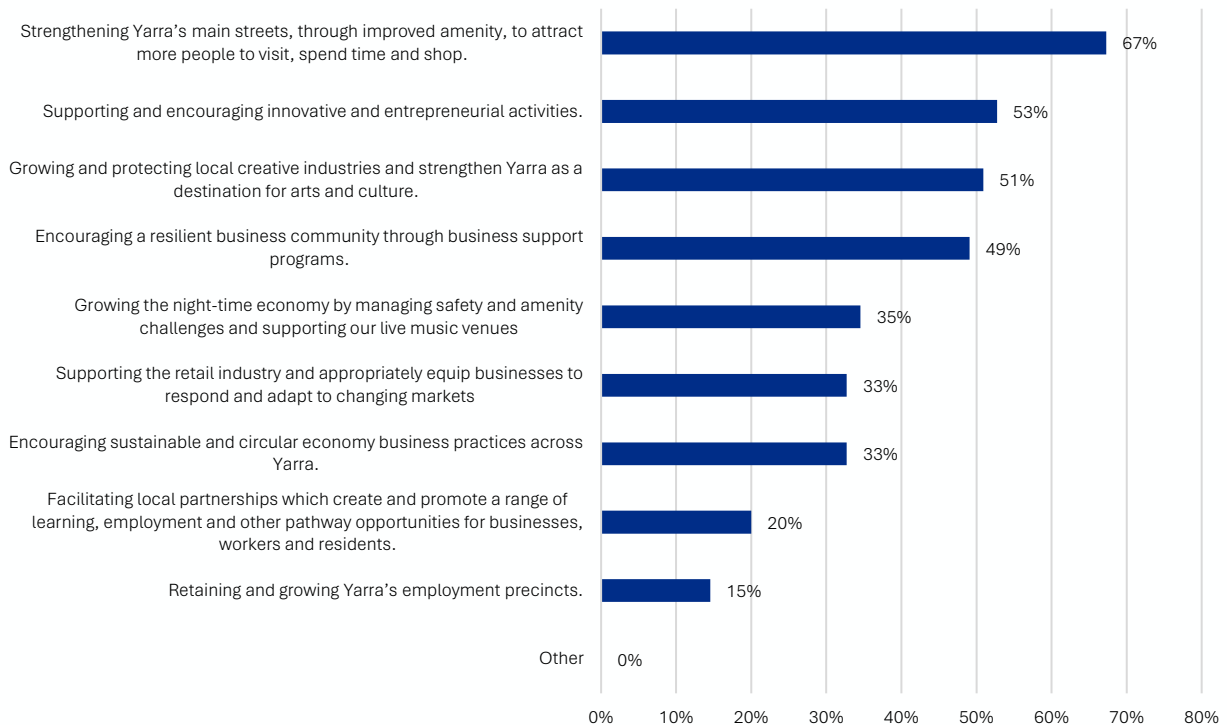
Source: Yarra City Council, *A strategy that supports our local economy*, Urban Enterprise, 2025. N=55.

What is the size of your business?



Source: Yarra City Council, *A strategy that supports our local economy*, Urban Enterprise, 2025. N=55.

As a business owner or operator, which of the following areas do you think Council should prioritise to help create a vibrant and thriving economy?



Source: Yarra City Council, *A strategy that supports our local economy*, Urban Enterprise, 2025. N=55.

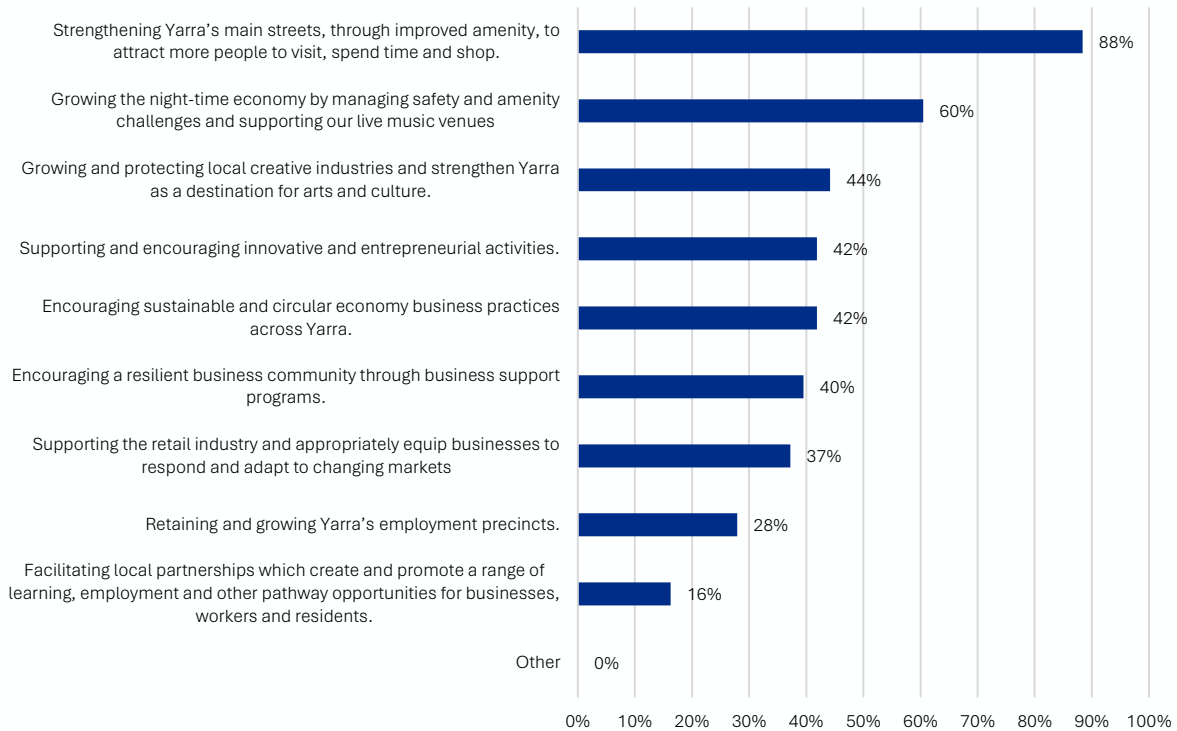
As a business owner or business operator, what actions do you think Council could take to improve the local economy?



Source: Yarra City Council, *A strategy that supports our local economy*, Urban Enterprise, 2025. N=55.

Community Respondents

As a community member, which of the following areas do you think Council should prioritise to help create a vibrant and thriving economy?



Source: Yarra City Council, *A strategy that supports our local economy*, Urban Enterprise, 2025. N=43.

As a community member, what actions do you think Council could take to improve the local economy?



Source: Yarra City Council, *A strategy that supports our local economy*, Urban Enterprise, 2025. N=43.

