



COVID-19 IMPACT AND OPPORTUNITIES ASSESSMENT

TOWN OF VICTORIA PARK
NOVEMBER 2020





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KEY TERMS

The following definitions outline how this document refers to the Local Government authority, the Local Government area, and the suburb of Victoria Park.

Town Council - Refers to the Local Government Authority, collective of Elected Members and administrative staff.

The Town Victoria Park (the Town) - Refers to the Local Government Area.

Victoria Park - Refers to the suburb of Victoria Park, which sits within the Local Government area.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Through a series of initiatives, the Town of Victoria Park Council (Town Council) are actively engaging with community, business and stakeholders to understand how COVID-19 is impacting the community and the role that Local Government can play in the short, medium and long term to help the Town of Victoria Park's (the Town's) residents and businesses to survive, recover, and ultimately, thrive in a world where COVID may continue to be an ongoing risk.

FAR Lane have been contracted by Town Council to develop a COVID-19 Initial Impacts and Opportunities Assessment Report which contributes a strong evidence base for future iterations and developments to Town Council's Re-Start Vic Park COVID-19 Strategy and COVID-19 Action Plan.

Throughout the project, FAR Lane met with 22 local businesses, three community and business groups, Town Council staff (Place Leaders) and utilised data sets provided by Town Council to provide insights into how COVID-19 has impacted on the local economy, and what stakeholders see as Local Government's role in supporting the economy moving forward.

IMPACTS

Analysis and engagement with stakeholders produced the following insights regarding the initial impacts of COVID-19 on the Town's local economy:

- The Town's diverse places and economies experienced COVID-19 very differently, influenced by the characteristics of resident population and the precinct's industry make up.
- Compared to the Greater Perth and Western Australian economy, the Town's industries are estimated to have experienced more negative impacts on gross regional product, but to have experienced lower levels of job losses¹, likely due to a significant local resident population being employed professionals with the advantage of being able to work from home.
- Local sales and expenditure, while taking a significant hit in the first half of 2020, have now all returned to pre-COVID levels, and in some places, exceeding them. A strong health response from the Western Australian State Government is likely to have sheltered local businesses from more significant impacts of COVID-19 (compared to other States) and increased consumer confidence.
- Predominantly customer facing businesses (tourism, hospitality, food and beverage, health, wellbeing and community) were more impacted by regionally applied restrictions (i.e. Social distancing, contact tracing and hygiene practices) where as professional services, technology, science and education were more impacted by global influences such as disruptions to markets and supply chains.
- Arts and Recreation Services, Construction and Accommodation were the industries that experienced the greatest declines in output and employment as a result of COVID-19². In the case of Arts, Recreation and Accommodation, these impacts are likely due to their exposure as predominantly in person / customer facing business models. The construction industry was likely impacted by international and interstate supply chain disruptions, increases in materials costs for imported products, and the influence of social distancing measures on the working environment.
- Due to the concentration of business within different places:
 - Burswood Peninsula is the precinct believed to be most greatly impacted by declines in Arts and Recreation output and employment due to the amount of related businesses located in that area;
 - Construction industry impacts are likely to have been most prominent in Burswood Peninsula, Burswood South and Victoria Park; and
 - Accommodation and food service impacts are expected to have impacted Burswood South, Bentley, and Victoria Park to the greatest extent.
- Footfall and transaction data show a return to pre-COVID levels of expenditure and precinct visitation. This is indicative of a relatively sharp shock and recovery of economic activity in the Town, although broader economic consequences are likely to continue over the medium term; and
- Given WA's relative success in containing COVID-19, and avoidance of sustained lock downs compared to other states, it is possible that the impacts felt may be less than available data suggests.

1 Profile ID [Town of Victoria Park Economic Profile COVID-19 Quarter Impacts](#)

2 ibid, Profile ID.

OPPORTUNITIES

Engagement and data analysis revealed the following areas of convergence relating to concerns and opportunities across industry and place, and potential roles for Local Government to support local business.

THE NEW NORMAL

Engagement identified the need for a planning approach that embraces a 'new normal' both as a challenge to overcome but more importantly as an opportunity to do things differently and better than before. This thinking applies not only to strategic forward thinking, and enhancing the Town's value proposition as a place to do business, but to short and medium term planning, which can address real concerns about how the local economy might deal with a second-wave of COVID-19, be that a state-wide issue or a local cluster, and returning to a lock-down state.

COMMUNICATION

Communication between Local Government and local businesses was raised as an area for improvement across all industry groups. Attending businesses raised that they were often not aware of Local Government initiatives or programs that were there to support them, but equally acknowledged that they have limited time to locate and absorb communications from Town Council (i.e. via e-newsletters, website or social media). Engagement highlighted that it is critical that local businesses understand how Town Council can support them, what current initiatives and projects may be relevant to them (in terms of impacts and opportunities) and also have a clear and reliable contact within the organisation who they can meet with face to face when required.

NETWORKS

The lack of formal business networks within the Town was flagged during engagement, with businesses across industries agreeing that opportunities to network and connect would be extremely valuable moving forward. The roundtable discussions provided an opportunity for business owners and representatives who had never met before to connect and understand each others experiences and offerings. Increased networking would not only provide an opportunity for businesses to jointly advocate to Local and State Government, but would provide a source of support and opportunities to collaborate on initiatives for the benefit of local industries.

ACTIVATION

Resident and commercial density, place activation and public realm enhancements emerged as priorities for Town Council to attract investment, new residents, visitors and to strengthen the local market, and thereby reducing the Town's exposure to impacts from future external shocks (e.g. a second wave of COVID-19). It emerged as important to retain and celebrate the Town's unique value proposition across a range of industries and places, and to attract investment and new business that builds on these characteristics.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

The following eight initiatives represent a program of complementary activities that work together to achieve strong impacts for the Town's local businesses, as well as areas of intervention most suited to the role and remit of Local Government, as well as the expectations of local businesses engaged.

Events calendar A strong and long term pipeline of small to medium sized local events that activate spaces across the Town and attract visitors to commercial areas.	Second Wave Plan A plan for how Local Government will respond to what local businesses perceive as an 'inevitable second wave' and the resulting lock-down restrictions.	Public realm upgrades Fast-track high impact public realm upgrades in Town Centres that are already planned.	COVID-19 tracking Track trends and provide ongoing updates to industry and community.
Town of Victoria Park Business Network A formal business network that represents and advocates for the needs and concerns of the local economy to local and State Government.	Town of Victoria Park Destination Marketing Campaign A destination marketing campaign that promotes the Town to a broad range of visitor types (i.e. leisure, education, business), increasing economic activity within the Town.	Targeted business contact drive A one-off push to proactively engage local businesses and bring them into the Local Government communication system.	Supporting Support our Strip Act in support of Support our Strip Facebook page to align messaging across community, business and Local Government.

Image: Town of Victoria Park Facebook Page



INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 has, and continues to have a significant impact on economies and communities of all sizes around the world. Understanding these impacts, so that residents and businesses can be supported appropriately, has been an ongoing and evolving challenge for governments at all levels.

Through a series of initiatives, Town Council are actively engaging with community, business and stakeholders to understand how COVID-19 is impacting the community and the role that Local Government can play in the short, medium and long term to help the Town's residents and businesses to survive, recover, and ultimately, thrive in a world where COVID may continue to be an ongoing risk.

RE-START VIC PARK

In May 2020, Town Council endorsed a number of initiatives to support the local community (residents and businesses) throughout COVID-19. One of these initiatives was the Re-Start Vic Park Strategy (Re-Start Vic Park), which outlines Town Council's overall approach to responding and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim of this strategy is to detail how the Town will facilitate the recovery of its community following the COVID-19 pandemic.

The strategy will seek to:

- Define Town Council's goals through three impact phases;
- Identify Town Council's priority in achieving those goals; and
- Outline how priorities will be implemented.

Re-Start Vic Park is accompanied by Town Council's COVID-19 Action Plan (the Action Plan). The Action Plan is a live and evolving document which details the actions and projects that Town Council will implement to achieve the objectives of the COVID-19 Response Strategy. The Action Plan will continue to be updated as the recovery process evolves and new actions and projects are identified.

Town Council have earmarked an additional \$500,000 specifically to implement initiatives relating to the COVID-19 Action Plan.

IMPACT AND OPPORTUNITIES ASSESSMENT

A key document that will inform further iterations of the Action Plan is Town Council's COVID-19 Impact and Opportunities Assessment (the Assessment). FAR Lane have been contracted by Town Council to develop this assessment, which will explore the following research questions:

- Define the extent of the initial impact of COVID-19 on local businesses, industry types and the Town's economy.
- Identify opportunities arising from the impact of COVID-19 that will benefit local businesses, industry types, the Town's local economy; and
- Understand the impacts and opportunities from both a Place and Town-wide perspective.

This report forms the outcomes of the Assessment conducted by FAR Lane.

The Assessment will explore the stated research questions through the following structure:

Project overview - Snapshot summary of key elements of the project.



Town of Victoria Park context - Profile of the Town's local economy as well as the strategic context (local, regional, state and national) within which this project and its goals are situated.



COVID-19 impacts - Summary of the initial impacts of COVID-19 on Town's local economy, drawn from analysis of primary and secondary data sources, and engagement activities.



SWOT - Exploration of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats identified throughout research, analysis and engagement.



Converging themes - Identification of themes and issues that converge across industries and place.



Potential initiatives and the role of Local Government - Identification of a range of potential Local Government initiatives or actions that respond to the key themes, and are relevant across the Town's industries and places.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

FAR Lane's work with Town Council commenced in September 2020, and utilised the following data sources and activities to inform the outcomes of this report:

DESKTOP RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

FAR Lane explored and analysed primary and secondary data sets provided by Town Council, as well as other external sources of data to understand the initial impacts of COVID-19 on the local economy. A full list of sources is provided on page 37 of this report.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

To understand the how local businesses and community experienced COVID-19, what they perceive as the risks and opportunities moving forward, and the role they think Local Government can play, FAR Lane engaged in the following engagement activities:

External engagement (September and October 2020):

- Burswood Peninsula Alliance;
- Vic Park Collective;
- Town of Victoria Park Business Advisory Group (via Town Council);
- Support our Strip (Facebook page); and
- Three industry roundtable workshops (attended by 22 local businesses as well as representatives of the Town).

Internal engagement (September and November 2020):

- Two meetings with Town Council's Place Leaders, including a workshop focussed on reviewing the results of industry engagement and developing place-based responses and initiatives that can be led by Local Government.

COVID-19 is a constantly evolving challenge and opportunity for local economies, as well as Western Australia and the nation as a whole. Direct conversation with representatives of the local economy was essential to put quantitative analysis into perspective, and to look beyond the numbers into the real, lived experience of local businesses who are operating in places and contexts unique to each other, even within the Town.

Image: Town of Victoria Park Facebook Page



TOWN OF VICTORIA PARK CONTEXT

PRE-COVID PROFILE

The Town of Victoria Park is an vibrant inner-city town, made up of diverse places, people, lifestyles and industries. Located 5km from Perth's central business district, the Town is home to several major attractions and institutions, including Curtin University, Crown Perth, Tennis West, Optus Stadium, Technology Park, the West Coast Eagles Football Park, Belmont Park Racecourse, and the iconic Albany Highway commercial, retail and hospitality strip, one of the metropolitan areas most successful, diverse and largest main streets. The Town is highly accessible both internally and to other centres thanks to extensive rail, bus and bike / pedestrian connectivity, and enjoys approximately 6km of river foreshore.

TOWN OF VICTORIA PARK COMMUNITY ¹



Population approximately 36,900 in 2019, forecast to grow to 54,000 by 2036.



In 2016, 40% of the population were born overseas, 27% of people spoke a language other than English at home.



In 2016, the Town had a comparatively younger age profile compared to Greater Perth, with a high proportion of young adults aged between 20 and 34, suggesting a large working population in the area.



Compared to Greater Perth, in 2016 the Town had a relatively higher equivalised household income, with only Bentley and Burswood Peninsula as significant outliers, representing lowest and highest income groups respectively.



In 2016, most of the Town's residents reported working locally, in Perth or the adjoining suburbs and drive their car to work.



55% of households in the Town are lone person or couples without children, and 20% are couples with children.

¹Profile ID [Town of Victoria Park Community Profile](#)

²Profile ID [Town of Victoria Park Economic Profile](#)

TOWN OF VICTORIA PARK ECONOMIC PROFILE ²



Approximately 35,600 local jobs in 2019.



Approximately 19,700 employed residents in 2019.



Approximately 3,900 local businesses in 2019.



Largest five employing industries in 2019 (by percentage of total industries employment):

- Education and training (22%)
- Construction (11%)
- Arts and recreation (9.3%)
- Professional, scientific and technical services and (8.6%)
- Health care and social assistance (7.9%)



Top five productive industries in 2019 (by value add):

- Education and training (\$809m / 18.1%)
- Construction (\$709m / 15.9%)
- Professional, scientific and technical services and (\$459m / 10.3%)
- Transport, postal and warehousing (\$350m / 7.8%)
- Arts and recreation (\$306m / 6.9%)

Engagement insight

Businesses consulted, particularly within the tourism hospitality and retail sector, tended to agree that there is an opportunity to capitalise on the strong community sentiment to 'support local' (evidenced by the incredibly successful "Support our Strip" Facebook page), and to continue building pride and recognition for the Town's unique and extensive retail and hospitality strip - to attract more locals and visitors alike.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The Town of Victoria Park COVID-19 Impact and Opportunities Assessment sits within a broader community, regional and state strategic framework. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of this strategic context at the state and regional level, and how this connects to Town Council's key planning documents. The Assessment sits within the portfolio of Town Council's Economic Development team, however has been informed by and will impact other portfolios who engage in activities that support the social and economic wellbeing of

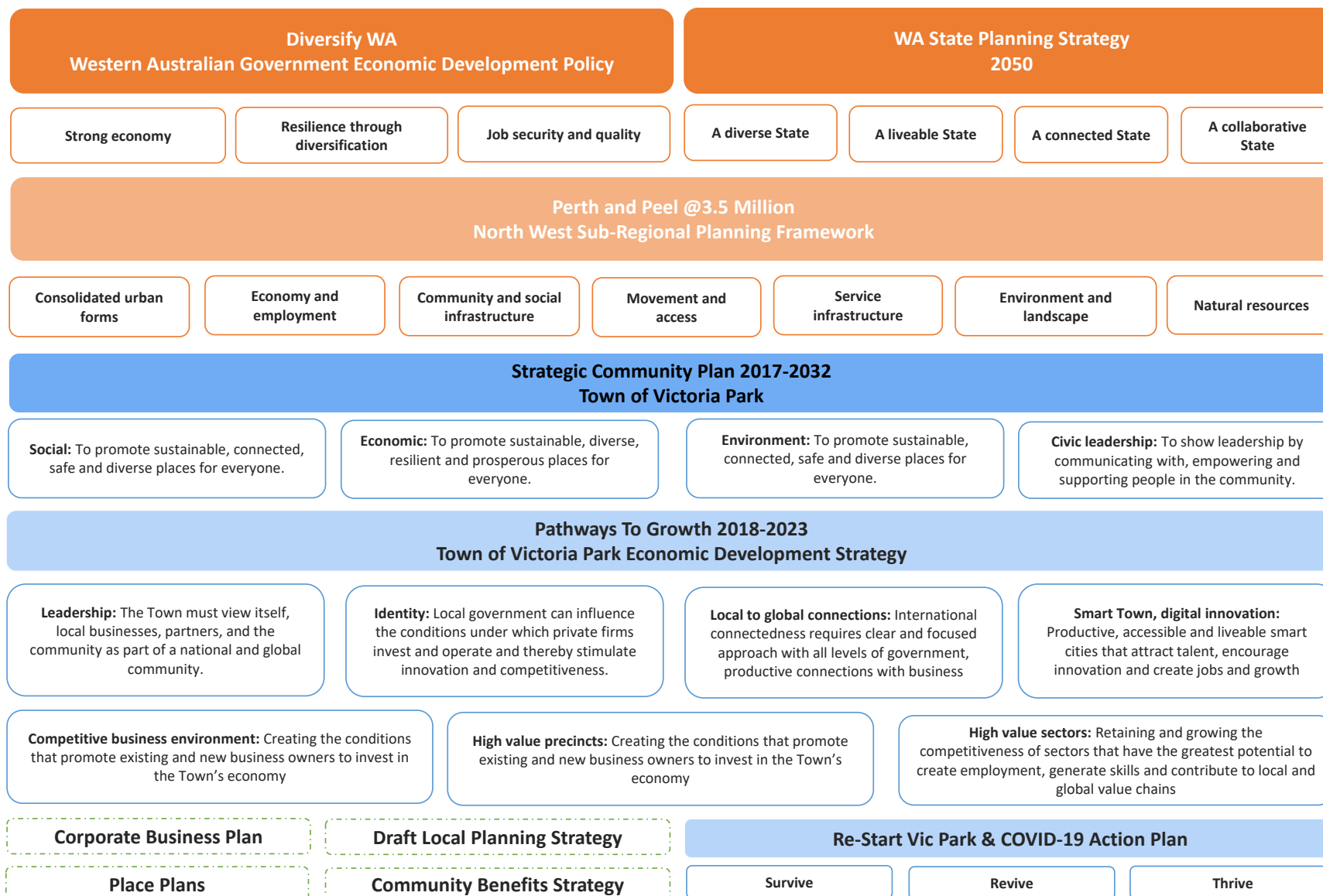
the Town's residents.

Key themes that create connection and alignment across state, regional and local economic and planning strategies include:

- **SUSTAINABILITY**
- **DIVERSITY**
- **JOB CREATION**
- **CONNECTION**

Maintaining alignment with these core themes will be important for securing investment and buy-in on initiatives which seek to support local businesses as they operate in a new COVID-19 reality. Alignment with emerging themes from the SWOT analysis is demonstrated on page 31 and 32.

Figure 1 - Strategic environment



A PLACE BASED APPROACH TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND BUSINESS SUPPORT

Recognising the Town's diverse economic profile, Town Council has adopted a place-based approach to economic development and business support. This approach enables Local Government to be more strategic with planning, support and investment decisions based on a precinct's unique characteristics, services, accessibility and value proposition. The approach also provides businesses within a particular precinct access to a dedicated person within Town Council, a 'place leader' who can provide advice, support and referral services. The Town's precincts include:

- Burswood Peninsula
- Lathlain
- Burswood South
- Victoria Park
- Carlisle
- Welshpool
- Curtin University and Bentley
- East Victoria Park
- St James

Town Council have invested significant effort in understanding the opportunities, challenges and characteristics unique to these precincts, and leveraging these aspects to achieve positive outcomes for community and businesses through investment attraction. Place leaders have been an important source of information and insights for the development of the Assessment, as they have a strong knowledge of their precincts and the businesses who operate within them.

Engagement insight

During engagement, local businesses discussed the diversity of the Town's economy and places as a key strength to be leveraged.

Image: Town of Victoria Park Facebook Page

COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS GROUPS

The Town's residents and community are highly engaged through the formalised Vic Park Collective, a group focussed on projects and initiatives that benefit community and local businesses, and "Support our Strip", a highly successful and active online community that was created in March 2020 as a community response to COVID-19, with the goal of supporting the Town's businesses throughout the COVID-19 lock down period.

Conversely there are currently no formal business networks in the Town, including a business association or a chamber of commerce. A Business Advisory Group (BAG) has been established by Town Council as a mechanism to seek direct feedback on projects and initiatives, but does not have its own independent strategic framework or objectives.

Engagement insight

During engagement it was identified that business networking could be enhanced within the Town, providing a space for collaboration, connection and support for local businesses.



STATE AND FEDERAL RESPONSES TO COVID-19

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The Western Australian Government's response to COVID-19 comprises of two key strategies: The WA Recovery Plan and the WA Roadmap.

The \$5.5billion *WA Recovery Plan* includes 21 priority 'streams' across three main areas of focus: economy, community and infrastructure - all with the goal of creating jobs for Western Australians and positioning the State as a 'thriving and innovative place in which to live, work, visit and do business'. Initiatives outlined in the Recovery Plan which are relevant to the Town include:

- **New City Deal** - Large scale investment in the Perth CBD to create jobs and transform the city centre. Due to proximity and as a place of work for many of the Town's residents, this initiative may have positive flow on effects for the Town.
- **New Swan River Bridge** - \$60 million has been invested into cycling infrastructure, including a pedestrian bridge connecting the Town to the Perth CBD. Enhanced accessibility between these centres has the potential to attract more visitors.
- **Building Road and Rail Infrastructure** - More than \$100 million of additional funding will be invested in a new major roads infrastructure package. There is a potential for opportunities for the Town's construction industry, as well as jobs for the Town's residents.

The WA Roadmap outlines the State Government's health and community safety response to COVID-19. The six phase roadmap is a 'live' resource that steps out a pathway for businesses, community and services to plan around. Western Australia is currently in phase four of the roadmap, which involves significantly reduce social distancing restrictions for businesses, schools, groups and individuals. This report was prepared in November 2020, during phase 4 of the response.

Restrictions and updates which are relevant to the Town include:

- **Capacity restrictions** - Capacity restrictions remain in place for sporting and entertainment venues. With a number of Perth's premier event and sporting venues in the Town, these restrictions will continue to impact businesses both directly and indirectly.
- **Controlled border** - The Western Australian government has announced that from November 14, 2020, the state will transition to a 'safe and sensible controlled border arrangement' which will be dependent on every state and territory in Australia recording a 14-day rolling average of less than 5 community cases of COVID-19 per day. Local businesses consulted perceived WA opening its borders as a risk in terms of exposing the WA community to COVID-19 (and inviting a second lock down) and an opportunity in terms of a re-opening of the State's economy. We are already seeing the precariousness of this arrangement, with a cluster in South Australia prompting the WA border to close again temporarily.

Information about the timing and details of the remaining two phases of the WA Roadmap are currently unavailable. This provides a challenge for businesses, who require more information to plan and make investment decisions.

Engagement insight:

Businesses engaged, particularly those within the tourism, hospitality and retail sector, acknowledged a level of anxiety around what is perceived as an inevitable 'second wave' of COVID-19 in Western Australia, and the lack of a plan from government about what this would look like, and how they are preparing.

With a move to a 'controlled' Western Australian border, local businesses are looking for guidance and support in preparing for a range of future scenarios, including COVID clusters, community transmission, uncertain travel, and further restrictive lock-downs, similar to those experienced in the Town between July and November 2020.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

The Australian Federal Government's response has been focussed on up-front and ongoing mechanisms that will support economies and jobs throughout a national health crisis which has required the 'shut down' of the Australian economy. Key mechanisms introduced by the Federal Government via a targeted response as well as via the 2020 Budget aim to support jobs and businesses to survive not only the initial lock-down period but subsequent restrictions, some of which remain in place to this day, including in Western Australia. The following mechanisms have been put in place by the Federal Government:

JobKeeper - Supporting businesses to keep Australians in jobs through a wage subsidy for eligible employees and business participants.

Support for trainees and apprentices - \$2.8 billion for the Supporting Apprentices and Trainees wage subsidy to help businesses keep their apprentices and trainees employed.

Income support for individuals - Support for income support recipients, including extending the Coronavirus Supplement.

Boosting cash flow for employers - Tax-free cash flow boosts of between \$20,000 and \$100,000 for eligible employers.

Small and Medium Enterprises Guarantee Scheme - Guaranteeing 50 per cent of eligible loans issued by participating lenders to small and medium businesses.

Early release of superannuation - Allowing individuals impacted by COVID-19 to access up to \$20,000 of their superannuation early.

Supporting pensioners - Support payments to our pensioners and other eligible recipients.

HomeBuilder - Providing grants of \$25,000 to eligible owner-occupiers (including first home buyers) to build a new home or rebuild an existing home.

JobMaker Hiring Credit - Incentivising businesses to take on additional employees that are young job seekers aged 16 to 35.

JobTrainer Fund - Providing school leavers and job seekers access to additional free or low-cost courses to boost their skills.

Accelerating personal income tax cuts - Bringing forward Stage 2 of the Personal Income Tax Plan and providing a one-off additional tax benefit to low- and middle-income earners in 2020-21 to deliver tax relief to hard-working Australians.

Supporting business investment - Temporary tax incentives for businesses to support new investments and increase business cash flow.

Infrastructure stimulus - \$14 billion committed since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic to boost demand and create jobs over the next four years.

The extent to which these mechanisms will be accessible or beneficial to businesses within the Town depends on a number of factors, including but not limited to existing capital, industry type, revenue

and business size. Like COVID-19, these mechanisms are not enjoyed uniformly across industries and places.

Engagement insight:

Two businesses within the tourism, retail and hospitality sector reported qualifying for JobKeeper from the outset of COVID-19. One narrowly missed the reduced income threshold, while the other was a new business owner, so did not have a previous year's income to compare to. The latter business reported 'losing a lot of staff'.

Businesses commented that JobKeeper was no longer available to many, as revenues were beginning to increase, pushing them over the minimum threshold. Regardless of the improvement in revenue, job security / the ability to retain staff remained an ongoing concern and risk to be managed.

The Federal Government's asset write-off mechanism, while an attractive offer for many businesses, is not uniformly helpful or accessible, because, as noted by a number of businesses during engagement, "you have to have money to spend money".

IMPACTS OF COVID-19

Data and engagement produced a number of insights into the different ways that COVID-19 has impacted local businesses. What became clear very quickly, and what has been observed across the nation, is that impacts have not been felt uniformly, with some businesses experiencing catastrophic impacts, and others busier and more profitable than ever. This section will look at the initial (what we know to date) impacts of COVID-19 on the Town's local economy, with insights into how these impacts may have been experienced differently across industry type and place.

TOWN OF VICTORIA PARK

Modelling made available by Profile ID forecasts the impacts of COVID-19 on local economies by comparing 2020 quarters to the same periods in the previous year or years. By doing this we are able to see how the Town's local economy has experienced COVID-19 and how it relates to Greater Perth and Western Australia.



Gross regional product was forecast to be 5.8% lower in the September quarter 2020 than the same quarter in 2019, and is greater than that experienced by WA as a whole.¹



Local Jobs were forecast to fall by -8.9% in the September Quarter 2020. This equates to a fall of 3,136 local jobs.²



The impact on employed residents (-3.2%) was lower than the local job impact for the September 2020 quarter.³



There was a decline in net GST registrations in the Town for the first time since 2016 in June 2020.

According to the modelling, the Town is estimated to have experienced more negative impacts when compared to Greater Perth and the Western Australian economy when it across gross regional product and local jobs,

1 Profile ID [Town of Victoria Park Economic Profile COVID-19 Quarter Impacts](#)

2 ibid, Profile ID

3 ibid, Profile ID

4 Profile ID [Town of Victoria Park Economic Profile Business Trends](#)

but estimated to have lower levels of job losses. This is likely due to a large number of the Town's residents being employed professionals⁴, which, due to their ability to transition to a 'work from home' arrangement during the lock down, were less vulnerable to job loss. In the absence of the Federal Governments Job Keeper mechanism, impacts across local and resident employment are forecast to be even stronger.

CALLS TO THE TOWN

Call data provided by Town Council provides a number of insights into the types of concerns community and business within the Town had in the early months of COVID-19. Compared to the same period in 2019, between January and June 2020:

- Approximately 7,600 more calls were made to Town Council.
- The business areas that experienced the most significant increase in calls (both in terms of number, but also as a percentage):
 - Parks operations
 - Building services
 - Customer relations
 - Financial services
 - Waste services
 - Urban planning
- Conversely, calls to the Economic Development Team declined, suggesting that this team were not a first port of call for businesses looking for support, compared to other business units such as financial services and customer relations.

Engagement insight

Communication was a key theme in the industry roundtables and came up across all industry groups. Businesses tended to agree that they were not aware of the types of support and initiatives provided by Local Government, but that equally they acknowledge they needed to be more proactive in seeking this information and staying across Local Government communications.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SALES AND EXPENDITURE

Using data collected by Commonwealth Bank Australia (CBA) it is possible to provide insights into how COVID-19 may have impacted transactions within the Town. The information used provides data between January and June on credit and debit transactions using Commbank Terminals in the Town. This includes data on the size, transaction volume and daily sales excluding online sales, and accounts for approximately 20% of the market. This data is disaggregated at the postcode level, and whilst not providing precinct level information, still gives meaningful insights into the impacts of COVID across different areas of the Town. Daily sales refers to the average daily revenue per business per day, transaction volume refers to the average number of 'card swipes' per business per day and transaction size refers to the average amount spent in a single transaction per business per day.

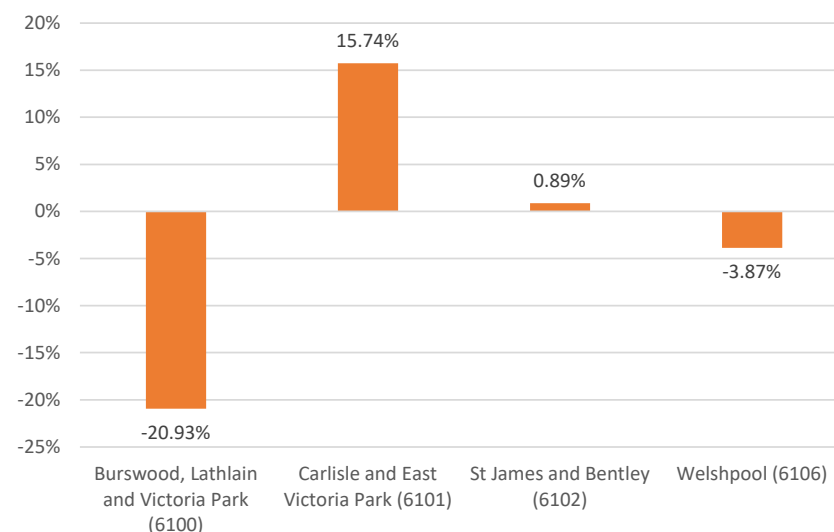
Initial impacts on sales and expenditure - January to June 2020

Change in daily sales

Figure 2 shows the change in average daily sales (revenue per business per day) recorded on Commbank terminals between January and June 2019 and January and June 2020. There are considerable differences in the change in average daily sales between post-codes. Burswood (Peninsula and South), Lathlain, and Victoria Park businesses saw the greatest decline in average daily sales, estimated to be 21%. In comparison Carlisle and East Victoria Park businesses experienced an increase in average recorded daily sales of 16% whilst St James and Bentley and Welshpool businesses experienced moderate changes in sales at 1% and -4% respectively.

It is likely that the reduction in number and size of events resulted in large declines in daily business revenues. These declines may be particularly prominent due to the location of Optus Stadium and Crown Perth and the significant impact that businesses in these locations faced. Other post codes with higher residential populations, and less reliance on a small number of large venues (such as Carlisle and East Victoria Park) may have not been impacted by trading restrictions to the same extent. Furthermore, a large proportion of the workforce working from home may have increased sales expenditure in some localities, as workers shifted consumption from the Perth CBD or place of work to their place of residence. This has likely contributed to increase in sales in Carlisle and East Victoria Park, and offset declines in sales that resulted from government restrictions.

Figure 2 - Percentage change in average daily sales Jan-June 2019-2020



Source: Commonwealth Bank transaction data 2020

Image: Town of Victoria Park Facebook Page



Change in average daily transaction volumes

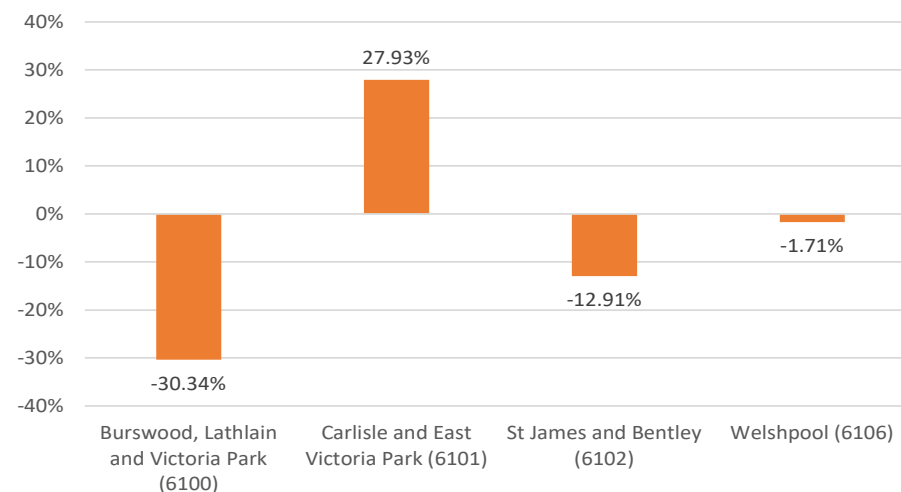
Figure 3 shows the change in average daily transaction volumes (number of card swipes per business per day) between the first half of 2019 and 2020. This reflects the similar trends observed in daily sales volumes (figure 2). Significant declines were experienced in Burswood (Peninsula and South), Lathlain, Victoria Park and St James and Bentley, reflecting lower levels of visitation and consumer expenditure in these areas. St James and Bentley are home to Curtin University, and given the large number of international and domestic students studying online during this time it is likely that this was a contributing factor in the declines in transactions volumes within this locality.

Figure 4 illustrates that the decline in transaction volumes in St James and Bentley were largely driven by reduced transactions by young adults. Young adults show significant declines in transaction volumes between 2019 and 2020, with transactions falling by approximately half for those aged between 15 and 24. This was likely driven by a large number of students studying from home in 2020 in comparison to 2019. It follows that transaction volumes are expected to increase as students return to campus. It should be noted that age and origin data provided by Commbank is based on approximately 4% of the market, including Commbank customers shopping at Commbank terminals and in-person transactions under \$5,000.

Image: Town of Victoria Park Facebook Page

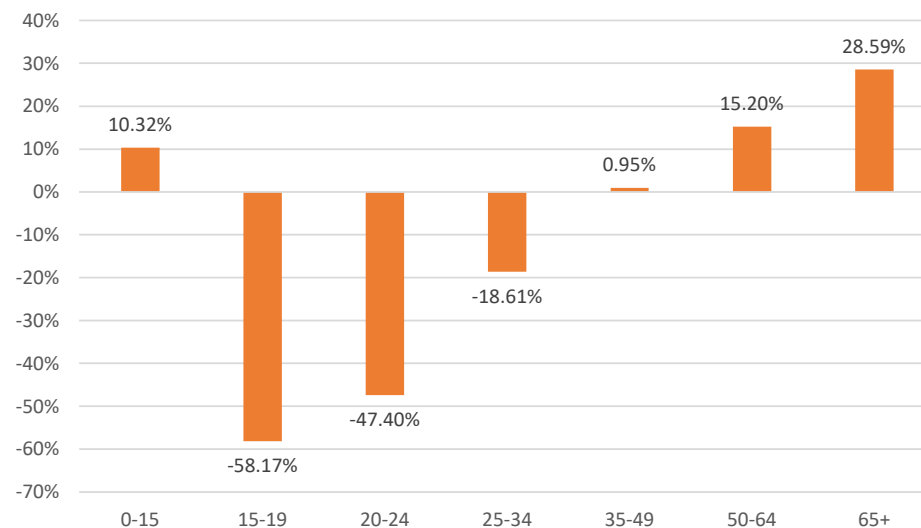


Figure 3 - Percentage change in average daily transaction volume Jan-June 2019-2020



Source: Commonwealth Bank transaction data 2020

Figure 4 - Percentage change in transaction volume by age in St James and Bentley Jan- June 2019-2020



Source: Commonwealth Bank transaction data 2020

Change in average transaction size

Figure 5 shows the changes in average transaction size (average amount spent in a single transaction per day) in the first half of 2019 and 2020. Changes vary significantly in each post-code. With Burswood (Peninsula and South), Lathlain, Victoria Park, and St James and Bentley showing increases in the average transaction size, whilst Carlisle and East Victoria Park experienced a decline of 9.52%. Decreases in transaction size, combined with increased transaction volume correspond to more small purchases of goods and services, that likely have resulted from more people working from home and spending in their local area.

Recovery begins - September 2020

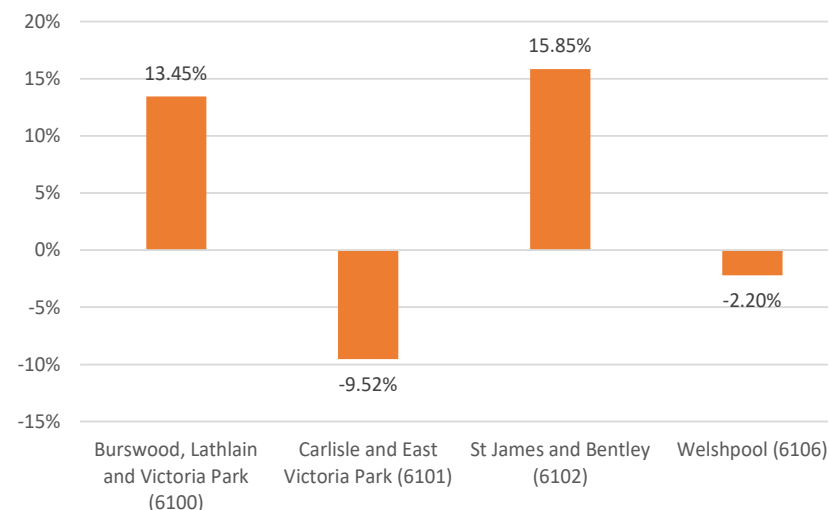
Whilst the data described above shows the impacts from the initial economic shock of COVID-19 and the associated restrictions, transaction data also provides an indication of the return to normality experienced in the latter half of 2020. This reflects a sharp shock in early 2020 followed by the easing of restrictions, and associated increase in local spending rather than a more complete economic recovery.

Change in sales and transaction volumes

Figure 6 and Figure 7 (see next page) show the change in daily sales (average daily revenue per business per day) and transaction volumes (number of swipes) within the month of September in 2020 compared to 2019. In general the changes suggest that sales and transactions volumes have returned to, or exceeded previous levels in 2019. All post codes have seen moderate increases in daily sales, ranging from 5.46% to 23.87% over the month of September.

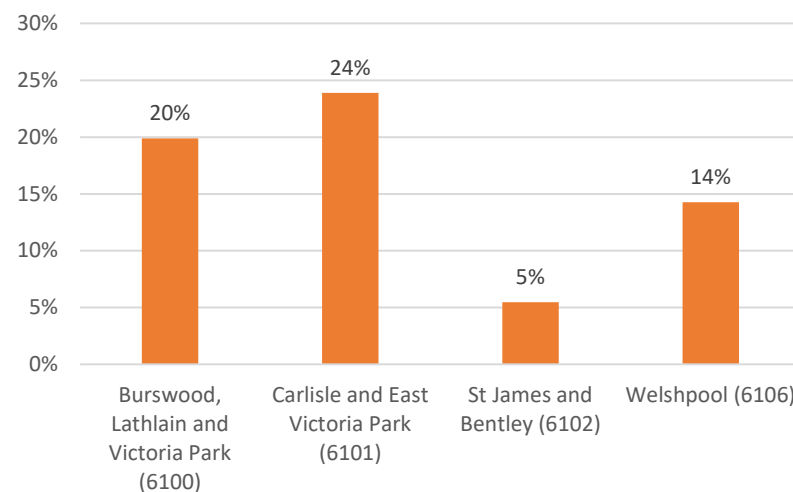
Change in transaction volumes ranges from -2% to 34%, with Carlisle, East Victoria Park and Welshpool having transaction volumes of a similar level to 2019. Burswood (Peninsula and South), Lathlain, Victoria Park, Carlisle and East Victoria Park have increased 14% and 34% respectively. FAR Lane believes that the large residential population choosing more often to work from home contributed to this increase in transaction volume through increased purchases of local goods and services.

Figure 5 - Percentage change in average transaction size Jan-June 2019-2020



Source: Commonwealth Bank transaction data 2020

Figure 6 - Percentage change daily sales September 2019 compared with September 2020



Source: Commonwealth Bank transaction data 2020

Change in average transaction size

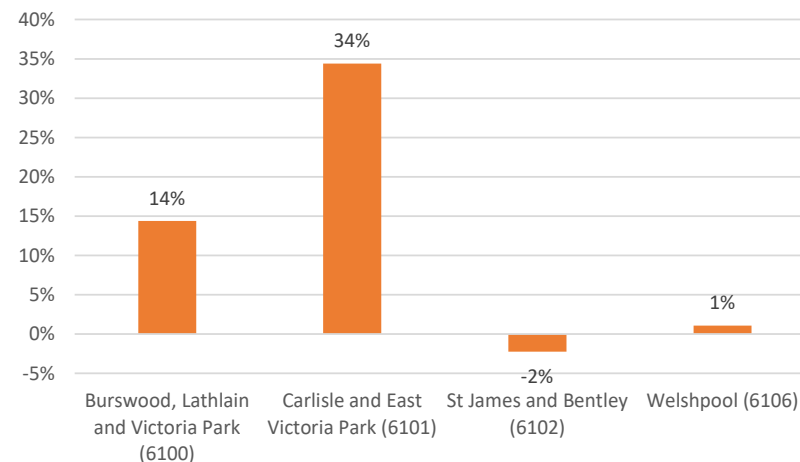
Figure 8 shows the percentage change in average transaction size in the month of September 2020 compared to September 2019. All post codes recorded an increase in transaction size, ranging between 5% and 13%, except for Carlisle and East Victoria Park which experienced a decline of 8%. The comparatively large residential areas in Carlisle and East Victoria Park, may explain lower expenditure sizes, as local households continue to spend on local goods and services which lowering the transaction size, but increasing the transaction volume. Increases in government support payments may have also increased the average transaction size over this period.

Key implications

The key implication from this analysis is that different places within the Town experienced varying changes in sales, transactions and transactions size during the past 12 months, and that in recent months these figures have appeared to return to pre-COVID levels or exceeded them. The differing characteristics of the Town's places such as residential population (age, profession, place of work) and industry composition play an important role in explaining these differences.

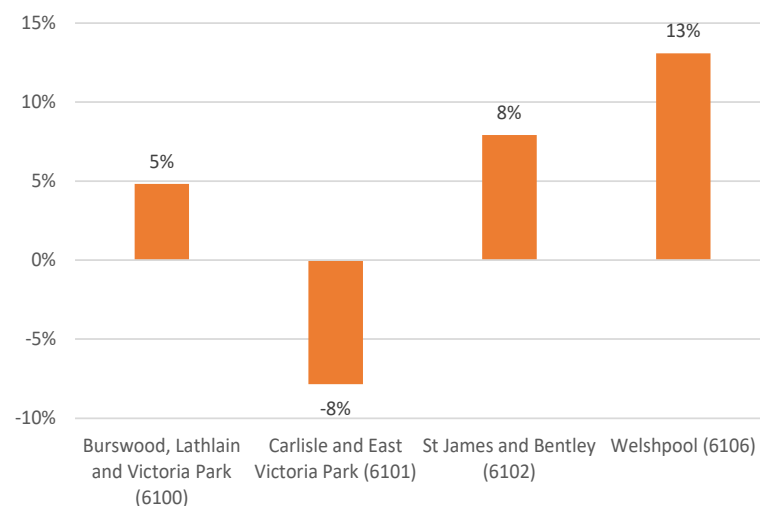


Figure 7 - Percentage change in average transaction size Jan-June 2019-2020



Source: Commonwealth Bank transaction data 2020

Figure 8 - Percentage change in average transaction size September 2019 compared with September 2020



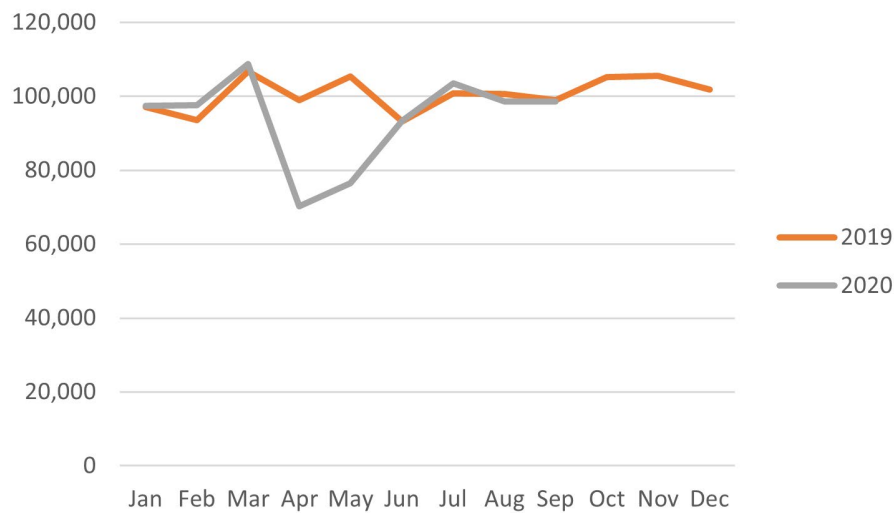
Source: Commonwealth Bank transaction data 2020

Image: Town of Victoria Park Facebook page

IMPACT ON PEDESTRIAN FOOTFALL

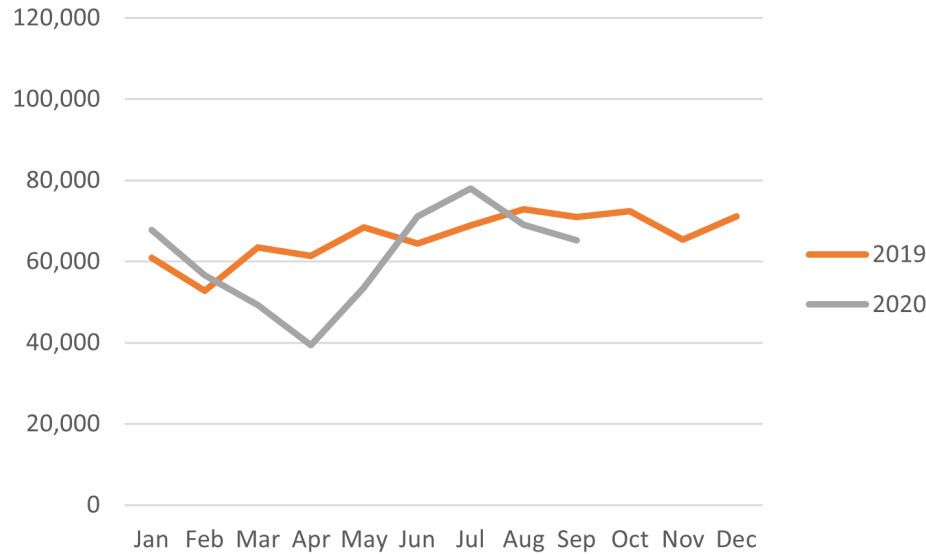
Resident footfall data provided by Town Council presents a similar picture to transaction data with a noticeable shock during government restrictions. Pedestrian counters in the suburbs of Victoria Park and East Victoria Park show a steep, and rapid decline in footfall in April, aligning with the introduction of heightened restrictions. This is followed by an increase to pre-COVID levels of footfall by June 2020. This aligns closely with transaction data, suggesting that transaction reductions were a primarily result of tightened government restrictions, and that there was a relatively rapid recovery when these restrictions were lifted.

Figure 9 - Pedestrian footfall in Victoria Park 2019 and 2020



Source: Town of Victoria Park, 2020

Figure 10 - Pedestrian footfall in East Victoria Park 2019 and 2020



Source: Town of Victoria Park, 2020

Image: Town of Victoria Park Facebook page



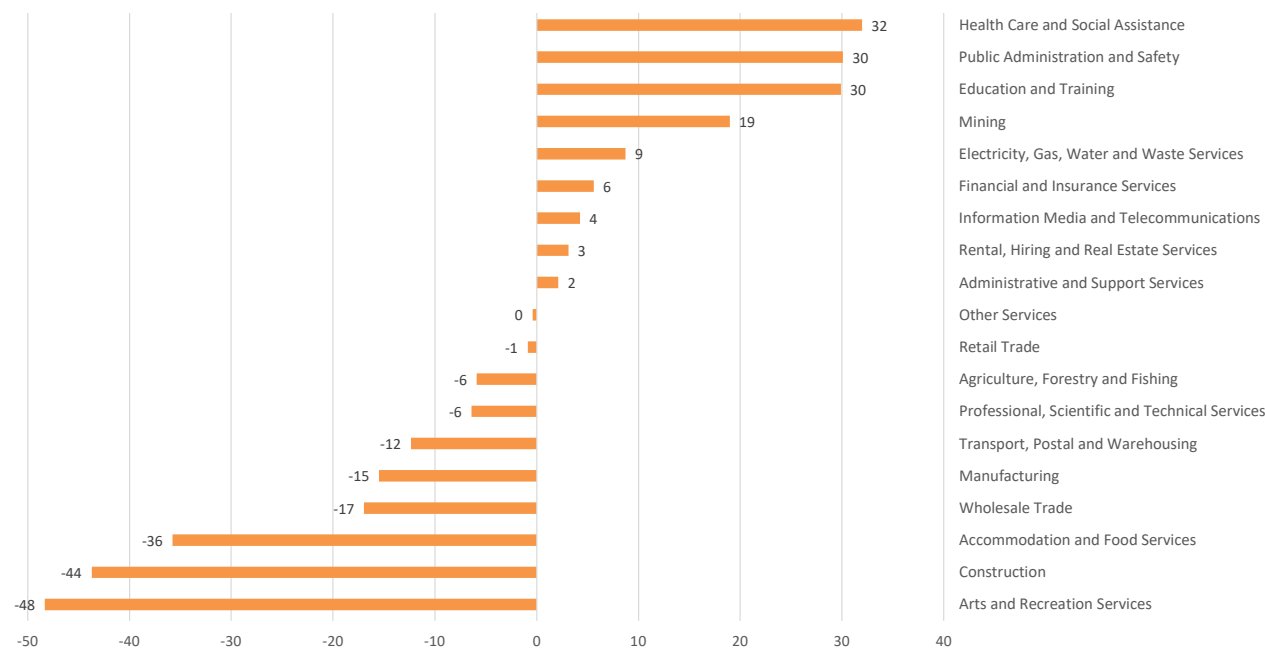
INDUSTRY IMPACTS

Modelling by Profile ID provides estimates that compare industries and their performance in the September 2019 and September 2020 quarter, helping us to understand how COVID-19 may be impacting a local economy. These estimates are obtained by disaggregating national level data, and implied local impacts should be treated as general, and be combined with an understanding of the local context to inform an understanding. Given WA's relative success in containing COVID-19, and avoidance of sustained lock downs, it is possible that the impacts felt may be less than available data suggests.

Any analysis of changes in value add and outputs (demonstrated in Figures 11 and 12) should acknowledge the overall contribution of an industry to a local economy. For example, construction was the Town's largest industry by output and second most productive by value add in 2018-2019. When viewing the significant negative change in both output and value add within this industry across the September 2019 and 2020 quarters, it suggests that impacts on the construction industry will have significant flow on effects for the output and productivity of the local economy as a whole. This also occurs for Arts and Recreation (representing 8% of the local economy's output in 2018-2019), which saw a significant negative change in both output (sales) and value add (productivity) in the comparison period.

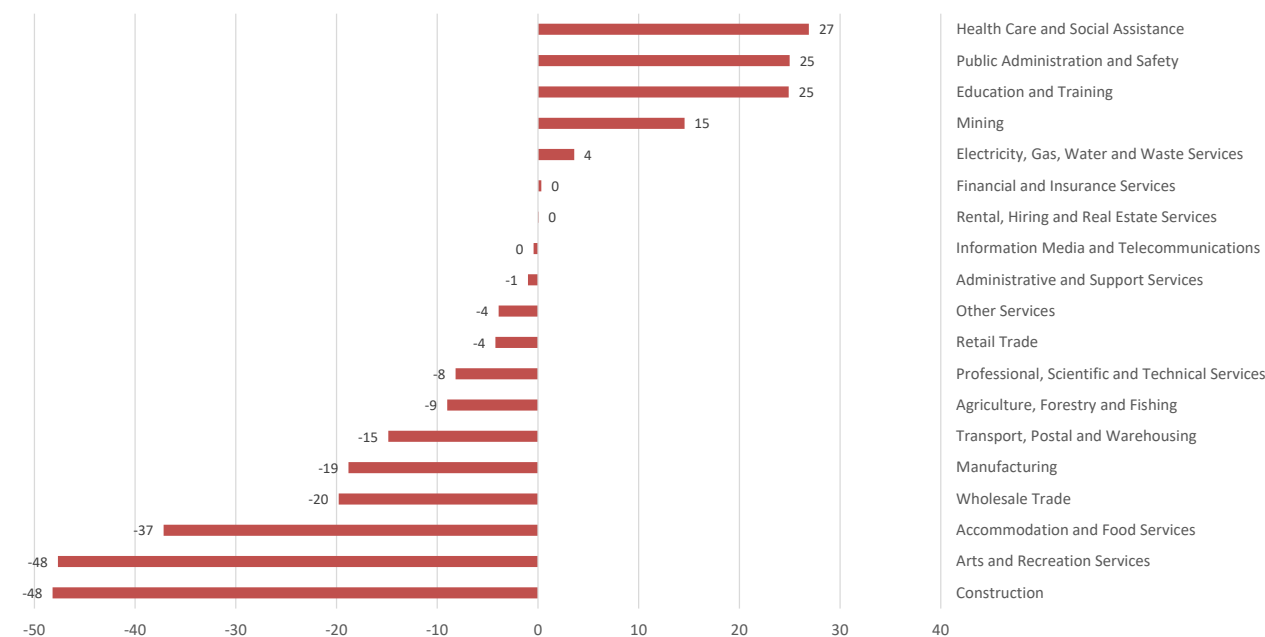
Conversely, Education and Training, the Town's most productive industry, may expect to see a positive impact on productivity in the September 2020 quarter, compared to the same period last year. This may be explained by the sector transitioning to online course delivery, as well as capitalising on Higher Education Contribution schemes and loans and offering an increased number of courses targeted at people who are upskilling in the short term.

Figure 11 - Percentage change in output Q3 2019 and Q3 2020, Town of Victoria Park



Source: Profile ID, 2020

Figure 12 - Percentage change in value add Q3 2019 and Q3 2020, Town of Victoria Park



Source: Profile ID, 2020

Arts and Recreation Services (-48%), Construction (-44%) and Accommodation and Food Services (-36%) are the three industries with the greatest estimated decline in total output and associated employment (see Figures 11, 12). Manufacturing, Retail and Professional Services are also estimated to have moderate declines in output and employment. It should be noted that figures 13 - 18 will appear different from each other due to the scale of the industries they describe.

Construction

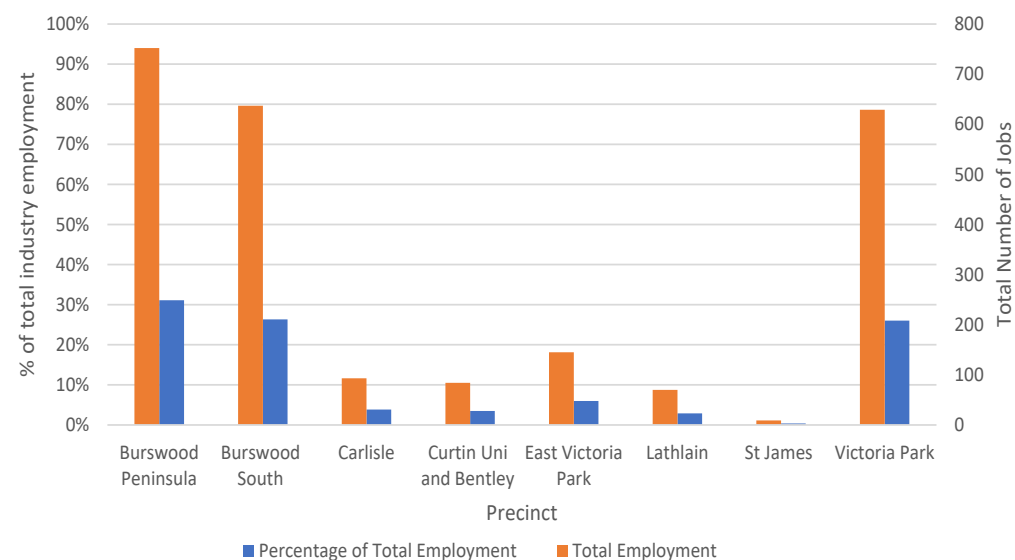
The construction sector is estimated to have been greatly impacted by COVID-19 on a national level and applied to the Town. Output is estimated to have decreased by 44% (see figure 11) and employment decrease by 932 jobs¹. Based on available employment data it is likely that Burswood Peninsula, Burswood South and Victoria Park have been most impacted by declines in construction employment (see figure 13), with these areas containing the majority of construction related employment. It should be noted that the magnitude of employment loss and output decreases are high level estimates, and should be treated as such, whilst noting the precincts that may be impacted the most.

Arts and recreation

Arts and Recreation services are also estimated to have been significantly impacted by COVID-19, with output estimated to have decline by 48% and employment by 1300 jobs, although given WA's success in containing COVID-19 these figures may be lower in reality. As figure 14 shows, the key location for employment is Burswood Peninsula, reflecting the location of Optus Stadium, and Crown Casino. It is likely that employment impacts have been most greatly felt in these areas, as well as declines in revenue. However, it is likely that these declines have lessened significantly as restrictions eased, and events have started to return.

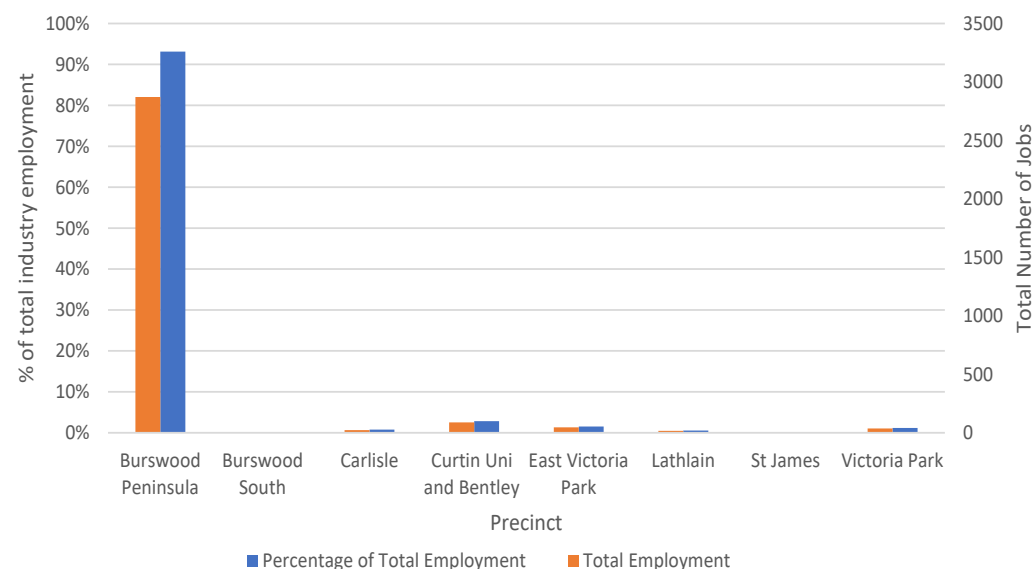
¹ Profile ID Town of Victoria Park Economic Profile - [COVID-19 Quarter Impacts](#)

Figure 13 - Construction employment by precinct 2016



Source: Profile.ID 2020, ABS Census 2016, FAR lane 2020

Figure 14 - Arts and recreation employment by precinct 2016



Source: Profile ID 2020, ABS Census 2016, FAR lane 2020

Accommodation and food services

Available estimates also suggest that Accommodation and Food Services will have experienced large declines in output and employment. In the Town this is estimated to be 35% and 1,015 jobs¹, although this number is estimated to be lower given the successful easing of restrictions in WA.

Figure 15 suggests that the impact of this was most likely felt in Burswood Peninsula, East Victoria Park and Victoria Park. This corresponds with the large number of hospitality venues within these areas in particular. Notably, the return of expenditure and foot traffic to pre-COVID levels suggest that there has been significant recovery for businesses in Victoria Park and East Victoria Park (see figures 9 & 10).

Retail trade

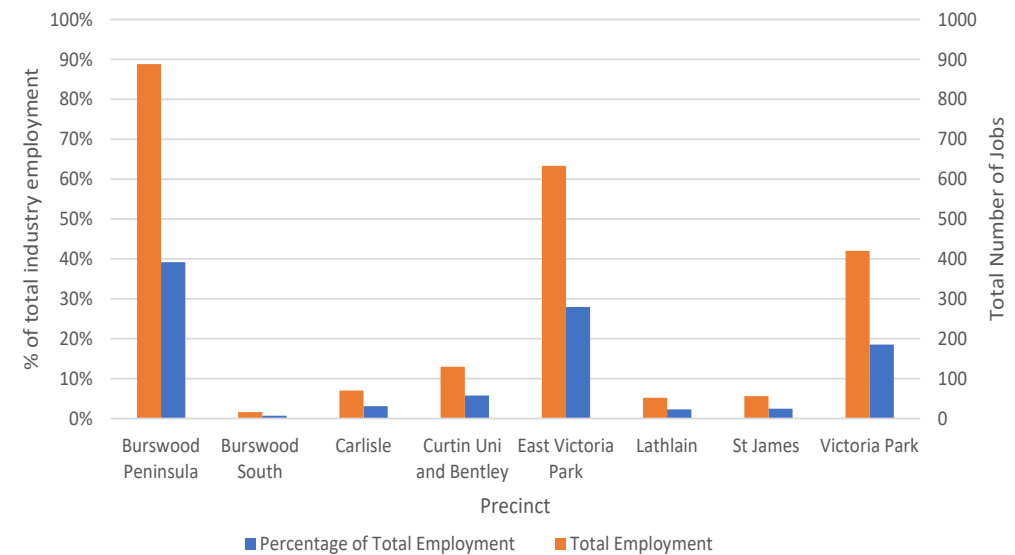
Retail trade has also been estimated to experience small declines in output and employment, with output estimated to have decreased by 0.88% and employment by 241² jobs compared to September the previous year. This small decline is likely due to the comparatively small impact that restrictions have had on retail compared to hospitality and the ability of businesses to adapt to online retailing.

Figure 16 suggests that East Victoria Park and Victoria Park were impacted by declines in retail activity, however, footfall and transaction data for both these areas is indicative of a relatively strong, and quick recovery following these easing of restrictions. Note that these impacts are relative to 2019, and is not accounting for the overall position of retail which has faced continual competition from online retailers.

1 Profile ID Town of Victoria Park Economic Profile - [COVID-19 Quarter Impacts](#)

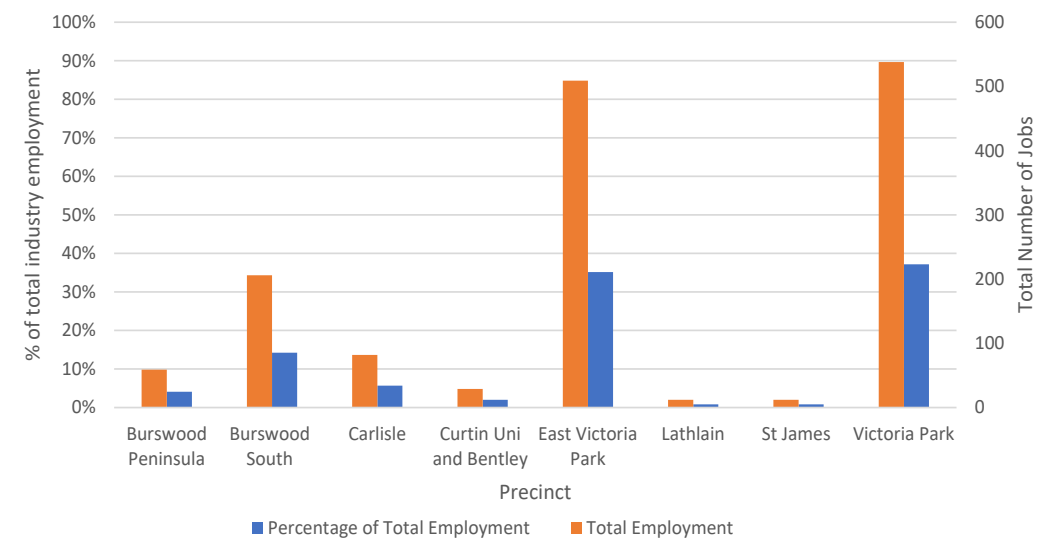
2 ibid, Profile ID

Figure 15 - Accommodation and food services employment by precinct 2016



Source: Profile.ID 2020, ABS Census 2016, FAR lane 2020

Figure 16 - Retail trade employment by precinct 2016

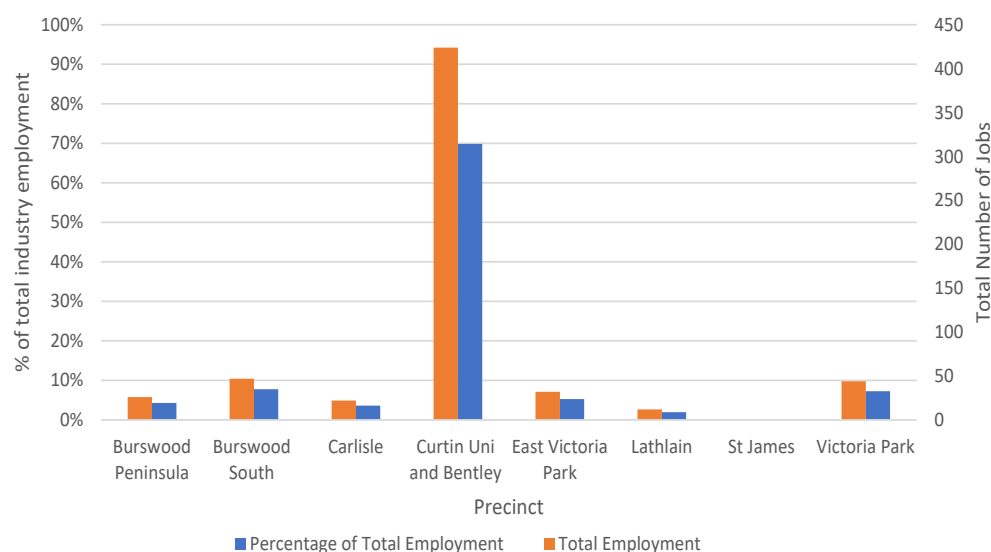


Source: Profile.ID 2020, ABS Census 2016, FAR lane 2020

Manufacturing

Manufacturing is also estimated to have experienced moderate declines in output and employment, with output decreasing by 15% and employment by 302 jobs¹. This sector is highly specialised and hence the impacts are expected to have been concentrated in the Curtin University/Bentley precinct (Figure 17) where the majority of employment in this sector is based.

Figure 17 - Manufacturing employment by precinct 2016

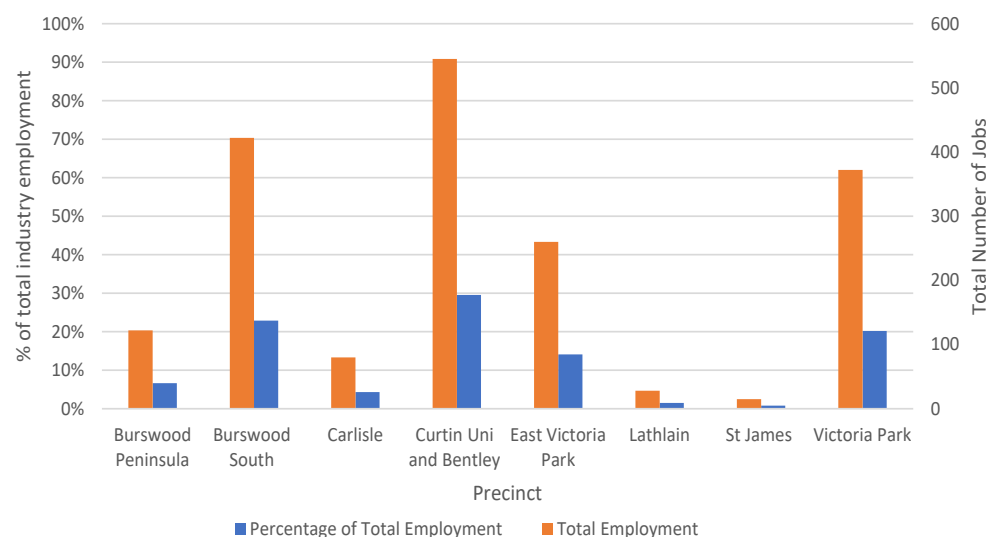


Source: Profile.ID 2020, ABS Census 2016, FAR lane 2020

Professional, scientific and technical services

There is a large representation of professional, scientific, and technical services in the Town and this sector has estimated moderate declines in output of 12.35%², corresponding to a reduction of 435 jobs which again may be overestimated. Interruptions to supply chains, and interstate travel are likely to have impacted the ability for some of these firms to conduct business in the Eastern states. Figure 18 shows that most employment in this sector is located in Burswood South, Curtin University/Bentley, and Victoria Park. These areas in particular have been most impacted by government restrictions and challenges conducting business for this sector. However, declines in employment and output are moderate and it is likely that individual businesses will have been impacted to different extents.

Figure 18 - Professional, scientific and technical services employment by precinct 2016



Source: Profile.ID 2020, ABS Census 2016, FAR lane 2020

1 Profile ID Town of Victoria Park Economic Profile - [COVID-19 Quarter Impacts](#)

2 ibid, Profile ID.



Key implications

Places in the Town of Victoria Park have been impacted by COVID-19 in different ways, and this varies based on the industry composition, types of businesses and residential population in each of these places.

The key findings from this analysis are:

- Compared to the Greater Perth and Western Australian economies, the Town is estimated to have experienced more negative impacts on gross regional products, but lower levels of job losses;
- Arts and Recreation Services, Construction and Accommodation were the industries that experienced the greatest declines in output and employment as a result of COVID-19. In the case of Arts, Recreation and Accommodation, these impacts are likely due to their exposure as predominantly in person / customer facing business models. The construction industry was likely impacted by international and interstate supply chain disruptions, increases in materials costs for imported products, and the influence of social distancing measures on the working environment;
- Due to the concentration of business within places:
 - Burswood Peninsula is the precinct believed to be most greatly impacted by declines in Arts and Recreation output and employment due to the amount of related businesses located in that area;
 - Construction industry impacts are likely to have been most prominent in Burswood Peninsula, Burswood South and Victoria Park; and
 - Accommodation and food service impacts are expected to have impacted Burswood Peninsula, East Victoria Park, and Victoria Park to the greatest extent;
- Footfall and transaction data show a return to pre-COVID levels of expenditure and precinct visitation. This is indicative of a relatively sharp shock and recovery of economic activity in the Town, although broader economic consequences are likely to continue over the medium term; and
- Given WA's relative success in containing COVID-19, and avoidance of sustained lock downs compared to other states, it is possible that the impacts felt may be less than available data suggests.

Image: Town of Victoria Park Facebook page

INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT

A series of industry roundtables, as well as direct consultation with local stakeholders, produced the following insights into how COVID-19 impacted different industry types within the Town. A full summary of the outcomes of the roundtable discussions can be found in appendix 1 of this report.

Tourism, hospitality and retail

As predominantly customer facing industries, businesses within the tourism, hospitality and retail sectors were extremely vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19, the subsequent lock down period and ongoing restrictions. Observations from this group included:

- Most businesses in attendance reported having to shut down / close completely during the lock-down period.
- Two businesses reported that they haven't yet returned to their pre-COVID business hours.
- Businesses were forced to reposition their offer to their markets, including adopting e-commerce and new products and experiences. It was observed that those who didn't or weren't able to embrace 'going digital' to access their market tended to not perform as well as those taking a more flexible approach.
- Two businesses who reported not qualifying for JobKeeper. One narrowly missed the reduced income threshold, while the other was a new business owner, so did not have a previous year's income to compare to. The latter reported 'losing a lot of staff'.
- One business refurbished during lock-down, and was able to provide a new experience when re-opening, which attracted new customer segments.
- The community-initiated "Support our Strip" Facebook page has helped, providing promotion and a strong sense of community support for business owners.
- Some businesses were able to adapt incredibly quickly to evolve their offer as well as support their community. Examples include cafes pivoting to take away meals and selling small goods such as bread and milk, and kitchens providing free meals for students and hospitality workers.
- The South East Asian hospitality business community has been particularly resilient and has continued to leverage off its strengths of co-location and

attraction of local and regional customers, with several new businesses opening in close proximity to each other.

- Traditional retail has struggled, not least by the trend towards online retail and regional shopping centres.

Health, wellness and community

Businesses within the health, wellness and community sectors experienced similar challenges to tourism, hospitality and retail in that they are predominantly customer facing, including a significant level of physical interaction. They were well placed to understand and adopt hygiene and safety practices, with many already having strong practices in place as part of business as usual. Observations from this group included:

- Most businesses reported the challenge of responding 'overnight' to COVID-19 restrictions, and the stress and strain that placed on the staff. Constantly evolving requirements left many worrying excessively.
- A key challenge for many businesses was reconciling Government requirements around social distancing with the practicalities of their business (which often involved being physical contact with patients or clients).
- Businesses were forced to reposition their offer to their markets, including going online. This included offering online classes or coming up with new ways to deliver their products so that clients could self-administer within the home.
- Being classed as an essential service was also a challenge, being instructed to remain open but under very strict guidelines.
- One business reported that their main priority for going online and maintaining a steady presence was to ensure that their clients retained a connection to their fitness community as a way support to each other.
- One business reported having to close for 11 weeks, and has still not been able to re-hire two staff positions.
- With the exception of a very few sports most sporting clubs and activities were extremely vulnerable to lock-down measures and restrictions. Conversely, Tennis West experienced a significant increase in bookings across the state, as a 'COVID safe' sport (non-contact).

Professional Services

The professional services sector was the most diverse group engaged throughout the project, and included businesses involved in education, technology, pharmaceuticals, management consulting, retail and property development and automotives. Generally less customer facing organisations (with exception of education), COVID-19's impacts were more influenced by global markets, contracts and supply chains. Observations from this group included:

- Managing staff and client stress and uncertainty was a key challenge for this group, most of whom transitioned to work from home arrangements.
- JobKeeper was useful for many of the businesses involved, who have now been able to transition off the program.
- One technology business reported experiencing a boom, including having to take on more staff, as COVID-19 exposed them to new markets in the eastern states.
- One international business reported a significant impact to their operations due to global 'blanket policies' that didn't reflect regional realities. This impact was also felt initially by a business offering flexible work spaces who have locations throughout the Perth metropolitan area, and are usually utilised for meetings and temporary work spaces for international or interstate organisations.
- Within the automotive industry, restricted supply chains are delaying imports of new vehicles, while the demand for used vehicles has increased significantly, leading to increased prices.
- In the education sector, pivoting to online course delivery was essential for retaining both domestic and international students.
- A company specialising in synthetic and chemical medicinal chemistry became heavily involved in projects for the WA State Government in response to COVID-19, and donated pharmaceutical grade sanitiser at the height of the lockdown.
- The real estate and property development sector experienced an initial downturn, and were managing tenant and landlord stress and concern around paying rents.

Image: Town of Victoria Park Facebook page



SWOT ANALYSIS

The SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) provides a framework for understanding the key insights that have arisen from consultation with industry, local community and Town Council's Place Leaders, as well as the quantitative analysis. The SWOT then provides the basis for potential initiatives, and recommendations for the role of Local Government in supporting business in a world where COVID-19 continues to be a reality.

STRENGTHS

Engagement and data revealed the following strengths for Town Council to leverage as part of any COVID-19 Action Plan initiatives.

Strengths	Description	Relevant places	Relevant industries
Education and Knowledge Hub	<p>The location of Curtin University, TAFE Carlisle and Bentley and the Technology Park are a recognisable strength of the area, providing knowledge and expertise, with commercialisation opportunities. This is reflected in 22.1% of local workers employed in education and training, and 8.6% in professional services compared to 9.7 and 8.3 % respectively in Greater Perth¹. This differentiates the Town from other areas in Perth and provides an opportunity for future investment, and resilience in the coming years, particularly within sectors which will be critical for safeguarding Western Australia against future health crisis like COVID-19, for example biomedical and pharmaceuticals as well as technology.</p> <p>Technology Park and Curtin University may also play an important role in driving and supporting new start-ups and enterprise location, making it an attractive place for new businesses to consider. There is an opportunity to enhance the accessibility, functionality and collaborative potential of Technology Park, to unlock its true potential, and with that, local jobs during construction phases.</p>	Curtin, Bentley, Carlisle	Education and training professional, science and technical services.
The WA Bubble	Businesses consulted acknowledge an advantage inherent in being in Western Australia which, due to strict border controls, is having a less disrupted experience than other Australian states and territories. Perth's isolation, which is normally perceived as a burden, is now viewed as a key strength to be leveraged to promote greater consumer confidence when it comes to spending money in the local economy, particularly in the event of another lock-down.	All places	All industries
A supportive community	The Town's community has traditionally been highly engaged, active and supportive of local business. This was evidenced by the Support our Strip online community that was created by community members to support businesses during the COVID-19 lock down. While initially focussed on the Albany Highway main street (the strip), the group has now broadened its scope to include any business situated within the Local Government area. The group has approximately 5,000 members and remains active to this day. It is a valuable resource that continues to be mobilised for the benefit of the local economy now, and in the event of a second wave and further restrictions.	Predominantly Victoria Park and East Victoria Park, but relevant to other areas.	Predominantly retail, hospitality, food and beverage, health, wellbeing and community, but extends to other industry types.
Strong and positive perceptions of Local Government	Overwhelmingly, businesses had very positive experiences to report when dealing with Local Government. Putting aside the common issues of responsiveness and accessibility, businesses tended to report that overall, the Local Government nurtured positive relationships with industry, and was perceived to be a progressive and proactive institution, particularly compared to other Local Government areas. There was a genuine appreciation for the work that Town Council staff do, and for the support and advocacy of Executive and Elected Members.	All places	All industries
Strong and diverse place based economy	During engagement, businesses tended to agree that the Town's diverse places and industries were a key strength that should be leveraged and promoted to attract investment. For those who were able to pivot during COVID-19 and transform their business model, there is the potential that they come 'out the other side' with a stronger sense of strategic intent which enhances their resilience and that of the local economy.	All places	All industries

WEAKNESSES

The following underlying issues may present challenges when planning and implementing any COVID-19 Action Plan initiatives.

Weaknesses	Description	Relevant places	Relevant industries
Wait and see approach	There is a perceived lack of forward planning by State and Local Governments, as well as a general sense of uncertainty within the community, around which local operators have advised makes it challenging to plan. As a result, many businesses are taking a 'wait and see' approach, and holding off on spending or investing in their business until they have a better sense of certainty. This presents a risk, as it becomes increasingly clear that uncertainty will remain a constant moving forward, and that the path to 'recovery' will not be linear. At some stage, businesses will need the confidence to keep investing.	All places	All industries
Reduced financial buffers	Federal stimulus packages have not been uniformly accessible to businesses, who have advised that in the case of the instant asset write off mechanisms, many are not able to utilise it because they don't have the capital to make the initial investment in new assets. In addition, many businesses are no longer eligible for the JobKeeper payment, but job security remains a real concern for them. In this environment, there is a risk that business resilience is being worn down, which presents issues in the event of a second wave and a series of lock downs in Western Australia.	Predominantly Victoria Park and East Victoria Park, but relevant to other areas.	Predominantly retail, hospitality, food and beverage, health, wellbeing and community, but extends to other industry types.
Business and community resilience	The Victorian experience of a second major wave of COVID-19 and a subsequent and extended hard lock-down has provided the rest of Australia with a strong warning of what could face other local and state economies. In contrast to the first lock-down which was experienced nation-wide and was characterised by grit, community spirit and determination, Victoria's experience of a second wave has been characterised more by mental health challenges, financial distress and significant fatigue. Businesses in particular have observed and absorbed the Victorian experience, and as a result, there is a sense of anxiety around how local communities and businesses would cope in the same situation, and with depleted reserves of capital and resilience.	All places	All industries
Lack of understanding of Local Government support	A strong theme that came up in consultation was that businesses generally weren't aware or across what Local Government support was available, and as such, missed out on benefitting from initiatives. Businesses acknowledged that while they felt that Town Council could do better on communicating about relevant projects, support and initiatives, that they also had a role to play in ensuring they read updates from Town Council. A challenge for many businesses was finding the time to read Local Government communication, as emails and social media updates were often missed or overlooked in favour of more urgent or important tasks.	All places	All industries
Lack of collaboration enterprises	Engagement revealed that communication and collaboration between enterprises, even within precincts such as Technology Park, is limited, presenting an opportunity cost for innovation. As a result, businesses of all sizes appear to be largely 'going it alone', including during COVID-19, when opportunities to co-invest in solutions (i.e. PPE) may have been of significant advantage to small businesses in particular.	All places	All industries

OPPORTUNITIES

Engagement and data revealed the following opportunities for the Town of Victoria Park to realise as part of any COVID-19 Action Plan initiatives.

Opportunities	Description	Relevant places	Relevant industries
Embracing a 'new normal'	During engagement, businesses engaged saw COVID-19 as an opportunity to change behaviours and norms and to innovate, evolve their businesses and contribute to finding solutions to existing local, regional and global challenges. This includes accepting and integrating COVID-19 as 'part of the game', and a constant moving forward, rather than waiting for a time when it will no longer exist, before making any further investments. Businesses also noted that their customers and staff have used COVID-19 to re-evaluate what is important in life, and are making significant decisions around their work, where they live and how they spend their free time.	All places	All industries
Activating the Town	Local businesses agreed that a strong calendar of small - medium sized events that encourage foot traffic and visitation to the commercial centres of the Town will provide opportunities for retail, hospitality, art and recreation and food and beverage operators. By having more, smaller events, as opposed to large scale events, the benefits of additional visitation activation can be spread more evenly over time, and smaller events will be less likely to impact on businesses who may not traditionally benefit from events or activation, ensuring their customers always have access to them (i.e. Parking and transport routes).	Victoria Park, Burswood Peninsula, East Victoria Park	Predominantly retail, hospitality, food and beverage, health, arts and recreation.
Developing destination awareness	Businesses located on the Albany Highway main street identified an opportunity to leverage off the strong 'support local' sentiment that has arisen in the wake of COVID-19 across Australia, and to channel that sentiment into generating a strong sense of pride and destination awareness and attract visitors from the region to Victoria Park's unique commercial strip. This also includes being willing to 'let go' of antiquated or traditional models of what main streets looked like 50 years ago, and allowing the strip to evolve, focussing on its strengths and co-location opportunities.	Victoria Park, Burswood Peninsula, East Victoria Park	Predominantly retail, hospitality, food and beverage, health, arts and recreation.
Building new networks	Discussions with local businesses uncovered an underlying demand for more networking opportunities within the Town. Several opportunities for collaboration were identified throughout the industry roundtable discussions alone, and attending businesses agreed that it would be beneficial to have access to more opportunities for businesses to meet face to face. Leveraging off the Town's strong community spirit, and the need for businesses to bolster their resilience in uncertain and challenging time, a formal business network could perform an important function in being a place of support and solution and ideas generation for local operators.	All places	All industries
Keep it simple	Engagement with Town Council's Place Leaders about the Local Government's initial response to COVID-19 revealed that there is an opportunity, in the event of a second wave of COVID-19 in Western Australia, to take a more focussed approach to supporting local businesses. Rather than trying to 'do everything', the Place Leaders expressed that they might have a greater impact by selecting a small number of targeted initiatives and resourcing and delivering them extremely well.	All places	All industries
Increased collaboration	There is an opportunity to build on the local community's strong response to COVID-19 and build stronger collaboration between Local Government, local business and community.	All places	All industries

OPPORTUNITIES CONTINUED

Opportunities	Description	Relevant places	Relevant industries
Public realm enhancements	As part of long term planning to attract investment, there is an opportunity to focus on enhancing public realms to create safer and more vibrant centres, attracting new residents and businesses.	Carlisle, St James	All industries
Density creating a strong local market	As part of long term planning, there is an opportunity to increase the Town's residential and commercial density. In Burswood Peninsula, increased residential density may result in resulting in additional businesses that open being supported locally, rather than relying on just visitors travelling to the area and reducing the areas exposure to future shocks. In the Curtin and Bentley area there is potential for densification, intensification, consolidation and diversification of land use. Major change at Curtin University, a key anchor for the Bentley area, is already subject to a program of major redevelopment and land use diversification, as COVID has created a need to change business offering and approach to teaching. This can create opportunities for collaboration and new ways of thinking about the role of Curtin as an anchor and Victoria Park and surrounding businesses as neighbours.	Burswood Peninsula, Curtin and Bentley	All industries
Unlocking Tech Park potential	With the State Government investing in the City of South Perth portion of Technology Park, there is an opportunity to leverage the comparative advantage of this precinct, and enhance it through greater accessibility and planning, and creating mechanisms that facilitate greater connection and collaboration between tenants to develop a functional cluster.	Curtin and Bentley	Education and training, professional, science and technical services.
Employable residents	The Federal Government's new JobMaker Hiring Credit will help to accelerate growth in employment during the recovery by giving businesses incentives to take on additional employees that are young job seekers aged 16 to 35 years old. The JobMaker Hiring Credit is a key part of the Government's JobMaker Plan to boost Australia's economic recovery. Compared to Greater Perth, the Town has a larger proportion of adults aged between 20 and 35 ¹ , and there is an opportunity for local businesses to utilise this mechanism to create employment opportunities for locals, while also being able to attract high quality and affordable staff.	All places	Predominantly retail, hospitality, food and beverage, health, wellbeing and community, but extends to other industry types.
Construction industry opportunities	Over 20% of output in the Town in 2016 was from construction ² . Although this industry has experienced declines from COVID according to the ABS September COVID figures, there is a potential opportunity to take advantage of increased investment in construction by the State Government over the medium term. This includes leveraging the Building Bonus Grants as well as the State and Federal Governments commitment to invest in road and rail infrastructure, which have the potential to fuel demand, leading to impacts for a relatively large proportion of construction businesses in the Town.	Welshpool, East Victoria Park, Burswood South, Curtin	Construction
A more proximate community	A larger proportion of residents working from home presents an opportunity to increase expenditure in the the Town. If 70% of workers from office based industries were to work from home, and spend \$20 per week, this could equate to approximately \$1.4m of additional local expenditure per annum or \$30,000 ³ per week in the Town.	Victoria Park, East Victoria Park	Predominantly retail, hospitality, food and beverage.

1 Profile ID Town of Victoria Park [Economic Profile](#)

2 ibid, Profile ID

3 FAR Lane, 2020

THREATS

The following threats may present challenges for the Town of Victoria Park and local businesses when planning for and implementing COVID-19 Action Plan initiatives.

Opportunities	Description	Relevant places	Relevant industries
A second wave	A second wave of COVID-19, resulting in a lock-down or significant restrictions on local businesses, represents a real threat that creates ongoing anxiety and concern for operators in the Town. While Western Australia's experiences have been relatively sheltered through its physical isolation and strong border controls, a plan to open borders (albeit as 'controlled'), is viewed as an opportunity but also a threat, as it brings with it the assumption that there will be further outbreaks of COVID-19 in Western Australia, as seen in other states. There is a perceived lack of planning or preparation for a second wave, which businesses who were engaged raised as an area of concern and anxiety in terms of how businesses would cope, and how consumers might respond.	Predominantly Victoria Park, East Victoria Park, Burswood Peninsula, but extends to other places.	Predominantly retail, hospitality, food and beverage, health, wellbeing and community, but extends to other industry types.
Delayed planning, projects and funding	A potential flow on effect of COVID-19 is the delay of planned major redevelopments and new builds, resulting in stagnation and uncertainty for existing businesses and tenants. While State and Federal Governments earmark significant investment and funding in projects, COVID-19 is likely to force some re-scoping and re-prioritisation, which could result in delays. In the case of places such as Burswood Peninsula, where the State Government has already invested a significant amount in the area, any delays or changes to future investment will impact the momentum that has been generated to date, impacting on the place's ability to reach its potential.	All places	All industries
Cluster competition	With government interest in the creation of innovation precincts as a stimulus measure, the Town's Technology Park will be in competition with more functional clusters in other Local Government areas. There is even potential for internal competition, with interest in the development of an innovation precinct in Burswood South. While the Park has some strong natural advantages, there are implementation and political hurdles to overcome to unlock its potential as a thriving and functional cluster.	Curtin and Bentley	Education and training professional, scientific and technical services
International organisation restructures	The potential restructuring of international organisations in response to COVID-19 could be a threat to areas overrepresented by these types of businesses. In the case of Curtin, Bentley and Technology Park, the areas comparative advantage and status as a knowledge hub could be impacted by restructures such as those flagged by Pfizer, who are set to completely shut down their Technology Park operations by 2024 ¹ , putting approximately 400 jobs at risk. The impact of the loss of this amount of jobs in one place will also potentially have flow on impacts for the area, particularly for the local services sector.	Curtin and Bentley	Professional, scientific and technical services
Chain reaction	As COVID-19 places additional strains on small to medium enterprises, there is a risk that larger chains, who are more resilient to new and ongoing shocks like COVID-19 will begin to dominate main street areas. This has the potential to edge out smaller operators and diminish the uniqueness of the Albany Highway main street offer and value proposition. In places such as St James, an increase in chain retail with poor design quality and lack of public realm investment could reduce the quality and liveability potential for the area. This is in addition to the acceleration of the movement to online shopping, which was already putting strain on the retail sector.	Predominantly Victoria Park, East Victoria Park and St James	Predominantly retail, hospitality, food and beverage.

¹ Hamish Hastie, WA Today, "[Hundreds of jobs at risk as pharmaceutical giant confirms its pulling out of Perth](#)". October 2020

CONVERGING THEMES

Engagement and data analysis revealed the following areas of convergence relating to concerns and opportunities across industry and place. Potential roles for Town Council to support local business and linkages to the strategic context in which these themes arise (see page 10) are provided.

THE NEW NORMAL

Engagement highlighted that uncertainty about the future (including the short term) is a major challenge for local business when making investment decisions. Stakeholders discussed that until recently, recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 has been assumed, and that recovery would mean 'going back to the way things were'. but now acknowledge that this is no longer a realistic assumption. A 'new normal' must be prepared for, and in the words of one businesses representative, "we need start planning for "COVID-19 to be part of the game"", rather than a obstacle with a start, beginning and end. Engagement identified the need for a planning approach that embraces a 'new normal' both as a challenge to overcome but more importantly as an opportunity to do things differently and better than before. This thinking applies not only to strategic forward thinking, and enhancing the Town's value proposition as a place to do business, but to short and medium term planning, which can address real concerns about how the local economy might deal

with a second-wave of COVID-19, be that a state-wide issue or a local cluster, and returning to a lock-down state.

Potential role for Local Government:

- Assist businesses to prepare for a second wave by providing information about potential future COVID-19 scenarios, what they can expect from Local Government, and what they can do to increase their resilience; and
- Focus on initiatives that provide some medium to long term certainty that local businesses can plan for.

Strategic linkages

- Sustainability - Enhancing resilience through proactive planning.
- Job creation - Build confidence to invest and hire by providing long term outlooks businesses can plan around.

COMMUNICATION

Communication between Town Council and local businesses was raised as an area for improvement across all industry groups. Attending businesses raised that they were often not aware of Local Government initiatives or programs that were there to support them, but equally acknowledged that they have limited time to locate and absorb communications from Town Council (i.e. via e-newsletters, website or social media). Engagement highlighted that it is critical that local businesses understand how Town Council can support them, what current initiatives and projects may be relevant

to them (in terms of impacts and opportunities) and also have a clear and reliable contact within the organisation who they can meet with face to face when required.

Attendees acknowledged that there is a role for business to play in ensuring they are not only subscribed to e-newsletters but also taking the time to read them, and that Town Council may need to take a more nuanced approach to communications and experiment with different formats for different businesses, recognising the range of communication preferences.

Potential role for Local Government:

- Proactive communication with business and community groups to provide updates on economic development initiatives and learning about their plans for the future;
- Investigate different communication tools to increase business exposure to Local Government information, and make getting that information streamlined and efficient; and
- Assess how culturally and linguistically diverse stakeholders can be better engaged, to ensure their views are being captured, and the broader community can benefit from their experience and insights.

Strategic linkages

- Connection - Ensuring business and community feel connected to their Local Government 'support team' and have clear sources of information to help them plan and make decisions.

CONVERGING THEMES

NETWORKS

The lack of formal business networks within the Town was flagged during engagement, with businesses across industries agreeing that opportunities to network and connect would be extremely valuable moving forward. The roundtable discussions provided an opportunity for business owners and representatives who had never met before to connect and understand each others experiences and offerings. On more than one occasion during discussions, attendees identified another business they wanted to connect with following the session to discuss ideas and mutual opportunities. These networks would not only provide an opportunity for businesses to jointly advocate to Local Government, but would provide a source of support and opportunities to collaborate on initiatives for the benefit of local industries.

Potential role for Local Government:

- Facilitate and resource the development of local business networks;
- Continue support for local community groups whose activities are aimed at generating activity and attracting visitors to the Town;
- Encourage and facilitate collaboration between businesses on destination marketing and place activation initiatives.

Strategic linkages

- Connection - Building and strengthening inter-industry connections and collaboration.
- Diversity - Creating a platform that can advocate for the Town's diverse businesses, industries and places.

ACTIVATION

Resident and commercial density, place activation and public realm enhancements emerged as priorities for Town Council to attract investment, new residents, visitors and to strengthen the local market, and thereby reducing the Town's exposure to impacts from future external shocks (e.g. a second wave of COVID-19). It emerged as important to retain and celebrate the Town's unique value proposition across a range of industries and places, and to attract investment and new business that builds on these characteristics.

Potential role for Local Government:

- Ensure events and activation opportunities (and benefits) are shared across the Local Government area;
- Facilitate the growth of a unique hospitality and tourism offering; and
- Review planning frameworks in key locations to ensure they reflect current place and precinct potential, opportunities and challenges.

Strategic linkages

- Sustainability - Providing long term outlook for events and activation planning to create sustainable offer for visitors and locals which businesses can leverage.
- Job creation - Creating local job opportunities through infrastructure and activation projects.

POTENTIAL INITIATIVES

The following eight initiatives represent a program of complementary activities that work together to achieve strong impacts for the Town's local businesses, as well as areas of intervention most suited to the role and remit of Local Government, as well as the expectations of local businesses engaged.

Details		IMPACT ON THEMATIC AREAS				Scope	
Initiative	New Normal	Communication	Networks	Activation	Timeframes	Resources	KPIs*
Events calendar Utilise Town Council's existing events program to promote more industry-led events to create a strong and long term pipeline of small to medium sized local events that activate spaces across Victoria Park and attract visitors to commercial areas.	A long term pipeline of events gives some certainty to businesses who benefit from increased visitors (local and external) to the Town.	Local businesses would be provided with the information they need to maximise on planned events (i.e. How to get involved, impacts on local access). This could be facilitated via the existing Business Events Calendar, which could be enhanced to include external and internally managed events.	Collaborative approaches to event development, operations and marketing contribute to an increase local and external visitors / attendance.	More events that are smaller in size have the potential to activate places that cannot cater to large events (providing opportunities for more places to benefit). In addition, smaller events have less of an impact on access and parking, reducing issues for co-located business owners.	Opportunity to consolidate a strong calendar for Christmas 2020 to support local businesses. 2021- 2022 for strategic events outreach and development.	Events budget Proactive engagement to attract external events (where appropriate). Planning and approvals.	Increase in number of local events year on year. Increased online engagement with Vic Park Business Events Calendar. Positive event feedback from visitors and businesses. Increased event participation (where it (possible- i.e. ticketed events).
Town of Victoria Park Business Network A formal business network that space and time for local businesses to connect and collaborate. Distinct from the Business Advisory Group (BAG) by having it's own strategic intent and function beyond providing feedback on Town Council initiatives.	The ability of the local economy to respond to future challenges and opportunities will be enhanced through the provision of resources that facilitate connection, networking and support amongst the local business community.	The business network can provide a valuable conduit for information from the Local Government to businesses, helping critical updates, support and opportunities reach more local business owners and representatives.	The business network would address a current lack of formal mechanisms (i.e. Chamber of Commerce) that are specific to the Town of Victoria Park.	Business networking may lead to greater communication between co-located businesses, enabling opportunities to collaborate on initiatives that could enhance the public realm (i.e. Joint investment in painting, events, promotions, parklets and safety upgrades).	Establishment, 2021 Operations, ongoing.	Potential for Town Council to provide an internal resource that can kick-start the development of the network and provide ongoing administrative support. It will be important to resource this group appropriately to ensure success. There is potential for the BAG to be consolidated with the Network, reducing duplication of function.	Number of businesses enrolled in the Town of Victoria Park network.

*Key performance indicators

POTENTIAL INITIATIVES

Details		IMPACT ON THEMATIC AREAS				Scope	
Initiative	New Normal	Communication	Networks	Activation	Timeframes	Resources	KPIs*
Second Wave Plan A plan for how Local Government will respond to what local businesses perceive as an 'inevitable second wave' and the resulting lock-down restrictions.	A proactive plan for a potential second (or multiple) lock-down period will contribute to consumer and business confidence. Remove the bottle necking of Local Government decision making to facilitate being adaptive.	Business will understand potential scenarios and impacts of a second wave and what they can be considering to prepare. Consumers will understand how they can continue to support and engage with their local economy in the event of a second-wave.	A formal business network can provide live feedback and input into the plan on behalf of local businesses. It can also facilitate initiatives that benefit local businesses (i.e. bulk PPE orders) that might not be within the remit of Local Government.	A second-wave plan can communicate to businesses how they can be innovative with space to meet any capacity restrictions, helping more businesses to remain open and attract local markets.	Priority task December 2020-February 2021 with ongoing review	Coordination across key internal business units. Strong communications plan and a clear communication channel 'one source of truth' for Local Government to share news and updates with businesses. Reinstate successful elements from first wave initiatives.	Increased number of businesses subscribed to Town communication channels.
Town of Victoria Destination Marketing Campaign A destination marketing campaign that promotes the Town to a broad range of local and intrastate visitor types (i.e. leisure, education, business) increasing economic activity within the Town.	Leveraging off Tourism WA and Destination Perth's local tourism campaigns (in response to COVID-19 and border restrictions), there is an opportunity to raise awareness and pride for the diverse and iconic offerings in the Town.	Local businesses will be empowered with access to high quality marketing collateral and material that they can use to promote their business and the Town more broadly.	A destination marketing campaign that celebrates the Town as a whole encourages a collaborative approach to product and experience development.	Business networking may lead to greater communication between co-located businesses, enabling opportunities to collaborate on initiatives that could attract visitors to the precinct.	Establishment, 2021 Operations, ongoing.	Local brand advocates - leveraging local champions. Destination identity and brand development, either through internal or external marketing expertise.	Businesses across all sectors are using common language and messaging about the Town of Victoria as a destination. Businesses are engaging in strategic collaborative marketing initiatives. Increased visitation across all visitor types (education, leisure, business).

*Key performance indicators

POTENTIAL INITIATIVES

Details		IMPACT ON THEMATIC AREAS				Scope	
Initiative	New Normal	Communication	Networks	Activation	Timeframes	Resources	KPIs*
Public realm upgrades Fast-track high impact public realm upgrades in Town Centres that are already planned.	Upgrades to the planning framework for the Town centres can give immediate clarity and stimulate development.	Local businesses are kept up to date on public realm upgrades and planning, ensuring their points of view are considered in the process, and helping them to plan for and capitalise on the enhancements.	Business networks are activated to facilitate strong engagement with the local economy during any review and planning processes.	Public realm upgrades provide more spaces, and therefore more opportunities for unique events and activation initiatives which can attract visitors to Victoria Park.	2021 internal review periods	Internal review and approval processes. Coordination with relevant internal business units.	Increase in number of upgrade projects fast-tracked and implemented, compared with current plans.
Targeted business contact drive A one-off push to proactively engage local businesses and bring them into the Local Government communication system.	Ensuring as many businesses as possible have information about what is currently happening in the economic development space, but also engaging with them about plans for their place in the future.	Utilise opportunity to ensure as many businesses as possible are registered on the Victoria Park Local Business Directory and subscribed to the Vic Park Biz e-newsletter.	Enlist interest and membership in a Town of Victoria Park Business Network. Taking a proactive approach to reaching out to the culturally and linguistically diverse business community to ensure their perspectives and needs are understood, and that they are included in ongoing engagement activities.	It will be easier to reach more businesses to help them understand and prepare for upcoming events and activation initiatives, as well as how any public realm upgrades may impact them in short, medium and long term.	Early 2021	Economic Development team to consider whether casual or temporary staff can be onboarded for a one-off activity to visit businesses one-on-one. Utilisation of roaming ipads / laptops to capture business details and images. Alternatively adopt a paper based approach.	Increased engagement with Town of Victoria Park website - particularly: Events calendar Local business directory Increased subscription to Vic Park Biz e-newsletter.

*Key performance indicators

POTENTIAL INITIATIVES

Details		IMPACT ON THEMATIC AREAS				Scope	
Initiative	New Normal	Communication	Networks	Activation	Timeframes	Resources	KPIs*
COVID-19 tracking Track trends and provide ongoing updates to industry and community including (but not limited to): Impacts of working conditions (work from home); Change in consumer behaviours; and Uptake and impacts of stimulus packages and incentives on private investment behaviour within the Town.	Knowledge is power. Helping businesses to understand how the Victoria Park as a whole (as well as different places and industries) is impacted by COVID-19 on an ongoing basis can help put individual experiences into perspective, as well as contribute vital information for businesses to use to make investment decisions.	Data and the tracking of ongoing COVID-19 local trends provides a topic that local businesses and stakeholders and regularly expect to receive from the Town of Victoria Park, enhancing the flow of communication.	Business networks can contribute to this data by providing insights from the business community about their experiences.	Business and consumer confidence may be enhanced through these regular trends updates, helping to ensure that any events and activation initiatives received maximum attendance, or, alternatively, businesses can identify risks early and plan accordingly.	Ongoing	Economic development team to develop a template for ongoing updates which draws on reliable and regularly updated data sets, and ongoing engagement with business through the Town of Victoria Park Business Network. Communications team to provide support in design and dissemination of updates.	Development and maintenance of longitudinal data set that describes the impacts of COVID-19 on the Town over time.
Supporting Support our Strip Act in support of Support our Strip Facebook page to align messaging across community, business and Local Government.	The hugely successful Support our Strip Facebook page had it's highest impact during the lock-down period, but continues to be active today. As the local economy adjusts to a new normal, where COVID-19 is 'part of the game, there is scope for Local Government to investigate how it can support the group to continue its work.	Where appropriate, and within the remit and goals of the group, there is an opportunity for key updates and information to be shared with local businesses through the page.	Aligning COVID-19 updates and messaging across key business network mechanisms such as Support our Strip and the the Town of Victoria Park Business Network (if established) will assist with reducing any confusion within the business community.	A key impact of the Support our Strip page has been it's ability to capture and generate local pride for the main street. This momentum should be leveraged to attract more visitors to the area, and raise awareness amongst residents about local offerings.	2021, with annual review	Coordination with Support our Strip Facebook Group administration to understand how Local Government can support ongoing operation of the group. Sharing communication materials and updates.	Aligned COVID-19 messaging across Local Government and Support our Strip facebook page.

*Key performance indicators

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Town of Victoria Park COVID-19 Impacts and Opportunities Industry Roundtables - Workshop Summary

REFERENCES

Australian Bureau of Statistics, Precinct Employment Data, 2016

Commonwealth Bank Transaction Data, 2020, access provided by the Town of Victoria Park

Profile ID, Town of Victoria Park Data Sets:

- Economic Profile, November 2020
- Community Profile, November 2020
- COVID-19 Quarter Impacts, November 2020
- Business Trends, November 2020

Western Australian Government

- COVID-19 Coronavirus: WA Roadmap
- WA Recovery Plan

The Treasury, Australian Federal Government, Economic Response to the Corona Virus

Hamish Hastie, WA Today, "Hundreds of jobs at risk as pharmaceutical giant confirms its pulling out of Perth". October 2020

Town of Victoria Park

- Local Government call data, 2019 & 2020
- Pedestrian footfall data, 2015- 2020
- COVID-19 community and business engagement survey

Image: Town of Victoria Park Facebook page



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Image: Town of Victoria Park Facebook Page



FAR lane



COVID-19 IMPACT AND OPPORTUNITY INDUSTRY ROUNDTABLES

TOWN OF VICTORIA PARK
OCTOBER 2020



INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 has, and continues to have a significant impact on economies and communities of all sizes around the world. Understanding these impacts, so that residents and businesses can be supported appropriately, has been an ongoing and evolving challenge for governments at all levels.

Through a series of initiatives, the Town of Victoria Park are actively engaging with community, business and stakeholders to understand how COVID-19 is impacting the community and the role that Local Government can play in the short, medium and long term to help the Town's residents and businesses to survive, recover, and ultimately, thrive in a world where COVID may continue to be an ongoing risk.

RE-START VIC PARK

In May 2020, the Town of Victoria Park Council endorsed a number of initiatives to support the Town of Victoria Park community (residents and businesses) throughout COVID-19. One of these initiatives was the Re-Start Vic Park Strategy, which outlines the Council's overall approach to responding and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim of this strategy is to detail how the Town will facilitate the recovery of its community following the COVID-19 pandemic.

The strategy will seek to:

- Define Council's goals through three impact phases;
- Identify Council's priority in achieving those goals; and
- Outline how priorities will be implemented.

Re-Start Vic Park is accompanied by the Town's COVID-19 Action Plan. The Action Plan is a live and evolving document which details the actions and projects that the Town will implement to achieve the objectives of the COVID-19 Response Strategy. The COVID-19 Action Plan will continue to be updated as the recovery process evolves and new actions and projects are identified.

The Town of Victoria Park have earmarked an additional \$500,000 specifically to implement initiatives relating to the COVID-19 Action Plan.

IMPACT AND OPPORTUNITIES ASSESSMENT

A key document that will inform further iterations of the Town's COVID-19 Action Plan is an Impact and Opportunities Assessment. FAR Lane have been contracted by the Town of Victoria Park to develop this assessment, which will seek to explore the following:

- Define the extent of the initial impact of COVID-19 on local businesses, industry types and the Town of Victoria Park economy.
- Identify opportunities arising from the impact of COVID-19 that will benefit local businesses, industry types, the Town of Victoria Park local economy; and
- Understand the impacts and opportunities from both a Place and Town-wide perspective.

FAR Lane are currently working with the Town of Victoria Park on this initiative, with the final report due in November 2020.

INDUSTRY ROUNDTABLES

The Impact and Opportunities Assessment will draw on a range of primary and secondary sources to produce as robust an understanding as possible of the effects of COVID-19 on the local economy. A key source of data will be direct engagement with local businesses, facilitated through a series of roundtable discussions and meetings organised by the Town of Victoria Park.

Three discussions were held between October 12-23, and were attended by 22 businesses. These groups were organised into related industries, to help focus discussions and identify and understand the varied experiences of COVID-19 across different sectors and places.

The roundtables provided an opportunity for these businesses to sit down with Local Government Council Members and staff members and share:

- Their experiences of COVID-19;
- What they see as the key risks to be managed moving forward;
- What they see as the key opportunities that their business, industry or the Town can realise; and
- Ideas and suggestions for the role Local Government can play in supporting businesses moving forward.

This report first provides a summary of each group's discussions (recognising the varied experiences), and then identifies emerging themes and potential key action areas.

TOURISM, RETAIL AND HOSPITALITY

Attendees	6 businesses (including 2 written submissions) 4 Town of Victoria Park representatives	
Business types represented	Arts Markets Tour group	Hotel and pub Retail shop Retail centres
Key places represented	Albany Highway Retail and Hospitality Strip	

YOUR BUSINESS'S EXPERIENCE OF COVID-19?

The following experiences were raised by attending businesses:

- Most businesses in attendance reported having to shut down / close completely during the lock-down period.
- Two businesses reported that they haven't yet returned to their pre-COVID business hours.
- Businesses were forced to reposition their offer to their markets, including adopting e-commerce and experiences.
- Two businesses reported not qualifying for JobKeeper. One narrowly missed the reduced income threshold, while the other was a new business owner, so did not have a previous year's income to compare to. The latter reported 'losing a lot of staff'.
- One business refurbished during lock-down, and was able to provide a new experience to customers when re-opening, which attracted new markets.
- The community-initiated "Support our Strip" Facebook page has helped, providing promotion and a strong sense of community support for business owners.



Image: Town of Victoria Park Facebook Page

KEY RISKS AND CHALLENGES MOVING FORWARD?

The following risk and challenges were raised by attending businesses:

- There is a general reluctance to invest when experiencing such uncertainty.
- A second wave of COVID-19 was viewed by the group as largely inevitable, with concern around how this would be managed.
- Federal Government asset write-off mechanisms are not uniformly helpful or accessible, because "you have to have money to spend money".
- Christmas represents a critical income period for this group, and this year there is an even greater reliance on a successful holiday season.
- Businesses operating in the events space noted the impact of national blanket policies on social distancing. For example, a business who might usually book their Christmas event in Victoria Park is unable to due to corporate guidelines restricting staff gatherings, despite the risks in Western Australia differing significantly from other states and territories.
- Car parking is an ongoing area of confusion for businesses along the strip. It has not been clear to all if / when free parking was implemented by the Town in an effort to attract people to the Albany Highway strip. In addition, the notion of 'parklets' and 'car free days' was also perceived differently within the group, with some seeing the removal of any parking spaces as a barrier for potential customers who tend to access the area by car, and others seeing an opportunity for more alfresco dining and street activation.

TOURISM, RETAIL AND HOSPITALITY

KEY OPPORTUNITIES MOVING FORWARD?

The following opportunities were raised during the discussion:

- Businesses see an opportunity to actively prepare for a second-wave of COVID-19 in Western Australia, so that impacts can be minimised as much as possible.
- Activating Victoria Park will be critical for bringing visitors and locals to key retail and hospitality precincts. The group agreed that more, smaller events that encourage foot traffic and don't impact on accessibility (parking) will have a better outcomes for all businesses along the strip, not just hospitality. It was also identified as important to ensure events are shared fairly across the strip and Victoria Park more broadly, to disperse benefits to more businesses.
- Businesses tended to agree that there is an opportunity to capitalise on the strong community sentiment to 'support local' (evidenced by the incredibly successful "Support our Strip" Facebook page), and to continue building pride and recognition for Victoria Parks unique and extensive retail and hospitality strip - to attract more locals and visitors alike.
- Access to Albany Highway could be better promoted as an easy place to access via public transport and cycling / walking. With the proposed new pedestrian-only bridge connecting Victoria Park and the City, there is an opportunity for local businesses to attract visitors.

WHAT CAN THE TOWN OF VICTORIA PARK DO?

Attending businesses identified the following potential areas of intervention for local government:

- Helping local businesses prepare for a second wave by communicating the different kinds of scenarios that businesses should be preparing for.
- Supporting a strong calendar of local events, and investing in activation. There should be a focus on smaller events and sharing the activation around Victoria Park.
- Providing a calendar of events that is specific to businesses, helping them to understand how an event might impact and benefit their business, and tips for maximising the events opportunity to generate visitors (i.e. through marketing and collaborations).
- Improving communications with local businesses to help ensure they get the important updates they need and are currently not seeing. Businesses acknowledged that the Town uses multiple communication channels (including email and social media) to communicate business updates, but that due to the nature of running a business, these updates often go unread or they are not even subscribe. There was a consensus that more proactive face to face interactions would be beneficial, or even experimenting with a paper-based communication system.
- Creating and implementing a destination marketing campaign that harnesses social media platforms and works collaboratively with retail precincts, giving businesses a platform from which to leverage their own marketing activities. This could be accompanied by training for Victoria Park businesses / tenants on consumer behaviour principles, brand principles and basic marketing planning.
- Considering business rates rebates.

Image: Town of Victoria Park Facebook Page



HEALTH, WELLNESS AND COMMUNITY

Attendees	7 businesses 3 Town of Victoria Park representatives	
Business types represented	Beauty services Fitness Physiotherapy	Retirement and aged care services Marketing and advertising Therapeutic services
Key places represented	Lathlain, Albany Highway Retail and Hospitality Strip, Bentley, Carlisle	

YOUR BUSINESS'S EXPERIENCE OF COVID-19?

The following experiences were raised by attending businesses:

- Most businesses reported the challenge of responding 'overnight' to COVID-19 restrictions, and the stress and strain that placed on the staff. Constantly evolving requirements left many worrying excessively.
- A key challenge for many businesses was reconciling Government requirements around social distancing with the practicalities of their business (which often involved being physical touch with patients or clients).
- Businesses were forced to reposition their offer to their markets, including going online. This included offering online classes or coming up with new ways to deliver their products so that clients could self-administer within the home.
- Being classed as an essential service was also a challenge, being instructed to remain open but under very strict guidelines.
- One business reported that their main priority for going online and maintaining a steady presence was to ensure that their clients retained a connection to their fitness community as a way support to each other.
- One business reported having to close for 11 weeks, and has still not been able to re-hire two staff positions.



Image: Town of Victoria Park Facebook Page

KEY RISKS AND CHALLENGES MOVING FORWARD?

The following risks and challenges were raised by attending businesses:

- Community perceptions of COVID-19 related risks in WA are impacting clients willingness to resume treatment or services with these industries. The businesses felt that people are still very scared or risk-averse when it comes to accessing health and wellbeing services, and that this is negatively impacting businesses. Inconsistent messages and requirements from State Government around social distancing is also influencing this risk (e.g. large numbers allowed in events, restaurants, however very limited numbers in health / therapeutic settings).
- The additional time and resources associated with cleaning and personal protective equipment (PPE) are having a significant impact on businesses. Extensive cleaning requirements are reducing the number of clients a service can see in one day, and the costs of PPE have been increasing since the start of lock-down.
- The group saw a lack of long term planning from the State Government as being a risk moving forward. With only short term plans or horizons available, it is challenging for businesses to plan or make investments.
- While some businesses saw a rise in business after lock-down, they have noticed client numbers beginning to drop in the lead up to Christmas.
- Businesses commented that JobKeeper was no longer available to many, but that job security remained an ongoing concern.

HEALTH, WELLNESS AND COMMUNITY

KEY OPPORTUNITIES MOVING FORWARD?

The following opportunities were raised during the discussion:

- The group acknowledged the privilege inherent in being in Western Australia which, due to strict border controls, is having a less disrupted experience than other Australian states and territories. Perth's isolation, which is normally perceived as a burden, is now viewed as a key strength to be leveraged.
- There is an opportunity for health, wellness and community industries to leverage off a trend within the population of people 'taking stock', and 're-assessing life priorities'. Some businesses in the group reported their clients coming back to their services with greater enthusiasm and an appreciation for health and connection in their lives. In the case of the retirement and aged care service, they have recorded a sharp increase in interest in retirement living, and have attributed this to a greater desire for community and connection, and an aversion to living alone.
- Business networking could be enhanced within Victoria Park, helping to connect businesses with complementary services together.

WHAT CAN THE TOWN OF VICTORIA PARK DO?

Attending businesses identified the following potential areas of intervention for local government:

- Promoting confidence within the community about how safe we are in Western Australia. The group felt that the Town could play a key role in helping get people back to using their local health, wellbeing and community services, by communicating that it's safe to do so.
- In the event of a second wave, educating consumers about who is still open for business by providing a registry of those businesses who are working with the right requirements in place, further promoting that sense of confidence.
- Providing a platform or space for more business networking. The Town of Victoria Park does not have an active business network or chamber of commerce that is linking business who provide complementary services together.
- Playing a role in coordinating the bulk purchase of PPE. By coordinating with local businesses who purchase PPE, the Town could play a key administrative role and with a large group order, new supply chains may become available which help to reduce the burden on individual businesses.

Image: Town of Victoria Park Facebook Page



PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Attendees	11 businesses 6 Town of Victoria Park representatives	
Business types represented	Operations and maintenance Property development Retail Education Laboratory technology Management consulting	Real estate Pharmaceuticals and synthetic and medicinal chemistry Automotives Flexible workspaces
Key places represented	Technology Park, Curtin University, Albany Highway Retail and Hospitality Strip, Burswood, Burswood Peninsula, Welshpool,	

YOUR BUSINESS'S EXPERIENCE OF COVID-19?

The following experiences were raised by attending businesses:

- Managing staff and client stress and uncertainty was a key challenge for this group, most of whom transitioned to work from home arrangements.
- JobKeeper was useful for many of the businesses involved, who have now been able to transition off the program.
- One technology business reported experiencing a boom-time, including having to take on more staff, as COVID-19 exposed them to new markets in the eastern states.
- One international business reported a significant impact to their operations due to global 'blanket policies' that didn't reflect regional realities. This impact was also felt initially by a business offering flexible work spaces who have locations throughout the Perth metropolitan area, and are usually utilised for meetings and temporary work spaces for international or interstate organisations.
- Within the automotive industry, restricted supply chains are delaying imports of new vehicles, while the demand for used vehicles has increased significantly, leading to increased prices.
- In the education sector, pivoting to online course delivery was essential for retaining both domestic and international students.
- A company specialising in synthetic and chemical medicinal chemistry became heavily

involved in projects for the WA State Government in response to COVID-19, and donated pharmaceutical grade sanitiser at the height of the lock-down.

- The real estate and property development sector experienced an initial downturn, and were managing tenant and landlord stress and concern around paying rents.

KEY RISKS AND CHALLENGES MOVING FORWARD?

The following risks and challenges were raised by attending businesses:

- Uncertainty and adapting to a new normal are seen as both a challenge and an opportunity within this group, who recognised that it is unlikely we will go back to 'the way things were'. It's unknown how long the impacts of the lock down are going to last, and how long the current trends (i.e. lack of housing and vehicle stocks) will remain.
- Maintaining office spaces for reduced workforces is a challenge facing some professional services, both in terms of having fewer employees, but also being impacted by work from home policies. One business reported that they are currently maintaining a 4 storey building which is only at 40% capacity, which is forcing them to look at bringing other businesses into the space. Another business noted the flow on impacts of a reduction people working in the offices
- The impact of a reduction in federal funding, combined with COVID-19 and deteriorating diplomatic relations with between Australia and China have created a 'perfect storm' for the education sector, that will have flow on effects for the student pipeline moving forward.
- The 'hangover effect' of COVID-19 and national and state lock-downs and restrictions is likely to manifest in a lack of interaction and innovation. This will impact mental health and solutions development.

Image: Technology Park Website



PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

KEY OPPORTUNITIES MOVING FORWARD?

The following opportunities were raised during the discussion:

- The new normal should be embraced. Members of the group see COVID-19 as an opportunity to change behaviours and norms and to address existing global issues such as climate change. This includes accepting and integrating COVID-19 as 'part of the game', and a constant moving forward, rather than waiting for a time when it will no longer exist.
- Within real estate and property development it is busier than ever. As noted by the health, wellbeing and community group, people are making significant changes to their lifestyles including re-thinking where and how they want to live. Building is currently being incentivised, which presents opportunities for property developers to take innovative approaches including pushing for 'build to rent' instead of 'build to own' to encourage uptake of new residential projects and get people into homes (with positive flow on effects for those neighbourhoods). There is an opportunity for the Town of Victoria Park to 'lead the way' in this area, however it would require State and potentially Federal support.
- With new rules and regulations in place due to COVID-19 restrictions, some members of the group discussed the opportunity to cater to new requirements, and help small businesses or remote teams and workers to adapt and change.
- The group discussed the untapped potential of having a large university within the district, and the power of having students (amazing people who are looking for things to do) within the town.
- The attending businesses discussed the diversity of the Town of Victoria Park's economy and places as a key strength to be leveraged.

Image: Burswood Park Website



WHAT CAN THE TOWN OF VICTORIA PARK DO?

Attending businesses identified the following potential areas of intervention for local government:

- Connecting community was seen as a key strength and function to continue to support residents and businesses moving forward. Suggestions for focus areas included initiatives that encourage social interactions and bring people (locals and visitors) into the Town.
- Attracting investment to the Town, and advocating for Victoria Park as a great place to set up a business.
- Connecting the potential of the local student population with local businesses, and unlocking that resource for the benefit of local employment, innovation and networking opportunities.
- Supporting businesses who are having to re-design their entire business models. What guidance or resources can help local businesses who are facing this challenge?
- Helping businesses plan for a world where COVID-19 is a long term reality, rather than a challenge or issue that will be resolved in the short or medium term. How does this type of thinking impact on what Local Government and businesses will do in the event of another lock-down, and concepts of 'revival' and 'thriving'.
- Harnessing the advocacy power of regional partnerships (e.g. with City of Canning and City of Gosnells) when advocating for business to State Government. When combined, advocacy from this group can be quite powerful.
- Reviewing the Town of Victoria Parking Plan to support existing and attract new businesses. The group recognised that parking is a complex issue that has undergone significant reviews by the Town, and that approaches differ across the local government area depending on the types of businesses and the level of 'traffic' that the parking arrangements want to facilitate (i.e. shorter parking periods for retail areas to encourage movement and access for as many visitors as possible).
- Facilitating or supporting more business networking. The group identified that networking is very important, and noted that currently there are limited mechanisms through which Town of Victoria Park businesses connect. There is a role for the Town to play in establishing and potentially resourcing a formal business network.
- Maintaining visually appealing streets to attract visitors.
- Monitoring and addressing homelessness within the Town of Victoria Park, both as an existing issue, as well as a potential long term impact of COVID-19.

EMERGING THEMES

Three over arching and common themes emerged from the three roundtable discussions:

- 1. The new normal;**
- 2. Communication; and**
- 3. Networks.**

THE NEW NORMAL

All three groups recognised that uncertainty about the future (including the short term) is a major challenge for their business, industry or local economy when making investment decisions. The groups discussed that until recently, recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 has been assumed, and that recovery would mean 'going back to the way things were'. Each of the groups acknowledged that this is no longer a realistic assumption. A 'new normal' must be prepared for, and in the words of one attendee we need start planning for "COVID-19 to be part of the game", rather than a obstacle with a start, beginning and end. To that end, the groups identified the need for a planning approach that embraces a 'new normal' both as a challenge to overcome but more importantly as an opportunity to do things differently and better than before.

COMMUNICATION

Communication between Local Government (the Town of Victoria Park) and local businesses was raised as an area for improvement across all three groups. Attending businesses raised that they were often not aware of local government initiatives or programs that were there to support them, but equally acknowledged that they have limited time to locate and absorb communications from the Town (i.e. via e-newsletters, website or social media). It was agreed that it is critical that local businesses understand how the Town can support them, what current initiatives and projects may be relevant to them (in terms of impacts and opportunities) and also have a clear and reliable contact within the organisation who they can meet with face to face when required. Attendees acknowledged that there is a role for business to play in ensuring they are not only subscribed to e-newsletters but also taking the time to read them, and that the Town may need to take a more nuanced approach to communications and experiment with different formats for different businesses, recognising the range of communication preferences.

NETWORKS

The roundtable discussions provided an opportunity for business owners and representatives who had never met before to connect and understand each others experiences and offerings. On more than one occasion during discussions, attendees identified another business they wanted to connect with following the session to discuss ideas and mutual opportunities. The lack of formal business networks within Town of Victoria Park was flagged by attendees, who agreed that opportunities to network and connect would be extremely valuable moving forward. These networks would not only provide an opportunity for businesses to jointly advocate to Local Government, but would provide a source of support and opportunities to collaborate on initiatives for the benefit of local industries.

POTENTIAL INITIATIVES

A range of ideas and initiatives for the Town of Victoria Park to prioritise as part of its Re-Start Vic Park COVID-19 Action Plan were raised during the roundtable discussions. Those initiatives which demonstrate the potential for the most impact across all three emerging themes and that can be lead or facilitate by the Town of Victoria Park are outlined in the below table.

		IMPACT ON THEMATIC AREAS		
Initiative	Description	New Normal	Communication	Networks
Events and activation	A strong and long term pipeline of small to medium sized local events that activate spaces across Victoria Park and attract visitors to commercial areas.	A long term pipeline of events gives some certainty to businesses who benefit from increased visitors (local and external) to Victoria Park. Smaller events are less likely to be impacted by potential second wave and associated restrictions.	Local businesses would be provided with the information they need to maximise on planned events (i.e. how to get involved, impacts on local access). This could be in the form of a business facing events calendar that is distinct from what the public / visitors view.	Collaborative approaches to event development, operations and marketing contribute to an increase local and external visitors / attendance.
Vic Park Business Network	A formal business network that represents and advocates for the needs and concerns of the local economy.	The ability of the local economy to respond to future challenges and opportunities will be enhanced through the provision of resources that facilitate connection, networking and support amongst the local business community.	The business network can provide a valuable conduit for information from the Local Government to businesses, helping critical updates, support and opportunities reach more local business owners and representatives.	The business network would address a current lack of formal mechanisms (i.e. chamber of commerce) that are specific to the Town of Victoria Park.
Lock-down / Second Wave Plan	A plan for how Local Government will respond to what local businesses perceive as an 'inevitable second wave' and the resulting lock-down restrictions.	A proactive plan for a potential second (or multiple) lock-down period will contribute to consumer and business confidence.	Business will understand potential scenarios and impacts of a second wave and what they can be considering to prepare. Consumers will understand how they can continue to support and engage with their local economy in the event of a second-wave.	A formal business network can provide live feedback and input into the plan on behalf of local businesses. It can also facilitate initiatives that benefit local businesses (i.e. bulk PPE orders) that might not be within the remit of local government.
Vic Park Destination Marketing Campaign	A destination marketing campaign that promotes Victoria Park to a broad range of visitor types (i.e. leisure, education, business), increasing economic activity within the Town.	Leveraging off Tourism WA and Destination Perth's local tourism campaigns (in response to COVID-19 and border restrictions), there is an opportunity to raise awareness and pride for the diverse and iconic offerings in Vic Park.	Local businesses will be empowered with access to high quality marketing collateral and material that they can use to promote their business and Victoria Park more broadly.	A destination marketing campaign that celebrates Victoria Park as a whole encourages a collaborative approach to product and experience development.

NEXT STEPS

The results of the industry roundtables, combined with further stakeholder consultation, a workshop with the Town's Place Leaders, and desktop economic analysis, will inform the Town of Victoria Park's COVID-19 Impact and Opportunities Assessment paper, which is currently in development by FAR Lane.

THANK YOU

FAR Lane and the Town of Victoria Park would like to sincerely thank those businesses who attended the industry roundtable sessions.

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Image: Town of Victoria Park Facebook Page

