



Shire of  
West Arthur

# Economic Development Strategy

2023-2033

[westarthur.wa.gov.au](http://westarthur.wa.gov.au)

Forest to Wheatbelt



## Contents

Message from the Shire President and CEO .....	4
Introduction .....	6
Our Roadmap for Success .....	8
Economic Vision.....	8
Economic Development Priorities .....	9
Economic Development Objectives.....	9
Measures of Success .....	10
Strategic Context.....	10
Approach .....	10
Our Role.....	11
Policy Alignment.....	12
Our Current Position.....	13
Profile .....	13
Challenges.....	18
Economic Insights.....	20
Growth Industries .....	20
High Potential Industries.....	21
Economic Trends .....	23
Comparative Advantages .....	24
Competitive Advantages .....	24
Strategic Assets and Opportunities .....	25
Location.....	26
Community Infrastructure.....	28
Strong Agricultural Industry.....	29
Community and People.....	30
Natural and Heritage Assets .....	31
Housing and Land Affordability .....	32
Economic Development Action Plan .....	34
References.....	43

We acknowledge the contributions made by key stakeholders, businesses and residents through consultation sessions and business and community surveys.

The Shire of West Arthur Economic Development Strategy was prepared by Anna Dixon Consulting in collaboration with the Shire of West Arthur. If you require further information or have any questions relating to this Strategy, please contact:

The Shire of West Arthur  
31 Burrowes Street  
Darkan WA 6392  
T (08) 9736 2222  
E [shire@westarthur.wa.gov.au](mailto:shire@westarthur.wa.gov.au)

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***The Shire of West Arthur acknowledges the Wilman Noongar people as the traditional custodians of this land.  
We pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging.***

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## Message from the Shire President and CEO



**Vin Fordham Lamont**  
Chief Executive Officer

The Shire of West Arthur Economic Development Strategy 2023-2033 provides a valuable roadmap as we build on our economic strengths, introduce new economic streams, and collaborate with other government entities, target industries and the business community to attract investment in our region.

The Shire of West Arthur is home to spectacular natural landscapes, our history is steeped in agriculture and our strong sense of community creates an energy and dedication to drive our region forward.

This document is designed to identify areas of most viable economic success and support the Shire, industries, the business sector and the community to focus on the actions that will reap the most rewards, in the short, medium and longer term.

Local government has several roles in ensuring the economic prosperity and growth of our community. Our primary functions of setting direction, planning for the future, regulation and managing community assets and infrastructure are further complemented by our role as an advocate and facilitator, bringing together stakeholders to collectively pursue shared interests.

The Shire of West Arthur Economic Development Strategy 2023-2033 aligns with the strategic direction set out in the Strategic Community Plan - West Arthur Towards 2031 and Corporate Business Plan 2021-2025, the State Planning Strategy 2050, and will positively influence economic development for the community.



**Cr Neil Morrell**  
President

The community of West Arthur is resilient, collaborative and committed to our region. This strategy provides a robust and practical plan for the future - enhancing the aspects of our region we value and presenting new opportunities that will support future growth.

This plan leverages our existing assets, infrastructure and industries, providing short term actions, along with a longer-term strategic direction that will facilitate partnerships, funding opportunities and investment attraction in key areas.

Our community-mindedness and ability to embrace collaborative approaches to achieve outcomes is a vital ingredient in the ongoing success of our region. Achieving our economic goals can only be done in partnership with business, community and stakeholders. We would like to thank everyone who shared their ideas and provided input into this strategy.

This comprehensive strategy sets out several paths to enrich our community and aligns with what we value as a community. It highlights our areas of strength and presents economic potential in areas yet to be fully exploited. I look forward to working with our community and partners further afield to see our economic vision for West Arthur realised.



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***“Local Economic Development is a way to build up the economic capacity of an area in order to improve quality of life.” World Bank***

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## Introduction

The Shire of West Arthur is a small, prosperous local government area covering 2,850km<sup>2</sup>, including the townsites of Darkan, Duranillin and Arthur River, and Bowelling. Darkan is the administrative centre and the main settlement, located approximately 200 kilometres southeast of Perth, 60 kilometres from Collie and 115 kilometres from Bunbury.

West Arthur enjoys an enviable mix of beautiful rivers and lakes, rich agricultural land, strong community cohesion and liveability. Strategically positioned on a major transportation route, the Coalfields Highway, in the agricultural Wheatbelt South sub-region of Western Australia, it is rich with investment and tourism potential, with many natural and historical assets.

Traditionally a wool producing region, primary producers have moved into grain and meat production in recent years, with most operating mixed farming enterprises. There is a wide range of opportunities for industry diversification in the Shire and value-adding for premium niche products.

Steeped in pioneering and agricultural history, the Shire is nestled between the forests of the South West and the Wheatbelt to the east. Its close proximity to Perth, Bunbury, Albany, and Narrogin gives it a strong comparative advantage, with easy access to the Southern Wheatbelt, South West, Great Southern and Peel regions.

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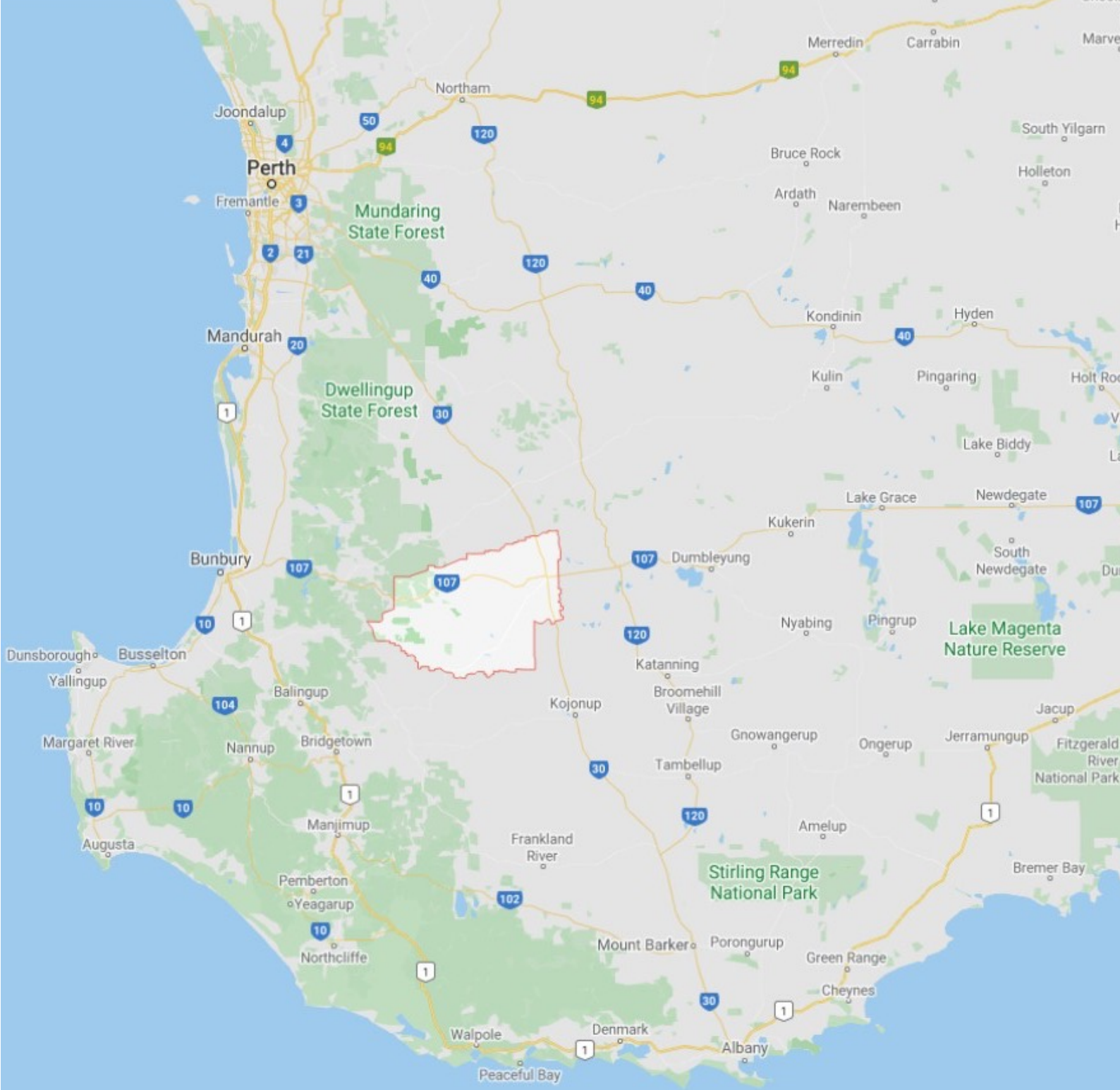
### **Community Vision:**

***“In 2027, the Shire of West Arthur will be a safe, sustainable and vibrant place to live.”<sup>1</sup>***

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At the heart of our Economic Development Strategy is a belief in the potential of our Shire to become a destination of choice for business, lifestyle, tourism and investment. Retention and growth of existing businesses, new business attraction, jobs, investment, residential development and new commercial/industrial assessment are some of the benefits to be realised through this strategy.

Supporting business retention and expansion is a key priority in our Economic Development Strategy along with enhancing the overall attractiveness of our community as a place to live, invest in, or visit. By identifying initiatives to further improve our assets, our Action Framework identified initiatives that can leverage opportunities, bring vibrancy to the main street and other strategic locations, support new and existing business, and strengthen the Shire’s tourism offering.



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***“The ongoing viability of our Shire and community will continue to be at the forefront of all deliberations of Council.”***  
***West Arthur Shire President<sup>2</sup>***

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## Our Roadmap for Success

### Economic Vision

Our economic vision has evolved as a result of widespread stakeholder consultation and consideration of the directions, needs and priorities set out in the Shire's Strategic Community Plan and Corporate Business Plan. Featuring strongly in these plans is the need for a stable, sustainable agricultural industry and a dynamic and growing business sector.<sup>3</sup>

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***Shire of West Arthur's Economic Vision:  
A resilient, diverse and prosperous economy, with an active agricultural and  
business sector supported by partnerships and collaboration.***

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This ten-year Economic Development Strategy is the roadmap we will use to pursue our economic development vision. It sets the direction for priorities, objectives, and actions and is based on an assets-based, multifaceted approach to fully build on our strengths and capture new opportunities for economic growth. It also takes into consideration the key determinants that contribute to long-term regional economic development:

- Human capital
- Sustainable communities and population growth
- Access to international, national and regional markets
- Comparative advantage and business competitiveness
- Effective cross-sectoral and intergovernmental partnerships<sup>4</sup>

Our strategy has been informed by extensive research and consultation and outlines the Shire's existing position and strategic opportunities, whilst showcasing what matters to our community and the Council's commitment to ensuring this strategy is delivered.

## Economic Development Priorities

As a result of research and stakeholder consultation, seven priority areas have been identified as foundational to achieving our economic development vision. A detailed rationale for each of these is provided in the Action Framework at the conclusion of this document.



1. Placemaking and Activation



2. Infrastructure Development



3. Business Support



4. Tourism Development



5. Strategic Industries and Diversification



6. Investment Attraction



7. Economic Development Capacity

## Economic Development Objectives

It is within these priorities that we aim to achieve the following economic development objectives:

1. A vibrant town centre and activated spaces within our townsite.
2. Built infrastructure that is well maintained and meets the needs of our community
3. A growing and diverse business community.
4. A thriving visitor economy that leverages our natural and heritage assets.
5. Greater economic resilience through industry diversification.
6. New industry development and diversified job opportunities.
7. Sufficient allocation of resources to successfully drive our strategy forward.

## Measures of Success

- ✓ Shire population remains stable or increases
- ✓ Increased number of development approvals
- ✓ Increased availability of housing
- ✓ An increase in annual visitor numbers
- ✓ No net loss of businesses in the Shire
- ✓ Increase in new, diversified industries
- ✓ Fit for purpose infrastructure
- ✓ Well maintained and improved natural assets

## Strategic Context

### Approach

This Economic Development Strategy has been developed based on the findings of research, analysis, and stakeholder engagement (see Figure 1).

This includes socioeconomic research and analysis, policy context, mapping assets and opportunities, a collaborative workshop with local stakeholders and one-on-one interviews.

The Strategy forms a new component of our Integrated Planning Framework. Whilst guided by our Strategic Community Plan and Corporate Business Plan, it will also inform future reviews of these plans as part of an intentional strategic roadmap for our Shire that supports future decision-making. This approach is outlined in Figure 2.



Figure 1: EDS development process.

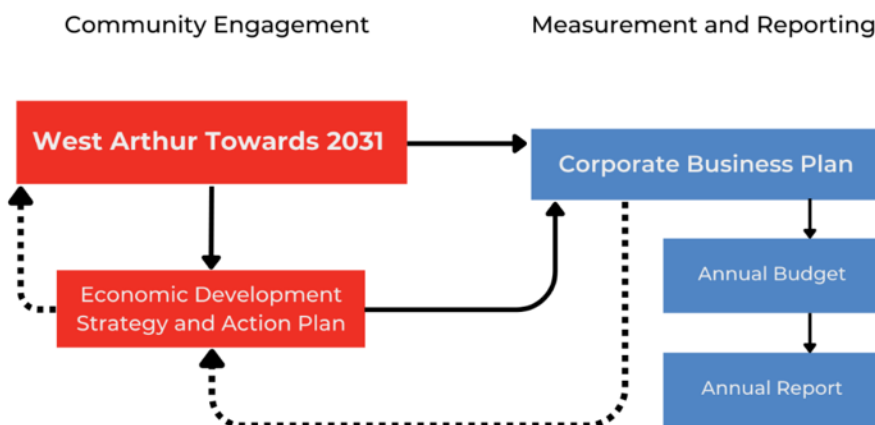


Figure 2: Shire of West Arthur Integrated Planning Framework

## Our Role

The Shire of West Arthur has several roles to play in relation to economic development. Particularly in a regional setting, these roles extend beyond the primary functions of governing the local government's affairs, responsibility for performance of local government functions, allocation of the local government's finances and resources and policy development. These roles are outlined below and in the Action Plan.

<b>Leader / Planner</b>	Lead the community, set an example, set direction and plan for the future.
<b>Owner/ Custodian</b>	Fulfil Council's obligations to manage the community's assets – economic, social, physical and environmental infrastructure.
<b>Regulator</b>	Undertake a particular role in response to legislation.
<b>Information Provider</b>	Provide information, develop resources to promote community or economic understanding, and to inform decision making.
<b>Advocate</b>	Make representations on behalf of the community.
<b>Facilitator / Initiator / Partner</b>	Bring together or partner with stakeholders to collectively pursue a shared interest or service to resolve an issue.
<b>Direct Service Provider / Part Funder</b>	Fully fund or contribute funds and/or resources to provide a service, promote initiatives or progress a project.



## Policy Alignment

This Economic Development Strategy has been developed in alignment with state, regional, sub-regional and local planning policy. This ensures that the recommendations made take into account critical strategic priorities for the State, region and community and align with their objectives. This hierarchy of documents, along with their aims and recommendations, are summarised in Figure 3.<sup>5 6 7 8 9 10 11 3</sup>

WESTERN AUSTRALIA	
State Planning Strategy 2050	Foundations for a Stronger Tomorrow
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Global competitiveness</li> <li>• Resilient regions and sustainable communities</li> <li>• Infrastructure planning and coordination</li> <li>• Conservation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Global location of choice</li> <li>• Value add strategic commodities</li> <li>• Emerging technology and consumer class</li> <li>• Aboriginal cultural heritage and enterprise</li> <li>• Transitioning to net zero emissions technologies</li> </ul>

WHEATBELT / WHEATBELT SOUTH	
Wheatbelt Regional Planning and Infrastructure Framework	Wheatbelt Blueprint & Wheatbelt South Sub Regional Economic Strategy 2014
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liveable communities and vibrant economy</li> <li>• Valued natural amenity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job intensive industry development</li> <li>• Build on comparative strengths</li> </ul>

SHIRE OF WEST ARTHUR	
Local Planning Strategy Local Planning Scheme No.2	West Arthur Towards 2031 Corporate Plan 2021-2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More diversified use of rural land as appropriate</li> <li>• Processing and value adding industries</li> <li>• Promote tourism</li> <li>• Greater provision for heritage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversification in agriculture for improved employment</li> <li>• Growing, diverse business community and existing businesses develop and grow</li> </ul>

Figure 3: EDS policy alignment at state, regional and local level.



## Our Current Position

### Profile

The Shire of West Arthur is located in the Wheatbelt region of Western Australia (WA), adjoining the South West, Wheatbelt and Great Southern regions. Darkan is the main town and administrative hub. The Shire is within the Gnaala Karla Booja Indigenous Land Use Agreement. The Shire of West Arthur takes a multifaceted approach to economic development. With a growing awareness of the need to go beyond economic statistics to build a full understanding of the quality of life in communities<sup>12,13</sup> a range of indicators, drawing on the OECD Framework, are presented below. Indicators are provided at either the LGA scale, or functional Statistical Area (SA) scale - Wagin SA2 or Wheat Belt South SA3.

#### Population

The Shire of West Arthur has a population of 795, a 3.5% decrease since 2016, against a trend of population growth in WA. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 3.5% of the Shire's population, similar to WA.<sup>14,15</sup> The median age is 47, older than the WA median of 38.<sup>14</sup> A small proportion of residents were born overseas (9.1%), significantly lower than WA (32.2%).<sup>14,15</sup>

Developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) assess the welfare of Australian communities. Based on census data, it includes measures of household income, education, employment, occupation, and other indicators of advantage and disadvantage. This index can be used for a range of purposes including targeting areas for business and services, strategic planning and social and economic research.<sup>16</sup> Overall, the Shire has more disadvantage than WA, with a SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD) score of 988 in 2016, compared to 1,015 for WA.<sup>17</sup>

#### Safety

The Shire of West Arthur is a safe community and over the past ten years reported offences have averaged 20 per year<sup>18</sup>, with a steady decline since 2018/19. Reported offences in 2021-22 were 0.5 per 100 people<sup>19</sup>, lower than WA with 4.78 per 100. The Shire's SA2 area also has low prison admissions.<sup>20</sup>



795 ↓

POPULATION

ABS, 2021



47 ↑

MEDIAN AGE

ABS, 2021



988 ↓

AREAS OF  
DISADVANTAGE

SEIFA IRSAD, 2016



0.5 ↓

OFFENCES / 100 PEOPLE

WAPOL, 2021-22

## Education

Early childhood development is ranked in the top index score in Australia (Q5), performing better than surrounding local governments (see Figure 5). This reflects a very low proportion of students who are developmentally vulnerable on at least one Australian Early Development Census domain.<sup>20</sup>

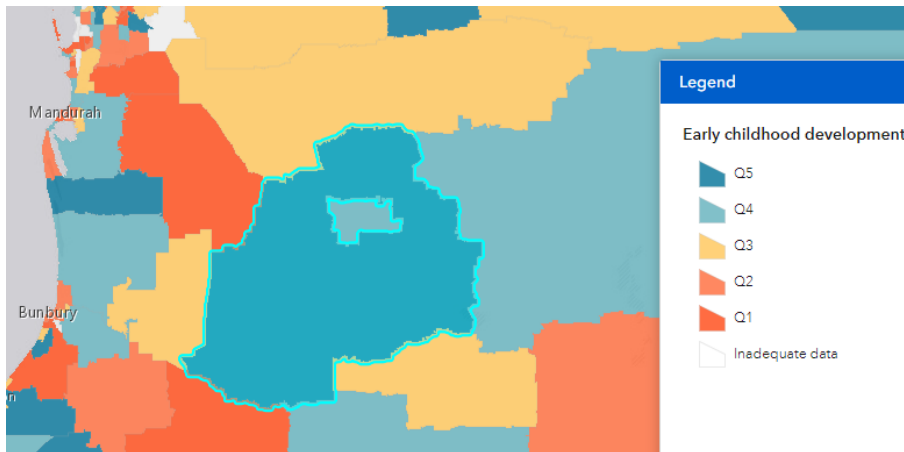


Figure 4: Least disadvantage (Q5) in Wagin SA2 area (Shire of West Arthur)

Darkan Primary School caters for Kindergarten to Year 6 and is a reputable, long-established school with a supportive P&C. Enrolled student numbers have trended downward over the past five years, from 81 in 2018 to 67 in 2022, based on Semester 2 student numbers.<sup>21</sup>

There are no high school or tertiary education institutions based in the Shire. Almost half of residents have attained year 12 or equivalent (47.5%). In 2021 7.1% of residents were undertaking tertiary study (university or vocational training), compared to 21.3% in WA.<sup>14, 15</sup>

## Civic Engagement and Identity

The community has high rates of civic participation and a strong local identity. The last local government election participation rate calculated for the Shire was 48.76%,<sup>22</sup> above the WA country average of 33.5% (2021).<sup>23</sup>

The Shire of West Arthur Council has seven Councillors, with low gender diversity evident over the past 10 years.<sup>24</sup>

In the Shire, 33% of residents report volunteering for an organisation or group in the past 12 months, more than double the rate in WA (15.9%).<sup>14</sup>

Heritage is an important part of local identity, and 141 places and sites were identified within the Shire in the recent Local Heritage Survey.

## Access to Services

Darkan townsite is considered car-dependent based on the access to local amenities, despite the townsite itself being a walkable size.<sup>25</sup> The Shire is located on major road transport routes, providing access to Perth, Albany,



7.1% ↓

TERTIARY STUDY

ABS, 2021



48.7% ↑

LG ELECTION PARTICIPATION

WAEC, 2013



33% ↑

VOLUNTEER

ABS, 2021



141

HERITAGE PLACES

Local Heritage Survey, 2022



CAR DEPENDENT SERVICES- DARKAN

Walkscore, 2023

Collie, and Bunbury. A TransWA road coach runs regularly between Perth and Albany and stops at Arthur River. The Shire does not have other public transport options.

A private airstrip is located at Hillman Farm, approximately 15 kms north-west of Darkan townsite.

The Shire's digital inclusion index is 63, below the national average<sup>26</sup> and 75.5% of households have internet access at home, below the WA average (85.1%).<sup>14,15</sup>

Darkan has a well-equipped Community Resource Centre, which provides internet access for those in the community that do not have access at home.

### Climate and Environment

The Shire enjoys a warm temperate<sup>27</sup> (Mediterranean climate), with lower occurrence of frost and heat compared to other parts of the Wheatbelt region, based on long term averages.<sup>28</sup> However, it is worth noting that West Arthur has been identified as having a high drought indicator (0.7), largely as a result of its high dependence on agriculture.<sup>29</sup>

The Shire is within the Jarrah Forest Bioregion (JAF) of Australia,<sup>30</sup> and the ecological collapse of the Northern Jarrah Forest due to hotter and drier conditions with more fires is a key risk for Australasia.<sup>31</sup>

Overall, 4.2% of the land area in the Shire is protected.<sup>14</sup> The Convention on Biological Diversity sets a target of 17% of each world ecoregion to be protected by 2020.<sup>32</sup>

The Shire is located within the southwest Australia world biodiversity hotspot, one of Earth's most biologically diverse yet threatened terrestrial areas.<sup>33</sup> Biodiversity loss is among the top global risks to society.<sup>34</sup>

Most farmers do not have access to a rubbish service. Co-mingled recycling and general waste kerb side services are offered to the townsite and those on the rubbish route, with an estimated 859kg of landfill waste and 152kg of recovered waste per household in 2020-21.<sup>24</sup>

### Health

The Shire has lower self-reported rates of both mental health conditions (including depression or anxiety) at 5.3%, compared to 8.3% in WA, and cancer at 1.6%, compared to 2.7% in WA.<sup>14</sup>

Self-reported rates of asthma, arthritis, heart disease and stroke were all above the WA rate.

Around half of residents (53.3%) self-report no long-term health conditions, less than the rate of 61.2% in WA.<sup>14</sup>

There is a low rate of GPs in the area<sup>20</sup> and hospital services are available in Collie and Narrogin.

The Shire boasts a wide range of sporting facilities, as identified in section Strategic Assets and Opportunities.



63 ↓

DIGITAL INCLUSION

ADII, 2021



ZONE 5

WARM TEMPERATE

ABCB



4.2% ↓

LAND PROTECTED

ABS, 2021



859KG

LANDFILL /HOUSEHOLD

MyCouncil, 2020-21



53.5% ↑

NO LONG TERM CONDITION

ABS, 2021



## Income and Jobs

There are an estimated 622 employee jobs in the Shire<sup>14, 35</sup> and the labour force participation rate is 66.9%, above WA (62.95%).<sup>14</sup> The Shire's SA2 area ranks well for low underemployment and low long-term unemployment.<sup>20</sup> Approximately 76% of jobs are in the agriculture sector, well above the Wheatbelt region (29.4%) and WA (2.4%).

Personal incomes in the Shire are diverse, with employee income the main source of income for only 49.2% of earners, well below the WA proportion of 77.7%. The other main sources of income are own unincorporated business 31.7% and investment 17.1% income (see Figure 6).

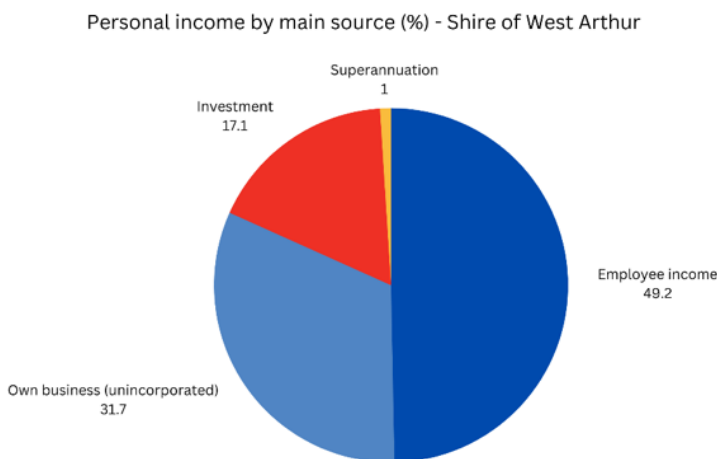


Figure 5: Main personal income by source (%) Shire of West Arthur 2021

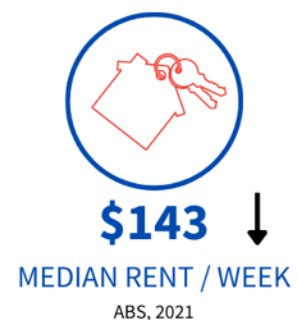
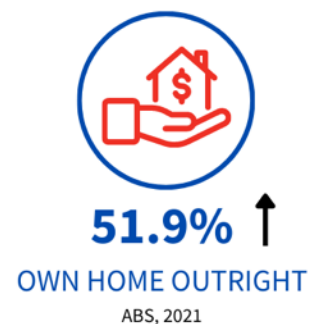
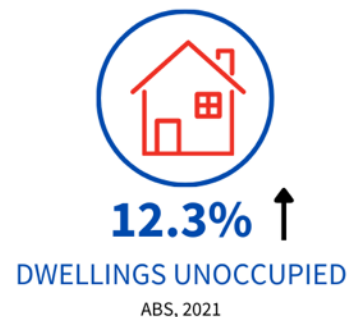
The top 5% of earners account for 20.6% of income share,<sup>14</sup> similar to WA at 22.2%. Median total income is \$51,095, comparable to WA (\$51,389)<sup>14</sup> and the Shire's SA2 area shows low financial stress.<sup>20</sup>

## Land and Housing

There are 334 dwellings recorded in the Shire, with an estimated 12.3% (41 dwellings) unoccupied, which is higher than the WA (10.9%) average. However, it is reasonable to conclude that a significant percentage of this data for 'Unoccupied Dwellings' is largely attributable to abandoned farming properties, with some semi-vacant residences in the townsite under external ownership (not principal place of residence).

According to Shire data, there are currently 11 known vacant, habitable properties in the Shire. Six of these are zoned residential and four are zoned commercial. The four commercial properties are all located within the main street of Darkan and the residential properties, held under a number of different ownership arrangements, are centrally located within the town site.

There is low housing stock diversity within the Shire, with 97% separate homes and 82% three or more bedrooms. Lone person households are 29%<sup>14</sup> and overcrowding is not an issue.<sup>20</sup> Affordable housing, freehold land and rental rates are identified as advantages in the broader region however, availability is limited.<sup>36, 37</sup>



Twelve serviced blocks were released by Development WA in 2021, with all now sold and awaiting development by the owners. There are a small number of privately held, undeveloped residential blocks. There were no residential building approvals between 2017 to 2021.<sup>14</sup> Over half of homes in the Shire are owned outright (51.9%), above WA (29.2%), and median mortgage repayments are \$915 per month, half the WA median. There is a low rate of renting (16%) and median weekly rent is \$143, well below the WA median of \$340 per week. Overall, the Shire's SA2 area shows low housing stress. Housing stress is an indicator of affordability and usually means that people are paying more than 30% of their income on housing.<sup>20</sup>

### Economic Output

The Shire of West Arthur has an annual total economic output of \$131.6 million (0.9% of Wheatbelt). The largest sector by output is Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing, with \$97.2 million or 73.87% of output. The other main output sectors are Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services \$8.64 million (6.6%), Manufacturing \$7.07 million (5.4%) and Public Administration & Safety \$6.91 million (5.3%).

### Gross Regional Product

Real Gross Regional Product was estimated at \$59.44 million (0.9% of Wheatbelt) and the annual gross value of agricultural production was \$258.4 million (30 June 2021). Regional exports generated in the Shire were \$87.6 million (1.2% of Wheatbelt) with Agriculture accounting for 95.9% (\$83.93 million). The largest value-added sector was Agriculture (66%) followed by Rental, Hiring & Real Estate (12.8%).<sup>38</sup>

### Businesses

Businesses in the Shire increased from 183 in 2017 to 207 in 2021 however, most of this growth (23) was in non-employing businesses.<sup>14</sup> The number of businesses with a turnover of zero to less than \$50,000 increased from 27 in 2017 to 38 in 2021, and the number of businesses with turnover of \$2m to less than \$5m increased from 14 in 2017 to 27 in 2021.

### Wages & Employing Industries

Wages and salaries output is \$15.4 million (0.6% of Wheatbelt). Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing accounts for 76% of jobs and 42.8% of wages output, followed by Public Administration & Safety at \$3.34 million (21.7%). Between 2016 to 2019, the highest growth rates in employment by industry (%) in the Shire's SA3 region were in Information Media & Telecommunications, Electricity, Gas, Water & Waste Services, and Arts & Recreation Services.

By total numbers, the largest gains in employment by industry were in Administrative & Support Services (124), Manufacturing (74) and Financial & Insurance Services (60). Between 2016 to 2019, the largest declines in employment by industry (%), particularly compared to national growth, were in Health Care & Social Assistance, Professional, Scientific & Technical Services, Wholesale Trade, and Construction. By total numbers, Agriculture had the largest contraction in employment by industry (-107). This could be attributed to factors such as increasing farm size and automation.<sup>39</sup>



**\$97.2M**

OUTPUT (AG)

Remplan, 2021



**\$83.93M**

EXPORTS (AG)

Remplan, 2021



**207** ↑

BUSINESSES

ABS, 2021



**GROWTH %**

INFORMATION MEDIA & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

ABS, 2019



**GROWTH #**

ADMINISTRATION & SUPPORT SERVICES

ABS, 2019



## Challenges

Over the past five years, the Shire of West Arthur has considered ways to strengthen its economy to build scale and capacity and drive population growth. The development of this EDS reflects the Shire and community's desire to embrace emerging opportunities and fully leverage its assets.

Featuring strongly in the Corporate Business Plan is the need for a stable, sustainable agricultural industry, and a dynamic and growing business sector. Economic opportunities identified in the Shire's Strategic Community Plan centre around agriculture, livestock and food supply chain, and tourism.

### Industry Diversification

We recognise that economic development is an ongoing process of improving our community. This requires strategically investing in overcoming challenges and building on strengths. There are a number of challenges we face as a small regional Shire. Whilst our agricultural sector is strong and forms the cornerstone of our economy, over reliance on one sector could negatively impact our economy if there was a major sectoral downturn or drought event.

Currently there is high demand but low availability of housing and limited land availability. Potential impacts of this include loss of labour force and economic opportunities. The agricultural industry is experiencing increasing farm sizes and automation<sup>49</sup>, which reduces the amount of employment provided by the sector. It is also vulnerable to external factors such as technological advancement, climate change and market conditions. Implementing pathways to increase the resilience of this vital sector is important. As such, economic diversification is an important priority within this Economic Development Strategy. Other economic challenges facing the Shire are shown below in Figure 7.<sup>40 41 42</sup>



Figure 6: Shire of West Arthur Economic Challenges

## Business Attraction

A key priority for West Arthur is to attract new business and investment. Decision-making factors influencing business location include<sup>43</sup>:

- Access to markets
- Availability of raw materials
- Availability of intermediate goods and services
- Availability and cost of labour
- Availability of adequate utilities
- Availability of worker accommodation
- decision-making factor for a business
- Business climate
- Quality of life factors
- Telecommunications

## Infrastructure Limitations

It is imperative that the infrastructural foundations for new types of businesses to enter, or emerge within the Shire are established.

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*Research shows that broadband and mobile connectivity, distribution, transmission, generation of energy, and water security are major infrastructure gaps that could negatively impact on economic development.<sup>42</sup>*  
*Infrastructure Australia 2022*

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Increased reliance on digital connectivity in the region is leading to more online businesses, reinforcing the need for adequate infrastructure. Housing stock is also critical in attracting and retaining a skilled workforce and new residents and investors.

Limited housing stock is currently a constraint in the Shire's economic growth. A recent Regional Housing Analysis, commissioned by the Wagin, Woodanilling, Williams, West Arthur, Dumbleyung and Lake Grace Voluntary Regional Organisation of Council (4WDL)<sup>44</sup> suggests that Local Government governments can play an important facilitating role in new worker housing developments either independently or in collaboration with State Government and community housing organisations, with the assistance of bridging grants and finance.

Insecure water supplies could increase the region's susceptibility to drought impacts, negatively impacting on agriculture production which accounts for 46% of the region's exports. Limited availability of freshwater is also an issue. **There are opportunities to draw on the water study undertaken by the Shire<sup>45</sup>** and leverage best-practice agricultural knowledge to overcome these issues. Energy infrastructure is critical for economic growth. The region is one of three locations being scoped by Western Power and the State Government for the development of a renewables-based disconnected microgrid pilot<sup>42</sup> and windfarms are also scoping out the area for opportunities.



## Economic Insights

### Growth Industries

Key regional growth industries are those which have a strong existing presence in the region and show potential for growth or to develop a competitive advantage. Between 2016-2019, the Shire's SA3 area showed competitive advantage in a range of industries.

According to research undertaken by Infrastructure Australia<sup>42</sup>, the following key regional growth industries have the most significant potential for driving economic growth and job creation in the Wheatbelt.

#### Agriculture, forestry and fishing

- Technological innovation – potential to build a \$100B agricultural industry by 2030.
- \$34M was channelled into the 2021/22 federal budget for agricultural innovation.
- Aquaculture export volume expected to rise to meet global demand.
- Growth opportunities in value adding processes, niche food productions, wine and beverage manufacturing, horticulture and aquaculture.
- Techniques to reduce livestock greenhouse gas emissions may also provide opportunities to increase livestock productivity and resilience (animal breeding, diet supplements, feed alternatives, improved pastures, stocking rates and biological control).<sup>42</sup>

#### Tourism

Tourism is a functional economic area that can include a range of industry sectors such as food and beverage, accommodation, arts and recreation, and transport. The Shire's SA3 region has shown an existing competitive advantage in Arts & Recreation.

- Significant potential exists for tourism growth through several nature-based and adventure-experience tourism offerings, along with biodiversity and food and agritourism opportunities.
- Overnight visitor numbers to the Wheatbelt region grew from 824,000 in 2013-2015 to over 1 million in 2017-2019.
- Growing interest exists in high-value ecologically sustainable tourism activities.
- Opportunities exist to expand astrotourism and agritourism offerings.<sup>42</sup>

## Energy

- Forecast to grow significantly.
- Transitioning away from coal to cleaner sources.
- Hydrogen industry could bring \$11 billion annually to Gross Domestic Product by 2050.
- Proposed Hydrogen Hubs and Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) technologies likely to be based in regional areas where there are sources of coal and gas.
- The Western Australian government is investigating local business opportunities in wind energy as part of the WA Recovery Plan.
- Bioenergy is an emerging sub-sector and the Wheatbelt region is well-placed for large-scale production<sup>42</sup>

## High Potential Industries

The following additional sectors have been identified based on their comparative or competitive advantage in the region and their potential in broader regional Australia.

### Knowledge sector

This area includes the industry sectors of education and training, professional services, research and development, and high technology.

The Shire's SA3 region has shown an existing competitive advantage in some areas related to the knowledge sector.

- Growth in Australia's knowledge sector forecast to increase from 1% to 1.7% by 2030.
- Significant opportunities exist through technology and technological advancement.
- Outward migration of young people can be minimised by providing educational facilities, with 66% of young people educated in the regions staying in regional communities to work.<sup>42</sup>

### Transport

- Growing demand for Australian exports.
- Significant opportunities for regional freight infrastructure improvements and expansions and technological advancements in this sector.<sup>42</sup>

### Food and Beverage Manufacturing

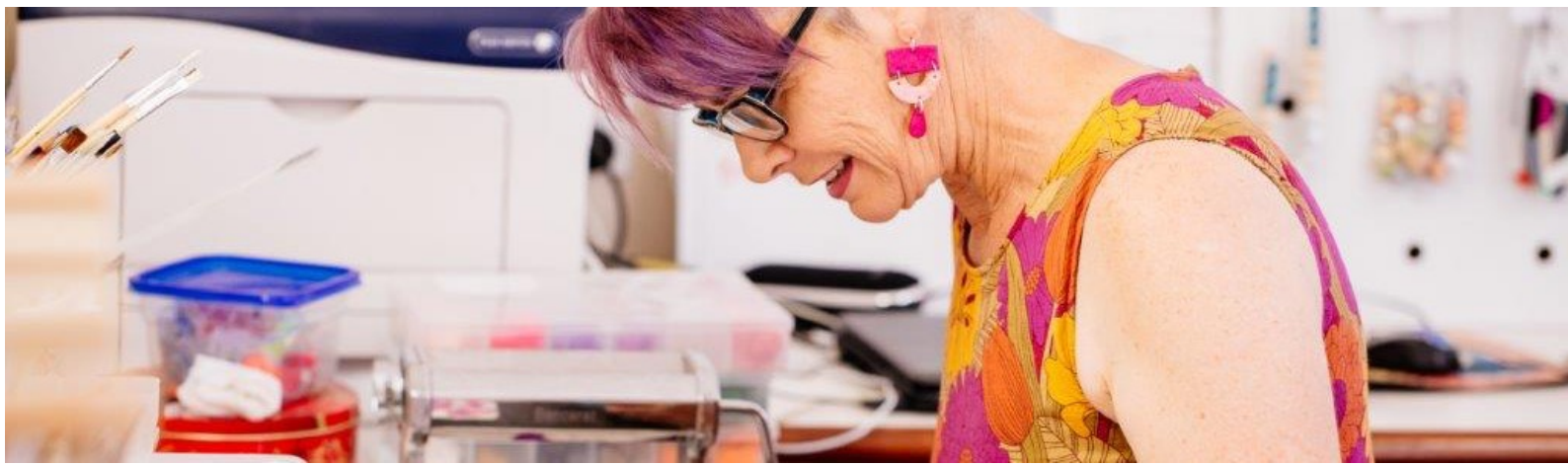
- Rapid growth in the food manufacturing and agribusiness sectors.
- Considerable opportunities, with a projected annual growth of 3.6% to 2030 in national value.<sup>42</sup>

Through its Business Opportunity Outline (BOO) project, the WA Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development outlines the significant potential for WA agribusiness and food and beverage sectors.

Figure 8 presents 15 food and beverage growth areas identified as having considerable investment opportunities, presented in Figure 8<sup>46</sup>:



Figure 7: Food and beverage growth areas for Western Australia, identified in DPIRD's Business Opportunity Outline.



## Economic Trends

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*“The wellbeing of our communities is dependent upon their ability to adapt and respond to changes in the broader economic environment.” WALGA <sup>47</sup>*

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The following key economic trends are expected to impact on Western Australia’s economy in the future<sup>47</sup>:

- Shift in global economic power (Asia is expected to account for 40% of global GDP by 2030, creating opportunities for supply of goods and services).
- Technological change (shift towards a digital and knowledge based economy and increasing prevalence of automation).
- Ageing population (approximately 5% of Australia’s population will be 85 and over by 2050, creating opportunities for health care and social services provision).
- Fiscal constraints (impacting on infrastructure outside of the metropolitan area).

Other general trends to consider include:

- Demand for sustainable plant-based proteins that address health, environmental and social concerns.
- An increasingly mobile workforce and increased workforce flexibility.
- Growing digital literacy.
- Environmental sustainability.
- Growth in regional hubs and co-working and co-study arrangements.
- Carbon farming and ecosystem service-based markets.
- Transition to clean energy technologies.



## Comparative Advantages

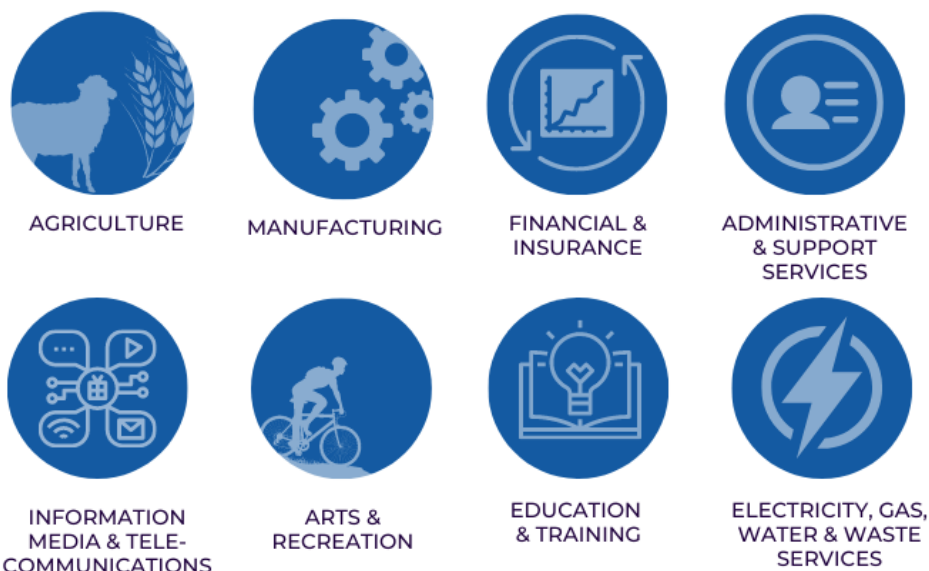
Comparative advantages in the Wheatbelt region<sup>36,37,42</sup> (shown in Figure 8) are also applicable in the Shire of West Arthur and can be grouped into themes of: locational, social and natural amenity, and enterprise.



Figure 8: Wheatbelt Comparative Advantages

The Wheatbelt Blueprint highlights the need to focus on job-intensive industry development and building on comparative strengths in production and processing, population services, as well as research and development in both of these sectors.<sup>37</sup>

## Competitive Advantages



Using a shift share analysis from 2016 to 2019 by industry of employment at SA3 scale (Wheat Belt South)<sup>48</sup>, the SA3 region showed a regional competitive effect (eg. how much of a sector job change within a given region is the result of some unique competitive advantage of the region) in a range of industries (see Figure 10).

Figure 9: Industries with a regional competitive effect in Wheat Belt South SA3 (2016-2019) versus national growth

The most significant regional effect compared to the nation was in Agriculture, followed by Manufacturing. Compared to WA, the region also had a competitive effect in the industries shown in Figure 10, except for Education & Training, with the most significant both Agriculture and Administrative & Support Services. Regional competitive effect can be attributed to advantages these industries have in the local area.

In 2016-2019, competitive effect was lowest compared to the nation in Public Administration, Health Care & Social Assistance, and Construction. When compared to WA, competitive effect was lowest in Health Care & Social Assistance, Public Administration and Education & Training.

This could indicate the region faced a disadvantage causing localised job loss in these industries. While Agriculture remains the largest employer in the SA3, sub-region and Wheatbelt region, this industry had the largest decrease in employment numbers during the period. This could be attributed to factors such as increasing farm size and automation.<sup>49</sup>

## Strategic Assets and Opportunities

The following strategic assets have been identified for economic development purposes and to support further growth opportunities. Identifying the key strategic assets and attributes of the Shire of West Arthur is integral to developing opportunities for economic growth and prosperity. These have been assessed based on the Shire's relative attractiveness as a place to invest and as a place to live, based on the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Regional Wellbeing Index<sup>12</sup>:

- Population and health
- Safety
- Education
- Civic engagement and identity
- Access to services
- Climate and environment
- Income and jobs
- Land and housing
- Economic outputs
- Investment and business

Within this context, six major assets with the potential to be leveraged for economic development have been identified and are presented in Figure 11.



Figure 10: Identified Strategic Assets, Shire of West Arthur



## 1. Location

The Shire of West Arthur is within close proximity to Perth, Bunbury and Albany and offers convenient access to the Southern Wheatbelt, South West, Great Southern and Peel regions.

It is serviced by the Albany Highway, which provides connection to the Perth Metropolitan area and the regional city and port of Albany to the south.

The Coalfields Highway links the Shire with the South West region, including the industrial bases of Collie and Kemerton, Port of Bunbury, and the wider Wheatbelt region to the east.

A TransWA road coach runs regularly between Perth and Albany and stops at Arthur River. A private airstrip is located at Hillman Farm, approximately 15 kms north-west of Darkan townsite.

### Opportunities

- Trade and tourism
- Accessing domestic and international markets for tourism and agriculture
- Industry and investment attraction
- Leveraging the needs of industries in neighbouring regions
- Existing air infrastructure (Airstrip)
- Transport and logistics





## 2. Community Infrastructure

The Shire of West Arthur's existing community infrastructure is well-maintained and could be built on to enhance liveability and attract new residents and businesses. Community sport and recreation infrastructure includes a public swimming pool, Darkan Sport and Community Centre, football oval, 18-hole golf course, Moodiarrup Sporting Club which includes tennis courts, bowling green and nine hole golf course, Arthur River Country Club (9 hole golf course and tennis courts), Collie-Darkan Rail trail. The Shire also has a well-established and reputable independent public school that offers a comprehensive and personalised education.

### Opportunities

- Place enhancement and activation
- Improved integration between precincts
- Enhancement and re-purposing of heritage buildings
- Main street beautification and walkability of Darkan townsite
- Greater tourism offerings
- Business and investment-ready infrastructure
- State and Federal funding programs
- Uptake of new business models
- 4WDL Housing Initiative
- Wheatbelt Southern Inland Health Initiative
- Southwest Catchment Council and Blackwood Basin Group
- Beaufort Paleochannel
- Partnerships with surrounding Shires
- Wheatbelt secondary freight project (WSFN)
- Business/Commercial Hub
- Business incubators
- Pop-up shops



### 3. Strong Agricultural Industry

Agriculture is the key economic output and employing industry within the Shire of West Arthur and its stability is a highly regarded asset, with strong potential for diversification. The Shire's Strategic Community Plan emphasises agriculture, livestock, and the food supply chain as key focus areas for economic development.<sup>2</sup> This industry supports a significant aspect of the business and manufacturing sectors, with goods and services primarily targeted to agricultural activities. The community's aspiration is for a stable and sustainable agricultural industry.<sup>40</sup>

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development identifies fifteen key opportunities for value-adding within the food and beverage manufacturing industry. With some reduction in total numbers employed in Agriculture, these have the potential to provide new diversification opportunities within the Shire.<sup>46</sup>

#### Opportunity

- Value adding
- Niche, high-growth areas
- Premium food and beverage manufacturing
- Horticulture and aquaculture
- Agritourism (farm stays)
- Agribusiness
- Agroforestry
- Research and development
- New market destinations
- Mechanisation and technology
- Regenerative agriculture
- Organics
- Automation
- Support Services
- Downstream processing



## 4. Community and People

Community and liveability have been ranked highest in the West Arthur's Community Scorecard, with an overall score of 61.4.<sup>40</sup> The Shire offers an attractive rural lifestyle and a friendly small community with commutable distances to larger regional centres and just 2 ½ hours from Perth. This provides connectivity and easier access to services than many other Wheatbelt communities.

The safe, inclusive community provides an idyllic location for a tree change, raising a family, starting a business or a retreat from the city. Affordable housing and vacant land present opportunities not available in larger centres, with FIFO workers expressing interest in locating here during their off swing.

Human capital in the Shire of West Arthur is a major strength. With a high level of volunteering, residents are resourceful and proactive in community building and supporting local businesses. Volunteering broadens networks and professional skills and serves as an indicator of the economic and health status of a community.<sup>50</sup>

The community has a track record of coming together to improve local infrastructure, amenity and experiences. Its strengths lie in strong leadership during times of crisis, and a communicative, supportive and well-managed Local Government, with a success in managing grants and bequests.<sup>40</sup>

Quality of life, affordability, family-friendly communities, and a strong sense of community are all significant locational draws for both residential and business development and these rely on the provision of population services and housing availability.

### Opportunities

- Attraction of target demographics
- Investment in population services
- Collaboration with other local governments
- Build on human capital to expand knowledge, skills, expertise and productivity
- Expansion of existing community programs or initiatives
- Low reliance on employment income presents investment opportunities
- High rates of outright home ownership provide stability
- Completion of housing needs assessment



## 5. Natural and Heritage Assets

Many of the Shire's strongest assets are found within its natural environment and heritage. Pristine natural landscapes and waterways provide an array of tourism and recreation opportunities within the Shire. Lake Towerinning is the jewel in the crown, offering swimming and water sports and has been identified in the Shire's Strategic Community Plan as a 'premier, iconic natural asset.'<sup>40</sup>

Additional natural assets include wildflower reserves, walking trails, Hillman Rock, Hillman Dam and several quiet river waterways. Clear skies provide the perfect conditions for astrotourism experiences and many natural assets align with adventure tourism activities such as hiking, climbing, mountain biking and skydiving.

The Shire's post-contact heritage dates back to the mid-1800s, with several historical landmarks and buildings showcasing the region's rich and interesting history, including the Betty Brown Museum, Arthur River Heritage Precinct, 6-Mile Cottage, and Collie Darkan Rail Trail.

The Local Heritage Survey was completed in 2022 and documents the considerable significance of the heritage and history of West Arthur's towns and districts. It also provides strategic guidance to conserve those places as assessed as having a high level of cultural significance. Of 141 identified places (including sites) in the Local Heritage Survey, one place is State Registered (Category 1), "The Arthur" Wool Shed Group. In addition to this, the group of buildings in Arthur River have been identified for inclusion as well and are currently 'interim' listed. These include the Post Office, Church, Hall, Inn Kitchen, Stables and Wells.

There are also registered Aboriginal sites including Arthur River and Arthur River: Watkins Farm. Lake Towerinning is of historical significance and was occupied by Aboriginal peoples until around 1938. Currently, formal Aboriginal engagement is carried out through the South West Land and Sea Council.

### Opportunities

- Tourism Development (Eco/nature-based tourism; trail development; astrotourism; adventure/recreational tourism; historical tourism; authentic Aboriginal tourism)
- Leveraging existing infrastructure for new tourism offerings (sky diving)
- Activation and repurposing of historical and heritage assets
- Tourism infrastructure development
- Funding for Category 1 buildings for conservation works
- Grant funding





## 6. Housing and Land Affordability

The Town Planning Scheme outlines residential (R12.5) and rural residential zoned property in Darkan townsite, as well as commercial and industrial, including Darkan Light Industrial Area which offers direct heavy vehicle access to Coalfields Road. Potential uses include agricultural wholesale, manufacturing or engineering (drawing on proximity to both agricultural and mining sectors).

Land, commercial and residential properties are significantly more affordable in West Arthur than in the rest of WA, offering a range of opportunities to realise property potential. Ground truthing of initial housing data conducted by the Shire of West Arthur suggests that housing vacancy rates in the town of Darkan are approximately 3-5%.

In 2021, a release of serviced blocks by Development WA resulted in the sale of 12 blocks, all of which are still waiting construction of housing. There is a small number of remaining vacant residential blocks within the Darkan townsite, although the majority were not on the market at the time of this document's development.

Currently there is high demand but low availability of housing and limited land availability. Despite current supply constraints, a number of opportunities exist to increase housing and land availability in the Shire. Feasible options include smaller, footprint efficient standalone and semi-detached dwellings, with opportunities in affordable rentals, shared equity, rent to buy schemes and small housing opportunities.

### Opportunity

- Unencumber existing land
- Release of land onto the market
- Low housing stress (affordability)
- Stimulate construction activity
- Development of existing vacant freehold blocks for residential, commercial, and industrial use.
- Attraction of industry sectors to develop industrial land
- Leverage proximity to both agricultural and mining sectors

# Economic Development Action Plan



## Economic Development Action Plan



1. Placemaking and Activation



2. Infrastructure Development



3. Business Support



4. Tourism Development



5. Strategic Industries and Diversification



6. Investment Attraction



7. Economic Development Capacity

The actions within this framework have emerged as a result of widespread community and stakeholder consultation, as well as strategies identified within the Shire's Strategic Community Plan and Corporate Business Plan.

Targeted actions in this framework are structured within our seven priorities for success. These priorities provide a multifaceted and focused approach to economic development. Actions have been identified within the context of our major assets and associated opportunities, growth industries, comparative advantages, and challenges.

These actions will contribute to the achievement of our economic development objectives:

- A vibrant town centre and activated spaces within the Shire
- Built infrastructure that is well maintained, attractive and inviting
- A growing and diverse business community
- A thriving visitor economy that leverages our enhanced natural assets
- Greater economic resilience through industry diversification
- New industry development and diversified job opportunities
- Sufficient resource allocation for strategy implementation

Metrics:

- ✓ Shire population remains stable or increases
- ✓ Increased number of development approvals
- ✓ Increased availability of housing
- ✓ An increase in annual visitor numbers
- ✓ No net loss of businesses in town
- ✓ Increase in new, diversified industries
- ✓ Fit for purpose infrastructure
- ✓ Our natural assets are well maintained and improved

This Action Plan will be further supported by a detailed implementation plan that specifies roles and responsibilities, strategic partnerships and details associated costs and resources.

The successful delivery of this Action Plan is dependent on partnerships and collaboration to maximise resources. Potential partners to engage with as part of this action framework include:

- Chambers of Commerce
- Contractors, architects and engineers
- Tourism agencies
- Educational Institutions
- Cultural attractions
- Employment agencies
- Financial Institutions
- Legal firms
- Manufacturing associations
- Media outlets
- Airport authorities
- Real estate agents
- Real estate developers
- Transport companies
- Utility providers
- State and Federal Governments

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***Coopetition: “Achieving collaboration advantage through sharing resources, capabilities and capacity to manage or respond to shared opportunities or constraints.”<sup>47</sup> WALGA***

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## Priority 1: Placemaking & Activation

**Rationale:** Physical amenity improvements contribute to community well-being and a sense of local pride, and encourage tourists to stop and spend money. Vibrant and active spaces are essential to liveability, community and visitor safety, thus increasing investment and strengthening tourism experiences. The Rail Reserve and main street are both visible from the highway and have the potential to offer appealing and interesting gathering places - particularly for motorists who are looking for a rest stop where there is something for them to engage with and potentially enjoy a retail experience in the main street.

**Objective:** A vibrant town centre and activated spaces within our townsite.

**Partnerships:** Public Transport Authority, consultants, council, local businesses, Community Arts Network, Heritage Council of WA, funding bodies.

Actions		Timeline
1.1	Expand existing Master Plan (2021) for the Rail Reserve to further enhance this area and its connection with the main street in a strategic manner, establishing this precinct as a major focal point for visitors and locals, offering opportunities for a range of engaging experiences.	Long term
1.2	Ensure the town planning scheme review supports this master plan and allows appropriate zoning and planning policies to promote activation.	Long term
1.3	Establish a Main Street Committee (governance structures to be determined by the Shire in consultation with local businesses) to undertake an audit of all businesses in the Main Street to identify gaps in the retail mix and be a conduit for business attraction and soft infrastructure such as training and capability building and business networking.	Quick Win
1.4	Develop a Mainstreet Activation plan that addresses townscaping; building façade improvements and incentives; revitalization and street enhancement.	Medium term
1.5	Work with the Community Arts Network to initiate interactive installations (e.g. town hedge maze, sculptural and mural art).	Quick win
1.6	Develop a Burrowes Street Policy to ensure viable businesses are attracted to the main street that create a critical retail mix.	Medium term
1.7	Investigate opportunities to provide for pop up shops and multi-tenancy/micro-scale enterprises.	Quick Win
1.8	Investigate opportunities to find modern uses for historic buildings through repurposing for community infrastructure or leasing for commercial operations. Identify grant opportunities for the restoration and refurbishment of heritage buildings. Identify clear guidelines that support commercial tenancy of heritage buildings.	Medium Term
1.9	Support the new owners/future lessee of the Darkan Roadhouse to provide quality food and drink/café style and reinstate the fuel service.	Quick win
1.10	Leverage the Shire's registration as a 'film friendly' location with ScreenWest to create economic opportunities resulting from film and television.	Medium term
1.11	Investigate the opportunity to establish a cultural and arts precinct within the town.	Long term
1.12	Enhance the Duranillan entrance statement.	Quick win

## Priority 2: Infrastructure Development

**Rationale:** Cost-effective, modern and reliable infrastructure is needed to allow the Shire to confidently promote itself as a place that is investment ready. The provision of supporting infrastructure and services to existing and new SMEs is essential for a strong and viable business sector and will support economic and employment outcomes. Increased reliance on digital connectivity in the region is leading to more online businesses, increasing the need for adequate infrastructure.

**Objective:** Built infrastructure that is well maintained and meets the needs of our community.

**Partnerships:** Public Transport Authority, developers, employers, residents, funding bodies, State and Federal government, Darkan Caravan Park, Lake Towerrinning Management Group, Department of Planning, and existing residents, construction and building companies.

Actions	Timeline
2.1 Complete a housing and land strategy that identifies new land release opportunities, and assesses housing stock diversity and suitability across the life stage, based on insights and recommendations from the 4WDL Regional Housing Analysis 2023. Focus should be placed on seizing opportunities for affordable rentals, shared equity, rent to buy schemes and small housing.	Long term
2.2 Communicate with residents and developers on expected housing needs and better understand what shovel ready sites exist and the timeline for more housing to come on the market.	Medium term
2.3 Improve internet access and mobile phone coverage by sourcing support through regional telecommunications programs such as Regional Mobile Communications Program and Regional Telecommunications Project. <a href="https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/econnected/mobile-connectivity-regional-telecommunications">https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/econnected/mobile-connectivity-regional-telecommunications</a>	Medium term
2.4 Investigate potential for more chalet/cabin style accommodation at Darkan Caravan Park and Lake Towerrinning (on boat ramp side of lake).	Quick win
2.5 Develop interpretive centre at Lake Towerrinning to detail flora, fauna, European and Aboriginal Heritage in the area. Establish an undercover bar and bbq area near the boat ramp at Lake Towerrinning.	Medium term
2.6 Establish an EV charging station at a central location.	Quick win
2.7 Investigate the potential for existing vacant blocks or disused buildings in town to be developed for worker/ visitor accommodation. <a href="https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-planning-lands-and-heritage/infrastructure-development-fund">https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-planning-lands-and-heritage/infrastructure-development-fund</a>	Quick win
2.8 Investigate water security and develop opportunities associated with sources.	Medium term

### Priority 3: Business Support

**Rationale:** A supported business sector is fundamental to a vibrant economy. Business needs for information, innovation, learning and networking should be supported in order to have vibrant and relevant businesses and local spending. Supporting business success strengthens investment attraction activities and generates new opportunities.

**Objective:** A growing and diverse business community.

**Partnerships:** West Arthur small business community, Small Business Development Corporation, West Arthur community, Wheatbelt Business Network, RSM Business Local, Darkan youth.

Actions		Timeline
3.1	Evaluate and assess the specific needs of the Shire’s small business sector, including home-based businesses and the potential role for business incubators and, other business-mentoring models in supporting small business growth and development.	Quick win
3.2	Review the SBDC Small Business Friendly Local Government suite of initiatives to ensure they are being systematically implemented and reviewed for appropriateness.	Quick win
3.3	Explore opportunities for community partnerships to operate cafés and retail shops.	Quick win
3.4	Strengthen local business networks and associations working with the WBN and the SBDC Business Local Program (RSM Business Local).	Medium term
3.5	Develop a Shire of West Arthur youth entrepreneurship and mentoring program to ensure a strong and vibrant entrepreneurial culture becomes one its competitive strengths.	Medium term
3.6	Assess West Arthur’s retail/commercial gaps and expenditure leakage and identify opportunities to address these out-flows.	Quick win
3.7	Working with RSM Business Local and Wheatbelt Business Network, support themed workshops (succession planning, marketing, social media) and other activities to support small businesses. Prioritise high-risk businesses that are experiencing expansion, retention or closure challenges.	Medium term
3.8	Develop a Business Guide and ensure it outlines all the services and processes of the Shire that assist business investment opportunities.	Medium term
3.9	Establish a working group to determine the feasibility and viability of establishing a new commercial business hub. Develop a business plan and concept plan for the business hub. This will identify key markets, demand, location, and typology.	Long term
3.10	Develop a business retention and expansion program targeted at the Shire’s key sectors.	Medium term
3.11	Develop an Industry Attraction Program	Medium term

## Priority 4: Tourism Development

**Rationale:** Tourism growth relies on the ability to attract new visitors by offering tourism products that meet the needs of existing and new target markets. The Shire has several natural and heritage assets which can be further enhanced to foster growth in the visitor economy. Potential exists to position the Shire as a destination of choice for outdoor and adventure tourism. Tourism infrastructure gaps should be addressed to influence visitors' destination perceptions and likelihood of repeat visits. Infrastructure and Placemaking & Activation actions cut across tourism and will further strengthen tourism development outcomes.

**Objective:** A thriving visitor economy that leverages our natural and heritage assets.

**Partnerships:** Tourism WA, neighbouring local governments, Wheatbelt Development Commission, airport, local businesses, local tourism groups and associations, Darkan Pub development group, local farmers, regional tourism businesses, Darkan Roadhouse owners/managers.

Actions		Timeline
4.1	Develop a tourism attraction strategy to identify and prioritise specific tourism growth areas: agritourism, astrotourism, sky diving, recreational/adventure tourism, eco-tourism, indigenous tourism.	Quick win
4.2	Trail development and enhancement (Collie to Darkan Rail Trail, Pump Track and Darkan Nature Play Area) linking to WA Mountain Bike Strategy and South West Mountain Bike Plan.	Medium term
4.3	Improve directional signage to Lake Towerinning so it is more visible to motorists and create an entrance statement at the Lake itself.	Quick win
4.4	Improve way finding, directional and information boards to move people through different offerings in the district.	Quick win
4.5	Support the community group that is developing the Darkan Hotel and promote the pub for quality food, drink and accommodation.	Quick win
4.6	Investigate potential to leverage the Hillman airstrip through fly-ins or other aero-related activities.	Quick win
4.7	Support the establishment of HIP camps/Free Camping/Nature Based Camping.	Medium term
4.8	Restore Nangip Creek Walk and Darkan Heritage Trail to a better condition.	Medium term
4.9	Develop a toolkit for businesses that identifies how they can be tourism ready.	Quick win
4.10	Encourage regional tourism businesses to share content and promote the ecosystem, not just the individual asset. Host workshops and develop marketing platforms that are regionally based.	Medium term
4.11	Support the reinstatement of the petrol bowsers at the Roadhouse.	Quick win
4.12	Revisit authentic Aboriginal culture and interpretation through the new South West Native Title Settlement governance structures.	Medium term
4.13	Investigate the viability of establishing visitor cabins at Lake Towerinning on Shire owned land opposite the existing caravan park for those who want to stay at the Lake but do not want to camp.	Long term
4.14	Develop a 'Welcome to West Arthur' entry statement or signage at Arthur River.	Quick win



## Priority 5: Strategic Industries and Diversification

**Rationale:** Industry diversification supports a resilient economy by reducing the risk of being overly exposed and overly reliant on one sector. The Shire has a longstanding agricultural industry, along with a mature business sector that further supports the industry. The strength of this sector presents significant opportunities for further diversification into growth and high-potential industries and the introduction of technological advancement.

**Objective:** Greater economic resilience through industry diversification.

**Partnerships:** Grower Group Alliance, AgriStart, Innovation Hub, University research partnership, CSIRO, Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

Actions		Timeline
5.1	Investigate opportunities to partner with a research centre or university (example – Pingelly Future Farm).	Medium term
5.2	Work with DPIRD to attract businesses wanting to set up intensive horticulture, aquaculture or commercial worm farming.	Long term
5.3	Specifically target economic opportunities and stakeholders within strategic growth industries.	Medium term
5.4	Promote industrial site availability.	Quick win
5.5	Continue to investigate opportunities associated with the Wheatbelt Secondary Freight Project.	Medium term
5.6	Explore opportunities for downstream processing of agricultural products.	Medium term
5.7	Support the expansion of associated ancillary businesses.	Long term
5.8	Investigate development of sheep sale yards.	Medium term
5.9	Investigate development of pelleting plant.	Medium term
5.10	Attract a renewable diesel producer.	Medium term
5.11	Investigate potential barriers or drivers of employment loss in Public Administration, Health Care & Social Assistance, and Construction. This could potentially be actioned with other SA2 shires.	Medium term
5.12	Identify more specific local advantages for Administrative & Support Services, Agriculture and Manufacturing and protect against changing contexts.	Medium term

## Priority 6: Investment Attraction

**Rationale:** Ensuring the Shire is well prepared to support future investment in terms of critical infrastructure is essential. This will strongly position West Arthur to proactively target specific sectors to grow the local economy, maintain and grow the population and provide a diversity of employment opportunities.

**Objective:** New industry development and diversified job opportunities.

**Partnerships:** Real estate agents, property developers, State government, academic institutions, landholders, Collie industries and commercial chains, Wheatbelt Development Commission.

Actions		Timeline
6.1	Develop a site and facilities database – inventory of available real estate and facilities. Identify appropriate uses for each development site (e.g. manufacturing, distribution, office use, flex space). Database should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of facilities and sites available for lease/purchase</li> <li>• Size and condition</li> <li>• Purchase and rental rates</li> <li>• Infrastructure and utility setup</li> <li>• Telecommunications capabilities</li> <li>• Parking availability</li> </ul>	Quick win
6.2	Develop a central point of contact for development inquiries. Document interactions with developers and businesses to ensure a central repository and institutional knowledge.	Quick win
6.3	Actively develop partnerships and collaboration with key stakeholders including, academic institutions, industry, and landholders.	Medium term
6.4	Project an open-for-business attitude and approach by creating a commercial investment profile and pitch deck that is suited to key commercial opportunities available in the Shire. Ensure that the Town’s website clearly defines these opportunities and who to contact if interested.	Quick win
6.5	Provide incentives for business attraction, ‘critical mass’ or ‘destination’ projects to help facilitate economic development.	Medium term
6.6	Target industries and commercial chains that already have a foothold in Collie and other regional centres within close proximity to the Shire, for identifying leveraging or development opportunities.	Quick win
6.7	Focus on high potential businesses that are good candidates to locate to the Shire.	Medium term
6.8	Conduct a local sector analysis: Identify factors that are important to each industry sector; evaluate the Shire’s capacity to satisfy those factors; rank industries on the basis of the Shire’s capacity to meet location requirements and its overall ED Objectives.	Medium term
6.9	Cluster analysis: Industries grow more quickly when there are linked clusters in the region or neighbouring regions and these clusters are associated with higher employment. Identify core industries in the community or region and determine which ones have the most growth potential. Identify and target businesses that support that industry (suppliers and buyers). Identify a cluster that is emerging locally and build on it.	Long term
6.10	Stimulate local construction through use of aggregated demand (with other LGA) and use of modular, offsite, housing construction. Consider house and land packages.	Long term

## Priority 7: Economic Development Capacity Building

**Rationale:** An important factor in delivering this strategy will be budget capacity and the ability to resource economic development initiatives. Leadership, partnerships and support from the wider community will be needed in order to fully realise the economic vision. This may require the establishment of an Economic Development Officer position within the Shire (or a shared service with surrounding local governments); or an external resource contracted to deliver the strategy. Either way, there needs to be a dedicated economic development leader to champion the plan and work with key partners. The Shire itself is also a key employer, and maintaining sound governance, as well as long term financial planning, will ensure it remains in a stable position into the future.

**Objective:** Sufficient allocation of resources to successfully drive our strategy forward.

**Partnerships:** WALGA, business and community groups, funding providers, council, local community, neighbouring local governments, State and Federal governments.

Actions		Timeline
7.1	Nominate a resourced position responsible for implementing and reporting on the EDS.	Quick win
7.2	Make use of support provided by WALGA including research. Include basic best practice economic development training for senior staff and Councillors.	Quick win
7.3	Bring together business and community groups to introduce the strategy and identify areas of mutual interest (resident attraction, festivals, events, business support and tourism).	Quick win
7.4	Identify business and community groups with an economic development mandate to partner and collaborate with.	Quick win
7.5	Maintain an inventory of economic development, tourism and community development grants available through the State and Australian Governments and Community Development Foundations.	Quick win
7.6	Promote available programming/grants to local businesses and entrepreneurs.	Medium term
7.7	Make economic development and tourism a dedicated line item within the annual budget deliberation.	Quick win
7.8	Increase local capacity to implement initiatives by targeting community based economic development. This actively involves residents, businesses, support organisations and volunteer networks to become active participants and ambassadors for the Shire.	Medium term
7.9	Partner with neighbouring local governments for regional economic development activities.	Medium term
7.10	Collaborate with, or advocate to, State Government and Federal Government for delivery of economic outcomes through integrated planning and funding.	Long term
7.11	Investigate opportunities for shared facilities, and system-wide benefits to ensure cost-effective investment.	Medium term

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