



Strategic Business Plan DRAFT

2020-2025

Prepared by the

**Bell Street Mall Traders
Association**

**February
2020**

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this plan is to outline a five-year Strategic Business Plan for the Bell Street Mall Traders' Association (BSMTA).

The Plan provides a vision for the centre, goals for the next five years and strategies to achieve them. The BSMTA has prepared the Plan.

The Bell Street Mall Traders' Association is an incorporated body representing business operators and owners of approximately 67 properties in the centre.

The Purposes of the Association, as stated in the 2015 BSMTA Rules are as follows:

- *To constantly improve and promote the Bell St Mall,*
- *To generate and manage the collective marketing, promotion, advertising and business development activities for the Bell St Mall traders,*
- *To engage with the business owners and operators, represent their interests and work with them for the collective benefit of the Bell St Mall,*
- *To develop positive relationships with our key stakeholders who impact and influence the role and function of the Bell St Mall, and*
- *To engage in such other activities as may benefit the West Heidelberg community.*

The Association operates through a Committee of Management and a Marketing and Management Coordinator (Team). The Association is funded by a Special Rate Scheme and levied by Banyule City Council on behalf of the BSMTA, which amounts to approximately \$105,000 annually. \$55,000 is levied from property owners and tenants and \$50,000 is contributed by Banyule City Council.

Details of the current BSMTA Committee and Marketing & Management Coordinator Team as well as the special rate are provided in the Appendix.

2. PROFILE OF THE CENTRE

The Bell Street Mall is located on the corner of Bell Street and Oriel Rd in Heidelberg West. The 67 commercial properties (approximately 70 businesses) within the Bell Street Mall are situated 12km north of Melbourne CBD. The shopping centre precinct also incorporates the five businesses on the west side of Oriel Rd in the Aldi area. The Bell St Mall is a part of Banyule City Council.

Figure 1 Plan Area of the Bell St Mall



The role of the Bell Street Mall is to provide a convenient Shopping Centre for visiting patrons, where they can purchase their necessities and more. It has also transformed into a meeting, activity and event place/space for the community where they can shop, dine, be entertained and meet with their friends. The Centre's business mix is predominately Retail and Services, with a large Food sector. Supporting this mix are anchor businesses including the Post Office, IGA/Heidelberg Foodstore, Shop 48 – The Harmony Centre, Heidelberg West Medical Centre, Vinnies, both Pharmacies and Aldi Supermarkets. Adding to this mix is the significant number of East African businesses. Details of the centre's business mix are outlined in the Appendix.

The current special rate expires on 30 June 2020. Over the last five years, some key activities have included

- Upgrading of the CCTV Camera System,
- New Pylon Sign with Digital Screen,
- Graffiti Removal Programs,
- Development of a new website,
- Consistent Social Media marketing and advertising (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter),
- Christmas Carnival Events,
- Lunar/Chinese New Year Events,
- Ramadan/IFTAR Events,
- Cultural Diversity Day/Multicultural Events,
- Seasonal Promotions, Market Saturdays, and
- Attracting a Weekly Fruit & Veg Market.

Major achievements of the program have included:

- Creating and executing an extensive range of strategic marketing promotions and campaigns consistently,
- Developing an increased presence online via relevant social media networks,
- Continuation of Cultural Events and markets as well as trying new events,
- Maintenance of an email database to use as targeted effective marketing tool,
- Continued lobbying of Council and other relevant authorities producing beneficial precinct outcomes,
- Being recognised as a Cultural Precinct by the Victorian State Government,
- Building strategic partnerships with key organisations to best promote the shopping centre,
- Installation of new Pylon Sign on Bell St with Digital Screen,
- Introducing and Maintaining a Trader Permit Parking System, and
- Attracting multiple Government Grants to assist with our funding of various projects and events.

Over the past five years the Bell St Mall has experienced a higher than usual vacancy rate. It has however seen the inclusion of many new businesses across a range of industries entering the precinct. Some of these businesses have included key tenants such as Shop 48 – The Harmony Centre and Heidelberg West Medical Centre. The trader mix has also changed over the last five years with traditional retail making way for service and health-based businesses.

The centre is constantly changing due to various outside forces. Economic factors, worldwide downturn in retail and online shopping have had a huge impact. Other things like Uber Eats (and other delivery services) are wonderful for eateries and customers, however it may affect foot traffic as customers may no longer be coming to the centre as often to buy their food.

In February 2020, traders were asked to complete a survey. The questions were discussing the Mall's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. There were nine respondents who gave some thoughtful insights about the Bell St Mall.

Recommendations from the trader survey have been included throughout this strategic plan in the Key Issues & Opportunities and in the Strategies and Actions Plan. Overall, traders felt the Bell St Mall had a great location in terms of proximity to the city and other hubs in Banyule. Parking and the great outdoor space were also listed as strengths. The biggest threats and weaknesses of the Mall were the lack of foot traffic, perception of it being unsafe, empty and closed shops and a weak retail mix. 50% of respondents thought the overall performance of the centre over the next five years will improve or stay the same.

Banyule City Council has several policies and strategies that impact on The Bell St Mall. The main policy influencing the Mall is the Economic Development Plan (2015-2020) A summary of the key points of the Strategy as it relates to the Mall is outlined in the Appendix.

The Economic Development Plan provides a to guide and promote economic activity and growth in Banyule over the next five years. There are four strategic objectives that shape the plan.

- 1. Vibrant Precincts**
- 2. Business Support**
- 3. Investment and Attraction**
- 4. Leadership and Partnerships**

3. KEY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

These key issues and opportunities are taken from research including feedback from the Bell St Mall Traders.

Strengths

The major strengths of the centre are considered to be

- Location / Proximity to CBD / Proximity to Austin Hospital.
- Proximity to large commercial developments along Bell Street.
- Parking/Number of parking spaces.
- Very multi-cultural and sense of community.
- Indoor/outdoor space and greenery.
- Cheap food
- Anchor Tenants such as Post Office / Vinnies.
- Well Maintained / Clean
- Multi-cultural Place / Unique African presence
- Functional Committee
- Traffic-less
- Uncongested/Not crowded/Traffic-less
- Main Road Location
- Large Land Mass
- Friendly

Weaknesses

The major weaknesses of the centre are considered to be

- Lack of people / Foot Traffic.
- Perception Mall is unsafe / Poor Image / Roller Doors / Graffiti / Birds and Droplets / Smoking / Littering / Ugly appearance from main roads.
- Variance of Store Hours.
- Lack of drawcards to encourage passing trade (e.g. newsagents, banks, anchor tenants).
- Retail Mix / Lack of Good/Quality Traders / Lack of destination shops.
- Closed/Empty shops.
- Lack of widespread marketing for the Mall / Awareness / Advertising.
- Lack of cafes and places for people to meet over coffee.
- Low Socio-Economic Population
- Run down Streetscape

Opportunities

The major opportunities of the centre are considered to be

- Attraction visitors and more businesses.
- Increase of foot traffic.
- Look at Westgarth and High St Northcote as a business model - e.g. café culture, shops focussing on niche products, sustainability (very trendy). The Mall has been described as an eclectic shopping centre and we should be celebrating our uniqueness. Play up that it's a 50s shopping centre with indoor / outdoor spaces and outdoor seating which makes it unique.
- Further redevelopment.
- Cultural Hub.

- More Government services.
- Location to attract better quality businesses or services to the centre.
- New residential apartment blocks and council blocks.
- Development that is occurring around it.
- Attracting the new demographic into the centre with shops that appeal to them.
- Attracting a large tenancy

Threats

The major threats to the centre are considered to be

- Social Problems.
- Unsafe image.
- Decline of shoppers.
- Lack of good traders.
- Loss of Tenants.
- Ethnic stereotyping / Racism.
- Move to being known as cultural precinct as opposed to a shopping centre.
- Expansion of Northland Shopping Centre.
- No longer fit for purpose.
- Poor upkeep of streetscape

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4. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Vision

To continuously lift the image of the Mall as a safe, clean, inviting and a local convenience Shopping Centre and Cultural Precinct for all patrons, with the aim of making the locals proud and passionate to build strong community connections and economic viability.

The role of the centre will continue to serve in the interests of the local community. Physically, there will be new developments and the Bell St Mall will adapt to ensure it services the needs of the local residents.

Aims:

- To promote the centre as a unique shopping environment with a range of interesting events and activities throughout the year,
- To maintain a productive partnership with Council to improve infrastructure, asset management and precinct presentation,
- To work towards increasing customer traffic and retail turnover to assist improvements to business performance,
- To potentially develop more interest and enthusiasm by all the businesses to promote the centre and become involved in the work of the Association,
- To maintain regular two-way communication with members and with community groups,
- To identify and deliver business development programs of value to the members, and
- To help maintain an attractive mix of businesses in the centre.

5. STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

The following set of strategies and actions aims to realise the vision for the Bell Street Mall. The recommended priorities over the next five years are:

5.1 Marketing and Public Relations

Branding

- Continue to promote the brand through media (digital & print) advertising as well as the Association's website and newsletter(s).
- Promote and protect the Bell St Mall image and brand by ensuring all marketing activities are of high value.

Strategic Marketing

- Develop and maintain the new website and look at updating it every few years and/or when it becomes dated.
- Maintain the social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram & Twitter) and continue to build paid and unpaid campaigns and advertising.
- Develop and maintain Trip Advisor account.
- Maintain and build the email database.
- Maintain analytics relating to website traffic and social media engagement.
- Utilise Banyule City Council's resources to best market the Bell St Mall.
- Develop and maintain an Australian Tourism Database Warehouse (ATDW) profile for the Bell St Mall.
- Re-examine the target market and ensure marketing activities are relevant.
- Investigate the introduction of a new electronic gift card program.
- Assess on-going marketing campaigns that are cost effective.
- Investigate the use of bloggers, vloggers, concrete playground, urban list and broadsheet.
- Target increased population coming from new developments.
- Investigate broader advertising for the centre (print and digital).
- Encourage traders to develop/update their shops/websites/online presence.
- Continue to market industry segments (e.g. Cultural aspects of the Mall).

- Continue to promote the Cultural Precinct as a place to visit.
- Investigate ways to improve all major events to ensure attendance, participation and growth.

Special Promotional Events

- Encourage more traders to be involved in promotions, to ensure that promotions don't lose their appeal by lack of trader participation.
- Continue to organise Bell St Mall annual events (Lunar New Year, Iftar, Christmas Community Day).
- Continue to organise smaller special promotional events throughout the year (Easter, Mother's Day / Father's Day, community events, fundraisers).
- Investigate adding a Food Festival – e.g. Somali food Festival.
- Investigate seasonal visual merchandising competitions.
- Continue to market and grow the Community Grocer Market and Market Saturdays.
- Investigate introducing a promotional event whereby it can be measured as to where people are coming from. E.g. Mother's Day Raffle.
- Update Christmas decorations.
- Investigate drawcards for Saturdays to coincide with the markets.
- Investigate introducing a pop-up cinema in the Mall in the warmer months.

5.2 Community Development

Community connection and development are important spin-offs of the current marketing and promotional strategies being undertaken by the Traders' Association. The recommended strategies for the future are:

- Continue to involve schools and community groups in the centre's promotional activities.
- Strengthen the relationship between community, community groups, council, landlords and traders.
- Maintain a strong relationship with Council

5.3 Business Development

Retaining and Improving Existing Businesses

It is important to have continuous upgrading, development, and renewal of products/services, shopfronts and service. The recommended strategies over the long term are:

- Continue to inform and encourage businesses to participate in training programs (such as those offered by Council and the Traders Association) to build up their skills and make improvements to individual shops and offices. In particular, encourage businesses to embrace electronic marketing and appreciate the significance of the online component of their business.
- Strengthen the relationships between community, community groups, Council, landlords and traders.
- Encourage more traders to be involved.
- Welcome new businesses to the Bell St Mall.
- Investigate the introduction of Trader Information Events.
- Encourage traders to all open at the same time – uniform trading hours.
- Encourage Council to relocate more Government services into the Mall.
- Discourage vacant shops with programs that use vacant spaces.
- Encourage potential development opportunities in the Mall

5.4 Car Parking, Streetscape and Infrastructure Improvements

The recommended strategies are:

- Continue to work with Council to ensure that there is adequate car parking in the centre for customers and traders and the parking mix/restrictions best reflects the habits of customers/shoppers.
- Continue to lobby Council to update, maintain and clean the painting of assets.
- Continue to lobby Council to provide funding as a priority for streetscape improvements.
- Encourage landowners/agents to make improvements to buildings.
- Investigate new signage opportunities in particular new electronic signage.
- Ensure the Traders Association is a part of any consultation for any new improvements and/or changes to occur and to ensure the Mall does not look tired.
- Ensure the Traders Association is a part of any consultation for any changes to parking spaces/restrictions in the Centre.
- Ensure Graffiti removal program is effective and investigate ways to ensure all graffiti is removed promptly.
- Investigate ways to ensure the safety of patrons and to promote the perception of safety in the Mall.

6. MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE

6.1 Traders' Association and Coordinators

Traders' Association

The recommended strategies to improve and sustain the management and communication processes are:

- Work to elect an active Committee each year at the AGM with, if possible, appropriate representation on the Committee from different types of businesses and/or landlords in different parts of the centre who are both positive and proactive.
- Continue to organise regular Committee meetings to direct and monitor the agreed program of activities.
- Continue to develop and implement a unique marketing program for the centre.
- Continue to take a very pro-active role with Banyule City Council and other Government agencies in facilitating improvements in the centre.
- Maintain strong links with Mainstreet Australia.
- Facilitate stronger business buy-in to the program by communicating with businesses regularly and selling the achievements and benefits of the program. Continue to prepare and distribute periodic newsletter and to make regular visits to keep businesses up to date with proposed new events and marketing approaches.
- Organise business networking nights such as the AGM, Information sessions other trader nights.
- Encourage trader participation and unity between traders.

Marketing & Management Coordinators

The Bell St Mall Traders Association is committed to continuing to employ and utilise the services and expertise from a part-time coordinator (team) with a continued strong focus on the marketing & management of the Bell St Mall. The key strategies for the coordinator to achieve are:

- Expand the branding, strategic marketing and promotional initiatives, as outlined above.
- Continue to communicate the marketing agenda with all businesses in the centre through newsletters, emails and personal visits to business premises.
- Maximise marketing value for dollar. Always try to minimise costs.
- Continue to maintain strong relationships with local community groups.
- Inform businesses about external training programs to motivate and educate them to make improvements to their businesses.
- Continue to lobby, with the Committee executive, Council and other Government agencies to achieve the recommended car parking and streetscape improvement priorities.
- Investigate new funding opportunities (sponsorships, grants).
- Help draft the Marketing Budgets for each upcoming Financial Year.
- Help manage the affairs of the Association

6.2 Financial Strategy

The current funding program for the Mall has a budget of \$105,000 for 2018-19. The Association is funded by a special rate and levied by Banyule City Council on behalf of the BSMTA, which amounts to approximately \$105,000 of which \$50,000 is contributed by Council.

Funds are also sourced from various grants from year to year. The Bell St Mall is currently a recipient of funding from the Victorian Multicultural Commission which is to fund the annual Iftar event. Funding has also been received for the CCTV system and other events. The total amount of working capital Marketing funds for the 2019 FY is \$190,000.

The BSMTA proposes the next five-year plan is funded through the Special Rate Scheme on the basis of the following:

- The proposed Special Rate will be declared and assessed based on the capital improved value of each property multiplied by an amount of 0.00161829, combined with a minimum Special Rate payable of \$350 and a maximum Special Rate payable of \$2,000.
- The special rate is to be renewed coming into effect on 1 July 2020. A general list of approximate expenses is listed below, based on the BSMTA 2019 FY Budget, as an indication of how activities/expenses are split.

The special rate is considered a marketing fund and to be primarily used for Marketing purposes. The Bell St Mall has its own unique challenges but still has a full calendar of events and promotions.

The BSMTA develops and adopts an annual budget. This budget works as a Marketing plan and details money to be spent on Marketing & Promotions, Maintenance & Streetscape Improvements, General Administration, Marketing & Management Coordinators, Communication and Security/CCTV. This budget is sent to Banyule Council.

The Traders Association is to continue to have a financial accountability system in place. This is to meet the reporting requirements of both Consumer Affairs Victoria and Banyule City Council's funding agreement. A financial report, outlining expenditure against a designated budget for each project area of the Association's program is to continue to be organised and provided regularly to Committee meetings. An audit of the Association's annual income and expenditure is to continue to be prepared at the end of the Association's financial year and presented to the Association's AGM as well as to Banyule City Council.

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Appendix

The Appendix provides further background information on the Bell St Mall, its Management Committee, Marketing and Management Coordinator Team and special rate details, demographic details and key policies and strategies approved by Banyule City Council in relation to the Bell St Mall.

Management Committee

The Committee of the Traders Association and Marketing Coordinators for 2020 are:

- President Emily Metcalfe (Chester Metcalfe Lawyers)
- Vice President Dr Hussein Haraco (Landlord Shop 70)
- Secretary Val Smith (The Koole Shop)
- Treasurer David Gilmour (Landlord Shop 48)
- Ordinary Member John Petsas (Landlord Shop 4)
- Ordinary Member Ahmed Ismail (Atlantis Travel)
- Ordinary Member Ian McLaughlan (McLaughlan Shoes)
- Ordinary Member Hassan Q Mohammed (Marka Cadeey)
- Marketing Co-ordinator Team Stavros & Circe Zikou (Marketa)

Special Charge Details

The Traders Association is funded primarily by a special levy covering approximately 67 rateable properties in the centre. Currently, the Association is funded by a special rate and levied by Banyule City Council on behalf of the BSMATA, which amounts to approximately \$105,000 of which \$50,000 is contributed by Council. The special charge expires on 30 June 2020.

Demographics

Data highlighted from the latest census (2016) shows the following information about people who live in the Heidelberg West Statistical area.

- There are over 13,400 residents, with 3200 families.
- The median age is 35 years old. 25-29 year-olds are the largest age group and make up 9.5% of the population. Over 65 year-olds make up 13.6% of the population.
- Over 25% of the population have a bachelor's degree or above.
- Over 59% of people were born in Australia. The most common countries of birth were Somalia 3%, India 2.7%, China (excludes SARs and Taiwan) 2.7%, England 1.7%, Vietnam 1.6%.
- 26.7% of the population are Professionals and 13.4% are Technicians and Trade Workers, with the median weekly income of \$543.
- 78% of households were connected to the internet.

Bell St Mall Activity Mix

The following is the Ivanhoe Shopping Centre Activity Mix as of February 2020.

Category	Count
Café/Restaurants/Takeaway	14
Professional Services	8
Speciality Services	9
Health Professionals	3
Hair & Beauty	4
Fashion/Jewellery/Shoes	8
Homewares/Giftware	1
Speciality Retail	11
Fresh Food	5
Everyday Services	5
Total	70

Please note the number of businesses listed above do not directly correlate with number of rateable properties as some businesses lease two or three rateable properties. As of February 2020, there are also 6 properties and/or spaces of vacant. Of which 3 are advertised for Lease.

Banyule City Council Strategies and Policies

There are many Banyule City Council Strategies and Policies. This appendix is only focusing on the main Policy that has the greatest impact on the Bell St Mall.

Banyule City Council Economic Development Plan (2015-2020)

The Economic Development Plan provides a to guide and promote economic activity and growth in Banyule over the next five years. There are four strategic objectives that shape the plan –

- 1. Vibrant Precincts**
- 2. Business Support**
- 3. Investment and Attraction**

4. Leadership and Partnerships

1. Vibrant Precincts

Making neighbourhood shopping precincts distinctive, appealing and thriving. Making them a focal point for business and community life, to stimulate vibrancy and ongoing economic prosperity.

To achieve this vision, some related strategies are

- Partner with Traders' Associations to effectively market and promote retail centres.
- Build the capacity of Traders' Associations to continue to deliver strong outcomes for centres.
- Longer term thinking for precincts while delivering innovative initiatives.
- Ensure centres are well maintained to contribute to a strong sense of place.

2. Business Support

Active, informed and connected local businesses being involved with the range of training, networking and support programs that Council provides.

To achieve this vision, some related strategies are

- Support and inform businesses about the latest issues and equipped to do business in Banyule.
- Enable businesses to have access to available resources and services tailored to their needs.
- Communicate and promote Banyule's business offer.
- Explore how spending can be retained within the local community.
- Investigate the links between economic growth and community needs.
- Celebrate and recognise Banyule Businesses.

3. Investment and Attraction

Understand and successfully market Banyule's competitive advantages and opportunities to increase investment and attraction appeal.

To achieve this vision, some related strategies are

- Develop Banyule's product offering and tourism potential.
- Promote Banyule's advantages as an investment location.

4. Leadership and Partnerships

Partnerships are actively explored and facilitated to maximise initiatives and opportunities.

To achieve this vision, some related strategies are

- Add value to Council's economic development role by recognising the contribution of different service areas.
- Actively pursue funding opportunities to deliver economic development agenda.
- Provide leadership in the local economic agenda.
- Monitor performance against the plan and strategic objectives.

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