

# York



## A Strategy for Tourism Development

# Executive Summary

First settled in 1831, it is Western Australia's oldest inland town and is situated 97 kilometres from Perth on the banks of the Avon River.

Many of York's opulent Victorian and Federation buildings have been restored and it is one of the few towns in WA to enjoy historic town classification. This heritage, along with its natural rural amenity and proximity to Perth, makes York a popular visitor destination in addition to its agricultural service centre role.

York's well documented heritage significance and local rural amenities are key advantages for the further development of local tourism activity. While it is expected that the daytrip market will continue to dominate local tourism in York, there are also opportunities to capture a greater share of "Grey Nomad" domestic tourism due to its level of accessibility and existing accommodation facilities." WDC, Sub-Region Economic Strategy, 2012.

## Principles

1. York's tourism plan should develop on the district's strengths, assets and on opportunities it is presented with.
2. Tourism planning should occur with consideration of community planning.
3. Decision making in tourism planning should be diverse and inclusive of all local community groups and stakeholders.
4. Tourism development in York requires strong leadership.
5. Tourism development in York should involve coordination with Regional Authorities.
6. Management of tourism should be adaptive and responsive to change.
7. Tourism planning should embrace nature and heritage values of the community.
8. Diversification of activities should be embraced in tourism development.
9. There should be a focus on place-making in economic development.
10. Tourism development should focus on increasing the skill and knowledge bank within the community.

York, as an established heritage town and within an hour and a half of central Perth, has both a wealth of visitor attractions and a large market in which to appeal. The heritage values of the area, however, are not the only tourism assets at York's disposal. Indeed a number of businesses have been, and continue to be, drivers of tourism and economic growth in York and its surrounding areas. Other major visitor attractions to York include both the stunning beauty of its natural surrounds and its reputation as a festival town.

With established bed and breakfasts, guest houses, hotels, motels, country retreats, self-contained cottages, farm stays and a caravan park, York offers a highly diverse range of accommodation. In a similar manner, York offers a variety of eating houses, with a range that encompasses hotels, restaurants, cafes, tea-rooms, roadhouses, delis and takeaways. The newly opened York Recreation and Convention Centre provides the capacity to accommodate and cater for large numbers of people for conventions and functions in a diverse manner that provides York with a significant advantage over nearby towns.

For York to maintain and grow its market share as an attractive destination to visit and increase both its visitor numbers and yield, it is crucial to develop a marketing and promotion strategy. Although previous methods of promotion and marketing have had their merits, in an increasingly competitive market it has been recognised that there is a need for change (Australian Government 2003).

Significant population growth is expected given that York is close to Perth, relative to other towns, and offers lifestyle opportunities for residents (Shire of York 2005). Meanwhile, the town will need to provide infrastructure without imposing on environmental and social values of the town, which attract people in the first place and provide infrastructure for the tourism sector without alienating the needs and wishes of other industries in the community.

## Strategies

A number of strategies have been identified in the following areas:

- Attractions
- Visitor Services
- Promotion, Management and Coordination
- Human Resources
- Infrastructure

Tourism in York has for too long been a little one dimensional, however, there are many opportunities for change. It is the recommendation of this report that York, as a community, should seek to diversify its tourism sector in order to bring unprecedented prosperity and growth. Naturally, this will not be an easy process, nor will it be an inexpensive process, as it will require significant levels of commitment from the community as well as considerable financial investment. The strategies and actions listed above

should act as a set of guidelines for the continued development of the tourism sector in York, having been devised specifically to enable York to build, for itself, a diverse and sustainable future.

In 2006, Paul Bentley, Matthew Burnett & Jessica Payne from Curtin University wrote “Future York – Planning for Tourism Development’. This strategy is based on that document.

This Strategy identifies the opportunities, and constraints, for the strategic development of tourism in York.

# Location

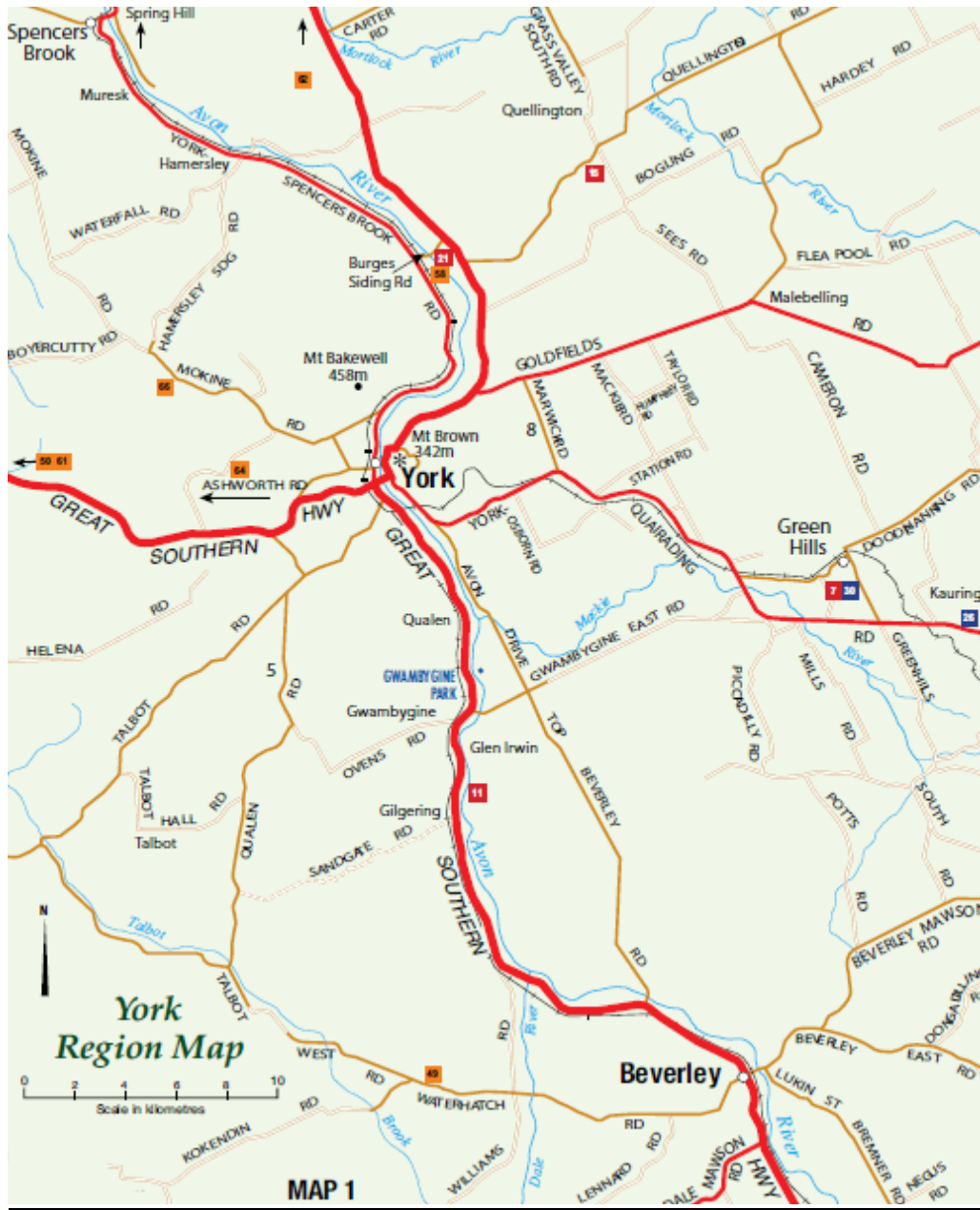


Figure 1: Locational Map

# Mission Statement

***York has significant potential to become one of Australia's leading tourist destinations!***

York's development has primarily focused on the agricultural sector for most of its history. While this sector remains an important contributor to economic activity in the district, structural economic shifts have resulted in the need to diversify its economic base. As a result, the need to develop tourism has become increasingly significant as a driver of economic development in York (Australian Government, 2003).

York is bestowed with numerous social, heritage and environmental assets. These benefits provide the town with much potential to significantly increase its tourism sector in order to attract a more diverse market. In doing so, the development of York's tourism sector will capitalise on international trends in tourism more effectively.

This strategy will outline the many strengths of the community, guide the future development of the tourism sector based on these strengths, and recognize opportunities for future growth. The visions will be developed with direct actions to facilitate the realization of these goals.

Throughout the development of the aforementioned strategies there is recognition that:

- Tourism development should be sustainable to ensure that conflict with environmental or social factors in the community remains minimal, while economic gain is optimised;
- Tourism development should contribute to community building and employment growth;
- As the tourism environment is changing, tourism development must be flexible and responsive to challenges, therefore allowing for growth and prosperity (Australian Government, 2003).

This strategy intends to build on the Shire of York's Mission Statement "*To build on our history to create our future*" by ensuring that tourism development provides a sustainable future for York.



**FIGURE 2: HISTORIC YORK: TOWN HALL**

# Guiding Principles

The following outlines the guiding principles for the development of York's tourism plan. There ensure that benefits from tourism are maximized throughout the community, allowing progress towards sustainable economic development.

<p><b>Principle 1:</b></p> <p>York's tourism plan should develop on the district's strengths, assets and on opportunities it is presented with</p>	<p>The tourism plan will be developed by focusing on strengths and opportunities, as well as attempts to expand on the positives in the community. This is believed to be likely to yield positive outcomes and develop positive attitudes towards tourism and confidence in tourism, throughout the community (Kenyon 2005). While there is identification of the 'issues' in this Report, the strategies themselves are based on the positives for the community.</p>
<p><b>Principle 2:</b></p> <p>Tourism planning should occur with consideration of community planning</p>	<p>The tourism sector ultimately needs to cater to the needs of tourists. However, planning for tourism development needs to also focus on measures which will benefit the community at large.</p> <p>This is because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A happy and empowered community will:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the development of tourism;</li> <li>• Is more likely to contribute to the sector;</li> <li>• Be attractive for tourists, and;</li> <li>• Attract people who can further develop the sector and ignite passion within the community.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Tourism can provide the opportunity for a range of employment opportunities, which will allow for an overall increase in confidence and the sense of self-worth among members of the community,</li> <li>• Problems are likely to occur when communities rely on tourism development and ignore other important factors. With this in mind, it is imperative to use services and facilities to attract a permanent work base, as well as supplementary economic activities (Centre for Community Enterprise 2005).</li> </ul>

**Principle 3:**

Decision making in tourism planning should be diverse and inclusive of all local community groups and stakeholders

Consultation with the local community and various stakeholders is likely to:

- Allow tourism planning to be more responsive to local employment, personal development and social needs.
- Allow tourism planning to build on diverse strengths, knowledge and passion from within the community. (Department of Environment and Heritage 2004)
- Allow tourism planning to take into consideration all values in the community. (Department of Environment and Heritage 2004, Western Australian Tourist Commission 2004)
- Allow determination of what future visions are realistic for the community and transpire into realities.
- Allow tourism to provide opportunities for the future in terms of employment, skill development and social cohesion.
- Develop greater potential for the story of the community to be extracted and communicated through interpretive tourism. (Department of Environment and Heritage 2004)
- Tourism development must also take into account externalities that could develop among sectors of the community, now and into the future (e.g. pressures on infrastructure).

Major groups to consult with in a meaningful way include:

- *Tourists*

Tourism development must respond to the demands of tourists and as such consultation must be made with tourists to determine their points of view on destinations and what influences their travel behaviours.

- *Service Providers*

There needs to be consultation with business owners, ranging from retailers to accommodation providers, as they are aware of the capacity to develop tourism and bring a wealth of knowledge as to the nature of opportunities and constraints for tourism development. Consultation with the business sector also allows and increases the job linking capacity in the community.

	<p>Community consultation should be completed as early in the process of tourism development as possible and a wide range of participatory initiatives must be utilised (Coakes 1999).</p>
<p><b>Principle 4:</b></p> <p>Tourism development in York requires strong leadership</p>	<p>There is benefit in having an individual or group, who can facilitate tourism development, who has the vision and motivation to ignite passion among the various stakeholders and encourage partnership and coordination.</p>
<p><b>Principle 5:</b></p> <p>Tourism development in York should involve coordination with Regional Authorities</p>	<p>Tourism planning must involve consultation and liaison with government and regional authorities, as to ensure that the steps towards tourism being taken coordinate with regional and State government efforts in tourism planning and that there is efficient resource use in doing so (Western Australian Tourist Commission 2004).</p> <p>Through cooperation with other regional authorities, it is believed each region is able to identify their competitive advantage and build on it. This way, each town within the region is able to complement each other, allowing the region as a whole to be more marketable and desirable by tourists (Wheatbelt Area Consultative Committee 2006).</p>
<p><b>Principle 6:</b></p> <p>Management of tourism should be adaptive and responsive to change</p>	<p>To ensure that the project is meeting community needs, the needs of tourists and is harmonizing with natural and cultural values, there must be performance indicators which identify whether there must be modifications to the actions and visions (Western Australian Tourist Commission 2004).</p>
<p><b>Principle 7:</b></p> <p>Tourism planning should embrace nature and heritage values of the community</p>	<p>Sustainable tourism development focuses on recognising the value of; maintaining and building on the natural environment and heritage features. Within Western Australia there is a particular need to embrace nature and heritage given that many visitors are attracted to the 'fresh and natural' experience it has to offer (Western Australian Tourist Commission 2004).</p> <p>There is also a focus on capitalizing upon opportunities to educate the community about such values and how the community can contribute to their preservation, through the tourism sector. The development approach must therefore be sympathetic to the environment and heritage and this requires adequate coordination between land-use planning, economic planning and environmental planning in order to take into account a wide range of externalities (Caitlin, Bakker et al. 2004).</p>

<p><b>Principle 8:</b></p> <p>Diversification of activities should be embraced in tourism development</p>	<p>Diversifying the activities on which tourism relies is an effective way to broaden the markets that a region can appeal to. For instance, activities specifically aimed at independent travellers, and backpackers in particular, might include expanding a region's capacity to cater for adventure tourism.</p> <p>Often the elements of a diverse activity base already exist, but the promotion of those elements is lacking. In cases such as this, building on what already exists and promoting it, is an effective means of diversifying the activity base.</p>
<p><b>Principle 9:</b></p> <p>There should be a focus on place-making in economic development</p>	<p>'Place making' involves creating York as a destination of choice as opposed to a stopover as part of travel to the Avon Region. There should be importance placed on determining the effectiveness of the type and variety of attractions, how they relate to each other and how they serve the needs of the market in York itself and in relation to the York area at large (Australian Government, 2003).</p>
<p><b>Principle 10:</b></p> <p>Tourism development should focus on increasing the skill and knowledge bank within the community</p>	<p>The local community and tourists should gain knowledge of the local area through tourism initiatives. Interpretative facilities such as cultural centres and self-discovery activities are beneficial in meeting this need (Western Australian Tourist Commission 2004). The education functions of the tourist sector not only apply to the interpretation of natural and cultural values among the tourists and the community but extend to life-long skill development among local communities in industries such as hospitality, the development of entrepreneurship and the role of research activities in strengthening the sector (Western Australian Tourist Commission 2004).</p> <p>There is also a strong importance placed on the role of education and tourism in retaining youth in tourist towns. While over recent decades there has been great encouragement for rural students to study and find employment in the City, there needs to be a focus on educating in areas relating to tourism, in order to keep youth in communities.</p>

# Market Analysis

## Attractions

York, as an established heritage town and within an hour and a half of central Perth, has both a wealth of visitor attractions and a large market in which to appeal. The heritage values of the area, however, are not the only tourism assets at York's disposal. Indeed a number of businesses have been, and continue to be, drivers of tourism and economic growth in York and its surrounding areas. Other major visitor attractions to York include both the stunning beauty of its natural surrounds and its reputation as a festival town. The following analysis will explore the aforementioned assets in regards to visitor attractions in York's tourism sector as well as investigating the key constraints to tourism growth.

### Assets

The following assets have been identified within the town of York.

<b>Heritage</b>	<p>Established in 1831, York was the first inland settlement in Western Australia and has been granted official historic town classification. The town has 27 on the state heritage register and is recognised by the National Trust as a historic town. These buildings are primarily of the Victorian and Federation periods which act to imbue the town with a sense of opulence. The main street in York, Avon Terrace, is a picture of heritage restoration, with some of the finer examples including the Town Hall.</p> <p>The historic nature of the town has provided York with a significant competitive advantage by allowing it to appeal to history and architectural enthusiasts. Heritage walk trails have been developed, and are continuously being reviews to improve accessibility and widen their appeal to tourists.</p>
<b>Entrepreneurship</b>	<p>Skydive Express is an award winning, world-class skydiving centre that operates just outside of York. The operation runs with a private airfield and two customised skydiving aircraft in conjunction with highly professional and knowledgeable staff (Skydive Express</p>

	<p>2006). The Skydive Express complex includes a café, swimming pool, sauna and licensed bar. As an adventure tourism facility, Skydive Express acts as a major attractor to the area, particularly with independent travellers, such as backpackers aged between 15 and 30 (Kookaburra Backpackers 2006).</p> <p>Unfortunately, Skydive Express is often seen as a daytrip from Perth for visiting tourists and, as a result, overnight stays associated with Skydive Express in York are uncommon (Kookaburra Backpackers 2006). Similarly, the bar and café located on site at the Skydive Express facility do not generally encourage tourists to explore nearby areas such as the town of York. While Skydive Express is a major attraction in the region, it does not tend to significantly increase tourism numbers in York (Kookaburra Backpackers 2006).</p> <p>The York Racecourse will again become a significant contributor to tourism and economic development in York, with works being completed to rebuild damage following the January 2010 storm. It is anticipated that the Racecourse will host many race meetings and become a regional training ground.</p> <p>York is fast becoming a destination for adventure sports with many four-wheel drive enthusiasts, trail bike riders, and more recently hang gliding. Plans are also underway for a cable ski park. The local 'free' off-road motorbike park attracts many people from Perth and surrounds and caters for experienced and inexperienced riders of all ages.</p>
<p><b>Natural Surrounds</b></p>	<p>York offers a number of nature based tourism attractions as outlined below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wildflowers – a variety of West Australian wildflowers can be observed in the natural settings in the following locations; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St Ronans Reserve,</li> <li>• Mokine Reserve,</li> <li>• Wambyn Road,</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wallaby Hills Reserve; and</li> <li>• Mt Observation.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mount Brown Lookout – At 342 metres above sea level, this lookout offers spectacular 360° views of York and the surrounding land.</li> <li>• Gwambygine Park – Located 10km south of York this park contains one of the few remaining permanent pools of the Avon River.</li> <li>• Avon River – York is situated in the Avon Catchment of the Avon River with close proximity to the river itself.</li> </ul> <p>Current tourism focuses on the heritage and adventure sectors, undervaluing the natural attractions York has to offer. Although nature based tourism is not viable as an attraction of York alone, it is a feasible market to be promoted in synergy within the region. For example tourists could visit York to see wildflowers and visit Mount Brown Lookout whilst on their way to Hyden to see Wave Rock. In an effort to diversify the tourism sector, further development of nature based tourism as part of a regional experience is needed.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Festivals</b></p>	<p>York has a proud history as a festival town, which has helped to develop a highly regarded reputation for York as a festival town. This reputation allows the town the potential to establish new festivals in order to attract visitors during traditionally low-season periods. Some of the well known events and festivals that have been held in York include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• York Jazz Festival;</li> <li>• York Spring Garden Festival;</li> <li>• Festival of Motoring; and</li> <li>• Timeless Treasures Antique Auction.</li> </ul>

	<p>These events attract large numbers of tourists, predominantly over weekends, at various times throughout the year.</p> <p>After a decline in events over the past few years, the schedule of events is steadily increasing to now include annual events such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• York Agricultural Show</li> <li>• Wheels for Hope Motorcycle Festival (a 2 day event)</li> <li>• York Easter Antiques Fair</li> <li>• York Cup</li> </ul>
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## Opportunities

As is evident above, the Town of York has numerous assets on which to build a prosperous tourism sector. Unfortunately, and for a number of reasons, York has not harnessed these assets to their full potential. These reasons include seasonality, conflicts within the community, lacking diversity of operations and visitor services as well as insufficient marketing and promotion. However, this report does not seek to criticise existing or past practices, but rather to learn from them and to build upon them with the aim of achieving the best possible outcomes for York.

Increasing the length of stay of tourists in York is fundamental in the pursuit of maximising the benefits of the tourism sector. The best means of achieving this is to provide a diverse activity base aimed specifically at tourists. This is particularly important in the case of independent travellers and backpackers who often spend limited time in York (Kookaburra Backpackers 2006). Increasing the length of stay will ultimately benefit all operators in York's tourism sector, particularly hotels and other accommodation providers.

There is also a need to address the seasonality of tourist activity in York. Visitor numbers in York tend to peak in the autumn, winter and early spring months, coinciding with the majority of festivals. Establishing more consistent, year round visitor numbers may assist in maintaining stability in the tourism sector and alleviate economic downturns in off-peak periods. Once again, broadening the activity base to include attractions that operate in predominantly warmer months will complement existing festivals and activities and help to sustain local businesses in traditionally low seasons.

The new York Recreation and Convention Centre at Forrest Oval provides a convention and seminar facility not previously available in York and the region. Due to this, York is now well placed to enter the conference, convention and seminar market, which is an often overlooked but highly lucrative sector of the tourist market. This is primarily a result of both York's proximity to central Perth and its abundance of accommodation and hospitality operators. To illustrate this, York has recently held a number of seminars and conferences, with some of them consisting of up to 100 delegates. One event in particular attracted over 300 delegates to the town (Shire of York 2006c).

## Visitor Services

For the purpose of this report, visitor services have been predominantly considered in terms of local businesses and organizational systems that serve and assist tourists such as accommodation, food outlets and visitor centres.

### Assets

York offers a highly diverse range of accommodation, with over 35 facilities available. This includes bed and breakfasts, guest houses, hotels, motels, country retreats, self-contained cottages, farm stays and a caravan park. In a similar manner, York offers a wide variety of eating houses, with a range that encompasses hotels, restaurants, cafes, tea-rooms, roadhouses, delis and takeaways. This capacity to accommodate and cater for large numbers of people in such a diverse manner provides York with a significant advantage over nearby towns.

The York Visitor Information Services (VIS) operates from small quarters in the magnificent heritage listed York Town Hall. The VIS, which primarily operates to provide visitors with information about local attractions and services, is open 10am to 4pm (excluding an hour for lunch), 7 days a week. The small gift shop that accompanies the VIS offers a selection of locally produced handicrafts, postcards and the like. A facility of this nature is a wonderful asset for York because it enables tourists to find the information they require with ease and allows York to introduce visitors to the best that the town has to offer.

Currently some of the products of the VIS can only be accessed via payment. This is argued to give the information intrinsic value that will result in the product being kept and passed around. Additionally, the charge would cover costs of promotion and marketing of the product. This however is somewhat unrealistic. Income would be better gained from visitors through other forms of merchandising. Information about tourism, such as guided walks and booklets should be made free to visitors encouraging everyone to take part and resulting in a larger yield of visitors engaging in the activity.

Recently, Tourism Western Australia conducted a study on the 32 Visitor Centres throughout Western Australia to determine whether each centre met a minimum standard for accreditation (Shire of York 2006). When operating as the York Tourist Bureau, it was subject to this study and it was concluded that at least ten upgrades were necessary for the bureau to maintain its accreditation (Shire of York 2006). The necessary upgrades include:

- Relocation (as the current premises in the Town Hall was deemed to be too small);
- Service provision upgrading;
- Creation of a marketing plan; and
- Updating the strategic business plan.

The review set a deadline of 30 June 2007, by which time all of the above changes must have been made. A decision was made following the closure of the York Tourist Bureau not to maintain the visitor centre accreditation and to operate a basic level of service known as the York Visitor Information Services.

Significantly, the Shire currently dedicates \$247,071 in its budget to tourism which encompasses the maintenance of 7 facilities. While there are significant constraints on the capacity for the Shire to fund tourist operations, it must be acknowledged that current funding levels are inadequate. Increased funding should be of a high priority and, where possible, federal and state government grants as well as private sector contributions should be actively pursued. An opportunity to develop the Town Hall as a Cultural Centre (to capitalize on the performing artists who want to use York as a venue) has been mooted at a cost of approximately \$1.8M which will require significant external funding sources. These funding opportunities are currently being pursued.

## Opportunities

Stemming from the assets listed above, significant opportunities exist for York to capitalise. As mentioned in *Attractions*, York is well suited to accommodate conferences, conventions and seminars due to the vast array of visitor services that is available. The potential to enter this market is a brilliant opportunity for York. In order to do so properly, this market has been incorporated into the Business Plan for the York Recreation and Convention Centre.

Interestingly enough, however, a number of the hotels on the main street have not prospered in recent years. While there are numerous reasons for this, some of the more evident problems that exist are a lack of coordination between tourist operators as well a level of resistance in the community to wholly tourist focused enterprises.

With the relocation of the Community Resource Centre into Avon Terrace, there may be an opportunity to enable York to establish a new, expanded and fully accredited visitor information centre that could offer a range of services to tourists that are not currently available, such as bookings. Introducing local interpretive displays and exhibits to the Visitor Information Centre, among other things, will also help to maximise the level of services offered.

The backpacker's hostel is another facility that presents York with some brilliant opportunities, which is unfortunately closed and the premises for sale. As the only dedicated backpacker's hostel in the entire Avon Valley, has the potential to be used as a drawcard for the town amongst independent travellers. Although the backpackers did not attract consistently high occupancy rates when in operation, it is believed a new business owner could effectively network with other tourist operators, such as Skydive Express, to maintain viability.

This networking strategy is an ideal model for other visitor services in York to adopt in order to maximise the net tourism benefits for all of York (Kookaburra Backpackers 2006). Additionally, if the attractions specifically aimed at this market are expanded, the backpacker market could provide a significant windfall for York. Strategies to address these opportunities can be found in the *Strategies* section of this document.

The local business community can further access the tourist market by ensuring relevant products are readily available that suit the nature of visitors in York. Similarly, it is important that local businesses are committed to ensuring that shop-fronts are aesthetically pleasing, including suitably merchandising windows. This is of particular note due to a number of local businesses along Avon Terrace which currently appear run-down and could use some rejuvenation.



**Figure 3: Skydive Express**

## Promotion, Management & Coordination

For York to maintain and grow its market share as an attractive destination to visit and increase both its visitor numbers and yield, it is crucial to revitalize the current marketing and promotion strategy. Although previous methods of promotion and marketing have had their merits, in an increasingly competitive market it has been recognized that there is a need for change (Australian Government, 2003).

### **Community Involvement and Mind Set**

Prior to the promotion of tourism there needs to be support for the sector within the community. Presently, conflict between farmers and tourist operators in York has resulted in the town being divided into two mind sets as to York's future direction (Kookaburra Backpackers 2006). The farming community largely sees more benefit in directing investment into the farming industry as it is believed there is a higher benefit for the community. With such conflict amongst the community, it is unlikely that the tourism industry in York can further progress and develop strongly.

A number of approaches can be implemented in order to bring the York community together to work towards improving the tourism industry within their town. Firstly, it is suggested that a community survey be produced to gauge concern surrounding tourism development. This will ensure future development can respond to the needs of the community. Additionally, if the Shire of York works

together with the York farming community to resolve other disputes and conflicts within the town, then the community may be more inclined to accept tourism development and less likely to reject change.

Opposition to tourism has also developed in the community due to a perception that the hospitality industry is overly tourist orientated (Bailey, 2006). However, local residents are a key element in creating a successful tourism industry and it is important to make them feel as if they are valued in the community. Businesses should cater for both tourists and the local community in synergy so that neither population groups feel marginalised.

York offers a unique and beautiful heritage township and as such, local residents and community members should be encouraged to take pride in this aspect of their town. Many of the heritage buildings are well cared for and provide an example of the heritage tourism potential of York. Funding has recently been invested into the refurbishment of the main street of York, however; further investment of funding into maintaining and educating the community of the heritage value of their town is needed to truly take advantage of the heritage tourism potential of York. Residents must know and appreciate the heritage value of their town for heritage tourism to succeed in York.

It is imperative to note that help from the community, in the form of volunteers, is invaluable to run tourism projects especially when there are few opportunities to employ tourist guides. Outsourcing should, where possible, be avoided. But if the townspeople are disinterested and/or too busy during peak tourism periods, this may be the only way to go. Thus it is extremely important for locals to embrace tourism, as they provide the base for volunteers.

### **Focus of Tourism Promotion, Marketing and Management**

One of the most pressing issues presenting itself in the tourism sector of York is the level at which the town should be promoted. Current uncertainties have resulted in a haphazard marketing approach on a regional and local level.

York is part of a regional tourism experience and sees itself as complimentary with other towns in the Avon Valley (Kookaburra Backpackers 2006). The Avon Valley has an established unique identity and York should take advantage of the opportunities this presents. By recognising the regional link and building on the competitive advantages it offers, a development of a niche market will help market and build capacity between towns (ACCC, 2006).

Future development of the tourism sector presents opportunities to strengthen and promote the regional links with the South East Avon Group of Councils (Shire of York, 2005). However it is believed that the development of York must be completed prior to investing resources in an Avon-wide development. The feasibility of this approach is debateable as York is part of a regional attraction and if it is to be promoted in this fashion, it should also be developed respectively.

There is a need to target the 'day-tripper' from Perth, but to also turn these day-trippers into overnight stayers. The development of programs which spread over two days and the integration with day trip programs between other towns is a way of retaining overnight stays and encouraging local expenditure. Essentially it provides a reason to stay for a longer period of time. Each town in the Avon Valley could act together to create a complimentary experience in which all towns would benefit.

There is a concern that the majority of tourism marketing is being directed from a regional level (i.e. through "Experience Perth") and that local control is, as a result, being jeopardised. It is for this reason that local level promotion is also needed. In past experiences, locally developed marketing strategies and program development has generated successful results.

On a local level, intra marketing must also be further implemented. Many businesses in York are already benefiting from creating partnerships with both local and metropolitan businesses; however a substantial increase would raise visitor awareness and therefore patronage of businesses. Simple tools such as verbal recommendations or pamphlet distribution throughout all businesses in York would improve the current tourism sector.

On a state or national level of promotion and marketing, York can be marketed under the umbrella of *Brand WA* or *Brand Australia*. However, due to the significance of York on a state and national level little direct promotion may be achieved. It is still important for York to identify with these marketing strategies as they are used internationally and domestically to promote Western Australia and Australia.

## Unique Tourist Promotion

York is a unique town offering an abundance of distinctive characteristics, such as its heritage assets, proximity to Perth, and location in the Avon Arc. With this in mind, a marketing tool specifically developed for York could highlight the town as a premium tourist destination that could not be experienced anywhere else. Hence there is the creation and implementation of *Brand York*.

The primary concept of *Brand York* is to guide the tone, design and imagery used in all communications to consumers, the travel trade and the tourism industry. It forms the basis of all television, cinema, print and online advertising as well as public relations, direct mail, travel guides, Internet and trade marketing activities (Australian Government, 2003).



Figure 4: Old Courthouse & Gaol

## Why Brand York

- Provides an umbrella under which all York companies can promote their product;
- Ensures that York stands out from other destinations;
- Will ensure local companies achieve better, more consistent outcomes for their products and will therefore not have to rely on discounting to win business;
- Improves distribution as retailers and wholesalers want to distribute products with stronger brands;

- Provides market leverage to small businesses who may not be able to afford major consumer marketing; and
- Provides opportunity for inter promotion between businesses.

## **York as a Reputable and Competitive Tourist Destination**

In marketing and promotional material, York should be viewed as a premium tourism destination, with the capacity to provide the provision of quality products and services (Australian Government, 2003). To ensure the return of visitors, York must to earn a reputation for quality, value and variety (Australian Government, 2003). Currently, it is recognised by the Shire of York that falsely advertising and raising the expectations of visitors would not benefit the reputation of York as a tourism destination. This attitude towards promotion will benefit York in the future and promotion and marketing strategies should ensure that the products and services advertised meet and exceed the standards they are advertised at.

It is essential for the York tourism industry to continually strive for improvement in its performance in order to maintain and increase market competitiveness. A good reputation can be diminished by a single report of low quality or bad service. It is for this reason that York businesses should continually strive to offer a competitive service that is continually exceeding previous levels of quality.

One way of raising industry standards to ensure high quality is through accreditation by developing a quality mark that can be displayed by businesses that meet the required standards. This will not only act as a means to improve industry standards but can also provide information to potential customers (Australian Government, 2003). This could either be a future national accreditation system or a locally developed system which involves local business owners setting the standards and making the outcomes more tangible.

## **Financial Resources**

Current funding to the promotion and marketing of York as a tourist destination appears to be limited and available funds are presently being used to capacity to promote and market York.

Local government spending should be subject to accountability. For this reason, a public record of moneys spent as well as progress-reporting should be implemented. By allowing the general public and business owners of York to see where moneys are being invested, an increase in public acceptance of investment levels may be seen.

Ultimately, there is a lot of work to be done. In order to ensure a high level of success, it is believed focus should be placed on one area at a time, rather than rushing it and accepting a diminished end result. There needs to be an appropriate order to the actions taken allowing for evaluation, modification, and the reduction of risks. Essentially, strong leadership will be needed for the future as to provide a firm basis for investment and to solve marketing and promotion issues. York has an abundance of potential, it is just a case of correctly managing the approach to marketing and promoting that potential.

# Human Resources & Employment Growth

The development of the tourism sector is labour intensive and is likely to provide many opportunities for employment growth in areas such as hospitality and creative arts, fields that provide visitor services and attractions, as well as in ancillary fields such as management, education services and health. As such there is an opportunity for a diverse set of employment opportunities to develop in York upon growth in tourism, which could provide employment for people with different skill sets (Centre for Community Enterprise 2005).

While most of this strategy sets out how to provide the opportunities for tourism development, this section explores the need to attract skilled labour to York to ensure that the industry can grow to potential. In doing so, the development of employment growth and local skill sets are optimised. Such moves are also likely to have a multiplier effect of creating further employment opportunities in the town overtime.

## York's Work Force

As seen in Figure 5 below, the population of York with skills are similar to that throughout the Perth Metropolitan Area. It is also noted that skills associated with the tourism industry are generally lower in York compared to the Perth Metropolitan Area. Such fields include management and commerce; Information Technology and food, hospitality and personal services (as shown in Figure 6).

There are, however, greater proportions of the population in the field of education, which is also required to facilitate the development of tourism related skills in the community. Yet, without skills in all fields relating to tourism, there may not be the right mix of skill development opportunities in the community which will allow for the most effective development of the tourism sector.

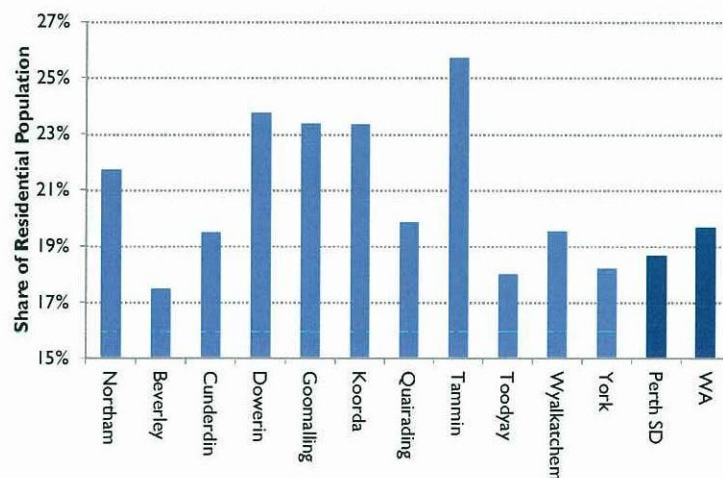
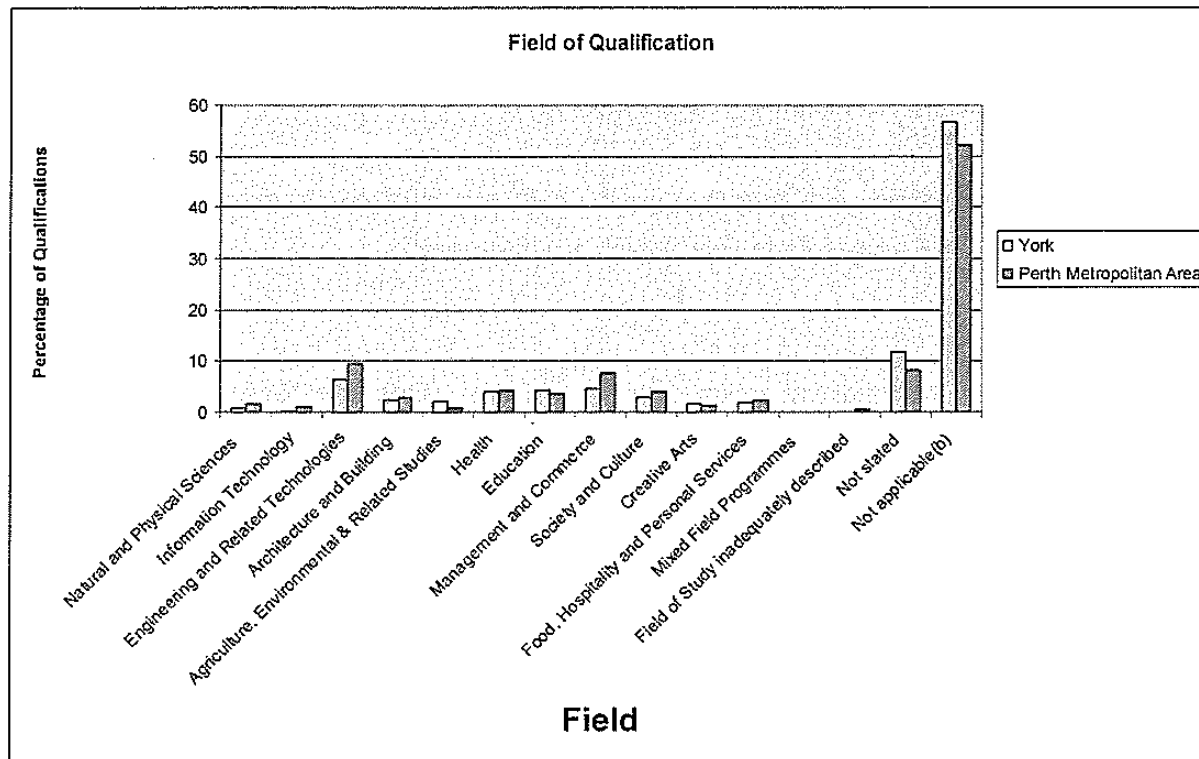


Figure 5: Percentage of Population with Qualifications



**Figure 6: Field of Qualification**

It is difficult to ascertain which qualifications are needed throughout York's community for the effective development of tourism, as well as the retention of traditional industries and the provision of essential services. However, generally speaking, the need to increase the skill set throughout the local community in relation to tourism and/or retain the skills which are developed in the town, in relation to the tourism sector, exists (Centre for Community Enterprise 2003).

The major issues placing constraints on the ability to retain skilled labour are that:

1. York's tourism sector is seasonal, which means that the town has a low tendency to retain skills from year to year and to build on these over time (Bailey 2006).
2. Rural communities such as York, often face a 'brain drain' whereby the lack of social and employment opportunities such towns offer, or are perceived to offer, encourage youth who study, to find employment in Perth.
3. There are few opportunities for training and career development in York in those industries which the tourism sector in York is based (Western Australian Planning Commission 2001).

There are many opportunities in York that can be built on, which would overcome such issues and increase the skilled workforce in York, which are discussed below.

## Seasonality

Throughout the summer months in York, when tourism declines, there are fewer jobs available in the tourism industry. Moreover, there is a perceived lack of social and educational activities for many of those employed in this sector and as such there is little to deter individuals from leaving during the off-season. Given the temporal nature of employment, it is difficult to build up knowledge throughout the local workforce regarding local history and attractions. This problem also represents costs to businesses as they must retrain staff every year.

To overcome the lack of employment over the off-season there needs to be:

- ***Greater economic diversity and employment opportunities;***

The employment base in York is expanding over the next 5 - 10 years as a result of the development of Balladong Estate, the Respite Centre and individual land development. These proposals are likely to provide alternative employment during the tourist off season and increase the long term economic development of the town, which will increase the social activity in the town and therefore act to retain more of the workforce each year.

- ***Greater focus on the lifestyle needs of those employed;***

In order to retain youth, youth accommodation as well as recreational facilities and community services (such as child care) must be readily available.

- ***Development of further ways to extend the tourism season;***

This may involve marketing approaches which target certain groups of who are attracted to York in the summer months. The Tourism Board has recognized that UK and European visitors frequented the area in December/January often, which was traditionally the off-season and as such these tourists may be the target of marketing campaigns (Bailey 2006).

- ***Development of off season training and skill development programs.***

Development of training and skill development keeps those employed in tourism focused on the tourism industry throughout the off-season and ensures that their skills are developing in relation to market trends. Educational activities in the town also induce social activities in the off-season, adding to the development of vibrancy in the area, which may in itself attract tourists to York, in spite of the weather.

## Enhancing Local Skill Development

There is a culture of youth in country towns moving to the City to further their education given the lack of education and business opportunities perceived to exist in rural communities. In the majority of cases, these individuals fail to return to their communities to use the skills and knowledge they accrue, which would be of a high benefit to their community. There are, however, opportunities in York for training, business development and entrepreneurship to more effectively harness local capacity. It is a matter of facilitating the development of such opportunities into real prospects (Career One 2006).

These opportunities are further explained below.

- ***Diverse opportunities for training and further education***

Further provision of educational opportunities such as TAFE courses and selected university courses may be required in York to prevent the loss of youth. More appropriate forms of education provision may take the form of programs such as 'Riverlink' where postgraduate students are based in rural Victoria and study in agricultural fields (Career One 2006). The program involves sourcing out industry-funded projects in rural communities to attract young graduates and involves partnerships between government departments, CSIRO and Research and Development Institute.

Similar institutional arrangements could be looked into for students who could study and research the tourism sector in York. There are also opportunities to be had in terms of developing partnerships with Curtin University of Technology, which runs the Muresk Agricultural School in nearby Northam, in areas mixing tourism and agriculture (Muresk Institute 2006).

There is also scope for technical educational programs run through TAFE in conjunction with the hospitality sector, so as to build practical skill sets which relate to tourism throughout York. These could be set up in conjunction with businesses so that training relates to the demands in the town, thereby students could use the infrastructure businesses have in their training and actually contribute to the local economy through their studies. Meanwhile, one-day cooking workshops and courses could be developed out of these institutions for tourists. Students could assist in such workshops, thus increasing their skill set and interpersonal skills.

The 'Create Rural Entrepreneurial Attitudes through Education' (C.R.E.A.T.E) Program is a non-profit school-based program which aims to clarify what is meant by entrepreneurship among youth, how it relates to the changing world in which they live and aims to involve students in entrepreneurial development (Kenyon 2005). This program helps to instil the idea in local youth that they can be successful in their community by developing skills in areas which relate to the needs of their community, such as tourism. The development of this program in York would help to instil a sense of community and retain youth skills in the community.

There are also a number of government programs available to assist those in the community who are unemployed or feel detached from social activity. The 'New Enterprise Incentive Scheme' (NEIS), is an Australian Government initiative, which aims to help unemployed people establish new small businesses. This could be developed further in York, through greater promotion of this opportunity. This scheme provides support and training for the first year of the business, so that the participant may become self-supporting and independent (Australian Government 2006).

Community Work programs are also available for job seekers to meet mutual obligation requirements. This can be recognized as formal training and also gives members of the community the opportunity to build relationships with other community members and thus contributes to social capital development (Australian Government 2006). These opportunities could deter those facing unemployment in York from leaving the town. The use of these programs is beneficial as it capitalizes on funding from the Federal Government which is already injected into community development.

Meanwhile, the development of the tourism sector in York would significantly benefit from the work of volunteers who could guide tourists around the town. Training volunteers would also increase the skill set in the local community, especially the development of interpersonal skills and awareness of local culture and industry. In order to train a volunteer force there will/may need to be paid tour operators to focus on the facilitation of volunteer training and tour organization (Bailey 2006).

- ***Provide more opportunities for business retention and expansion***

There are two main benefits in providing more opportunities for business retention and expansion. These are;

1. It provides for opportunities for employment.
2. It increases the chance that skilled entrepreneurs will stay in York and pass on their knowledge to members of the local community.

The Business Retention and Expansion program assists in this role by scoping the needs of local businesses, which will increase the chance that the local community provides what is needed for businesses success and match-making businesses so that they may learn from each other (Bank of I.D.E.A.S 2006).

This program is also beneficial as it builds social networks and broadens involvement in economic activity which increases the tendency to retain and attract skills. Meanwhile, greater appreciation begins to develop for local businesses which further attracts and retains skilled labour.

- ***Provide more opportunities for social interaction in York***

In order to maintain skilled labour in York there also needs to be recreational and social opportunities within the town. The Shire of York's push towards business development and provision of accommodation for youth is likely to increase the scope of this (Hooper 2005). Social interaction will also enable the development of opportunities for networking for the purposes of business expansion.

# Infrastructure & Urban Amenity

While the focus in tourism planning is often on the visitor attractions, there must be consideration of infrastructure in dealing with increased numbers of tourists and in providing for those employed in the tourism sector. York will face these issues in the development of its tourism sector and must also deal with projected population increases when contemplating infrastructure provision. Significant population growth is expected given that York is close to Perth, relative to other towns, and offers lifestyle opportunities for residents (Shire of York 2005).

Former Commissioner of the Shire of York, Gavan Troy, claims "York is geared for a stage of unprecedented development from 2006 onwards due to its unlimited potential for quality growth" (Shire of York 2005). Meanwhile, the town will need to provide infrastructure without imposing on environmental and social values of the town, which attract people in the first place and provide infrastructure for the tourism sector without alienating the needs and wishes of other industries in the community. The following section will outline some issues with infrastructure and tourism in York and some opportunities available to overcome these issues.

## Land Availability and Capacity

Land availability is not a constraint on the expansion of activity in York with new land releases coming onto the market (Shire of York 2005). The expansion of urban activity into rural areas and the infrastructure synonymous with it should not threaten the environmental and social values of the town if it is to develop further as an attractive tourist destination. Moreover, if development is to threaten the viability of agricultural activity in the town, then there is a risk that the agricultural community will be further opposed to development in the town (Sharon; Western Australian Planning Commission 2001; Bailey 2006).

The York Local Planning Strategy identifies suitable areas for urban growth both east and west of the River.

In order to develop the tourism sector, there will need to be consultation with the agricultural community as to the benefits of tourism development to reduce the potential for conflict against shifts in expenditure towards the tourism sector.

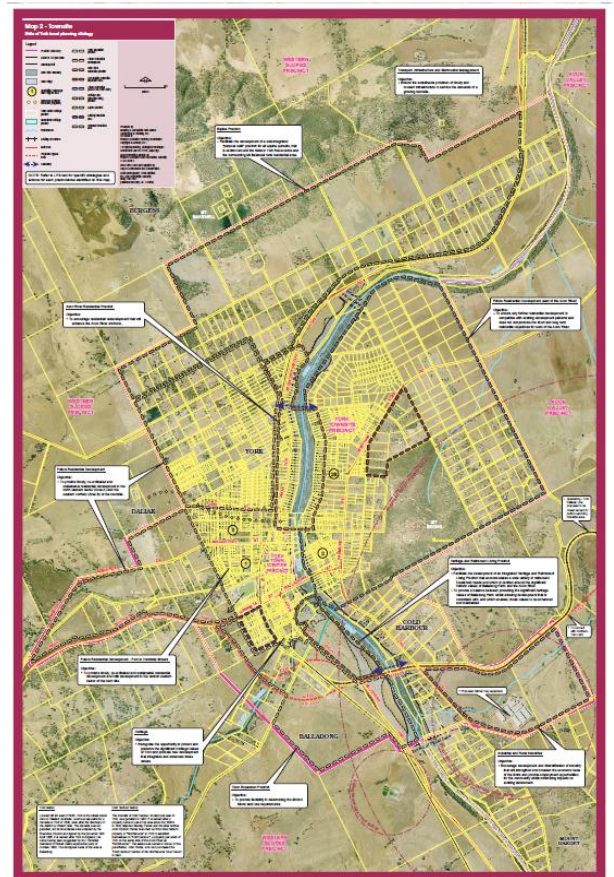


Figure 7: LPS Map 2 (2007)

## Density Issues

There are a number of restrictions on the development of tourism activity in York pertaining to the density on development allowed. Lack of sewerage infrastructure will continue to constrain any increase in density closer to the town centre. The State Government's decision to extend the timeframe for the sewer infill program to 2018 or beyond could seriously impact the potential for tourism growth in York.

To accommodate for the chance that sewerage will not be provided, the tourism strategy will have to be made to be adaptive to this point. Reference may have to be made to the need for staged development, with sufficient flexibility in accordance to the provision of sewerage overtime, if it is provided at all. If sewerage is undertaken and the controls on density are removed, consideration must be given to ensure the values of heritage and sense of place are not lost.

## Land Values

Similar to Perth, York's property prices are increasing and as such the return on development in York is increasing as well. This makes it more difficult for existing tourism ventures to expand and new tourism ventures to enter the market, which is placing the development of economic diversity in the district and innovation in the tourism sector, in jeopardy (Kookaburra Backpackers 2006).

Increased land prices also reduce the propensity for those employed in tourism to be able to live affordably in York. Workers may be significantly disadvantaged if they must commute from other centres or Perth, to work in York. Action on the housing needs in the community and facilitation of small business growth will assist in overcoming such issues and is being initiated with the development of affordable housing for young people.

## Impacts of Development Projects

Particular forms of development in the district, such as the CBH Pty Ltd Grain Receival Point Centre and any industrial land development may create problems for the development of tourism, as such activities may reduce the environmental and heritage values of the town (Western Australian Planning Commission 2001; Shire of York 2005). However, if sufficient guidance is placed on the nature of operations and the mitigation of impacts on the natural environment and social outcomes, then the chance of conflict is reduced. The development of further commercial activity in the area has many benefits such as increasing the economic resilience of the town and enhancing the development of ancillary businesses such as retail, which attract tourists.

## Town Centre Development

York prides itself on its heritage and the business community has shown a commitment towards rejuvenating such buildings to their original splendour (Caitlin, Bakker et al. 2004). However, there are some problems relating to the aesthetic and functionality of the town centre which requires attention before the town may be able to further strengthen its tourism activity.

While York's commercial sector is growing, some of the buildings in the main street have become vacant, such as Sargeant's Pharmacy (pictured). This poses a threat as to the maintenance of such heritage buildings. Strategies must be developed which will see these buildings being utilized as community assets.



**Figure 8: Sargeant's Pharmacy**

Strategic planning is being undertaken for the town centre and heritage areas to guide development and to preserve the streetscape character of York, which in turn helps to develop a sense of community and place and contributes to economic vitality. Strategies will need to build on development initiatives to adapt to the fact that not all of these proposals may become realities, depending on financial restraints.

The Shire of York is also investigating funding options to develop further infrastructure to meet the social, cultural and economic needs of the permanent population as well as to increase the tourism focus of the centre. The relocation of the Community Resource Centre to Avon Terrace could add to the attraction of York for tourists and those locally employed in tourism. Similarly, an increased provision for retail and commercial space along Avon Terrace is being advocated, which is likely to increase the development of tourism and provide essential services for the community. Increased youth accommodation is also being advocated.

## Transport

Transportation provision to and around York must cater for increased tourism motor vehicle traffic, namely from Perth, as well as existing freight loads to and from Perth. Given that there is no passenger rail from York to Perth, the dependence on travel to York is on the Great Southern Highway (Chidlow-York Road). The Shire of York is lobbying for improvements to the Chidlow-York Road in order to increase amenity and to decrease travelling time to York from Perth. Meanwhile, the Great Eastern Highway, which connects with Great Southern Highway and links Chidlow with Midland has been recently upgraded which has decreased the travelling time from Perth.

The fact that Great Eastern Highway has been upgraded could be promoted by the York tourism sector as York's increased accessibility to Perth is likely to increase travel to the area. Yet, the increased travel to York this could induce, would require work on the Chidlow-York Road to be completed. If this is ignored, traffic congestion and conflicts may occur on this road, which could leave a poor image of travelling to York in the minds of tourists.

Upon any work being completed on the York to Chidlow Road, whereby the road needs to be widened or a dual carriage way needs to be developed, the aesthetic value of the entrance to York must be maintained along this road to maintain the visual attraction along the drive to the area. Green corridors and/or landscaping along highways and the approach of the town are recognized as being of potential benefit to the town and providing an effective entry statement (Western Australian Planning Commission 2001).

While road improvements to York means that people can readily access the town, it also means that people can leave the town within the day as well. As such the opportunity to capture expenditure on accommodation and services in the town is lost. While day-trippers represent an important market, and day-tripping to York should be encouraged, there is also a need to encourage day-trippers to stay on in York overnight and beyond as much as possible (Bailey 2006).

The expansion and development of unique accommodation, experiences and travel programs (which are held over more than one day) is a great way to overcome this issue. York may also find benefit in co-ordinating with nearby towns through tourism initiatives, which would highlight the benefits of the Avon Region and possibly increase the need to stay and see more and experience more than towns, such as York, have to offer.

# Strategies

## Attractions

PRIORITY	OBJECTIVE	SHORT TERM ACTION	LONG TERM ACTION
To expand the tourism attractions in conjunction with educational programs in the local community	The development of tourism and education should be in conjunction with each other, so that resources can be shared in the community and so that skills developed throughout the community relate to the needs of the tourism sector.	<p>To encourage educational institutions to assess opportunities in the local economy to build partnerships.</p> <p>To encourage the building of relationships between businesses and creative arts groups in the district.</p>	<p>To develop cooking workshops existing food establishments. Market these workshops with accommodation, theme evenings and tours.</p> <p>To encourage the employment of local students through Traineeships and the like to provide training in the tourism and hospitality areas.</p> <p>To promote the local creative arts industry in and through local businesses.</p>
To develop regional partnerships in order to establish a sound nature based tourism sector	To diversify York's tourist activity base by embracing nature based tourism as part of a regional experience.	<p>Identify nature attractions of regional significance in York and surrounding towns.</p> <p>Establish a series of policies to ensure the protection, restoration and maintenance of the identified natural features.</p> <p>Identify grant funding for the protection, restoration and maintenance of identified natural features.</p>	<p>Develop partnerships with identified towns.</p> <p>To develop and successfully promote travel routes and regional accommodation packages through identified towns.</p> <p>To promote York as part of a regional nature based tourism experience.</p>

<p>To develop attractions which further diversify the tourism base in York</p>	<p>While there are a range of activities in York, there is a need to diversify the base of attractions to attract a larger range of users such as those in business and young people.</p>	<p>Prepare a report that identifies activities not currently available in York that, if implemented, have the potential to appeal to and attract new markets, such as a cable ski park.</p> <p>Build on the initiatives by the York Recreation and Convention Centre for York to become a hub for conferences, conventions and seminars.</p> <p>Extensively promote York as a destination for conferences, functions, conventions and seminars.</p>	<p>To review the visitor use of Avon Park and identify new opportunities.</p> <p>To provide a contemporary setting for a business or community facility based on elements of local arts and music to give it a unique place in the market and to build on York's festival background.</p> <p>Develop partnerships in the tourism industry to cater for regular conferences, functions, conventions and seminars.</p> <p>Promote York as a location to set up new tourism businesses.</p>
<p>To develop attractions that act to attract tourists in low seasons</p>	<p>To help sustain local businesses by maintaining stable tourist numbers year round.</p>	<p>Investigate opportunities for festivals and events that are viable and suited to warmer months.</p>	<p>Maintain festivals as annual events.</p> <p>Promote venues that conduct year round activities e.g. cooking classes, markets, etc.</p>

# Visitor Services

PRIORITY	OBJECTIVE	SHORT TERM ACTION	LONG TERM ACTION
To provide a state of the art tourist information centre	To provide the best possible initial point of contact for all visitors to York and to ensure that tourist information is readily accessible.	To consult with tourists and the local community, through the Local Tourism Development Committee as to what types of services should be provided.  To develop a business strategy for the provision of the service and complementary services or business opportunities.	To source funding for new displays and interpretive facilities for learning at the centre.  To examine opportunities for co-location or partnership with the Community Resource Centre following their relocation to Avon Terrace.
Accommodate delegates from conferences, conventions and seminars	To ensure that York is sufficiently equipped to cater for delegates of future conferences, conventions and seminars.	Build partnerships within the tourism sector to cater for conferences, conventions and seminars.	Actively promote York as a destination for conferences, conventions and seminars through Tourism WA and the business sector.
Encourage local retail and service industry businesses to network	Actively promote the importance of networking in the local business community and the communal benefits that can be achieved.	Facilitate focus groups in which owners and managers of local businesses can discuss and negotiate ways in which to benefit from each other.	Reform the Chamber of Commerce or similar organisation to enable businesses to partner and work together.

# Promotions, Management & Coordination

PRIORITY	OBJECTIVE	SHORT TERM ACTION	LONG TERM ACTION
To promote the benefits of tourism to the local community	Prior to the promotion of tourism in York and the provision of infrastructure, ensure there is support from the local community. Locals will then be more likely to welcome visitors and understand the needs of the tourism industry, therefore allowing positive contribution to the development of tourism in York.	To promote the development of tourism throughout the local community through event development, promoting the success of tourism initiatives, and outlining the financial benefits from tourism.  To present a united approach to the community by the tourism industry.	To continue with programs that can involve the entire community.  To engage and consult with the community in relation to tourism.
To establish a Local Community Development Committee which can coordinate tourism programs and encourage individuals to be active in the tourism market	A Local Community Development Committee would be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish what is needed for the local tourism industry</li> <li>• Increase local input into tourism planning and increase confidence in local capacity</li> <li>• Facilitating programs involving partnerships between educational institutions, community groups and the business community</li> </ul>	Consult with the community as to what should be the priorities of a Community Development Committee in relation to tourism and establish what views should be represented on the committee.  Determine the assets in the community which could contribute to the development of a Committee.	The Local Community Development Committee is to perform audits of local skills, facilitate opportunities for skill and job matching, and facilitate in the Business Expansion and Retention Program.  The objectives and terms of the Local Community Development Committee to be reviewed periodically.  Liaise with (or become) the new Chamber of Commerce (or similar business organisation).

<p>To promote tourism through local strategies</p>	<p>To increase the local input into tourism planning so that it is more responsive to local needs and builds on York's comparative advantages.</p>	<p>To determine what elements of tourism should be dealt with in house and what elements should be dealt with from a regional perspective.</p>	<p>To incorporate appropriate tourism strategies into corporate planning documents, such as the Local Planning Strategy.</p>
<p>To promote regional links</p>	<p>To maintain regional coordination of resources and build on the comparative advantages of the Avon Region as a whole.</p>	<p>To seek partnerships with towns in Avon Valley for partnerships for travel programs.</p> <p>Identify regional projects, seek grant funding and implement e.g. drive trails to encourage overnight stays.</p>	<p>To develop travel programs which build on the assets over the region and over two or more days to ensure that people stay in the York/Avon District.</p> <p>To develop discount cards, and 'attraction supersavers' which encourage people to travel throughout the region, as a whole, over a few days. These to combine accommodation and attractions.</p> <p>To develop public artwork and themed routes along identified regional drive routes.</p>
<p>To promote reasons to stay in York and the Avon Valley, for more than one night</p>	<p>To increase the viability of the tourism sector by encouraging multiple night stays.</p>	<p>Actively promote York as an overnight destination.</p> <p>Work with local and regional tourism industries to encourage overnight stays e.g. ticket and event promotional packages.</p>	<p>To better promote the various forms of accommodation in York.</p> <p>To identify and establish a series of events and programs which involve the visitor staying more than one night in York.</p>

To promote intra-marketing in York and throughout the Avon Region	Encourage partnerships by local businesses.  Develop pride in <i>Brand York</i> .	To educate the tourist operators of the net gain of promoting York and the whole of the Avon Region.  Distribute marketing material between tourism operators.	To intra-promote <i>Brand York</i> .
To maintain flexibility in travel programs	Identify that there is a need for packaging tourist activities and visitor services as well as self-discovery options for tourists.	To produce a series of self-guided tours.	To develop information displays throughout and en-route to York.
To expand tourism activity over the year	To provide employment in tourism industry through low season.	Identify which overseas markets would be most likely to want to travel to York in summer.	Develop partnerships with UK and European tourism boards to coordinate tourism between York and overseas towns.
Forms links with other local authorities to determine effective tourism planning strategies	Links with other local authorities will allow York's tourism sector to be planned for in light of a wider source of insight and for tourism planning to be more adaptive to social and economic change over time.	Establish partnerships with other local authorities.	Maintain partnerships with other local authorities.
Establish <i>Brand York</i>	To establish <i>Brand York</i> which will act as the forefront of future promotion and marketing strategies.	Identify and create unique <i>Brand York</i> .	Develop ownership of <i>Brand York</i> through the industry and community.  Implement <i>Brand York</i> throughout York, and on a state level.

# Human Resources

PRIORITY	OBJECTIVE	SHORT TERM ACTION	LONG TERM ACTION
To increase positive sentiment towards tourism and skill development in the community	To increase the likelihood that opportunities in tourism training provided are embraced by the community.	Work with local training providers and businesses to provide traineeships and other on-the-job opportunities.	Work with TAFE and other training providers to identify training needs and opportunities.
Developing a postgraduate program for students in York and to link this with Muresk University	Postgraduate/ Honours and Masters studies in the field of tourism development could be developed in York. Individual students would be able to do projects and research using existing social capacity in the town and commute to Muresk for other elements of their course.	Access opportunities in the community which would provide attractive research opportunities in the field of tourism.  The Shire of York and Wheatbelt Development Commission to communicate with Curtin University as to the possibility for coordination.	Promote training and education successes.
Developing TAFE courses in York.	There are opportunities in York for the development of TAFE courses in hospitality and woodwork, which build on the industries with a comparative advantage in the town and where possible use infrastructure available in the town.	To discuss opportunities for private sector collaboration and resource sharing between educational facilities and businesses.  To use local entrepreneurs in lecturing, tutoring and mentoring, where possible.	Promote training and education successes.

Expand on the CREATE initiative in York	To indicate to local community members that there are opportunities for entrepreneurship in York.	The Local Tourism Development Committee should audit local residents for more success stories in the community.  To expand the principles of this initiative to the adult community.	
To promote the expansion of existing government funded programs for skill development and recognition	To capitalise on existing sources of funding for community and tourism development.	To increase awareness of programs such as NEIS, Community Work and the Business Retention program in the community, through schools and community organisations.  Make the Local Tourism Development Committee aware of opportunities available.	To assess the effectiveness of these programs in the local community.
To expand the volunteer base in York's tourism	Expanding the volunteer base in tourism in York is likely to increase the skill set of the local community and increase social networks while contributing to the tourist sector.	To employ a facilitator who will coordinate volunteering activity in York and who will increase the profile of tour guides in York.  Market the benefits of tourism to the community.	To provide opportunities for local students to become involved in hospitality courses as volunteers as part of their assessment tasks e.g. Cadets, Youth Centre programs.
To provide for social and housing needs for locals employed in tourism	In order to retain students and trained workers in tourism they must be provided with housing and avenues for social activity.	To develop a social activity calendar for youth and travelling workers.	Develop student housing complex and a shared use community facility.

Focus on educational programs for off-season periods	To ensure that, where possible, educational programs will encourage students to stay in York during off-season as to extend activity in York over the year and retain skilled labour.	Local Tourism Development Committee to, where possible, extend educational programs/ opportunities throughout the year.	To develop sustainable all year round educational and tourism programs and opportunities.
Educate local business owners as how to best tap into local tourism sector	To indicate to local businesses how effective marketing, coordination and product development can increase tourist share.	To market the benefits of tourism to the community.  To hold workshops run by successful local businesses and others skilled in marketing and promotions where local community members can attend for free.	To obtain feedback on the benefits accrued from workshops.
Perform audit of local skill base and assess against opportunities for community development	To determine local assets and passions which could be built on in the community, through skill development. This is likely to ensure that the resources allocated to training will be utilised the most effectively.	Local Tourism Development Committee to assess the skill base of the community through informal interviews and seek partnerships with educational providers based on the passions identified.	Fill gaps in the skill base through training and attraction.
Continue to encourage traineeships	Despite the lack of success in the past, with greater community reception to the benefits of tourism development, it is likely that traineeships may be more effective.	Proceed with marketing to the local community, continue to provide traineeships.	Ongoing traineeship program developed and adopted by local business.

# Infrastructure

PRIORITY	OBJECTIVE	SHORT TERM ACTION	LONG TERM ACTION
Present strategic tourism plan to State Government in applications for funding to show self-commitment	The sound planning principles and the contribution of the local community towards tourism planning should be used to argue for funding for projects in York.	Continue discussions with State government and service providers regarding provision of infrastructure.  To use the strategic plan for other opportunities to obtain funding (e.g. Town Hall upgrade to Cultural Centre).	Tourism Plan adopted and utilised by whole of York community.
Improvements to the town centre	The character of the York Main Streetscape, the mix of activities and retail offerings will impact the attraction to York amongst tourists.	To consult with stakeholders as to how they could contribute collectively to improvements to the streetscape and what they would like Council to focus on.  To develop a Main Street streetscape plan.	To develop alfresco and market atmosphere in main street.  To adopt a 'no empty shop' policy.  To develop an incentive program to attract new businesses and skilled persons.
To maintain affordable housing and competitive business entry	To avoid the impact of increasing house prices and commercial property prices on new firms wanting to set up in York.  Attracting a skilled workforce, affordable housing and commercial rents.	Encourage affordable housing development through partnerships with Landcorp, Department of Housing and the private sector.	House prices and rental values should be assessed over time and management strategies developed over time in response.

<p>To maintain access to York from Perth</p>	<p>To mitigate the potential for increased traffic along Chidlow-York Road and to maintain the aesthetic appeal of the drive as to promote York as an attractive place to travel.</p>	<p>To work with Main Roads to review traffic loads on major thoroughfares into York.</p> <p>To ensure that roads do not jeopardise the quality of the natural landscape en route to York.</p>	<p>Lobby the State government for the upgrade of the Chidlow-York Road.</p> <p>Create attractive entrance statements to York, including visitor information.</p>
<p>To provide options for development</p>	<p>The strategies need to be adaptive, in the event that sewerage is not provided, infrastructure is not provided and State policy restricting densities is not overturned.</p>	<p>Maintain diverse development opportunities as to increase economic resilience.</p>	<p>The Local Tourism Development Committee is to develop adaptive management techniques and assess the likely outcomes, if infrastructure is not provided. New workshops for idea generation should be developed.</p> <p>To develop a Local Planning Strategy and Town Planning Scheme that encourages tourism and has the flexibility to encourage appropriate tourism development.</p>

# Conclusion

York's tourism sector has a very proud history. Indeed, York is high equipped in terms of the provision of accommodation and associated visitor services. York has wonderful tourist attractions, ranging from the architectural beauty of its heritage buildings to its reputation as a festival town, and from its stunning natural surrounds to the entrepreneurial brilliance of some of its local business owners. In many respects, York should be the envy of rural towns across Australia.

However, York has failed to capitalise on some of its potential in regards to tourism because of a lack of leadership and coordination in the community as well as financial, infrastructural and human resources constraints. York is not unique in these regards, with many rural towns throughout Australia struggling with similar obstacles. It is important to be optimistic, however, and realise that there are significant opportunities to overcome these constraints and achieve York's plentiful potential.

For these reasons, it is the understanding of this report that tourism in York has for too long been a little one dimensional. York, as a community, should seek to diversify its tourism sector in order to bring unprecedented prosperity and growth. Naturally, this will not be an easy process, nor will it be an inexpensive process, because it will require significant commitment from the community as well as considerable financial investment. The strategies and actions that form such an integral part of this report should act as a set of guidelines for the continued development of the tourism sector in York, having been devised specifically to enable York to build, for itself, a diverse and sustainable future.

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