

Christmas Festival Planning 2024

Tuesday, 7 May 2024

City Community Services and
Culture Committee

Strategic Alignment - Our Community

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Public

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Adelaide's Christmas Festival delivers on Council and community expectations for a free, accessible, vibrant, festive and highly visible city-wide celebration of the season. Each year, Council strives to deliver new and impactful decorations and experiences for the community.

The City of Adelaide (CoA) delivers Christmas Festival city-wide decorations and experiences through an annual Business Plan and Budget allocation managed by the City Culture program. Christmas is a collaboration between CoA and its subsidiaries, the Adelaide Economic Development Agency (AEDA) and Adelaide Central Market Authority (ACMA), which also allocate specific budgets to the CoA Christmas Festival.

Christmas Festival 2024 is the final year of the Christmas Festival Action Plan 2021-2024 (the Plan), which was developed in 2020 through community consultation, market research, and stakeholder engagement.

This report outlines Administration's proposal that a new four-year Plan is developed in alignment with Council's 2024-2028 Strategic Plan to guide Council's investment in and celebration of Christmas in the public realm.

A new Plan for 2025-2029 would provide Council with an opportunity to shape the direction of Christmas in the City and build upon partnerships to grow and deliver dynamic lighting, decorative displays, and activities that are coordinated and consistent across the City and North Adelaide.

RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendations will be presented to Council on 14 May 2024 for consideration

THAT THE CITY COMMUNITY SERVICES AND CULTURE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS TO COUNCIL
THAT COUNCIL

1. Approves the development of a draft four-year Christmas in the City Action Plan (2025-2029).
 2. Notes the approach for Christmas 2024 as the final year under the current Christmas Festival Action Plan 2021-2024.
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IMPLICATIONS AND FINANCIALS

City of Adelaide 2024-2028 Strategic Plan	Strategic Alignment – Our Community Create fun, lively and interesting experiences.
Policy	Not as a result of this report
Consultation	Internal consultation has occurred with the Adelaide Economic Development Agency (AEDA), Adelaide Central Markets (ACMA), and City Operations in writing this report and the recommendation. Both internal and external consultation will be undertaken during the development of a new Christmas Festival Action Plan.
Resource	Not as a result of this report
Risk / Legal / Legislative	Not as a result of this report
Opportunities	This Council has an opportunity to develop a new four-year Christmas in the City Action Plan, which may include a more substantial and coordinated approach to purchasing new Christmas decorations.
23/24 Budget Allocation	<p>The 2023/2024 operating budget allocation for Christmas 2023 was \$512,500, which includes salary for an FTE staff resource.</p> <p>The capital budget proposed for the purchase of new decorations for Christmas 2024 is \$193,174.18. This proposal is currently unfunded. Any required funding for this item is subject to, and needs to be considered in the context of, the prioritisation of projects, initiatives and service enhancements for the development of the 2024/25 budget, and within the parameters of the Long Term Financial Plan to ensure long-term financial sustainability.</p> <p>The collective budget allocation for 2023/2024 for activities across the CoA, AEDA and ACMA is \$1.675M includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CoA Operational Budget \$512,500 • CoA Capital Budget New and Upgrade \$193,174.18 • Rundle Mall \$900,000 (including Black Friday and Boxing Day) - pending final budget approval • Adelaide Central Market \$70,000
24/25 Budget Allocation	<p>The proposal in this report for Christmas 2024 is currently unfunded. Any required funding for this item is subject to, and needs to be considered in the context of, the prioritisation of projects, initiatives and service enhancements for the development of the 2024/25 budget, and within the parameters of the Long Term Financial Plan to ensure long-term financial sustainability.</p> <p>The 2024/2025 proposed operating budget allocation for Christmas 2024 is \$529,130 and includes salary for an FTE staff resource.</p> <p>The draft Business Plan and Budget do not propose a capital budget for the purchase of new city-wide Christmas decorations for 2024/2025.</p> <p>The collective proposed budget according to the draft Business Plan and Budget allocation for Christmas 2024/2025 activities across the CoA, AEDA and ACMA is proposed as \$1.499M which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CoA Operational Budget \$529,130 pending final budget approval. • Rundle Mall \$900,000 (including Black Friday and Boxing Day) - pending final budget approval. • Adelaide Central Market \$70,000 - pending final budget approval.

Life of Project, Service, Initiative or (Expectancy of) Asset	Not as a result of this report
23/24 Budget Reconsideration (if applicable)	Not as a result of this report
Ongoing Costs (eg maintenance cost)	Not as a result of this report
Other Funding Sources	Not as a result of this report

DISCUSSION

Christmas 2024

1. Christmas is an important celebration in the cultural life of the city. It commences in November when Father Christmas arrives on a Pageant float and ends on 6 January after the 12 days of Christmas.
2. The City's Christmas Festival also provides a platform for Council, partners, businesses, artists, and event organisers to collectively promote Adelaide as a key visitor destination annually during November and December. The festival showcases Adelaide's enviable lifestyle, climate, retail experiences, creative cultural life, and level of well-being during the Christmas season. The current Christmas Festival Action Plan 2021-2024 can be found at [Link 1](#).
3. Highlights of Christmas 2023 included that attendance at the four Christmas events in Victoria Square/ Tarntanyangga was substantially more than in 2022, with an increase of 29,709 attendees to over 58,000 total attendees in 2023. The two stand-out events were the annual community Christmas Tree Lighting event delivered by City of Adelaide and the Adelady Christmas Village weekend markets. Rundle Mall decorations saw a 39% increase in awareness from visitors surveyed in 2023. Rundle Mall's market share on Black Friday increased to 12.5% from 11.3% in 2022 and foot traffic was up 8.2%. Retail spending across the City was \$11.1M, an increase of 2.5% on 2022. Boxing Day market share grew to 13.8% from 12.4% in 2022 and foot traffic was 26% higher than Boxing Day 2022.
4. A survey and evaluation of Christmas 2023 was undertaken and can be found at [Link 2](#).
5. In 2023, the new Santa Trail decorations were highly visible, engaged the community and worked well from a marketing perspective. The Santa Trail will be presented again in 2024 with some minor improvements. The Santas were useful to establish partnerships with Adelaide Oval, the State Library, Lot 14, Adelaide Botanic Gardens, the Adelaide Festival Centre and the Aquatic Centre. Continued growth in City of Adelaide's partnerships is important to achieve cohesion and increased Christmas displays across the City. We are also in discussion with Andrew 'Cosi' Costello regarding the return of the iconic Giant Santa on Federal Hall as part of the Trail, again in 2024.
6. The following are planned new decorations to be purchased for Christmas 2024:
 - 6.1. Illuminated street banners (motifs) – will include the purchase of new lit decorations and banner pole upgrades along King William Street, between Victoria Square / Tarntanyangga and Rundle Mall.
 - 6.2. A range of new festive decorations for the Giant Christmas Tree in Victoria Square / Tarntanyangga.
7. The previous 'Have a Cracker of a Christmas' creative suite won the 2022 Australian Marketing Institute (AMI) Award for Marketing Excellence in the category of Public Sector Marketing. This suite was delivered with variations from 2021-2023. A variation on this theme will continue in 2024.
8. City Culture, AEDA and ACMA work closely together to align branding, messaging and promotions and be complimentary through a shared design aesthetic, showing a consistent Christmas theme wherever possible across the City and marketing collateral.
9. Due to overwhelming demand and success, particularly for the annual Christmas tree lighting community event and the Adelady Christmas Village, these free community events will be programmed again during November and December 2024 in Victoria Square / Tarntanyangga.
10. Council will continue to provide support to other significant Christmas events, including the Christmas Pageant and the Carols by Candlelight event in Elder Park.
11. The current suite of Christmas decorations (baubles, throne, etc) will be deployed across the City in November and December 2024.
12. Live music at Christmas time will continue to play a key role on our City streets, to enhance the festive atmosphere throughout December, subject to budget.

New decorative lighting- Illuminated street banners

13. Festive decorations are important to the cultural life of the City and decorative lighting is intrinsically linked to the Christmas period. A trial of new illuminated street banners (lit motifs) will be undertaken in 2024 on King William Street. If successful this new approach has the potential to contribute significantly to a long term plan for city-wide decorative rollout.
14. Christmas decorations continue to have limitations in where and how they can be placed in the public realm. Being located in public spaces over a two-month period, they are subject to vandalism, require greater maintenance, can be bulky and challenging to install and costly to store throughout the year.

15. New decorations are being sourced for Christmas 2024, with these challenges in mind. The design will include upgrades to some of the City's main street banner poles, to enable lit Christmas motifs, similar to European countries, and other Australian capital cities, along main boulevards and streets. The pilot project encompasses both decorative requirements of daytime visibility and illumination at night. Final designs are to be determined. An example of lit motifs is shown [here](#).
16. The pilot in 2024 will demonstrate stage one, along King William Street between Victoria Square / Tarntanyangga and Rundle Mall, creating a link between the Giant Christmas Tree and Rundle Mall. This will include approximately 18 new motif decorations. Should this pilot be successful and subject to future budgets, more in-depth infrastructure assessments can be conducted to determine other main street suitability to be included in this suite of decorations.

The Giant Christmas Tree in Victoria Square/ Tarntanyangga

17. A new range of decorations will be purchased to replace and refresh the current decorations on the Giant Tree to align with our new traditional creative design.
18. The picket fence around the Giant Tree is being upgraded and we are exploring decorative lighting for the fence, to replace the opaque light boxes that sit under the tree.
19. The current proposed asset renewal timeline for the Giant Christmas Tree is as follows:
 - 19.1. 2024/2025 Detailed design for a Christmas new tree.
 - 19.2. 2025/2026 Procurement of a new Christmas tree.

Christmas in the City Action Plan 2025-2029

20. The 2021-2024 Christmas Action Plan has been successful and, Christmas 2024 represents the end of this current plan. Elements from the current three strategic pillars may likely remain relevant to any new action plan. They are as follows:
 - 20.1. The City will be brimming with magical places, must see dynamic destinations, decorations and lighting, sensory experiences that draw people in day and night.
 - 20.2. The City will be a premiere location in South Australia to participate in the signature events of a festive season that is culturally rich, meaningful and prosperous.
 - 20.3. City businesses, artists and makers will be supported to grow their cultural, artistic and economic contribution to the City, to attract audiences, visitors and givers.
21. The current City of Adelaide Christmas Festival Action Plan focuses on a coordinated city-wide approach to enhance the community experience. For 2024, this coordination and collaboration will continue between City Culture, AEDA and ACMA.
 - 21.1. Work between Administration and AEDA continues this year. The AEDA commitment is branding and marketing the City as well as supporting the traders in Rundle Mall.
 - 21.2. Rundle Mall's Christmas plan will primarily focus on supporting retailers and promoting the shopping experience for visitors, as Christmas is the most important time on the retail calendar.
 - 21.3. City of Adelaide and AEDA will continue to work together to ensure the execution of Christmas in the City complements each other, whilst aligning to each other's brand guidelines and objectives.
22. Future city-wide delivery of Christmas in the City would be in alignment with the Community goals of the Strategic Plan and would include Council acting as a community advocate and representing the interests of our community. New directions would align with cultural and community planning, with our objectives to support our communities to thrive and create fun, lively and interesting experiences and celebrate and honour community and cultures.
23. Areas of potential alignment with Council's Strategic Plan 2024-2028 may include:
 - 23.1. Partnerships with charities, aligning events and experiences with community engagement and 'giving' opportunities.
 - 23.2. Potential to reach out to residents of the CBD and North Adelaide to connect with experiences, decorations and events during the Christmas season.
 - 23.3. City schools may present opportunities to bring Christmas experiences and events into City spaces.
 - 23.4. A greater focus on the inclusion of multicultural and diverse experiences during the season. Key events such as Council's community tree lighting event always attracts a diverse audience. There is opportunity to ensure that the entertainment and cultural offerings better represent diverse audiences and visitors.

24. Council has recently engaged in the development of a new Economic Development Strategy. A new Christmas Plan would have actions aligned with supporting thriving businesses during the festive season.

Next Steps

25. If Council approves the development of a new Plan, a Christmas in the City 2025-2029 Plan will be presented to Council for endorsement in 2025.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Link 1 – Christmas Festival Action Plan 2021-2024

Link 2 – Christmas 2023 Tracking Evaluation

Link 3 – Lit motif example

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

- END OF REPORT -