

Draft Christmas in the City Action Plan 2025-2028

Tuesday, 4 March 2025
City Community Services and Culture Committee

Strategic Alignment - Our Community

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Public

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek approval of a new draft Christmas in the City Action Plan 2025-2028 (**Attachment A**) for the purposes of public consultation.

Christmas in the City is one of Adelaide's most anticipated annual highlights encompassing significant civic, traditional and cultural celebrations for communities in Adelaide and in Capital Cities globally.

Christmas 2024 was the final year of delivery of the Christmas Festival Action Plan 2021-2024.

On 14 May 2024, Council approved the development of a new four-year Christmas in the City Action Plan in collaboration with our delivery partners including the Adelaide Economic Development Agency (AEDA) and the Adelaide Central Market Authority (ACMA).

Public consultation was undertaken in September 2024, the findings of which informed the development of the Plan's five focus areas; Bold, impactful and traditional decorations; major drawcard events to promote attraction; showcase Adelaide's unique heritage and cultural icons; a global Christmas through welcoming and supporting community-led celebrations; and thriving local precincts through festive business and sustainability initiatives.

On 12 November 2024 Council approved the principles and themes that underpin the proposed draft plan.

Should the Council approve the draft Christmas in the City Action Plan 2025-2028 (**Attachment A**) for final public consultation, this will occur in March 2025 and the Plan will be presented to Council for approval in May 2025 and Christmas 2025 will be the first year of delivery under the new plan.

RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendation will be presented to Council on 11 March 2025 for consideration

THAT THE CITY COMMUNITY SERVICES AND CULTURE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS TO COUNCIL

THAT COUNCIL

1. Approves the draft Christmas in the City Action Plan 2025-2028 as contained in Attachment A to Item 7.1 on the Agenda for the meeting of the City Community Services and Culture Committee held on 4 March 2025, for the purposes of public consultation.
 2. Notes the Christmas in the City Action Plan 2025-2028 will replace the Christmas Festival Plan 2021-2024.
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IMPLICATIONS AND FINANCIALS

City of Adelaide 2024-2028 Strategic Plan	<p>Strategic Alignment – Our Community</p> <p><i>Create fun, lively and interesting experiences</i></p> <p>The draft Christmas in the City Action Plan 2025-2028 (the draft Plan), through engagement with and benefits to city businesses, also delivers on the theme of Our Economy, aligned with the outcome: <i>Adelaide's unique experiences and opportunities attract visitors to our City</i></p>
Policy	<p>The proposed draft Plan will deliver on the City of Adelaide's Economic Development Strategy, which includes a priority to:</p> <p>'Enable events and experiences of every size and scale'</p> <p>The Christmas in the City Action Plan will align with Council's Cultural Policy (in development) as a key cultural celebration on the city community calendar.</p>
Consultation	<p>To inform the development of a new plan, community consultation through Our Adelaide was undertaken from 9 - 27 September 2024, with 282 contributions. There were 1,580 visits to the Our Adelaide page. The Christmas in the City Community Engagement Summary Report 2024 can be found at Link 1. Themes have been drawn from this to inform the development of the draft Plan.</p> <p>Consultation on the draft plan is proposed to occur in March 2025.</p>
Resource	Not as a result of this report
Risk / Legal / Legislative	Not as a result of this report
Opportunities	The draft Plan provides opportunities to respond directly to community feedback and Council ambitions for Christmas in the city. It enables a refreshed approach and a renewed approach for maintaining the city's status as the premier location for Christmas activity.
24/25 Budget Allocation	<p>The new Christmas in the City Action Plan will be funded annually through Council's Business Plan and Budget.</p> <p>The total 2024/2025 expenditure allocated to Christmas activities across the CoA, AEDA and ACMA is \$2.103M which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CoA Operational Budget \$529,130 • Rundle Mall \$900,000 – funding provided by the Rundle Mall Separate Rate (including Black Friday and Boxing Day activity) • Adelaide Central Market \$70,000 • Capital (New and Upgrade) \$188,174 • Christmas tree installation, repair, maintenance and removal \$206,287 • AEDA Events and Festivals Sponsorship to the Christmas Pageant and Carols by Candlelight of \$150,000 • Office of the Lord Mayor Christmas Budget \$59,550
Proposed 25/26 Budget Allocation	Budget allocation for Christmas 2025 will be considered as part of Council's 2025/2026 Business Plan and Budget process.
Life of Project, Service, Initiative or (Expectancy of) Asset	The new Christmas in the City Action Plan will direct the planning and delivery of Christmas seasons for the next four years.
24/25 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

Background

1. The 2024 Christmas season was the final delivery year under the current City of Adelaide (CoA) Christmas Festival Action Plan 2021-2024 and the commencement of the development of a new Plan.
2. The Christmas Festival Action Plan 2021-2024 was written in a post-COVID recovery environment and included financial incentives for small businesses and artists to participate in and lead Christmas activities. However, these incentives were not part of the 2024/2025 Annual Business Plan and Budget.
3. On 14 May 2024, Council approved the development of a draft four-year Christmas in the City Action Plan as a 'whole of organisation' approach to Christmas planning, including the subsidiaries, the Adelaide Economic Development Agency (AEDA), which manages the Rundle Mall precinct, and the Adelaide Central Market Authority (ACMA).
4. Christmas 2024 saw Rundle Mall's highest spending on record, and the average city-wide visitor count for the 12 days of Christmas (13-24 December) was 431,894 daily visitors to Adelaide.
5. On 12 November 2024, Council approved the principles and themes that have formed part of the draft Plan contained in **Attachment A**.
6. The CoA leads the city-wide planning and integration of Christmas for the whole organisation, including the subsidiaries. This includes:
 - 6.1. Delivery of the Christmas experience to city users in key locations such as Victoria Square/Tarntanyangga, North Terrace, city squares and main streets in the CBD and North Adelaide
 - 6.2. City-wide decorations purchases, installation and renewal, including:
 - 6.2.1. The Giant Christmas Tree which is due for renewal and currently proposed for installation for Christmas 2026 (subject to procurement and project timeline)
 - 6.2.2. A suite of city-wide decorations including present boxes, light baubles, giant stars, thrones, wreaths, garlands, garden bed baubles and pillars of approximately \$250,000 in value
 - 6.2.3. A set of new gold and red bow decorations for the Giant Christmas Tree, new for Christmas 2024
 - 6.2.4. Fifty-one traditional Light Bauble Motifs, new for Christmas 2024.
 - 6.3. Delivery of community activities and events that sit outside Rundle Mall and the Adelaide Central Market (the Market)
 - 6.4. Facilitation of land use and road closures for Christmas events. Each year, the planning and distribution of these experiences is based on careful assessment to maximise geographic spread and impact, aligned with available financial and human resources.
7. AEDA leads a marketing campaign to attract visitors to Adelaide during the festive season including the important retail event 'Black Friday'. AEDA has also financially supported the Christmas Pageant and the Carols by Candlelight events. In 2024/25 this occurred through the Events and Festivals Sponsorship Program.
8. Rundle Mall, activated by AEDA, delivers a two-month-long calendar of decorations and activations, funded through the Rundle Mall trader levy. The primary purpose of these activities is to welcome and attract shoppers to the precinct in support of the traders.
9. The Adelaide Central Market Authority (ACMA) has a remit to support the traders within the Market. Through trader levies they deliver promotions, decorations and activations to the value of approximately \$70,000, with a focus on the unique and iconic offerings of food and produce within the Market. ACMA is planning to

revitalise the decorations in the Market in 2025. The Market precinct also benefits from the visitation and interest in the heritage and iconic Giant Santa on Federal Hall.

Development of the proposed Christmas in the City Action Plan 2025-2028

10. The following five Focus Areas have been developed in response to Council and community feedback through public consultation which was undertaken in September 2024:
 - 10.1. Focus Area 1 - Bold, Impactful and Traditional Christmas Decorations: The city and North Adelaide are transformed during the festive season with high impact decorations on the entrances to the city and on main streets.
 - 10.2. Focus Area 2 - Major Drawcard Events to Promote Attraction and Ensure the City is the heart of Christmas in South Australia: Visitors choose the city to celebrate South Australian traditional Christmas events.
 - 10.3. Focus Area 3 - Showcase Adelaide's unique Christmas Heritage and Cultural Icons: The CoA has a proud heritage of unique Christmas icons, traditions and heritage locations that can be showcased and celebrated.
 - 10.4. Focus Area 4 - A Global Christmas through welcoming and supporting community-led celebrations: Christmas in Adelaide is welcoming, diverse, and localised, embracing and showcasing the global and multicultural nature of Christmas celebrations and traditions.
 - 10.5. Focus Area 5 – Thriving Local Precincts through festive business and sustainability initiatives: The CoA supports local business to benefit from the festive season, local places will be bustling as destinations for celebration and businesses will be encouraged to promote sustainable consumption.

What is different about the Christmas in the City Action Plan 2025-2028?

11. The new plan is bold and proud of Adelaide's unique Christmas icons and traditions and seeks to maximise the benefits of leveraging our unique heritage.
12. The plan responds the Christmas in the City – Our Adelaide community consultation [[Link 1](#)] which provided strong direction for Council to invest in:
 - 12.1. bold centralised lighting displays
 - 12.2. high impact decorations, and
 - 12.3. markets and events.
13. The new plan will deliver a new look and feel for Christmas in the city. The former 'Christmas Festival' will be replaced by a new brand for 'Christmas in the City'.
14. Rundle Mall is undertaking a strategy which will encompass a detailed two-year plan for retail marketing and activation in the Precinct. This will include reference to a new creative suite which can be integrated through a city-wide new creative asset suite.
15. A new evaluation framework will be set up, commencing from Christmas 2025 and will include new questions for community feedback annually to enable a consistent 'pulse check' and opportunity for iterative and continuous improvement.

What challenges do we face in delivering on community expectations?

16. The draft Plan is ambitious, and delivery must consider and address financial and other challenges which may include:
 - 16.1. Each new decoration acquired comes with maintenance, installation and removal operating costs; more decorative assets lead to higher operating costs year on year.
 - 16.2. Ground-based decorations are often damaged, and the location of decorations is dictated by a need to mitigate this risk. For example, new decorations may need to be installed at height or in secure areas.
 - 16.3. Engaging diverse communities well and in ways that lead to increased participation.
 - 16.4. Continuing to attract visitors to the city for Christmas in an environment where there are multiple other entertainment and shopping options outside of the city, and increased costs of living continuing to impact visitor choices.

Next steps:

17. The draft Plan will be made available for public feedback in March 2025. The following timeline outlines where we are in the process:



18. The final document is proposed to be presented to Council for endorsement in May 2025.
19. Should Council approve the draft Plan in May, Christmas 2025 will be the first year of delivery under the new plan, for four seasons, up to and including Christmas 2028.

DATA AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Link 1 - Christmas in the City – Our Adelaide community consultation

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Draft Christmas in the City Action Plan 2025-2028

- END OF REPORT -