



Enabling Priorities

**McGregor Tan Research Outcomes
Return to the City Program – Phase 2 Summary**

Strategy, Insights and Performance

Bree Goodchild

Presenter – Jaclyn Thorne, McGregor Tan

16 August 2022



CITY OF
ADELAIDE

Methodology

Methodology

Phase 2 for the Return to the City Research Program was conducted by McGregor Tan from 31st May to 1st June 2022

Large City Employer Pulse Survey comprised 27 large employers who participated in Phase 1 of the research program, exploring current perspectives and tracking any behaviour change.



Four **focus groups** were conducted with City Users and City Workers, with the below characteristics:



City Users: Who used to come to the city frequently pre-COVID for high-frequency activities such as retail and dining and still do those activities with the same frequency, but not as often as before in the city.



City Workers: Work in the city and have some flexibility in their work arrangements (work from home for part of the week). Skewed towards 'staying put segment' – prefer working from home more than they currently do. A good mix of industries, age, gender, and family stage.



City Workers - young professionals: Under 35, work in the city and have some flexibility in their work arrangements. A mix of likely and unlikely to live in the city. High propensity to being 'out and about'.



City Workers - parents accessing childcare: Parents who work in the city and have some flexibility in their work arrangements, have young children and are accessing childcare or paid after-school care. Mix of full-time and part-time employment.

Focus Group Summary

Adelaide is mainly known for its lifestyle, affordability and ‘Mad March’

Being known as a place of opportunity and progression is a desired future association

What Adelaide is known for- now

- ✓ Lifestyle – associated with affordability, lack of traffic/ short commutes, *“less hustle and bustle”*
- ✓ ‘Hidden gem’ - quiet but with a lot to offer
- ✓ Universities and great higher education offer
- ✓ Events (Fringe, WOMAD etc.) and ‘Mad March’
- ✓ Weather – limited extreme weather events such as floods
- ‘City of churches’ – while mentioned by one participant, this was not a strong association

What Adelaide should not be known for

- ✗ *“A big country town where nothing happens and there is nothing to do.”*

What Adelaide could be known for - future

- ✓ Science and future industries – (Space industry, innovation - Lot14)
- ✓ A place of opportunity – especially for young people and encouraging people from interstate to consider Adelaide as a place to live
- ✓ Progressiveness
- ✓ Medical research
- ✓ Year-round events and unique events (cultural, arts, sports, music)
- ✓ Big/ specialty brands

Vibrancy in the city has bounced back – time to look to the future.

Most agreed that “COVID is over”, it is time to move on from the recovery stage and focus on the future



Vibrancy in the city has been steadily improving since March, noticeably during the working week. Many observed increased city-bound traffic, busier carparks, and more foot traffic in the city during the week.

Focus Group Summary

The city is the number one choice for activities that can't be replicated elsewhere

Everyday activities, such as grocery shopping or getting takeaway, preferred in the suburbs

City

- Retail – specialty stores (ie., Apple store), 'window shopping'
- Restaurants – fine dining, special dates (birthdays, anniversaries, date night)

Exclusive to the city:

- Central Markets
- Music events - festivals, concerts
- Sporting events – Adelaide Oval etc.
- Theater, shows
- Casino
- Galleries, museums, exhibitions
- Overnight accommodation
- Nightclubs, having a night out

Suburbs

- Retail - shopping precincts such as Marion, Burnside Village etc. due to better parking options and variety
- Grocery shopping (or online)
- Pubs
- Takeout as they are closer to home
- Restaurants – everyday/ date night for some
- Meet with friends that live in the same area
- Cafes
- Date nights/ going to the movies

Focus Group Summary – key themes

Hybrid working is here to stay, however, having a physical office is important

Being able to work from home is particularly beneficial for parent accessing childcare or OSCH, and a benefit they are not willing to part with

Childcare in the city is not attractive if working from home part of the week.

Providing childcare is not seen to be Council's responsibility

“When I thought I would work in the city every day, I definitely thought childcare is going to be in the city. Lucky that we haven't committed because what do you do on those days when you work from home and then you've got to commute in for a drop-off?”

“When you do a mix of work in the office and work from home, my preference would be for them to be closer to home.”

City Workers with some flexibility in their work arrangements agree that hybrid work has become an employee expectation rather than a 'nice to have'. Evidence of how this has been ingrained in employee's workplace expectations includes the following examples:

- Co-workers pushing back on new directives to work more from the city premises (Young professionals)
- Passing up a promotion that required working from the city office 100% of the time (Childcare group)
- Recruiters experiencing more applicants demanding flexibility and working from home (City Workers)

- The shift to hybrid working has eased some of the challenges for working parents
- All parents enrolled their children in childcare centres and schools closer to home
- Drop off and pick up closer to home- easier (parking- door to door), log back on later
- Mindset- getting prepared for the work day on commute, not rushing to drop off in city
- Commute into the city with children not appealing
- Logistics of getting to a city based childcare are too great



Apart from working from home, logistics and peak-time city traffic are key barriers. Childcare centres would need to be conveniently located close to the workplace and have well-thought-out parking, drop-off and pick-up solutions to be a serious consideration.

Focus Group Summary

Barrier: Personal safety is a concern and impacts city reputation

Activating the city and increasing foot traffic was seen as an important factor to improve safety in the city

- High foot traffic and a vibrant and “buzzing CBD” make activities in the city feel safe.
- Many choose to not visit the city after dark, or take additional precautions and avoid certain areas.
- The walk from the university to the train station along North Terrace, as well as Hindley Street and Rundle Mall, were seen as particularly problematic areas on both weekends and mid-week.
- Some further commented on seeing more homelessness recently, impacting negatively on the ‘vibe’ and amplifying safety concerns.
- When comparing the city to the suburbs, suburbs felt safer at night in general.

“Safety is a big one. The walk from Adelaide Uni to the train station is a big issue. I’ve had bottles thrown at me.” - Young professionals

“There are a lot of homeless people in the city right now, as awful as it sounds, that kills the vibe. There needs to be a good mix of people to feel safe.” - City Workers

“I would like the city to be safer in 5 years time. There are many problem areas where it’s dark and people hang out; change that and it would definitely make me go more often.” – City Users

“I would go to chill with friends at Uni but at night I avoid the area; it’s quite unsafe in the city at night.” – City Users

“Hindley Street is a problem. I would not go there after dark.” - City Users

“Maybe we need some more policing in some areas. Just more of a presence.” – Young professionals



Improved lighting, a greater police/ security presence at night, and increasing foot traffic will make the city feel safer and encourage visitation.

Focus Group Summary

Barriers: Access to the city for daily activity (parking and commute) however for special occasions or events, the cost of commute is factored in



Cost of city parking is a key barrier for City Users. Cheaper parking could encourage this cohort to frequent the city more for everyday activities that can also be done in the suburbs

*"I'd much rather go to Marion to shop. It's easier to park and there is more stuff there."
"If parking was cheaper, I would go more; certainly for shopping."*



Cost of city parking and public transport is a key pain point for City Workers; but those with hybrid arrangements will not return more frequently as they appreciate the time at home

*"If there was free parking in the city. I would be driving in every day."
"Maybe having an incentive: after a certain amount of parks, you get free or cheaper parking. It gets cheaper. That would encourage you coming in more."*



Young professionals have no significant accessibility barriers;
Public transport is the preferred mode, seen as simple, convenient, an opportunity for 'me-time', and a cost-effective option

*"I would say, one of the best things about working in the city is accessibility with public transport; the bus stop is not far from my place and it's really easy."
"I catch the bus. Why not read a book on the bus or relax while I pay less?"*



Time spent commuting is a concern for parents. Many choose to drive into the city for work as it offers the greatest flexibility and makes childcare/ school drop-offs and pick-ups easier.

*"The cost of parking is a barrier. I need to get back by a certain time for pick-ups, so I generally drive and my husband as well; doubling the parking costs is huge."
"For me, free parking would be great when I have to be there but it would not outweigh the chaos of a long day in the city versus being at home."*

Focus Group Summary – key opportunities

Opportunity: city + workplace amenity is the key

Having abundant choice, and being close to a wide variety of eateries, cafés and shops is a major perk of working in the city

Best thing about working from office

- ✓ Technology (dual screens, printers etc)
- ✓ Collaboration/ socialising/ networking
- ✓ Getting things done quicker/ immediate feedback
- ✓ Incidental learning
- ✓ Dressing up/ feeling nice

Best thing about working from the city

- ✓ Lunch and coffee options
- ✓ Convenience – access to shops/ retail
- ✓ Running errands in the lunch break
- ✓ Friday night drinks/ going out after work

“For me, 50% is about having direct access to colleagues and the other 50% is that I can go out on my lunch breaks and quickly run an errands.” – Childcare group

“For me, it’s the city environment rather than the office; The office itself isn’t too stimulating or fun, but being able to catch up with other colleagues and exchange ideas or meeting at a coffee shop makes it a bit more fun.” – Childcare group

“For me, it’s the socialisation of going into work, getting things done, and having dual screens makes it much easier – so more the office than the city.” – City Workers

“The office and Friday nights in the city. There are a few people at work that I like and we do like to go out on Fridays.” – City Workers

“It’s a bit of both. If you have good things happening in the city and you have good people to hang out with at work, that’s an incentive.” – Young professionals



With fewer days worked from the city premises overall, the propensity to leave the office and spend money when in the city is higher compared to pre-COVID.

Focus Group Summary



Opportunity: encourage people to **do more** on the days they are in the city

Group	Business events/ training (networking, TED talks, workshops etc)	Social events (shows, food trucks etc)	City Rewards Program	Alternative workspaces (pods/ hubs, nice/ modernised office spaces)
City Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business events <u>during the workday</u> There was limited interest outside of work hours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> key motivators to work from the city on that day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A City Rewards Program is appealing – can encourage doing (and spending) more on office days. Existing programs (such as <u>Rewardle</u> or Amex cash back rewards) are appealing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modern workplaces, sit-stand desks, and separate offices (rather than open-plan) would motivate some to work more from the city premises.
Young Professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited interest in external business events. employees choose the days they work from the office based on ‘what’s on’. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More social events such as food trucks, street parties, markets, arts or sports events <u>would encourage this cohort to work from the city premises more.</u> Socialising, both within and outside of work, is the strongest driver to be in the city. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reward programs are highly appealing, <i>“if someone is paying for dinner, I can go see a show”</i>. exploring new places in the city. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> networking seen as a potential benefit One suggested they would like working from <u>hubs in the suburbs</u> on work-from-home days to get out of the house and benefit from a different work environment while saving the commute to the city.
Childcare group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business events during the workday are difficult to fit - wouldn't encourage extra visits- just a switch of days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go straight home after work <u>Family-friendly events on weekends</u> would appeal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While parking, food, and shopping discounts would be welcomed, it <u>would not incentivise working additional days from the city office.</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“We have all that, but that doesn't override the commute and the extra time it takes. It's nice when you're there, but it's just not enough.”</i>

Focus Group Summary

Highlights

- Young professionals are the 'low hanging fruit' and a key opportunity segment.
- The city is the obvious choice for activities that can't be replicated elsewhere.
- Personal safety, particularly at night, is a concern and impacts city visitation.
- A combination of the city amenity and office perks motivate City Workers to work from the city premises.
- Childcare centres in the city are not practical if working from home and not appealing to parents with flexibility.

Participants suggested improvements to encourage more visitation

1. Special attractions and events that are unique to the city
2. Creating more vibrant 'laneway bar areas'
3. Improving the street appeal of main streets
4. Activation of the riverbank precinct
5. Creating more areas like the Light Square arts and hospitality hub
6. Closing off Rundle Street for a mall with outdoor dining (COVID safe and more atmosphere)
7. Having a City Rewards Program (such as the 'Entertainment Book' or 'EatClub')
8. Decorating the city during special holidays
9. Big-name brands and specialty stores for shopping
10. Extending trading hours for retail and hospitality

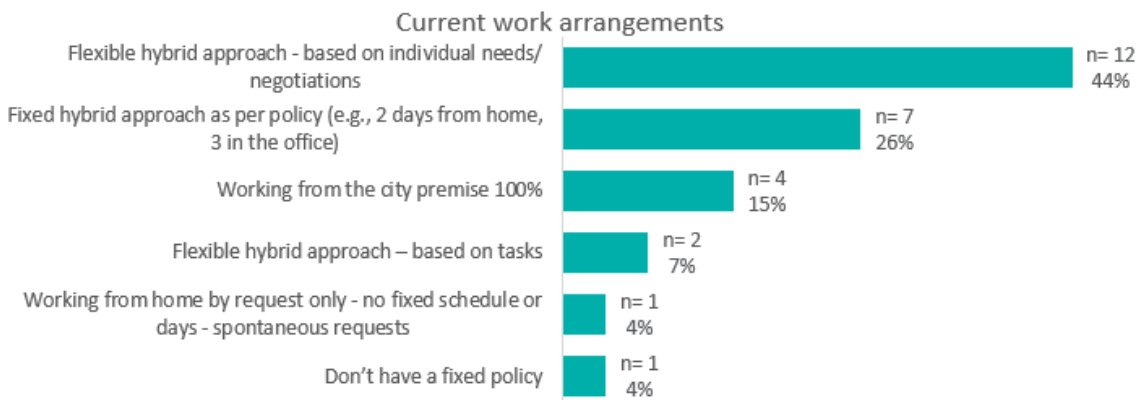


Large Employer Pulse Summary

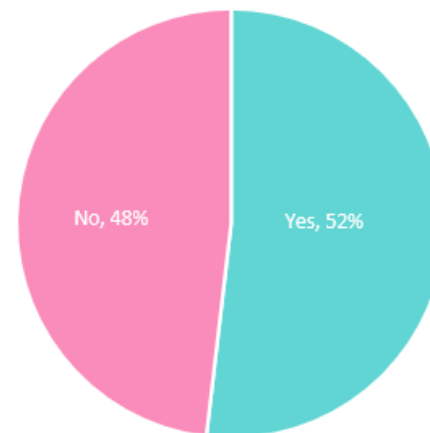


77% of large employers offer regular hybrid work arrangements

52% have actively encouraged people back into the city



Encouraged employees to work from city premises more frequently



Q3. What best describes your work from home policy/arrangements: Select one
Base: 27 (n=27)

Q7. Employers have previously suggested the items below as things that might encourage their employees into the city for work more frequently. In the last 3 months, has your organisation done any of the below to encourage staff to work from the city premises more often? (select all that apply)
Base: 27 (n=27)

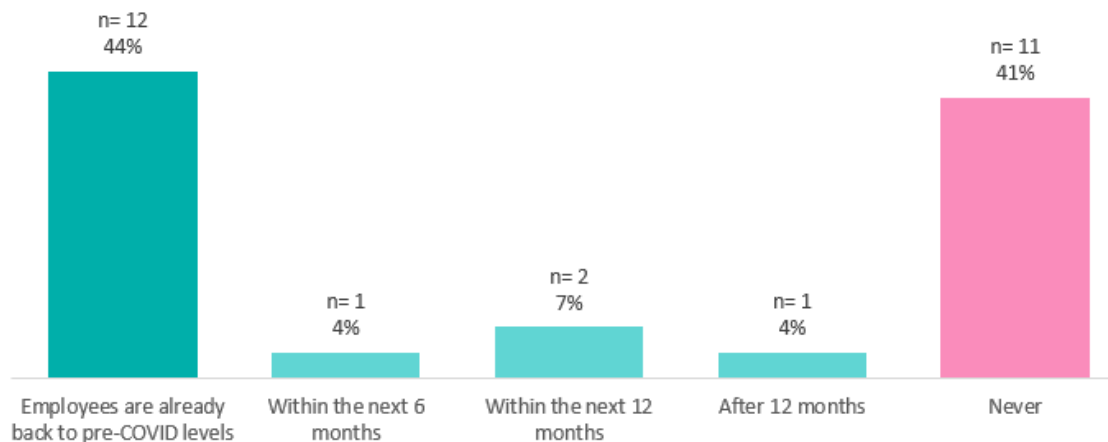
Large Employer Pulse Summary



59% already have everyone back or expect to by end of year

41% of large employers don't expect their employees to work from the city premises at pre COVID levels

Expectation to return to City premises at pre-COVID levels



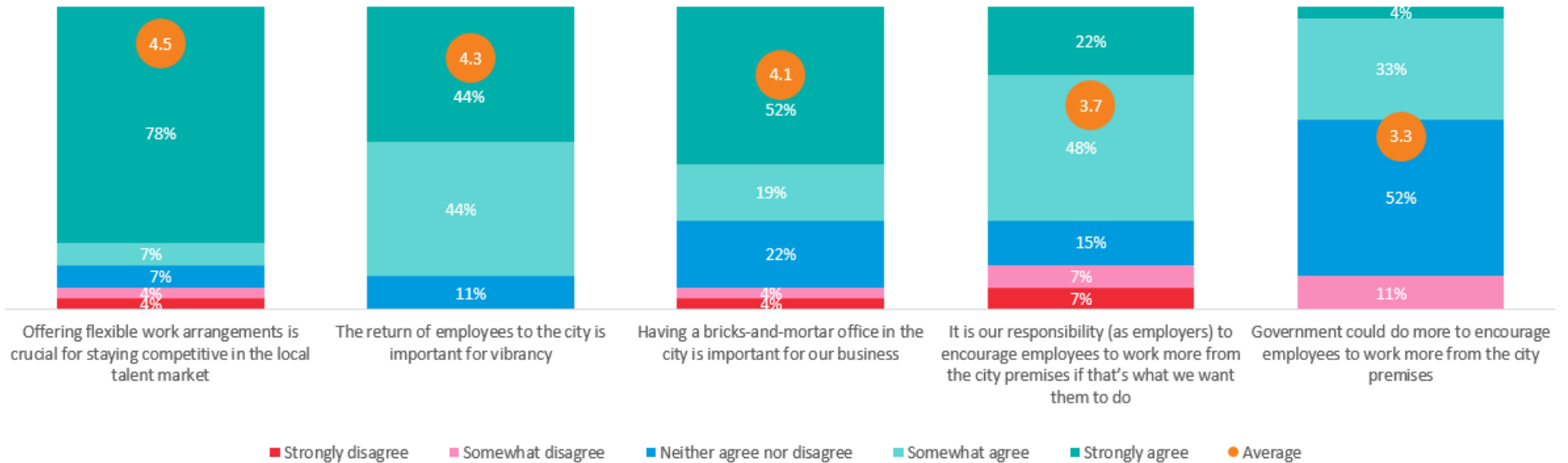
Q4. When do you expect all employees to return to working from the city premises at pre-COVID levels? Select one
Base: 27 (n=27)

Large Employer Pulse Summary



Flexibility is crucial for staying competitive but office based workforce is essential for vibrancy

Agreement with statements



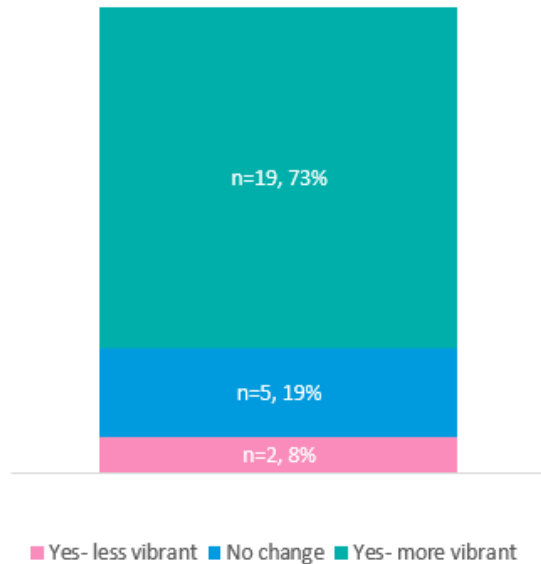
Q5. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, how strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements: Select one
 Base: 27 (n=27)

Large Employer Pulse Summary

Vibrancy during the workweek is seen to have improved in the past three months (March, April, May)

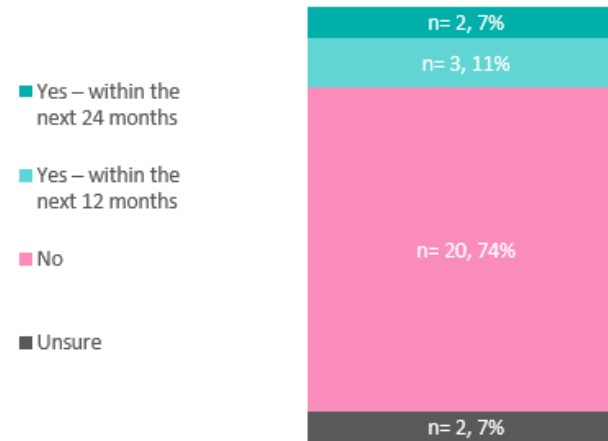
Majority of businesses do not anticipate reducing their physical office in the city

Change in vibrancy



Q9. In the past three months, have you noticed a change in the vibrancy in the city during the workweek (Monday – Friday)?
Base: 27 (n=26)

Anticipation to reduce physical office space in the city



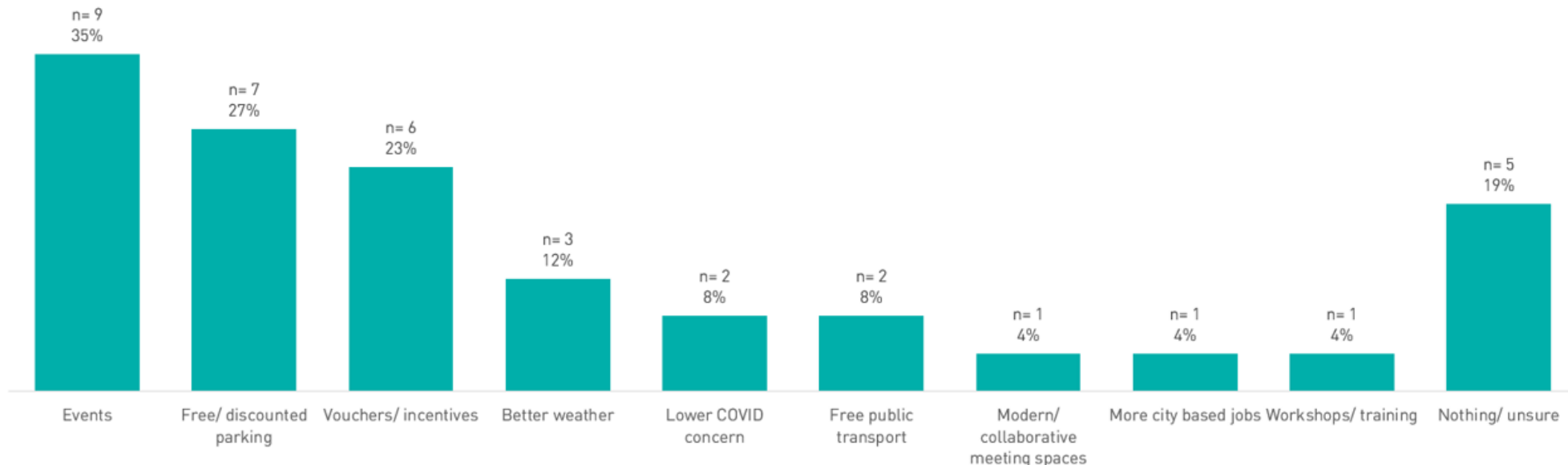
Q6. Do you anticipate reducing your physical office space in the city?
Base: 27 (n=27)

Large Employer Pulse Summary



Events, cheaper parking and vouchers biggest opportunity to increase city visitation

Biggest opportunities to encourage more people into the city - next 3 months



“Create fun events to drive people into the city; good food and music always attracts people.”

“As a business, we do a lot; the biggest thing is hesitation around cost and time of travel. Free parking or public transport would be the biggest help.”

“Making the process of commuting worth it. Offering different things that people can choose from.”











“The City Eat and Stay Vouchers were great for vibrancy and should be continued. Visitors should be reminded that the City is convenient to accomplish many tasks in one day.”

“Winter is very difficult, look ahead to Spring and have events. Create FOMO. Car parking costs need to be less.”

Q10. In the next 3 months, what do you think are the biggest opportunities to encourage more people into the city? Answer in as much detail as possible.

Base: 27 (n=26)

Large Employer Pulse Summary - Recommendations

	Collaboration with business	Large employers firmly believe they are responsible for their workforce, and where they are based, however welcome Council run initiatives and relevant email communications.
	Future focus	While COVID is still a consideration and concern, most agree that it is time to stop talking about recovery and focus on the future instead.
	Car-free streets and alfresco dining	Events are the greatest driver of city visitation. Closing off streets for outdoor dining, live music, pop-up bars, and markets is highly appealing and could increase the frequency and duration of time spent in the city.
	City Rewards Program	A City Rewards Program appeals and sparks motivation to explore new places in the city. While most City Workers would not work additional days from the city premises, it could encourage them to stay longer and do more on the days they are in the city. (pulse and FG)
	Improved safety measures	Improved lighting, a greater police/ security presence at night, and increasing foot traffic will make the city feel safer and encourage visitation.
	Improved shopping experience	Many retail shopping habits have shifted to the suburbs due to better accessibility and shop variety. Improving the shopping experience by occupying vacant stores, attracting specialty stores and big-brands, extending trading hours, and importantly, discounting parking fees, specifically for retail shopping and on weekends, could encourage shopping in the city instead.
	City based childcare not appealing	In a world where we can 'work from anywhere', the prospect of more childcare centres in the city did not appeal to workers with hybrid arrangements, with childcare closer to home being the preference. Exploring this further is not recommended.
	Liveability and affordability	Promoting benefits of living in the city coupled with affordable housing could be an opportunity to attract young people to consider living in the city. In particular, those who enjoy being 'out and about' and have limited family commitments.
	Activations for young people	Consider promoting events and activations specifically targeted at younger people as this cohort has limited accessibility barriers, or family commitments, and socialising/ catching up with colleagues and friends is their key motivator to spend time in the city.
	Accessibility	Offering free or discounted parking and public transport can encourage City Users and City Workers to come to the city more frequently. Particularly for everyday/ unplanned activities for City Users, as well as shopping on weekends (groups and pulse)

Full Reports & Next Steps

Full Reports

Full versions of the McGregor Tan Phase 2 Summary research findings can be accessed using the below links:

- City of Adelaide – Return to the City program - Focus group report (Conducted June 2022) ([Link 1](#))
- City of Adelaide – Return to the City program - Large Employer Pulse Check (Conducted June 2022) ([Link 2](#))

Next Steps

McGregor Tan will continue to:

- consider the insights and findings to inform planning
- conduct pulse checks with large employers
- share the findings with those involved, the community and Elected Members