South Gippsland
Shire Council

Come for the beauty... Stay for the lifestyle

Rating Strategy 2014 – 2018

Adopted 25 June 2014
Revised 10 June 2015

9 Smith St., Leongatha 3953 (Private Bag 4) Ph: 5662 9200 Fax: 5662 3754
council@southgippsland.vic.gov.au www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

It is important to note that the focus of the Rating Strategy is different to that of the Annual Budget. The rating system determines how Council will raise money from properties within the municipality; it does not influence the total amount of money to be raised, only the share of revenue contributed by each property. The rating system comprises the valuation base and actual rating instruments allowed under the Local Government Act 1989 (the Act) that are used to calculate an individual property owner's liability for rates.

The Rating Strategy 2014-2018 has been developed with community input via the Rating Strategy Review Steering Committee, public information sessions and public submissions.

Changes to the rating structure to achieve a more equitable distribution of the rate burden will increase the amount paid by some properties and decrease the amount paid by others.

The changes to the rating structure are to be implemented over a two year period.

1.2 Key Elements

Council's Rating Strategy 2014-2018 is framed around the following key elements:

1. That the basis of valuation for rating purposes continues to be Capital Improved Value.
2. That South Gippsland Shire Council continues to apply differentials as its rating system.
3. That 'user benefit' principle is given relatively low weighting and consideration when setting differential rates.
4. That the municipal charge be phased out over two years, reduced from the current 20% to 10% in 2014/15 and 0% in 2015/16.
5. That the General Rate be set at 100%, this rate to be used for Residential Land and the municipal charge be phased to 10% in 2014/15 and 0% in 2015/16.
6. That the Industrial category have a 105% differential rate and be phased in over two years, 102.5% in 2014/15 and 105% in 2015/16 as well as the municipal charge being phased to 10% in 2014/15 and 0% in 2015/16.
7. That the Commercial category have a 105% differential rate and be phased in over two years, 102.5% in 2014/15 and 105% in 2015/16 as well as the municipal charge being phased to 10% in 2014/15 and 0% in 2015/16.
8. That the Farm category have a 70% differential rate and be phased in over two years, 80% in 2014/15 and 70% in 2015/16 as well as the municipal charge being phased to 10% in 2014/15 and 0% in 2015/16.
9. That the Farm category definition be revised so that it ties in with the Australian Valuation Property Classification Codes.
10. That the Vacant Land category have a 200% differential rate and be phased in over two years, 175% in 2014/15 and 200% in 2015/16 as well as the municipal charge being phased to 10% in 2014/15 and 0% in 2015/16.

11. That the Restricted Vacant Land Category is no longer required as a separate differential rating category.
12. That the Cultural and Recreational category have a 50% differential rate and be phased in over two years, 43.75% in 2014/15 and 50% in 2015/16 as well as the municipal charge being phased to 10% in 2014/15 and 0% in 2015/16.
13. That Waste Charges are only recovered for waste and recycling services across all Waste Service Charges.
14. That the current policy and cycle of reviewing the Special Charge Scheme Policy is considered adequate.
15. That land management rebates for rural properties not be introduced into Council's Rating Strategy.
16. That the current policy and cycle of reviewing the Debt Recovery on Unpaid Rates and Charges Policy is considered adequate.
17. That the current policy and cycle of reviewing the Rates and Charges Hardship Policy is considered adequate.
18. That Council continue to offer lump sum payment options to its ratepayers and investigate introducing an additional 10 monthly payment option for ratepayers.
19. That Council with the assistance of a Rating Strategy Steering Committee review the Rating Strategy on a four year cycle that aligns with the 2nd year term of a newly elected Council.
20. That the Rural Residential Category have a 70% differential rate (Key Element update as per Special Council Meeting held 10 June 2015 and Council meeting held 24 June 2015)

Other information incorporated into Council's Rating Strategy includes details regarding the property valuation process, how rates are calculated, payment due dates and payment options, interest on arrears, the government funded pensioner rebate, deferred payments and financial hardship.

1.3 The Process So Far

The following diagram shows the processes undertaken in the development of Council's Rating Strategy 2014-2018.

June- August 2013	• Council approves to implement a review of its Rating Strategy through the establishment of a steering committee representing a cross-section of rate-paying stakeholders and three Councillors.
October - November 2013	• Nominations sought from community members to be appointed to the Rating Strategy Review Steering Committee.
November 2013	• Seven community members and three Councillors appointed by Council to the Rating Strategy Review Steering Committee.
November 2013-February 2014	• Rating Strategy Review Steering Committee held eight meetings before making 19 recommendations to Council.

February 2014	• Council received and endorsed the Rating Strategy Discussion Paper for public comment.
February - March 2014	• One public information session held. • 31 electronic and 7 written submissions received
March 2014	• Council at Briefing session held on 19 March 2014 considered the 2014-2018 Rating Strategy Discussion Paper and feedback that was provided from the public.
April 2014	• *Proposed Rating Strategy 2014-2018* presented to Council recommending the public be invited to respond through written submissions
April – May 2014	• Public submissions invited on the *Proposed Rating Strategy 2014-2018.*
June 2014	• Council considered 14 submissions on the *Proposed Rating Strategy 2014-2018* • *Rating Strategy 2014-2018* to be adopted by Council, with or without amendment by Council

1.4 The Next Steps

The 2014/15 Annual Budget incorporates the outcomes of the Rating Strategy 2014-2018.

1.5 Strategy revised 10 June 2015

Council at its Special Council Meeting held 10 June 2015 amended the 2014-2018 Rating Strategy relating to the Farm land differential category. The Rating Strategy was refined to include Residential Rural / Rural Lifestyle properties equal to or greater than 18 3 hectares where primary production and uses and associated improvements are secondary to the residential uses to be classified as 'farm land' for differential rating purposes.

Council's legal advisers recommended that Council should consider formulating a separate differential rating category distinct from 'farm land' for these properties. Council at its meeting on 24 June 2015 determined that a separate differential rating category be established called 'rural residential'.

Section 8 Key Elements and in particular Section 8.20 Rural Residential Land Category has been updated accordingly.

2 Context

2.1 Rating Context

Council has prepared this Rating Strategy within the context of the current legislative framework to provide a detailed explanation of rating concepts and Council's decisions. The Rating Strategy has been developed with community input via the Rating Strategy Steering Committee and public submissions.

2.2 Rating Strategy Steering Committee

A Rating Strategy Steering Committee was formed to act as an advisory group to assist Council in preparing a new Rating Strategy.

The Rating Strategy Steering Committee comprised ten members appointed by resolution of the Council as follows:

- Mayor and two Councillors.
- Seven community members representing a cross-section of ratepayer categories including: Commercial, Residential, Tourism, Environment, Retirees and Farming.
- Council staff, as required, to provide technical input and administrative support.

The Steering Committee brought a variety of skills and perspectives as well as representation of the various categories of ratepayers. Members of the Steering Committee were as follows:

Name	Representation
Mayor James Fawcett	**Councillor and Committee Chair**
Councillor Lorraine Brunt	**Councillor**
Councillor Don Hill	**Councillor**
John McKay	**Farming, residential, tourism and retiree**
Lynn Atkinson	**Community, residential, retiree**
Malcolm Davies	**Farming**
Brian Hoskins	**Residential, retiree**
Peter Watchorn	**Commercial**
Sheryl Bruce	**Industrial**
Keith Brydon	**Commercial**

These were accompanied by Council Officers as follows:

Name	Position
Tim Tamlin	Chief Executive Officer
June Ernst	Director Corporate Services
Tom Lovass	Manager Finance

Name	Position
Stuart Smith	Management and Systems Accountant
Aileen Clark	Valuation & Rates Officer

The objectives of the Rating Strategy Steering Committee were to act as an advisory group for the development of a new Rating Strategy, and in particular to:

- Identify and recommend to Council the principles that the Council should consider when striking general rates, particularly with regard to the creation and maintenance of any differential rates.
- Make recommendations to the Council regarding the equitable sharing of the rates burden between various categories of ratepayers – e.g. Residential, Rural, Commercial and Industrial.
- Recommend to the Council any changes to the structure of current charges and their relationship to general rates, e.g. Waste Service Charges and Municipal Charge.
- Identify any other special rates, charges or levies it believes the Council should consider.
- Rate payment cycle, rebates and waivers and rating strategy review cycle.

The group held eight meetings between November 2013 and February 2014, as well as attending a briefing of Council to present their Rating Strategy 2014-2018 Discussion Paper.

2.3 Rating Strategy 2014-2018 Discussion Paper

To assist Council in preparing a new rating strategy, the Rating Strategy Steering Committee made a number of recommendations to the Council which was detailed in the *Rating Strategy 2014-2018 Discussion Paper*. The discussion paper provided details of the existing legislative rating framework, the rating principles the Council should consider when striking differential rates, the history of the Council's current rating system and concluded with 19 recommendations of the Rating Strategy Steering Committee.

The Rating Strategy Steering Committee recommended that the Council's practices and decisions regarding rating should be underpinned by the following rating principles:

- Equity principle, considering:
  - Property wealth tax (including both horizontal and vertical equity)
  - User benefit
  - Capacity to pay
- Incentive principle
- Comparative rates principle
- Simplicity principle
- Transparency principle
- Efficiency principle
- Legislative compliance principle

After receiving the group's discussion paper at a Special Council meeting of 13

February 2014, Council invited the public to make comment regarding the *Rating Strategy 2014-2018 Discussion Paper* which concluded at 5.00pm on 10 March 2014.

As well as being available at Council's Smith Street offices, the *Rating Strategy 2014-2018 Discussion Paper* was available for download from Council's website.

A summary containing the recommended changes, including an optional feedback form, was also available from Council's website during the submission period.

2.4 Public Submissions

At a Council briefing held on 19 March 2014, Council received 31 electronic and 7 written submissions in response to the release of the *Rating Strategy 2014-2018 Discussion Paper*.

Key issues raised in written submissions included:

- Ratepayers owning higher valued properties are penalised by the committee's proposals.
- Commercial properties are currently struggling and farmers on the other hand do not appear to be having problems paying their rates.
- Increasing vacant land rates will stop any developers from subdividing land.
- Abolishing the municipal charge is not appropriate, the cost of administering the shire should be shared equally among ratepayers.
- Farm rate should not be less than 80% of the residential rate.
- Many smaller farms are owned by professionals and farm profits are complimentary to salaries.
- A redistribution of charges from farms to businesses would be a disincentive to business confidence and expansion.
- Concern that the removal of the municipal charge will have a significant effect on farmers.
- Farmers have been having a difficult time lately and the spending capacity of farmers affects commercial and industrial businesses.
- Request that farm rate assessments average charge be reduced by around $500 on average.
- Concern about classification of farm land as well as definition of waste service charges.
- Concern the Rating Strategy is not supportable by the Minister's Guidelines.

- Concern that a differential rating system based on Capital Improved Value does not reflect the capacity to pay and produces inequitable outcomes.

- Request that a system be implemented that calculates rates in a manner so that they are reflective of the services consumed by the ratepayer.

- Farming assessments should not be used to calculate averages but instead the number of farmers that own properties (some farmers own multiple properties).

- Differential rates for commercial, industrial and vacant land differentials should be set higher and the farming property categories set lower.

- An alternative differential rate model proposal put forward.

Matters raised that were outside the Terms of Reference are also summarised below:

- Rate increases over the years have been excessive.

- Significant influence on the level of rates is the cost of the Shire's operations.

- Future annual staff increases be limited to 1.8%.

Due to the inclusion of personal information within submissions, written submissions are not publicly available.

2.5 Section 223 - Public Submissions

At a Special Council Meeting held on 11 June 2014, Council received 14 written submissions in response to the release of the *Proposed Rating Strategy 2014-2018 Paper*.

Key issues raised in written submissions included:

- Request that the rating differentials need to be reviewed and revised.

- Rate increases are unjustifiable for vacant land owners.

- Encouraging vacant land owners to develop properties will be detrimental to the environment.

- Concern about rate increases to Commercial properties having a detrimental impact to Leongatha and surrounding area.

- Concern that farmers get a reduction in rates when they only pay one set of rates (most business owners pay residential and business rates).

- Position put that Rating Strategy 2014-2018 is illegal.

- Concern that Council has already decided outcome and concern with cost of living and the impact of rates on pensioners.
- Request that valuations be equitable for properties in the vicinity of Wind Farms.
- Concern that wind farms should not be rated as farms.
- Concern about rate increases for residential properties when taking into consideration the reduction of the municipal charge and property revaluations.
- Concern about reclassification of rural lifestyle properties from farm to general land.
- Concern that property values do not reflect capacity to pay rates and charges.
- Concerns of increasing rates on farming land.

3 Rating Framework

3.1 Context

South Gippsland Shire Council currently receives 69% of its total revenue (excluding capital grants and granted assets) by way of property based rates and waste service fees. The development of strategies in respect of the rating base is therefore of critical importance to both Council and its ratepayers.

Council has prepared this Rating Strategy within the context of the current legislative framework and with regard to the Victorian Ministerial Guidelines, to provide a detailed explanation of rating concepts and how they can assist in achieving Council's objectives.

3.2 Background

Public finance theory and practice implies that taxation revenue whether it is at Federal, State or a Local level is generally used to finance various forms of 'public goods, services and community obligations' not necessarily in direct relation to user benefit, but ultimately of benefit to the community as a whole. In this respect, property rates are a general purpose levy not linked to 'user pays', or ability to pay principles. Other charges such as waste service fees are liable to be linked to costs associated with a direct service benefitting specific rate payers and thus are 'user pays' based.

Council acknowledges that the existing system of raising rates using the property wealth tax valuation methodology is imperfect; however, the application of an alternate rating model (e.g. income tax) is not available within the constraints of the existing legislation.

Council can however modify certain aspects of the rating system in accordance with the legislation, including the application of differential rates in the dollar (or differential rates) to different classifications of properties.

Total rates collected are fixed by Council each year as part of the budget process. Council only seeks to increase the total amount of revenue required in order to deliver services and the capital works program that is expected by the community and required by legislation.

The amount of property rates collected by Council depends on considered choices as to the quantity and quality of services that it decides to provide and how much of the cost is to be recovered from other revenue sources. The amount collected in rates represents the difference between the total expense required by Council to fund programs, maintain assets, to service and redeem debt, and the total of revenue from all other sources. Other sources of income include grants, prescribed and discretionary fees, fines and charges, sale of assets and interest earned.

The net funding requirements are incorporated into budgeted financial statements not only for the forthcoming Annual Budget, but also in the forward budgets in the Long Term Financial Plan. The financial integrity of the annual and forward budgets is assessed by reference to a series of key financial performance indicators. The performance indicators that South Gippsland has been using for the past 10 years is not dissimilar to newly developed financial performance and sustainability indicators that all Victorian councils will be compelled to use from 2014/15.

Council acknowledges that property rates do not recognise that individual ratepayers within a class of properties can be 'asset rich' and 'income poor'. In some cases ratepayers may have considerable wealth reflected in property they own but have a low level of income.

While income and goods and services taxes are more reflective of capacity to pay, it is not possible to expect a property rating system to deal practically with all aspects of capacity to pay based on individual households and businesses. Given this, Council can provide flexible payment options to ratepayers experiencing genuine hardship upon request.

In the local government context, the rating system determines how Council will raise money from properties within the municipality. The rating system comprises the valuation base and the rating instruments that are used to calculate property owners' liability for rates.

3.3 Rating Framework

Council rates constitute a system of taxation on the local community for the purposes of local government. The value of land and its improvements (or Capital Improved Value) is generally used as the basis of taxation, which is a measure of the property wealth of the ratepayer. By legislation (*Valuation of Land Act 1960*), the value of all property is to be reassessed every two years and is to be relative to all other like property within the municipality. Together these address both horizontal equity (all ratepayers in a class pay a similar amount for an equivalent property within its category) and vertical equity (properties valued higher than others within a category pay more than lower valued properties).

The rating framework is set down in Part 8 Division 1 of The Act and determines how a council develops a rating system. The framework provides considerable flexibility to suit an individual council's requirements, which includes principles of equity, benefit, efficiency and community resource allocation. Under The Act, Council has the power to levy:

- Uniform rates
- Differential rates
- Municipal charge
- Special rates and charges
- Service rates and charges

and to

- Provide rebates and concessions
- Provide deferrals and waivers based on hardship

Council acknowledges that this framework will not universally cater for the possible significant revaluation of property movement in a non-homogenous market place and may result in significant movements in rates on an individual case-by-case basis within rating categories.

Council rates are basically calculated as follows:

Rate in the dollar x Property value = Council rates

As an example the 'rate in the dollar' for a residential property in 2013-2014 is 0.00379739. Assuming a property, say a house and land, was valued at $350,000, the annual rate payment would be $1,329.09, calculated as:

0.00379739 x $350,000 = $1,329.09

In addition to rates on property, local governments are able to levy a Municipal Charge on each property. Under The Act, the municipal charge cannot raise more than one-fifth (20%) of the total amount of rates through rates (including the municipal charge).

Rates and Municipal Charges are non-reciprocal in the sense that the Shire is not required to give approximately equal value in exchange directly to ratepayers. Rates are in the form of a general purpose levy. The benefits that a ratepayer may receive will not necessarily be to the extent of the rates paid. Benefits are consumed in different quantities and types over the lifecycle of the ratepayer, e.g. maternal and child health, libraries and aged care, roads and footpaths, local laws. In other words, Council governs for the whole needs and wishes of the community and raises rates accordingly. Rates and charges are raised in order to provide for existing services and sustaining infrastructure assets throughout the Shire as a whole.

Council has the power to levy a service rate or charge or combination service rate and charge to fund the provision of a water supply, sewerage or waste services. The most commonly used service rate or charge is that used to defray garbage collection and recycling costs. A unit charge is normally levied on each property that receives or can access the service. These types of services are based on a user benefit principle.

Council also has the power to levy a special rate or special charge or combination of special rates and charges, to fund service provision. A special rate or charge can be used if Council deems that a special benefit is received by those properties on which it is levied. Special rates and charges have been used by councils to fund things like the construction of infrastructure (street schemes) or to fund marketing, promotional and economic development initiatives that assist local traders.

Special rates and charges are specifically designed to address the user benefit principle. They are targeted rating instruments in the sense that they focus on ratepayers who receive an exclusive or additional benefit to other ratepayers from particular expenses.

Councils have the power to grant a rebate or concession in relation to any rate or charge to assist the proper development of the municipal district, preservation of buildings or places of historical, environmental, architectural or scientific importance within the municipality. It is expected that rebates and concessions be used with respect to 'individual' properties within a property class. The legislation intended that differential rates be used to achieve an outcome for a 'class' of properties.

Council also has the power to defer payment or waive part or all of any rate or charge.

These are typically considered for financial hardship cases.

3.4 Local Government Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2012

The *Local Government Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2012* was enacted in October 2012. This legislation requires the Minister to issue guidelines which Councils must have regard to before declaring a differential rate for any land. The guidelines address the objectives of differential rating; suitable uses of differential rating powers; and types of land that are appropriate for differential rating.

The Minister was given the power to seek an Order prohibiting any Council from making a declaration of a differential rate if the Minister considers the declaration would be inconsistent with any guideline. It is important to note that any prohibition Order does not have a retrospective effect.

The Minister established a Differential Rates Ministerial Committee in December 2012 inviting representatives from all political parties in the Victorian Parliament to join the committee to lead a consultation program to develop new guidelines for the use of differential rates.

Following consultation, the Ministerial Guidelines were released in April 2013. These guidelines are available from: http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/localgovernment/projects-and-programs/ministerial-guidelines-for-differential-rating

The intent of the guidelines is to reduce complexity and the inconsistent application of differential rates across local governments in Victoria. The guidelines have been designed to provide clarity, consistency and transparency for Councils in their decision making for or with respect to:

- The Minister's expectations for how differential rates can be applied;
- The determination requirements in considering differential rate objectives;
- The consideration of how and when differential rates are likely to be a useful tool to achieve those objectives.

3.5 Property valuations

For the purpose of The Act and its rating provisions, the *Valuation of Land Act 1960*, is the principle Act determining property valuations. Generally, each separate occupancy on rateable land must be valued and rated. Contiguous areas of vacant land with more than one title in the same ownership may be consolidated for rating purposes.

An assessment for the purpose of rating may be against any piece of land subject to separate ownership or occupation. In this context, land has been defined to include buildings, structures or improvements and may include automatic teller machines, show case, signage, advertising, radio and mobile communication towers.

Local government may adopt one of the following three valuation methodologies to value properties in its municipality:

Capital Improved Value (CIV): the total value of the property including the land value (i.e. Site Value) and other improvements including the buildings and landscaping.

Site Value (SV): the total value of land, plus any improvements which permanently affect the amenity or use of the land, such as drainage works, but excluding the value of building and other improvements.

Net Annual Value (NAV): the value of the rental potential of the land, less the landlord's outgoings (such as insurance, land tax and maintenance costs). For residential and farm properties this must be set at 5% of the CIV.

3.5.1 Capital Improved Value

Capital Improved Valuation (CIV) is the most commonly used valuation base by Victorian Local Government with 74 Councils applying this methodology. Based on the value of both land and all improvements on the land, it is relatively easy for ratepayers to understand as it equates to the market value of the property.

The key driver behind the majority of councils using CIV is the ability to apply differential rates should this valuation base be used.

Section 161 of the Local Government Act (1989) provides that a Council may raise any general rates by the application of a differential rate if –

a. It uses the capital improved value system of valuing land; and
b. It considers that a differential rate will contribute to the equitable and efficient carrying out of its functions.

Where a Council does not utilise Capital Improved Valuation, it may only apply limited differential rates in relation to farm land, urban farm land or residential use land.

3.5.1.1 Advantages of using Capital Improved Valuation (CIV)

Capital-improved value includes all improvements, and hence is often supported on the basis that it more closely reflects 'capacity to pay'. The CIV rating method takes into account the full development value of the property, and hence better meets the equity criteria than Site Value and NAV.

With the increased frequency of valuations (previously four year intervals, now two year intervals), the market values are more predictable and has reduced the level of objections resulting from valuations.

The concept of the market value of property is far more easily understood with CIV rather than NAV or SV.

Most Councils in Victoria have now adopted CIV which makes it easier to compare relative movements in rates and valuations across councils.

The use of CIV allows Council to apply differential rates which greatly adds to Council's ability to equitably distribute the rating burden based on ability to afford Council rates. It also allows Councils to compare differentials for various categories of land against other similar councils as required in the Victorian Ministerial Guidelines.

3.5.1.2 Disadvantages of using CIV

The main disadvantage with CIV is the fact that rates are based on the total property value which may not necessarily reflect the income level of the property owner as with pensioners and low income earners and their capacity to pay.

3.5.2 Site Value

With the movement of Monash City Council to CIV Rating, there are no Victorian Councils that use this valuation base. Valuations are based simply on the valuation of land and offer only very limited ability to apply differential rates. Council may raise general rates by applying a differential rate in relation to farm land, urban farm land or residential use land.

3.5.2.1 Advantages of Site Value

There is a perception that under site valuation, a uniform rate would promote development of land, particularly commercial and industrial developments. There is however little evidence to prove that this is the case.

There is scope for possible concessions for farm land, urban farm land and residential use land.

3.5.2.2 Disadvantages in using Site Value

Under Site Value, there will be a significant shift in bearing the rate burden from the Industrial / Commercial sector onto the Residential sector of Council. The percentage increases in many cases will be in the extreme range.

SV is a major burden on property owners that have large areas of land. Large landowners, such as farmers for example, are disadvantaged by the use of site value.

SV would reduce Council's rating flexibility and options to deal with any rating inequities due to the removal of the ability to levy differential rates;

The rate-paying community has greater difficulty in understanding the SV valuation on their rate notices, as indicated by many inquiries from ratepayers on this issue handled by Council's Customer Service and Property Revenue staff each year.

3.5.3 Net Annual Value

Net Annual Value, in concept, represents the annual rental value of a property. However, in practice, NAV is closely linked to capital improved value for residential and farm properties. Valuers derive the NAV directly as 5 per cent of CIV for Residential and Farm properties.

3.5.3.1 Advantages in using Net Annual Value

In contrast to the treatment of Residential and Farm properties, Net Annual Value for commercial and industrial properties is assessed with regard to actual market rental. This approach can be of some merit for municipalities that have a high concentration of commercial and / or industrial properties.

3.5.3.2 Disadvantages in using Net Annual Value

For Residential and Farm ratepayers, actual rental values pose some problems. The artificial rental estimate used may not represent actual market value, and means the base is the same as CIV but is harder to understand.

In choosing a valuation base, councils must decide on whether they wish to adopt a differential rating system (different rates in the dollar for different property categories) or a uniform rating system (same rate in the dollar). If a council was to choose the former, under The Act it must adopt either of the CIV or NAV methods of rating.

3.5.4 Property valuation cycle

Every two years, Council, to satisfy its statutory requirement under the *Valuation of Land Act 1960*, conducts a review of property values based on market movements and recent sales trends. For the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 rating years, valuations will be based on values returned as at 1 January 2014.

Valuers undertake a physical inspection of a number of residential and rural assessments during each revaluation cycle. Inspections are undertaken on commercial, industrial and specialist properties. Other valuations are derived from a complex formula based on sectors, sub-market groups, property condition factors (including age, materials and floor area), influencing factors such as locality and views, and land areas compared to sales trends within each sector/submarket group. The municipality has defined the sub-market groups which are reviewed during the revaluation process. Council's valuers determine the valuations according to the highest and best use of a property.

In valuing large areas of land without buildings, residential zoning, permits for subdivision or structure plans are indications of potential for subdivision. If the land is capable of subdivision, it will be valued accordingly as potential subdivisional land and will typically be higher than Farm land. The amount of valuation increase will depend on market factors at the time of valuation.

Supplementary valuations are adjustments that are required to be made when properties have a reason to be reviewed. Reasons for this may include a dwelling demolished, a certificate of occupancy issued for a completed dwelling, titles issued for newly subdivided lots or the reduction of value on a parent assessment due to be subdivided.

The Valuer-General Victoria is responsible for reviewing the total valuation of each municipality for accuracy before certifying that the valuations are true and correct. Valuations are conducted using Best Practice Guidelines formulated and published by the Valuer-General Victoria.

The total value of the municipality is used as a base against which Council strikes its rate in the dollar for each defined category or type of property.

3.5.5 Objections to Property Valuations

The *Valuation of Land Act 1960* provides that objection to the valuation may be made each year within two months of the issue of the original or amended (supplementary) Rates and

Valuation Charges Notice (Rates Notice).

Objections must be dealt with in accordance with the *Valuation of Land Act 1960*.

Further information can be obtained by contacting Council or accessing the Land Victoria website at www.land.vic.gov.au/valuation.

3.5.6 No Windfall Gain

There is a common misconception that if a property's valuation rises then Council receives a 'windfall gain' with additional income. This is not so, as the revaluation process results in a redistribution of the rate burden across all properties in the municipality.

As previously explained, Council only seeks to increase the total amount of revenue required from all ratepayers in order to provide the services and capital works expected by the community.

Total income is fixed each year as part of the budget process. The rate in the dollar (ad valorem rate) used to calculate the rate for each property is adjusted to ensure that the total income required is actually generated.

3.5.7 Rating Differentials

The Act allows councils to 'differentiate' rates based on the use of the land, the geographic locality of the land or the use and locality of the land. Different rates in the dollar of CIV can be applied to different classes of property. These classes must be clearly differentiated.

There is no theoretical limit on the number or type of differential rates that can be levied; however, the highest differential rate can be no more than four times the lowest differential rate.

Council distinguishes rateable properties on the purpose for which the property is used. The establishment of differential tariff groups can ensure greater equity and contribution from rates according to land use characteristics in relation to affordability and taxation principles.

In accordance with The Act, Council is required to undertake the following when levying a differential rate. Council must:

- Specify the objectives of the differential rate;
- Define the types and classes of land and a statement of reasons for the use and level of the rate; and
- Identify types and classes of land in respect to uses, geographic location, planning scheme zoning, building types and other relevant criteria.

The purpose of the above is to ensure that Council has a sound basis on which to develop various charging features when determining its revenue strategies and ensure that these are consistent with the provisions of The Act.

The general objectives of each differential rate are to ensure that all rateable land makes an equitable financial contribution to costs of carrying out the functions of Council, including the:

- Construction and maintenance of public infrastructure;
- Development and provision of health and community services;
- Provision of general support services;

or

- A specific objective as described within the differential rate characteristics.

The application of a differential rate means that one class of property is treated differently from another – either paying a higher or lower ad valorem rate in the dollar. For each effect a differential has, it will have the opposite effect for other property classes. A lower differential given to one class of property can only be covered by a higher differential in other property classes and vice-a-versa.

The relativity of the differential rate is normally expressed in terms of a comparison of the rate in the dollar against a nominated general rate. The general rate normally used as the benchmark is the particular rate in the dollar that applies to residential properties, whether it is a rate that applies to residential properties or a rate applying to a broader class that includes residential.

4 Rating Strategy

4.1 What is a Rating Strategy?

A rating strategy is the process by which Council systematically considers the factors of importance that informs its decisions about the rating system. The rating system determines how Council will raise money from properties within the municipality. It does not influence the total amount of money to be raised, only the share of revenue contributed by each property. The rating system comprises the (valuation) base and actual rating instruments that are used to calculate an individual property owner's liability for rates.

This Rating Strategy comprises a number of components including:

- A review of rationales and objectives;
- The development of principles;
- Related research;
- Rate modelling;
- The development of required documentation; and
- The opportunity for public review/consultation.

4.2 Council Profile

4.2.1 Snapshot of South Gippsland Shire Council

South Gippsland Shire was formed in 1994 from the amalgamation of four municipalities. Located 90 minutes south east of Melbourne, the Shire has an expanding population of about 27,500. It has an area of 3,300 square kilometres with substantial coastal frontage. South Gippsland Shire is a spectacular region, with communities nestled among the rolling green hills, and along the coast, linking the mountains to the sea.

Its major centres are Leongatha, Korumburra, Mirboo North and Foster, and other significant townships include Nyora, Toora, Venus Bay, Sandy Point, Poowong, Port Welshpool, Loch, Dumbalk, Welshpool, Meeniyan, Fish Creek, Port Franklin, Koonwarra, Kongwak and Tarwin Lower.

4.2.2 Our Economic Base

South Gippsland has a thriving economy with over 7,000 businesses contributing to an annual output of over $2.6 billion. South Gippsland has one of the lowest unemployment rates in Australia.

Key industry sectors contributing to this output are:

- Manufacturing $688 million;
- Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing $416 million;
- Property services $218 million;
- Construction $215 million;
- Mining $136 million;
- Wholesale Trade $129 million;
- Health care and social assistance $116 million; and
- Retail trade $101 million.

4.2.3 Agriculture

South Gippsland's economy centres around agricultural production. It is one of the key dairy farming locations in Australia, is a major beef farming area and also has significant sheep farming. The Victorian Livestock Exchange operates a modern regional saleyards at Koonwarra.

Horticultural food production, such as snow pea and potato farming, are also key industries in South Gippsland. For part of the year most of Australia's snow peas are produced here.

South Gippsland has a growing wine industry and has been identified as a centre of organic and native food production.

4.2.4 Food Processing

- Murray-Goulburn's Leongatha dairy factory, the largest in Australia;
- Burra Foods, at Korumburra;
- United Dairy Power at Poowong;
- ViPlus Dairy being established at Toora;
- Select Produce, operating a significant snow pea packing and distribution centre at Korumburra;
- GBP Exports, operating a major export abattoir at Poowong; and
- Fresh Zest, operating a herb packing facility at Pound Creek.

4.2.5 Tourism

The tourism industry is also a major contributor to the South Gippsland economy with visitors contributing over $230 million annually to the economy. Marketed as "Prom Country" - the region attracts over 1 million visitors each year. The region is rich in nature based activities, with the world renowned Wilsons Promontory National Park, spectacular scenery, unspoilt beaches and quaint villages.

4.2.6 Other Industries

Esso has a major marine terminal located at Barry Point near Toora that is used to provide services to their Bass Strait oil and gas platforms. This includes supporting the $4 billion project to develop the 'Kipper Tuna Turrum' oil and gas field. A private port, 'Port Anthony' is also being constructed next to the Esso facility. An important fishing industry operates from Port Welshpool and Port Franklin and a wind farm is located on the hills around Toora.

The agricultural and manufacturing sectors also support a substantial service industry including: transport, engineering, construction and agricultural supplies.

4.2.7 Residential Profile

The latest adjusted population estimate is 27,500 people as at June 2011. Council's recently prepared population forecasts project that the Shire's population will increase to 36,500 by 2031. This is an increase of almost 8,500 people at an average annual growth rate of 1.5%. The Shire has approximately 15,100 dwellings and about 19,050 rateable properties.

The number of households within South Gippsland increased by 790 between 2006 and 2011 to a total of 10,884.

This trend is expected to continue over the next 20 year period as population growth increases. The increase in the total number of households will require a diverse range of housing opportunities including higher density dwelling development in serviced townships and lifestyle living opportunities in a low density residential or rural living context.

The age structure of South Gippsland Shire in 2011 reflected a similar profile to Regional Victoria as a whole. The proportion of residents in the 20-29 age group (8.8%) continues to be lower than the average for Regional Victoria (10.7%) whereas the proportions in age groups above 50 years were higher. The proportion in the 60-69 age range was 11.8%, almost three percentage points higher than the average for Regional Victoria.

South Gippsland's age profile compared with Regional Victoria is shown in the following table:

Age Group	South Gippsland	Regional Victoria
0-9	12.1%	12.5%
10-19	13.0%	13.5%
20-29	8.7%	10.7%
30-39	10.1%	11.3%
40-49	13.1%	13.7%
50-59	15.0%	14.0%
60-69	14.4%	11.8%
70-79	8.1%	7.3%
80-89	5.2%	4.9%

(ID consulting for South Gippsland Shire Council, Community Profile 2011)

There are high levels of home ownership in South Gippsland with 44% of dwellings fully owned compared with 32% nationally. The proportion of rental dwellings at 18.5% is much lower than the national average of 29.6%.

South Gippsland has 27% of lone person households, higher than the national rate of 24% while 56% of South Gippsland residents are married compared with 50% average for Australia.

South Gippsland has very high levels of citizen engagement with 71.4% of the population participating in the last year in comparison with 50.5% for Victoria. Volunteerism is also high with over 6,400 people or 32% of the adult population identifying that they worked as a volunteer for an organisation. This compared with about 19% across Victoria.

4.2.8 Labour Force

South Gippsland Shire has:

- an estimated labour force of 12,969 people; and
- an unemployment rate of 3.7%, with 477 unemployed persons on Census night 2011.

This is the lowest unemployment rate in Gippsland and one of the lowest in the State. This is considerably below the average for Regional Victoria of 5.2%.

Key industry sectors by employment in the South Gippsland Shire in 2011 were Agriculture, forestry & fishing (16.7%), Health Care and Social Assistance (10.6%), Retail Trade (10.2%), and Construction (9.7%). The Shire's top eight employment sectors compared with that of Regional Victoria as shown in the table below:

Employment by Industry	South Gippsland	Regional Victoria
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	16.7%	7.8%
Health care and social assistance	10.6%	13.1%
Retail trade	10.2%	11.6%
Construction	9.7%	8.9%
Manufacturing	9.6%	10.4%
Education and training	6.6%	8.2%
Accommodation and food services	5.9%	6.8%
Transport, postal and warehousing	4.2%	4.1%

(ABS 2011 Census)

Since 2006 the greatest rise has been in the manufacturing sector and in transport, postal and warehousing. There has been a drop in those working in agriculture, forestry and fishing.

In 2011, key employment by occupation groups in South Gippsland were managers (22.0%), technicians and trades workers (15.1%) and professionals (13.7%). The Shire's employment by occupation compared with that of Regional Victoria are as follows:

Occupation	South Gippsland	Regional Victoria
Managers	22.0%	15.2%
Technicians and trades workers	15.1%	15.4%
Professionals	13.7%	16.7%
Labourers	12.4%	12.3%
Clerical and administrative services	10.2%	11.7%

Occupation	South Gippsland	Regional Victoria
Sales workers	8.9%	9.7%
Community and personal service workers	8.4%	10.3%
Machinery operators and drivers	7.4%	6.9%
Inadequately described and not stated	1.9%	2.0%

(ABS 2011 Census)

4.3 Rating Principles

Council's practices and decisions regarding rating are underpinned by the principles described below.

- **Equity principle:** To achieve an equitable distribution of the rate burden across the community. A differential rating structure can assist in achieving an equitable imposition of rates and charges. The equity principle includes consideration of property wealth tax, user benefit and capacity to pay principles.
  - **Property wealth tax:** Council is limited to taxing one component of wealth, being real property. The wealth tax principle implies that rates paid are dependent upon the value of a ratepayer's real property and does not necessarily have any correlation to the individual ratepayer's consumption of services or the perceived benefits derived by individual ratepayers from the expenditures funded from rates. Some moderation of the effect of property value on the level of rates paid through differential rates may be required to make the rating system more equitable.
  - **Horizontal equity** means that like properties in the same position, e.g. with the same property value, geographical locality and/or land use, should be treated the same. The Act allows councils to differentiate rates based on the use of land and/or the geographic locality of the land. There is a fundamental importance on which characteristics define similarity. Horizontal equity is ensured mainly by accurate property valuations and their classification into homogenous property classes.
  - **Vertical equity** in respect to property taxation means that higher property values should incur higher levels of tax.
- **User benefit**: A popular complaint is that "the rates I pay have no correlation with the services I consume or the benefits I receive". This argument is based on the benefit principle (the opposite of the wealth tax principle) that argues there should be a nexus between consumption/benefit and the rate burden. Evaluating the relative benefits received by various classes of property raises many practical difficulties, in particular, trying to trace quantifiable consumption/benefits to particular types of properties. The analysis often gets reduced to arguments of what

services are consumed by residential versus farm, commercial/industrial versus residences versus farms, and between different towns. Clearly, the exercise is not clear cut – for example, it might be argued that rural ratepayers derive less benefit from library services than their town counterparts but the reverse argument may be argued with respect to the costs of repairing and constructing long lengths of local roads to service a small number of properties. Also, the benefits that a ratepayer may receive will not necessarily be to the extent of the rates paid. Benefits are consumed in different quantities and types over the lifecycle of the ratepayer, e.g. maternal and child health, libraries and aged care, roads and footpaths, local laws.

- **Capacity to pay:** The relativity of rates paid by each class of property, including residential, farm, commercial, industrial and cultural and recreational, are to be considered in relation to their respective capacity to pay. Ratepayers with higher value properties generally have a higher wealth and a greater capacity to pay. However, as rates are levied on unrealised wealth in the form of real property, their nexus with ratepayers' capacity to pay may be more tenuous. Ratepayers may be asset rich but cash poor. Council acknowledges that property rates do not recognise that individual ratepayers within a class of properties can be 'asset rich' and 'income poor'. In some cases ratepayers may have considerable wealth reflected in property they own but have a low level of personal income. Examples include; pensioners, self-funded retirees, businesses subject to cyclical downturn, households with large families and property owners with little equity but high levels of mortgage debt.

  While income and goods and services taxes are more reflective of capacity to pay, it is not possible to expect a property rating system to deal practically with all aspects of capacity to pay based on individual households and businesses.

  Rating instruments such as differential rates are available to reflect the differing capacity of classes to pay. For example, higher differential rates may reflect the income producing capacity of the class of property.

- **Incentive principle:** Rate setting objectives can also be used to support Council's social, environmental, or economic goals as part of a longer term strategy such as the Council Plan. For example, rates can be altered to encourage business activity, the development of vacant land or environmentally sustainable improvements.

- **Comparative rates principle:** When considering what an equitable distribution of the rate burden is across the community, the Council's rating structure should be compared to other like councils of a similar size, scale and population. Benchmarking on its own however, does not necessarily determine Council's performance with respect to an equitable distribution of rate burden. Although the information may show differences between councils, the reasons for the differences sometimes require further investigation. What is an equitable distribution can be difficult to determine based on benchmarking indicators alone.

- **Simplicity principle**: Refers to a transparent rating system with a clear purpose and principles that are understood by ratepayers, with a view to the tax system being capable of being questioned and challenged by ratepayers. Finding a balance between different objectives can be complex.

- **Transparency principle**: Transparency implies openness, communication and accountability, such that it is apparent and easy for stakeholders to see what steps have been taken, and why, to reach outcomes. Transparency is, or should be, an overarching principle for public officials and organisations in their decision making. Under the *Local Government Act 1989* a council must have regard to a number of facilitating objectives, which include transparency and accountability, when making decisions. In relation to the development and implementation of a differential rating strategy, transparency implies openness and accountability of process and outcomes. This involves, for example, developing a clear and justifiable rationale for differential rating decisions, ensuring agreed and clearly defined rating principles underpin those decisions, communicating the strategy in an accessible and timely way, and reviewing the strategy over time. The principle of transparency does not bring any specific rating principles into conflict, but rather serves as an overarching principle applicable to the elements that underpin and guide the rating strategy, the decisions that are made, and the strategy as a whole.

- **Efficiency principle:** Refers to the cost of administering the rates system including issuing of assessments, collection of rates, monitoring outcomes, educating and informing ratepayers, enforcement and debt recovery. There is a tendency for uniformity to help minimise administration costs, however, it is also possible for a simple rate system to be costly if it is unpopular and results in increased appeals and higher collection costs.

- **Legislative compliance principle**: It is important to ensure that all rating decisions are made in accordance with relevant legislation, particularly the Local Government Act 1989.

5 The current Rating System

5.1 History

5.1.1 Property Valuation Base

Property values are used to calculate how much each property owner will pay. South Gippsland has used the Capital Improved Value (CIV) as the basis for valuing its land since it was formed in 1994. Successive councils considered that this method provides the fairest way to distribute the rate burden across all ratepayers on the following basis:

- The 'Capacity to Pay Principle' of taxation requires that ratepayers of similar wealth (based on the value of their land), pay a similar amount of rates.
- Ratepayers of greater wealth pay more tax than ratepayers of lesser wealth;
- Property value is a relatively good indicator of wealth (when lifetime incomes, including incomes from capital gains, are taken into account). The CIV, which closely approximates the market value of a property, provides the best indicator of overall property value.

Seventy-four of Victoria's 79 councils use the CIV method to calculate property rates, while the remaining five use the Net Annual Value (NAV) method. (Melbourne, Port Phillip, Glen Eira, Yarra and Maribyrnong).

5.1.2 Differential rates

The current rating structure comprises seven differential rates, incorporated into major property categories: Residential, Farm, Commercial, Industrial, Vacant Land, Vacant Land Restricted and Cultural and Recreational.

The different rates are structured in accordance with the requirements of Section 161 of The Act and are detailed below:

- ***Residential Land***
  - Land located within the municipality that is residential, meaning rateable land upon which is erected a private dwelling which is used primarily for residential purposes; or
  - Land located within the municipality that is rural living, meaning land which is generally outside the established townships and which is primarily used and developed for residential purposes in a rural location.
- ***Farm Land***

  Land located within the municipality that is farm land as defined in Section 2 of the *Valuation of Land Act 1960.*
- ***Commercial***

  Land located within the municipality that is commercial, meaning rateable land, which is used primarily for business or commercial purposes, including structures, which are used in conjunction with or for purposes ancillary to business or commercial purposes.

- ***Industrial***

  Land located within the municipality that is industrial, meaning land upon which is erected a factory or workshop which is primarily used for industrial purposes and includes any land which is used in conjunction with or for purposes ancillary to industrial purposes for which the factory or workshop is being used for industry including, but not being limited to, the operations included in the definition of industry in the South Gippsland Shire Council Planning Scheme.
- ***Vacant Land***

  Land located within the municipality that is vacant, meaning land upon which no improvements have been made. Improvements being work actually done or material use on and for the benefit of the land, so far as the work done or material used increases the value of the land which is capable of being developed for residential, commercial, rural living or industrial purposes.
- ***Vacant Land- Restricted Use***

  Land located within the municipality that is vacant, meaning land upon which no improvements have been made, and where residential development has been dis-allowed due to planning restrictions
- ***Cultural and Recreational Land***

  Land located within the municipality that is cultural or recreational land, as defined in Section 2 of the *Cultural and Recreational Land Act 1960*.

5.1.2.1 Historical Rates and Charges Data from 2003/04

Historical rates and charges data are detailed below for South Gippsland Shire Council.

5.1.2.1.1 Residential Rates

Details of the Residential differential rate in the dollar and the ratio comparison to the General rate are included in the table below:

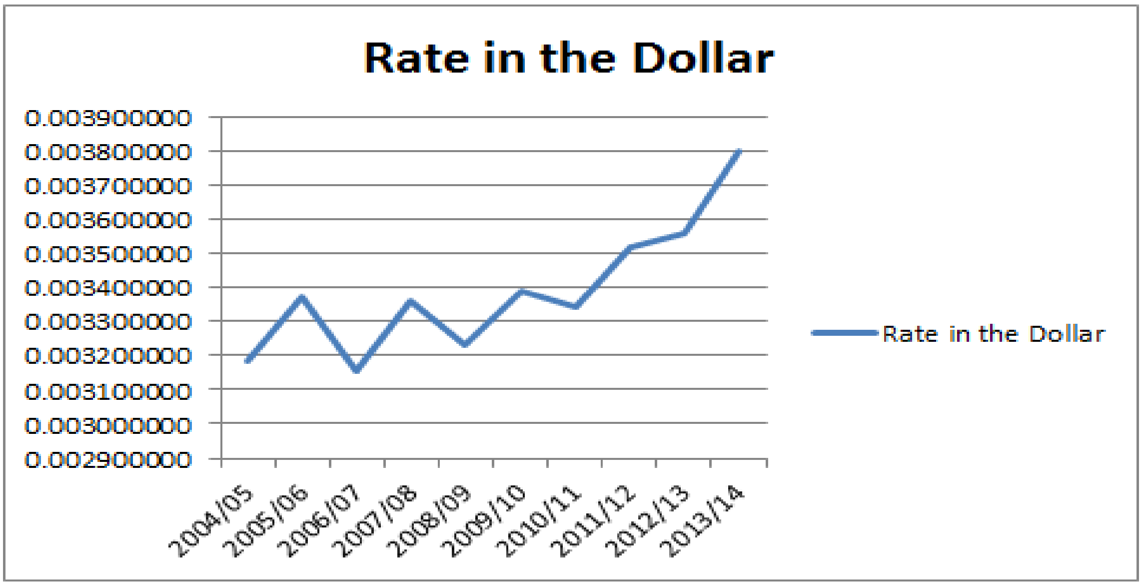
Year	Rate in the Dollar	Ratio to General Rate
2004/05	0.003183061	100%
2005/06	0.003372350	100%
2006/07	0.003152580	100%
2007/08	0.003357670	100%
2008/09	0.003232050	100%
2009/10	0.003390430	100%
2010/11	0.003343330	100%
2011/12	0.003514510	100%
2012/13	0.003561240	100%
2013/14	0.003797390	100%

The rate in the dollar varies from year to year. Typically every year when the annual budget is set, rate revenue requirements increase when compared to what was raised in the previous year.

In a non-general revaluation year the rate trends upwards as expected in order to generate the required additional rate revenue.

Every second year a general revaluation of all rateable properties takes place. Rising land values do not provide Council with a windfall financial gain. Rather, the revaluation burden is redistributed across all properties.

In the early years in the first decade of the 21st century there were substantial increases in property valuations. The table below clearly shows how the rate in the dollar was reduced every second year.



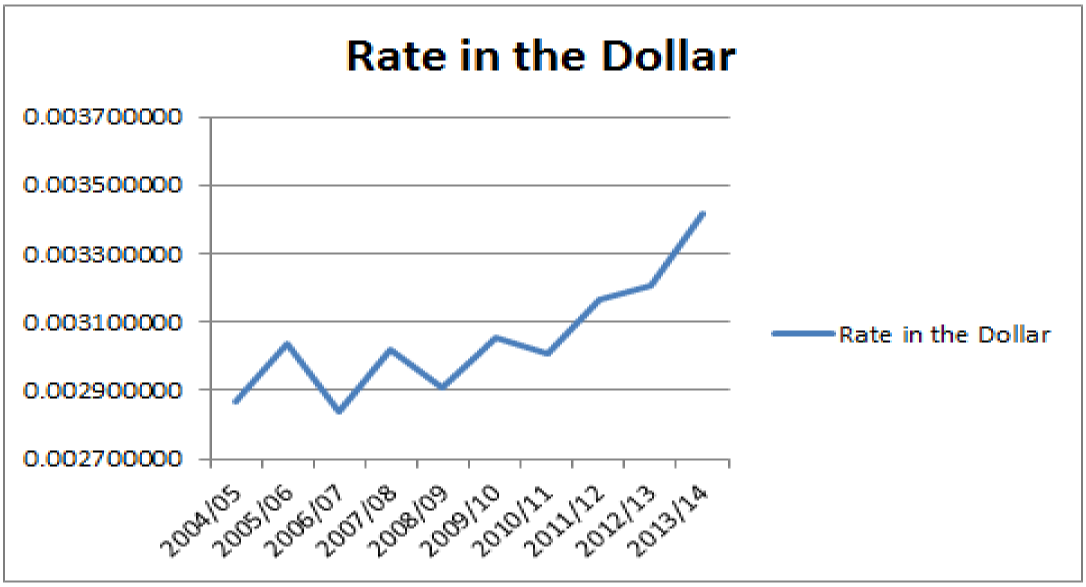
5.1.2.1.2 Farm Rates

Details of the Farm differential rate in the dollar and the ratio comparison to the General rate are included in the table below. The Farm differential has been set at 90% of the General rate.

Farming properties over the year were provided a 10% discount to that of the general rate.

Year	Rate in the Dollar	Ratio to General Rate
2004/05	0.002864755	90%
2005/06	0.003035120	90%
2006/07	0.002837320	90%
2007/08	0.003021900	90%
2008/09	0.002908840	90%
2009/10	0.003051390	90%
2010/11	0.003009000	90%
2011/12	0.003163060	90%
2012/13	0.003205120	90%
2013/14	0.003417650	90%

The rate in the dollar increases for Farm rates changed proportionately exactly as it did for Residential rates (and Commercial, Industrial and Cultural & Recreational Land categories).



5.1.2.1.3 *Commercial Rates*

Details of the Commercial differential rate in the dollar and the ratio comparison to the General rate are included in the table below. They are identical to the Residential rate (and Industrial rate).

Year	Rate in the Dollar	Ratio to General Rate
2004/05	0.003183061	100%
2005/06	0.003372350	100%
2006/07	0.003152580	100%
2007/08	0.003357670	100%
2008/09	0.003232050	100%
2009/10	0.003390430	100%
2010/11	0.003343330	100%
2011/12	0.003514510	100%
2012/13	0.003561240	100%
2013/14	0.003797390	100%

5.1.2.1.4 Industrial Rates

Details of the Industrial differential rate in the dollar and the ratio comparison to the General rate are included in the table below. They are identical to the Residential Rate (and Commercial Rate).

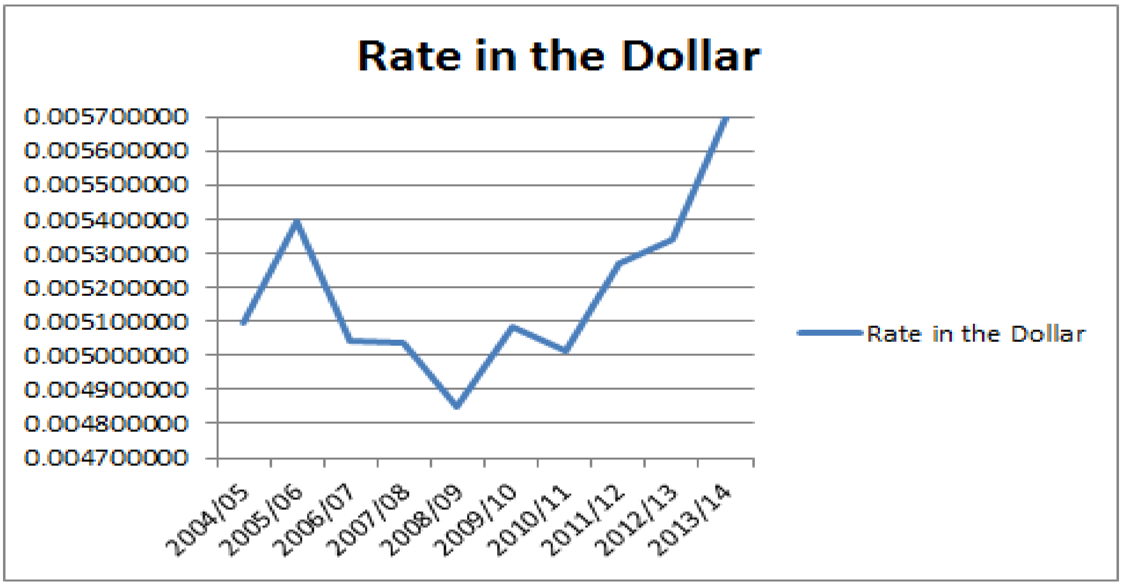
Year	Rate in the Dollar	Ratio to General rate
2004/05	0.003183061	100%
2005/06	0.003372350	100%
2006/07	0.003152580	100%
2007/08	0.003357670	100%
2008/09	0.003232050	100%
2009/10	0.003390430	100%
2010/11	0.003343330	100%
2011/12	0.003514510	100%
2012/13	0.003561240	100%
2013/14	0.003797390	100%

5.1.2.1.5 Vacant Land Rates

Details of the Vacant Land differential rate in the dollar and the ratio comparison to the General rate are included in the table below:

Year	Rate in the Dollar	Ratio to General rate
2004/05	0.005092898	160%
2005/06	0.005395760	160%
2006/07	0.005044130	160%
2007/08	0.005036510	150%
2008/09	0.004848070	150%
2009/10	0.005085650	150%
2010/11	0.005015000	150%
2011/12	0.005271760	150%
2012/13	0.005341860	150%
2013/14	0.005696090	150%

Council marginally reduced the vacant land differential from 160% to 150% in 2007/08. The change reflected in the graph below recognised that in previous years the substantial increase in overall property value increases was attributable to land value increases.

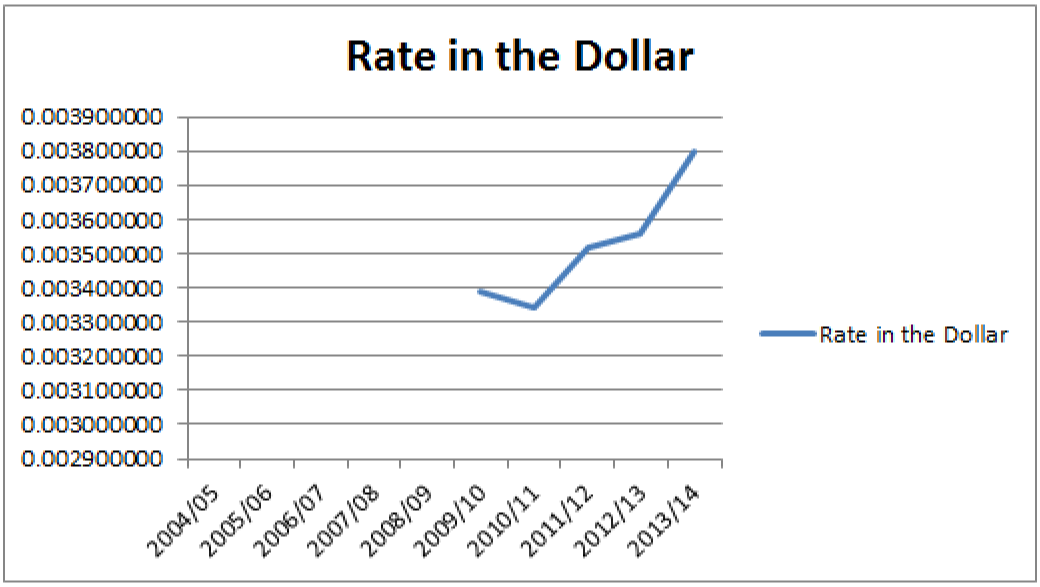


5.1.2.1.6 *Vacant Land – Restricted Use Rates*

Details of the Vacant Land Restricted differential rate in the dollar and the ratio comparison to the General rate are included in the table below:

Year	Rate in the Dollar	Ratio to General rate
2004/05	0.000000000	0%
2005/06	0.000000000	0%
2006/07	0.000000000	0%
2007/08	0.000000000	0%
2008/09	0.000000000	0%
2009/10	0.003390430	100%
2010/11	0.003343330	100%
2011/12	0.003514510	100%
2012/13	0.003561240	100%
2013/14	0.003797390	100%

Council introduced a new differential classification in 2009/10 for vacant land where residential development was not allowed due to planning restrictions (otherwise they would have continued to incur the 150% vacant land differential rate). The rate in the dollar changed proportionately exactly as it did for Residential rates.

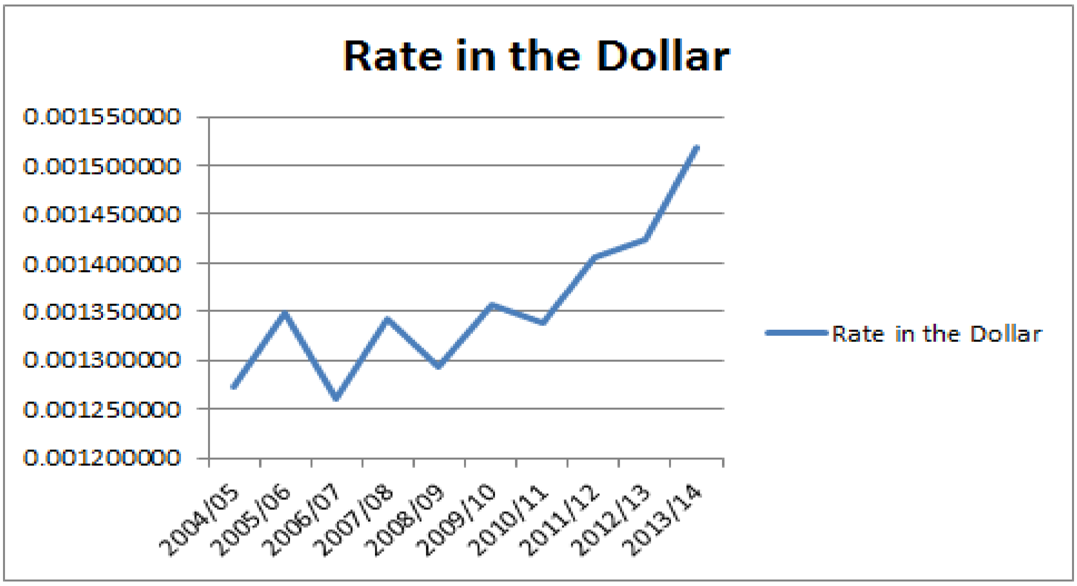


5.1.2.1.7 Cultural and Recreational Land Rates

Details of the Cultural and Recreational Land differential rate in the dollar and the ratio comparison to the General rate are included in the table below:

Year	Rate in the Dollar	Ratio to General rate
2004/05	0.001273244	40%
2005/06	0.001348940	40%
2006/07	0.001261030	40%
2007/08	0.001343070	40%
2008/09	0.001292820	40%
2009/10	0.001356170	40%
2010/11	0.001337330	40%
2011/12	0.001405800	40%
2012/13	0.001424500	40%
2013/14	0.001518960	40%

The rate in the dollar increases for Cultural and Recreational Rates changed proportionately exactly as it did for Residential rates (and Commercial, Industrial and Farm land categories).



Details of each differential rate in the dollar, the ratio to the Residential differential rate, the number and percentage of assessments for 2013-2014 are included in the table below:

Differential Category	Cents in /$ CIV 2013/14	Ratio to Residential Rate	Assessments 2013/14	% of Assessments
Residential	0.00379739	100%	12,089	63%
Commercial	0.00379739	100%	791	4%
Industrial	0.00379739	100%	150	1%
Farm Land	0.00341765	90%	4,000	21%
Vacant Land	0.00569609	150%	1,821	10%
Vacant Land Restricted Use	0.00379739	100%	177	1%
Cultural & Recreational Land	0.00151896	40%	22	0%
TOTAL			**19,050**	**100%**

Differential Category	Assessments 2013/14	CIV 2013/14 $	%of CIV	Differential Revenue 2013/14 $	% of Differential Rate Revenue
Residential	12,089	3,283,928,000	48%	12,470,363	50%
Commercial	791	305,695,000	5%	1,160,844	5%
Industrial	150	105,517,000	2%	400,689	2%
Farm Land	4,000	2,837,080,500	42%	9,696,157	39%
Vacant Land	1,821	227,810,000	3%	1,297,626	5%
Vacant Land Restricted Use	177	11,564,000	0%	43,913	0%
Cultural & Recreational Land	22	8,255,000	0%	12,539	0%
TOTAL	**19,050**	**6,779,849,500**	**100%**	**25,082,131**	**100%**

5.1.3 Municipal Charge

The Municipal Charge is a flat, identical charge that can be used to offset some of the 'administrative costs' of the Council. The legislation is not definitive on what comprises 'administrative costs'.

Council is able to levy a Municipal Charge on each rateable property within the municipality with the exception of farms where a single Municipal Charge is payable on multiple assessments operated as part of a single farm enterprise.

The maximum Municipal Charge that can be levied equals 20 per cent of the revenue raised from general rates and the Municipal Charge divided by the number of chargeable properties. Historically, South Gippsland has levied the Municipal Charge at the maximum 20 per cent of the total rates revenue. The strategic intent was to provide a financial benefit to farming properties.

The Municipal Charge ($343.65 in 2013/14) is applicable to all rateable properties with the exception of Farms where a single Municipal Charge is payable on multiple assessments operated as part of a single farm enterprise. Farmers who own a number of rateable properties that form part of a single farming enterprise can make application to Council to not pay multiple Municipal Charges. This strategically benefits single farming enterprises consisting of a number of properties because they only receive one Municipal Charge

The Municipal Charge is regressive, which means that as the value of properties decrease, the Municipal Charge increases as a percentage of that value. As a result, the rate burden is reduced on higher valued properties. Conversely, lower valued properties pick up the financial burden.

Strategically in past years this would mean that lower valued vacant land picked up more of the rate burden. This further complemented the strategy of imposing higher differential rates that were applied to vacant properties.

The effect for Residential, Commercial and Industrial properties is not as general as there is usually greater diversity in the range of property values. It can be argued, however, that overall the Municipal Charge has an individualised impact for properties within a property class.

It is acknowledged that at best, the Municipal Charge can be considered a partial targeted rating instrument focusing on some Farms and Vacant properties. It is not a targeted rating instrument like a differential rate and the use of differential rates is considered to be a more transparent and accurate means of achieving rate outcomes for certain classes of property.

Year	Municipal Charge	Increase $		Increase %	Municipal Charge Revenue % of Total Rates and Charges Revenue	Maximun allowed
2004/05	200.05				20%	20%
2005/06	212.45	$	12.40	6%	20%	20%
2006/07	227.80	$	15.35	7%	20%	20%
2007/08	241.75	$	13.95	6%	20%	20%
2008/09	256.00	$	14.25	6%	20%	20%
2009/10	273.10	$	17.10	7%	20%	20%
2010/11	284.00	$	10.90	4%	20%	20%
2011/12	300.40	$	16.40	6%	20%	20%
2012/13	320.50	$	20.10	7%	20%	20%
2013/14	343.65	$	23.15	7%	20%	20%

5.1.4 Service Rates and Charges

Kerbside waste collection services are provided in urban areas and rural areas abutting the sealed road network. The charge for a waste/recyclables service is compulsory for all residential properties in urban areas (whether or not the service is used) and optional in some rural areas.

The waste service charges account for the various direct and indirect costs associated with the provision of waste management services; including a recycling service, waste disposal and management, rehabilitation, a portion of capital and operational costs of the Council's landfills in accordance with Environment Protection Authority License, as well as street litter bins and street sweeping.

The costs of street litter bins and street sweeping were included in the waste charges from 2009/10. Waste Service charges in recent years have also been expanded to Venus Bay and Walkerville.

Type of Charge	Per Rateable Property 2012/13 $	Revenue 2013/14 $
Waste Services Charge A - Kerbside garbage & recycling collection service charge – Residential (120 litre weekly garbage/240 litre fortnightly recycling), street sweeping and litter bins.	213.20	1,806,870
Waste Services Charge B - Kerbside recycling only collection service charge - Commercial (2 x 240 litre fortnightly recycling service only), street sweeping and litter bins.	213.20	8,102

Type of Charge	Per Rateable Property 2012/13 $	Revenue 2013/14 $
Waste Services Charge C - Kerbside garbage & recycling collection service – Commercial premises only (240 litre weekly garbage / 240 litre fortnightly recycling), street sweeping and litter bins.	309.10	64,909
Waste Services Charge D – Kerbside garbage & recycling collection service - Sandy Point (120 litre weekly garbage/240 litre fortnightly recycling, plus 3 additional recycling collections during Summer), street sweeping and litter bins.	221.20	146,652
Waste Services Charge E – Kerbside garbage & recycling collection service - Waratah Bay (120 litre weekly garbage/240 litre fortnightly recycling, plus 3 additional recycling collections during Summer), street sweeping and litter bins.	256.70	26,184
Waste Services Charge G – Kerbside garbage & recycling collection service – Venus Bay (120 litre weekly garbage / 240 litre fortnightly recycling) for 6 months from November to April.	130.55	2,350
Waste Services Charge H – Kerbside garbage & recycling collection service – Venus Bay (120 litre weekly garbage / 240 litre fortnightly recycling) for 12 months.	232.95	21,897
Waste Services Charge J – Kerbside garbage & recycling collection service – Walkerville (120 litre weekly garbage / 240 litre fortnightly recycling) for 6 months from November to April.	151.85	0
Waste Services Charge K – Kerbside garbage & recycling collection service Walkerville (120 litre weekly garbage / 240 litre fortnightly recycling) for 12 months.	268.65	806

5.1.5 Special Rates and Charges

Council has the power to levy a special rate or special charge, or a combination of special rates and charges to fund service provision. A special rate or charge can be used if Council deems that a special benefit is received by those properties on which it is levied. Council need not necessarily use property value as the basis for levying a special rate or charge.

Special Rates and/or Special Charges have been used by councils to fund things like:

- The construction of a road;
- The construction of a footpath; and
- The provision of drainage infrastructure.

Special rates and charges are specifically designed to address the benefit principle. They are targeted rating tools in the sense that they focus on ratepayers who receive an exclusive or additional benefit to other ratepayers from particular council expenditures. Certain council expenses and the beneficiaries of those expenses are required to be identified clearly and the directness of the benefit needs to be demonstrable.

The fundamental difference in using differential rates or special rates and charges in addressing the benefit principle is magnitude. A special rate or charge is generally applied to a single narrow group of expenditures. Generally the areas chosen for their use can be seen clearly to benefit some ratepayers.

Currently there are no special rates or charges currently in operation within the South Gippsland Shire Council. However, there is a road works scheduled for 2014/15 and 2022/23 in the Long Term Financial Plan that is proposed to be partially funded by Special Rates.

5.1.6 Rebates and Concessions

A rebate is a mechanism through which a targeted group receives a discount or concession to achieve certain objectives.

Holders of a Centrelink or Veterans Affairs Pension Concession card, or a Veteran Affairs Gold card which stipulates TPI or War Widow (excludes Health Care and DVA all conditions, POW, EDA and dependent cards) may claim a rebate on their sole or principle place of residence.

When the pension rebate scheme was first introduced the objective was to provide the majority of pensioners a 50% rebate for their rates and charges. Over the years however, the increase in rebates payable did not match the increases in rates and charges payable. In fact from 1983 to 2003 the rebate stayed at $135.00. From 2004/05 onwards the rebate has been increased each year.

Year	Pension rebate
2003/04	50% of rates and charges payable to a maximum of $135.00
2004/05	50% of rates and charges payable to a maximum of $160.00
2005/06	50% of rates and charges payable to a maximum of $163.60
2006/07	50% of rates and charges payable to a maximum of $168.00
2007/08	50% of rates and charges payable to a maximum of $172.90
2008/09	50% of rates and charges payable to a maximum of $178.60
2009/10	50% of rates and charges payable to a maximum of $184.30
2010/11	50% of rates and charges payable to a maximum of $187.60
2011/12	50% of rates and charges payable to a maximum of $193.40
2012/13	50% of rates and charges payable to a maximum of $198.00

Year	Pension rebate
2013/14	50% of rates and charges payable to a maximum of $202.90

For 2013-2014 the government-funded indexed rebate is provided under the Municipal Rates Concession Scheme. It increased from $198.00 to $202.90 for 2013-2014 or 50% of the rate payment, whichever is the less.

Upon initial application, an ongoing eligibility is maintained unless rejected by Centrelink or Department of Veteran Affairs during verification procedures. Upon acceptance of pensioner status the concession or rebate is deducted from the rate account before payment by the ratepayer. Council is reimbursed pension rebates by the State Government.

Applications for the concession must be lodged by 30 June in each year.

In 2010 the MAV undertook a statistical analysis of figures across Victoria that showed on average 2.25% of household expenditure was spent on Council rates. The study indicated that households occupied by aged pensioners are likely to have a higher rate burden. The study recommended that the MAV should call for an increase in the State Government pension rate rebate.

$202.90 equates to 13.3% of the average residential rate issued in 2013/14.

Council does not and has not provided any rebates or concessions over and above what is currently provided by the government. The State Government has historically accepted the need to redistribute income taxes in support of utility concessions and rebates to low income households. For Council to make further concessions would mean a redistribution of the rate burden with other ratepayers bearing the cost by way of higher rates and charges.

5.1.7 Debt Recovery

Council makes every effort to contact ratepayers at their correct address but it is the ratepayers' responsibility to properly advise Council of their contact details. Amendments to the Local Government Act require both the vendor and buyer of property, or their agents (e.g. solicitors), to notify Council by way of notices of disposal and acquisition respectively.

In the event that an account becomes overdue, Council has established procedures for the issue of an overdue final notice which may include interest pre calculated to a forward payment date.

In the event that the account remains unpaid, Council may take legal action without further notice to recover any overdue amount. All fees and court costs are recoverable from the ratepayer.

If an amount payable by way of rates in respect to land has been in arrears for three years or more, Council may sell the land in accordance with the Local Government Act – Section 181.

Council has Debt Recovery on Unpaid Rates and Charges Policy that provides quantitative guidelines to the general statutory obligations of the Local Government Act in relation to property debt recovery. The policy objective is to ensure that rate and other overdue property debts are recovered in a timely and fair manner. The policy also makes reference to the Rates and Charges Hardship Policy to defer rates and charges for a period of time.

The table below shows outstanding rates at 30 June 2013 financial year by property type.

Property Type	Balance of rates as % of rates raised
Residential	4%
Farm	3%
Commercial	5%
Industrial	1%
Residential Vacant land	9%
Industrial Vacant land	5%
Commercial Vacant land	0%
Restricted Use Vacant land	28%

5.1.8 Deferrals and Waivers

Councils also have the power to defer payment or waive part or all of any rate or charge. Council has a Rates and Charges Hardship Policy, its objective is to provide rate relief to rate and special charge scheme payers who are suffering from financial hardship and need assistance.

The policy permits ratepayers to submit applications for rates and charges, or part thereof to be deferred, although rates and charges will continue to be levied.

The policy does not waive rates, municipal charges or service charges, as the value of each property provides the owner with a potential source of funds if liquidated. Interest and legal cost waivers can be given under certain circumstances.

5.1.9 Payment Cycles

The Local Government Act requires that councils 'must allow' payment in four instalments and 'may allow' payment in one lump sum. The Minister fixes the dates of instalments and lump sum by notice published in the Government Gazette. The dates are set state wide with no variability between councils.

There are only two options available under the *Local Government Act (1989)* for Council to set payment dates. The first is an option of a lump sum payment (which by law is set on 15 February of each year) and the second is a mandatory instalment approach where payments are required at the end of September, November, February and May. Under this second approach, residents can elect to advance pay instalments at any point in order to opt out of the instalment dates.

Council currently allows payment in lump sum in addition to the compulsory instalment method of paying rates and charges.

Of the 19,050 rate accounts issued in 2013/14, some 7,799 (41%) used the 4-instalment option. A move to four instalments only would bring cash flow forward and increase interest on cash held in investments. However, this is offset by increased postage and collection fees.

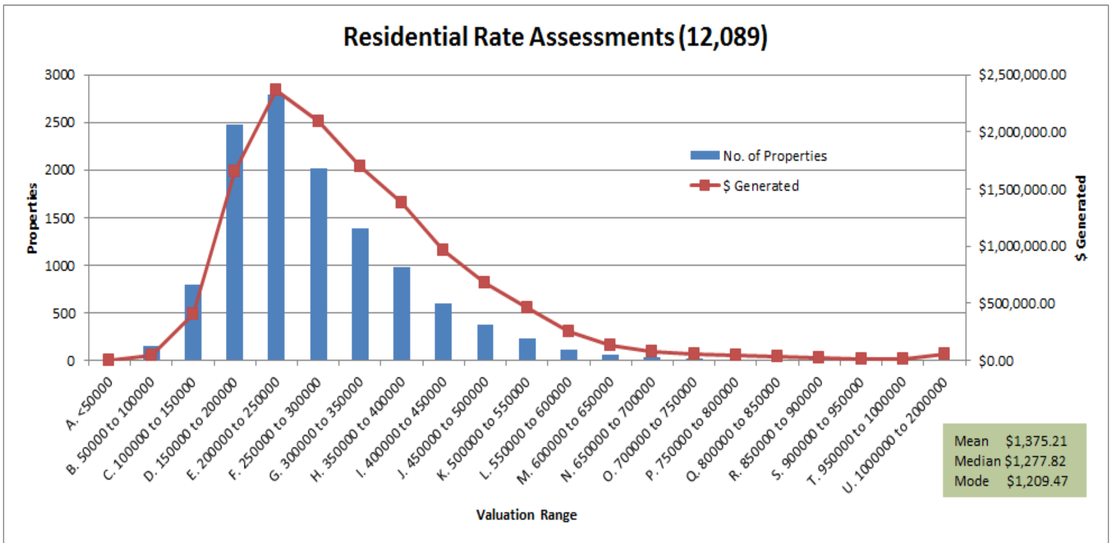
A further option is available, upon request, for ratepayers suffering from financial difficulties to spread the cost of their rates over the year. Council allows 10 monthly payments in these circumstances.

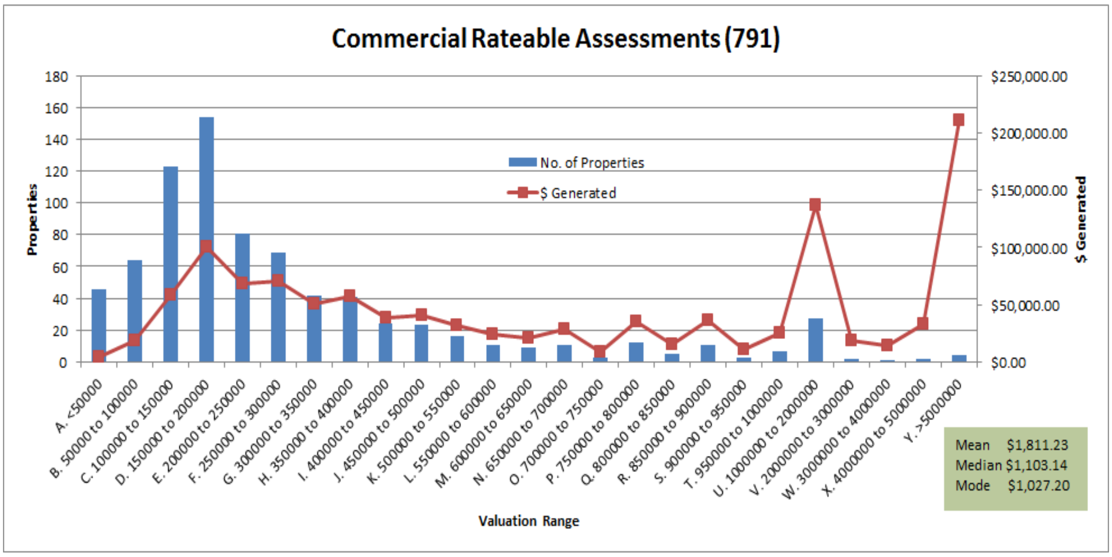
The table below shows the number of rate payers by property type for 2013/14 comparing payments by instalments to lump sum payers.

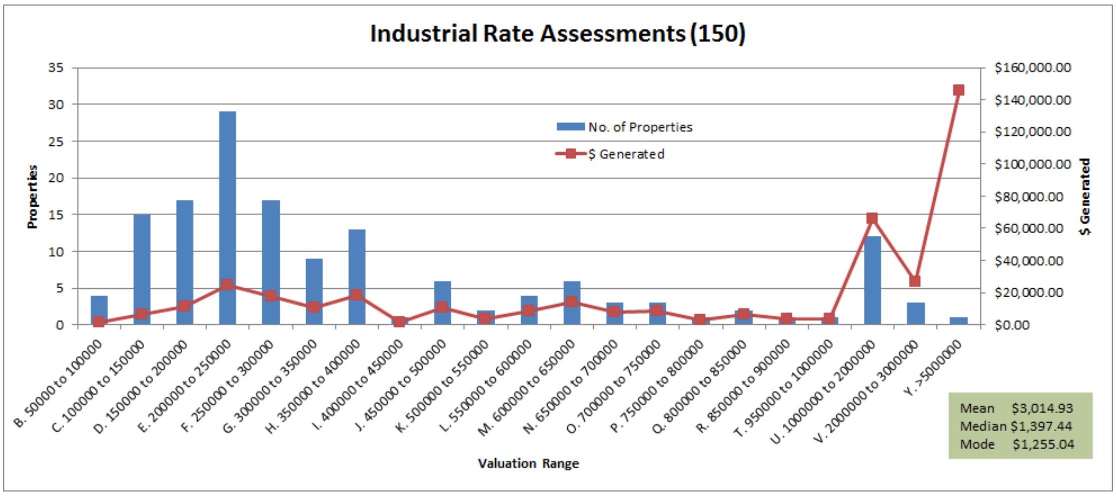
Differential Category	Assessments 2013/14	Ratepayers on instalments	% of Assessments	Ratepayers on Lump Sum	% of Assessments
Residential	12,089	5,649	47%	6,440	53%
Commercial	791	259	33%	532	67%
Industrial	150	86	57%	64	43%
Farm Land	4,000	1,022	26%	2,978	74%
Vacant Land	1,821	718	39%	1,103	61%
Vacant Land Restricted Use	177	54	31%	123	69%
Cultural & Recreational land	22	11	50%	11	50%
TOTAL	**19,050**	**7,799**		**11,251**	

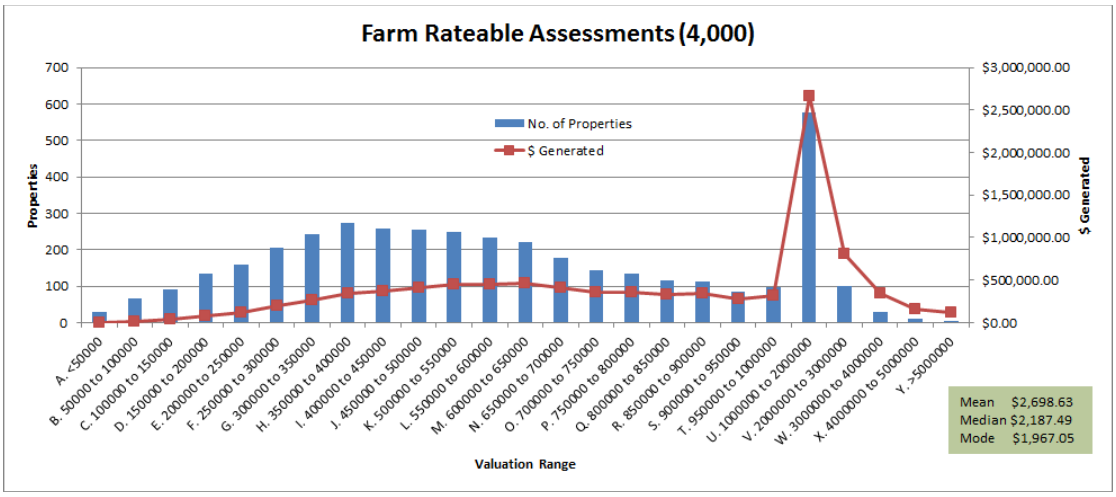
5.1.10 Number of Assessments for 2013/14 Rating Differentials

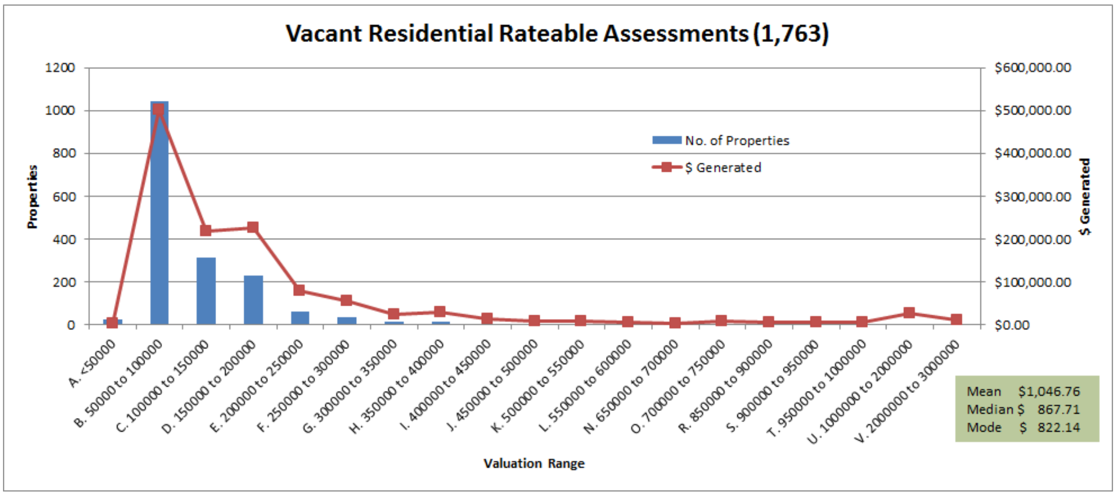
The graphs following provide a snapshot of the details for 2013/14 relating to the number of assessments per Capital Improved Value (CIV) range and rate revenue generated for each current rating differential.

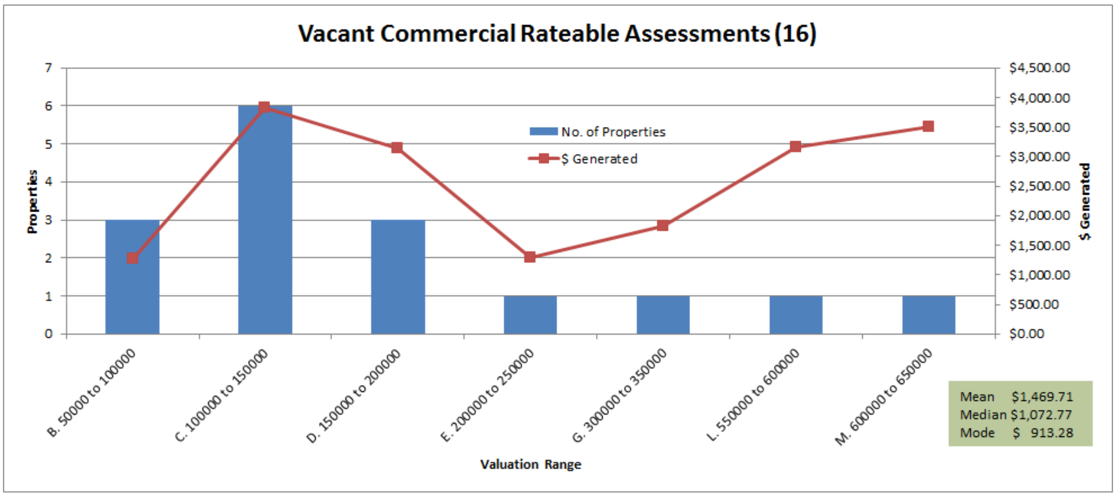


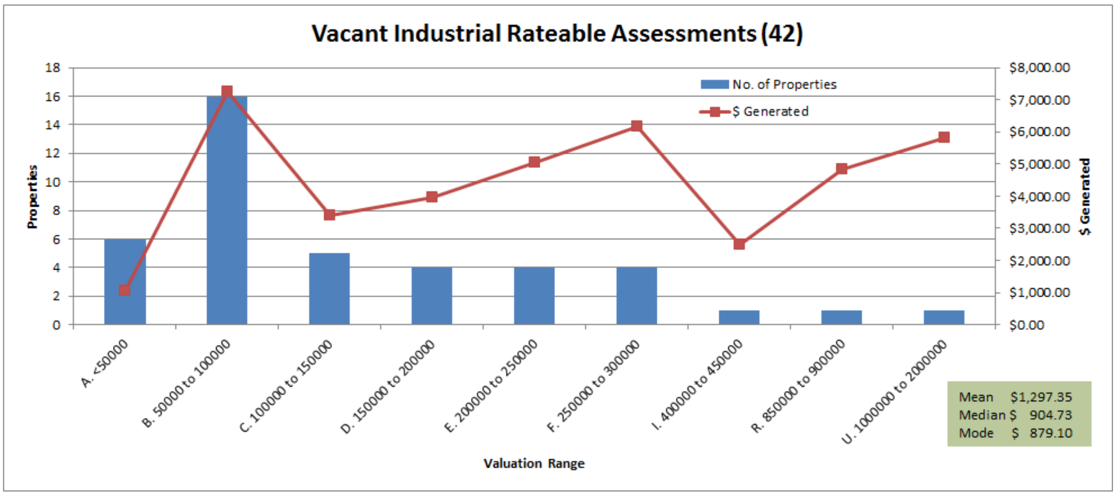

Commercial Rateable Assessments (791)
No. of Properties
$ Generated
Properties
$ Generated
Valuation Range
Mean $1,811.23
Median $1,103.14
Mode $1,027.20

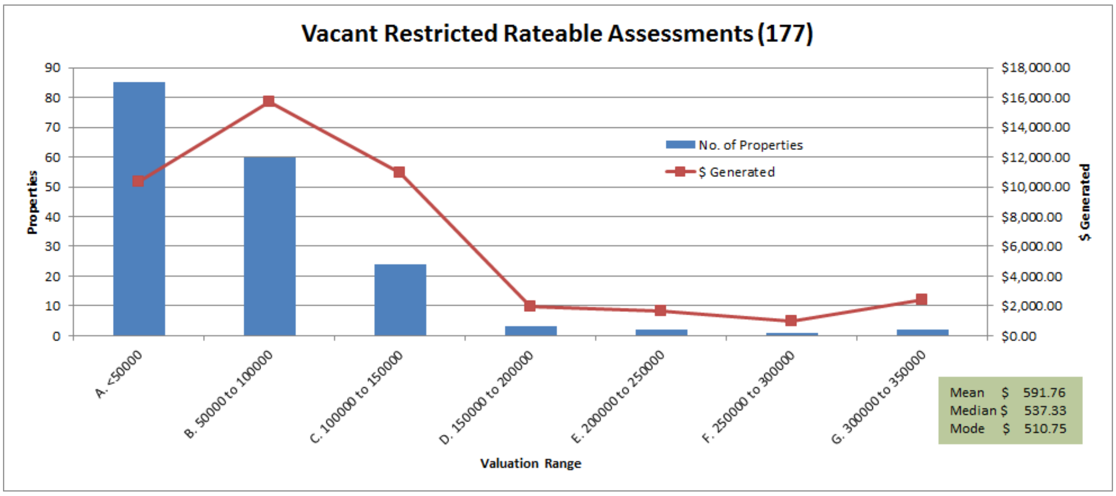

Industrial Rate Assessments (150)
No. of Properties
$ Generated
Properties
$ Generated
Valuation Range
Mean $3,014.93
Median $1,397.44
Mode $1,255.04

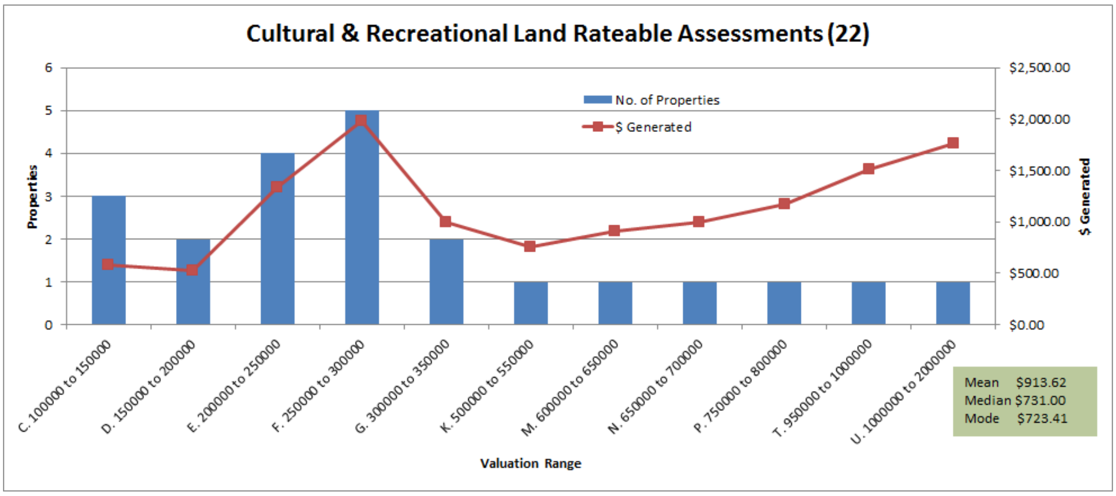

Farm Rateable Assessments (4,000)
No. of Properties
$ Generated
Properties
$ Generated
Valuation Range
Mean $2,698.63
Median $2,187.49
Mode $1,967.05


Vacant Residential Rateable Assessments (1,763)
Properties
$ Generated
No. of Properties
$ Generated
Valuation Range
A. <50000
B. 50000 to 100000
C. 100000 to 150000
D. 150000 to 200000
E. 200000 to 250000
F. 250000 to 300000
G. 300000 to 350000
H. 350000 to 400000
I. 400000 to 450000
J. 450000 to 500000
K. 500000 to 550000
L. 550000 to 600000
N. 650000 to 700000
O. 700000 to 750000
R. 850000 to 900000
S. 900000 to 950000
T. 950000 to 1000000
U. 1000000 to 2000000
V. 2000000 to 3000000
Mean $1,046.76
Median $ 867.71
Mode $ 822.14

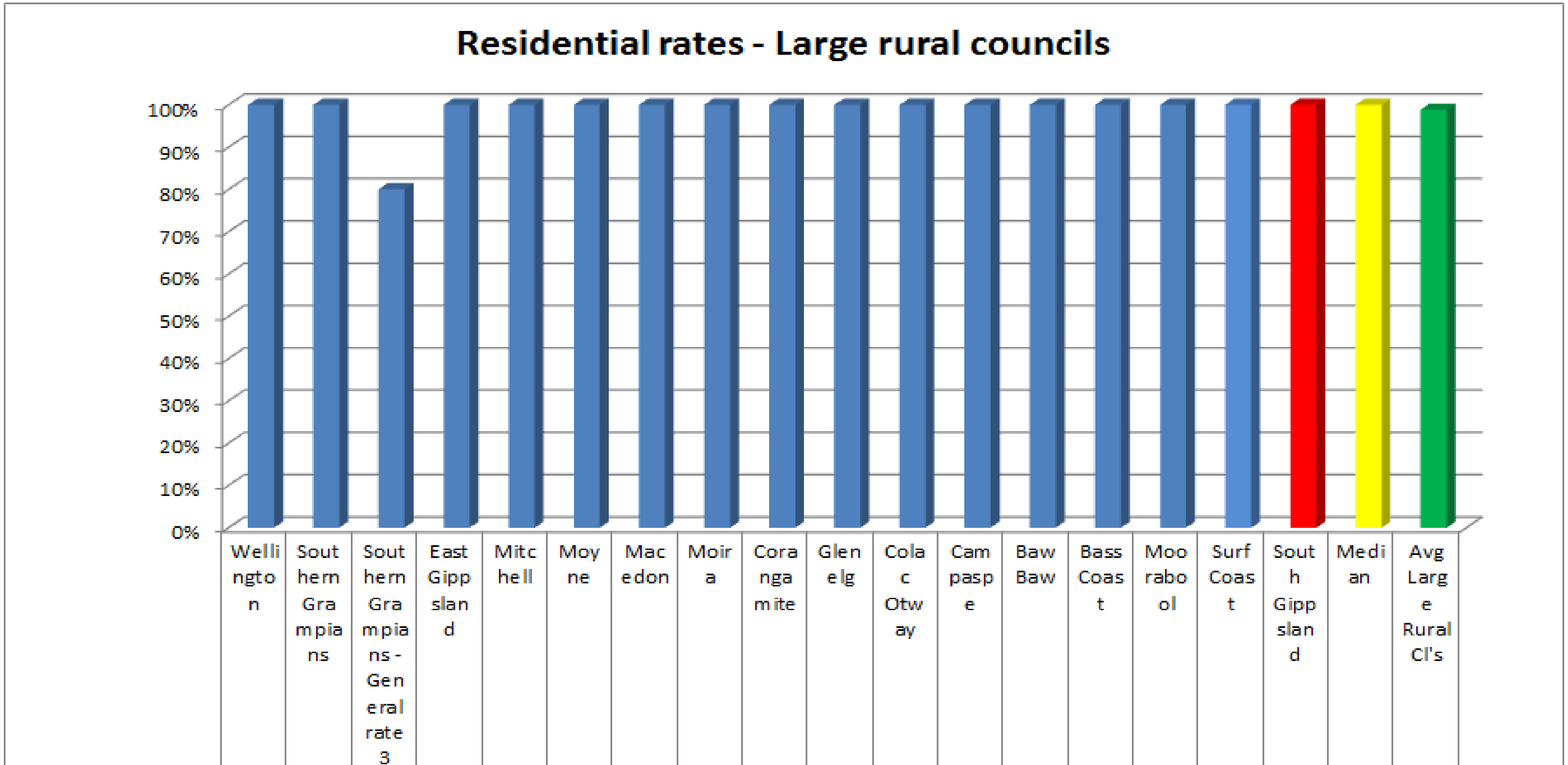

Vacant Commercial Rateable Assessments (16)
Properties
$ Generated
No. of Properties
$ Generated
Valuation Range
B. 50000 to 100000
C. 100000 to 150000
D. 150000 to 200000
E. 200000 to 250000
G. 300000 to 350000
L. 550000 to 600000
M. 600000 to 650000
Mean $1,469.71
Median $1,072.77
Mode $ 913.28


Vacant Industrial Rateable Assessments (42)
Properties
$ Generated
No. of Properties
$ Generated
Valuation Range
A. <50000
B. 50000 to 100000
C. 100000 to 150000
D. 150000 to 200000
E. 200000 to 250000
F. 250000 to 300000
I. 400000 to 450000
R. 850000 to 900000
U. 1000000 to 2000000
Mean $1,297.35
Median $ 904.73
Mode $ 879.10

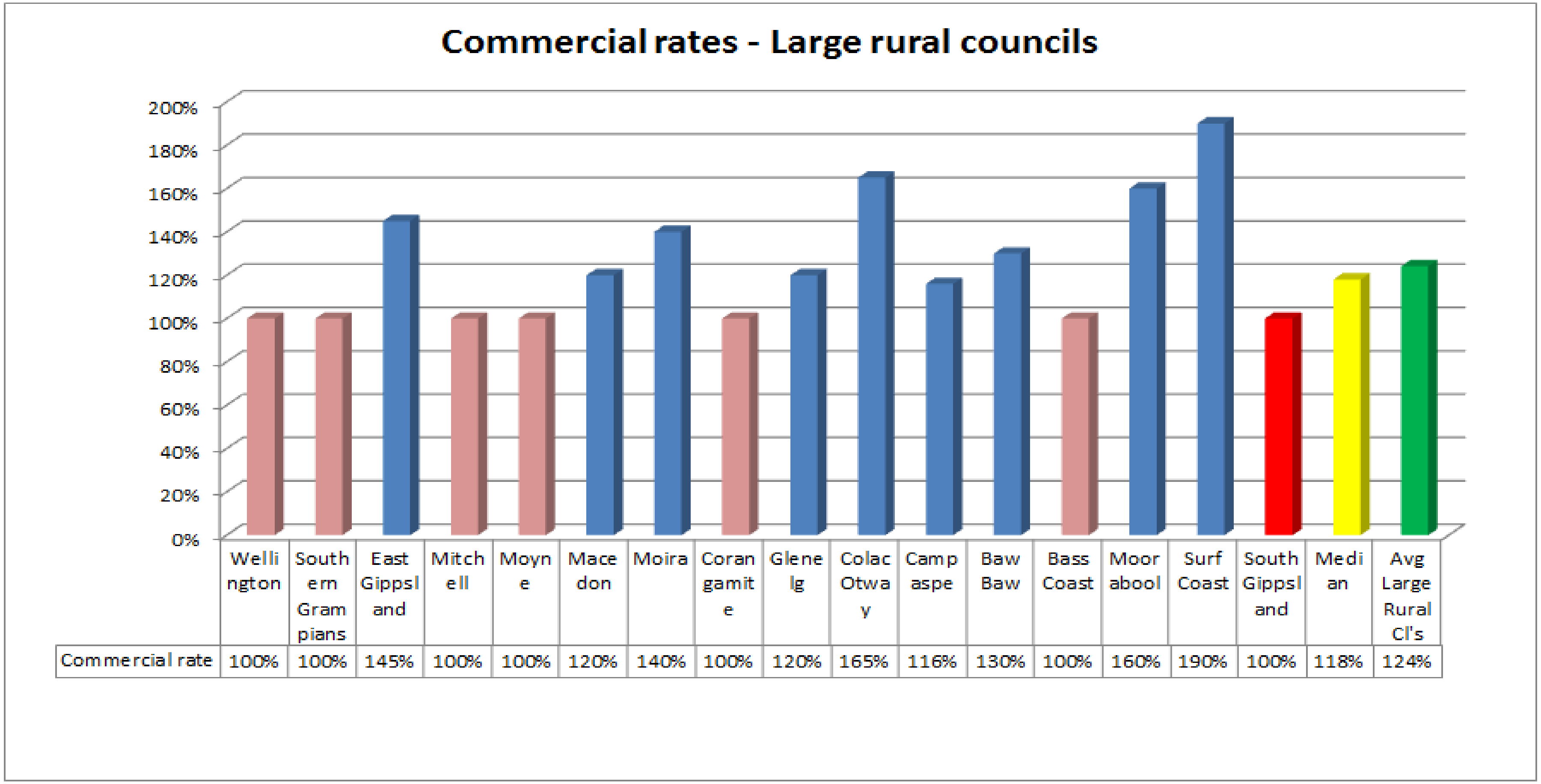

Vacant Restricted Rateable Assessments (177)
No. of Properties
$ Generated
Properties
$ Generated
Valuation Range
A. <50000
B. 50000 to 100000
C. 100000 to 150000
D. 150000 to 200000
E. 200000 to 250000
F. 250000 to 300000
G. 300000 to 350000
Mean $ 591.76
Median $ 537.33
Mode $ 510.75


Cultural & Recreational Land Rateable Assessments (22)
No. of Properties
$ Generated
Properties
$ Generated
Valuation Range
C. 100000 to 150000
D. 150000 to 200000
E. 200000 to 250000
F. 250000 to 300000
G. 300000 to 350000
K. 500000 to 550000
M. 600000 to 650000
N. 650000 to 700000
P. 750000 to 800000
T. 950000 to 1000000
U. 1000000 to 2000000
Mean $913.62
Median $731.00
Mode $723.41

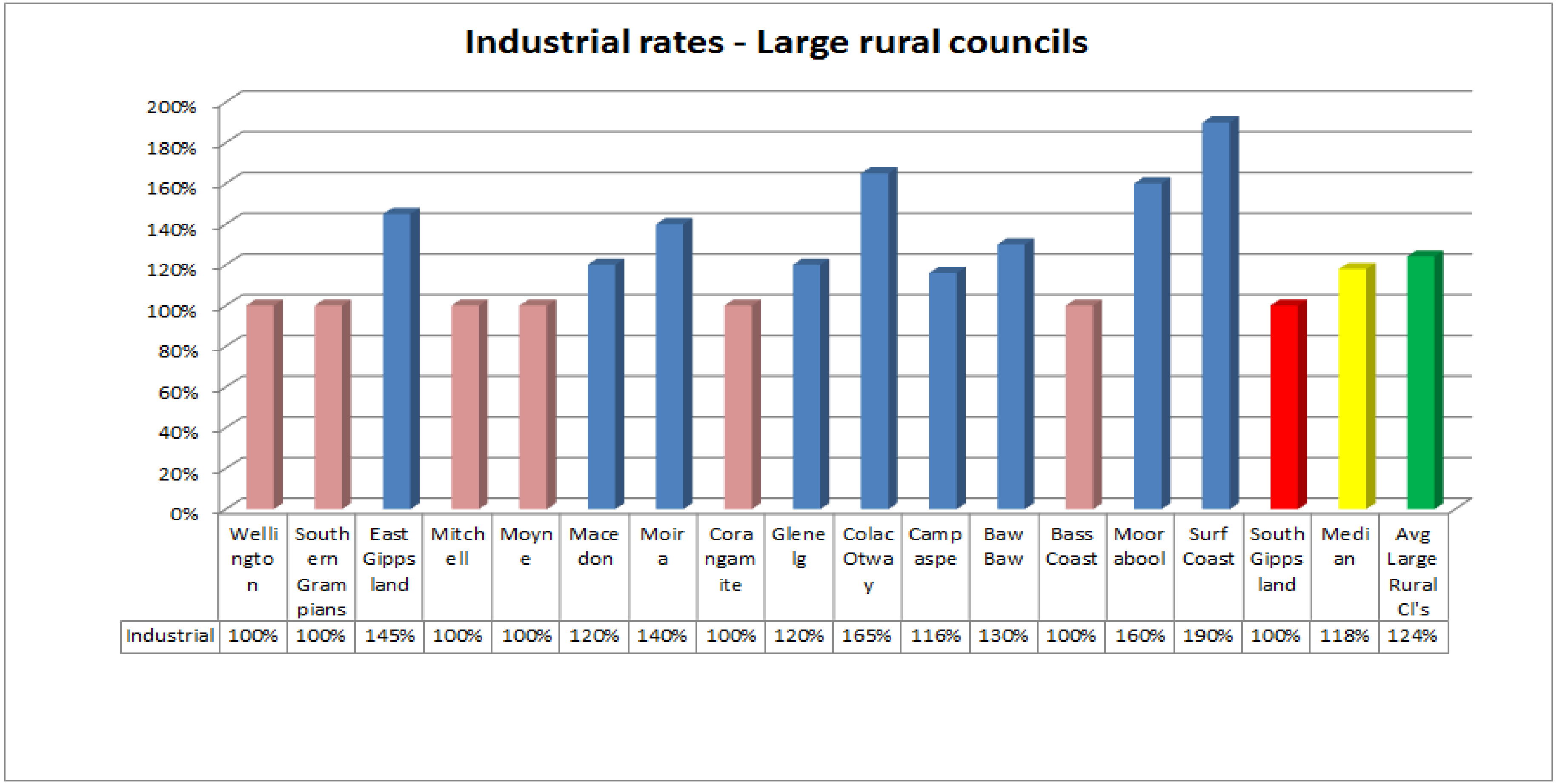
6 Large Council – Comparative data



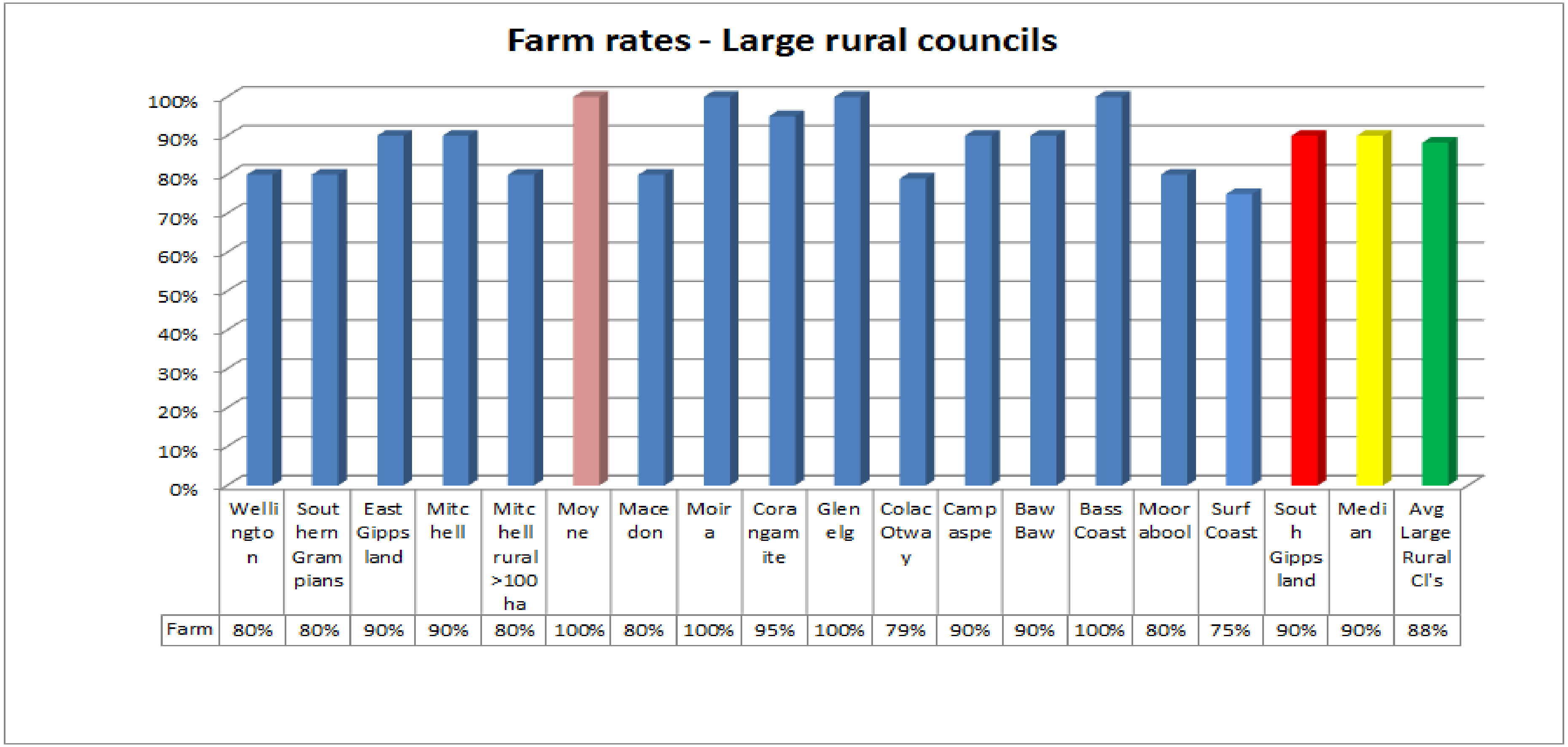
	Wellington	Southern Grampians	Southern Grampians - General rate 3	East Gippsland	Mitchell	Moyne	Macedon	Moira	Corangamite	Glenelg	Colac Otway	Campaspe	Baw Baw	Bass Coast	Moorabool	Surf Coast	South Gippsland	Median	Avg Large Rural Cl's
Residential rate	100%	100%	80%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	99%



Some councils do not have a specific property type for commercial properties. By default the differential rates for these properties would be 100% of the General Rate (Pink bars in the above chart).

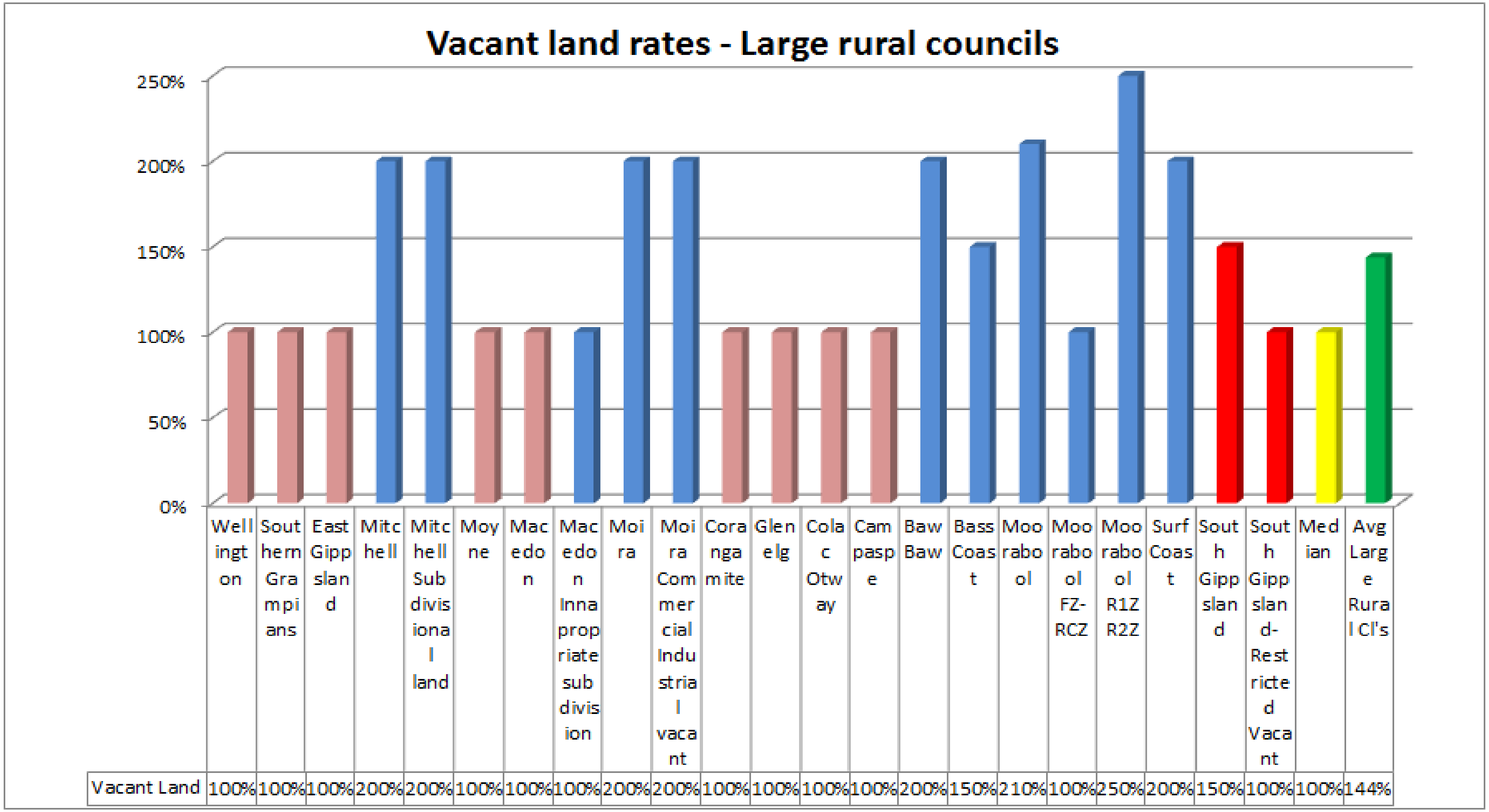


Some councils do not have a specific property type for industrial properties. By default the differential rates for these properties would be 100% of the General Rate (Pink bars in the above chart).

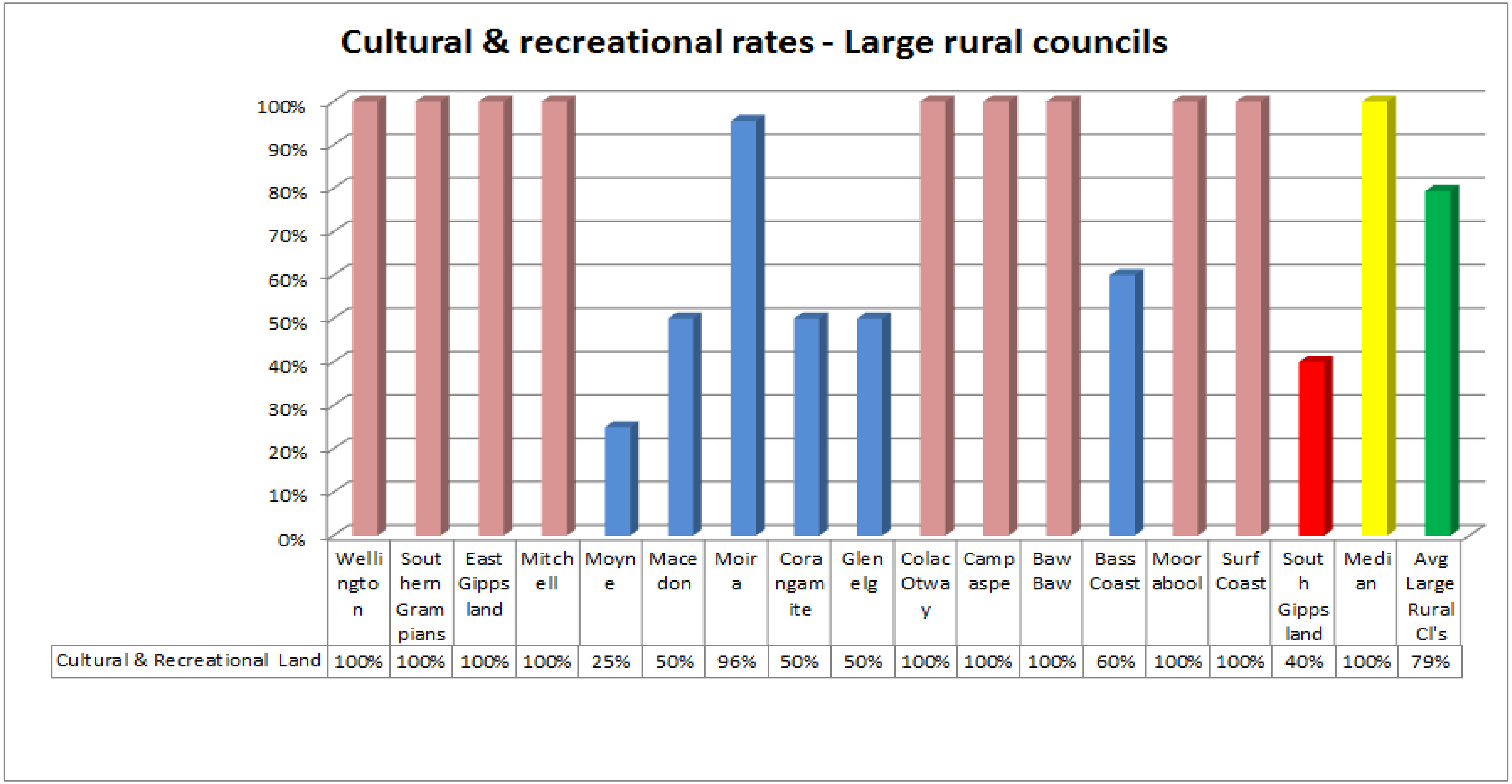


Moyne does not have a specific property type for farm properties. By default the differential rates for these properties would be 100% of the General Rate (Pink bar in the above chart).

Glenelg has a 30% Primary Reduction Land Rebate for eligible properties, Mitchell a 10% Land Management Rebate for eligible properties and Bass Coast a $10.28 per hectare Land Management Rebate for eligible properties.

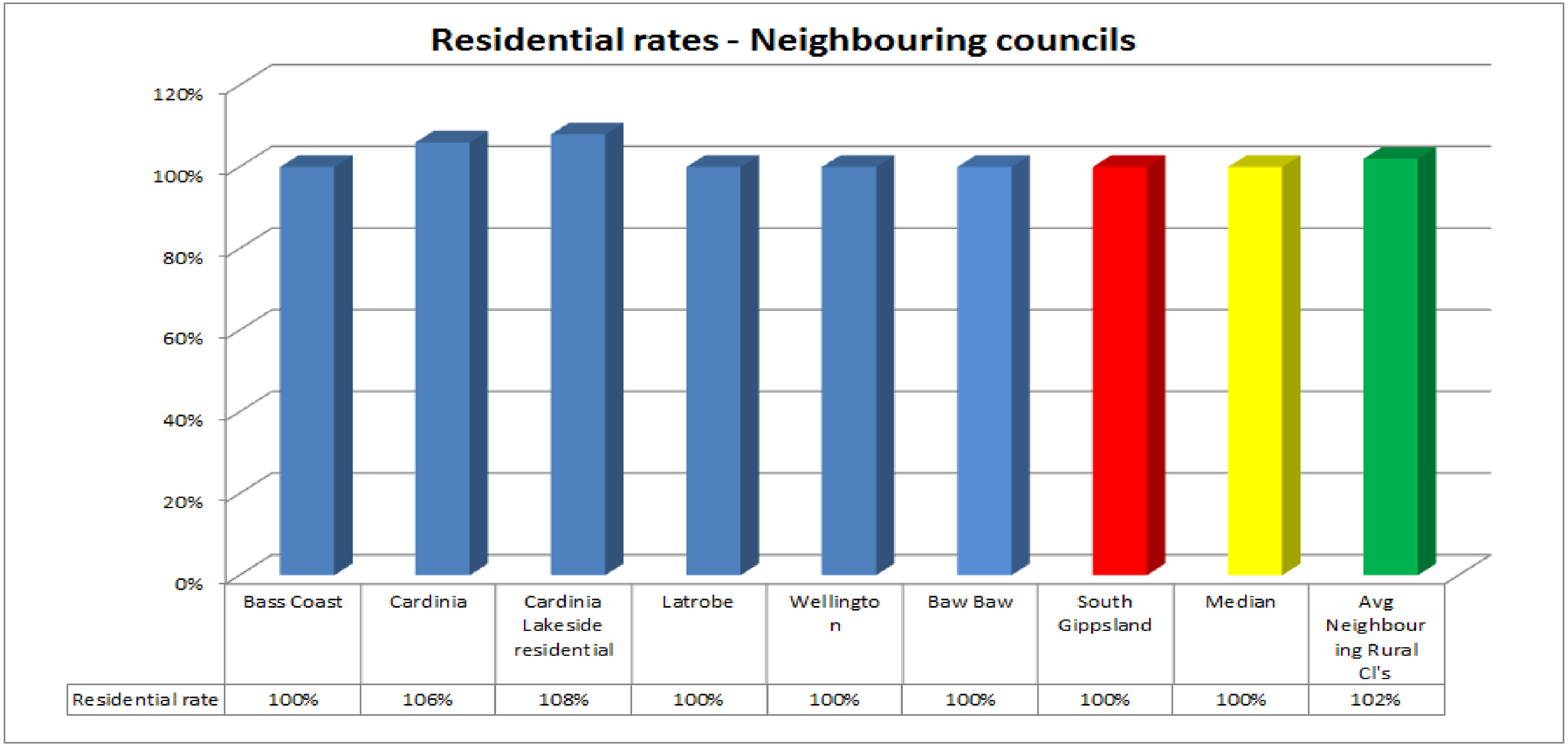


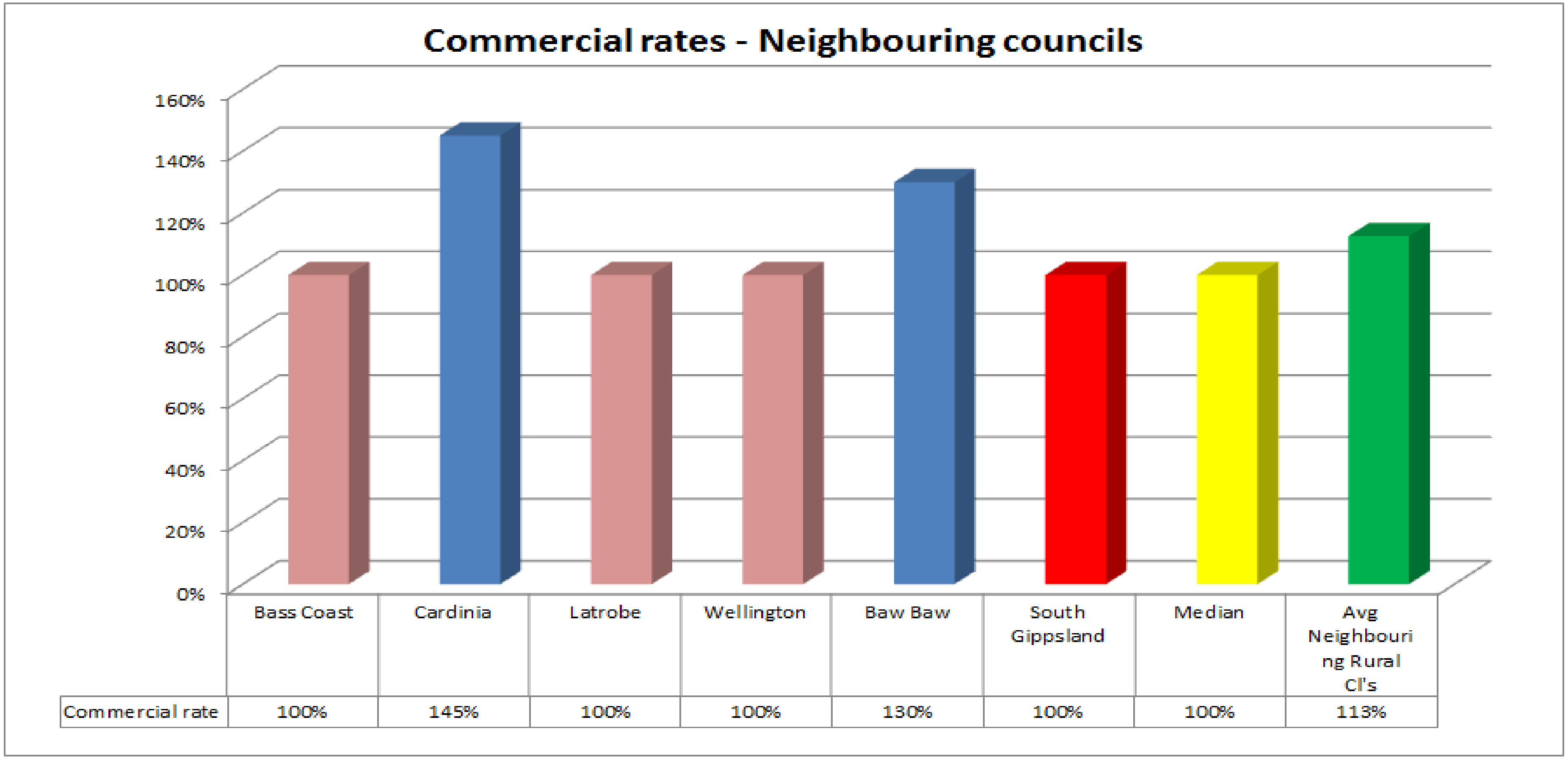
Some councils do not have a specific property type for vacant land. By default the differential rates for these properties would be 100% of the General Rate (Pink bars in the above chart).



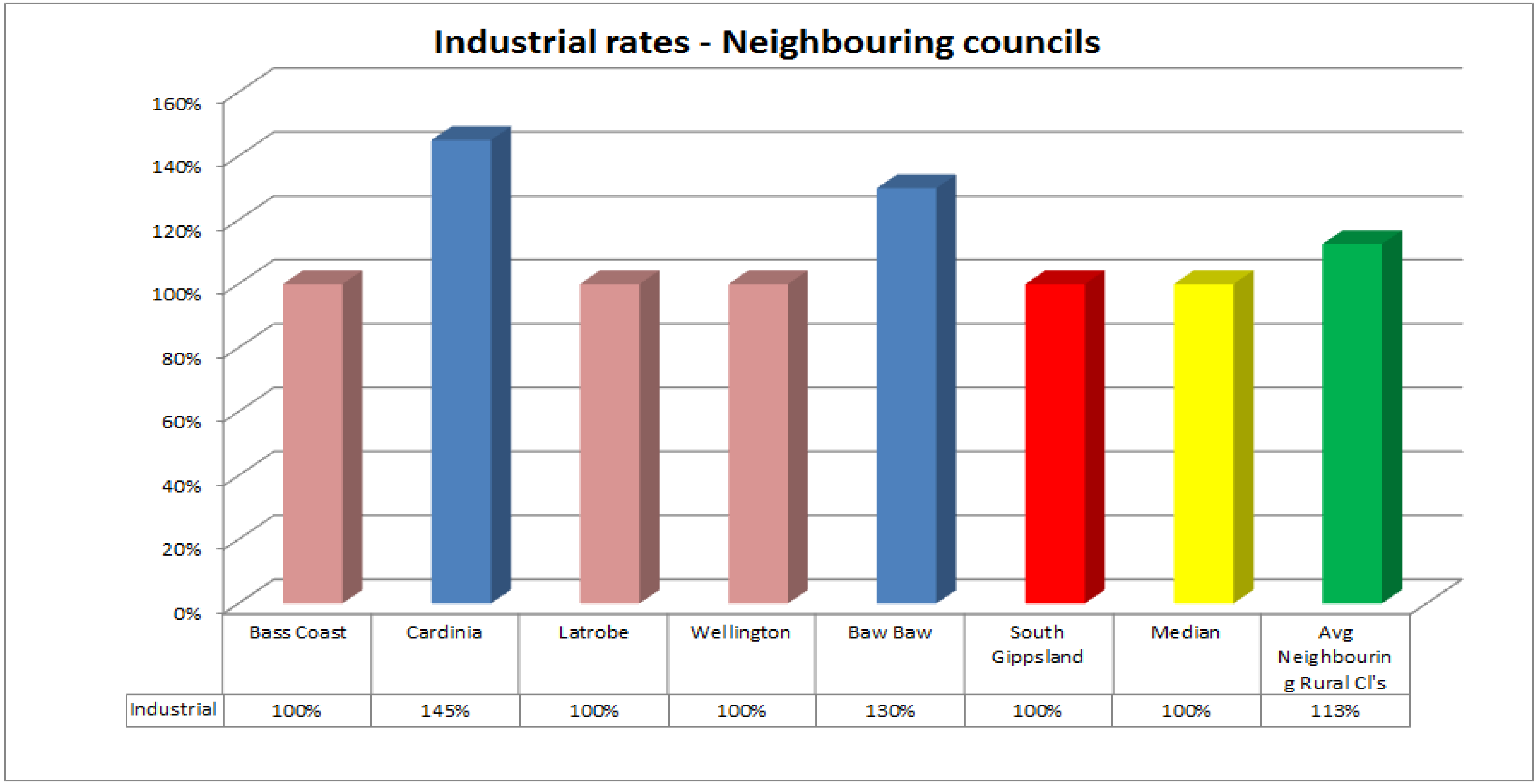
Some councils do not have a specific property type for cultural & recreational properties. By default the differential rates for these properties would be 100% of the General Rate (Pink bars in the above chart).

7 Neighbouring Council – Comparative data

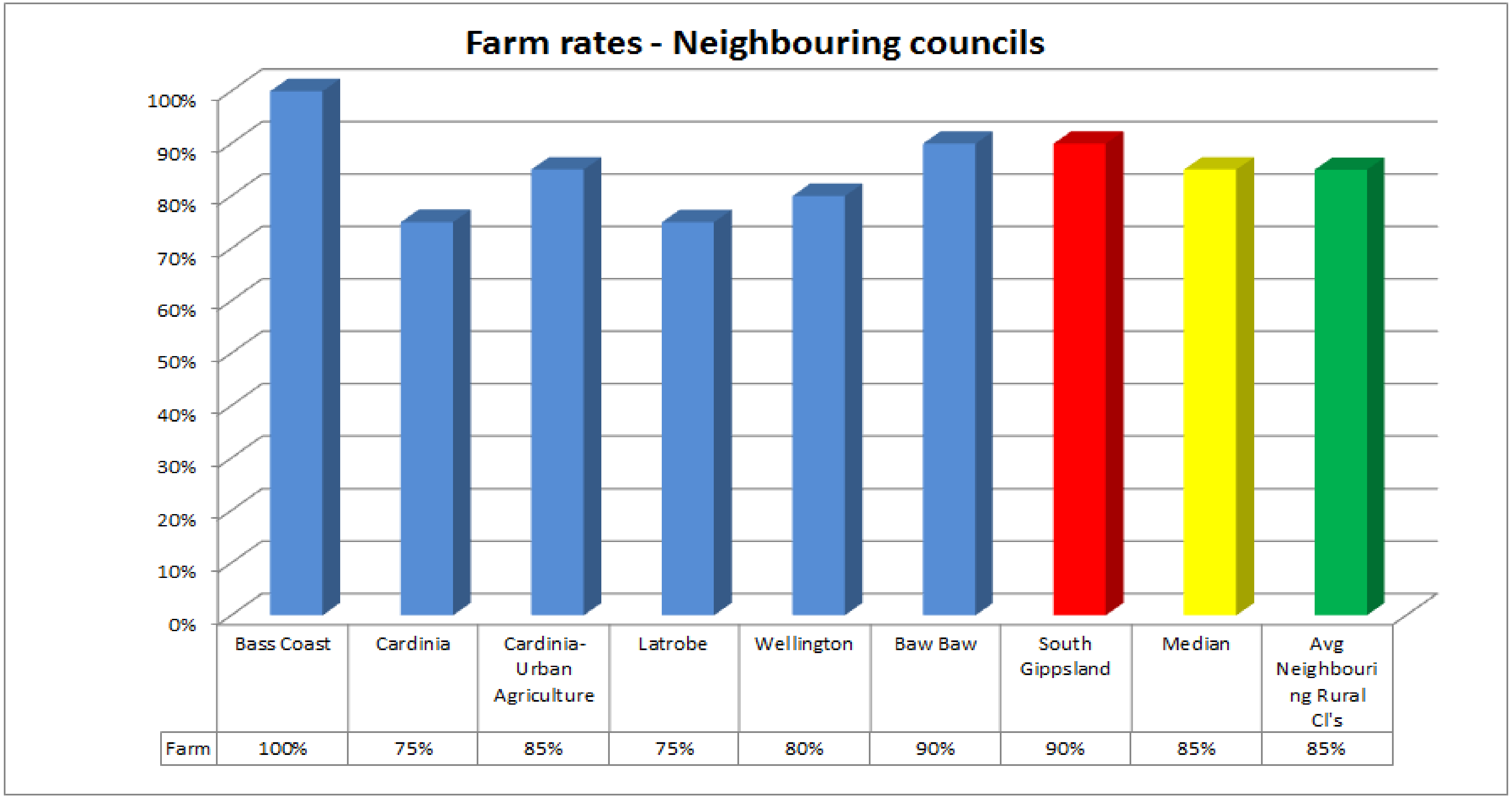




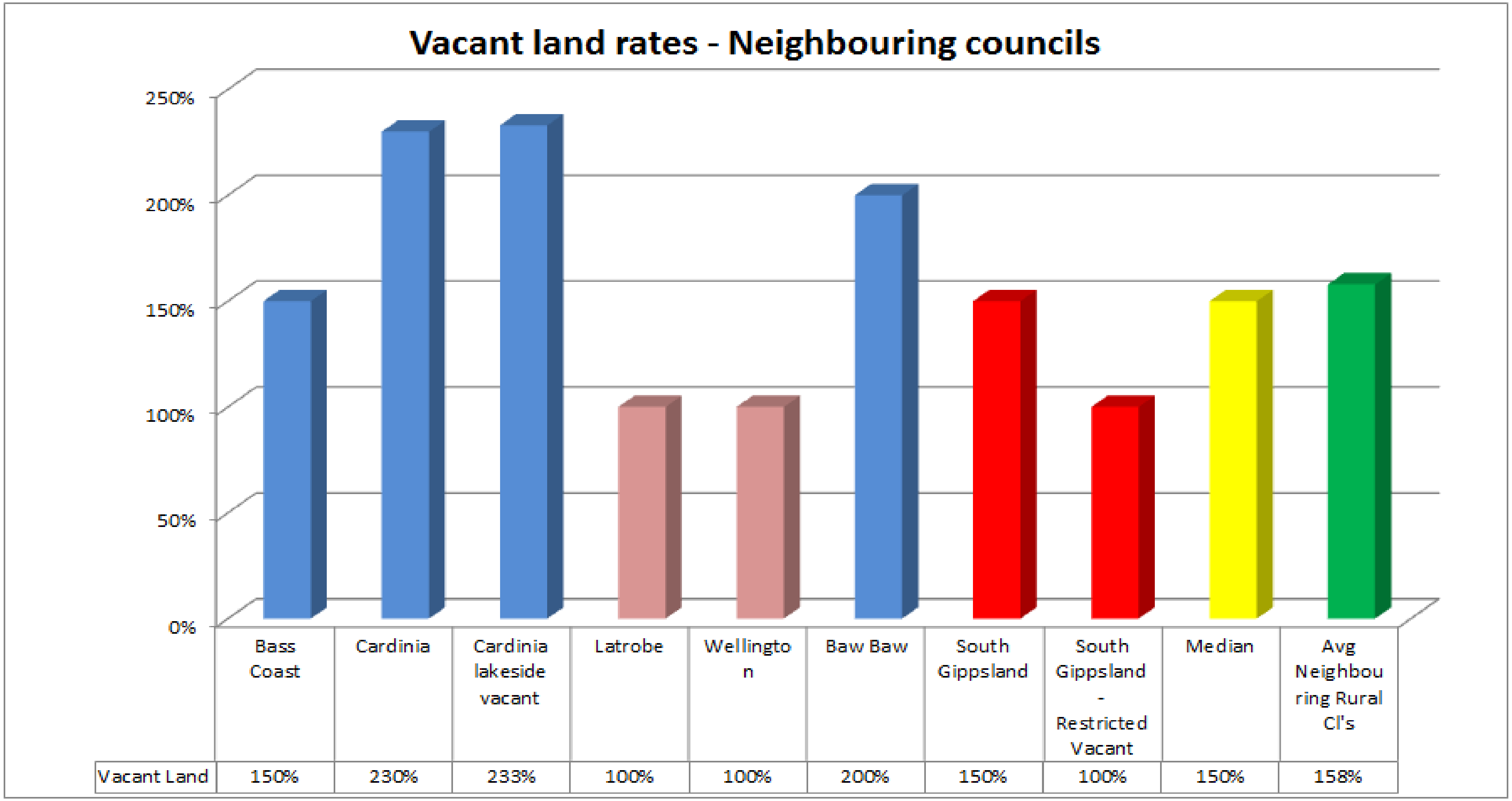
Some councils do not have a specific property type for commercial properties. By default the differential rates for these properties would be 100% of the General Rate (Pink bars in the above chart).



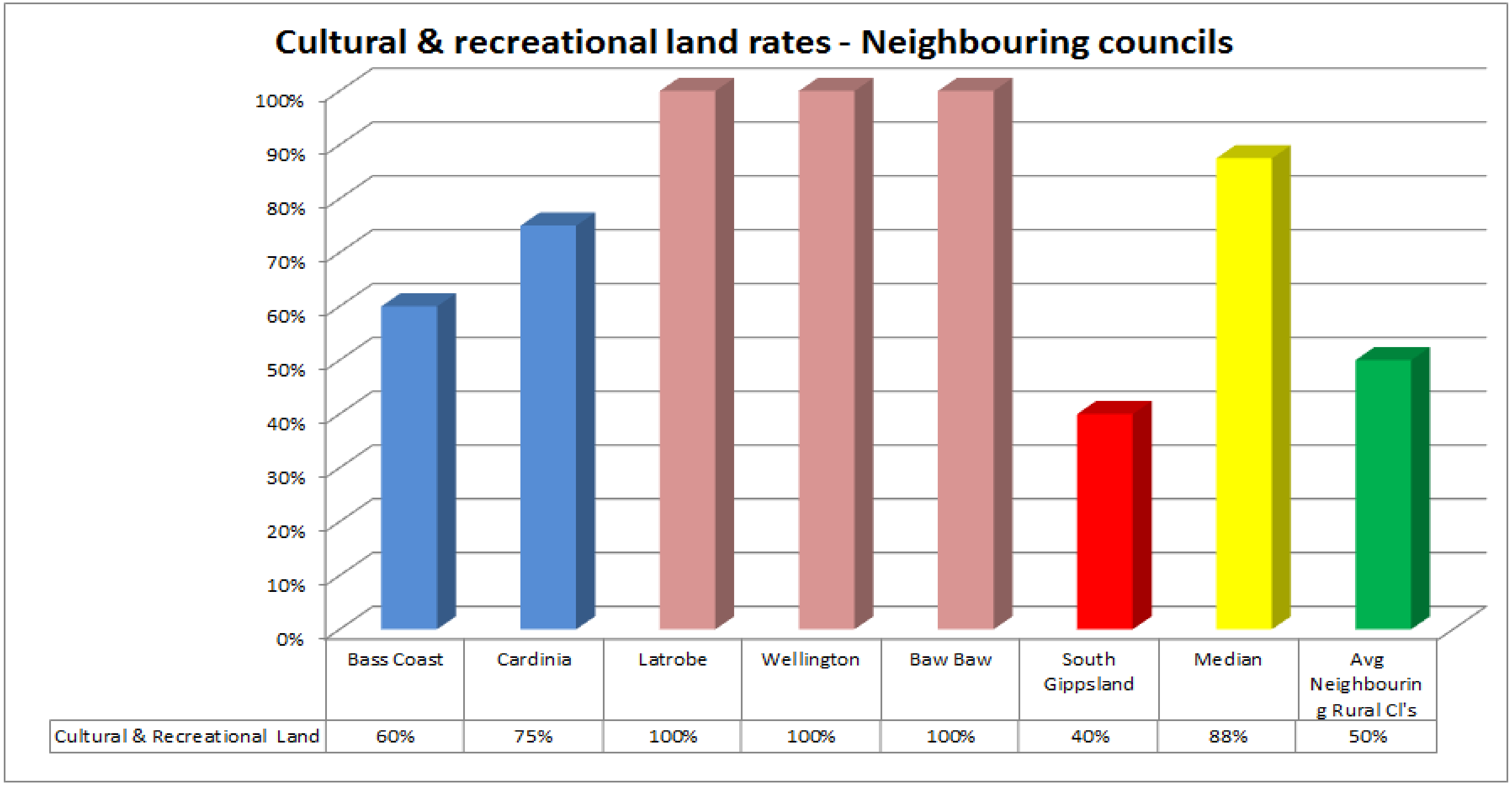
Some councils do not have a specific property type for industrial properties. By default the differential rates for these properties would be 100% of the General Rate (Pink bars in the above chart).



Bass Coast has a $10.28 per hectare Land Management Rebate for eligible properties.



Some councils do not have a specific property type for vacant land. By default the differential rates for these properties would be 100% of the General Rate (Pink bars in the above chart).



Some councils do not have a specific property type for cultural & recreational properties. By default the differential rates for these properties would be 100% of the General Rate (Pink bars in the above chart).

8 Key Elements

Council has considered the Rating Strategy Steering Committee recommendations and the comments received from the community in response to the Committee's recommendations as well as the public submissions made to the Proposed Rating Strategy 2014-2018. Outlined below are the key elements that form Council's Rating Strategy 2014-2018.

8.1 Property Valuation Basis

Council has adopted the Capital Improved Value (CIV) as the value to which the rate in the dollar will be assessed. Being a measure of the realisable value of the property, the CIV most closely reflects wealth and affordability and this is more equitable to rate residents on the total value of their property rather than the notional value of their land alone. In addition, differential rating, combined with CIV allows greater flexibility in developing rating outcomes enabling Council to pursue its particular objectives. 74 of 79 Victorian councils use CIV and the remaining five councils use Net Annual Value.

Key Element 1

That the basis of valuation for rating purposes be Capital Improved Value.

Achievement of Council Objectives

Capital Improved Value is the only available valuation methodology that will assist Council to achieve its Council Plan and strategic objectives, while ensuring equity in the distribution of the rate burden on its ratepayers based on the total value of their property.

8.2 Differential Rate

If a uniform rate was applied to simplify the rating system, rather than applying the existing differentials, the Cultural and Recreational Land rating type would increase by 150%, Farm Land by 11% and Vacant Land would reduce by 33%.

Differential Category	Cents in /$ CIV 2013/14	Rate in the $ standardised	Change %
Residential	0.00379739	0.00379739	0%
Commercial	0.00379739	0.00379739	0%
Industrial	0.00379739	0.00379739	0%
Farm Land	0.00341765	0.00379739	11%
Vacant Land	0.00569609	0.00379739	-33%
Vacant Land Restricted Use	0.00379739	0.00379739	0%
Cultural & Recreational land	0.00151896	0.00379739	150%

Having different differentials allows Council to address equity, capacity to pay, incentive and comparative rate principles to achieve a more equitable distribution of the rate burden across the community.

Key Element 2

That South Gippsland Shire Council continues to apply differentials as its rating system.

Achievement of Council Objectives

Utilising differentials for specific categories of land provides flexibility for Council to achieve its Council Plan and strategic objectives, and adequately address equity, capacity to pay, incentive and comparative rate principles, to ensure a more equitable distribution of the rate burden across the municipality.

8.3 User Benefits

The 'User-Benefits' principle is basically the opposite of the property wealth principle, which is what the current rate system is based on. Under the 'user-benefits' principle, ratepayers will pay for a specific service and receive a benefit which approximates the amount paid.

Rates and Municipal Charges like other taxes traditionally have been seen to be non-reciprocal in the sense that the Shire is not required to give approximately equal value in exchange directly to ratepayers. Rates and charges are raised in order to provide for existing services and sustaining infrastructure assets throughout the Shire as a whole.

Current legislation enables certain services that are readily identifiable to specific ratepayers to be identified as a special rate or charge on a rate notice. Currently, the vast majority of councils that provide garbage services to some of their residents apply the 'user-benefits' principle and have a separate garbage charge for those properties. Similarly, councils tend to implement special rates to certain residents to fund specific infrastructure works such as roads, footpaths and drainage schemes.

With the exception of identifying and applying garbage charges and special charge schemes for infrastructure works, the actual process of trying to identify particular benefits to users is both subjective and complex. Evaluating the relative benefits received by various classes of property raises many practical difficulties, in particular, trying to trace quantifiable consumption / benefits to particular types of properties.

Key Element 3

That 'user-benefit' principle is given relatively low weighting and consideration when setting differential rates.

Achievement of Council Objectives

Legislation enables certain services readily identifiable to specific ratepayers to be identified as a special rate or charge on a rate notice. The majority of Council services are available and used to varying extents by most ratepayers throughout the course of their lifetime. Even if all services are not used by all ratepayers, they are available to those who require them.

User benefits will be used for waste collection services and other services that can be applied to identifiable, specific rate payers.

8.4 Municipal Charge

Council is able to levy a municipal charge on each rateable property within the municipality with the exception of Farm Land where a single municipal charge is payable on multiple assessments operated as part of a single farm enterprise.

The Municipal Charge is a flat, identical charge that can be used to offset some of the 'administrative costs' of the Council. The legislation is not definitive on what comprises 'administrative costs'. The maximum municipal charge that can be levied equals 20 per cent of the revenue raised from rates and the municipal charge divided by the number of chargeable properties.

The municipal charge is regressive, which means that as the value of properties decrease, the municipal charge increases as a percentage of that value. As a result, the burden is reduced on higher valued properties. Through its effect of providing a reduction in the amount paid by higher value properties, the Municipal Charge may be seen to assist certain classes of property. There is a tendency in rural municipalities for Farm Land, as a class, to generally benefit from its application.

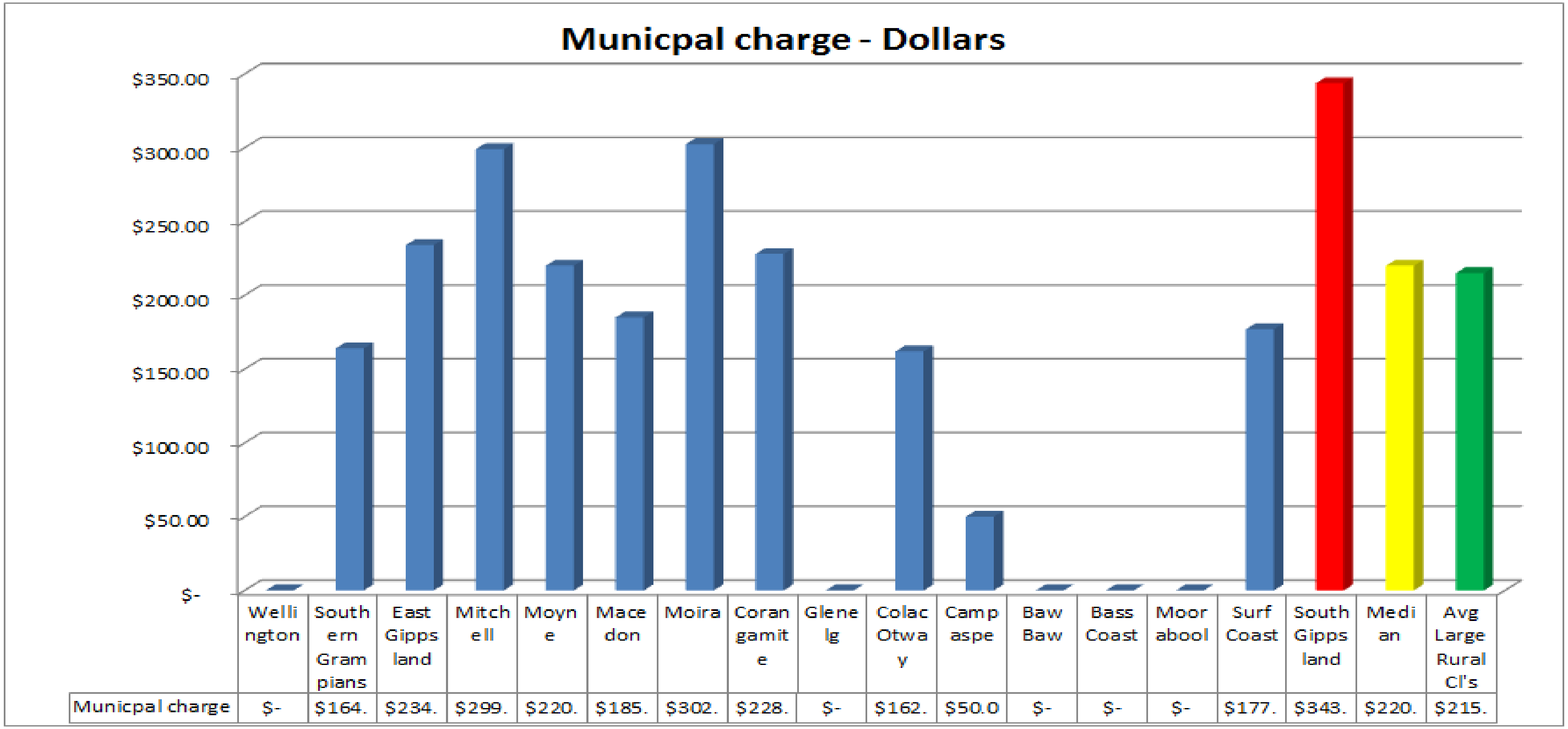
It also has the effect of increasing the charges imposed upon Vacant Land holdings that tend to be lower valued when compared with developed properties.

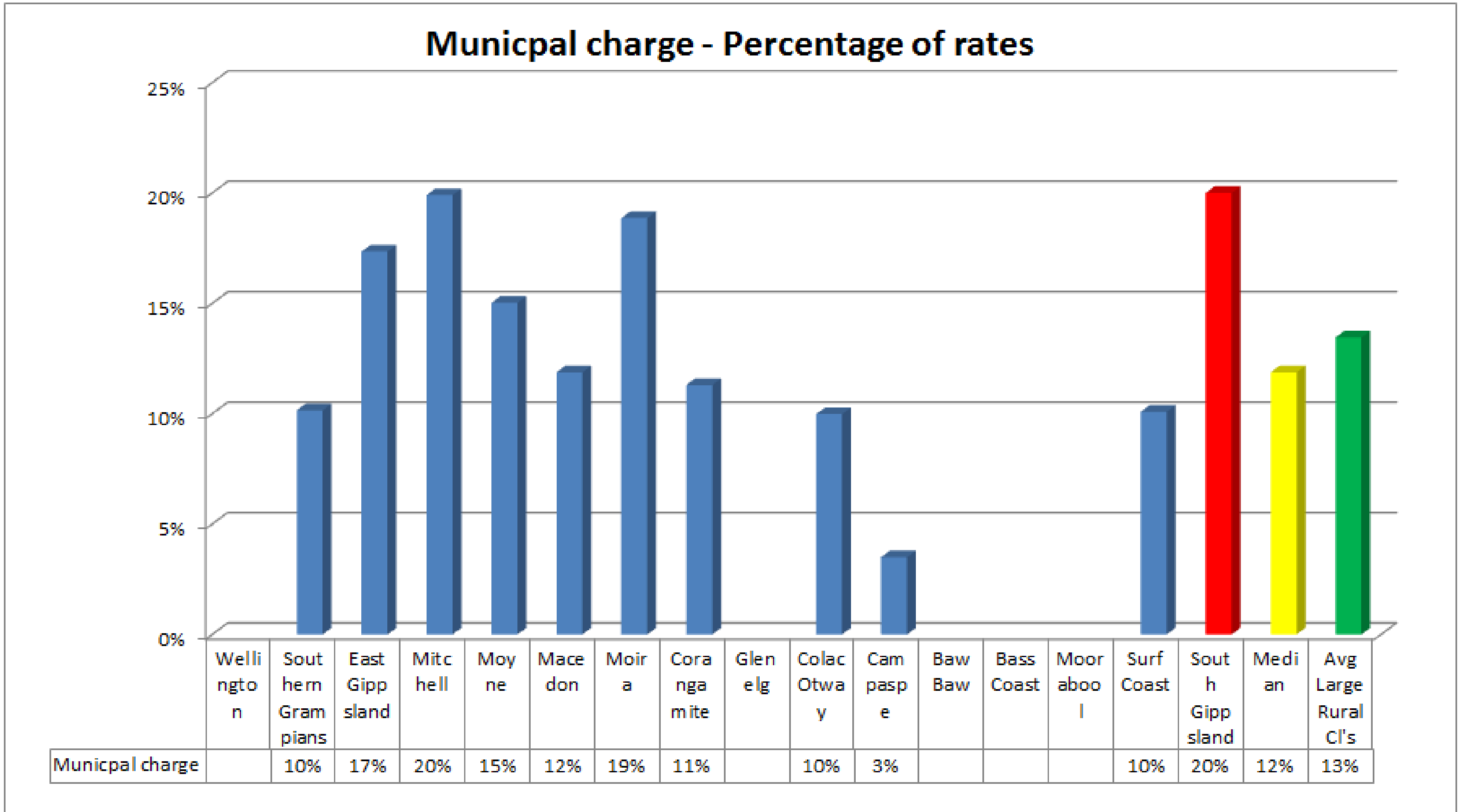
The effect for Residential, Commercial and Industrial properties is not as general as there is usually greater diversity in the range of property values. It can be argued, however, that overall, the Municipal Charge has an individualised impact for properties within a property class.

The Municipal Charge is not a targeted rating instrument like a differential rate. The use of differential rates is considered to be a more transparent and accurate means of achieving rate outcomes for certain classes of property.

The Municipal Charge enables all properties to make a standard contribution to some of the administration costs of the Council. In relation to the 2013-2014 Budget, total revenue from the Municipal Charge was $6,270,533. The Municipal Charge of $343.65 during the 2013-2014 financial year partly funded administrative costs for the areas of Governance, Executive Management, Council Operations, Finance, Information Technology, Human Resources and department management costs of $9,310,472.

The following two charts outline the Municipal Charge in dollars and in percentages applied by the various large rural Shires.


Municpal charge - Dollars
$350.00
$300.00
$250.00
$200.00
$150.00
$100.00
$50.00
$-
Wellington
Southern Grampians
East Gippsland
Mitchell
Moyne
Macedon
Moira
Corangamite
Glenelg
Colac Otway
Campaspe
Baw Baw
Bass Coast
Moorabool
Surf Coast
South Gippsland
Median
Avg Large Rural Cl's
Municpal charge
$-
$164.
$234.
$299.
$220.
$185.
$302.
$228.
$-
$162.
$50.0
$-
$-
$-
$177.
$343.
$220.
$215.



	Wellington	Southern Grampians	East Gippsland	Mitchell	Moyne	Macedon	Moira	Corangamite	Glenelg	Colac Otway	Campaspe	Baw Baw	Bass Coast	Moorabool	Surf Coast	South Gippsland	Median	Avg Large Rural Cl's
Municpal charge		10%	17%	20%	15%	12%	19%	11%		10%	3%				10%	20%	12%	13%

It was determined that the recovery of Council's administration costs be allocated by property valuation rather than as a flat fee.

It is a reasonable assumption that those living in lower valued properties are also on lower incomes and hence have less capacity to pay. For this reason, the Steering Committee recommended the abolition of the Municipal Charge. This lowers the rates for a majority of ratepayers in lower valued properties in all property categories.

There are 8,044 residential assessments with a valuation of $291,000 or below which is equal to 63% of the total number of assessments.

Removing the requirement for a Municipal Charge also simplifies Council's rating system.

The impact of removing the Municipal Charge completely in one year would have a significant financial impact on many higher valued properties. A phased approach to remove the charge over two years was considered appropriate as this would allow high valued property owners time to adjust to the change.

Key Element 4

That the municipal charge be phased out over two years, reduced from the current 20% to 10% in 2014/15 and 0% in 2015/16.

Achievement of Council Objectives

The Municipal Charge is a regressive charge. It lacks transparency in regard to the specific administrative services it covers and as a result it is frequently questioned by ratepayers. Removal of the Municipal Charge simplifies Council's rating system while more equitably distributing the administrative service costs of Council across all ratepayers. This works toward achieving Council's purpose to 'determine clear and transparent objectives for setting differential rates'.

8.5 Residential Category

Residential properties make up more than 60% of rateable properties. It is appropriate that residential properties are considered the baseline for all other property categories and have a 100% General differential rate.

This aligns with the property wealth tax principal from both a horizontal and vertical equity perspective. From a capacity to pay principle perspective, it is a reasonable assumption that generally, those living in lower rated properties are also on lower incomes and hence have less capacity to pay.

Removing the Municipal Charge removes the effect of subsidising ratepayers in higher rated properties at the expense of those in lower rated properties. Refer to 9.2.3.1 and 9.2.3.2 'Average $ Change – Residential Rate' in Section 9, for details on the impact of this change for properties in various price ranges.

The tables on the following pages show the shift in rating burden from lower valued properties to higher valued Residential properties when the Municipal Charge is removed over two years.

The tables show the rating impact on residential properties of adjusting the differentials for Commercial, Industrial, Farming and Cultural and Recreational properties arising from the respondents' feedback as described in this rating strategy paper. It is important to note that all data shown below is indicative and for modelling purposes only based on 2013/14 budget data. It does not represent a forecast of rates beyond 2013/14.

The table below shows the rating impact on residential properties if the differential rate was kept at 100% and the municipal charge was reduced to 10% in the first year.

Residential					
	Valuation	Base	Comparison	$ Diff	% Diff
20 Percentile	$ 185,000	$ 1,041.11	$ 977.96	⇩ $ 63.15	⇩ 6.07%
50 Percentile	$ 252,000	$ 1,294.04	$ 1,270.08	⇩ $ 23.96	⇩ 1.85%
80 Percentile	$ 366,000	$ 1,724.41	$ 1,767.12	⇧ $ 42.71	⇧ 2.48%

The table below shows the rating impact on residential properties if the differential rate was kept at 100% and the municipal charge was reduced to 0% in the second year.

Residential					
	Valuation	Base	Comparison	$ Diff	% Diff
20 Percentile	$ 185,000	$ 977.60	$ 921.56	⇩ $ 56.04	⇩ 5.73%
50 Percentile	$ 252,000	$ 1,270.08	$ 1,255.32	⇩ $ 14.76	⇩ 1.16%
80 Percentile	$ 366,000	$ 1,767.12	$ 1,823.20	⇧ $ 56.08	⇧ 3.17%

Key Element 5

That the General Rate be set at 100%, this rate to be used for Residential Land and the municipal charge be phased to 10% in 2014/15 and 0% in 2015/16.

Achievement of Council Objectives

One of Council's purposes set out in the Council Plan 2013-2107 is that 'A wide range of services are provided that improves the liveability of everyday life for residents, visitors and workers'. The Residential category is paying the largest proportion of the rate burden for the wide range of services Council provides.

Where possible, Council aims to alleviate the extent of the tax burden by encouraging others to support Council in the provision of services. This is achieved through its Council Plan 2013-2107 Strategy 2.1.3: 'We aim to minimise barriers and find ways to support our volunteers, community groups and committees to provide services beyond those that Council, by itself, can provide'.

8.6 Industrial Category

From a comparative rates principle perspective among large rural councils, no council gives a discount to industrial ratepayers, nine charge a differential greater than 100% and six charge a 100% differential rate. The median differential is 118%. Two out of six of our neighbouring councils charge a premium while the rest have set the differential at 100%.

Industrial rates are paid from pre-tax money. At a tax rate of 30% (current company tax rate) this amounts to a benefit of 43%. It is considered appropriate from a capacity to pay principle perspective that this be taken into account when determining a differential rate for the Industrial Properties Category.

Despite increasing the differential rate from 100% to 105%, the lower valued industrial properties would still pay less rates due to the abolition of the municipal charge. Refer to 9.2.3.7 and 9.2.3.8 'Average $ Change – Industrial Rate' in Section 9 for details on these changes for properties in various price ranges. The highest valued properties would receive a considerable increase in their tax burden.

The tables below show the impact of the shift in rating burden from lower valued Industrial properties to higher valued properties.

The table below shows the rating impact on industrial properties if the differential rate was increased to 102.5 % and the municipal charge was reduced to 10% in the first year.

Industrial					
	Valuation	Base	Comparison	$ Diff	% Diff
20 Percentile	$ 185,000	$ 1,041.11	$ 998.12	⇩ $ 42.99	⇩ 4.13%
50 Percentile	$ 275,000	$ 1,380.87	$ 1,400.33	⇧ $ 19.46	⇧ 1.41%
80 Percentile	$ 600,000	$ 2,607.79	$ 2,852.76	⇧ $ 244.97	⇧ 9.39%

The table below shows the rating impact on industrial properties if the differential rate was increased to 105% and the municipal charge was reduced to 0% in the second year.

Industrial					
	Valuation	Base	Comparison	$ Diff	% Diff
20 Percentile	$185,000	$ 998.12	$ 967.64	$ 30.48	3.05%
50 Percentile	$275,000	$1,400.33	$ 1,438.38	$ 38.05	2.72%
80 Percentile	$600,000	$2,852.76	$ 3,138.29	$285.53	10.01%

Key Element 6

That the Industrial category have a 105% differential rate and be phased in over two years, 102.5% in 2014/15 and 105% in 2015/16 as well as the municipal charge being phased to 10% in 2014/15 and 0% in 2015/16.

Achievement of Council Objectives

Objective 1.1 of the Council Plan 2013-2017 specifically aims to: ‘Work with the business community to support existing businesses, diversify employment opportunities and to attract new businesses’. Strategy 1.1.3 strengthens this objective further: ‘We will actively encourage sustainable development and growth of agriculture, industry and commercial business’.

Council has established an Economic and Tourism Strategic Steering Committee to plan for the economic growth and development of the Shire. This is being achieved through the Council Plan 2013-2107 Strategy 1.1.1: ‘We will actively plan for growth and economic development’.

In order to achieve a sustainable economy Council seeks to support further development of existing industrial businesses and encourage new businesses. To this end only a slight increase in the Rate differential is proposed, compared to some of the larger differentials required by other large rural Shires. This increase is able to be offset through business tax deductions resulting in a rate that is comparable, or lower to similar valued Residential properties.

8.7 Commercial Category

From a comparative rates principle perspective among the large rural councils, no council gives a discount to commercial ratepayers, nine charge a differential greater than 100% and six charge a 100% differential rate. The median differential is 118%. Two out of six of our neighbouring councils charge a premium while the rest have set the differential at 100%.

Commercial rates are paid from pre-tax money. At a tax rate of 30% (current company tax rate) this amounts to a benefit of 43%. It is considered appropriate from a capacity to pay principle perspective that this be taken into account when determining a differential rate for the Commercial Properties Category.

Despite increasing the differential rate from 100% to 105%, the lower valued commercial properties would still pay less rates due to the abolition of the Municipal Charge. Refer to 9.2.3.5 and 9.2.3.6 'Average $ Change – Commercial Rates' in Section 9 for details of this change for properties in various price ranges. The highest valued properties would receive a considerable increase in their tax burden.

The tables below show the impact of the shift in rating burden from lower valued properties to higher valued properties.

The table below shows the rating impact on commercial properties if the differential rate was increased to 102.5 % and the municipal charge was reduced to 10% in the first year.

Commercial					
	Valuation	Base	Comparison	$ Diff	% Diff
20 Percentile	$ 120,000	$ 795.73	$ 707.64	$ 88.09	11.07%
50 Percentile	$ 200,000	$ 1,097.74	$ 1,065.16	$ 32.58	2.97%
80 Percentile	$ 425,000	$ 1,947.14	$ 2,070.68	$ 123.54	6.34%

The table below shows the rating impact on commercial properties if the differential rate was increased to 105% and the municipal charge was reduced to 0% in the second year.

Commercial					
	Valuation	Base	Comparison	$ Diff	% Diff
20 Percentile	$ 120,000	$ 707.64	$ 627.66	$ 79.98	11.30%
50 Percentile	$ 200,000	$ 1,065.16	$ 1,046.10	$ 19.06	1.79%
80 Percentile	$ 425,000	$ 2,070.68	$ 2,222.96	$ 152.28	7.35%

Key Element 7

That the Commercial category have a 105% differential rate and be phased in over two years, 102.5% in 2014/15 and 105% in 2015/16 as well as the municipal charge being phased to 10% in 2014/15 and 0% in 2015/16

Achievement of Council Objectives

Objective 1.1 of the Council Plan 2013-2017 specifically aims to: 'Work with the business community to support existing businesses, diversify employment opportunities and to attract new businesses'. Strategy 1.1.3 strengthens this objective further: 'We will actively encourage sustainable development and growth of agriculture, industry and commercial business'.

Council has established an Economic and Tourism Strategic Steering Committee to plan for the economic growth and development of the Shire. This is being achieved through the Council Plan 2013-2107 Strategy 1.1.1: 'We will actively plan for growth and economic development'.

In order to achieve a sustainable economy Council seeks to support further development of existing Commercial businesses and encourage new businesses. To this end only a slight increase in the Rate differential is proposed, compared to some of the larger differentials required by other large rural Shires. This increase is able to be offset through business tax deductions resulting in a rate that is comparable, or lower to similar valued Residential properties.

8.8 Farm Category

The Farm properties proposed differential rate takes into consideration a number of principles.

Rates are primarily a property wealth tax. Farms by their nature have a high rateable valuation relative to Residential, Commercial and Industrial premises.

From a capacity to pay perspective, ratepayers with higher value properties generally have a higher wealth and a greater capacity to pay. However from a farming industry perspective it can be argued that rates are in fact levied on unrealised wealth in the form of real property. Therefore the nexus with ratepayers' capacity to pay becomes somewhat tenuous. Farmers may be asset rich and income poor.

On the other hand, farms more so than other types of businesses can realise the inherent capital value of their properties at the end of their working lives if they choose to do so.

Farms effectively include a residential and business component. Farm rates are paid from pre-tax money and this includes the residential component of the farm. At a tax rate of 30% (current company tax rate) this amounts to a benefit of 43%. It is considered appropriate from a capacity to pay principle perspective that this be taken into account when determining a differential rate for the Farm Properties Category.

Farming is considered to be a key industry and it is appropriate to provide some incentive to encourage farmers by moderating the rate impact. Decreasing the differential rate from 90% to 70% provides some rate relief to farmers after taking into consideration the property wealth, capacity to pay and incentive principles.

The Farms are one of the categories significantly impacted by the removal of the Municipal Charge. To modify the extent of this impact and provide an incentive to retain existing and new Farm businesses, a decrease of 30% compared to the Residential rate is recommended.

Refer to 9.2.3.3 and 9.2.3.4 'Average $ Change – Farm Rate', in Section 9 for details of these changes for properties in various price ranges.

The tables below show the impact of the shift in rating burden from lower valued properties to higher valued properties.

The table below shows the rating impact on Farm properties if the differential rate was decreased to 80 % and the municipal charge was reduced to 10% in the first year.

Farm					
	Valuation	Base	Comparison	$ Diff	% Diff
20 Percentile	$ 341,000	$ 1,392.58	$ 1,308.44	$ 84.14	6.04%
50 Percentile	$ 620,000	$ 2,388.08	$ 2,302.09	$ 85.99	3.60%
80 Percentile	$ 1,050,000	$ 3,876.24	$ 3,830.27	$ 45.97	1.19%

The table below shows the rating impact on Farm properties if the differential rate was decreased to 70% and the municipal charge was reduced to 0% in the second year

Farm					
	Valuation	Base	Comparison	$ Diff	% Diff
20 Percentile	$ 341,000	$ 1,308.44	$ 1,189.06	$ 119.38	9.12%
50 Percentile	$ 620,000	$ 2,302.09	$ 2,161.93	$ 140.16	6.09%
80 Percentile	$ 1,050,000	$ 3,830.27	$ 3,661.34	$ 168.93	4.41%

Key Element 8

That the Farm category have a 70% differential rate and be phased in over two years, 80% in 2014/15 and 70% in 2015/16 as well as the municipal charge being phased to 10% in 2014/15 and 0% in 2015/16 .

Achievement of Council Objectives

Objective 1.1 of the Council Plan 2013-2017 specifically aims to: 'Work with the business community to support existing businesses, diversify employment opportunities and to attract new businesses'. Further, Strategy 1.1.3 strengthens this objective further: 'We will actively encourage sustainable development and growth of agriculture, industry and commercial business'.

Council has established an Economic and Tourism Strategic Steering Committee to plan for the economic growth and development of the Shire. This is being achieved through the Council Plan 2013-2107 Strategy 1.1.1: 'We will actively plan for growth and economic development'.

Farms are the second largest group of rateable properties in the Shire. The removal of the Municipal Charge has had a significant impact on many of these properties.

To modify the extent of this impact and provide an incentive to retain existing and new farming businesses, a decrease is proposed in the differential to Farms.

This decrease along with the offset through tax deductions provides Farms with a discount aimed at encouraging the sustainable growth of agriculture across the Shire

8.9 Farming Properties Category – Review of Definition

Currently properties classified as Farm land is as per the definition in Section 2 of the *Valuation of Land Act 1960*.

The definition of Farm land means any rateable land:-

a. that is not less than 2 hectares in area; and
b. (b) that is used primarily for grazing (including agistment), dairying, pig-farming, poultry farming, fish-farming, tree-farming, beekeeping, viticulture, horticulture, fruit growing or the growing of crops of any kind or for any combination of those activities; and
c. (c) that is used by a business—
    i. that has a significant and substantial commercial purpose or character; and
    ii. that seeks to make a profit on a continuous or repetitive basis from its activities on the land; and
    iii. that is making a profit from its activities on the land, or that has a reasonable prospect of making a profit from its activities on the land if it continues to operate in the way that it is operating;

It is considered that the 70% differential Farm rate should only be applicable to genuine farming operations as distinct from hobby or rural lifestyle properties.

All rateable properties are coded with an Australian Valuation Property Classification Code (AVPCC). Currently properties coded 117 'Residential Rural / Rural Lifestyle and 103 Vacant Residential / Rural Lifestyle are classified as Farm land for rating purposes.

It is recommended that the definition of Farm Land for differential rating purposes be modified so that rural lifestyle properties are no longer defined as Farm land for differential rating purposes.

Properties where primary production and associated improvements are secondary to the value of the residential home site and associated residential improvements (properties coded 117) should not be classified as Farm land for differential rating purposes.

Similarly, vacant properties in a rural, semi-rural or bushland setting that have no restrictions or are not likely to encounter difficulties in obtaining building purposes (properties coded 103) should not be classified as Farm land for differential rating purposes.

These properties, from a property wealth tax perspective, should not be classified as Farm land for differential rates. It would be more appropriate to classify properties coded 117 as Residential properties and properties coded 103 as Vacant Land for differential rating purposes.

A more tailored definition is proposed using the Australian Valuation Property Classification Codes (AVPCC).

All rateable assessments are given an Australian Valuation Property Classification Code (AVPCC) as part of the valuation process. The code is based on the use of the property. These codes are already used for the Fire Services Property Levy.

The Fire Services Property Levy was introduced for the current rating year. Council collects this levy on behalf of the State Government as part of the Rates process.

The Fire Services Property Levy charges are based on the AVPCC codes and the categories they fall into. The categories are Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Primary Production, Public Benefit, Vacant and Exempt.

It is considered logical to align the rate categories with the AVPCC codes so the classification of each property uses the same definition and has the same classification for both the rates and the levy. The AVPCC classification process is also transparent as it is clearly documented. There is also a process for objection to incorrect allocation of the AVPCC code under the Valuation of Land Act 1960.

The Fire Services Property Levy guideline for the AVPCC codes classifies Residential/Rural and Rural Lifestyle categories with a dwelling under 20ha as residential. It also has a range of AVPCC codes to cover various farm uses in the Primary Production category.

It is proposed to revise the Farm category so that it ties in with the AVPCC codes rather than use the generic Farm Land definition under the Valuation of Land Act (1960). The application of a Farm Differential using this method is an efficient way to administer the differential as there is no duplication of classification. It also gives more flexibility to tailor the definition to the characteristics of the Municipality.

Key Element 9

That the Farm Category definition be revised so that it ties in with the Australian Valuation Property Classification Codes

Achievement of Council Objectives

Utilising differentials for specific categories of land provides flexibility for Council to achieve its Council Plan and strategic objectives, and adequately address equity, capacity to pay, incentive and comparative rate principles, to ensure a more equitable distribution of the rate burden across the municipality. The proposal to separate rural lifestyle properties from Farms (whose purpose is for primary productions purposes) aims to ensure the equitable distribution of rates in line with the main use of the property. In the majority of cases, the primary use of rural lifestyle properties is for residential purposes. To this end it is considered the discount provided through the lower Farm differential should not be applied to these properties and that rural lifestyle properties fit within the Residential category.

8.10 Vacant Land Category

Vacant properties (which include Residential, Commercial and Industrial properties) currently have a 150% differential rate to encourage vacant land owners to develop their properties.

From an incentive principle perspective it is proposed that the differential rate be increased to 200%.

Despite the increase in the differential rate from 150% to 200%, the lower valued vacant land properties would pay less rates due to the abolition of the municipal charge. 15% of the vacant land properties would receive a favourable financial outcome whilst 85% of the vacant land properties would pay additional rates in varying degrees based on their valuation. The highest valued properties would receive a considerable increase in their tax burden.

The tables below show the impact of the shift in rating burden from lower valued properties to higher valued properties. It should be noted that Vacant Residential, Commercial and Industrial properties are all classified into one Vacant Land property type.

The table below shows the rating impact on vacant residential properties if the differential rate was increased to 175 % and the municipal charge was reduced to 10% in the first year

Vacant Land Residential

	Valuation	Base	Comparison	$ Diff	% Diff
20 Percentile	$ 83,000	$ 812.71	$ 804.65	⇩ $ 8.06	⇩ 0.99%
50 Percentile	$ 92,000	$ 863.68	$ 873.32	⇧ $ 9.64	⇧ 1.12%
80 Percentile	$ 165,000	$ 1,277.06	$ 1,430.31	⇧ $ 153.25	⇧ 12.00%

The table below shows the rating impact on vacant residential properties if the differential rate was increased to 200% and the municipal charge was reduced to 0% in the second year

Vacant Land Residential

	Valuation	Base	Comparison	$ Diff	% Diff
20 Percentile	$ 83,000	$ 804.65	$ 826.92	⇧ $ 22.27	⇧ 2.77%
50 Percentile	$ 92,000	$ 873.32	$ 916.58	⇧ $ 43.26	⇧ 4.95%
80 Percentile	$ 165,000	$ 1,430.31	$ 1,643.87	⇧ $ 213.56	⇧ 14.93%

Key Element 10

That the Vacant Land category have a 200% differential rate and be phased in over two years, 175% in 2014/15 and 200% in 2015/16 as well as the municipal charge being phased to 10% in 2014/15 and 0% in 2015/16

Achievement of Council Objectives

Council's Strategy is to: 'Actively plan for growth and economic development'. Council's Objective 4.1 is to 'Improve the financial sustainability of Council, including diversifying income streams'. The Vacant Land differential has been increased as an incentive to encourage developers and land owners to develop their land. This, in turn, will increase population growth, employment and business opportunities and add to the vibrancy and sustainability of the Shire. A greater number of rate payers in the Shire, allows the rate burden to be spread across a greater number of people.

8.11 Restricted Vacant Land Category

Restricted Vacant properties currently have a 100% differential rate applied to Vacant Land where residential development was not allowed due to planning restrictions

From an incentive principle perspective it is proposed that the differential rate be increased to 200%. This is to encourage Restricted Vacant Land owners to rationalise and consolidate their properties.

Despite the increase in the differential rate from 100% to 200%, the lower valued Restricted Vacant Land properties would pay lower rates due to the abolition of the Municipal Charge. 54% of the Restricted Vacant Land properties would receive a favourable financial outcome whilst 46% of the Restricted Vacant Land properties would pay additional rates in varying degrees based on their valuation.

The majority of the lower valued Restricted Vacant Land category properties are residential blocks of land. With the proposed removal of the municipal charge, the vast majority of these properties despite having the differential rate increased to 200% (in line with the Vacant Land property category) will pay fewer rates than they did previously.

All properties including the remaining higher valued properties under the Australian Valuation Property Classification Code (AVPCC) would be either classified as Farm property or Vacant Land. They will need to be assessed on a property by property basis by the shire valuers.

Key Element 11

That the Restricted Vacant Land Category is no longer required as a separate differential rating category.

Achievement of Council Objectives

Council's Strategy 1.1.1 is to 'Actively plan for growth and development'. The Restricted Vacant Land, by itself cannot be developed, so the increased differential is an incentive to property owners to rationalise and consolidate land with other parcels that together, can be developed. This in turn will lead to productive use of the land, reduction of derelict and unsightly properties and potentially an increase in population growth, expanded business, or expanded agricultural land.

8.12 Cultural and Recreational Category

Properties classified as Cultural and Recreational for differential rating purposes exist for the purposes of providing or promoting cultural, sporting or recreational activities as defined in the *Cultural and Recreational Land Act 1963*.

Council supports having a wide range of recreation and leisure amenities for its community. It encourages active recreation and participation.

These properties apply any profits that they make into promoting their objectives. Council from an incentive principle perspective supports these organisations by providing a significantly reduced differential rate for such properties.

It was determined that Council continue to provide Cultural and Recreational properties with a minimum differential rate. The Local Government Act states that the highest differential rate can be no more than four times the lowest differential rate. Because the highest differential rate proposed is now 200%, the lowest differential that can be used is 50%. This means the Cultural and Recreational differential now has to increase from 40% to 50%.

Despite the increase in the differential rate from 40% to 50%, the lower valued Cultural and Recreational properties would pay less rates due to the abolition of the Municipal Charge. 73% of the Cultural and Recreational properties would receive a favourable financial outcome whilst 27% of the Cultural and Recreational properties would pay additional rates in varying degrees based on their valuation.

The tables below show the impact of the shift in rating burden from lower valued properties to higher valued properties.

The table below shows the rating impact on Cultural and Recreational properties if the differential rate was increased to 43.75 % and the municipal charge was reduced to 10% in the first year.

Cultural and Recreational Land					
	Valuation	Base	Comparison	$ Diff	% Diff
20 Percentile	$ 165,000	$ 591.87	$ 486.10	⇩ $ 105.77	⇩ 17.87%
50 Percentile	$ 250,000	$ 720.22	$ 648.24	⇩ $ 71.98	⇩ 9.99%
80 Percentile	$ 500,000	$ 1,097.74	$ 1,125.12	⇧ $ 27.38	⇧ 2.49%

The table below shows the rating impact on Cultural and Recreational properties if the differential rate was increased to 50% and the municipal charge was reduced to 0% in the second year.

Cultural and Recreational Land					
	Valuation	Base	Comparison	$ Diff	% Diff
20 Percentile	$ 165,000	$ 486.10	$ 410.97	⇩ $ 75.13	⇩ 15.46%
50 Percentile	$ 250,000	$ 648.24	$ 622.68	⇩ $ 25.56	⇩ 3.94%
80 Percentile	$ 500,000	$ 1,125.12	$ 1,245.35	⇧ $ 120.23	⇧ 10.69%

Key Element 12

That the Cultural and Recreational category have a 50% differential rate and be phased in over two years, 43.75% in 2014/15 and 50% in 2015/16 as well as the municipal charge being phased to 10% in 2014/15 and 0% in 2015/16

Achievement of Council Objectives

As a rural Shire, Council does not have the resources to provide all of the recreational and cultural needs of its communities, even though it recognises the importance of the health and well-being of its people. Council has several strategies aimed at encouraging others in the community to provide some of these services. Strategy 3.1.5 states 'We will encourage sustainable development that promotes the health, well-being and unique character of the community'. Strategy 3.1.2 states 'We will collaborate with other agencies and service providers to focus attention on growth areas and avoid duplication of services'. To these ends, Council aims to set the lowest differential possible to support Cultural and Recreational land that meets the requirement of the *Cultural and Recreational Land Act 1963.*

8.13 Service Rates and Charges

The majority of Waste Charges include street sweeping and litter bin costs as well as the garbage recycling services / costs. The rationale being that these waste charges were applied in urban areas where street sweeping occurs and where most litter bins are also located.

The additional costs captured for Waste Charges is supported by the user benefits principle. That is, the people in these areas receive a specific benefit from the additional services.

A counter argument can be put that other ratepayers and people that come to town to visit, shop and so forth, would benefit from these broader waste services to some extent.

The majority of Victorian councils Waste Service Charges are specifically for waste and recycling services. The majority of ratepayers would also presume that the charge is just for waste and recycling services. Rate notices only disclose the titles of applicable charges.

The detailed commentary of what is specifically funded by the individual waste charges is described in the 'Annual Budget' document and the statutory required disclosure advertisements. It is a fairly safe assumption to presume that the vast majority of ratepayers do not access and read this information.

It was determined that the Waste Charges only are recovered for waste and recycling costs across all waste service charges. This aligns with the simplicity, efficiency and transparency principles. The driving rationale being that the actual services provided would align to the majority of ratepayers' perception of services provided.

Key Element 13

That Waste Charges are only recovered for waste and recycling services across all Waste Service Charges.

Achievement of Council Objectives

Council Objective 1.3 seeks to 'Promote sustainable waste management practices, energy efficiency and management of our natural resources'. Council encourages the community to reduce its waste and increase its reuse of resources or recycling of resources. Removing street cleaning and public litter bin costs from the waste charge improves the transparency of the waste charge for those properties it applies to, and spreads the costs of street cleaning and litter bins across all rate payers on the basis that the benefit of these components are shared by the wider community

8.14 Special Rates and Charges

The special rate charges specifically address the benefit principle.

The current policy frameworks states that Council will implement Special Charge Schemes:

- In accordance with Section 163 of the Local Government Act, 1989 and 'Special Rates and Charges Ministerial Guidelines, Local Government Victoria, September 2004' (as amended).
- If Council contributes a third (33.33%) or more of the cost of the Scheme without the support of affected property owners, or
- If there is a minimum of 70% of property owner support in writing to contribute financially to the works

The Special Charge Scheme Policy was last reviewed in December 2010 and will be revised in 2014.

That the current cycle of reviewing the Special Charge Scheme Policy is considered adequate.

Key Element 14

That the current policy and cycle of reviewing the Special Charge Scheme Policy is considered adequate.

Achievement of Council Objectives
The Special Charge Scheme Policy supports Council's Strategy 2.1.2 'We will develop an integrated approach to planning with the community incorporating budgeting/ funding strategies and project development'.
Special Charge Schemes recognise that specific land owners can receive a benefit that is additional or greater than the benefit to other properties. To this end, it is reasonable for these properties to contribute financially to receive these benefits.

8.15 Rebates and Concessions

A submission from the Landcare group includes a recommendation that Council introduce a rebate for land management for rural land along the lines of what Bass Coast Council currently does.

It should be noted that Bass Coast does not have a special differential rate for rural properties. Rather, it provides a rebate for undertaking certain works on their land. South Gippsland on the other hand currently provides a differential rate of 90% but no rebate scheme.

If a similar scheme was to be implemented at South Gippsland the total cost of the rebate would have to be distributed across all ratepayers (the assumption being that there is no change to the farming or other property type differentials so as to provide a funding source).

Similarly, if Council wished to introduce an additional rebate or concession for pensioners or some other group, the total cost of the rebate would have to be distributed across all ratepayers.

The principles of efficiency and simplicity should also be considered. Currently, there is a very stringent criterion that has to be fulfilled by any pensioner if they wish to get the pension concession. The process for land management rebate at Bass Coast appears to be resource intensive. This is a significant and somewhat concerning contrast to existing processes.

It is highly desirable that a uniform standard of assessing and applying rebates and concessions to all property types be applied.

Key Element 15

That land management rebates for rural properties not be introduced into Council's Rating Strategy.

Achievement of Council Objectives

A land management rebate scheme could be one option to achieve Council's strategic directions for sustainability, however the increased administrative costs required to manage the rebate scheme, ensure the rebates were being used for the purposes provided and assessing if they were having the desired results, would outweigh the benefits achieved from providing the rebates. Council is directing its resources to provide educational sessions to support sustainable land management practices, to achieve its strategic objectives.

8.16 Debt Recovery

Council has a policy for Debt Recovery on Unpaid Rates and Charges. It was reviewed by Council in May 2013. The policy is scheduled to be reviewed every four years.

The policy's objective is that rates and other overdue property accounts are recovered in a timely and fair manner. Rate payers are also referred to the Rates and Hardship Charges Policy.

Key Element 16

That the current policy and cycle of reviewing the Recovery on Unpaid Rates and Charges Policy is considered adequate.

Achievement of Council Objectives

The Debt Recovery Policy requires ratepayers to pay the rates applicable to their property. Every attempt is made to work with property owners to assist them where personal financial hardship situations arise and these ratepayers are assisted through the Rates and Charges Hardship Policy. The Debt Recovery Policy applies where attempts to recoup rates through negotiated approaches have failed. This policy places the onus on the ratepayer to pay the annual rates applicable to their property(s)

8.17 Deferrals and Waivers

Council has a Rates and Charges Hardship Policy. It was reviewed by Council in May 2013. The policy's objective is to provide relief to ratepayers who are suffering from financial hardship and need assistance. The thrust of the current policy is to refer applicants to an independent financial counsellor or accountant who in turn assesses and submits an application to Council to consider on behalf of the ratepayer.

This has two benefits. The first being that financial hardship claims are independently assessed by persons that are qualified and experienced in making such assessments. Secondly, it removes the perception that Council and / or Council officers have a vested and biased interest in the matter at hand. The intent being that Council would be expected to uphold the recommendations put by the appropriately qualified and experienced professionals.

The policy allows deferral of rates and charges when certain criteria are fulfilled as well as a waiver of interest and costs under certain circumstances. It does not allow the waiving of rates, municipal charges or service charges as the value of each property provides the owner with a potential source of funds if liquidated. It is considered inequitable for the majority of ratepayers to subsidise the property assets of hardship applicants.

The policy is scheduled to be reviewed in three years. The Municipal Association of Victoria is currently conducting a review of rates hardship claims on behalf of Victorian Councils. Council officers are monitoring this review process. If required, the policy can be reviewed earlier than scheduled.

Key Element 17

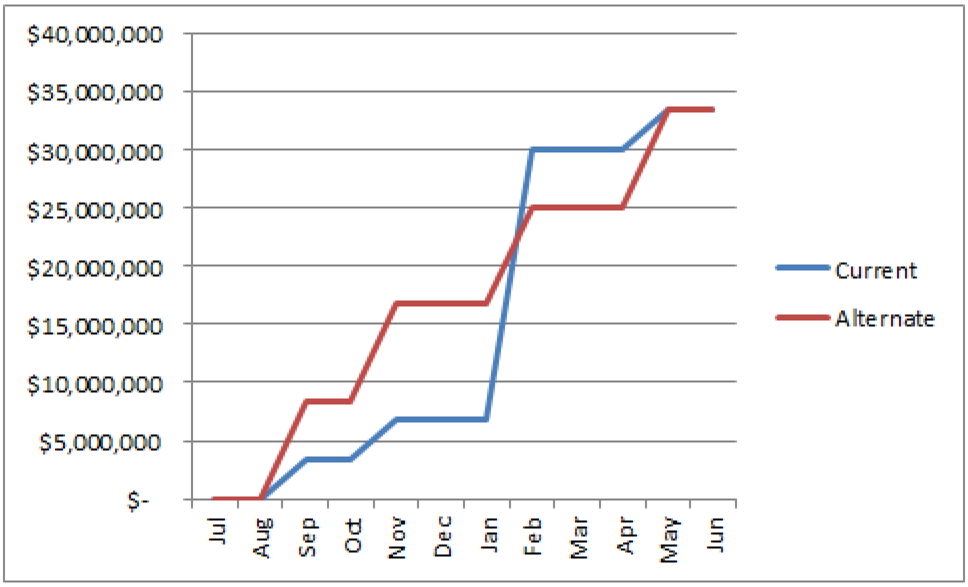
That the current policy and cycle of reviewing the Rates and Charges Hardship Policy is considered adequate.

Achievement of Council Objectives

Every attempt is made to work with property owners to assist them where personal financial hardship situations arise and these ratepayers are assisted through the Rates and Charges Hardship Policy. The Rates and Charges Hardship Policy can be utilised by any ratepayer meeting the requirements of the policy. The policy is designed to assist ratepayers to meet their responsibilities for payments of rates, but allows Council to provide some relief from the cumulative burden of unpaid rates when deemed appropriate and reasonable to do so.

8.18 Payment Cycles

If Council chose to no longer allow ratepayers the option of lump sum payment, this would result in a positive cash flow outcome. The graph below shows the difference between the current payments cycle and the alternate (no lump sum)



Taking into consideration that currently the majority of most property types prefer to pay rates and charges by lump sum and the potential other changes that may occur to differential rates as a result of this current rating review exercise, it was determined that payment cycles remain unchanged. It may be more appropriate to review this matter in more detail in the next rating review process that Council will undertake in coming years.

Key Element 18

That Council continue to offer lump sum payment options to its ratepayers and investigate introducing an additional 10 monthly payment option for ratepayers

Achievement of Council Objectives

Council's Strategy 3.1.4 is to 'Plan for the service needs of the Shire's changing demographic'. The current payment options for rate payers could be expanded if changing community needs indicate more flexible options are required.

8.19 Rating Strategy Review Cycle

Council has a statutory obligation to implement principles of sound financial management, in particular having rating policies that are consistent with a reasonable degree of stability in the level of the rates burden. Having a four year review cycles supports this principle.

Key Element 19

That Council with the assistance of a Rating Strategy Steering Committee review the Rating Strategy on a four year cycle that aligns with the 2nd year term of a newly elected Council's term.

Achievement of Council Objectives

Council's Strategy 4.2.3 states 'We will make informed decisions and provide opportunities for the community to participate in the decision making process'. The involvement of community members representing various land categories in the Rating Strategy Steering Committee has resulted in a well deliberated rating model for consideration by Council and the community. Re-establishing a similar committee in the second year of the next elected Council hopes to achieve similar insightful and transparent results to those that have been achieved in 2013/14.

8.20 Rural Residential Category

Council at its Special Council Meeting held 10 June 2015 amended the 2014-2018 Rating Strategy relating to the Farm land differential category. The Rating Strategy was refined to include Residential Rural / Rural Lifestyle properties equal to or greater than 18 3 hectares where primary production and uses and associated improvements are secondary to the residential uses to be classified as 'farm land' for differential rating purposes.

Council's legal advisers recommended that Council should consider formulating a separate differential rating category distinct from 'farm land' for these properties. Council at its meeting on 24 June 2015 determined that a separate differential rating category be established called 'rural residential'

The rationale for the classification being:- 'Council recognises that some ratepayers with properties greater than or equal to 18.30 hectares with an AVPCC code 117 undertake primary production activities on their property that add to the rural character and contribute to the primary production output of the municipality'.

Key Element 20

That the Rural Residential Category have a 70% differential rate.

9 Modelling of Key Elements

9.1 Summary of key changes

9.1.1 Summary of differential rates in the dollar

A summary of recommended changes to differential rates in the dollar and municipal charge is detailed below.

Current Differential Rate Type	Current Differential	Proposed Differential 2014-2015	Proposed Differential 2015-2016
Commercial	100.00%	102.50%	105.00%
Cultural and Recreation	40.00%	43.75%	50.00%
Farm	90.00%	80.00%	70.00%
Industrial	100.00%	102.50%	105.00%
Residential	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Vacant Land	150.00%	175.00%	200.00%
Restricted Vacant Land	100.00%	175.00%	200.00%
Municipal Charge	20.00%	10.00%	0.00%

9.2 Detailed modelling of recommendations

The modelling included below and on the following pages has been prepared to demonstrate the impact of the key elements of the Rating Strategy 2014-2018.

Note: All data shown below is indicative and for modelling purposes only based on 2013/14 budget data. It does not represent a forecast of rates beyond 2013/14.

9.2.1 Consolidated rates revenue

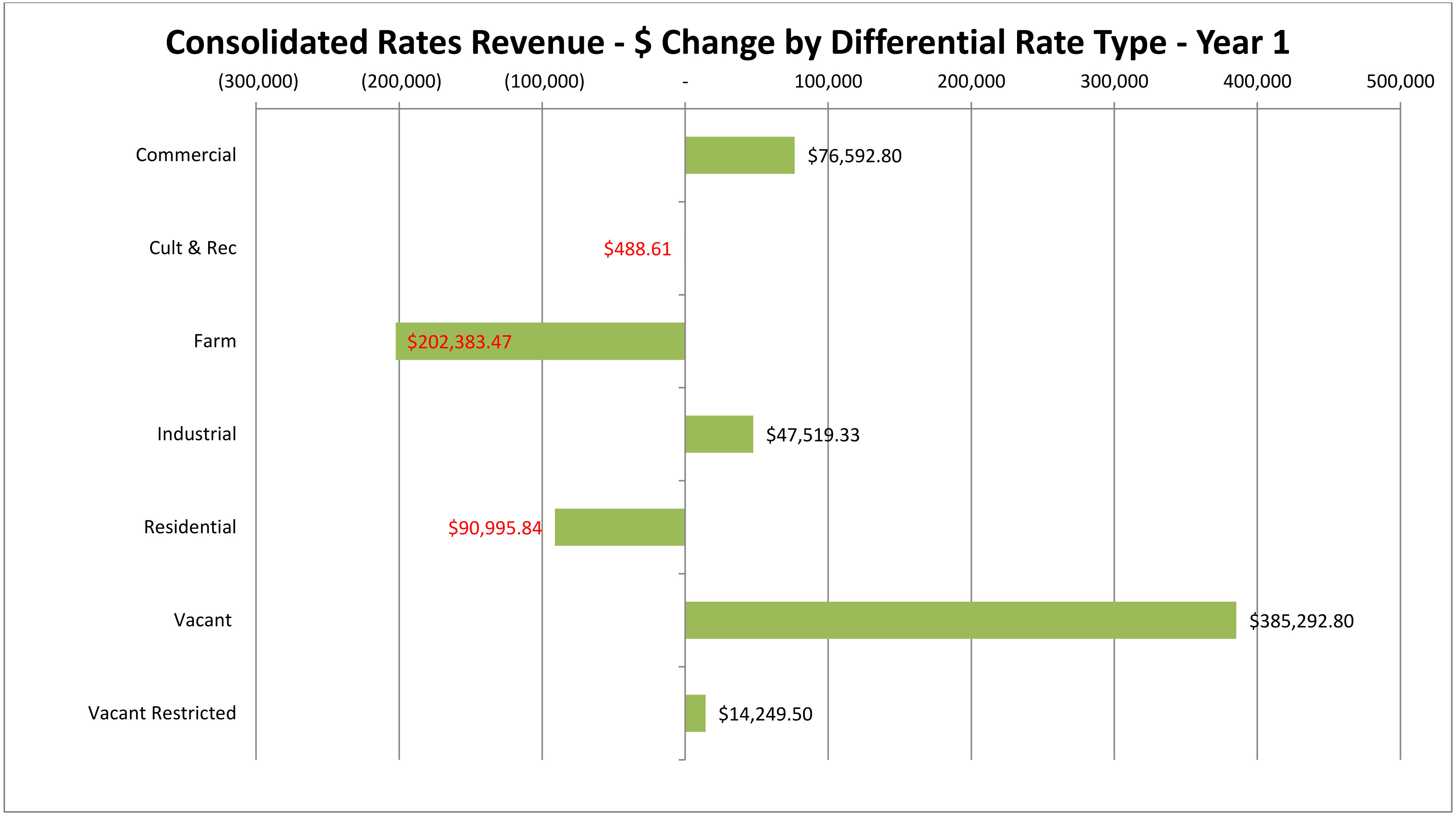
Consolidated rates revenue includes general rates and municipal charges but excludes waste service charges as these were not considered by the Rating Strategy Steering Committee. A summary of recommended changes to the total consolidated rates revenue is detailed below.

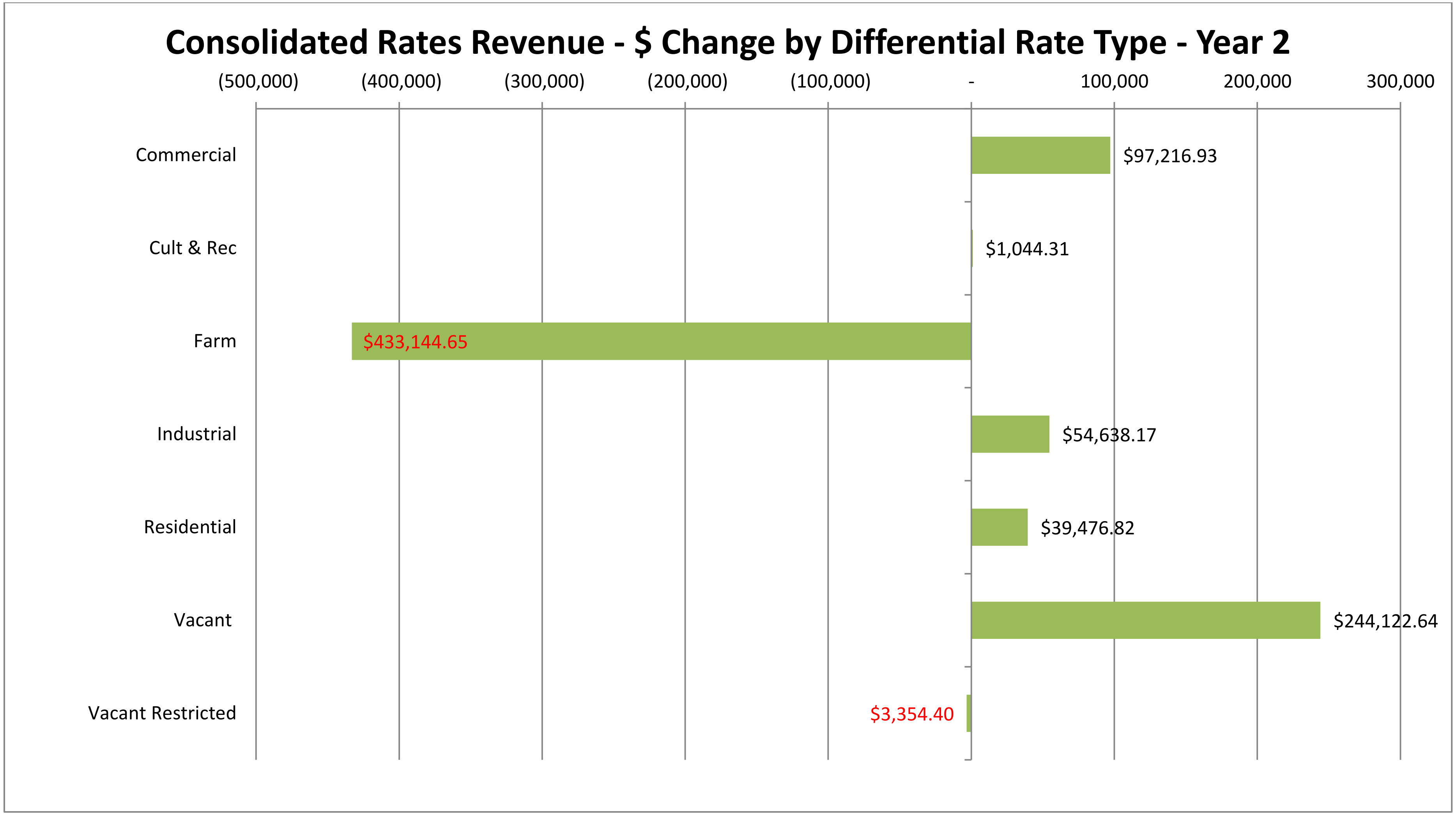
Year 1

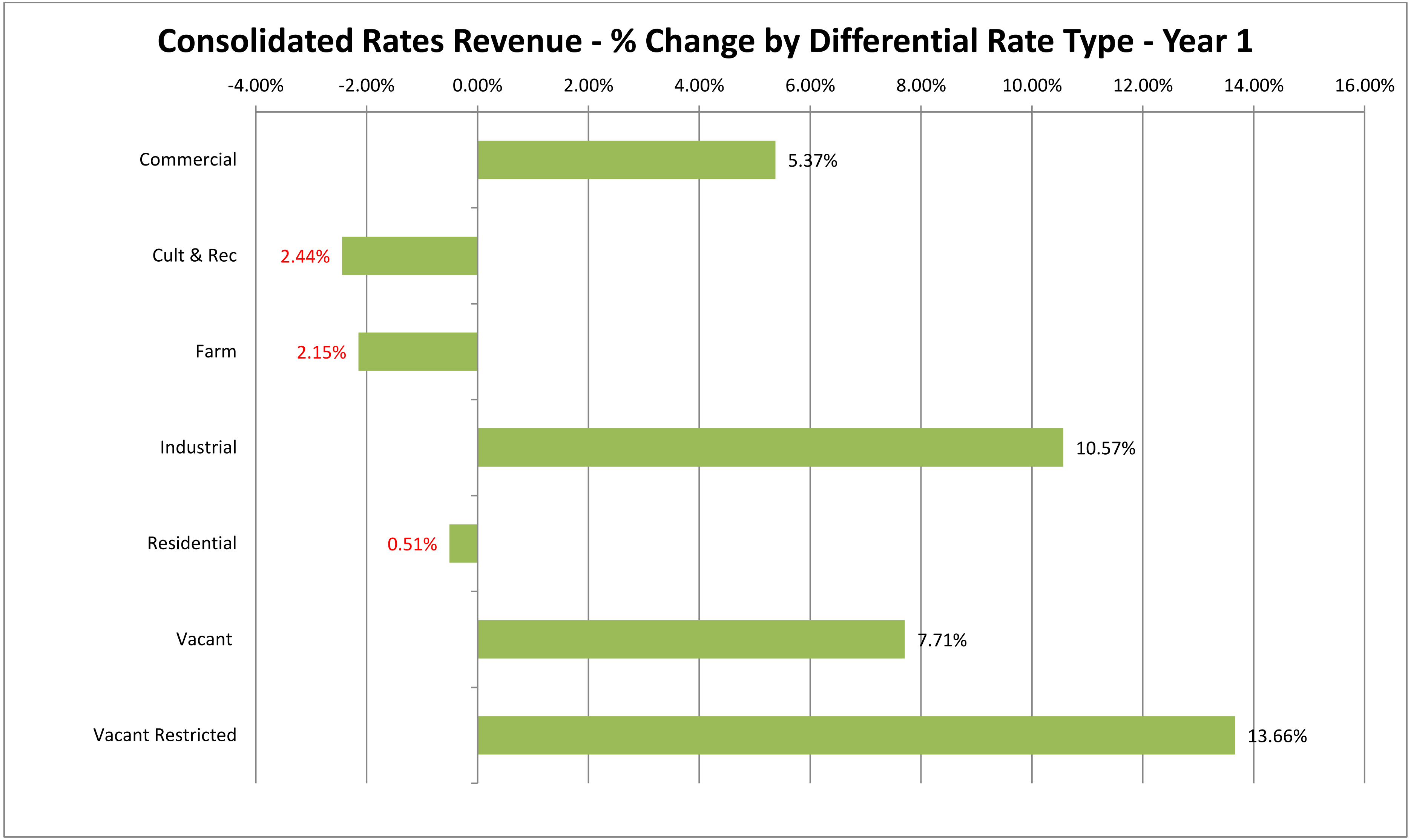
Differential Rate Type	2013-2014 Budget	Recommended 2014-2015	Change $	Change %
Commercial	1,425,124	1,501,717	$76,593	5.37%
Cultural and Recreation	20,005	19,516	($489)	(2.44%)
Farm	9,428,879	9,226,496	($202,383)	(2.15%)
Industrial	449,748	497,267	$47,519	10.57%
Residential	17,907,179	17,816,183	($90,996)	(0.51%)
Vacant Land	2,017,414	2,172,921	$155,506	7.71%
Restricted Vacant Land	104,315	118,565	$14,250	13.66%
Totals	**31,352,664**	**31,352,664**	**$0**	**0.00%**

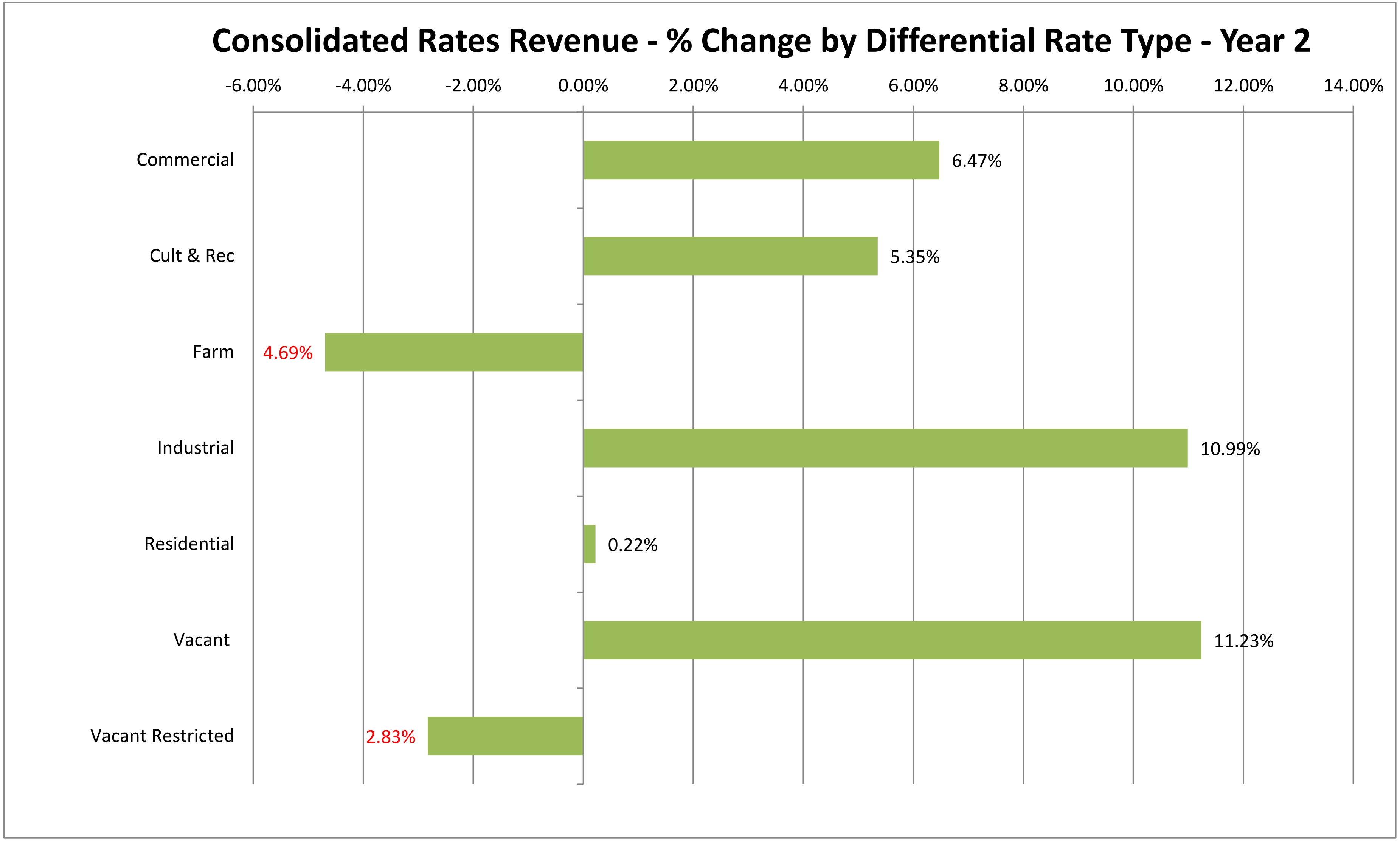
Year 2

Differential Rate Type	Recommended 2014-2015	Recommended 2015-2016	Change $	Change %
Commercial	1,501,717	1,598,934	$97,217	6.47%
Cultural and Recreation	19,516	20,561	$1,045	5.35%
Farm	9,226,496	8,793,351	($433,145)	(4.69%)
Industrial	497,267	551,905	$54,638	10.99%
Residential	17,816,183	17,855,660	$39,477	0.22%
Vacant Land	2,172,921	2,417,043	$244,122	11.23%
Restricted Vacant Land	118,565	115,210	($3,354)	(2.83%)
Totals	**31,352,664**	**31,352,664**	**$0**	**0.00%**


Consolidated Rates Revenue - $ Change by Differential Rate Type - Year 1
(300,000)
(200,000)
(100,000)
-
100,000
200,000
300,000
400,000
500,000
Commercial
$76,592.80
Cult & Rec
$488.61
Farm
$202,383.47
Industrial
$47,519.33
Residential
$90,995.84
Vacant
$385,292.80
Vacant Restricted
$14,249.50


Consolidated Rates Revenue - $ Change by Differential Rate Type - Year 2
(500,000)
(400,000)
(300,000)
(200,000)
(100,000)
-
100,000
200,000
300,000
Commercial
$97,216.93
Cult & Rec
$1,044.31
Farm
$433,144.65
Industrial
$54,638.17
Residential
$39,476.82
Vacant
$244,122.64
Vacant Restricted
$3,354.40


Consolidated Rates Revenue - % Change by Differential Rate Type - Year 1
-4.00%
-2.00%
0.00%
2.00%
4.00%
6.00%
8.00%
10.00%
12.00%
14.00%
16.00%
Commercial
5.37%
Cult & Rec
2.44%
Farm
2.15%
Industrial
10.57%
Residential
0.51%
Vacant
7.71%
Vacant Restricted
13.66%



Consolidated Rates Revenue - % Change by Differential Rate Type - Year 2
-6.00%
-4.00%
-2.00%
0.00%
2.00%
4.00%
6.00%
8.00%
10.00%
12.00%
14.00%
Commercial
6.47%
Cult & Rec
5.35%
Farm
4.69%
Industrial
10.99%
Residential
0.22%
Vacant
11.23%
Vacant Restricted
2.83%

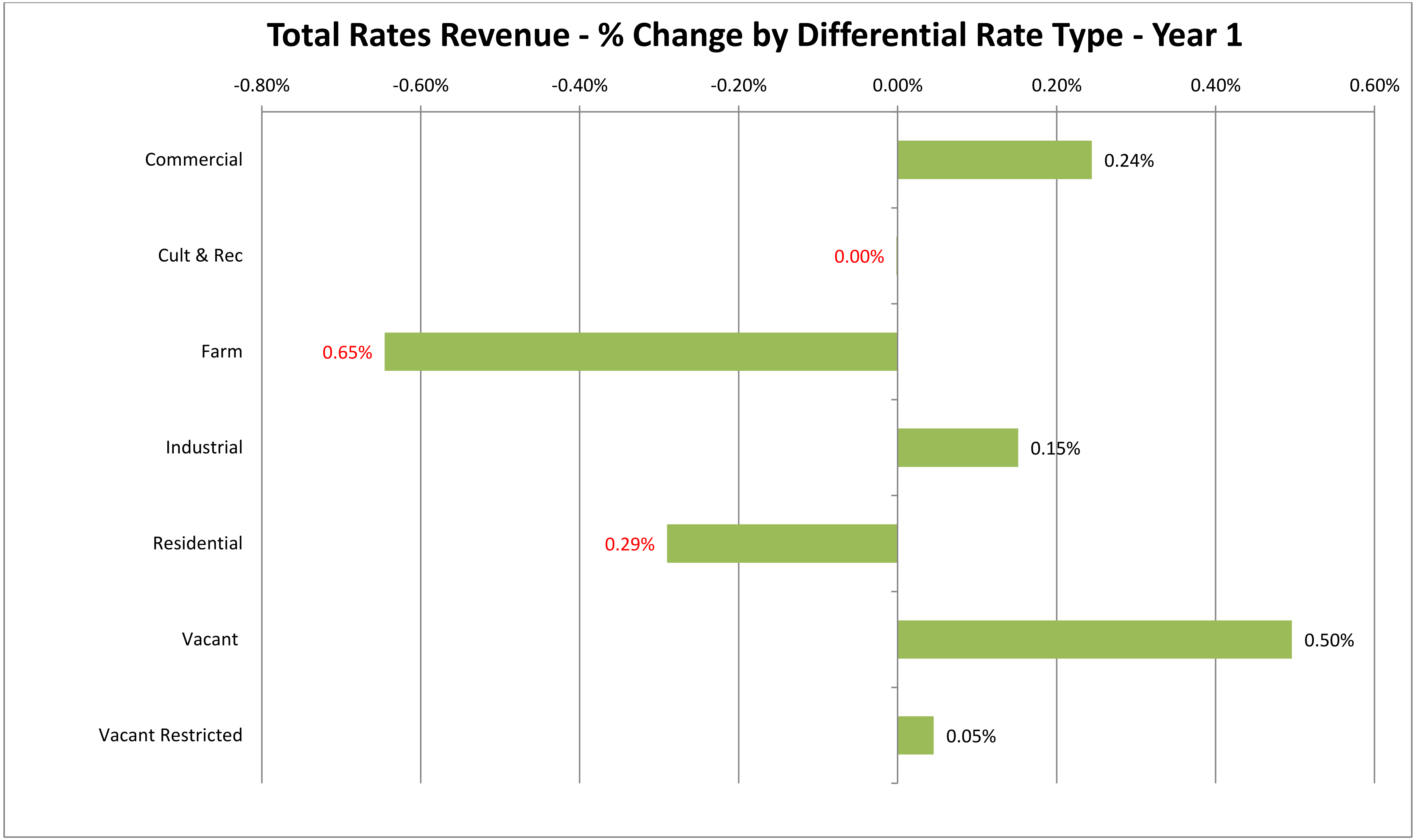
A summary of the changes to the percentage share of total consolidated rates revenue is detailed below.

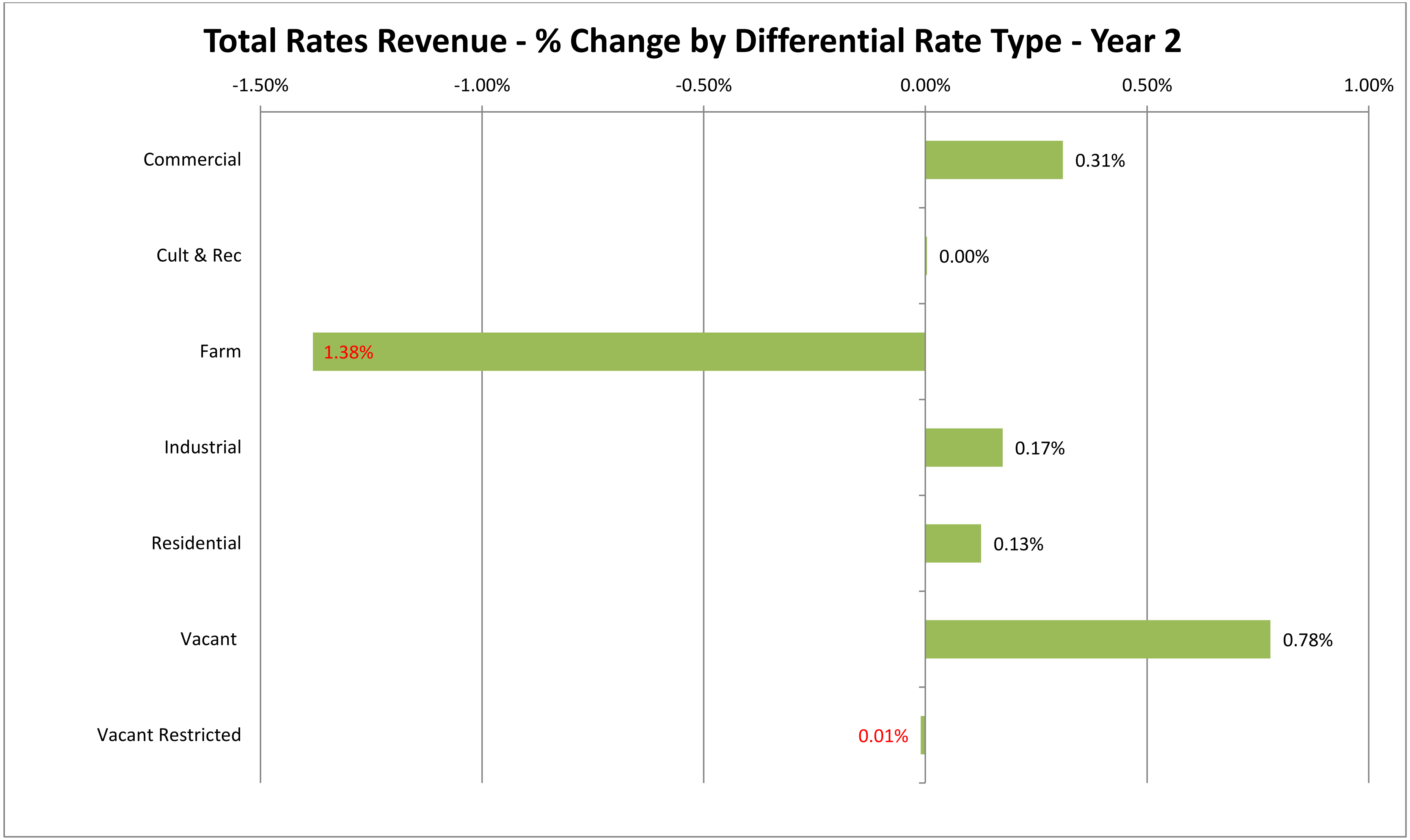
Year 1

Differential Rate Type	2013-2014 Budget	Share of Consolidated Rates Revenue %	Recommended 2014-2015 $	Share of Consolidated Rates Revenue %	Change %
Commercial	1,425,124	4.55%	1,501,717	4.79%	0.24%
Cultural and Recreation	20,005	0.06%	19,516	0.06%	0.00%
Farm	9,428,879	30.07%	9,226,496	29.43%	-0.65%
Industrial	449,748	1.43%	497,267	1.59%	0.15%
Residential	17,907,179	57.12%	17,816,183	56.83%	-0.29%
Vacant Land	2,017,414	6.43%	2,172,921	6.93%	0.50%
Vacant Land Restricted	104,315	0.33%	118,565	0.38%	0.05%
Totals	**31,352,664**	**100.00%**	**31,352,664**	**100.00%**	**0.00%**

Year 2

Differential Rate Type	Recommended 2014-2015 $	Share of Consolidated Rates Revenue %	Recommended 2015-2016 $	Share of Consolidated Rates Revenue %	Change %
Commercial	1,501,717	4.79%	1,598,934	5.10%	0.31%
Cultural and Recreation	19,516	0.06%	20,561	0.07%	0.00%
Farm	9,226,496	29.43%	8,793,351	28.05%	-1.38%
Industrial	497,267	1.59%	551,905	1.76%	0.17%
Residential	17,816,183	56.83%	17,855,660	56.94%	0.13%
Vacant Land	2,172,921	6.93%	2,417,043	7.71%	0.78%
Vacant Land Restricted	118,565	0.38%	115,210	0.37%	-0.01%
Totals	**31,352,664**	**100.00%**	**31,352,664**	**100.00%**	**0.00%**


Total Rates Revenue - % Change by Differential Rate Type - Year 1
-0.80%
-0.60%
-0.40%
-0.20%
0.00%
0.20%
0.40%
0.60%
Commercial
0.24%
Cult & Rec
0.00%
Farm
0.65%
Industrial
0.15%
Residential
0.29%
Vacant
0.50%
Vacant Restricted
0.05%


Total Rates Revenue - % Change by Differential Rate Type - Year 2
-1.50%
-1.00%
-0.50%
0.00%
0.50%
1.00%
Commercial
0.31%
Cult & Rec
0.00%
Farm
1.38%
Industrial
0.17%
Residential
0.13%
Vacant
0.78%
Vacant Restricted
0.01%

9.2.2 Municipal Charge revenue

The Municipal Charge is a regressive tax and has a greater impact upon lower valued properties, which may have a lower capacity to pay. The Steering Committee recommended the removal of the Municipal Charge. In 2013/14, South Gippsland Shire Council raised $6,270,533 by way of a Municipal Charge. This amount will now be raised by way of the property wealth tax system, which in effect shifts the burden from the lower valued properties to the higher valued properties.

One example of this shows that 8,044 (63%) residential properties out of a total of 12,767 properties will receive a reduction in their total rates paid as a result of the removal of the Municipal Charge. This relates to properties with a C.I.V. of $291,000 or less.

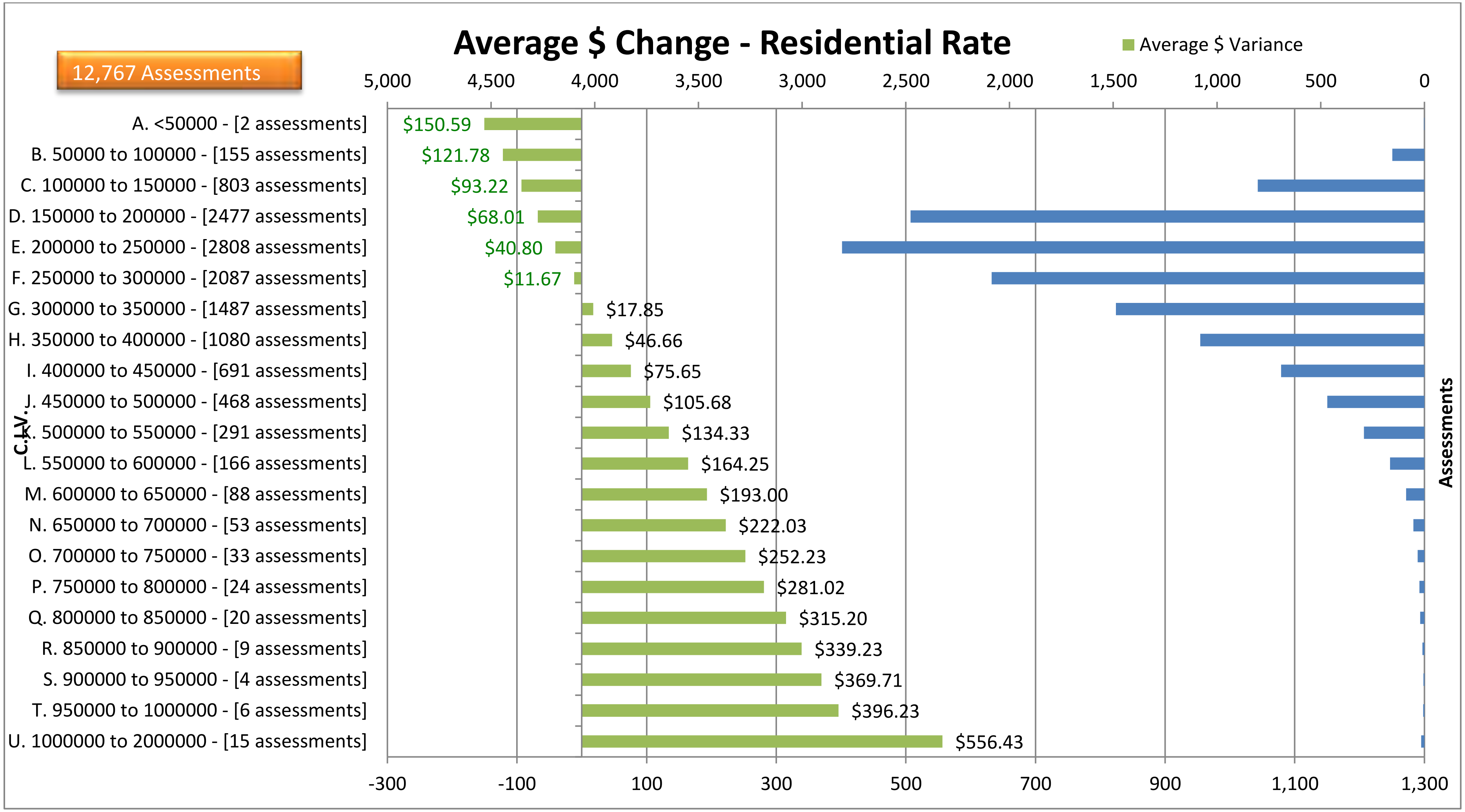
9.2.3 Summary of Average Rate Movements within Valuation Ranges

The following graphs provide a visual representation of the average dollar change that properties within a given valuation range might expect as a result of the changes. These graphs do not take into account any proposed rate increase that will occur for the 2014 / 2015 financial year, nor any valuation movements that may occur when the new valuations come into force that will be used for the 2014 / 2015 rate notices. The graphs are purely looking at the rates that were raised for the 2013 / 2014 year with a Municipal Charge and restating the rates without a Municipal Charge and with proposed differentials.

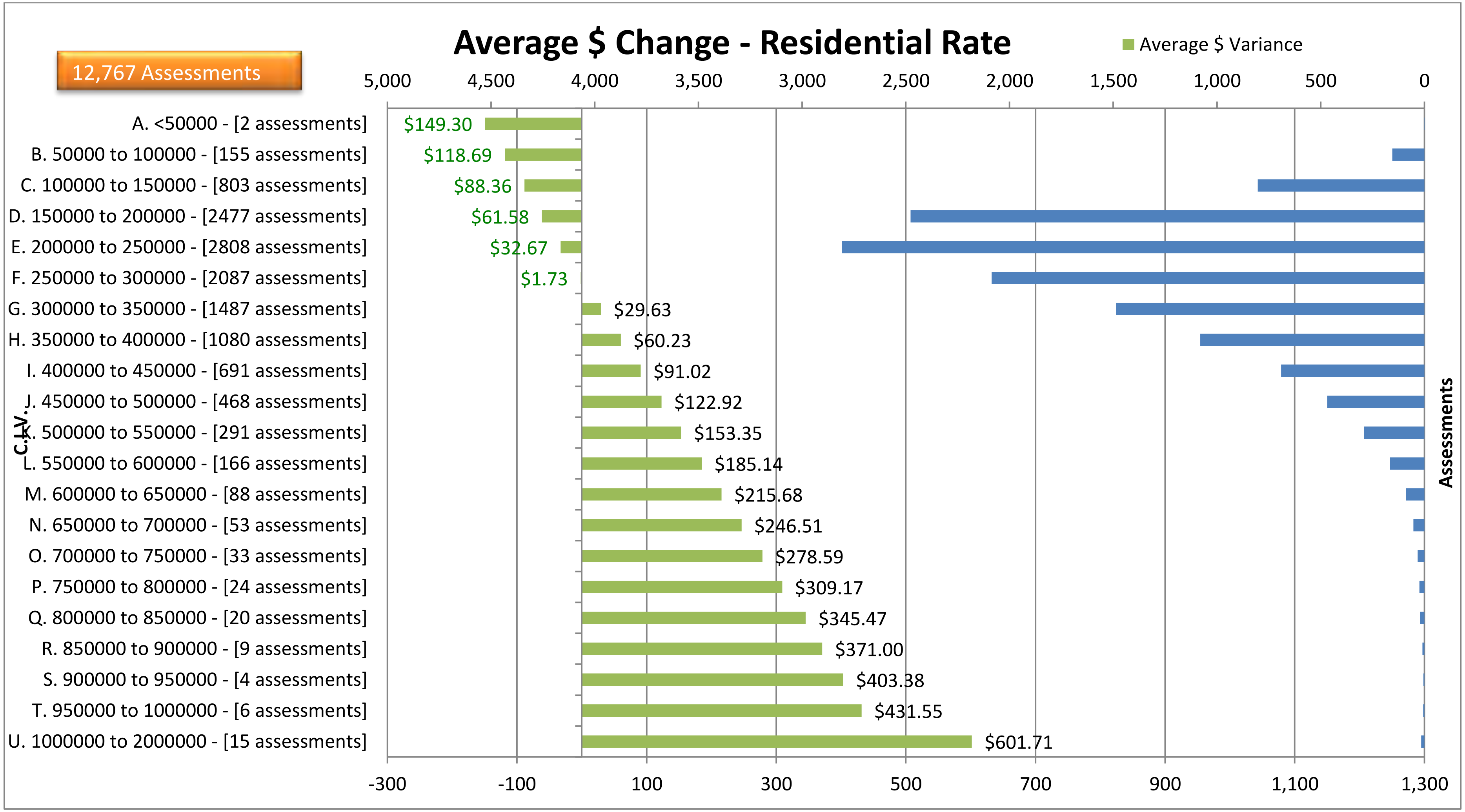
The green bars to the left show an average decrease in rates for the particular valuation range and the green bars to the right show an average increase in rates for that valuation range. The blue bars from the right show how many assessments / properties are included in the valuation ranges.

There is a general trend in each graph that shows that the greater number of properties will be at the lower valuation ranges which receive either a reduction in overall rates or a relatively low increase.

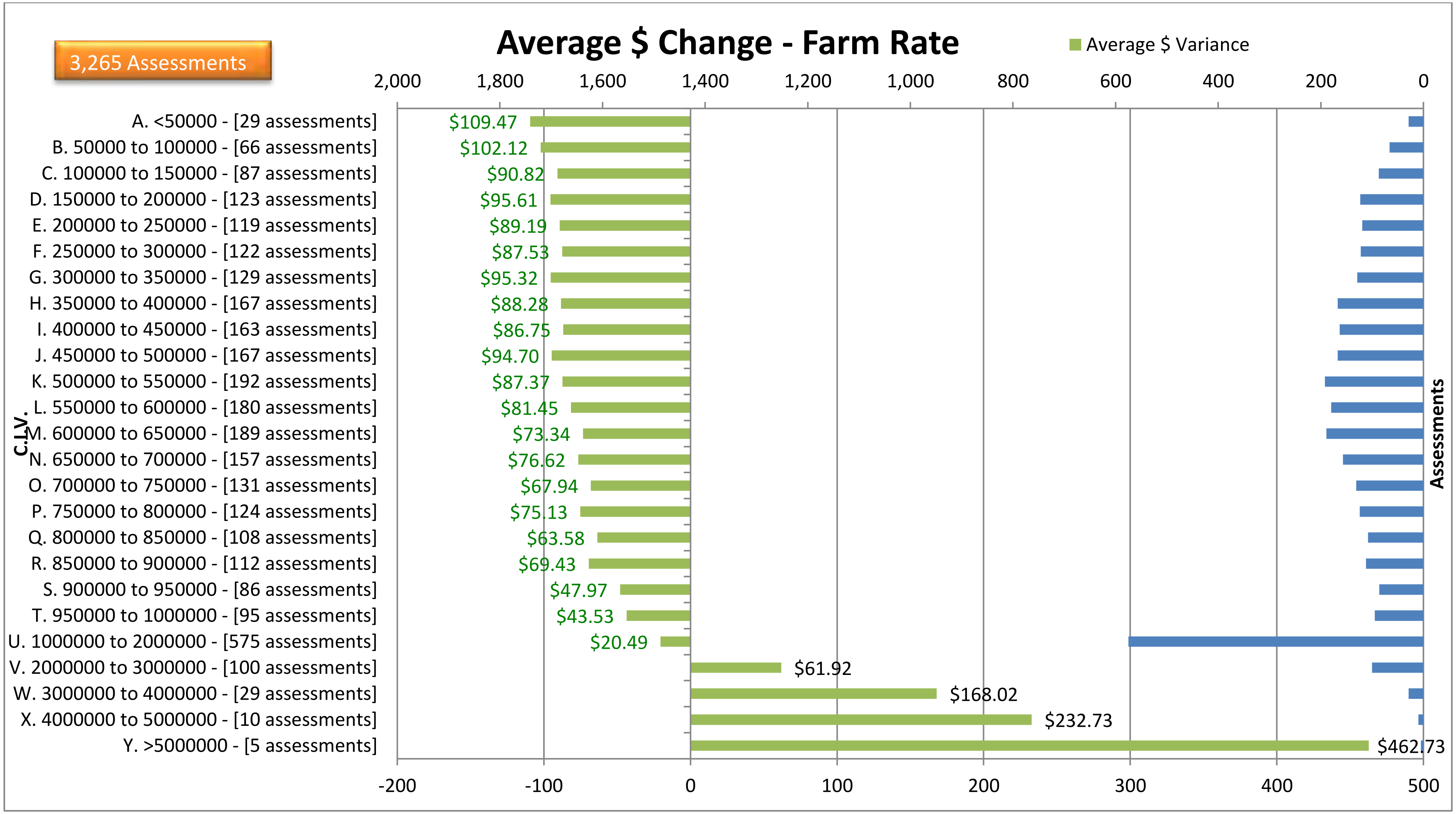
9.2.3.1 Residential rate – Year 1



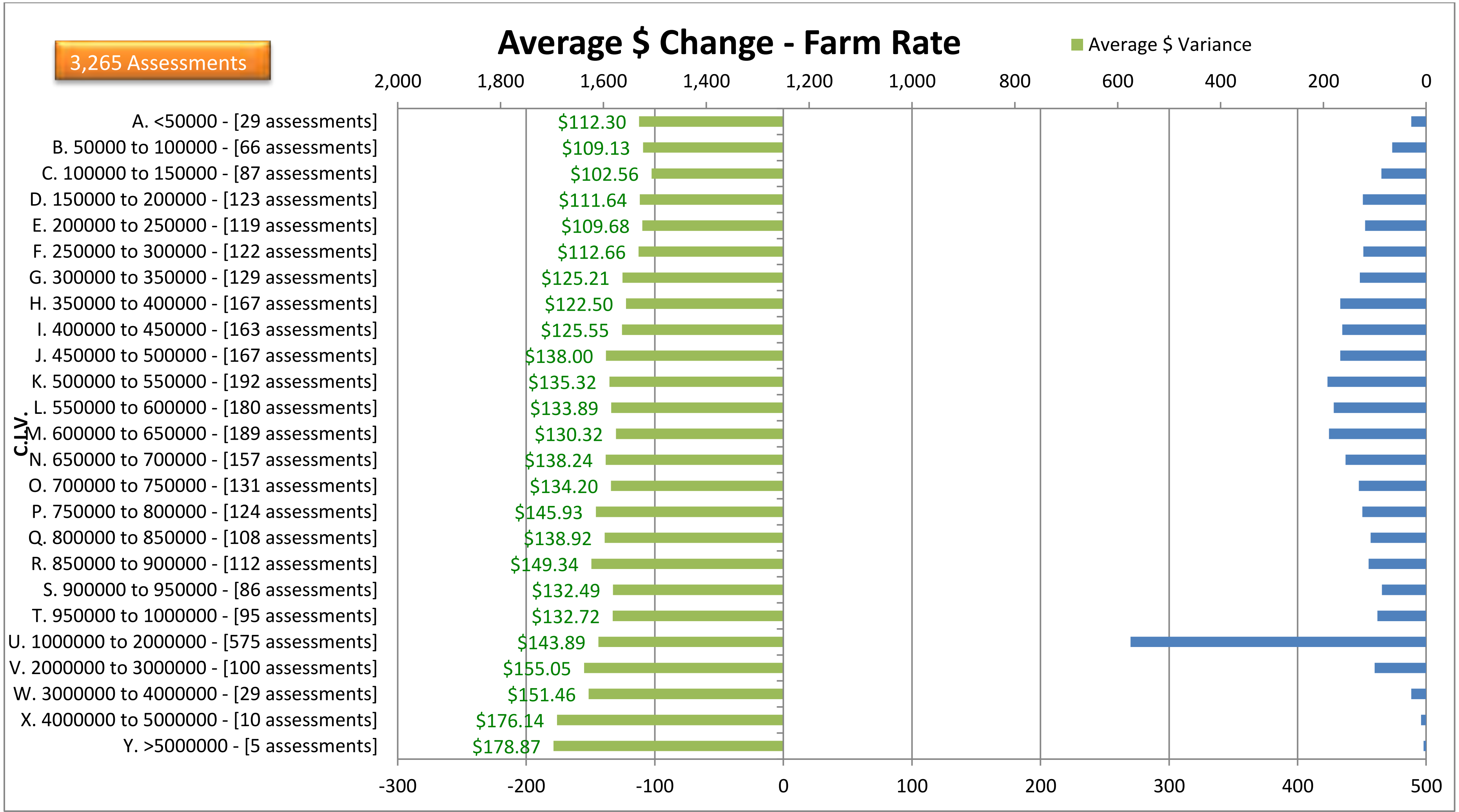
9.2.3.2 Residential rate – Year 2



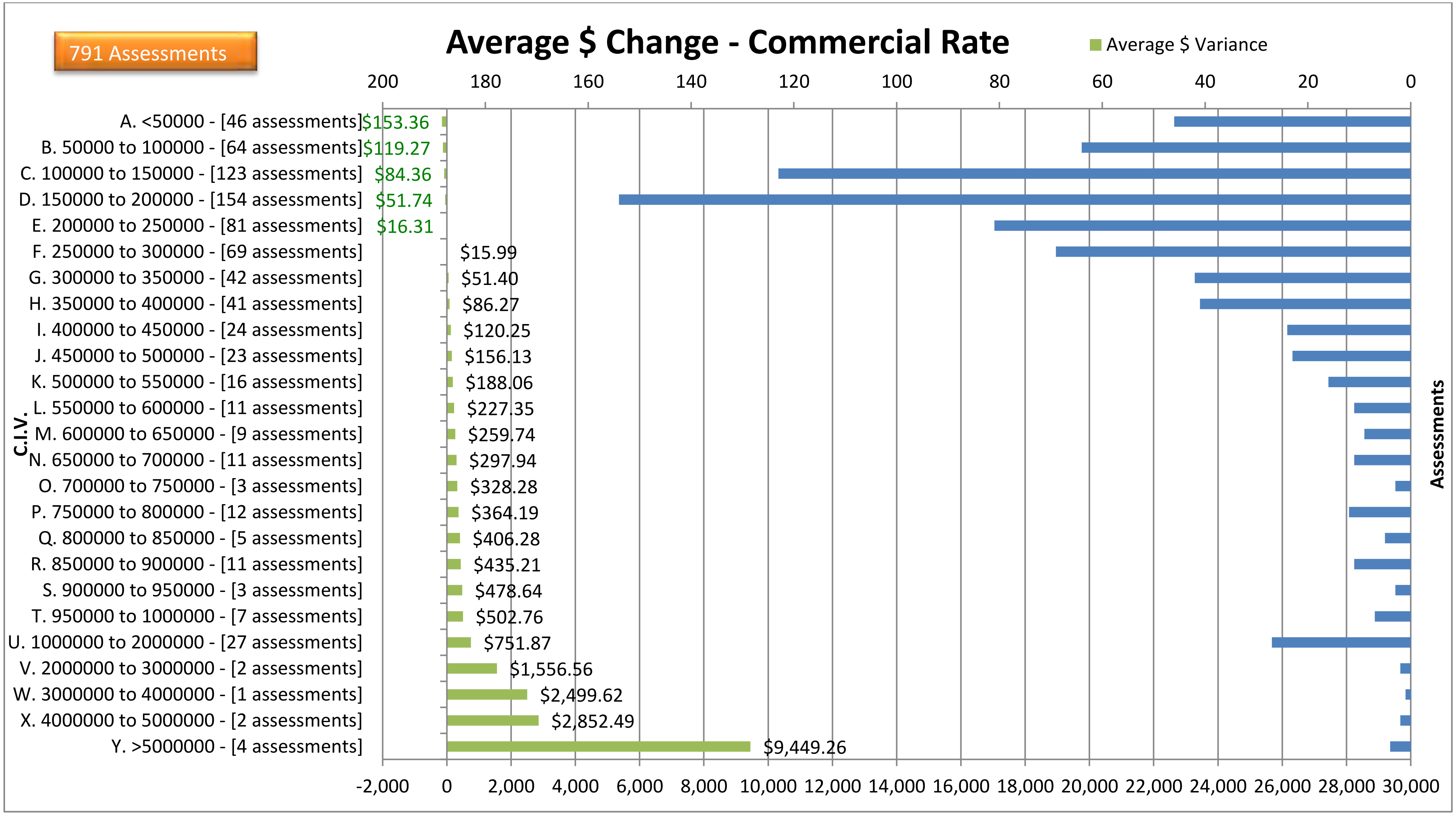
9.2.3.3 Farm rate – Year 1



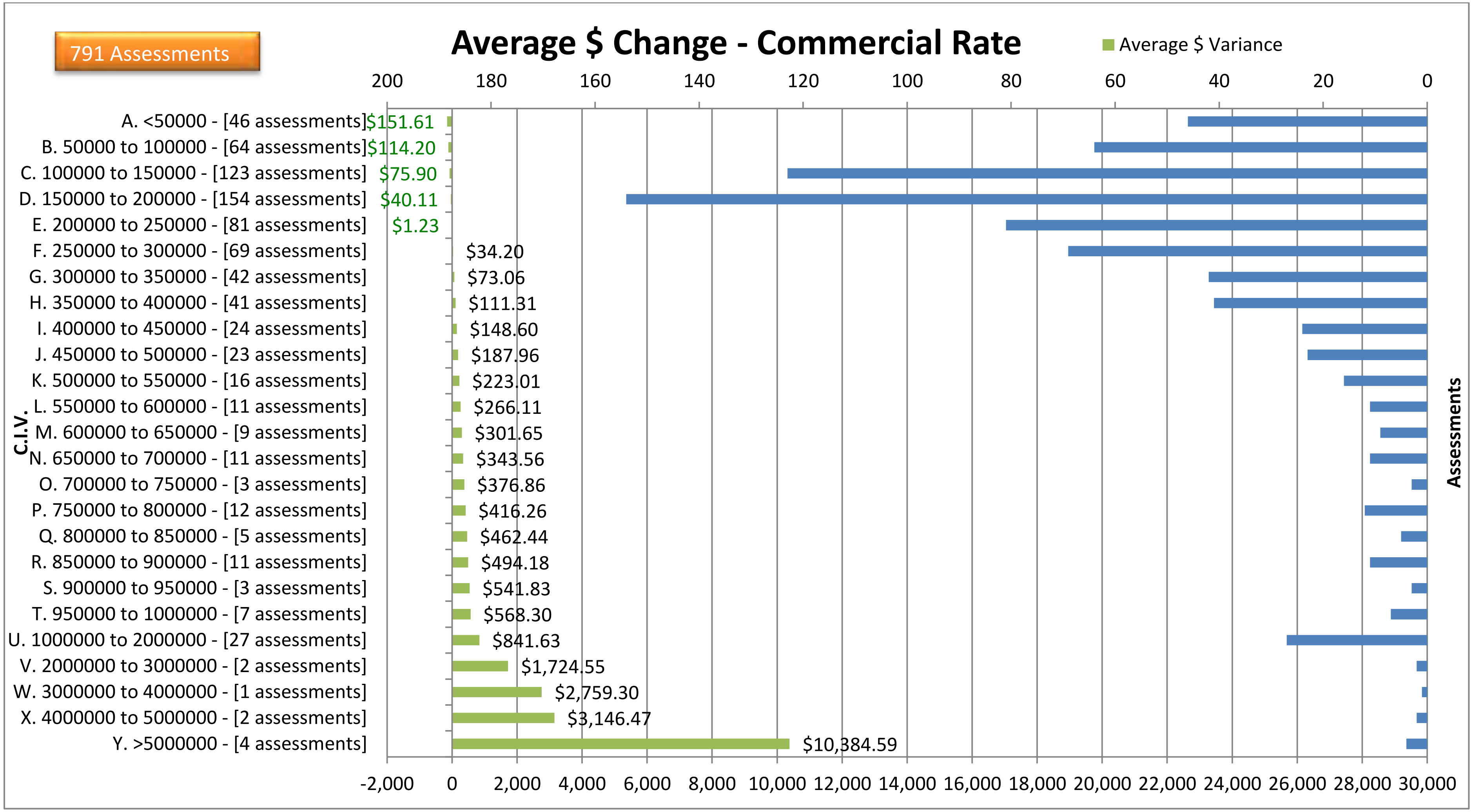
9.2.3.4 Farm rate – Year 2



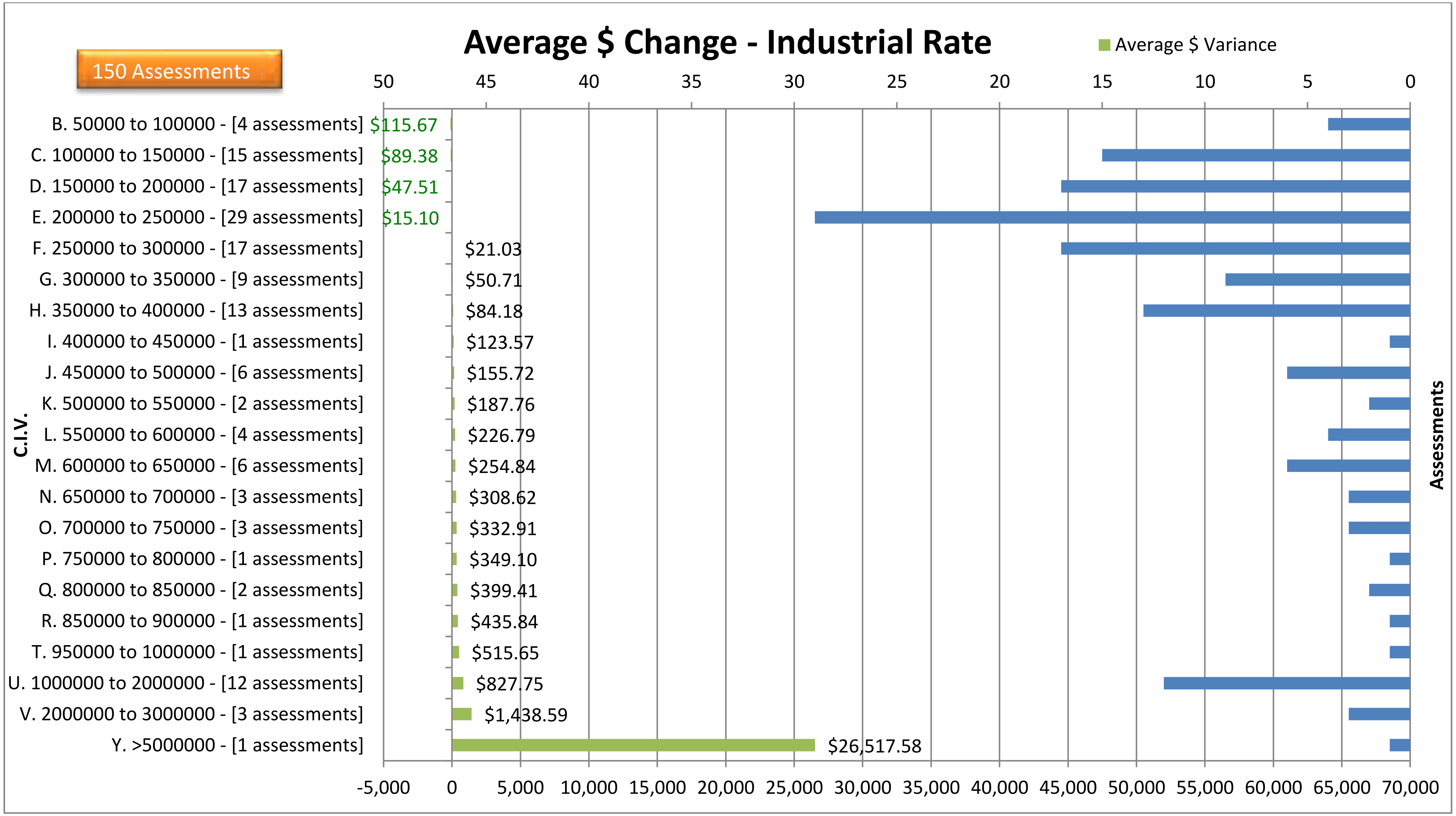
9.2.3.5 Commercial rate – Year 1



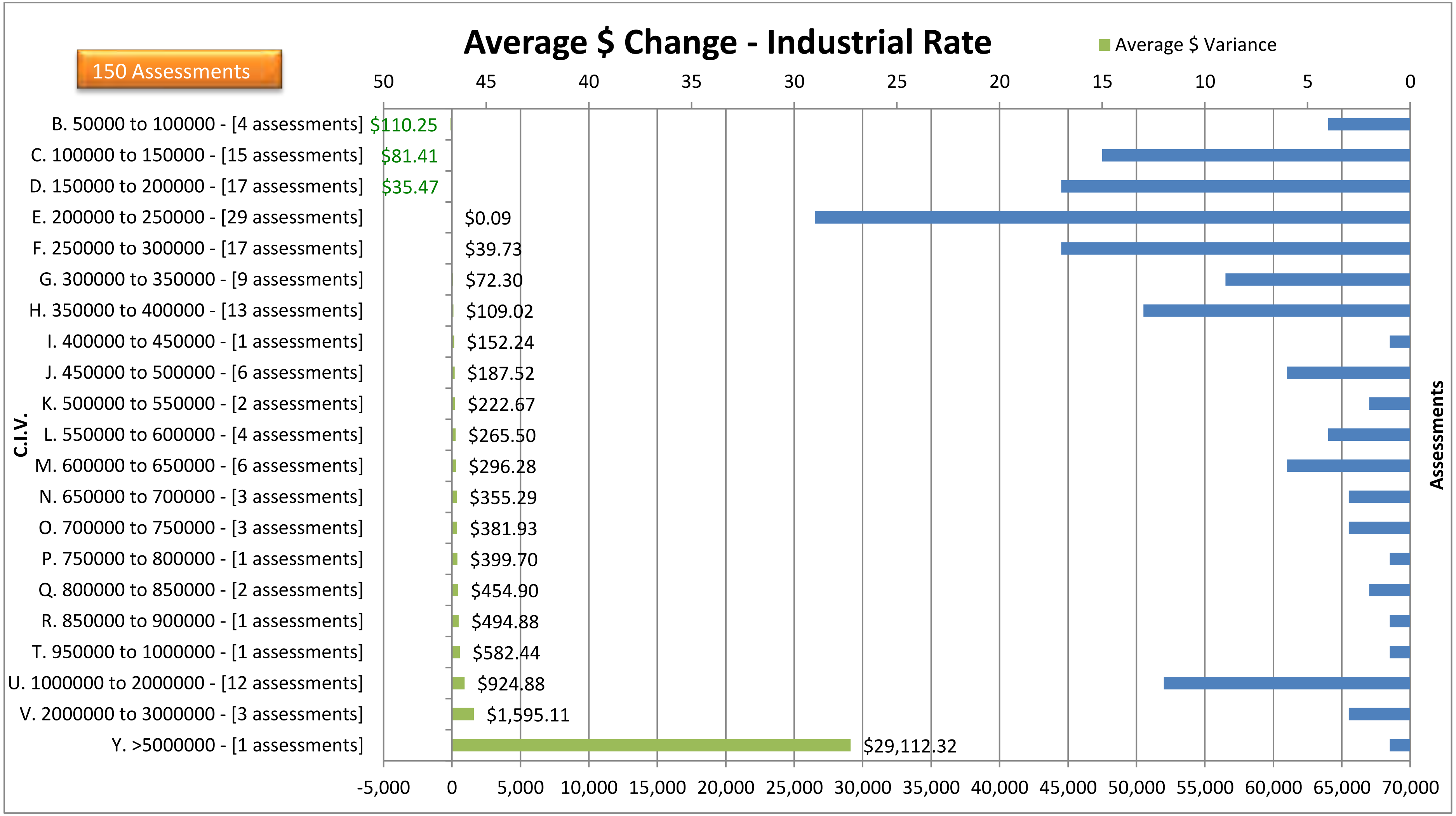
9.2.3.6 Commercial rate – Year 2



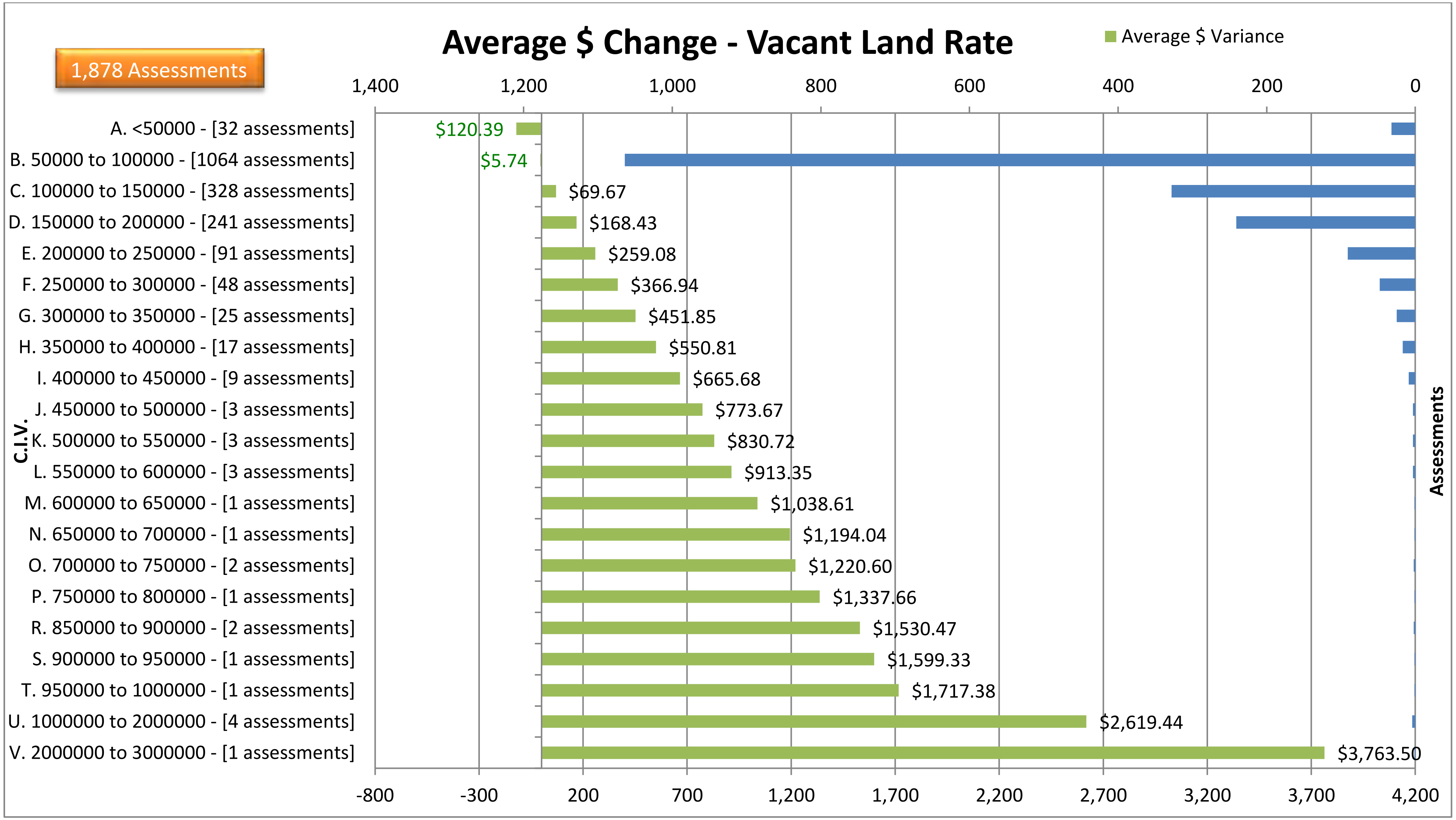
9.2.3.7 Industrial rate – Year 1



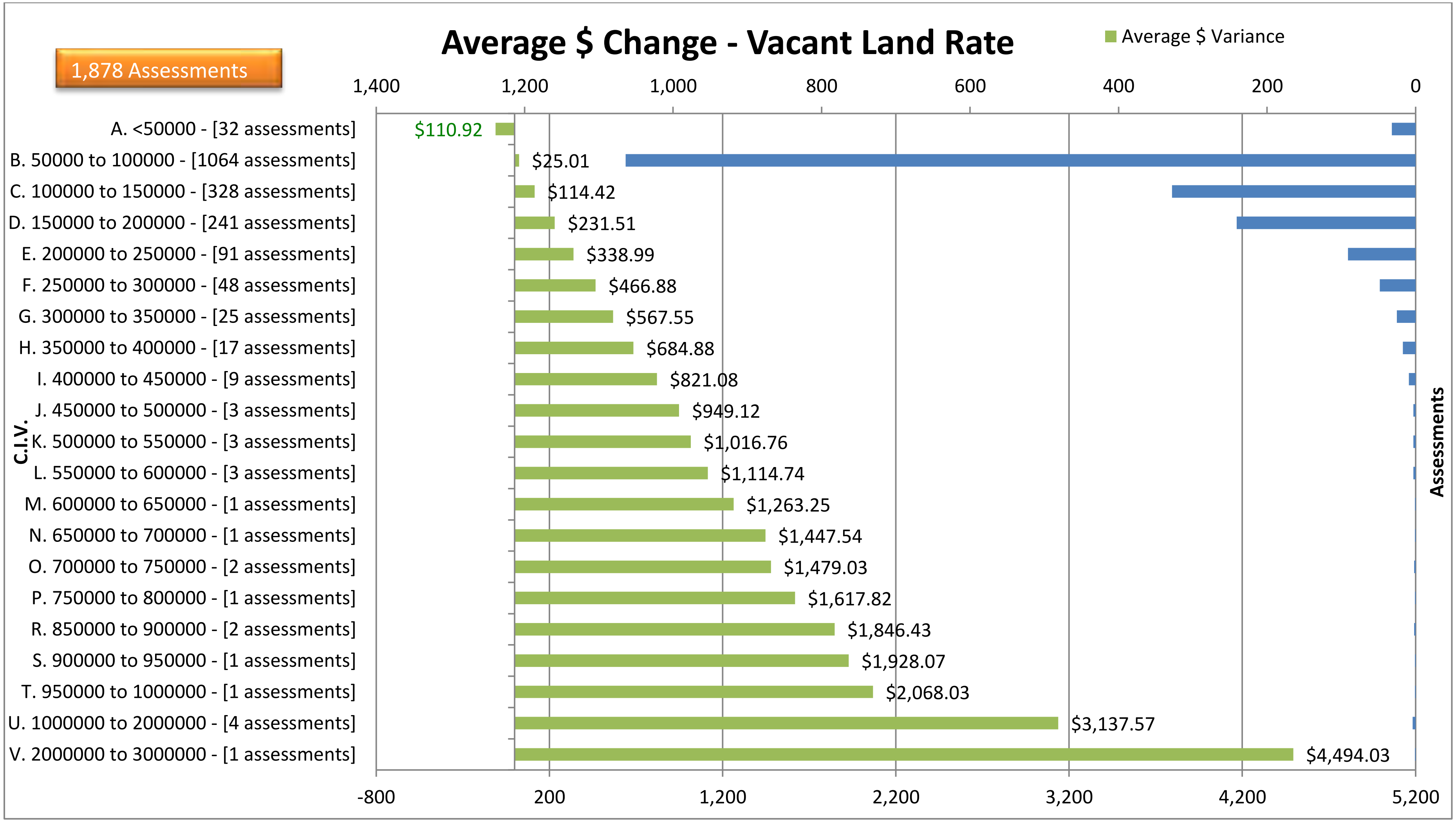
9.2.3.8 Industrial rate – Year 2



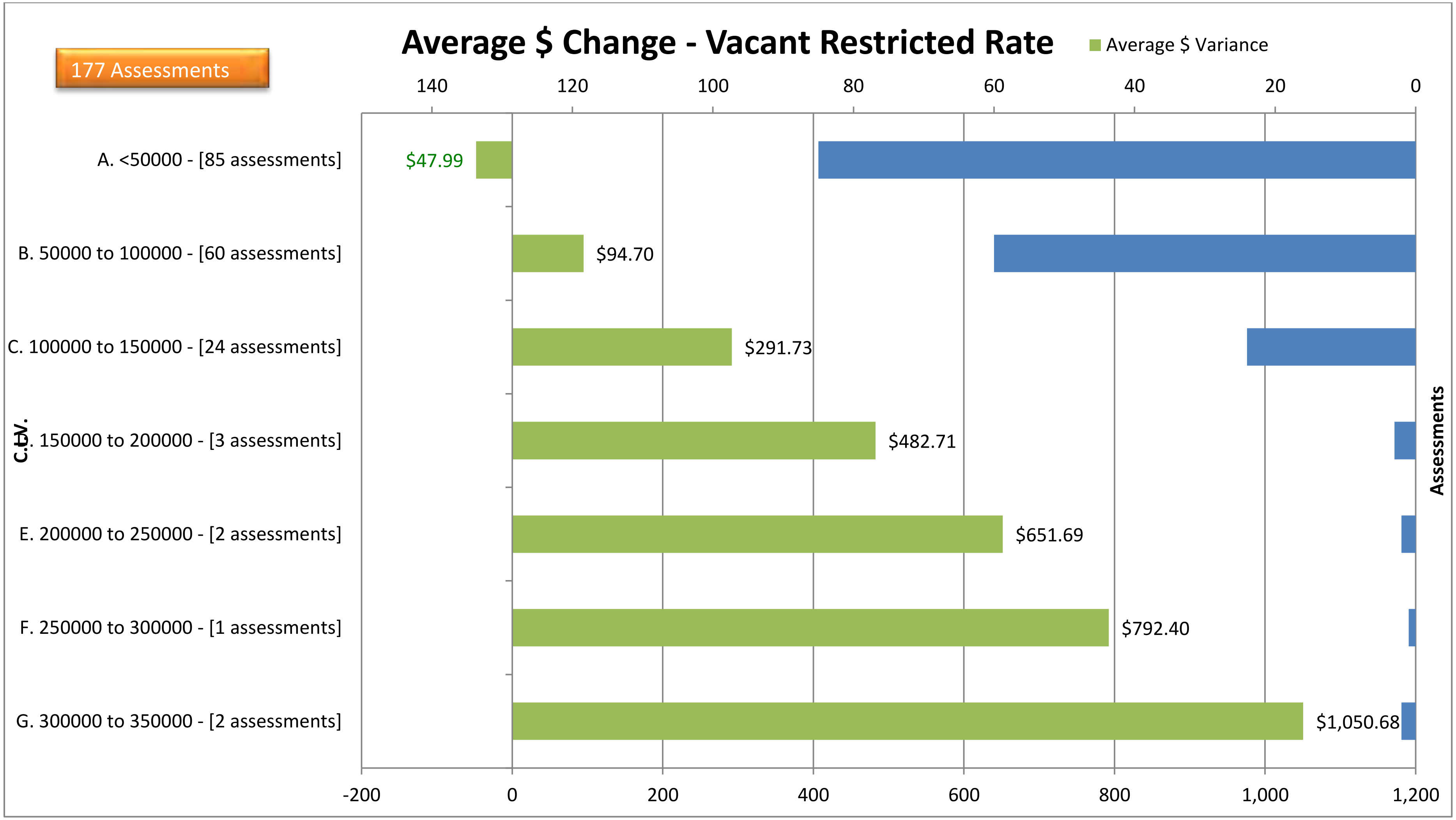
9.2.3.9 Vacant Land rate – Year 1



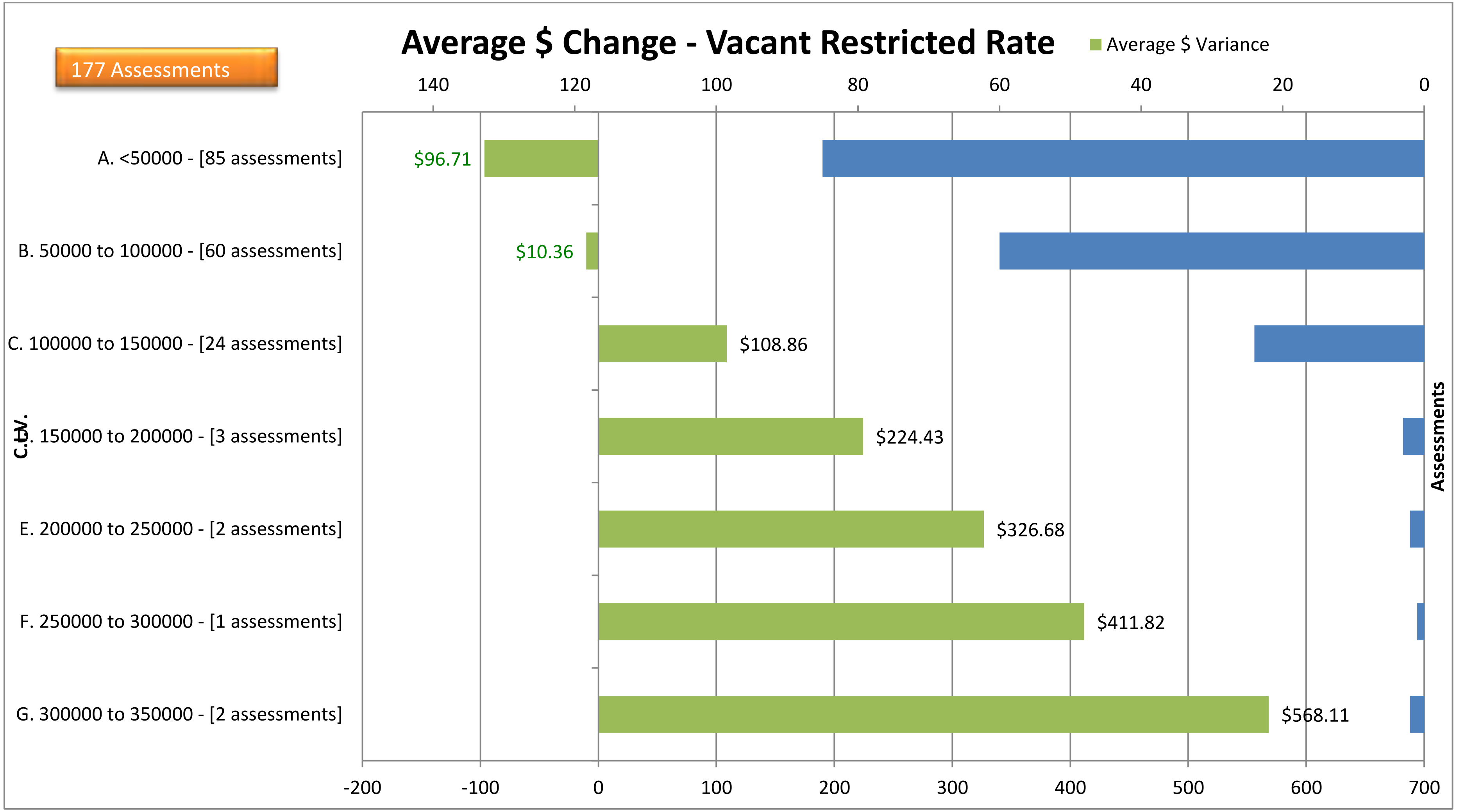
9.2.3.10 Vacant Land rate – Year 2



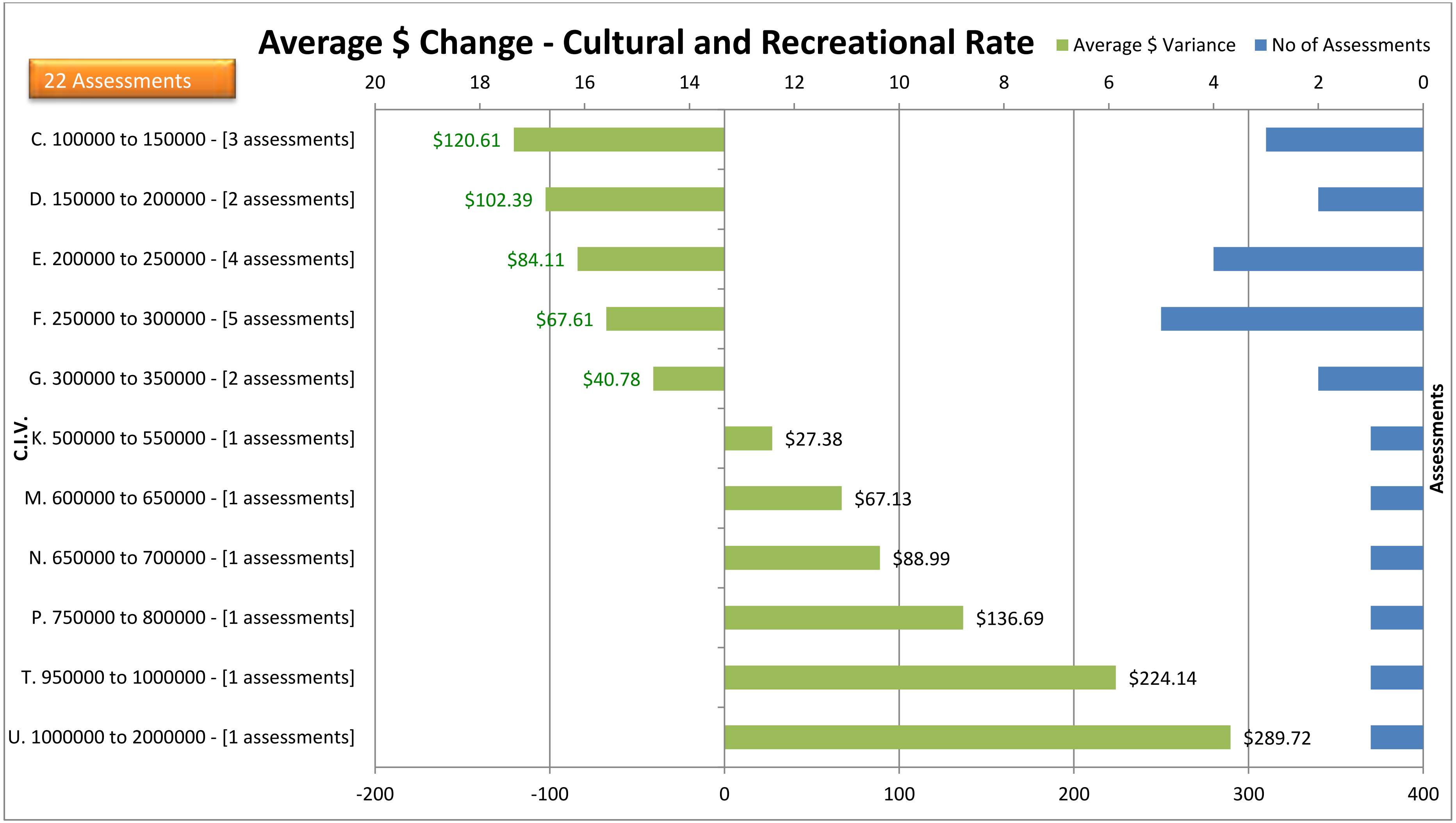
9.2.3.11 Vacant Land Restricted rate – Year 1



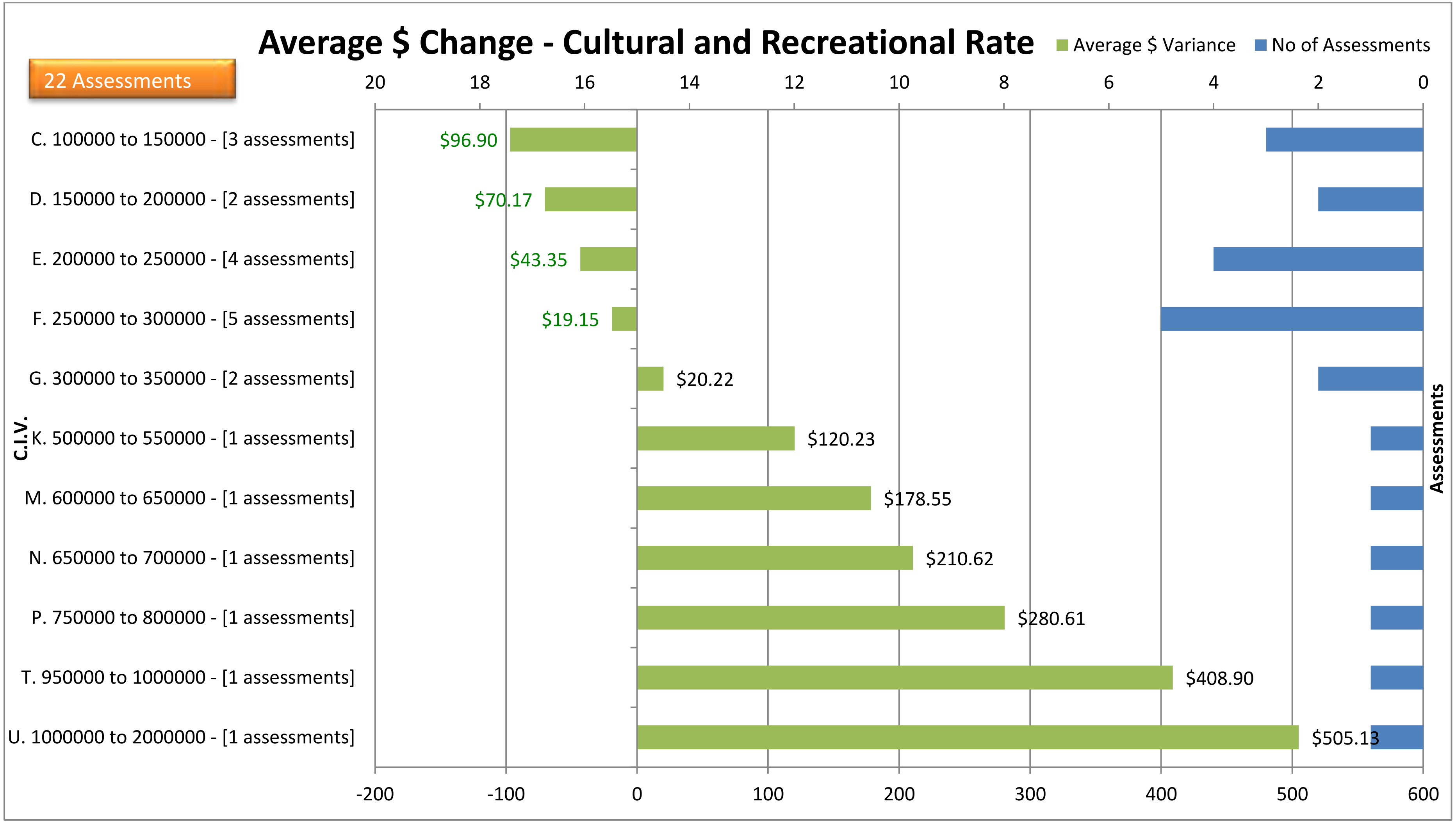
9.2.3.12 Vacant Land Restricted rate – Year 2



9.2.3.13 Cultural and Recreational rate – Year 1



9.2.3.14 Cultural and Recreational rate – Year 2



10 Acknowledgements

Council would like to acknowledge the time, effort and commitment given by the members of the Rating Strategy Review Steering Committee.

Council would like to acknowledge the advice and documentation provided by Greater Shepparton City Council in establishing a framework that could effectively involve members of the community in the review of Council's Rating Strategy.

Council would like to acknowledge the Municipal Association Victoria produced documents, parts of which were used in this document.

Council would like to acknowledge the guidelines provided by the State Government to assist councils in addressing the recently amended legislation for rating strategies.

Council would like to acknowledge the Rating Strategies of other Victorian regional and neighboring councils, from which some text has been directly copied into this document.

Council would like to acknowledge interested members of the community that participated in the community engagement activities to inform Council's revised Rating Strategy.