

# Planning (City Centre - Urban) Design Guide 2024

**Notifiable instrument NI2024–515**

made under the

**Planning Act 2023, s 50 (Design guides)**

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**1 Name of instrument**

This instrument is the *Planning (City Centre - Urban) Design Guide 2024*.

**2 Commencement**

This instrument commences on 27 September 2024.

**3 Design guides**

I make the design guides at schedule 1.

**4 Revocation**

This instrument revokes the *Planning (City Centre - Urban) Design Guide 2023* (NI2023-726).

Chris Steel MLA  
Minister for Planning  
9 September 2024



# City Centre **Urban Design Guide**

Place  
Specific  
Design  
Guide







## Acknowledgement of Country

*Yuma*

*Dhawura Nguna Dhawura Ngunnawal*

*Yanggu ngalawiri dhunimanyin Ngunnawalwari  
dhawurawari*

*Nginggada Dindi yindumaralidjinyin*

*Dhawura Ngunnawal yindumaralidjinyin*

*Hello,*

*This is Ngunnawal Country*

*Today we are meeting on Ngunnawal country*

*We always respect Elders, male and female*

*We always respect Ngunnawal Country*

**The ACT Government acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognises any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.**

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# CONTENTS

## CITY CENTRE URBAN DESIGN GUIDE

<b>PART ONE: INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Site and Land Use</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Introduction and purpose</b>	<b>2</b>	3.1 City Centre context and character	36
<b>How to use this guide</b>	<b>3</b>	3.2 Site configuration	40
<b>Place-based design thinking</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Access and Movement</b>	<b>42</b>
What is place based design?	4	4.1 Streets as places of movement	44
Why is public space important?	4	4.2 Streets as places	48
Looking forward at the City Centre	4	4.3 Parking, loading and services	58
Place identity	5	<b>Public Spaces and Amenity</b>	<b>60</b>
City Centre scale	6	5.1 Public open spaces	62
Existing City Centre Character	7	5.2 Placemaking	64
		5.3 Art and culture	66
		<b>Built Form and Building Design</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>PART TWO: DESIGN GUIDANCE</b>	<b>9</b>	6.1 Building design and architectural quality	70
<b>Country and Place</b>	<b>10</b>	6.2 Interface and activation	72
1.1 Ngunnawal cultural resonance	12	6.3 Entertainment precinct	74
<b>Urban Structure and Natural Systems</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>Sustainability and Environment</b>	<b>76</b>
2.1 Structuring the City Centre	16	7.1 Building performance	78
2.2 Natural systems	18	7.2 Green Infrastructure	80
2.3 City Centre precincts	20		
City Hill	24	<b>PART THREE: APPENDIX</b>	<b>83</b>
City North-East	26	City Centre Urban Design checklist	84
City North-West	28	Glossary	88
City South-East	30		
West Basin and Acton Waterfront	32		





A fair place for all.  
A vital and energetic place for  
people to enjoy and meet.  
A place that is community  
focussed, walkable, public  
transport-oriented, sustainable,  
resilient and connected to its  
landscape.

*Canberra City Plan Vision*

Location: Canberra City Centre, ACT.



A nighttime photograph of a city street. In the background, there are modern buildings with illuminated windows. Streetlights are visible, casting a glow on the road and surrounding trees. A large, semi-transparent white circle is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the title text. The bottom right corner features a dark purple curved shape.

# **Part One:** Introduction

# INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The Canberra City Centre’s competitiveness and economic success, like that of other cities, are now more than ever dependent on its urban attractiveness and liveability. Continued growth for the City Centre gives important potential to improve the liveability, economic performance and long-term growth. Recognising the distinct characteristics of the City Centre as it is today and planning for success in the future is now critical.

The ACT Government has developed a new planning system to promote better outcomes for the ACT and support the well-being of those who live and work here. A new Planning Act, a new Territory Plan and the addition of a new level of planning known as district strategies are among the key reforms to the planning system.

The new planning system introduces design guides to help with the interpretation and application of the Territory Plan’s assessment outcomes. The design guides and design evaluation process will be critical in supporting the assessment processes, particularly those planning provisions that are less prescriptive and leave more room for interpretation and innovation.

The ACT Government have developed three overarching design guides that sit across the whole of the ACT. These include:

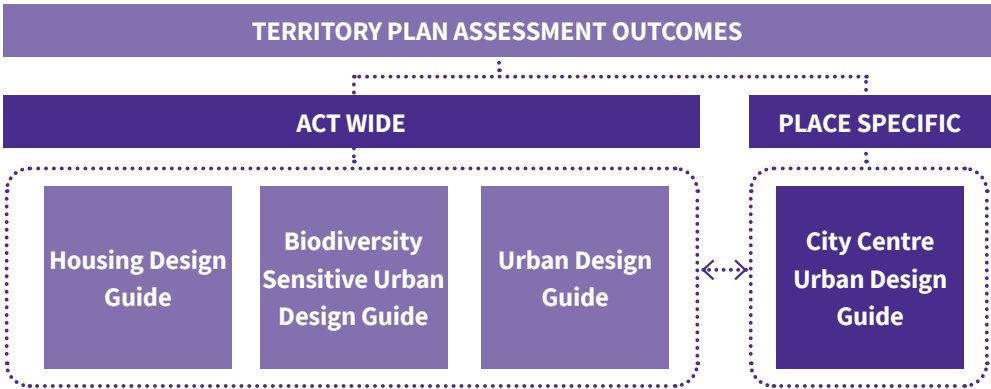
- i. Urban Design Guide (UDG) addresses public space, streetscape and built form interface outcomes at a range of scales
- ii. Housing Design Guide (HDG) addresses housing and built form outcomes at a range of densities, excluding single residential dwelling
- iii. Biodiversity Sensitive Urban Design Guide (BSUD) provides guidance on biodiversity and ecological design matters.

The guides support the development and interpretation of statutory policy by providing clear written and visual guidance to help proponents interpret the expected outcomes, while supporting an outcomes-based approach for development assessment.

The City Centre Urban Design Guide is a place specific guide that provides additional support in the translation of the Assessment Outcomes. Place-specific design guides are an extension to the above guidance, focussing on more specific projects and outcomes relevant to that place. For more general guidance not outlined in the City Centre Urban Design Guide, refer to the above documents.

To assist with the development assessment process, proponents should consider and respond to the Territory Plan and associated design guides at the beginning of the design process, when preparing plans and DA documents, to ensure alignment with the Assessment Outcomes. This will support the application, development assessment and evaluation process.

Where there is inconsistency between the ACT Urban Design Guide and the City Centre Urban Design Guide, this City Centre Urban Design Guides will take precedence.





# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The Canberra City Centre Urban Design Guide communicates the ACT Governments intent to deliver high quality best-practice design outcomes for the City Centre. This design guide demonstrates place-based development outcomes that support the delivery of the Territory Plan Assessment Outcomes.

The City Centre Urban Design Guide follows the same overarching themes as the whole-of-ACT Urban Design Guide to provide direct alignment and ease of reference, as shown below.

This document uses industry terms. Please refer to the glossary in the appendices.



Within that, guidance identifies the following scales:

## City Centre

The City Centre scale focusses on bringing together the key precincts that make up the City Centre collectively as a whole. City Centre strategies relate to the seven key themes above and focus on built form and public space outcomes, with a key focus on the interface between these elements, to encourage a holistic approach to development for the City Centre.



## Precinct

Individual city precincts focus on identifying unique characteristics and outcomes for a specific part of the City Centre. Precinct plans begin to outline design responses in relation to character and context. Potential key moves are identified with design responses. Future investigations support the desired characteristics and outcomes for each precinct.



## Block and building

At the project scale, exemplars and ideas are identified for place-based projects that are key to the City Centre. For each new development proposal, consideration must be given to each of the City Centre strategies, as well as any specific precinct intent and guidance relevant to the proposal.



*Design guides may provide guidance that goes beyond the requirements set in the Municipal Infrastructure Standards (MIS) for the design of municipal infrastructure. Proponents will still be required to provide a design response to the design guide.*

# PLACE-BASED DESIGN THINKING

Canberra is made up of many different places and districts, each with its own combination of people, culture, built form, landscaping and natural features. The distinct character of each district helps to define it, and helps planners and developers create places that are memorable, with distinct identities and functions. Good design focusses on these aspects, noting that the way a place makes people feel is significantly more important than merely how it looks.

## WHAT IS PLACE-BASED DESIGN?

A place-based approach to design builds upon a place's character to create places that are responsive to their context and create a desirable sense of place. Designing for place requires a deep understanding of the physical, environmental, social and cultural attributes that make a place desirable, recognising that solutions that work in one place, may not work in another.

Place-based design recognises current values and patterns while enabling change, as envisaged by the planning reform, to create a compact, sustainable, affordable, vibrant and equitable city.

## WHY IS PUBLIC SPACE IMPORTANT?

The importance of public space and amenity as part of successful urban outcomes cannot be diminished. The design guides specifically call out public space as a key element to be addressed. When public space is designed well, it provides places for human interaction and activity, including culture, entertainment, sport, recreation and commercial activity.

## LOOKING FORWARD AT THE CITY CENTRE

In a global economy increasingly characterised by competition between cities, an innovative and diverse Canberra City Centre is well-positioned to boost its competitiveness to generate, attract and retain investment and talent and further develop its knowledge-based sectors. Good urban design and land use planning can significantly build the prosperity and appeal of the City Centre as a place to live, work, learn and play.



*Location: City Walk, Canberra*



## PLACE IDENTITY

In the past ten years, Canberra has seen tremendous growth, as seen by the arrival of new municipal, residential and mixed-use developments, as well as transport infrastructure. The redevelopment of several of the City Centre precincts has given the city a new identity and residents more desirable places to live, such as new laneway-inspired residential development at New Acton. It is expected that more than 20,000 people will be living in the City Centre by 2040, an increase of 16,000 people.

The light rail network has increased the City Centre's liveability and connectivity, providing a reliable and modern transport system that connects into and through the City Centre. This, in turn, has promoted better integration between public transport options as well as active travel. As the City Centre continues to grow, and the light rail network expands, this will increase accessibility for both local residents and visitors.

The City Centre supports a young and diverse demographic, with 56% of its residents being between the ages of 20 and 34 years. There is a strong sense of

community. The City Centre supports a strong sense of community and diverse demographic through an eclectic community program, offering activities for all to enjoy. Streets are sprinkled with local art pieces and stimulated by socio-cultural attractions, however it is more than Canberra's socio-cultural status that makes it one of the world's most liveable cities.

The City Centre is accessible, contemporary, innovative and progressive; and its community is active, collaborative and colourful. There is, however, still so much room to grow and continue to diversify, which will be supported by an increasing population.

Canberra is a sustainable city that celebrates seasonal charm and the harmonisation of natural and urban environments. It is the first mainland city to achieve one hundred per cent renewable energy. This approach will support the continued growth of the City Centre in a sustainable way, supporting social, environmental and economic benefits to the community.

*Location: New Acton, Canberra*





## CITY CENTRE SCALE

The past century has seen Canberra evolve from a design competition through to the City Centre it is today. While careful planning and considerable intent have been present since the beginning, there are numerous physical challenges contributing to the way the City Centre currently operates. This Design Guide provides direction toward overcoming some of these challenges in the City Centre.

The current size of Canberra's City Centre in relation to the overall population presents challenges regarding pedestrian access, walkability, and activation.

The diagram below compares Canberra's City Centre size to those of Sydney and Melbourne, two major Australian cities. It shows that Canberra's City Centre is larger compared to the total population of these cities.

On the other hand, looking at the city of Newcastle, which has a comparable population, it highlights a more appropriate size City Centre for its current population.

As the population continues to increase, Canberra anticipates increased density near activity centres, employment areas, and high-quality active travel connections. This Design Guide identifies and supports distinct precinct scales within the City Centre, each with its unique identity and land use activation. This will promote clusters of activation for the City Centre.

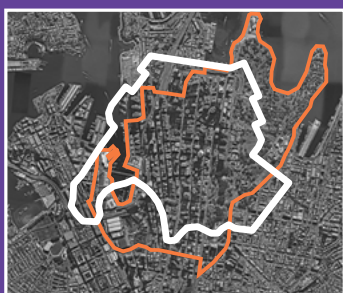
### CITY CENTRE COMPARISON



**Canberra population:**  
454,000 (2021 Census)



**Newcastle population:**  
390,519 (2021 Census)



**Sydney population:**  
5,231,147 (2021 census)



**Melbourne population:**  
4,900,000 (2021 census)

## EXISTING CITY CENTRE CHARACTER

Character influences the look and feel of an area and contributes to a place's identity through a combination of both physical and built elements. The City Centre is influenced by the Griffin Plan, leveraging the natural topography, the rise of City Hill, long views and vistas to hills including Mt Ainslie, and elevating the key organising features of the National Triangle.

The following elements have been identified to describe the current overall character of the City Centre.



### Land use

Land uses across the City Centre are generally mixed and characterised by the large scale of City Centre blocks, surface parking areas and single-purpose activities. These factors tend to create an atmosphere of vastness characterised by dispersed and disconnected activity.



### Structural features

The apex of City Hill, at the intersection of the axial avenues of Commonwealth and Constitution Avenue, and radial layout of the City Centre highlights key features of the City Centre and serve as the basis for creating more distinctive precincts each with its own character.



### Built form

The built form resulting from the Griffin Plan and current building controls along the prominent streets in the City Hill precinct has two distinctive forms: building heights of up to 25 meters, and landmark buildings up to RL 617.



### Public space

The City Centre supports a large amount of open space of varying quality, condition and use, with much of the public space corridors dominated by wide streetscapes with poor amenity. This acts as an impediment to safe active travel and reduces the sense of place for the City Centre.



### Social character

The City Centre is the centre of economic activity and employment for Canberra and the region, primarily comprised of a young and diverse cultural, student and residential cohort, as well as workers in knowledge intensive industries, health and education services.



### Contextual design

The City Centre supports various natural, built, and cultural features that can inform future design responses to strengthen its unique character qualities through considerate building and public space design. Some recent developments have responded thoughtfully to their context.



### Culture and heritage

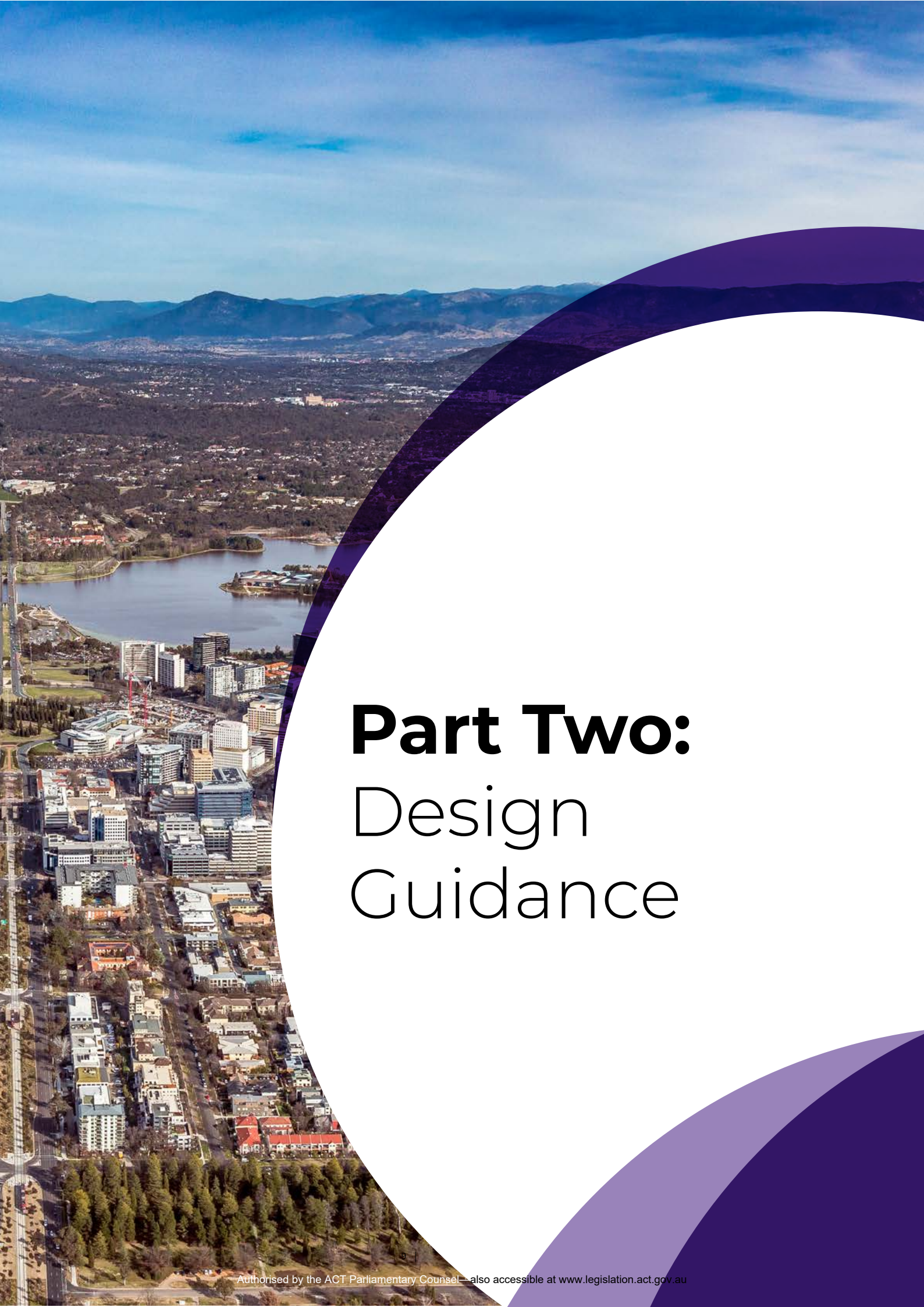
The Griffin Plan holds national significance creating a national capital for the new democratic nation, a symbolic place to reflect Australia's collective values. The City Centre supports numerous heritage sites of local and national significance that contribute to a rich and diverse character.





Location: City Centre,  
Canberra ACT.





# **Part Two:** Design Guidance



# COUNTRY AND PLACE

The Ngunnawal people, their culture and relationship to Country are foundational elements for all design projects in the ACT.

*The City Centre is of great importance as the capital city and prime commercial and retail centre. As we consider the future of the city, it is imperative to engage with and understand the complex interpretations of place and Country.*

## DESIGN ELEMENTS

### 1.1 NGUNNAWAL CULTURAL RESONANCE

**1.1A** Governance, Process and  
Engagement

**1.1B** Buildings, Spaces and  
Landscape Character

**1.1C** Wayfinding and Navigation





A 'Welcome to Country' sequence incorporated into the landscape design features carvings by local First Nations artists.

Location: National Museum of Australia, Canberra



## 1.1 NGUNNAWAL CULTURAL RESONANCE

The interconnections between the Ngunnawal people, the landscape and all its value past, present and future is a foundational element of planning for the future development of the ACT.

Canberra has a rich Aboriginal history, dating back thousands of years before European settlement. The Ngunnawal people are the rights holders of the Canberra region and have strong cultural and spiritual connections to the land, rivers, and forests in and around the city.

### DESIGN GUIDANCE

#### 1.1A GOVERNANCE, PROCESS AND ENGAGEMENT

- i. Consider facilitating authentic and inclusive engagement and consultation processes with Ngunnawal people throughout the design and development process, particularly in the project's early stages to enable a holistic suite of strategy and design responses.
- ii. Recognise and respect Ngunnawal people as rights holders in the ACT, their sovereignty, governance, ways of knowing, thinking and being, their social and cultural practices, their priorities and concerns, and their meanings and values – facilitating safe and welcoming environments for co-creation.
- iii. Work alongside Ngunnawal Traditional Custodians of Country to protect, restore and manage sites of cultural significance through Connection to Country conversations with the Ngunnawal knowledge holders as deemed appropriate.
- iv. Incorporate the aspirations of Ngunnawal people into decision making, planning and management to acknowledge, celebrate and incorporate Ngunnawal values, meanings and culture that reflect whatever contemporary Ngunnawal decision-makers choose these elements to be.
- v. Acknowledge the structural inequality caused by colonial processes and the ways in which these have elevated and prioritised Western practices and knowledge structures to illuminate ways to move forward together in collaboration with the Ngunnawal people.
- vi. Deploy engagement tools that allow Ngunnawal people as knowledge holders to clearly contribute to projects in ways that are meaningful and beneficial to them.
- vii. Facilitate culturally appropriate engagement with the diverse First Nations people living in the ACT to collaborate on and contribute design perspectives respecting and valuing Ngunnawal Traditional Custodians' rights and protocols as decision-makers for Country.
- viii. Collaborate with Ngunnawal and ACT First Nations people to explore diverse employment, business and research opportunities.
- ix. Explore opportunities to incorporate Ngunnawal land management techniques into natural areas to facilitate employment opportunities and restorative landscape outcomes.
- x. Extend project partnerships and explore skill sharing opportunities to facilitate opportunities for stronger Aboriginal community networks.

#### Why this is important:

Completely and respectfully recognising Ngunnawal and First Nations people – their sovereignty, governance, ways of knowing, thinking and being, their social and cultural practices, their priorities and concerns, and their meanings, values and place as a contemporary and living culture – is fundamental in reconciliation, learning and enriching the lives of all Australians on all levels.

**Exemplar:**

A 'Welcome to Country' sequence incorporated into the landscape design features carvings by local First Nations artists.

Location: National Museum of Australia  
Design: T.C.L. Photo: T.C.L



### 1.1B BUILDING, SPACES AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- i. Identify and protect significant tangible and intangible Ngunnawal heritage, historic and environmental values to safeguard Ngunnawal histories, cultural values, narratives and knowledge systems for future generations.
- ii. Reflect cultural and heritage values through creative interventions and responses in built form and public spaces to incorporate Ngunnawal knowledge, stories and history of place and landscape into the urban environment.
- iii. Incorporate space for art, structures, planting, installations and embedding language to create both formal and informal opportunities for learning.
- iv. Showcase native endemic species to celebrate Ngunnawal ecologies and strengthen the sense of place.

**Tip: Ensure cultural safety in public space**

The design process must encourage cultural safety and ensure that spaces express and resonate with First Nations communities. Cultural safety requires that we do not speak for others or on behalf of others without their approval. Cultural safety creates a space for those who are often silenced to voice their concerns and a space for those who, historically, have been excluded. Cultural safety provides time for all who need to be heard. Cultural safety ensures that all expressions of culture are enabled, irrespective of personal opinions.

Daniele Hromek, What is cultural safety and how do we design for it?, Architecture AU 23rd Jan 2023

### 1.1C WAYFINDING AND NAVIGATION

- i. Incorporate Ngunnawal language and, where culturally appropriate, First Nations language through place naming and signage to improve community understanding of First Nations' histories and geographies, while strengthening a sense of place.
- ii. Consider use of illumination, lighting, projections, and digital technologies to create memorable landmarks.
- iii. Integrate artworks and languages through key spaces and routes.
- iv. Preserve and emphasis historic sight lines through articulation of key spaces and built form.

**Exemplar:**

The planting strategy acknowledges and preserves the native landscape, providing a "window to the past" for the local Aboriginal Guringai people.

Location: St Leonards Health Organisation Relocation. NSW  
Design: Arcadia, Photo: Paul McMillan





# URBAN STRUCTURE AND NATURAL SYSTEMS

Understanding and responding appropriately to the existing urban structure will support the human experience and success of the City Centre.

*To celebrate the City Centre's unique urban plan, vistas, inherent landscape topography and key views along strong geometrics should be maintained and enhanced when defining the City Centre's character. These qualities along with the existing land uses help to define several bespoke precincts, each with their own unique role and character.*

## DESIGN ELEMENTS

### 2.1 STRUCTURING THE CITY CENTRE

- 2.1A** Views, Vistas and Sight Lines
- 2.1B** Building Heights
- 2.1C** Landmark Buildings and Gateway Sites

### 2.2 NATURAL SYSTEMS

- 2.2A** Blue-Green Network
- 2.2B** Water Management

### 2.3 CITY CENTRE PRECINCTS

- 2.3A** City Hill Priority Directions
- 2.3B** City North-East Priority Directions
- 2.3C** City North-West Priority Directions
- 2.3D** City South-East Priority Directions
- 2.3E** West Basin and Acton Waterfront Priority Directions



Aerial view of Ainslie Avenue toward  
Canberra Centre



## 2.1 STRUCTURING THE CITY CENTRE

The structure of the City Centre is fundamental to the preservation of the city's unique urban plan

*The symbolic processional routes of the urban plan should be maintained and enhanced by strengthening views and sight lines along the geometry of the Griffin Plan through careful consideration of building heights, and important sites like landmark buildings and gateway sites. The urban structure should support the precinct's planned built form and land use arrangement.*

### DESIGN GUIDANCE

#### 2.1A VIEWS, VISTAS AND SIGHT LINES

- i. Ensure new development and public space outcomes respect the geometry and intent of the Griffin Plan and emphasise the national significance of the main approach routes and avenues.
- ii. Consider the built-form response to surrounding open spaces and streets to foster safe, pleasant and usable open space experiences and avoid adverse impacts to sun and micro-climatic conditions.
- iii. Maintain and enhance views to the Brindabella Ranges, Black Mountains and Mount Ainslie where possible from within the City Centre.

#### 2.1B BUILDING HEIGHTS

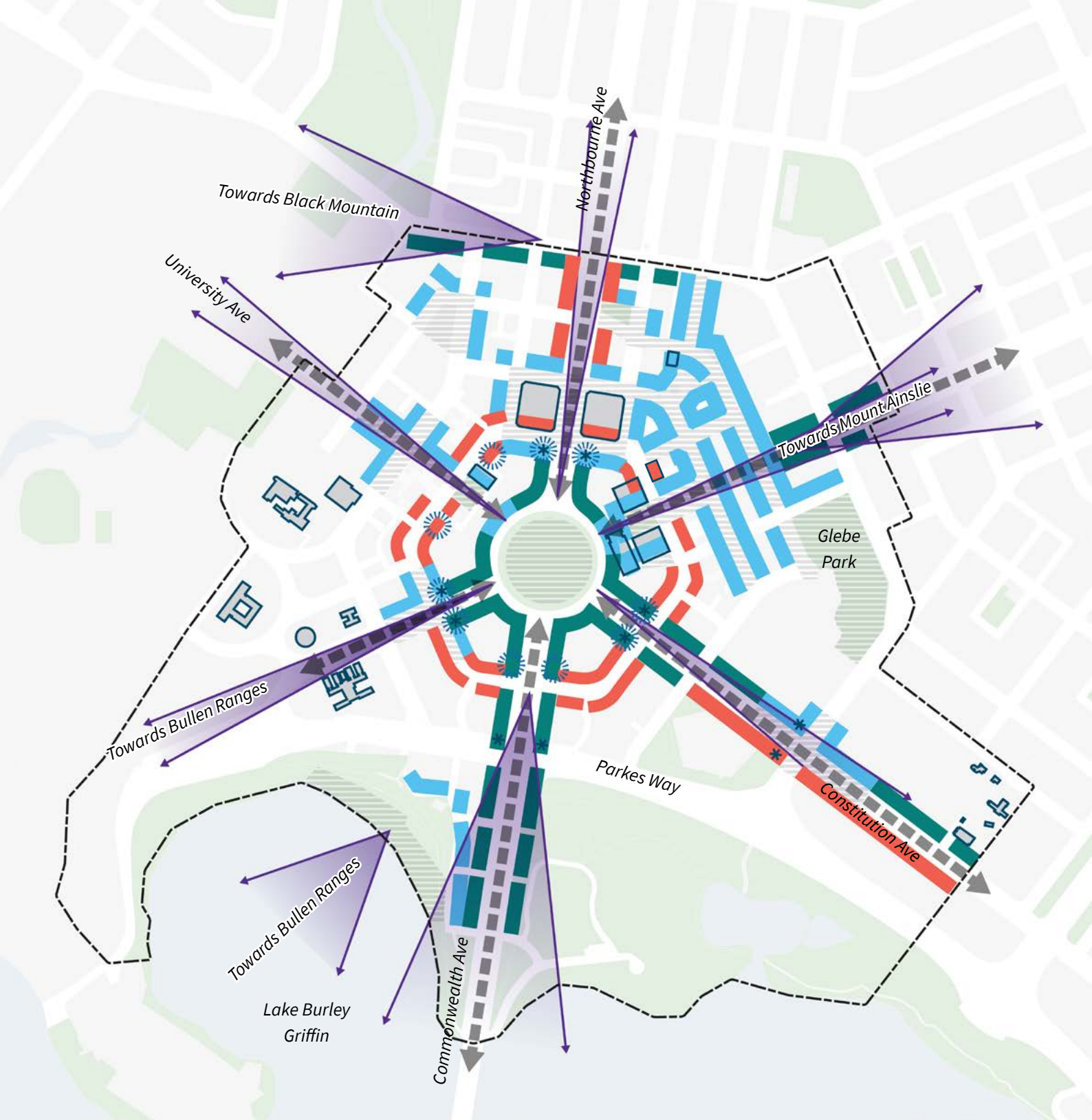
- i. Heights of buildings and structures in the City Centre must not exceed RL617 in any location.
- ii. Transition built form height when interfacing with adjacent lower-scale buildings and heritage buildings.
- iii. Establish a defined street wall edge with human-scale building articulation of a maximum 5-8 storeys unless mandatory Territory Plan or National Capital Plan requirements dictates otherwise.
- iv. Tower elements above podiums should be set back from the main street wall to maintain human scale.
- v. Ensure that key urban spaces, common areas and pedestrian streets continue to receive sufficient sunlight through consideration of overshadowing.

#### 2.1C LANDMARK BUILDINGS AND GATEWAY SITES

- i. Identify landmark buildings and gateway sites with special articulation of built form and architectural outcomes.
- ii. Ensure buildings are of high design quality and contribute positively to the city skyline and public spaces.
- iii. Recognise the hierarchy of buildings in relation to the landscape and the importance of landmark buildings.
- iv. Landmark buildings should stand above the tree line and punctuate the skyline to make a positive contribution to the shape and character of the City Centre.
- v. Provide innovative design solutions with world-class architecture at identified landmark buildings and gateway sites.

##### **Tip: Gateway sites and landmark buildings**

Gateway sites are defined in the City Plan and are sites as prominent locations that provide a distinct sense of entry to the City Centre and require special consideration and articulation of built form and architecture. Landmark buildings and locations are defined by the National Capital Plan and specify these buildings as examples of design excellence and prominence in building design and height (up to RL617).



**Legend**

---	City Centre boundary		Key urban spaces
	Heritage buildings	*	Gateway sites
	Provide and maintain sun access to key urban spaces and pedestrian streets		Landmark building sites
	Maintain quality of views and vistas grounding the City Centre into the surrounding natural landscape		Key geometry of Griffin Plan
	Reinforce the geometry of Griffin Plan, radiating main avenues, street definition and building heights		Key views and vistas



## 2.2 NATURAL SYSTEMS

Landscape, ecology and biodiversity are foundational elements that define urban responses.

*The natural topography and drainage, the rise of City Hill and long views of the mountains all play a key role in shaping the city's structure and layout. These should be enhanced and connected where possible, creating synergies with natural systems to create healthy and sustainable habitats for both humans and other species.*

### DESIGN GUIDANCE

#### 2.2A BLUE-GREEN NETWORK

- i. Support the protection and restoration of habitat values in key blue-green corridors including re-naturalisation of Sullivans Creek and its tributary waterways and linkages between reserves, urban open space and Garden City precincts.
- ii. New development must consider the need to maintain functional ecosystems, habitats and ecological connectivity throughout the City Centre and Lake Burley Griffin foreshore to enhance the resilience of the natural environment to urbanisation and climate change.
- iii. Implement enhanced water sensitive urban design (WSUD) and ecologically sensitive urban design (ESUD), green space and tree canopy cover as part of all future development proposals in the City Centre to contribute to achieving living infrastructure targets, reducing urban heat and improving environmental outcomes in built up areas.
- iv. Consider opportunities to increase the social resilience to climate change, amenity and connectivity in blue-green networks, including around Lake Burley Griffin.
- v. Support the connectivity of the blue-green network and potential habitat area as defined in the Inner North and City District Strategy.
- vi. Contribute to the ACT's tree canopy cover by providing trees to allow for shade and enhance the microclimate in the City Centre. Where it is not possible to provide trees on a block, provide other alternatives such as green roofs or podium gardens to contribute to shade and the microclimate.

#### 2.2B WATER MANAGEMENT

- i. Holistically account for all component of the water cycle including the use of stormwater to reduce urban flooding and improve health of waterways.
- ii. Ensure that development has no adverse impact on flood risk upstream and downstream of the development site (for the 1% AEP Flood Event).
- iii. Seek alternative water sources to passively irrigate trees and support new open spaces.
- iv. Implement nature-based water filtration solutions to remove pollution and support the natural systems.

##### Why this is important:

Supporting and enhancing natural systems improves ecological, social, cultural and climate resilience across the ACT and City Centre. The City Centre is connected to blue-green networks and ecological corridors in the ACT along Lake Burley Griffin. Supporting the natural systems on a local scale contributes to the overall health of natural systems in the entire ACT.

##### Related planning strategies and tools:

- i. Inner North & City District Strategy
- ii. ACT Nature Conservation Strategy
- iii. ACT Biodiversity Sensitive Urban Design Guide
- iv. Canberra's Living Infrastructure Plan: Cooling the city
- v. ACT Urban Forest Strategy 2021-2045
- vi. CRA Sustainability Checklist
- vii. Municipal Infrastructure Standards (MIS)





Location: Commonwealth Park,  
City South-East, Canberra



# 2.3 CITY CENTRE PRECINCTS

The City Centre is made up of five precincts, each with its own unique character.

*The axes of avenues and radial layout of the Griffin Plan are key features of the City Centre and serve as the basis for the identification of several distinct character precincts. These precincts include City Hill, City North-East, City South-East, City North-West and West Basin and Acton Waterfront. Each of the five precincts has its own precinct heart which signifies the most active and characteristic place, grounding each of the precincts.*

## CITY CENTRE PRECINCTS

The City Centre is large in area and made up of five precincts, each with their own unique character precinct heart. Each of the precincts plays a significant role in the overall function of the City Centre, offering a variety of different experiences that collectively form the overarching character for the City Centre.

Further details about each of the precincts are explained on the following pages. Each precinct spread will identify the individual precinct vision and spatial framework.

A series of precinct priority directions that align with the City Plan have been identified to guide the future development of each precinct.

A series of design objectives has been formulated to provide further guidance on how the priority directions may be considered and influence specific key moves in each precinct.

A summary of each precinct's key opportunities and challenges, key streets and places and catalyst projects that support the precinct objectives can be found in the appendix of this document.

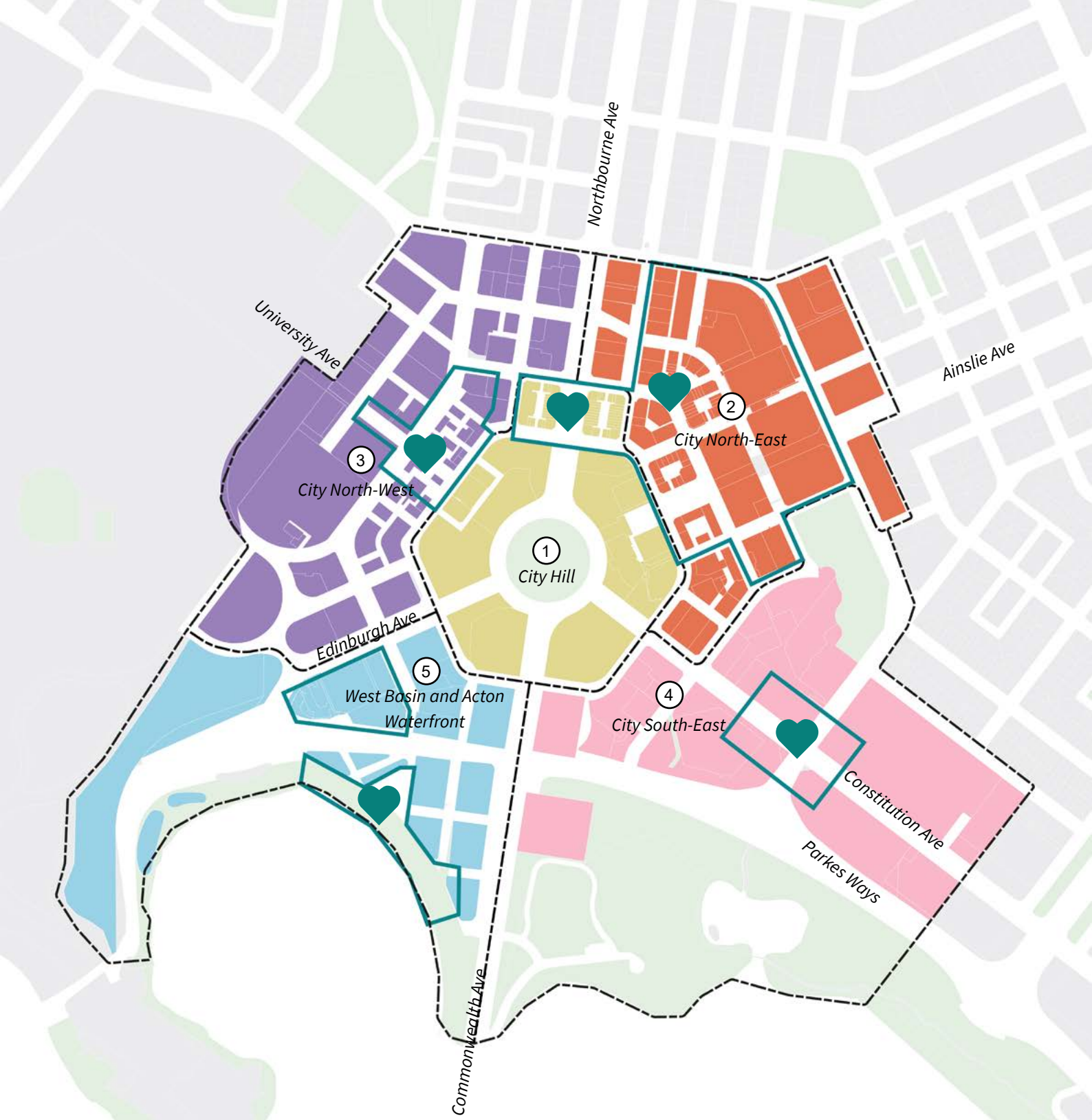
## PRECINCT CHARACTER

Each precinct and their desired future character are identified:

Key	Description
①	City Hill Precinct - Canberra's iconic cultural and civic core and the apex of the National Triangle. Future uses will fit its iconic location and encourage activity focussed on the cultural economy.
②	City North-East - City Centre's retail and entertainment heart with various cultural and entertainment uses.
③	City North-West - City Centre's knowledge and innovation hub characterised by its mix of residential, higher education, research and commercial facilities.
④	City South-East - Tourism, business and education precinct defined by tourism and recreational uses, access to high-quality parks and open spaces.
⑤	West Basin and Acton Waterfront - A lively urban precinct that brings the everyday life of the City Centre to the shores of Lake Burley Griffin.

### Related planning strategies and tools:

- i. ACT City Plan
- ii. National Capital Plan



**Legend**

	Precinct boundaries
	City Hill
	City North-East
	City North-West
	City South-East
	West Basin and Acton Waterfront
	Precinct hearts

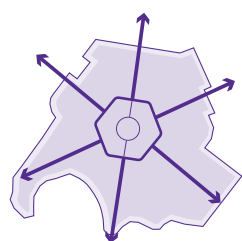


## The proposed City Centre spatial framework represents the strategic objectives of each of the precincts, and how they come together for the entire City Centre

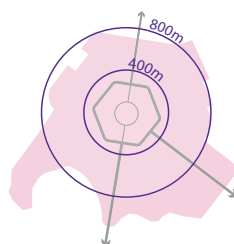
The spatial framework outlined on the adjacent page lays the foundation for delivering place-based outcomes in the City Centre. Combining the five precincts into a consolidated framework that aligns with the vision and precinct-level priority direction outlined in the City Plan. The framework highlights key elements, including access and movement, open spaces, pedestrian plazas, pedestrian focussed streets, precinct hearts, heritage, key sites and character.

### STRATEGIC GOALS

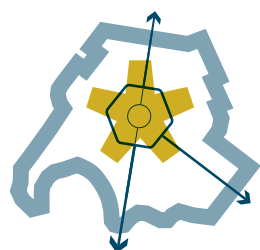
The spatial framework supports the strategic goals outlined in the City Plan.



A City Centre that is our gateway to the world and the cosmopolitan heart of Canberra with a clear sense of arrival and more destinations for people to visit, linger and interact.



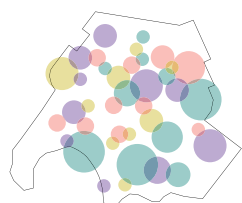
A public transport supportive urban environment that balances movement and place with significant provision and priority for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users.



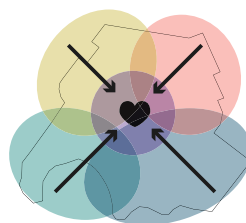
A City Centre that is a contemporary expression of the Griffin Plan's structure by strengthening formality, geometry, and the National Capital's symbolic importance.



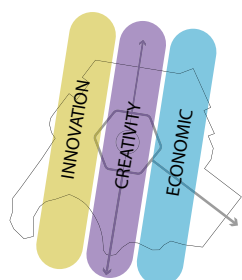
A biodiverse urban environment with generous planting on buildings, the public space, streets and open spaces, which create memorable places to support public life.



An easy-to-access, people-first destination that offers unique business opportunities and a wide range of lifestyle options for diverse communities and a distinct urban culture.



A unified City Centre, comprised of five precincts each with its own unique character, emphasising their distinct identities and contributions to the overall unity.



A place-based approach to development and urban renewal with a strong focus on design excellence, providing a diversity of housing choices, sustainability and innovation.



A celebration of historical and heritage elements by the protecting and restoring important landmarks and architecture, bridging the City Centre's past and future.



Proposed City Centre Spatial Framework

## Legend

----- City Centre boundary	Canberra Theatre Centre Redevelopment site	* Publicly accessible open space
Existing buildings	UNSW project area	* Gateway sites
Potential new development site	ANU Master plan site	* Iconic buildings
Heritage overlay	Pedestrian plaza	* Landmark building sites (NCP)
Precinct heart	Pedestrian focussed road treatment	City Centre Entertainment Precinct boundary
Park and civic spaces	Activation opportunities	Current / future principal active travel route
Open space	Current / proposed light rail corridor	Current / future main active travel route
Road layout	Potential future light rail corridor – alignment TBD	Indicative Garden City Cycle Route
laneway	Green link	Key pedestrian links
Proposed road alignment in ANU Master plan		

\*Refer to the ACT Transport Strategy and Planning Strategy for information on high speed rail alignment options.



# CITY HILL

**Precinct vision:** The City Hill precinct will be Canberra’s iconic cultural and civic core and the apex of the National Triangle. The precinct’s future release and development potential make it one of the most significant renewal sites in the City Centre.

## DESIGN GUIDANCE

### 2.3A CITY HILL PRIORITY DIRECTIONS

- i. Reinforce the precinct’s role as the civic and cultural heart of the City Centre.
- ii. Provide clear and legible pedestrian links to facilitate greater pedestrian connectivity within and between City Hill park and the wider precinct.
- iii. Enhance and activate City Hill park to realise it’s potential as the heart of the City Centre, reinforcing its cultural prominence as a point in the National Triangle.
- iv. Encourage a fine-grain density around City Hill precinct with activity focussed on the cultural economy.
- v. Use the legacy of the Griffin Plan to guide the planning and design approach to the City Hill precinct while accepting contemporary realities.

## KEY MOVES

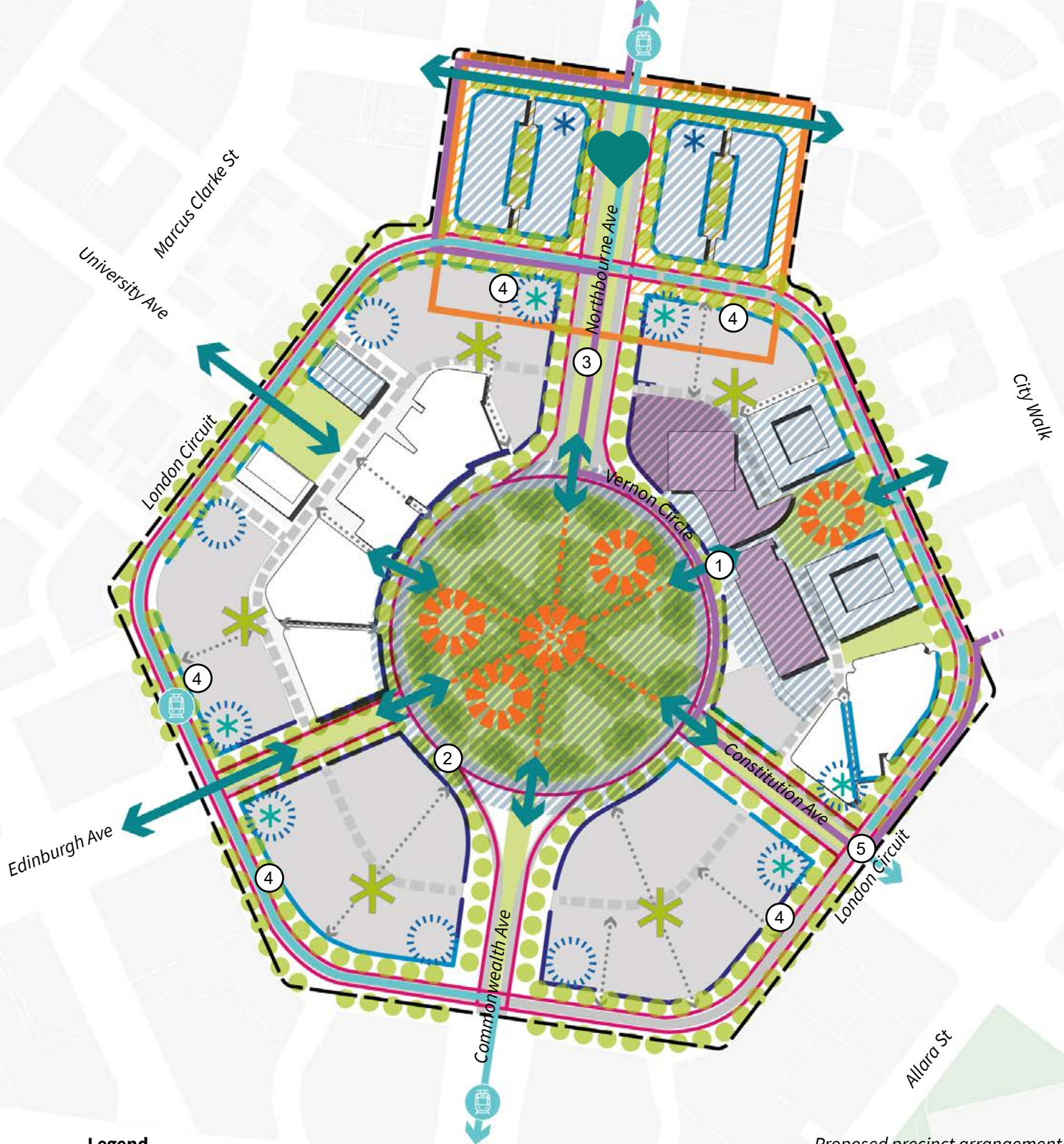
Key moves identified in the City Hill precinct are:

Key	Description
①	Civic Square connection - A new connection from Ainslie Place, through Civic Square, and onto the parkland will be a key part of the broader city connectivity and improved accessibility. Similarly, the Canberra Theatre Centre Redevelopment and the Canberra Civic and Culture District will also enhance accessibility to the City Hill park.
②	Vernon Circle – Building frontages to address and support Vernon Circle as an active street. Reduction of speed limit (40km/h) will create a more pedestrian-friendly environment and promote connectivity to the parkland.
③	Northbourne Avenue – Consider public space improvements to Northbourne Avenue between London Circuit and Vernon Circle and encourage active travel use.
④	Focus on active uses and new buildings to address London Circuit as the primary active street spine through City Hill precinct with excellent public space, active and public transport opportunities.
⑤	Improve connectivity between City Centre precincts and neighbouring suburbs and popular destinations. This can be achieved by exploring activation opportunities and making it easier for people to travel along a potential future light rail corridor.

### Tip: City Hill design objectives

The design objectives for City Hill precinct will achieve the following:

- i. Be the place for celebration, attracting a diverse range of people and activities
- ii. Establish London Circuit as a premier address for business, with a pedestrian and public transport focus
- iii. Have a mix of uses integrated with varied cultural, entertainment and civic uses to reinforce the area’s economic and civic specialisations while encouraging variety and activity around City Hill precinct
- iv. Enhance its historic and geographic importance through high-quality buildings and public spaces
- v. Reinforce gateway sites on Northbourne and Commonwealth avenues through landmark buildings that enhance historic views
- vi. Build upon the emerging fine grain and human-scale character in targeted sections of the precinct to establish a unique character and drive the economy.



## Legend

	Precinct boundary
	City Centre Entertainment Precinct boundary
	Existing buildings
	Potential new development sites
	Canberra Theatre Centre Redevelopment site
	Heritage overlay
	Precinct heart
	Park and civic spaces

	Open space
	Road layout
	Laneway
	Pedestrian laneway
	Active frontage
	Adaptable frontage
	High-quality streetscape
	City Hill park trees
	City cycle loop
	Current / proposed light rail corridor

## Proposed precinct arrangement

	Potential future light rail corridor
	Key pedestrian links
	Pedestrian focussed road treatment
	Activation opportunities
	City Hill park connection
	Landmark building sites
	Publicly accessible open space
	Iconic buildings
	Gateway sites



# CITY NORTH-EAST

**Precinct vision:** The City North-East precinct will be the City Centre’s destination for retail and entertainment, boasting a dynamic urban environment with a mix of uses, activities and quality public spaces that celebrate the City Centre’s creativity and hospitality.

## DESIGN GUIDANCE

### 2.3B CITY NORTH-EAST PRIORITY DIRECTIONS

- i. Protect and expand retail and commercial floorspace opportunities and diversify the retail economy.
- ii. Consolidate nightlife character in the City Centre to enable the continued growth of the night-time and visitor economy.
- iii. Improve the ground-level experience between existing retail uses with public spaces and facilitate more activity in the main pedestrian areas.
- iv. Better connect to the south, east and west with the neighbouring suburbs of Braddon and Reid.
- v. Encourage new development to generate activity, support business and attract investment.

## KEY MOVES

Key moves identified in the City North-East precinct are:

Key	Description
①	Canberra Centre - Activate the edges of the Canberra Centre by encouraging redevelopment of the edges to create a more pedestrian-friendly and active street frontage.
②	City Hill precinct connection - A new connection from Ainslie Place, through Civic Square, and onto the parkland will be a key part of the broader city connectivity and improved accessibility.
③	Cooyong Street – Enhance multi-modal functionality and pedestrian-friendly environment.
④	Ainslie Place - Connected to Canberra Civic and Culture District with a focus on people-centred public space design to support an inviting and attractive precinct offering a variety of activities and services.
⑤	Improve connection to Lonsdale Street and Braddon via Genge Street and Cooyong Street by providing good public space, active frontages and pedestrian crossings.

**Tip: City North-East design objectives**

The design objectives for City North-East precinct with the aim to achieve the following:

- i. Build upon the high levels of pedestrians and walkability of the precinct to establish an urban street environment
- ii. Focus on active uses along key pedestrian links that connect with the public space
- iii. Connect better to the south, east and west and to Braddon in the North
- iv. Be economically resilient through diverse and unique offerings and activities
- v. Offer an increased mix of uses that appeal to a diverse demographic and encourage 24/7 activity, entertainment and life
- vi. Establish public space that is safe and comfortable



## Legend

	Precinct boundary
	City Centre Entertainment Precinct boundary
	Existing buildings
	Potential new development sites
	Heritage overlay
	Precinct heart
	Park and civic spaces
	Open space

	Road layout
	Laneway
	Pedestrian laneway
	Active frontage
	Adaptable frontage
	High-quality streetscape
	Park trees
	City cycle loop
	Key pedestrian links
	Current / proposed light rail corridor

## Proposed precinct arrangement

	Potential future light rail corridor
	Indicative Garden City Cycle Route
	Pedestrian plaza
	Pedestrian focussed road treatment
	Activation opportunities
	Publicly accessible open space



# CITY NORTH-WEST

**Precinct vision:** City North-West precinct will be City Centre’s knowledge and innovation hub characterised by its mix of residential, higher education, research and commercial facilities. The introduction of the Light Rail Stage 2A will be a catalyst for development and activity, providing the opportunity to improve ground-level activation, public space design and connection with the street.

## DESIGN GUIDANCE

### 2.3C CITY NORTH-WEST PRIORITY DIRECTIONS

- i. Reinforce the connection between the City Centre and the ANU education precinct.
- ii. Provide a range of residential typologies responding to the adjacent education and research precinct to accommodate future growth.
- iii. Protect and reinforce the fine-grain public space character that provide an amenity to the professional and residential communities.
- iv. Ensure future development and land use respond to opportunities for existing and emerging innovation and knowledge-related employment.
- v. Enhance the heart of the precinct identity and the ‘front door’ between the ANU and the City Centre.

## KEY MOVES

Key moves identified in the City North-West precinct are:

Key	Description
①	Marcus Clarke Street - Improve pedestrian connection to City Walk (via Alinga Street) and the main cycle loop for the CBD.
②	Childers Street - Strengthen Childers Street as an active “Place for People” by linking key university functions with student accommodation and providing opportunities for new buildings and active uses.
③	Edinburgh Avenue - Consider wide streetscape verges and the quality of building frontage along Edinburgh Avenue to provide better and more active streetscape outcomes.
④	Hutton Street - Consider opportunities to activate long residential block edges with adjacent to commercial areas that are inactive due to poor building outcomes.

### Tip: City North-West design objectives

The design objectives for City North-West precinct with the aim to achieve the following:

- i. Integrate commercial and employment uses with residential and mixed-use developments to support both these purposes and the neighbouring education and research precinct
- ii. Improve pedestrian connections to the city and leverage its proximity to light rail
- iii. Provide a range of residential typologies that respond to the adjacent education and research precinct to accommodate future growth
- iv. Offer a range of supporting uses to accommodate the diverse student, professional and residential demographic
- v. Provide a finer grain public space that will provide amenities to professional and residential communities and create an enjoyable pedestrian experience
- vi. Accommodate traffic restructure to the west and south-west, moving it out of the City Centre core area
- vii. Retain and establish supporting community.



## Legend

	Precinct boundary
	Existing buildings
	Potential new development sites
	Heritage overlay
	ANU Master plan sites
	Precinct heart
	Park and civic spaces
	Open space

	Road layout
	Proposed road alignment in ANU Master plan
	Laneway
	Pedestrian laneway
	Active frontage
	Adaptable frontage
	High-quality streetscape
	Park trees
	City cycle loop

## Proposed precinct arrangement

	Key pedestrian links
	Current / proposed light rail corridor
	Potential future light rail corridor
	Pedestrian plaza
	Pedestrian focussed road treatment
	Activation opportunities
	Publicly accessible open space



# CITY SOUTH-EAST

**Precinct vision:** City South–East precinct will be the tourism, business and education precinct defined by community, tourism and recreation use and benefitting from convenient access to high-quality parks and open space. The precinct heart will provide a central point of activity, utilising the surrounding key attractions and student population, as well as an activity relevant to the university (UNSW Canberra City campus), the existing Canberra Olympic Pool site, the casino and the existing National Convention Centre Canberra site.

## DESIGN GUIDANCE

### 2.3D CITY SOUTH-EAST PRIORITY DIRECTIONS

- i. Provide opportunities for tourism, recreation, education and mixed-uses.
- ii. UNSW Canberra City campus will be an anchor site for a revitalised precinct of social diversity.
- iii. Encourage future development that reinforces connectivity to the National Triangle.
- iv. Strengthen connections with the innovation and knowledge sector in City North-West.
- v. Provide a strong link connecting the City Centre to the lake.

## KEY MOVES

Key moves identified in the City South-East precinct are:

Key	Description
①	Existing National Convention Centre Canberra site - A redefined built form with enhanced connections to the casino and interface with Commonwealth Avenue.
②	Glebe Park - Opportunity to provide enhanced connectivity and links to the casino and convention areas. Strengthen the role as an Urban Park to support the surrounding density and increase in residential population.
③	UNSW Canberra City campus - The existing master plan for UNSW Canberra City campus will be implemented, with a focus on integrating streetscapes into the broader precinct.
④	Create a new heart for the precinct at the intersection of Constitution Avenue and Coranderrk Street with built form and activity addressing the street corners.
⑤	Improve pedestrian connectivity from City Walk down to the precinct and UNSW Canberra City campus.

### Tip: City South-East design objectives

The design objectives for City South-East precinct with the aim to achieve the following:

- i. UNSW Canberra City campus will be an anchor site for a revitalised precinct of demographic diversity, supported by uses that encourage street activity
- ii. Reinforce the grand boulevards of Commonwealth and Constitution avenues (already occurring with light rail, and initial Constitution Avenue upgrades are complete), building on their character through creating a strong landscape character
- iii. Provide good connectivity to light rail stops
- iv. Have established new residential opportunities with the development of the UNSW campus
- v. Support the growing residential population through the provision of services and a transition of mixed uses to City North-East, while strengthening connections with the innovation and knowledge sector in City North-West
- vi. Provide a strong connection between the City Centre and Commonwealth Park by expanding its distinctive landscape character back into the City Centre
- vii. Promote and recognise the heritage value of Lake Burley Griffin and the vistas across the lake.



## Legend

	Precinct boundary
	Existing buildings
	Potential new development sites
	Heritage overlay
	UNSW Canberra City campus
	Precinct heart
	Park and civic spaces
	Open space
	Road layout

	Laneway
	Pedestrian laneway
	Active frontage
	Adaptable frontage
	Green Link bridge
	High-quality streetscape
	Park trees
	City cycle loop
	Key pedestrian links
	Shared-use recreational trail

## Proposed precinct arrangement

	Current / proposed light rail corridor
	Potential future light rail corridor
	Pedestrian focussed road treatment
	Pedestrian plaza
	Activation opportunities
	Publicly accessible open space
	Gateway sites



# WEST BASIN AND ACTON WATERFRONT

**Precinct vision:** The West Basin and Acton Waterfront precinct will be a lively urban precinct that brings the everyday life of the City Centre to the shores of Lake Burley Griffin.

## DESIGN GUIDANCE

### 2.3E WEST BASIN AND ACTON WATERFRONT PRECINCT PRIORITY DIRECTIONS

- i. Create a more accessible and people-focussed lakefront destination for visitors and residents.
- ii. Prioritise pedestrian and cycling connectivity from the waterfront and to the wider City Centre precinct.
- iii. Invest in public space, setting the groundwork for future mixed-use development.
- iv. Accommodate a mix of uses including a high-quality community and recreational facility that serves the regional as well as City Centre community.
- v. Ensure the provision of social infrastructure and facilities to meet projected population needs.

## KEY MOVES

Key moves identified in the West Basin and Acton Waterfront precinct are:

Key	Description
①	Create economic diversity with commercial, retail, cultural and residential uses delivered through the precinct.
②	Provide a mix of housing typologies to cater for a mixed social demographic.
③	Establish a precedent for exemplary sustainable development.
④	Increase biodiversity, WSUD, canopy cover and permeable surfaces within the precinct.
⑤	Acknowledge Ngunnawal culture and stories throughout the precinct and foreshore.
⑥	Increase services to enable events for the City Centre.
⑦	Increase well-being and liveability through open space provisions, play spaces and access to the lake.

**Tip: West Basin and Acton Waterfront design objectives**

The design objectives for West Basin and Acton Waterfront precinct with the aim to achieve the following:

- i. Create a liveable place to live and visit, with an accessible and active waterfront
- ii. Provide a mix of uses in addition to residential uses

- iii. Connect other parts of the City Centre to and around the waterfront to overcome the pedestrian barrier created by Parkes Way
- iv. Establish a neighbourhood with local amenities and services as an activity node within the City Centre.
- v. Establish a community/recreational facility that serves both the regional and City Centre community, including connection with the ANU.



## Legend

	Precinct boundary
	Existing buildings
	Potential new development sites
	Heritage overlay
	ANU Master plan sites
	Precinct heart
	Park and civic spaces
	Open space
	Road layout

	Proposed road alignment in ANU Master plan
	Laneway
	Pedestrian laneway
	Active frontage
	Adaptable frontage
	Green Link
	High-quality streetscape
	Park trees
	City cycle loop
	Current / proposed light rail corridor

## Proposed precinct arrangement

	Key pedestrian links
	Shared-use recreational trail
	Pedestrian focussed road treatment
	Pedestrian plaza
	Activation opportunities
	Publicly accessible open space
	Gateway sites





# SITE AND LAND USE

Responding to shifting trends, drivers and change in the urban environment will create high-quality places and improved public life.

*The planning, design and delivery of built outcomes should respond to the physical, cultural and economic context and urban structure, understanding the key components of the city, including where density lies and the transition between building typologies. The ability to make well-informed decisions that will positively shape the development's future and its area of influence is made possible by understanding all of those aspects at varying scales and their relationships with one another.*

## DESIGN ELEMENTS

### 3.1 CITY CENTRE CONTEXT AND CHARACTER

**3.1A** City Centre Character

**3.1B** Role and Function of the City Centre

**3.1C** Density Done Well

### 3.2 SITE CONFIGURATION

**3.2A** City Block Configuration and Structure

**3.2B** Local Climate

**3.2C** Street and Ground Level



# 3

Location: Melbourne Buildings  
Photo: Lightbox Studio



## 3.1 CITY CENTRE CONTEXT AND CHARACTER

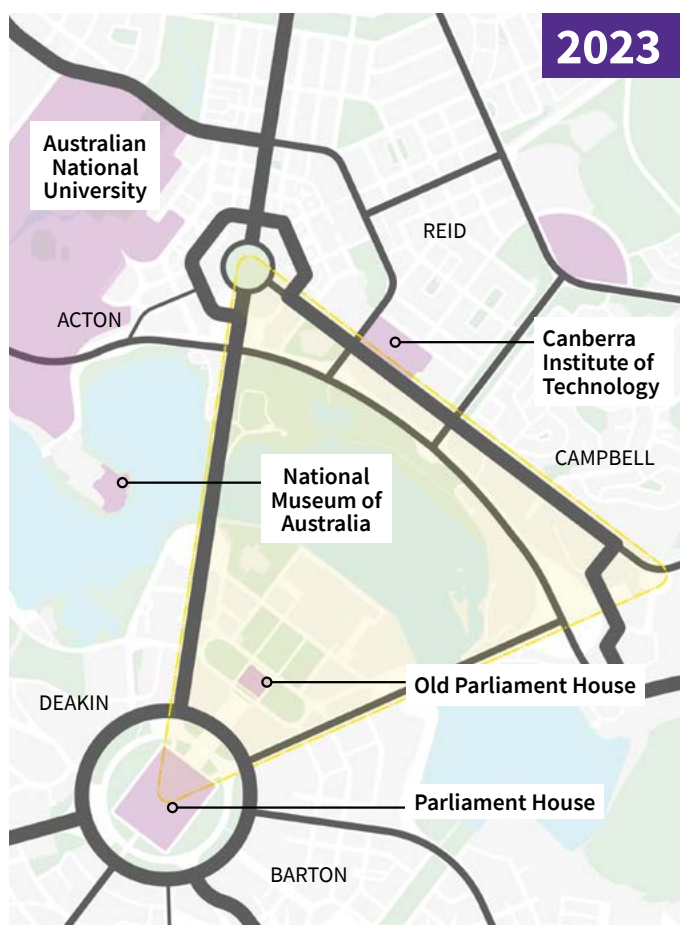
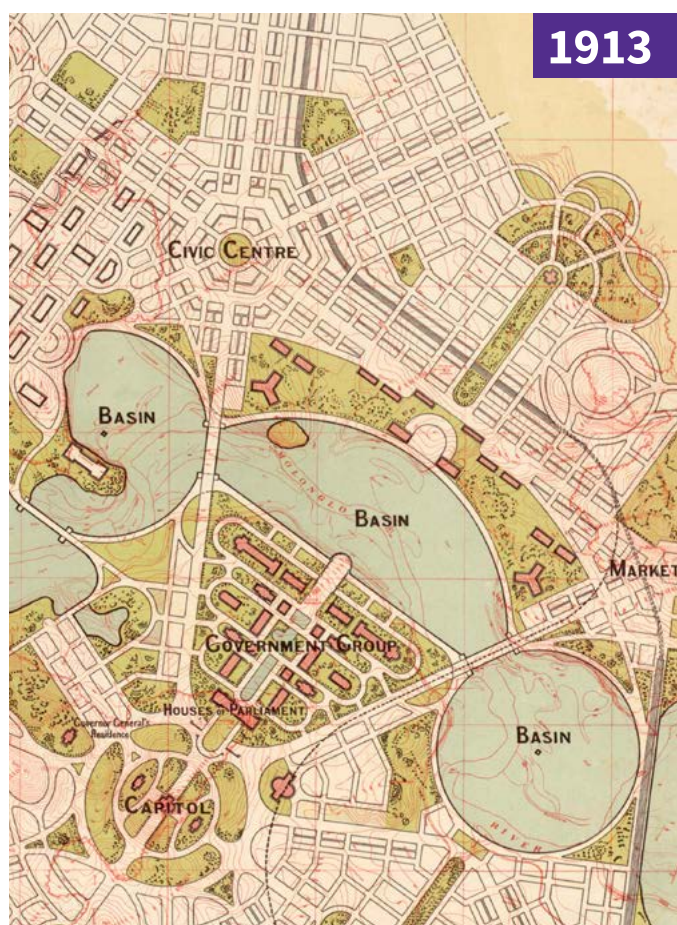
The Canberra City Centre has evolved over the years in a very intentional way, based on the original vision and planning intent of the Griffin Plan.

*With bold design moves and expansive streets and spaces, this has created some disconnect between the visionary intent and the realities of a bustling inner-city. Through an increase in density and a focus on expanding the residential population into the City Centre, a critical mass of people will allow for a diversity of uses and activities, while still maintaining the core elements of the Griffin Plan.*

### DESIGN GUIDANCE

#### 3.1A CITY CENTRE CHARACTER

- i. Maintain the core defining features and structure of the Griffin plan through the bold axial arrangements, grand boulevards and street avenues, and strong visual lines to key landmarks.
- ii. Celebrate the natural features of the City Centre including extensive open space and connections to abutting Lake Burley Griffin.
- iii. Maintain the ceremonial nature of the National Triangle where relevant through the City Centre.
- iv. Consider the impacts of the built form and open spaces on the existing and future desired character of the site.



*The National Triangle as planned in 1913 and current layout as of 2023 shows strong resemblance.*





City Hill precinct

**Tip:** The core defining features for the City Centre:

- i. Bold geometric axial arrangements
- ii. Undulating topography, hills and dramatic backdrops
- iii. Extensive open space
- iv. Lake Burley Griffin
- v. Grand boulevards and street avenues
- vi. Strong visual lines often terminating with key landmarks
- vii. The National Triangle
- viii. Gateway sites and approach routes
- ix. Traditional grid style blocks
- x. Built form integrated as part of the landscape

**Related planning strategies and tools:**

- i. Inner North & City District Strategy
- ii. ACT City Plan
- iii. The Griffin Legacy, National Capital Plan
- iv. National Capital Plan

### 3.1B ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE CITY CENTRE

- i. Provide high-quality streets and public spaces with active streets together with high-quality building controls to support urban renewal of the City Centre.
- ii. Further establish the City Centre's dynamic cultural and entertainment scene, employment and economic opportunities.
- iii. Focus on integrating environmental sustainability and climate change initiatives to enhance liveability and competitive advantage.
- iv. Enhance liveability to encourage and attract investment and innovation.

**Why this is important:**

Canberra is full of great places, particularly within the City Centre. Great places bring people together, are welcoming and provide spaces for social interaction and spontaneous moments that are enjoyable for City Centre users. This can occur through all elements of the public spaces and places, in key open spaces and plazas, but predominantly within the everyday streets where the public space interfaces with the built form. The seamless integration of these elements is critical in creating high-quality places. People use streets for a broad range of functions, including movement, work and leisure. Highly active streets are fundamental to the success of the City Centre.



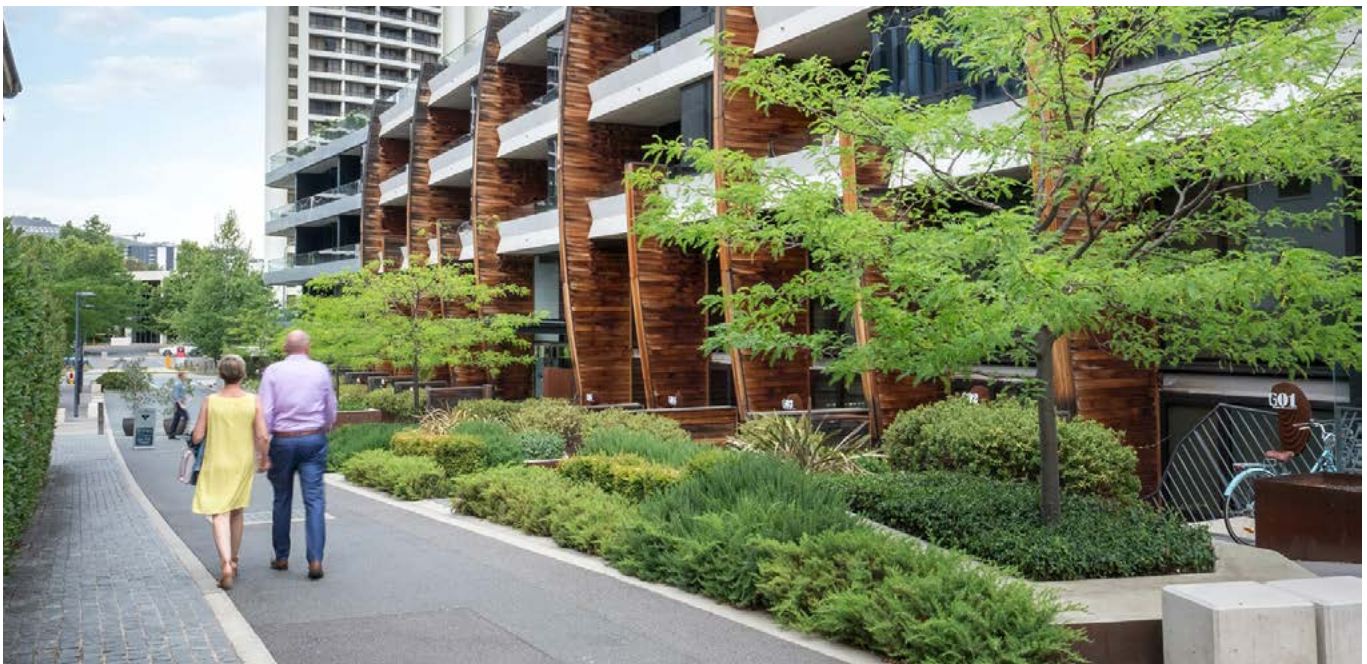
## DESIGN GUIDANCE

### 3.1C DENSITY DONE WELL

- i. Include a diversity of recreational, employment, cultural and learning opportunities centred around a dynamic mix of entertainment, retail and residential uses.
- ii. Provide a mix of uses within the City Centre that meet the needs of the users according to 15-minute neighbourhood principles.
- iii. Provide a mix of both day and night activities to support amenity, safety and a lively evening economy.
- iv. Ensure high-quality streets that have a high place value, and focus on people rather than cars, and include safe and well-maintained pathways and amenities.
- v. Ensure good accessibility to public and active travel modes.
- vi. Provide a wide range of living options to cater for diversity in living arrangements and budgets to support social resilience.
- vii. Provide safe, accessible, adaptable, multi-functional green spaces and movement pathways that encourage walking and social interactions in the street.
- viii. Consider impacts on building requirements to achieve energy efficient and sustainably built spaces within residential that is in close proximity to late night entertainment precincts.





#### Why this is important:

Canberra is likely to double its population within the next 50 years. There are significant opportunities to accommodate growth within the City Centre, accelerate development, and fill existing vacant and underutilised sites. Through an increase in density and a focus on expanding the residential population into the City Centre, a critical mass of people will allow for a diversity of uses and activities.



Location: New Acton, West Basin and Acton Waterfront, Canberra

## Tip: Density done well

		DESCRIPTION
	<b>MIX OF USES AND ACTIVITIES</b>	Mix of uses and activities include a diversity of recreational, employment, cultural and learning opportunities centred around a dynamic mix of entertainment, retail and residential uses. This creates a City Centre that meets the needs of all of the people who live, visit and work there. Activities and uses should be provided to ensure activity at all times of the day and night to support amenity, safety and a lively evening economy.
	<b>DENSITY X DIVERSITY = PROXIMITY</b>	Density of diverse activities increases the possibility of having useful or desirable things, places and people, closer to you (proximity). With proximity comes the convenience of being able to do a wide variety of activities in the same day, or same hour, with less time spent in traffic or public transport. Proximity to where decisions are made grows knowledge and enhances culture.
	<b>STREETS FOR ALL PEOPLE</b>	Streets are one of the most important parts of the City Centre, where people comes together and people of all ages, genders and abilities can interact. Streets must focus on people, not cars, and those of all abilities to encourage activity within the streets. Streets should include safe and well maintained pathways, and include public space amenities such as seating and shade, with large trees, to encourage people to stop, sit and dwell, and enjoy the City Centre.
	<b>GOOD PUBLIC TRANSPORT</b>	The City Centre must be accessible for people of all abilities, with walkable distances between transport services and dwellings and other key places. Public transport must be frequent, reliable, safe, clean and affordable, and provide opportunities for integration with other transport modes.
	<b>GOOD PUBLIC ENVIRONMENT</b>	The public environment must include safe, adaptable multifunctional and green space in proportion to the density, technology and environmentally sustainably built infrastructure. This will create a diverse community, inclusive of all ages, cultures and abilities reflecting the cultural elements of that neighbourhood.
	<b>HOUSING CHOICE AND AFFORDABILITY</b>	The City Centre should provide a wide range of living options to cater for diversity in people's living arrangements, stages of life and budgets. This will enable social resilience within communities, integrating services and supporting the diverse needs of the city.
	<b>COMMUNITY SAFETY AND ACCESSIBILITY</b>	The City Centre must be designed to be accessible for all, with comprehensive transport connections, and where community amenities are reachable within a short walk. Promoting ownership of spaces encourages people to take care of them and have pride in their surrounding environment. Sufficient lighting and other measures allow for the safe use of spaces after hours.



# 3.2 SITE CONFIGURATION

The design of buildings and spaces within the City Centre is critical to the overall function, distinctiveness and liveability of the city and how Canberrans use it.

*Beyond the design of the buildings themselves, it is the arrangement of the broader network of City Centre blocks and buildings that sets the city up for success. Understanding how best to arrange the site is key to shaping the quality of the built form, public spaces and human experiences.*

## DESIGN GUIDANCE

### 3.2A CITY BLOCK CONFIGURATION AND STRUCTURE

- i. Support human-scale in building width and height by breaking up large blocks into smaller development parcels while delivering them in a coordinated, integrated strategy that unlocks shared spaces and amenities.
- ii. Consider new laneways and cross-block links that create permeability at the ground level.
- iii. Align blocks with other pedestrian links to adjacent blocks, providing opportunities for active and lively streets and connected internal courtyards.

### 3.2B LOCAL CLIMATE

- i. Create openings to catch the eastern summer breeze and enclosures to protect open spaces on the ground level during the winter months.
- ii. Ensure that buildings are designed for the widely varied Canberra climate through summer and winter.
- iii. Provide fit-for-purpose and usable public/private spaces for more times of the day and year.
- iv. Consider orientation, privacy and climatic conditions to leverage the best outcomes for public space and urban life while taking in the beauty of Canberra’s visual amenity.
- v. Maintain key views and vistas to mountains and the lake. Then create a separate point: Consider the Griffin Plan to recognise and maximise opportunities that form the key internal and external spaces of the

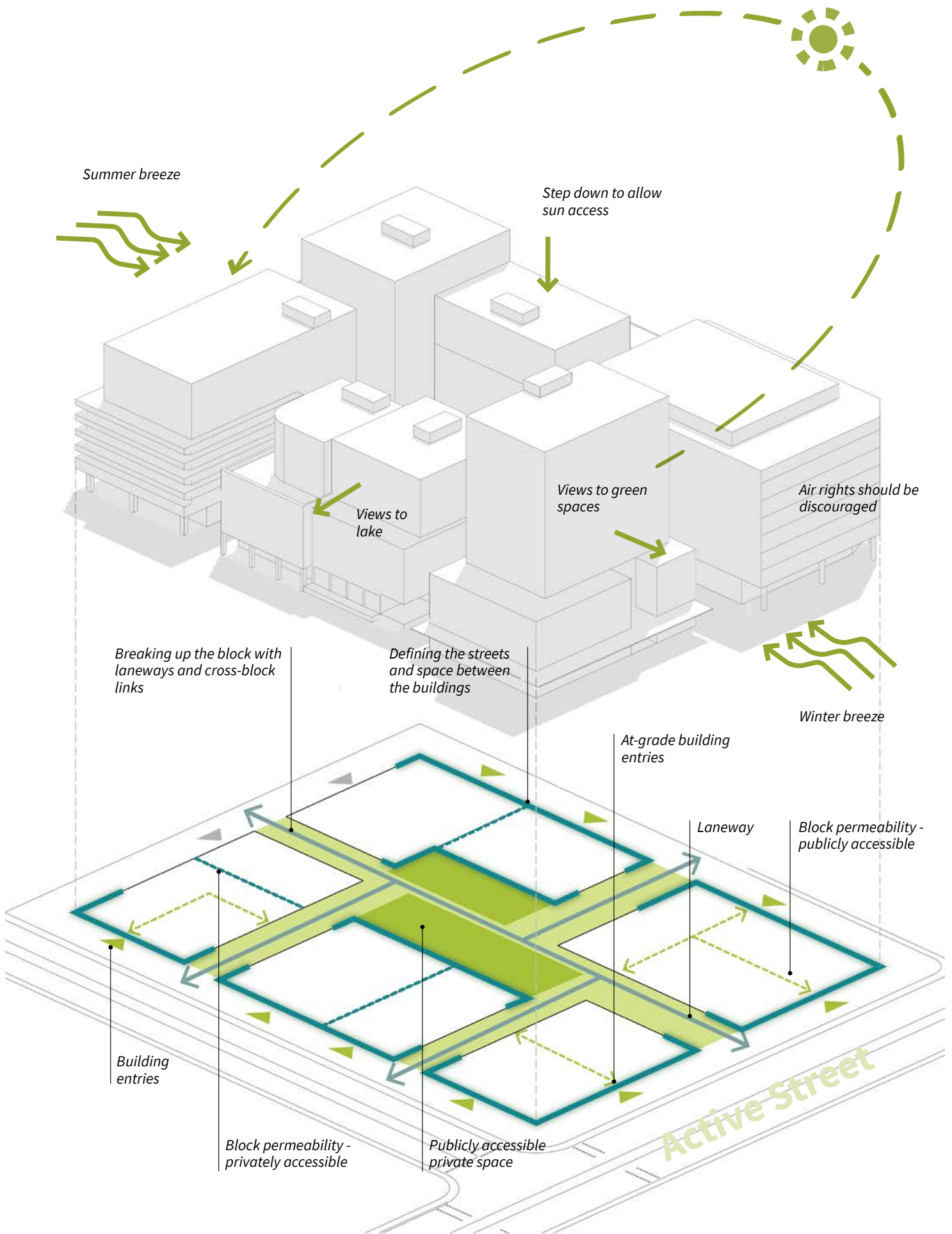
buildings.

- vi. Building heights to maintain solar access to open spaces, main pedestrian areas and existing residential buildings.

### 3.2C STREET AND GROUND LEVEL

- i. Recognise the street function, role and public life opportunities adjacent to any new buildings and respond accordingly.
- ii. Encourage diverse new spaces to be provided at the ground level with clear definition of access and ownership between public, private and common spaces.
- iii. Provide clear guidance for how best to achieve high quality street level outcomes, through diversity.

**Tip:** Air rights  
Previous developments within the City Centre have provided built outcomes that take advantage of usable air rights space. This outcome is not supported.



Generic block for illustration purposes





# ACCESS AND MOVEMENT

Streets make up a very high proportion of public space in urban areas, foster business activity and provide places for people to gather and interact.

*The City Centre should be the catalyst to refocussing the primary use of streets for people and not vehicles, reinforcing the vitality of urban life and the role that good design can play in balancing different movement demands. Creating more pedestrian focussed streets encourages the use of more active travel, which promotes better health and activity.*

## DESIGN ELEMENTS

### 4.1 STREETS AS PLACES OF MOVEMENT

- 4.1A** Light Rail Network
- 4.1B** Bus Network
- 4.1C** Key Pedestrian Links and Laneways
- 4.1D** City Cycle Loop and Dedicated Off-Road Bike Lanes
- 4.1E** Shared-use Recreational Trail

### 4.2 STREETS AS PLACES

- 4.2A** Street Activation
- 4.2B** Inclusive Design Elements
- 4.2C** High Movement, High Place
- 4.2D** Low Movement, High Place
- 4.2E** City Centre Streets

### 4.3 PARKING, LOADING AND SERVICES

- 4.3A** Parking
- 4.3B** Integrated Services



4

Location: Melbourne Buildings  
Photo: Ben Wrigley Photography



## 4.1 STREETS AS PLACES OF MOVEMENT

Successful places require a high degree of connectivity and activation, coupled with the need to balance varying demands within the available road space and public space.

*The City Centre's growth requires enhancing and expanding services, providing multi-modal transport options, and meeting the requirements of all ages and abilities, across the day and night. Significant changes are taking place to accommodate growth and alterations in travel behaviours and preferences, to move towards greener, lower emission travel choices.*

### DESIGN GUIDANCE

#### 4.1A LIGHT RAIL NETWORK

- i. Identify location of future light rail stops and potentials for adjacent building outcomes to support the successful operation of the light rail infrastructure.
- ii. Consider opportunities for supporting infrastructure to enhance the operation and experience of transport modal interchange, such as bike parking locations and connections to bus networks.
- iii. Consider building façade and building edge articulation at the ground floor to support a comfortable public transport experience through elements such as canopies, public seating, planting, and high-quality materials to support the use of public transport and integration into the built form.
- iv. Ensure inclusive and equitable access to the light rail network and stops in the day and nighttime.

##### **Tip: Light Rail Stage 2**

The ACT Government is now progressing with the second stage of building light rail to Woden. Connecting light rail to Woden occurs in two stages – from the City to Commonwealth Park (Stage 2A) and then Commonwealth Park to Woden (Stage 2B).

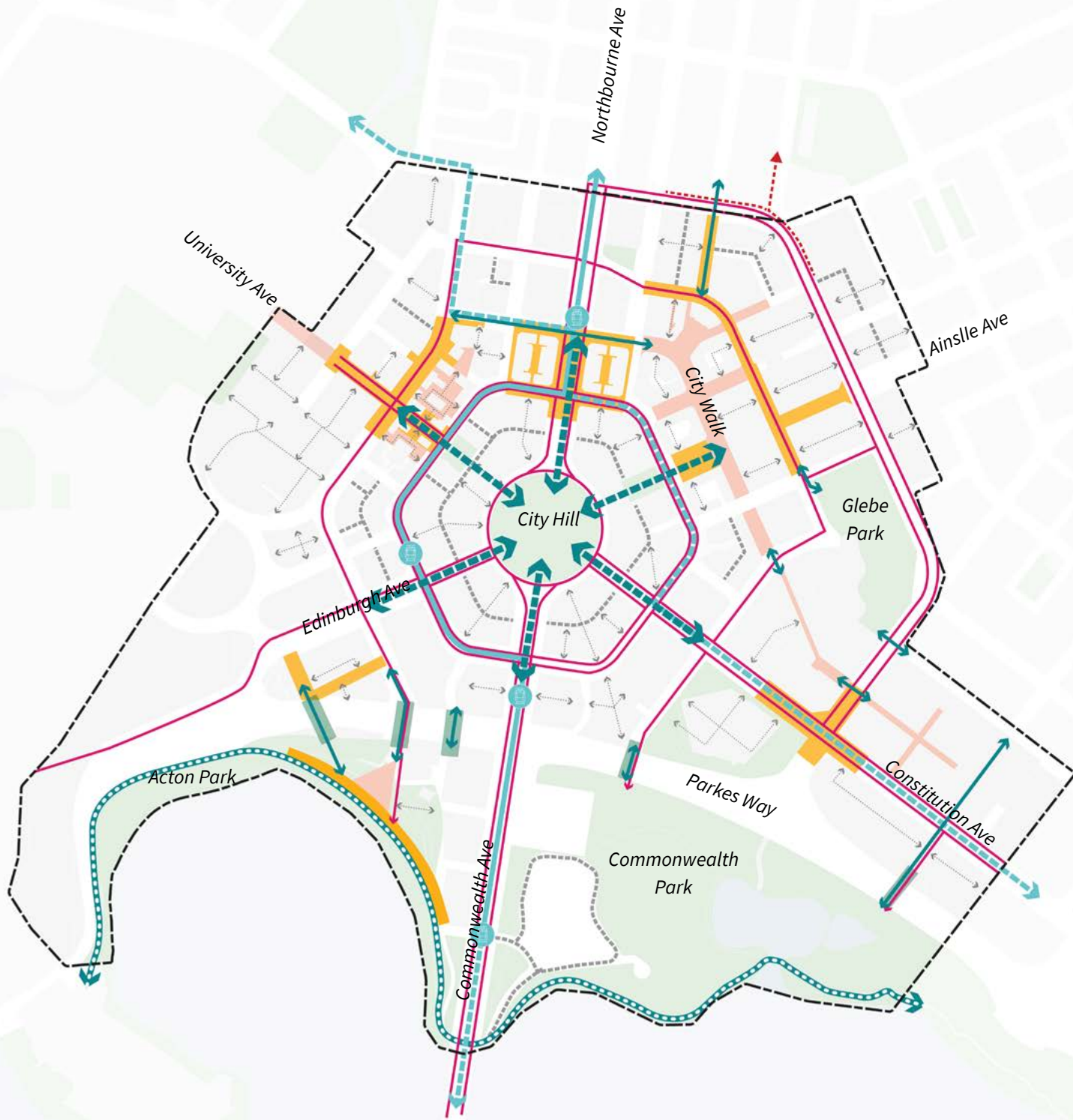
Alinga Street light rail stop will be connected to Commonwealth Park by Stage 2A, improving the connection between the City Centre and the lake. Edinburgh Avenue, City South, and Commonwealth Park are the three additional stops that will add 1.7 kilometres to the light rail network. London Circuit will be raised to increase amenities and connectivity to deliver Stage 2A. Strong place connections between key spaces and light rail stops will be key to its success, and will result in improved places for the City Centre.

#### 4.1B BUS NETWORK

- i. Consider the location of building entries and public space treatment adjacent to bus stops to avoid clutter and the number of pedestrian traffic near bus stop locations.
- ii. Consider providing canopy cover and comfortable standing and seating locations for people who are waiting near bus stops integrated into building and public space design and suitable for use across the day and night.
- iii. Provide accessible and level-access bus stops where possible to improve equity and the use of public transport.
- iv. Carefully manage and design kerb-side bus stops and dedicated bus lanes to minimise crossings and potential conflicts with active travel uses through the appropriate location of bus stops, waiting areas, and clear and consistent signage to improve legibility and safety.

##### **Why this is important:**

Canberra has been undertaking a significant renewal of the public transport system for the city, including the integration of current and future proposed light rail systems. This is in support of the city working towards a zero-emissions travel policy. Through the integration of the first stage of the light rail system, 30% of city commuters chose more sustainable travel options. This is expected to grow with further investment in public and active travel and is supported by responsive building and public space design.



**Legend**

	City Centre boundary		City cycle loop		Key pedestrian links
	Pedestrian plaza		Green link		Shared-use recreational trail
	Pedestrian focussed road treatment		Current / proposed light rail corridor		Indicative Garden City Cycle Route
	Laneway		Potential future light rail corridor -alignment TBD		
	Pedestrian laneway				



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#### 4.1C KEY PEDESTRIAN LINKS AND LANEWAYS

- i. Consider appropriate location of building entries, building interface design and public space treatment to align with key pedestrian links and laneways to support the pedestrian experience.
- ii. Provide an active ground floor interface along key pedestrian links through the use of high-quality materials, a high degree of transparency, multiple building entries and well-considered building edges to encourage use and enhance the pedestrian experience.
- iii. Respond to pedestrian laneways on or adjacent to the subject site by respecting connections and crossings.
- iv. Ensure clear, legible, connected and safe pedestrian access across sites where pedestrian laneways are identified to support and encourage a fine-grain pedestrian network in the City Centre.
- v. Make pedestrian laneways open to the sky whenever possible and provide climatic protections such as awnings.
- vi. Consider opportunities for small and human-scale open spaces adjacent to pedestrian laneways to improve open space amenities through diversifying their size, scale, and function.

##### **Related planning strategies and tools:**

- i. Inner North & City District Strategy
- ii. ACT Movement and Place Framework for Canberra
- iii. ACT Transport Strategy
- iv. ACT Active Travel Plan
- v. Municipal Infrastructure Standards (MIS)
- vi. ACT Design Guide for Best Practice Intersections

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#### 4.1D CITY CYCLE LOOP AND DEDICATED OFF-ROAD BIKE LANES

- i. Ensure dedicated lanes for active travel such as bicycles, e-scooters, and e-bikes are separated from vehicular traffic by kerb, raised elements such as planting, buffers, bollards or markings to improve safety and convenience. Different solutions may be considered in different locations as appropriate.
- ii. Prioritise active travel legibility, convenience and safety in traffic intersections along the city cycle loop, to encourage active travel use.
- iii. Provide clear and legible parking, parking entries and set down areas for bikes and micro-mobility near main entrances adjacent to the city cycle loop to improve convenience and legibility for active travel.
- iv. Identify key active travel and micromobility linkages across the city centre to better connect to, and enhance, the existing city cycle loop.
- v. Include a review of existing bicycle and micromobility parking facilities with new developments and activations.

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#### 4.1E SHARED-USE RECREATIONAL TRAIL

- i. Ensure clear, safe, accessible pathways for pedestrians and bicycles along the waterfront in a connected blue-green corridor.
- ii. Consider entries and direct pedestrian connections to the blue-green network to improve legibility, use and ease.
- iii. Consider the location of bike parking and set down areas in buildings and in the public space adjacent to the blue-green corridor to encourage convenience and legibility of active travel.
- iv. Identify and improve connectivity from the City Centre to the shared-use recreational trail.

## Tip: Sustainable transport in the City Centre

Active travel is based on the need for physical activity to be undertaken as a means of transport and includes travel by foot, bicycle, and micromobility vehicles such as e-scooters and e-bikes. Active travel should be supported by high-quality public space and streetscape amenities to make moving around on foot and bike an attractive, pleasant, and safe choice of transport that is integrated with public transport. The City Centre will ensure high quality, safe connections for cycling and e-mobility as well as broader infrastructure and end-of-trip facilities.

Active travel infrastructure comes in numerous forms, whether as dedicated on-road pathways, shared pathways or off-road. Different typologies should be considered appropriate depending on their location.



### One-way paired bicycle-only path

Dedicated single directional on-street cycle path toward the outer lane of the street, sometimes separated by small medians or delineated by line marking or colour of paint.



### Bidirectional lanes

Bidirectional lanes include two adjacent lanes of bicycle traffic going in each direction as a dedicated lane. These are generally separated from vehicles by either a raised median, buffer, vegetation, fencing or parking bays. They are completely separate from vehicular traffic.



### Shared on street

Shared infrastructure on the streets is located in areas where there are lower traffic levels, and bicycle sharing with vehicular traffic is considered appropriate.



### Parking / set down

Dedicated bike parking and set down areas should be provided to allow for cycle and e-mobility parking in convenient places. These should be located within the flexible street zones near building entrances.



### Dedicated bus lanes

Similar to on-street cycleways, dedicated bus lanes are depicted by a change in paving or paint colour. They improve the efficiency of the public transport network by allowing for more direct travel and a reduced dependency on private vehicles.



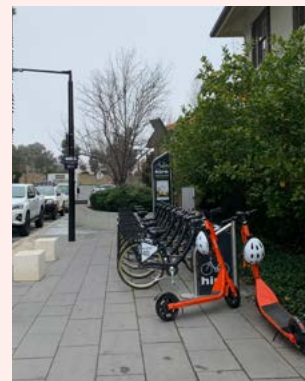
### Shared traffic lanes

Most transit lanes incorporate shared traffic lanes for the use of buses and private vehicles. Shared traffic lanes can have reduced efficiencies when compared with dedicated lanes, however can allow for broader transport opportunities.



### Light Rail

The integration of light rail stops into high-quality public space outcomes can promote activity nodes. Subsequently, adjacent attractors can promote high-usage and activity. Accessible and integrated light rail stops elevate the public transport experience and increase attractiveness.



### Modal interchange

Co-locating multiple public transport modes to allow for enhanced connections between alternative transport modes should be promoted. Increased flexibility and ease of use can be achieved with integration to bikes and micro-mobility.



# 4.2 STREETS AS PLACES

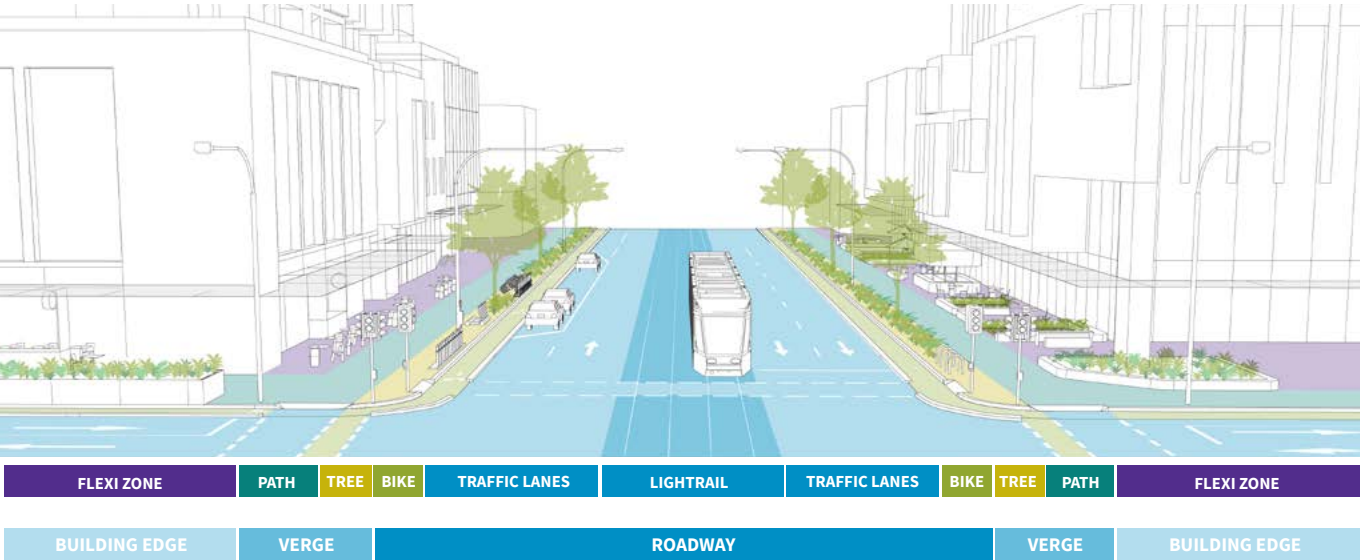
The future sustainable growth of the City Centre will be dependent upon the place value activated within the streetscape network.

*The streetscape network in the City Centre should promote activation, integrate green infrastructure and strengthen the public space network, focussing on creating streets and places for people that are safe, resilient and comfortable.*

## DESIGN GUIDANCE

### 4.2A STREET ACTIVATION

- i. Along key streets and within precinct hearts, provide sufficient width of a flexible zone adjacent to footpaths to enable outdoor dining along building facades without blocking pedestrian flow to promote street activation.
- ii. Identify opportunities for appropriate public space activation and provide adjacent ground floor uses to support and drive activation, where possible.
- iii. Provide areas for temporary activations on building ground floors and adjacent public space to accommodate temporary pop-up interventions, events and gatherings to activate the public space.



#### Tip: Elements of a City Centre street

Streets are the lifeblood of our cities and are the primary urban element through which people experience the City Centre. Streets are typically made up of a series of different zones where different uses can and should happen. These zones include:

- i. Roadway - the space between the two kerbs used to accommodate different modes of vehicles, active travel infrastructure and parking
- ii. Traffic lanes - dedicated zone for motorised vehicles
- iii. Active travel lanes - dedicated zone for cyclists and micro-mobility (e-scooters and e-bikes) use
- iv. Verge - the space between the property boundary and the kerb
- v. Pedestrian clearway - the primary pedestrian movement and clearway
- vi. Building edges - where the buildings interact with the public space
- vii. Privately owned public spaces (POPS) - Spaces that are privately owned, but open to the public such as arcades, plazas and atriums.

### Tip: Street activation

Temporary activation is all about improving streets and public spaces through temporary activation activities, to demonstrate the potential for long term catalysing change.

Examples of temporary activation are shown below:



#### Reclaimed streets and plazas

Roads or other urban spaces have been reclaimed and used as new parkland or plazas by the redirection of vehicular traffic. Planting, public artworks, barriers and bollards should be installed to make the space safe and pedestrianised.



#### Utilising existing roads and car parking

Existing roads and car parking can be used as demonstration projects for outdoor dining or parklets through the temporary installation of furniture and planting.



#### Events and pop-up activations

The programming and activation of events throughout the City Centre bring to life. This can be through live performances, outdoor exercise classes, giant games and community activities. These activities give the community a sense of ownership and belonging and bring activity to the City Centre.



#### Temporary art

Public art and murals are a positive way to activate the City Centre, particularly along blank walls and roadways. Private sector partners should be encouraged to incorporate public art projections and murals around key development sites and on temporary hoardings during construction.

Outdoor dining contributes to the life and animation of the street by giving people a legitimate reason to stay in the streets and public spaces for longer periods of time and bridging the indoor and outdoor of the building's ground floor. Encouraged examples of outdoor dining in the City Centre are shown below:



#### Footpath dining

Footpath dining through flexible zones on the street creates an active and dynamic public space, while ensuring pedestrian clearways are maintained. This activity drives economic performance for local businesses.



#### Setback dining

Where possible along major streets, dining along street frontages should be encouraged to face the public space. This gives the feeling of additional open space to the street and creates a sense of activity and dynamism.



#### Laneway dining

Activated laneways provide safe, inviting, legible pedestrian connections throughout the City Centre. Laneways can be activated through small dining opportunities that spill out and create more intimate spaces of activity.



#### Temporary on-street dining

Opportunities should be taken for temporary activation including the closure of streets or parking bays for new dining opportunities. This may be during major or key events, or through the temporary consideration and trial of future opportunities.



## 4.2B INCLUSIVE DESIGN ELEMENTS

- i. Provide paths that can accommodate a pram, wheelchair user, cyclist or scooter and two people side-by-side.
- ii. Ensure universal design principles for building and public space design and provide universal access to main building entries and cross-block links to ensure the access to all users.
- iii. Ensure accessible and effective navigation for people of all abilities through clear, legible, multilingual, and tactile signage.

- iv. Ensure good quality and appropriate lighting in public spaces to improve the perception of safety.
- v. Integrate urban furniture within the public space to support the elderly, those with limited mobility, and adults with small children.

### Related planning strategies and tools:

- i. Inner North & City District Strategy
- ii. ACT Movement and Place Framework for Canberra
- iii. ACT Transport Strategy
- iv. ACT Active Travel Plan
- v. Municipal Infrastructure Standards (MIS)

### Why this is important:

An inclusive approach to street design breaks down the barriers that exclude some people from participating in public life and enables everyone to go about their daily lives regardless of ability, age and gender.



#### Tactile ground surface indicators (TGSIs)

TGSIs provide outcomes to assist vision impaired pedestrians by providing a physical element within the pavement that can be felt underfoot.



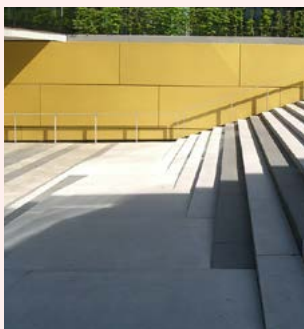
#### Raised crossings

Raising the surface of the road to be flush with the kerb at key pedestrian crossings creates a safe and seamless transition to the street.



#### Safe footpaths

Safe and clearly defined pedestrian movement pathways and zones, free from obstruction and clutter such as furniture and signage.



#### Accessible path gradients

The City Centre must include well designed ramps, escalators or elevators, where possible, to allow access for all users.



#### Effective navigation

Wayfinding is provided for people of all abilities and is clear, legible, multilingual and provided in logical places.



#### Universal access

Comply with universal access standards in key places, such as transport hubs, public spaces and key destinations and precincts.



#### Shoulder buffer zones

Creating a landscaped buffer between the road and the pedestrian clearway improves the safety and the quality of the pedestrian experience.



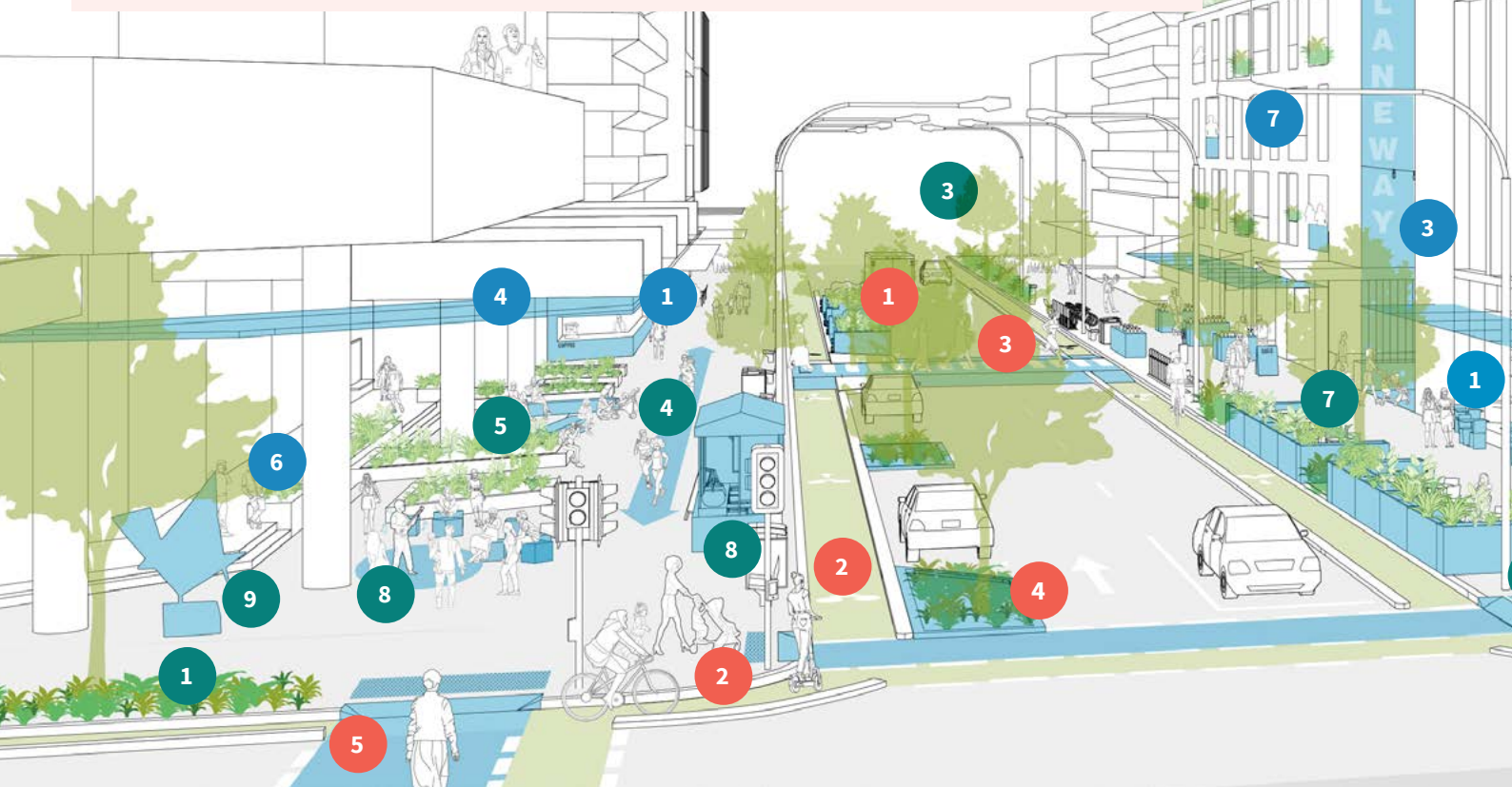


Location: Akuna Street crossing by SMEC  
Photo: Ben Wrigley



### Why this is important:

The 2020 ACT Transport Strategy introduces the 'Movement and Place' concept, which emphasises the need to balance the dual functions of streets. This concept serves as a framework for integrating land use and transportation. As Canberra experiences increased urban density, more streets are evolving to serve both as a high movement and a high place function. The streets in the City Centre provide a good example of this 'high movement, high place'. The streets of 'high movement, high place' should promote legibility, connectivity and an increased place value within the public space. Critical principles in achieving a high-quality streetscape public space include inclusive design elements, green infrastructure and active travel frameworks. The following diagram demonstrates key elements that contribute to high-quality public space outcomes for a street of high movement and place and should be considered where possible.



## 4.2C HIGH MOVEMENT, HIGH PLACE

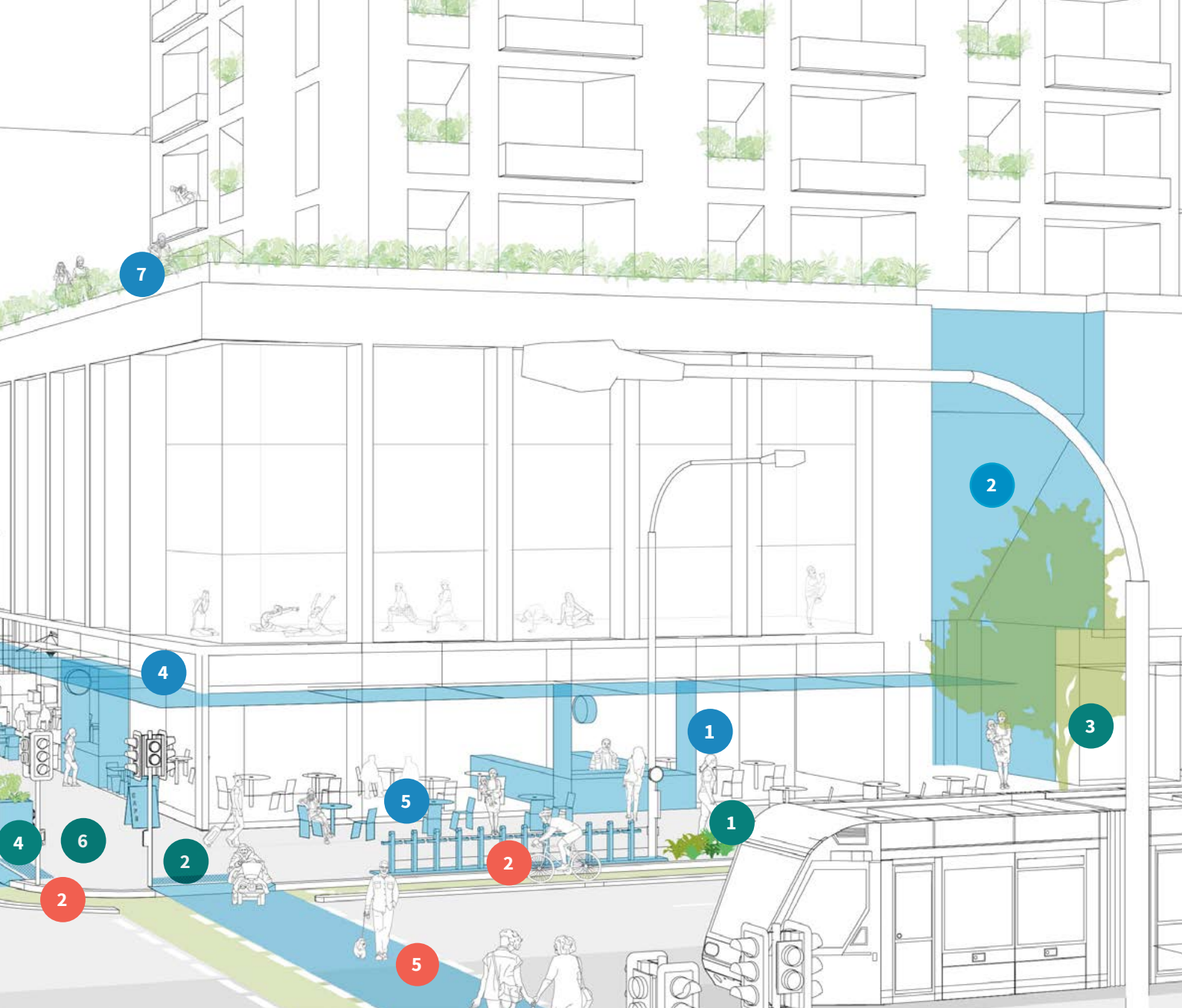
### Building Edge

- 1 Provide retail and public uses with active ground floor wherever possible.
- 2 Provide as many building entrances as practicable in visible and legible locations on the street to support street activation.
- 3 Clearly sign entries to laneways, cross-block links and pedestrian connections to support legible way-finding.
- 4 Provide continuous awnings or colonnades along main streets to protect pedestrian from rain, sun and wind.
- 5 Provide footpath dining in locations with good climatic conditions adjacent to cafes and restaurants.

- 6 Provide high quality landscaping and planting on building setbacks where there are no public ground floor uses to improve the ground floor experience from the street.
- 7 Incorporate residential uses on the above-ground floors, where suitable, to provide passive surveillance and street activity throughout more hours of the day.

### Verge

- 1 Implement water sensitive urban design elements and climate adaptation elements where appropriate.
- 2 Incorporate Tactile ground surface indicators (TGSIs) to support navigation for all abilities.
- 3 Ensure tree canopy cover on and planted planter beds.



- 4 Provide a safe and clear footpath along with no obstacles or clutter for fast and direct movement.
- 5 Consider locating plazas, forecourts and courtyards adjacent to main entries with high quality public space and seating to transition from public to private uses.
- 6 Ensure accessible path gradients on all streets and crossings.
- 7 Provide planted enclosures around outdoor dining and temporary dining area to buffer from faster moving traffic.
- 8 Provide areas in streets that can be used for temporary events and pop-up functions to support street activation.

- 9 Provide temporary and permanent public art in practicable locations to create visual character and interest.

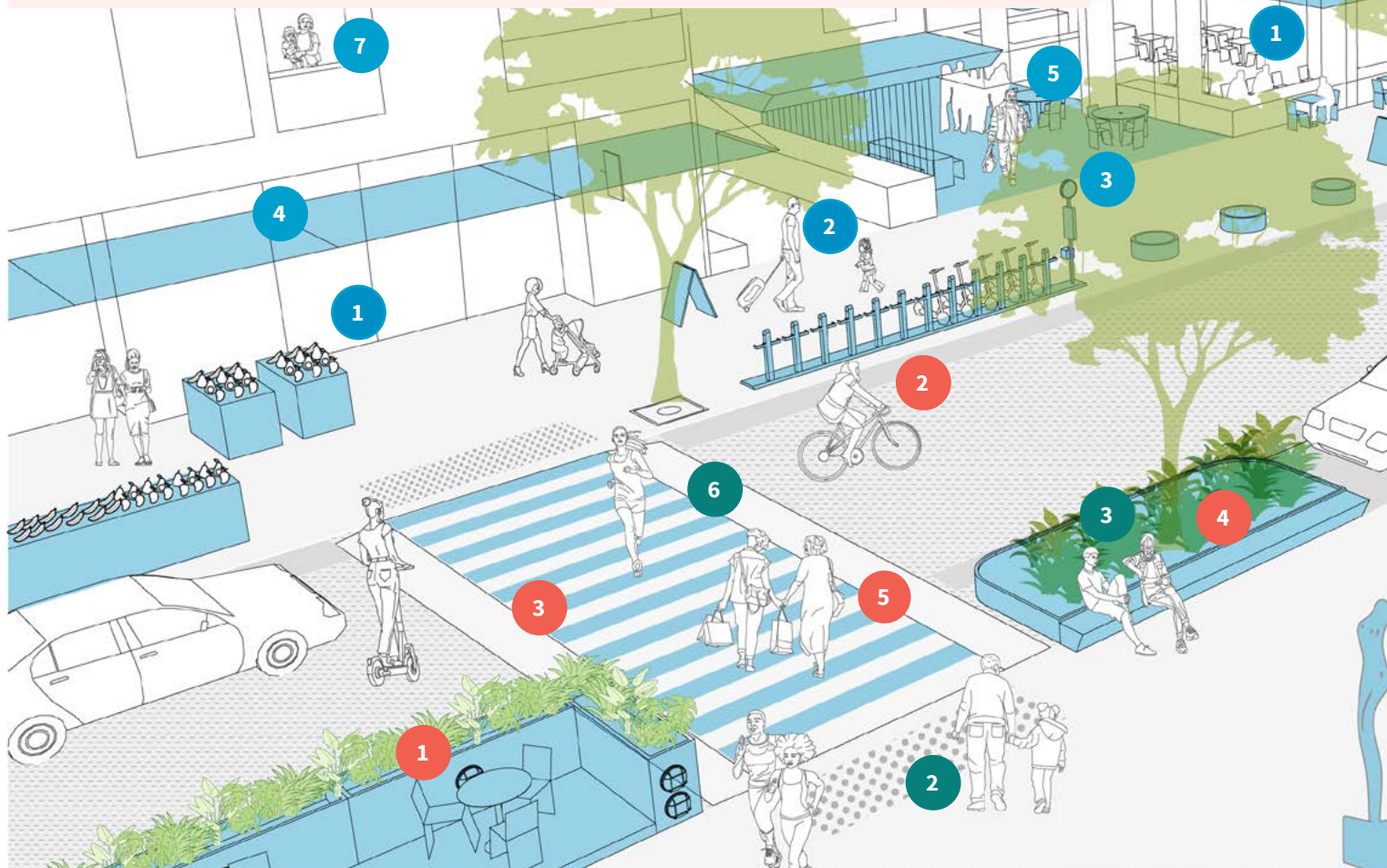
### Roadway

- 1 Consider car parking spots for other functions, such as outdoor dining or seating.
- 2 Provide bike lanes separated from vehicular traffic to improve the safety and comfort of using active travel.
- 3 Provide raised crossings in locations of high pedestrian movement outside of main intersections.
- 4 Implement shoulder buffer zones to improve safety.
- 5 Implement intelligent pedestrian crossings in locations of high pedestrian movement with short wait times at traffic light intersection to improve efficiency of active mobility.



### Why this is important:

Within the ACT Movement and Place Framework, 'Low Movement, High Place' streets are community-centered, offering meaningful activity and distinctive built environments. They prioritise pedestrian experiences at a leisurely 5 kmph pace through careful design and public space treatment, fostering interaction with the surrounding environment. While primarily intended for walking and cycling, limited public transport and traffic access may be permitted. City Centre streets in this category focus on creating high-quality pedestrian spaces. The diagram illustrates key elements for excellent public open spaces in 'Low Movement, High Place' streets, enhancing pedestrian outcomes.



## 4.2D LOW MOVEMENT, HIGH PLACE

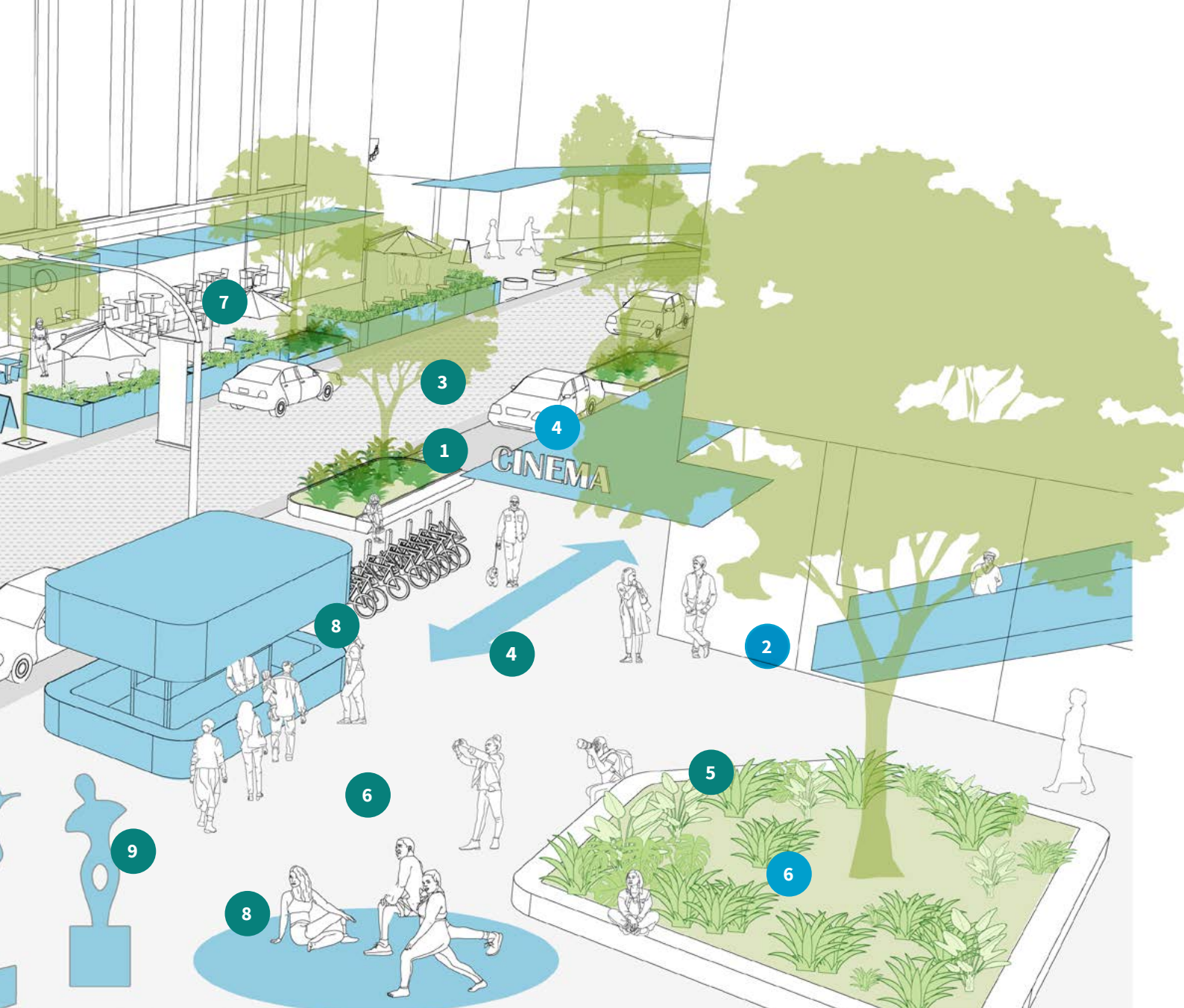
### Building Edge

- 1 Provide retail and public uses with active ground floor wherever possible.
- 2 Provide as many building entrances as practicable in visible and legible locations on the street to support street activation.
- 3 Clearly sign entries to laneways, cross-block links and pedestrian connections to support legible way-finding.
- 4 Provide continuous awnings or colonnades along main streets to protect pedestrian from rain, sun and wind.
- 5 Provide footpath dining in locations with good climatic conditions adjacent to cafes and restaurants.

- 6 Provide high quality landscaping and planting on building setbacks where there are no public ground floor uses to improve the ground floor experience from the street.
- 7 Incorporate residential uses on the above-ground floors, where suitable, to provide passive surveillance and street activity throughout more hours of the day.

### Verge

- 1 Implement water sensitive urban design elements and climate adaptation elements where appropriate.
- 2 Incorporate Tactile ground surface indicators (TGSIs) to support navigation for all abilities.
- 3 Ensure tree canopy cover on and planted planter beds.



- 4 Provide a safe and clear footpath along with no obstacles or clutter for fast and direct movement.
- 5 Consider locating plazas, forecourts and courtyards adjacent to main entries with high quality public space and seating to transition from public to private uses.
- 6 Ensure accessible path gradients on all streets and crossings.
- 7 Provide planted enclosures around outdoor dining and temporary dining area to buffer from faster moving traffic.
- 8 Provide areas in streets that can be used for temporary events and pop-up functions to support street activation.

- 9 Provide temporary and permanent public art in practicable locations to create visual character and interest.

### Roadway

- 1 Consider car parking spots for other functions, such as outdoor dining or seating.
- 2 Provide safe and comfort shared road for bike and vehicular traffic.
- 3 Provide raised crossings in locations of high pedestrian movement outside of main intersections.
- 4 Implement shoulder buffer zones to improve safety.
- 5 Implement intelligent pedestrian crossings in locations of high pedestrian movement with short wait times at traffic light intersection to improve efficiency of active mobility.



Different street types in the City Centre have different Movement and Place concept needs depending on their location, role, size and hierarchy.

The 2020 ACT Transport Strategy introduces the Movement and Place Framework, a concept that underscores the significance of creating high-quality, liveable, and sustainable urban spaces. It goes beyond merely accommodating vehicles and standard walking and cycling infrastructure in street planning. This approach considers a wide array of users, activities, and requirements, all with the goal of balancing them through place-specific design. This approach prioritises active travel and strives to enhance the urban environment to cater to individuals of all ages and abilities.

The cross-section on the next page illustrates the typical streets for the various street types in the City Centre providing a visual representation of these concepts.

DESIGN GUIDANCE

4.2E CITY CENTRE STREETS

- i. Analyse the Movement and Place framework of adjacent streets and laneways and identify how the development supports them.
- ii. Allow continuous street tree canopy along street profiles.
- iii. Reinforce the geometry and symbolic intent of the Griffin Plan by maintaining consistent building alignment and establishing a vertical rhythm of the streetscape.
- iv. Align street lighting and other vertical elements with trees to ensure a clear and unobstructed pedestrian pathway.
- v. Create opportunities for activation through retail and dining establishments on the streets.

Light rail corridor

The light rail corridors in the City Centre prioritise pedestrian activity and place value, with flexibility for future expansions. The corridor design integrates the light rail, green verges, building frontage and land use at ground level enhancing the urban environment.

Street verges feature formalised urban elements like colonnades, quality furniture, and signage integrated into building design, contributing to the place character.

Active building frontage and colonnades create well-lit, safe spaces without hiding spots, enhancing public amenity. Generous ground floor heights and colonnades improve visibility, urban scale, and adaptability for various services. These design features ensure accessibility for all and foster inclusivity in the City Centre.

Urban street

Typical urban streets in the City Centre primarily serve local traffic for easy access to buildings while prioritising the well-being of people.

Spacious verges are designed to accommodate high pedestrian activity and foster a dynamic public life at the ground level increasing amenity for both visitor and residential use. This street type accommodates continuous awnings, creating a welcoming public space with frequent entry points and interesting window displays. The active footpath, flex zone and minor building feature like operable screens or balconies enhance the streetscape and surveillance from upper levels.

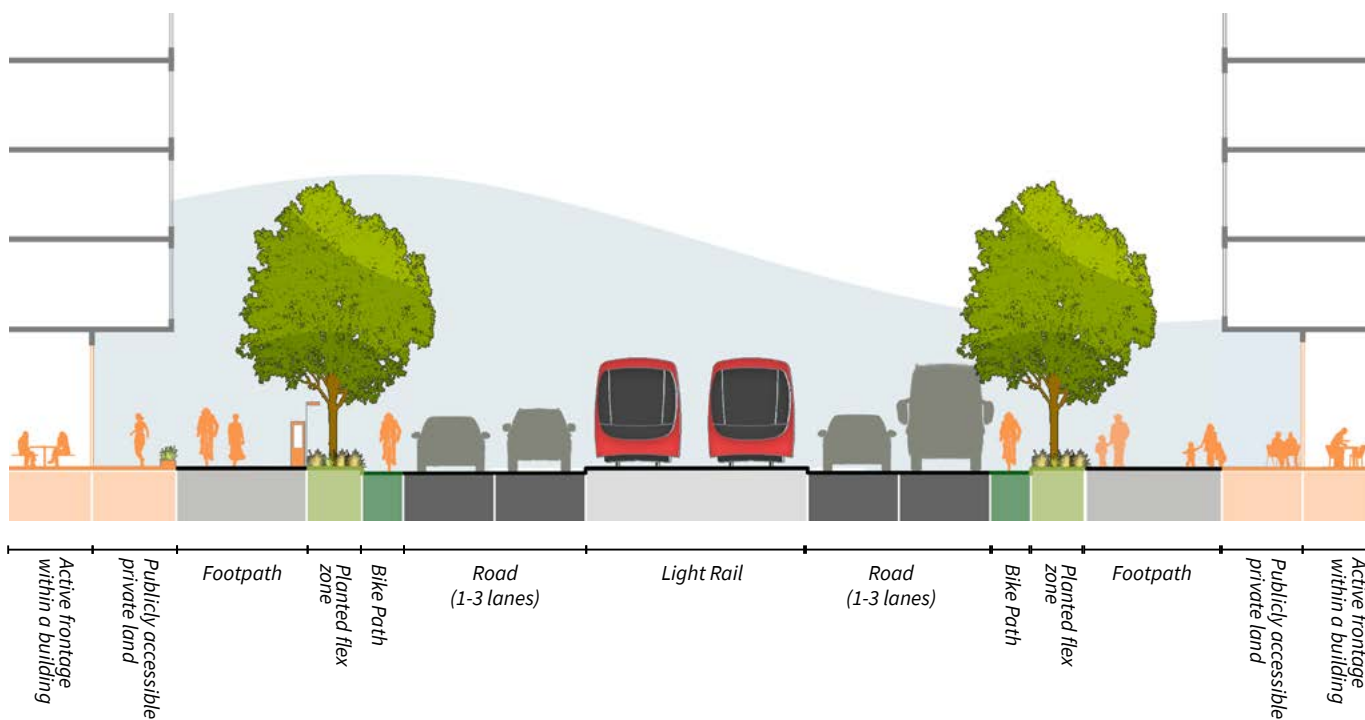
Laneway

Laneways in the City Centre accommodates low movement of services and access to developments and varying place value for people.

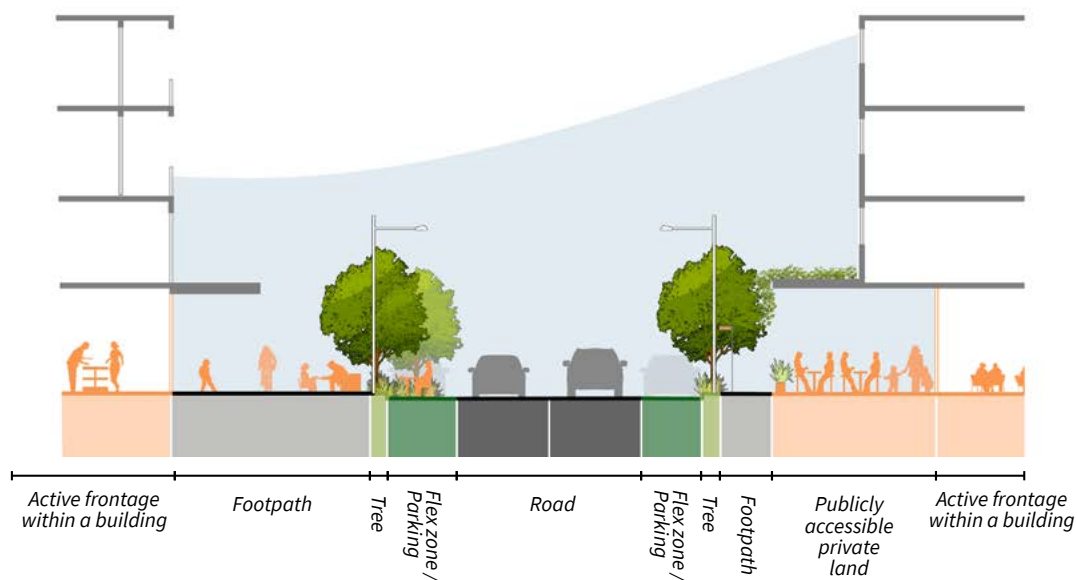
The laneway cross-section on the adjacent page illustrates a laneway with high place value for people with active uses and street trees which offers an intimate urban scale and amenity to adjacent building users. It is intended that the laneway will remain active when possible, with one-way access for cars and service vehicle.

Related planning strategies and tools:

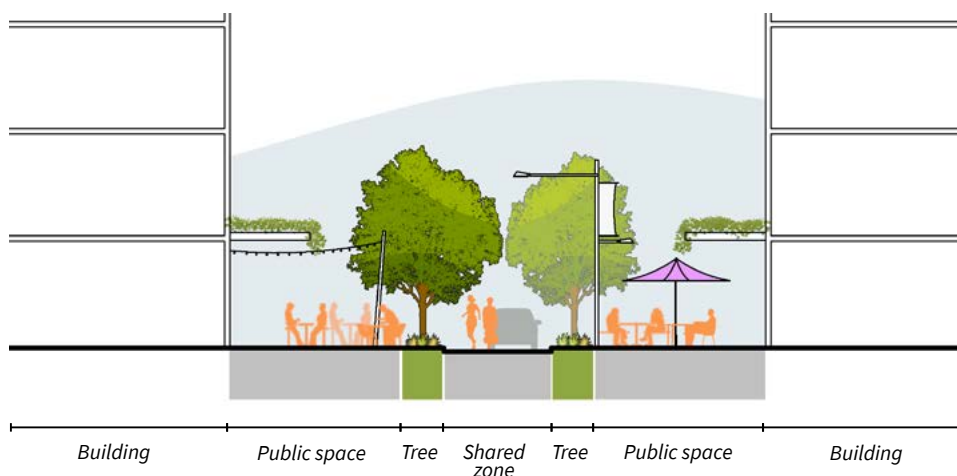
- i. Inner North & City District Strategy
- ii. ACT Movement and Place Framework for Canberra
- iii. ACT Transport Strategy
- iv. Municipal Infrastructure Standards (MIS)



*Indicative cross-section of future light rail corridor in the City Centre*



*Indicative cross-section of future urban street*



*Indicative cross-section of future new laneway*



## 4.3 PARKING, LOADING AND SERVICES

The way in which access, parking and services are considered throughout the City Centre are key to creating a successful and pleasant urban environment.

*Abundant surface car parking has shaped the face and experience of the City Centre and will need to change with the future urban density increase, changes to car ownership models and technologies. Future car parking should be integrated into basements of new developments or flexible structures that can adapt over time and help shape the urban environment to enhance the human-scale experience.*

### DESIGN GUIDANCE

#### 4.3A PARKING

- i. Provide underground car parking where possible to minimise the impacts of car parking on the public space experience in the City Centre.
- ii. Locate car parking entries and exits away from primary streets to minimise negative impacts on the street facades and to avoid interrupting pedestrian flows.
- iii. Locate pedestrian entrances to car parking adjacent to main building entrances, public streets or other highly visible locations to increase legibility, perceived safety and passive surveillance and consider journeys to nearby main attractors.
- iv. Consider coordinated efforts to provide car parking by shared underground facilities between multiple building sites to maximise efficiency and minimise the negative impacts of parking in the public space.
- v. Provide safe and legible entrances for secure bike parking inside buildings for bicycles and micro-mobility, including pavement marking and signage to improve the experience of active travel.
- vi. Sleeve car parking with other active uses where underground parking is not possible to provide attractive, animated facades along key streets, parks and open spaces. Blank walls and podium car park screens are not supported at lower levels.
- vii. Multi-storey structures with the primary use of car parking should include other integrated uses such as sleeved retail or commercial spaces at ground and roof level to encourage building and public space activation.
- viii. Design above ground car parking to be adaptable for other uses over time and in response to reducing parking demand, i.e., being converted to office space.

#### 4.3B INTEGRATED SERVICES

- i. Provide access to servicing and loading areas from secondary streets or rear laneways to minimise conflict with pedestrians and cyclists as well as negative impacts on main building frontages.
- ii. Utilities and services areas should be consolidated in areas with easy access and utility while minimising negative impacts on adjacent public space and buildings.
- iii. Sensitively integrate and disperse ground floor services such as fire hydrant boosters and sub-stations into building façade design to minimise impacts and disruptions to the adjacent public space.
- iv. Consolidate and co-locate loading docks, storage areas and service areas away from main streets and the public space to minimise negative impacts caused by large vehicles, smells and visual clutter.
- v. Consider space provision for waste collection vehicles to the site at the planning stage to prevent these functions from spilling over into either the public right-of-way or public space.
- vi. Consider sustainable and future-proof waste management and sorting solutions to accommodate for future waste management demands.
- vii. Consider the size of waste disposal vehicles in early design stages to minimise the negative impacts on the pedestrian experience while adequately servicing the building.

#### Related planning strategies and tools:

- i. Development Control Code for Best Practice Waste Management in the ACT 2019
- ii. Municipal Infrastructure Standards (MIS)



*Integrated parking options allow for car parking to be consolidated within mixed-use contexts, promoting active and dynamic streetscape interfaces with the public space.*

*Underground parking for multiple plots with shared entry*

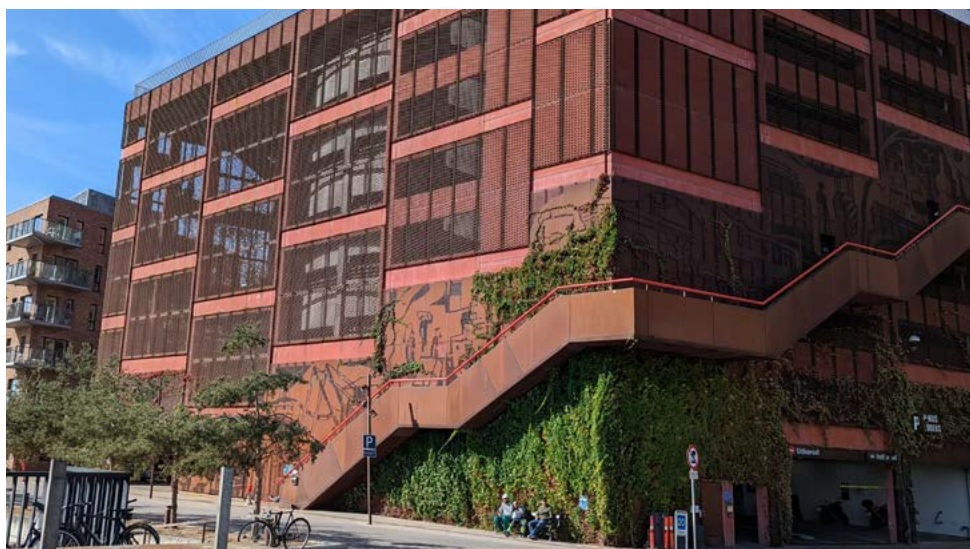
*Discreetly integrated services and parking entries*

*Common entry/exit points in open spaces help animate the public space and contribute to activity and feelings of safety.*

*Services and loading entries located in secondary streets and laneways*

*Underground parking for a single plot can have access directly to lift core*

Generic block for illustration purposes



### Exemplar:

Preference is for developments with basement car parking facilities in place of multi-storey car parks with integration into mixed-use developments. Integrated car parking options provide opportunities for an enhanced, dynamic streetscape frontage.

Parking House + Konditaget  
Lüders, Nordhavn, DK, Design:  
JAJA Architects





# PUBLIC SPACES AND AMENITY

Great places bring people together, are welcoming and provide spaces for social interaction and spontaneous moments.

*The City Centre has a very generous amount of open space however much of it is underutilised and lacks programming, connections and a sufficient adjacent population to consistently activate the spaces. The public space should be designed with the needs and values of its users in mind, focussing on building spaces that are people-centric, walkable, well-connected and inviting, and providing a variety of uses and activities. As the City Centre densifies and the population and demographic grows, so will the importance of the open space network.*

## DESIGN ELEMENTS

### 5.1 PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

**5.1A** Links within the Open Space Network

**5.2B** Diverse Recreational and Social Needs

**5.3C** Pedestrian Priority Streets and Plazas

### 5.2 PLACEMAKING

**5.2A** Day and Nighttime Activity

**5.2B** Placemaking Process

### 5.3 ART AND CULTURE

**5.3A** Public Art and Culture

**5.3B** Partnerships



# 5

Location: Henry Rolland Park,  
West Basin and Acton Waterfront,  
Canberra  
Photo: Martin Ollman



# 5.1 PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

Convenient access to high-quality, well-maintained open space is critical to supporting the physical, psychological and social wellbeing of its users.

*The quality and functionality of spaces must provide a diverse hierarchy of publicly accessible spaces with a variety of uses and activities to meet the needs of adjacent populations. High quality and consistent detailing of the City Centre’s public space will establish a strong and memorable urban quality commensurate with its status.*

## DESIGN GUIDANCE

### 5.1A LINKS WITHIN THE OPEN SPACE NETWORK

- i. Improve linkages from activity centres to open spaces to promote connectivity and encourage public space activation.
- ii. Enhance links between parks and green corridors to provide continuous landscaped experiences throughout the City Centre and support biodiversity corridors.
- iii. Design green spaces in a way that promotes high levels of accessibility to help revitalise the urban ecosystem and transform undervalued open spaces and green options.
- iv. Support the network of attractive open spaces and destination of varying sizes and uses to provide a layered and diverse range of activities and functions.
- v. Signage should be minimised and primarily support placemaking and wayfinding not commercial advertising. Ensure that signs on buildings are considered through the Territory Plan and Development Application (DA) process. Additionally, construction hoarding signage must consider the

**Why this is important:**

Parks and plaza areas can provide active social spaces to meet, linger and engage with others. These should be designed to include a diverse range of offerings that reflect the community’s priorities, needs and expectations and include dog parks, high-quality lawn areas, exercise equipment, formal and informal play spaces and picnic/barbecue facilities. Community gardens allow people to grow their own food, learn and engage in activities that promote physical fitness. Community gardens also enable people to come together with a common purpose, strengthening social networks and encouraging healthy lifestyles.

hoarding signage guidelines. Signs on public land require a public unleased land permit (ACT) or NCA approval.

### 5.1B DIVERSE RECREATIONAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS

- i. Consider multiple themes in the design of parks to create destination parks that cater for a diverse, active and healthy community.
- ii. Create spaces for children to encourage increased social interaction between adults.
- iii. Provide formalised playground facilities and nature-based play areas to support physical activity and creative exploration for all ages.
- iv. Incorporate sheltered seating, toilets and picnic areas, where possible.
- v. Encourage community gardens where suitable across the City Centre.

### 5.1C PEDESTRIAN PRIORITY STREETS AND PLAZAS

- i. Consider new pedestrian priority streets and plazas in locations with potential for high pedestrian footfall or significant symbolic and historic values.
- ii. Enable community events and celebrations of varying scales to be safely and comfortably hosted in pedestrian priority streets and plazas.

**Related planning strategies and tools:**

- i. Inner North & City District Strategy
- ii. Municipal Infrastructure Standards (MIS)



Key Public Open Spaces

### Legend

	City Centre boundary
	Semi natural open spaces
	Recreation spaces
	Amenity green space
	Pedestrian plaza
	Key pedestrian routes
	City Hill park
	Current / proposed light rail corridor

	Potential future light rail corridor - alignment TBD
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## 5.2 PLACEMAKING

Placemaking is about more than just buildings and open spaces, it is about the often-intangible elements that people identify with and relate to that create a connection to place.

*Significant benefits are achieved in terms of health, happiness and well-being through participatory placemaking outcomes. Placemaking initiatives also provide opportunities to quickly test new ideas for how public spaces can be used and occupied to inform longer-term change, and the City Centre is the most active platform for testing these initiatives.*

### DESIGN GUIDANCE

#### 5.2A DAY AND NIGHTTIME ACTIVITY

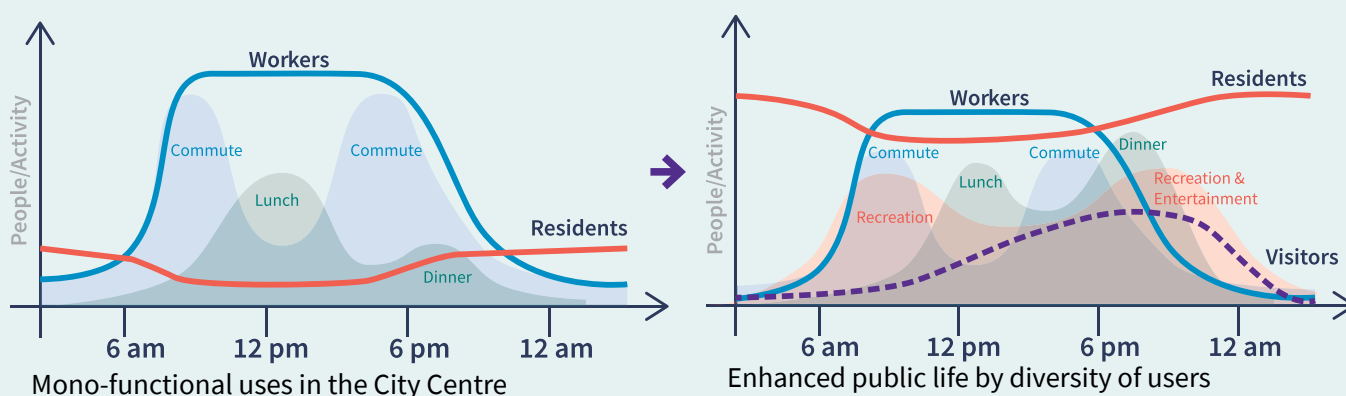
- Promote a new critical mass of people through increasing density of the City Centre in support of diverse and dynamic spaces and places.
- Encourage sustainable growth to promote a new critical mass of people, ensuring a diversity of activities, functions and services within the City Centre.
- Ensure the successful activation of urban spaces both during the day and night.
- Densify urban areas to promote the sustainable growth of a diverse demographic, facilitate multi-functional uses and activities and enable dynamic spaces and places for both during the day and the night.

#### 5.2B PLACEMAKING PROCESS

- Consider a placemaking approach involving pilot projects in urban areas undergoing transformation to develop with the community and respond to user engagement.
- Consider an iterative process for pilot projects involving temporary activation or urban intervention, refining them to suit user needs and measuring the impacts to track the outcomes and benefits.
- Collaborate and co-design with local users and the community on all placemaking projects to increase community ownership in urban transformation projects and significant development areas.
- Provide continuity between temporary activation projects and final implementation to increase community engagement and investment.

#### Why this is important:

Diverse users and demographics in the City Centre will enable multi-functional uses and activities that support dynamic spaces and places that are active both during the day and the night. (See Entertainment Precinct 6.3)



**Tip: Placemaking should focus on the following principles**

- i. Designing people-focussed places and streets.
- ii. Providing for a diversity of uses and users.
- iii. Creating places that are connected and legible.
- iv. Establishing places that are safe, appealing and inclusive.
- v. Supporting and encouraging sustainability and innovation.
- vi. Empowering the community to initiate change and build place leadership.
- vii. Acknowledging and celebrating heritage places and civic life.
- viii. Minimising the use of signage, reserving it primarily for supporting placemaking and wayfinding rather than commercial advertising.



## Streets

Opportunities to utilise key parts of the street, such as verges and medians, to create temporary public spaces for activity. This can increase footfall, attract new visitors and create new places of recreation for all age groups and demographics.

## Underutilised spaces

Key spaces that are not always used, such as car parks and empty lots, can be transformed into pop up public spaces for events and other key activities. By allowing food trucks and other temporary and movable furniture, these spaces can be transformed into new city destinations.

## Development sites

Work with public and private sector partners to incorporate public art, projections and murals around key development sites and on temporary hoardings during construction to create a more attractive environment for the public.

## Parks / open spaces

Parks and open spaces create the perfect platform for new creative interventions. Movable furniture and lighting allow users to create their own urban spaces through informal meetings, areas for relaxation and recreation and allow areas to evolve on a daily basis.



# 5.3 ART AND CULTURE

Beyond the direct economic contributions, the arts, culture and creative industries play an important role in creating an attractive and active City Centre in which to live and induce tourism visitations.

*The City Centre is the focus of Canberra’s arts and cultural institutions, including museums and galleries, theatres and other independent venues. The City Centre should continue to enhance this experience, attracting, retaining and growing talent which will impact on the prosperity, vitality and success of the City Centre.*

## DESIGN GUIDANCE

### 5.3A PUBLIC ART AND CULTURE

- i. Conceptualise urban art together with any public space revitalisation projects and consider the role of art relating to the five key themes proposed by the Canberra Urban Art Strategy.
- ii. Incorporate public art into public space projects located near key pedestrian links or routes, thereby enhancing visibility and accessibility, and creating a sense of identity that engages the community.
- iii. Work with artists to create a diverse range of artistic expressions for the City Centre.
- iv. Integrate Urban Art into everyday community functions and services as central nodes for public life (kindergarten, local grocery store, bike repair, community centre, local library, local supermarket).
- v. Consider implementing various types of public art in a range of public spaces, such as murals, light installations, music, play equipment and seating.

**Why this is important:**

Arts and cultural institutions and organisations play a key role in defining the character and identity of the places where we live, work, play and visit. They bring people together and provide new ways to enjoy our City Centre and flourish personally. They also foster creativity and innovation, provide jobs and celebrate heritage, while playing a key role in economic growth. The arts and culture sector for the ACT leads the nation in creating employment and has the highest arts and creative attendance and participation rates across Australia.

- vi. Integrate art projects into long-term construction site hoardings to reduce the need for “out of order”, especially around infrastructure projects.

### 5.3B PARTNERSHIPS

- i. Foster collaborative partnerships with stakeholders from various levels of government, private enterprises, and community landowners to enrich public art initiatives.
- ii. Proactively involve local communities in the creative process of developing public art projects.
- iii. Dedicate efforts to enhance public awareness and recognition of the significance of public artwork within the city.
- iv. Support and promote community and business-driven initiatives that expand art opportunities in public spaces.
- v. Advocate for the integration of public art into private development projects, further enriching the city’s aesthetic appeal.
- vi. Allocate specific resources to support artist-led public art ventures that align with the city’s objectives and priorities.

**Related planning strategies and tools:**

- City Renewal Precinct Urban Art Strategy 2022-2025

### **Tip: Urban Art Strategy 2022-2025**

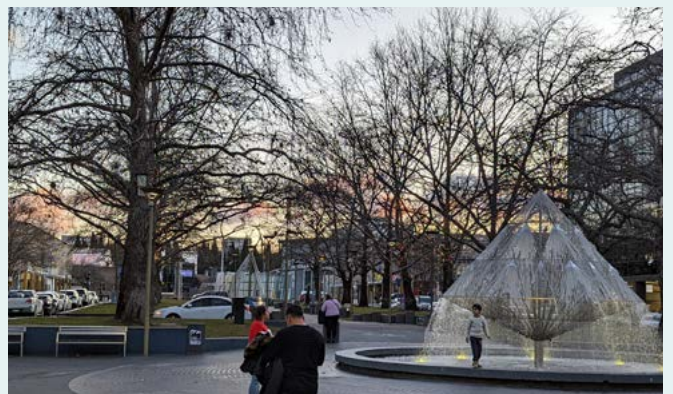
The City Renewal Precinct Urban Arts Strategy 2020 - 2025, has been developed to assist ACT Government agencies, developers, artists, arts workers, curators and producers with the implementation of urban art in the city. This document and its themes should be used as a guide when developing the aims and curatorial intent for any urban art projects and initiatives.



*Urban art and sculptures integrated into public spaces*



*Temporary art interventions in public spaces*



*Festivals and gatherings on the waterfront*







# BUILT FORM AND BUILDING DESIGN

The design of buildings and their interface with the public space are crucial to the overall function and success of the City Centre.

*At the street level, building edges should facilitate attractive and engaging edges that support amenity, usability, safety and diversity of the urban fabric. At the precinct level, the built form should unlock a diverse range of new public spaces and opportunities. At the city level, built outcomes must be responsive to context and climate.*

## DESIGN ELEMENTS

### 6.1 BUILDING DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURAL QUALITY

- 6.1A Ground Floor Interface
- 6.1B Buildings and Towers
- 6.1C Visual Amenity
- 6.1D Heritage Integration

### 6.2 INTERFACE AND ACTIVATION

- 6.2A Mixed-Use City
- 6.2B Laneways and Cross-Block Links
- 6.2C Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS)

### 6.3 ENTERTAINMENT PRECINCT

- 6.3A City Centre Entertainment Precinct

A photograph of a modern apartment building with concrete balconies and glass railings. In the foreground, there is a paved sidewalk, some greenery, and a white van parked on the street. A large, semi-transparent blue circle with a white number '6' is overlaid on the right side of the image. The background shows a clear blue sky with some clouds.

# 6

Location: Campbell 5 Apartments,  
Canberra



# 6.1 BUILDING DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURAL QUALITY

Buildings play a key role in shaping the quality of our cities and the way that people experience the City Centre.

*When this is done well, it is where the interface between buildings and the public spaces seamlessly intersect to create places that are functionally appropriate. Well-designed buildings make a positive contribution to the City Centre, not only at the ground level, but also to the city skyline and overall image and identity of the City Centre.*

## DESIGN GUIDANCE

### 6.1A GROUND FLOOR INTERFACE

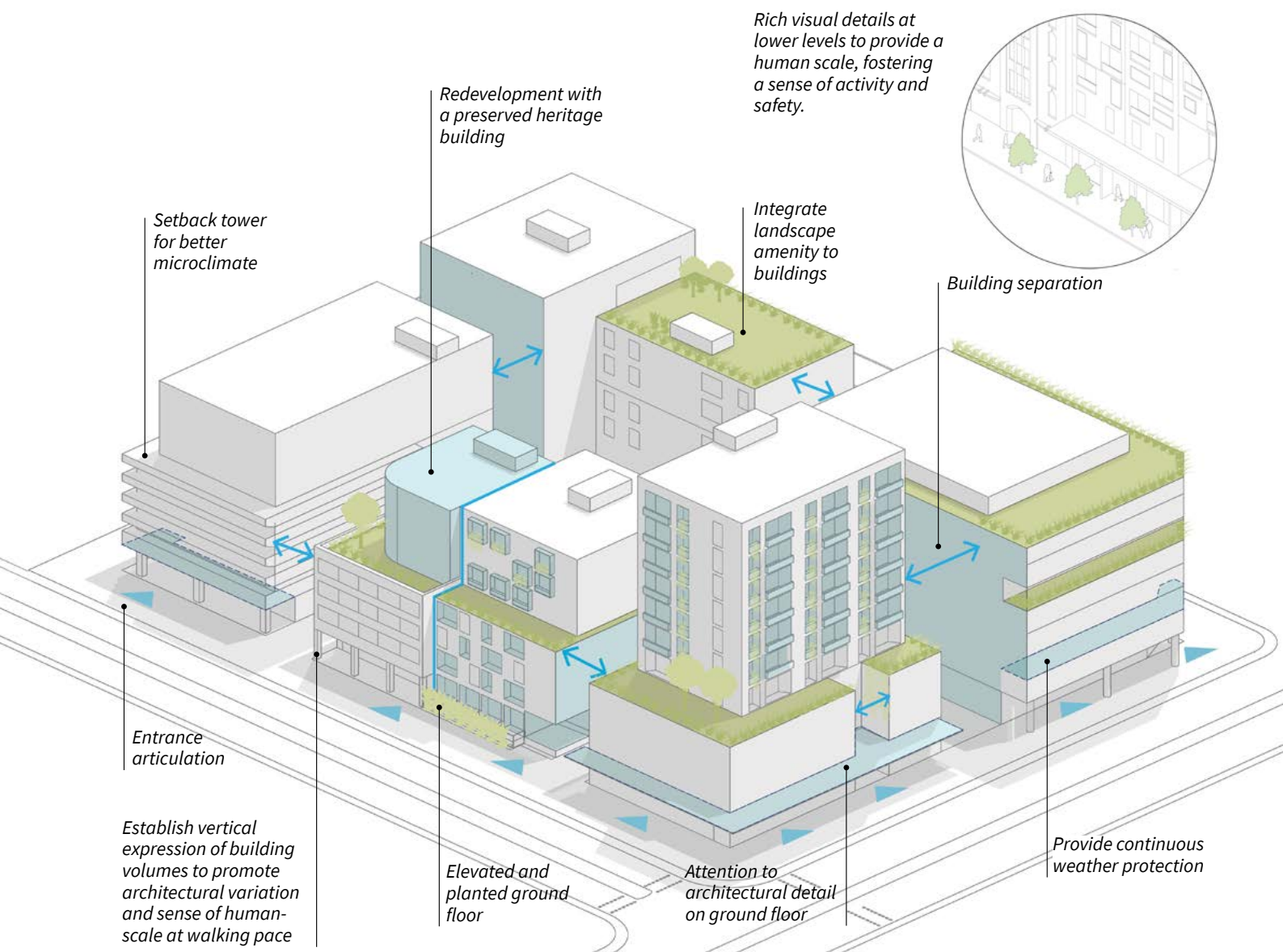
- i. Provide continuous awnings and weather protection along inner-city streets to provide a comfortable walking environment and a pleasant microclimate.
- ii. Provide consistent colonnades and building awnings where an existing feature on adjoining buildings to promote a human-scale and weather protection at the ground level.
- iii. Maximise building entrances and openings on primary streets and key points and nodes within the movement network.
- iv. Locate building entries at grade with adjacent street or footpath level to ensure easy and equitable access while improving interaction between the street and building.
- v. Emphasise building entrances as a focal point in the building facade and ensure they are in highly visible and legible to activate City Centre streets.
- vi. Consider upgrading the ground floor interface of existing buildings to make entries easier and clearer for people of all ages and abilities.
- vii. Minimise blank walls, areas of louvers and roller shutters on primary streets and where addressing key pedestrian spaces. Where blank walls are unavoidable, alternative treatments are used such as integration of artwork or screening vegetation.
- viii. Provide well-designed residential and other accommodation ground floor interface where retail and commercial active ground floors are not appropriate. Consider building setbacks, elevated ground floors, front gardens, privacy and passive surveillance.

### 6.1B BUILDINGS AND TOWERS

- i. Avoid lot amalgamation in the City Centre particularly in City North-East to maintain a diverse, lively and attractive character and fine grain pedestrian network.
- ii. Buildings should be joined at the ground level, where possible, to provide a continuous streetscape edge.
- iii. Separate building (setback) massing where habitable rooms occur to protect reasonable levels of visual privacy (and access to daylight)
- iv. Consider solar and daylight access to private open spaces.
- v. Setback towers and building mass above 5-6 storeys to improve open space microclimate and avoid down wash of wind and turbulence.
- vi. Neighbouring buildings can be attached above ground on smaller plots and on levels below 5-6 storeys on larger plots to maintain character of street wall.
- vii. Transition built form height through new developments when interfacing with adjacent lower scale buildings.

#### Why this is important:

Buildings should be designed to respond to the streetscape's intended scale, use and public life. Long buildings that limit cross-site permeability, block view corridors and disrupt a pedestrian-scale neighbourhood system should be avoided. Breaks in facade articulation should correspond to building uses and relate to building entrances and circulation logic. In the case of long plots and building floor plates, a clear break in building volume should occur to support a general vertical articulation of volumes.



Generic block for illustration purposes

### 6.1C VISUAL AMENITY

- i. Improve the amenity of spaces by incorporating landscape amenities at all levels including landscape beds, green roofs and podium gardens.
- ii. Integrate plantings into building edges and facades to improve visual amenity and support urban wildlife.
- iii. Activate open space and streets through building frontage, surveillance and climate-smart design.
- iv. Utilise deep planting zones within the front setback and throughout the development to establish larger, long-lived trees that provide shade and enhance amenity to the street.
- v. Contribute additional public space within the front setback for planting and landscaping elements, with varying depth depending on their function. Provide seating and lighting near building entrances where possible.
- vi. Hardscape treatments integrate with and complement the footpath hardscape treatments to create a continuous public space aesthetic.
- vii. Integrate set downs in basements to allow for deep root planting in courtyards and public spaces.

- viii. Maximise tree and planting green cover on building podiums and rooftops, where feasible.
- ix. Signage should be minimised and primarily support placemaking and wayfinding not commercial advertising. Ensure that signs on buildings are considered through the Territory Plan and Development Application (DA) process. Additionally, construction hoarding signage must consider the hoarding signage guidelines. Signs on public land require a public unleased land permit (ACT) or NCA approval.

### 6.1D HERITAGE INTEGRATION

- i. Integrate or adapt heritage and character buildings into new building designs to maintain the historical layers of the City Centre and provide continuity to the City Centre's identity.
- ii. Promote enhanced environmental performance for the re-adaption of existing or underperforming building stock.
- iii. Reduce building waste through recycling and up-cycling of building stock and materials.



# 6.2 INTERFACE AND ACTIVATION

The City Centre is the heart of Canberra. A larger focus on activating the streets and spaces will enhance the experience and vitality along with the increasing population and urban density.

*To attract a new residential market, the City Centre must provide a lifestyle and embedded amenity offer that brings together the best of living, working and recreation. The City Centre must provide a diverse range of uses, destinations, amenities, conveniences and infrastructure, supported by a walkable built environment that allows pedestrians to comfortably move around the city.*

## DESIGN GUIDANCE

### 6.2A MIXED-USE CITY

- i. Diversity the mix of uses and building types in the City Centre, including commercial, residential, retail and entertainment uses, to provide more reasons for people to spend time in the City Centre throughout both the day and night.
- ii. Respond to appropriate market conditions and context while providing the residential critical mass to support other local uses.
- iii. Create an active ground level where a variety of uses come together and spill out onto the street to create energy and life on the street.
- iv. Consider a variety of active uses, tenants consider if the uses are appropriate to the location to maximise activation of the street.
- v. Maximise clear glazing on commercial ground floor functions with minimal obstructing signage to create visual links through windows or translucent building materials.

**Why this is important:**

Mixed uses should define the City Centre to provide a diversity of activities and experiences. A connected and legible ground level that utilises design outcomes such as laneways, cross-block links and activated building corners provides for an enhanced pedestrian experience.

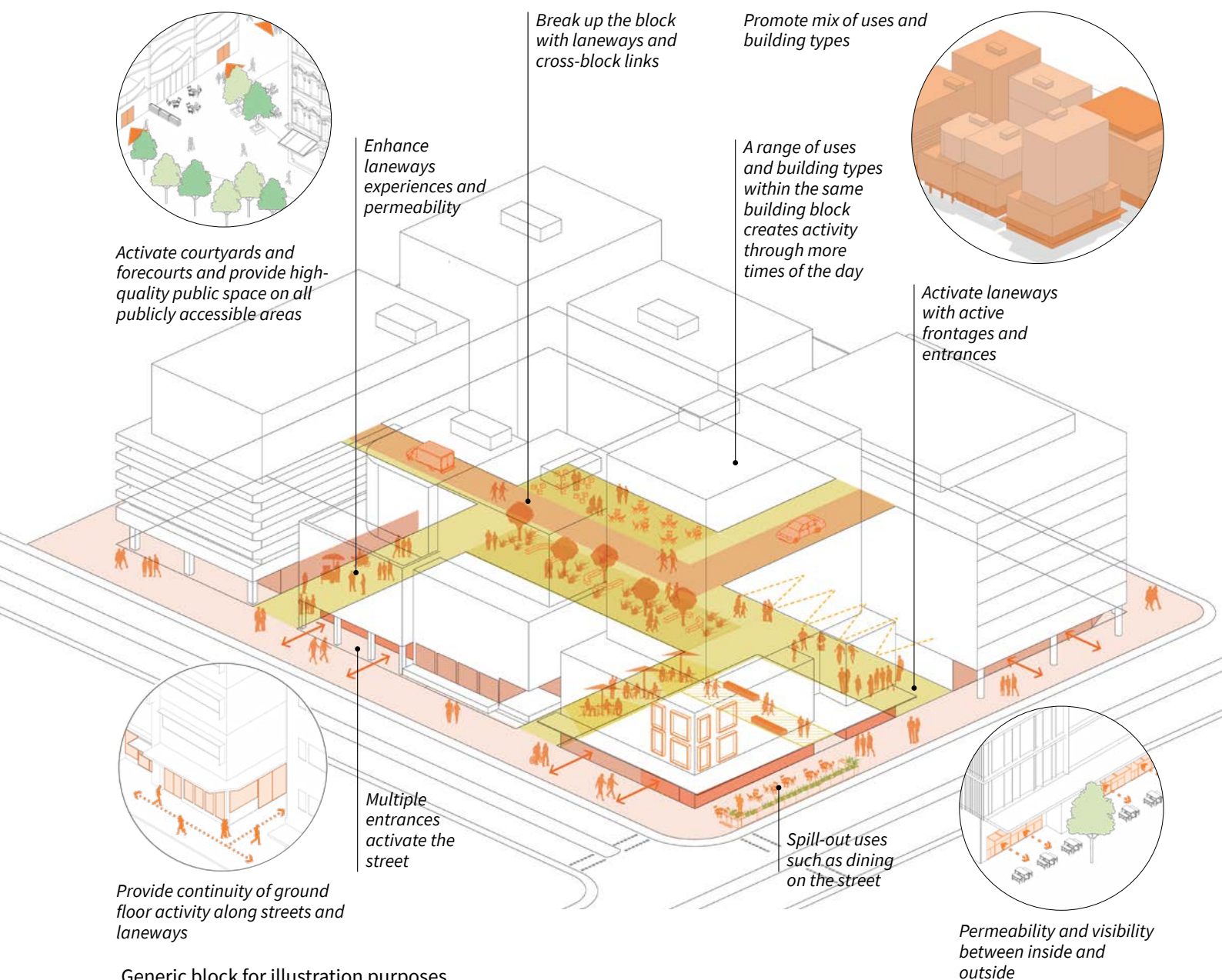
**Related planning strategies and tools:**

- i. Municipal Infrastructure Standards (MIS)

- vi. Provide visually interesting frontages through façade articulation in areas where there are no active uses at grade, by using architectural elements and artworks.
- vii. Accentuate street corners at key significant places, by providing highly visible and active spaces for cafes, retail use, commercial and other business.
- viii. Encourage chamfered building corners along London Circuit to enhance pedestrian connectivity, wayfinding and legibility.

### 6.2B LANEWAYS AND CROSS-BLOCK LINKS

- i. Utilise and enhance existing laneways to increase permeability, pedestrian priority and activation of the City Centre. These spaces increase opportunities for pedestrian movement, business activity and urban activation at the street level and should be prompted by a variety of active land uses where possible.
- ii. Minimise the impact of vehicles in these spaces by careful consideration of vehicular entries/exits and services with minimal impact and conflict to the pedestrian experience and laneway activities.
- iii. Cross-block links should be provided along city blocks to break up long building facades and create opportunities for fine-grain pedestrian flow and movement to support walking.



## 6.2C PRIVATELY OWNED PUBLIC SPACES (POPS)

- i. Create new spaces and places to encourage pedestrians to stop, linger, and enjoy City Centre life along key pedestrian links and activity nodes, by providing comfortable seating and shade.
- ii. Services access should be located away from habitable spaces and vehicular access can be restricted at certain hours of the day to accommodate active uses.
- iii. Publicly accessible open spaces should be located adjacent to other open spaces or pedestrian connections to activate the public space enhancing the combined effect of activity and complementing the overall City Centre streets and open spaces.
- iv. Invitations to active uses and staying activities in public space design should be in areas with a beneficial microclimate and sun access.
- v. The ground level should contribute to a high degree of permeability and visibility between the inside and outside. This can be achieved through permeable visual openings, as well as by incorporating seating into window openings and facades when appropriate.
- vi. Consider partnering with neighbouring buildings to include multiple courtyard owners to create one cohesive courtyard design and experience.



## 6.3 ENTERTAINMENT PRECINCT

An Entertainment Precinct is an identified area where the existing and future nightlife activities and character, including live music, are protected.

*The night-time economy is a key contributor to Canberra's social, cultural and economic vitality. Night-time activities include restaurants, cafes, bars, nightclubs, retail, live music, cultural events and more, and designated precincts give greater certainty to businesses, residents and developers.*

### DESIGN GUIDANCE

#### 6.3A CITY CENTRE ENTERTAINMENT PRECINCT

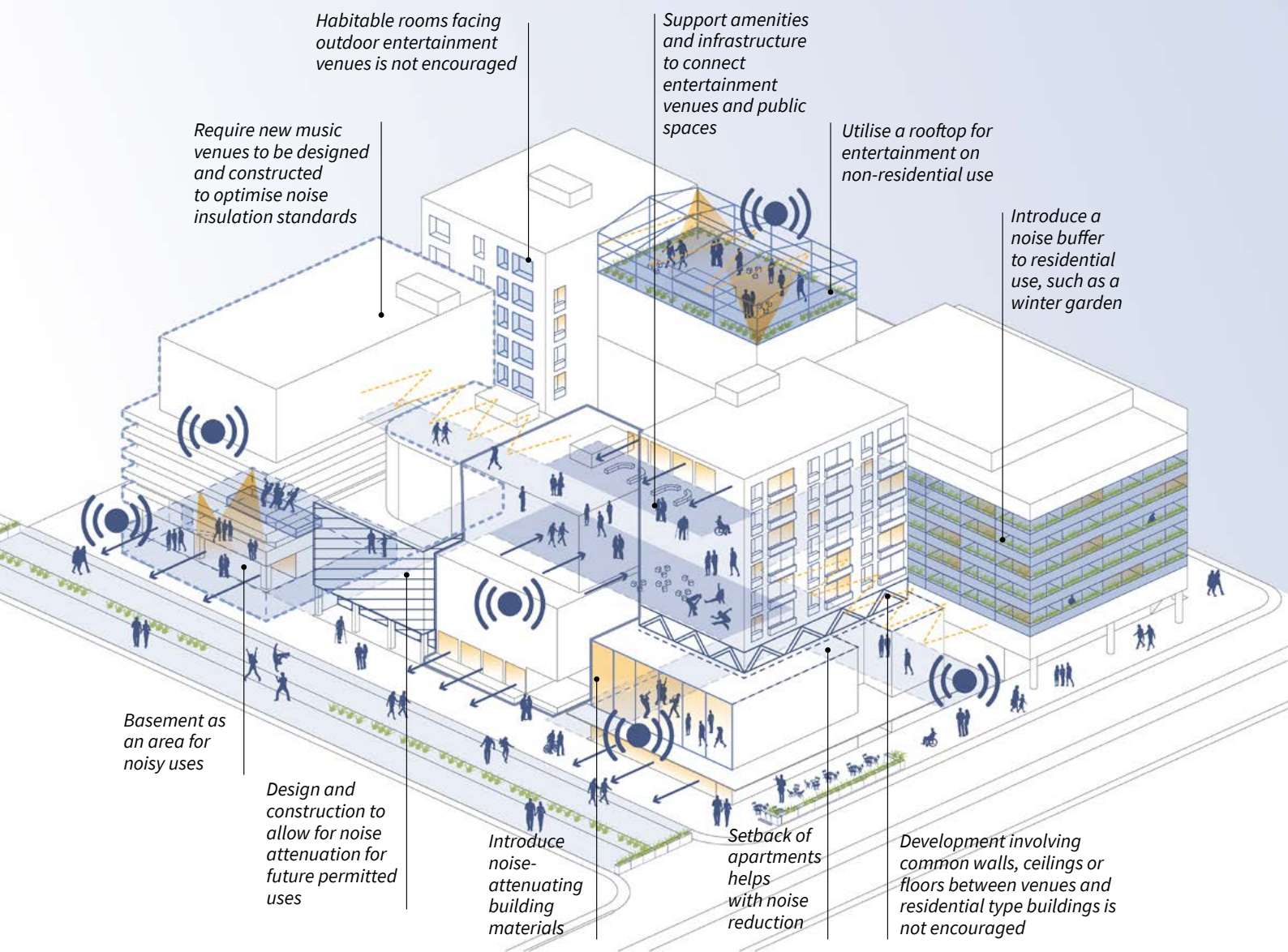
- i. Support the facilitation of entertainment events and uses in the City Centre through night-time destinations, bars, performance and concert venues integrated with surrounding public spaces to attract new visitors and activity, bringing new economic benefits.
- ii. Support entertainment uses that are appropriate to the location and scale of the precinct to contribute to a thriving, lively and inclusive precinct and nighttime economy.
- iii. Design and develop buildings that enable live performances and entertainment options for a diverse range of interests, while supporting the health, wellbeing and amenity of occupants in a lively, higher-noise urban environment.
- iv. All noise emitting and receiving development must demonstrate how low frequency noise associated with live entertainment and amplified music has been considered and applied in building design, siting and materials.
- v. Carefully consider and demonstrate how adverse impacts are minimised on surrounding uses and amenity of other users to support a successful night-time economy and diverse entertainment offerings in the City Centre with a range of other uses.
- vi. Consider noise elements when planning for entertainment areas, including identifying areas where higher noise is acceptable, how noise can be measured and where it is being attenuated by the built form.
- vii. Mitigate noise impacts in new residential development with architectural elements such as winter gardens and locating main habitable rooms away from noise emitting venues or open spaces.
- viii. Support the clustering of entertainment venues within the City Centre Entertainment Precinct Core to enhance the night-time economy, while incorporating a variety of venues in the City Centre Entertainment Precinct Frame that contribute to the entertainment and night-time economy scene alongside other uses.



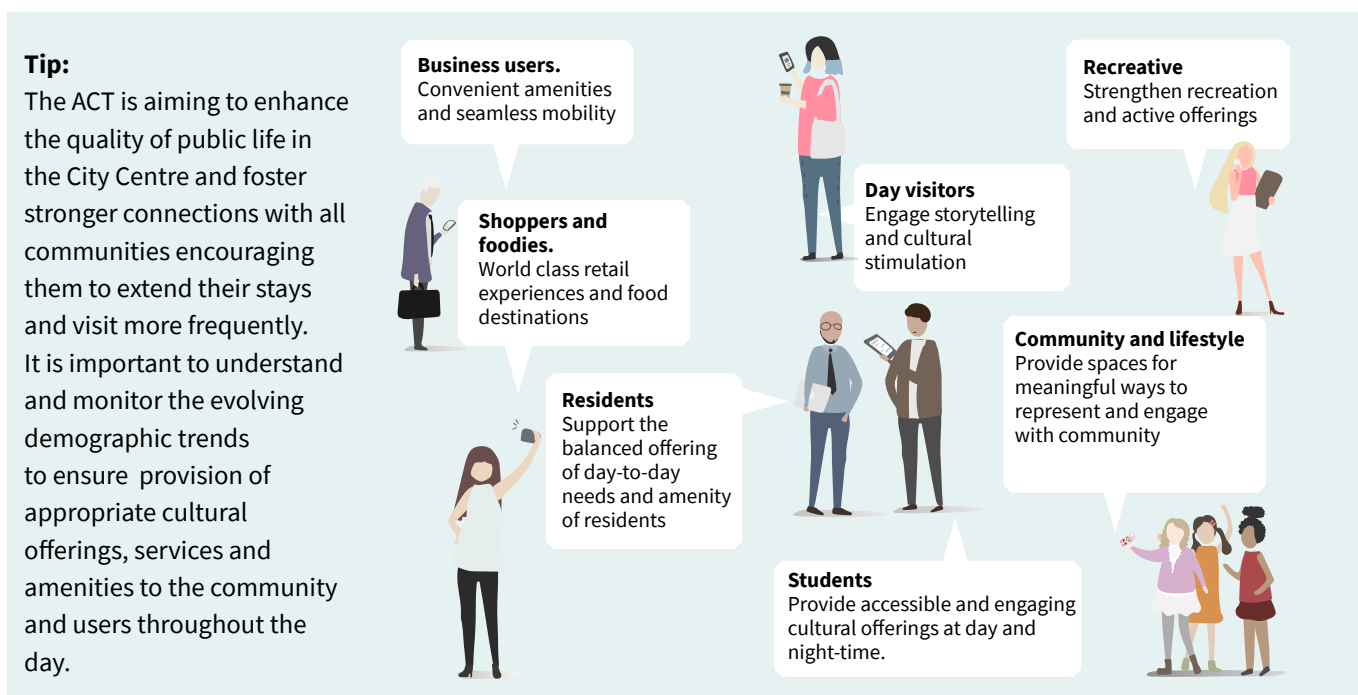
- City Centre Entertainment Precinct Core
- City Centre Entertainment Precinct Frame

#### Why this is important:

The City North-East precinct aims to become a destination for entertainment and culture that attracts regional, national and international visitors. A dynamic night-time economy and cultural scene are key to for enhancing the visitor economy and establishing the City Centre as a dynamic, inclusive space. Hosting diverse events, including music, performances, and sports, contributes significantly to Canberra City Centre's appeal. Noise standards in the entertainment precinct are evolving and the latest noise standards can be found in the Environment Protection Regulation 2005. Entertainment precincts play an important role in balancing cultural vibrancy with the well-being of residents and businesses in the area.



Generic block for illustration purposes







# SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT

Integrate natural systems, sustainable technologies and circular economy governance and processes into the built environment to improve liveability and amenity.

*The City Centre has extensive development opportunities and the potential to be a leader in showcasing new ways in which to embed sustainable design outcomes. This will improve liveability and support the longevity of the planet and its resources. Material sustainability should be considered from the perspective of embedded carbon emissions, sustainable sources and the complete life cycle to support the healthy environments and practices.*

## DESIGN ELEMENTS

### 7.1 BUILDING PERFORMANCE

**7.1A** Climate- Responsive Design

**7.1B** Balconies, Rooftops and Open Spaces

**7.3C** Sustainable Materials

### 7.2 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

**7.2A** Blue and Green Infrastructure

**7.2B** Climate Adaptation through Public space

**7.2C** Integrated Greenery and Planting



# 7

Location: New Acton, West Basin and  
Acton Waterfront, Canberra



# 7.1 BUILDING PERFORMANCE

Building performance is a critical component for supporting environmental performance sustainability outcomes in the City Centre.

*Sustainable building technologies, climate responsiveness, heritage integration and climate-responsive design are key design indicators for improving building performance. New and existing developments in the City Centre must consider these elements and focus on achieving better environmental outcomes.*

## DESIGN GUIDANCE

### 7.1A CLIMATE-RESPONSIVE DESIGN

- i. Position renewable energy infrastructure, such as solar panels and wind turbines, on rooftops and building facades of new and repurposed buildings.
- ii. Encourage carbon-positive outcomes by generating new energy resources locally through the remediation of energy consumption at the building block scale.
- iii. Provide self-shading facades that are adaptable and operable to respond to different climatic conditions throughout the seasons and times of day to minimise the need for mechanical and energy-intensive solutions.
- iv. Consider the orientation of the built form and its impacts on wind, sunlight, and shade to minimise negative effects on the microclimate and reduce energy costs.
- v. Consider the use of landscape and the use of technology in materials (such as smart glass) for its effects on heating/cooling.
- vi. Consider passive environmental design including solar access, cross ventilation and thermal massing.

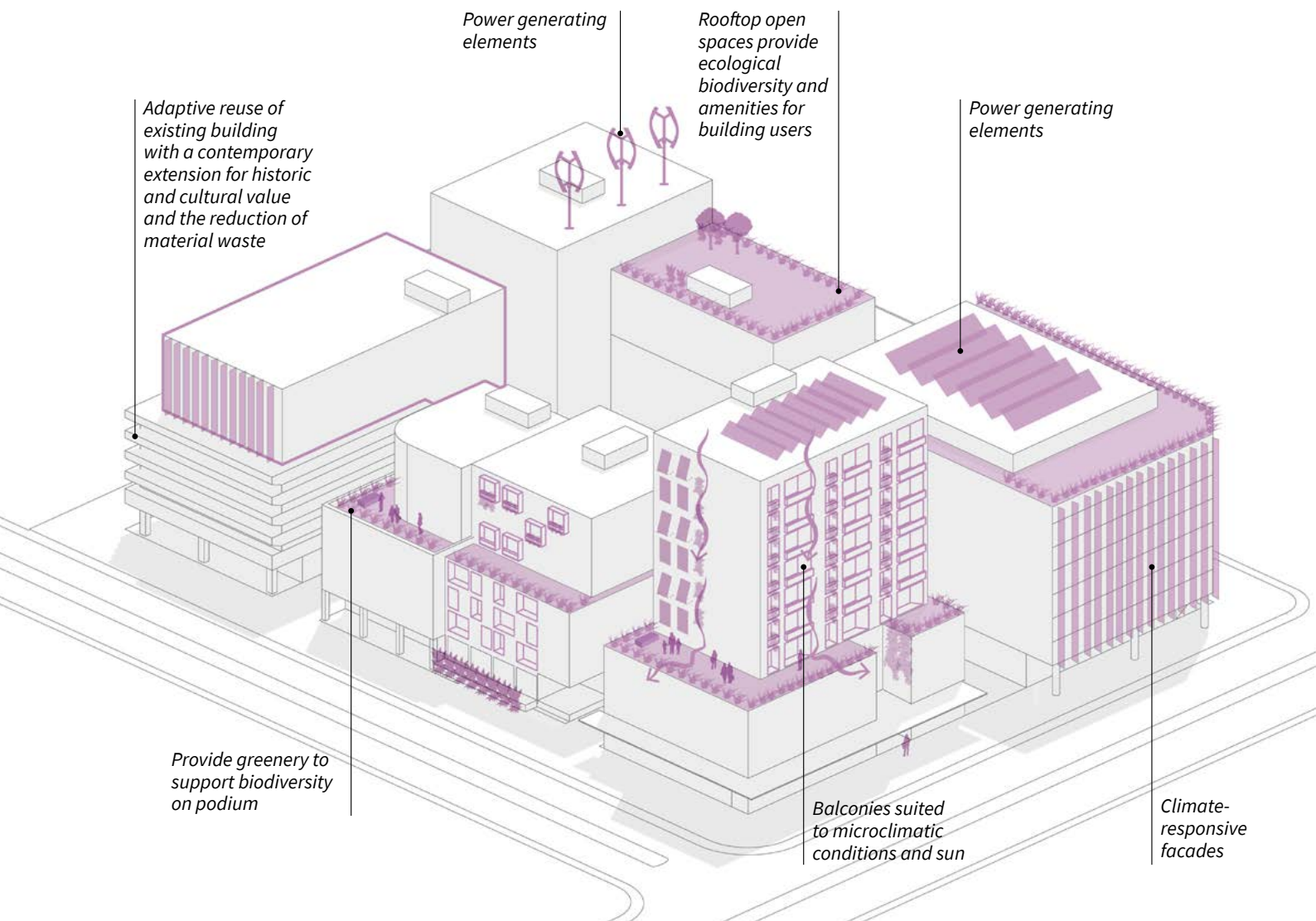
### 7.1B BALCONIES, ROOFTOPS AND OPEN SPACES

- i. Consider incorporating a variety of balcony types and open spaces, such as recessed and semi-recessed balconies, which provide weather-protected extensions to living spaces while also ensuring wind protection in the winter and shade in the summer.
- ii. Provide greenery and habitat to support biodiversity in common open spaces, on podium levels and rooftops while also providing valuable amenities to residents and users in the City Centre.

### 7.1C SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS

- i. Re-use existing aging and underperforming build stock and structures where possible to reduce the need for new building materials.
- ii. Improve environmental performance on existing buildings to extend building life cycles and reduce the need for new building materials.
- iii. Incorporate recycled and upcycled building materials to reduce building waste.
- iv. Materials should be sustainably sourced and aimed at minimising negative impacts on the environment.
- v. New buildings should consider whole life cycle and design for disassembly.
- vi. Consider environmental impacts, such as reflectivity and solar heat absorption of building materials on facades and surfaces.

**Related planning strategies and tools:**  
→ ACT Circular Economy Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2030



Generic block for illustration purposes

### Exemplar

Excellence in building sustainability is achieved through adaptable facades that serve as passive shading, minimising negative environmental impact and reducing energy use through strategic building design elements.

Peter Coaldrake Education Precinct, Kelvin Grove, Queensland. Wilson Architects + Henning Larsen





# 7.2 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

A greener City Centre will help improve people’s health and wellbeing, reduce urban heat impacts, and enhance the City Centre as a ‘Garden City’.

*The Canberra City Centre still has the space available to embrace urban greening, improve liveability and provide a means to proactively address future climate and public health challenges before they become significant issues. Potential opportunities to enhance and reconnect blue and green infrastructure exist at all scales, from large public open spaces to small privately-owned spaces.*

## DESIGN GUIDANCE

### 7.2A BLUE AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

- i. Embody principles of water sensitive urban design (WSUD) in all aspects of the public space within the City Centre.
- ii. Enhance and reconnect open spaces where possible throughout the City Centre, including large open spaces with privately-owned spaces.
- iii. Prioritise green infrastructure in high pedestrian movement streets.
- iv. Increase tree planting, garden planting and permeable surfaces through City Walk and Garema Place.
- v. Provide landscaping aligned with street trees and public furniture where people stop and dwell to foster connections among people, plants and animals.

### 7.2B CLIMATE ADAPTATION THROUGH PUBLIC SPACE

- i. Enhance the City Centre’s environmental performance through the retention and improvement of valued natural features that contribute positively to the local context.
- ii. Maximise solar access, microclimate enhancement, tree canopy and habitat values by including deciduous trees to maximise tree canopy cover.
- iii. Promote the preservation of and connections between existing green networks.
- iv. Consider stormwater solutions including local collection, storage, permeable pavements and the greening of hard surfaces to include roadways and rooftops.
- v. Implement water recycling technologies and processes to create water self-sufficiency and reduce

water consumption in the City Centre.

### 7.2C INTEGRATED GREENERY AND PLANTING

- i. Integrate landscaping into building sites to reinforce Canberra’s ‘City in a Landscape’ character.
- ii. Maximise tree and planting green cover and permeability along city streets as well as on building podiums and rooftops.
- iii. Integrate plants for food into the public space by encouraging productive landscapes within public streets and private developments.
- iv. Consider indigenous and native plant food sources throughout the City Centre.
- v. Choose appropriate tree species options that are supported by the Canberra climatic conditions.

**Related planning strategies and tools:**

- i. Municipal Infrastructure Standards (MIS)





Location: Constitution Avenue, City South-East,  
Canberra





Bunda Street, City North-East  
Precinct





# **Part three:** Appendix



# CITY CENTRE URBAN DESIGN CHECKLIST

This design criteria checklist is an evaluation tool for those involved in the planning, design and delivery of built environment projects to demonstrate that a given project achieves good design outcomes in the ACT context. It could be used at several stages throughout a project, from early design concepts, to detailed proposals and completed works.

COUNTRY AND PLACE	NOTES
This chapter supports the interpretation, application and assessment of the assessment outcomes specified in the Territory Plan.	
<b>1.1 NGUNNAWAL CULTURAL RESONANCE</b>	
<b>1.1A</b> Governance, process and engagement	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>1.1B</b> Buildings, spaces and landscape character	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>1.1C</b> Wayfinding and navigation	<input type="checkbox"/>

URBAN STRUCTURE AND NATURAL SYSTEMS	NOTES
This chapter supports the interpretation, application and assessment of the assessment outcomes specified in the Territory Plan.	
<b>2.1 STRUCTURING THE CITY CENTRE</b>	
<b>2.1A</b> Views, Vistas and Sight lines	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2.1B</b> Building Heights	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2.1C</b> Landmark buildings and Gateway sites	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2.2 NATURAL SYSTEMS</b>	
<b>2.2A</b> Blue-Green Network	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2.2B</b> Water Management	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2.3 CITY CENTRE PRECINCTS</b>	
<b>2.3A</b> City Hill Priority Directions	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2.3B</b> City North-East Priority Directions	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2.3C</b> City North-West Priority Directions	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2.3D</b> City South-East Priority Directions	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2.3E</b> West Basin / Acton Waterfront Precinct Priority Directions	<input type="checkbox"/>

SITE AND LAND USE	NOTES
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This chapter supports the interpretation, application and assessment of the assessment outcomes specified in the Territory Plan.

3.1 CITY CENTRE CONTEXT AND CHARACTER	
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3.1A City Centre Character	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1B Role and Function of the City Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1C Density Done Well	<input type="checkbox"/>

3.2 SITE CONFIGURATION	
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3.2A City Block Configuration and Structure	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2B Local Climate	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2C Street and Ground Level	<input type="checkbox"/>

ACCESS AND MOVEMENT	NOTES
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This chapter supports the interpretation, application and assessment of the assessment outcomes specified in the Territory Plan.

4.1 STREETS AS PLACES OF MOVEMENT	
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4.1A Light Rail Network	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.1B Bus Network	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.1C Key Pedestrian Links and Laneways	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.1D City Cycle Loop and Dedicated Off-Road Bike Lanes	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.1E Shared-use Recreational Trail	<input type="checkbox"/>

4.2 STREETS AS PLACES	
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4.2A Street Activation	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.2B Inclusive Design Elements	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.2C High Movement, High Place	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.2D Low Movement, High Place	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.2E City Centre streets	<input type="checkbox"/>

4.2 PARKING, LOADING AND SERVICES	
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4.3A Parking	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3B Integrated Services	<input type="checkbox"/>



PUBLIC SPACE AND AMENITY	NOTES
This chapter supports the interpretation, application and assessment of the assessment outcomes specified in the Territory Plan.	
<b>5.1 PUBLIC OPEN SPACES</b>	
<b>5.1A</b> Links Within the Open Space Network	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>5.1B</b> Diverse Recreational and Social Needs	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>5.1C</b> Pedestrian Priority Streets and Plazas	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>5.2 PLACEMAKING</b>	
<b>5.2A</b> Day and Nighttime Activity	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>5.2B</b> Placemaking Process	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>5.3 ART AND CULTURE</b>	
<b>5.3A</b> Public Art and Culture	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>5.3B</b> Partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>

BUILT FORM AND BUILDING DESIGN	NOTES
This chapter supports the interpretation, application and assessment of the assessment outcomes specified in the Territory Plan.	
<b>6.1 BUILDING DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURAL QUALITY</b>	
<b>6.1A</b> Ground Floor Interface	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6.1B</b> Buildings and Towers	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6.1C</b> Visual Amenity	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6.1D</b> Heritage Integration	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6.2 INTERFACE AND ACTIVATION</b>	
<b>6.2A</b> Mixed-Use City	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6.2B</b> Laneways and Cross-Block Links	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6.2C</b> Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6.3 ENTERTAINMENT PRECINCT</b>	
<b>6.3A</b> City Centre Entertainment Precinct	<input type="checkbox"/>

SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT	NOTES
This chapter supports the interpretation, application and assessment of the assessment outcomes specified in the Territory Plan.	
<b>7.1 BUILDING PERFORMANCE</b>	
<b>7.1A</b> Climate-Responsive Design	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>7.1B</b> Balconies, Rooftops and Open Spaces	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>7.1C</b> Sustainable Materials	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>7.2 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE</b>	
<b>7.2A</b> Blue and Green Infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>7.2B</b> Climate Adaptation through Public Space	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>7.2C</b> Integrated Greenery and Planting	<input type="checkbox"/>



# GLOSSARY

This glossary identifies the words and acronyms that appear frequently throughout the Canberra City Centre Urban Design Guide, to help the reader identify unfamiliar words and terminologies.

**ACT** - Australian Capital Territory.

**Accessibility** - The ease of reaching destinations. In a highly accessible location, a person, regardless of age, ability or income, can reach many activities or destinations quickly, whereas people in places with low accessibility can reach fewer places in the same amount of time.

**Activations** - A place with the appropriate facilities that invite people to spend time in that space and thereby activating it.

**Active frontages** - Occurs where there is active visual or tactile engagement between the ground and upper floor of buildings and the adjacent street/public space.

**Active travel** - Any form of transport involving physical activity, e.g. cycling and walking.

**Active use** - Active uses are uses that generate many visits, in particular pedestrian visits, over an extended period of the day.

**Adaptable frontage** - Building frontages will be located behind the front setback providing landscaped private outdoor space for either residents or other users, depending on the current use of the building. The ground floor interface will provide a direct, on grade connection with the street, with tree planting in the verge and setback areas and awnings to entries only. Double height volumes, some with mezzanines, at ground level ensures longer term adaptability to other uses is able to occur.

**Adaptive reuse** - Projects that give new life to an existing place, building or structure through sympathetic alterations, conversions and additions that enable compatible new uses and functions, while maintaining the heritage significance where applicable.

**Amenity** - The features of an area, street or building, that provides facilities and services that contribute to physical or material comfort and benefit, and are valued by users.

**ANU** - Australian National University.

**Articulation** - An area in front of the building line that may contain porticos, balconies, bay windows, decks, patios, pergolas, terraces, verandas, window box treatments, window bays, awnings and sun-shading features.

**Building edges** - The façade plane of a building's ground floor that face the outer perimeter of a site.

**Catalyst project** - A proposed project that is providing outcomes that support the priority directions and design objectives in delivering the overall vision.

**City Centre** - The area broadly defined by Canberra's civic centre and bordered by the outer hexagonal road (Cooyong Street and extensions) radiating from City Hill, ANU and Lake Burley Griffin.

**City Plan** - ACT Government document establishing a long-term vision for Canberra City Centre.

**Courtyard** - Communal space at ground level or on a structure (podium or roof) that is open to the sky, formed by the building and enclosed on 3 or more sides.

**Connectivity** - The number of connecting routes and intersections within a particular area. An area with high connectivity provides multiple routes to and from destinations.

**CRA** - City Renewal Authority.

**CPTED** - Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design.

**Density** - Average number of residents, households, dwellings, or habitable space in a given area, usually expressed as dwellings/ people per hectare or floor area ratio.

**Design excellence** - When architectural, urban design and landscape outcomes exceed expectations of built quality, sustainability and process.

**Desired character** - The form of development in terms of siting, building bulk and scale, and the nature of the resulting streetscape that is consistent with the relevant desired outcomes, and any statement of desired character in a relevant district code. It does not necessarily reflect the existing character of the area.

**Enclosure** - Where building height and open space width create a feeling of contained space.

**EPSDD** - Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate.

**Façade** - The external face of a building, generally the principal face, facing a public street or space.

**Floor plate** – The total floor area of a storey within a building or structure.

**Gateway site** - A predominant site that provide a sense of entry to the City Centre.

**Good design** - Architectural and urban design outcomes are expected to comply with good practice design principles as a minimum ambition.

**Habitable spaces** - Spaces in a building where the most time is spent and important activities take place. Habitable rooms include bedrooms, living room, lounge, family room, kitchen, dining room, music room, playroom, home theatre, study, sunroom, retail, office working spaces and commercial balconies.

**Heritage** - Any place from a building to a monument, natural area, landmark or viewpoint that has special cultural, Indigenous culture or natural heritage significance. Can be identified at a local, state, federal or global level.

**Infrastructure** - The basic systems, facilities or framework that support a community's population, e.g. roads, transport, utilities, water, and sewage.

**Key moves** - Specific focus area to inform potential projects and catalyst projects while supporting design objectives and priority direction.

**Key pedestrian link** - An easy and legible pedestrian connection between points of interest.

**Key pedestrian route** - A route within the City Centre that prioritise safety for pedestrians and seamlessly connect various destinations, with a special emphasis on enhancing the overall pedestrian experience.

**Key urban spaces** - Public areas in the City Center, such as plazas, parks, and streets, that influence the precinct's character and function, offering a range of amenities.

**Landmark building** - Landmark buildings and locations are defined by the National Capital Plan, which specifies these buildings as examples of design excellence and prominence in building design and height (up to RL617).

**Legibility** - The ease with which a person is able to see, understand and find their way around an area, building or development.

**Light Rail Stage 2A** - Refers to proposed Light Rail Stage 2A extending the light rail from Northbourne Avenue to Commonwealth Park.

**Living infrastructure** – The vegetation, soils and water systems that are sometimes referred to as blue or green infrastructure.

**Master plan** - A flexible framework for future growth and change through formulating long-term vision and development concepts.

**Mixed-use** - Mixing residential, commercial, retail, entertainment and community uses in same building, site or precinct.

**Mixed-use development** – Mixed-use development involves a mix of complementary land uses, such as residential, small offices or convenience stores. This can include horizontal and vertical mixes.

**Modal interchange** - Co-locating multiple public transport modes to allow for enhanced connections between alternative transport modes.

**NCA** - National Capital Authority.

**Non-habitable room** – A space of a specialised nature not occupied frequently or for extended periods, including a bathroom, laundry, water closet, pantry, walk-in wardrobe, corridor, hallway, lobby, photographic darkroom or clothes drying room.

**NCP** - National Capital Plan.

**Parks and civic spaces** - Open spaces with recreational value publicly accessible and maintained.

**Passive environmental design** - Architectural design approach to built form and facade treatment that minimises the need for purchased energy to ventilate, heat and lighting a building.

**Passive surveillance** - Observation from the street or adjacent buildings provided by ordinary people as they go about their daily activities.

**Permeability (in the context of built form)** – The extent to which the urban structure allows or restricts movement of people or vehicles through an area.



## Continued from previous page

**Permeability (in the context of landscape)** – The quantity of pervious surfaces that allow for water to penetrate into and be retained by the landscape.

**Pedestrian plaza** - An outdoor vehicular-free pedestrian space, such as City Walk, Civic square, larger building forecourts and open space network on campus.

**Podium** – The base of a building upon which taller (tower) elements are positioned.

**Precinct** – Is defined as:

- i. development on land that forms part of a centre – group centre, town centre, local centre
- ii. development that forms part of a corridor

**Podium** – The base of a building upon which taller (tower) elements are positioned.

**Precinct** – Is defined as:

- iii. development on land that forms part of a centre – group centre, town centre, local centre
- iv. development that forms part of a corridor

**Precinct heart** - The precinct heart signifies the most active and characteristic place that grounds each precinct with a unique identity and function.

**Public pace** - General term for an open area or place for public use, e.g. streets, parks, plazas, squares.

**Scale** - The apparent size of a building in relation to its surroundings and to the scale of a person.

**Solar access** – The ability of a building to receive direct sunlight without obstruction from other buildings or impediments, not including trees.

**Setback** – means the horizontal distance between a block boundary and the outside face of any building or structure on the block.

**Storey** – Storey means a space within a building that is situated between one floor level and the floor level next above, or if there is no floor level above, the ceiling or roof above but does not include an attic or a basement or a space that contains only a lift shaft or stairway.

**Street wall** – The vertical plane of a building from the ground floor to the parapet that is facing the street.

**Sustainability** - An approach that considers the environmental, social and economic aspects (such as of a building) so it can meet the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

**TGSI** - Tactile ground surface indicators to support people with visual disabilities to navigate streets and the public space.

**Territory Plan** - The key statutory planning document in the ACT. It guides planning and development to provide the people of the ACT with an attractive, safe and efficient environment in which to live, work and play. The Territory Plan is used to: manage development, in particular land use and the built environment; assess development applications; and guide the development of new estate areas (future urban land) and the management of public land.

**Urban fabric** – The make-up of an urban area. Refers to characteristics such as movement network, block structure, building heights and grain.

**Urban structure** – Refers to the relationship between urban blocks, movement network, the key natural and built features of an area, as well as its history, social, economic, health and environmental conditions.

**Water sensitive urban design (WSUD)** - A set of design elements and on-ground solutions that aim to minimise impacts on the water cycle from our built environment and enhance our city's liveability.





