



The Committee for
Sydney

RE-BALANCING THE CITY

TOWN CENTRE RENEWAL FOR SYDNEY

MAY 2018

 **Blacktown City Council**

PAYCE

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	1
RECOMMENDATIONS	2
INTRODUCTION	3
WHY TOWN CENTRES?	8
THE GREAT INVERSION	8
WHAT TOWN CENTRES ARE, AND WHAT THEY ARE NOT	9
LOCAL GOVERNMENT IS CENTRAL TO TOWN CENTRE RENEWAL	12
THIRTEEN FEATURES OF SUCCESSFUL TOWN CENTRES	14
BARRIERS FOR RENEWAL	24
PROCESS FOR ACHIEVING TOWN CENTRE RENEWAL	29
AUDIT – IDENTIFYING THE BARRIERS TO TOWN CENTRE RENEWAL	29
PLAN – DEVELOPING TOWN CENTRE RENEWAL PLANS	30
FUNDING – CREATING A TOWN CENTRE CHALLENGE FUND	31
GOVERNANCE – ESTABLISHING TOWN CENTRE RENEWAL DEALS	33
DELIVERY – CREATING SPECIAL PURPOSE TOWN CENTRE RENEWAL DELIVERY VEHICLES	35
OUTCOMES – MONITORING IMPACTS AGAINST BASELINE DATA	36

FOREWORD

For many residents of Sydney, the 30-minute city where jobs and services are a short step from home is already a reality. If you live within 10 km of the CBD, you likely already live within a 30-minute city. However, by 2056 almost half of Sydney's eight million citizens will reside west of Parramatta. To prevent disconnected development and worsening transport congestion, we need to ensure that the numerous and vital town centres across Sydney are developed into amenable employment and services hubs where residents want to live and businesses want to locate. A trip to the shops, a restaurant or to see a friend, should not be a time-consuming and arduous endeavour.

This paper argues that revitalising and improving our suburban town centres can help to heighten the quality of life of many people living in Sydney. The paper builds on the Committee's earlier paper, *Density Done Well*, and seeks to better define what we should expect from our town centres.

The paper provides clear recommendations for a Town Centre Challenge Fund to support Town Centre Renewal Deals (modelled on the emerging City Deals framework), as well as funding and Town Centre Renewal Delivery Vehicles that local and state policy makers can use to renew their centres. It also articulates the key challenges we face in renewing Sydney's town centres – and what characteristics make up a great town centre.

Of course, while there are similarities in the experience of town centres in the Sydney region, the needs of Randwick are different from Liverpool, which are different again from Chatswood or Hurstville. Policymakers will need to tailor their solutions to the characteristics of each region and will likely need to adopt a suite of interventions given that individual policy measures rarely achieve the holistic integration necessary to deliver centre-wide revitalisation.

We are proud to present this paper and commend its recommendations to you.



Kerry Robinson

General Manager of Blacktown City Council and Chair of the Town Centre Renewal Taskforce



Dominic Sullivan

PAYCE Director and Deputy Chair of the Town Centre Renewal Taskforce

RECOMMENDATIONS

AUDIT IDENTIFYING THE BARRIERS TO TOWN CENTRE RENEWAL

Local Government interested in achieving town centre renewal should Audit their town centres to identify shortcomings and obstacles to the centre's successful redevelopment.

PLAN DEVELOPING TOWN CENTRE RENEWAL PLANS

Local Government should then develop a Town Centre Renewal Plan to holistically address challenges identified by the Audit, with guidance provided from the Greater Sydney Commission.

FUNDING CREATING A TOWN CENTRE RENEWAL CHALLENGE FUND

A competitive Town Centre Renewal Challenge Fund should then be created by the NSW Government to support Local Government in delivering town centre renewal.

GOVERNANCE ESTABLISHING TOWN CENTRE RENEWAL DEALS

Town Centre Renewal Deals should then be jointly developed by the relevant Local Government Authorities and the Greater Sydney Commission to bring stakeholders together around each site's long-term renewal program.

DELIVERY CREATING TOWN CENTRE RENEWAL DELIVERY VEHICLES

Special purpose Town Centre Renewal Delivery Vehicles should then be created and given appropriate powers and resources to deliver the Town Centre Renewal Deal.

OUTCOMES MONITORING IMPACTS AGAINST BASELINE DATA

Baseline data should then be collected across a series of quantifiable metrics to support ongoing evaluation and analysis.

INTRODUCTION



Sydney is under pressure. It currently hosts about a quarter of Australia's economic growth. The proportion of jobs in traditional industries has steadily declined but the physical structure of the city still derives from its industrial heyday, when well-paid workers lived in suburbs and drove to work in manufacturing centres dispersed throughout the conurbation.

Sydney's new and growing economic strength has shifted to new industries, like financial services. These tend to be more tightly clustered with high workforce densities. Growth of these industries favours different settlement patterns. Knowledge workers seek to live closer to those jobs, within a half hour's travel time. Further, the nature

of this work favours different, more-complex workforce interactions that thrive on density.

This 'great inversion' creates a problem for Sydney. Our urban structure of dispersed suburbs and car access mean that these new jobs increase travel times, congestion and pressure on local communities. Those fortunate enough to live close to centres hosting these jobs and in neighbourhoods rich with other amenities are Sydney's winners – while those who do not, miss out.

Superimposed on the social and economic divide between Sydney's east and west, intergenerational inequity is also intensifying. Younger people in many Australian cities at the start of their careers are being locked out of

housing and home ownership because of rising rental and purchasing costs. Over recent years, the Committee has examined these dynamics in depth and discovered them to be durable and accelerating.¹

Sydney is also growing. Over the next forty years Sydney's population will almost double to some eight million people, about the size that London is today. How and where to accommodate new arrivals currently vexes Sydney's policy makers. Sydney can no longer grow outwards simply because the distances between new homes and jobs risks becoming too great.

The Greater Sydney Commission (GSC) recently released its *Greater Sydney Region Plan*, which embraced the principle of the 30-minute city. The Committee for Sydney has long argued that Sydney's residents should be able to travel from their place of residence to their place of employment within 30-minutes and by public transport. The NSW Government deserves praise for also embedding the 30-minute principle within the recent Transport for NSW (TfNSW) *Future Transport Strategy 2056* document.

The GSC's 30-minute city not only strives to improve access to employment but also to schools, health services, government services, shopping precincts, large open green spaces, recreation and entertainment. The GSC's District Plans also emphasise the role of strategic and town centres outside of the CBD and Parramatta, in providing jobs and services.

This paper seeks to add support to the GSC's District Plans by offering a pathway for turning policy intent into practical action.

¹ **Committee for Sydney**, Adding to the dividend, ending the divide 3, January 2017, <http://www.sydney.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/CFS-Issues-Paper-14-Adding-to-the-Dividend-Ending-the-Divide-3-1.pdf>

Successful renewal can unlock the potential of Sydney's town centres

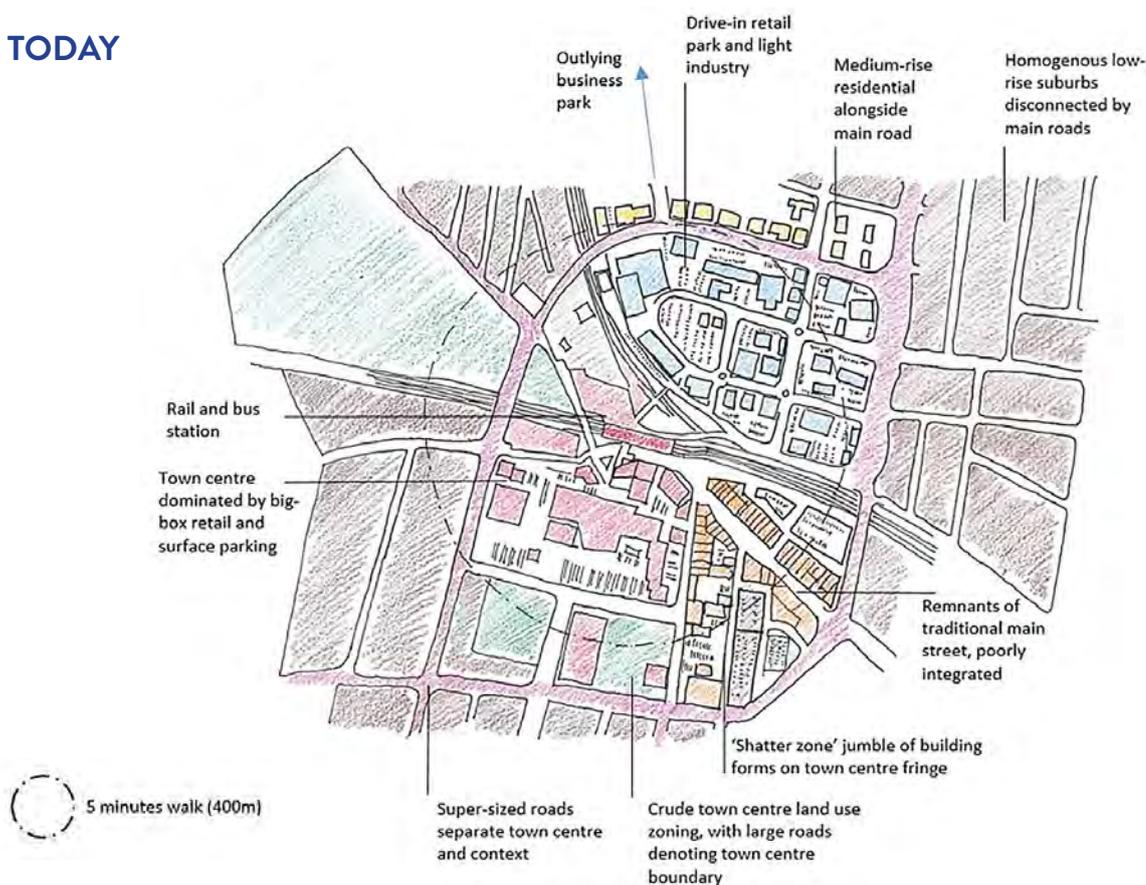
Over the past 18 months, the Committee for Sydney has invited leading international urban thinkers to discuss how Sydney can improve its city and urban design. This has provided the authors of this paper with valuable knowledge on a range of topics including:

- **The elements of successful urban regeneration** – driven by insights from Peter Bishop, the former head of Design for London.
- **Innovation districts** – drawing on research by Julie Wagner and Bruce Katz of the Brookings Institution.

- **Walkable cities** – shaped by the work of author and planner Jeff Speck.
- **The economics of walkable urbanism** – bolstered through the input of real estate expert and developer Christopher Leinberger.
- **The role of mass transit and active transportation in urban transformation** – informed by global transport leader for Arup and former deputy mayor of London Isabel Deding and transport specialist Todd Litman.

The contributions from these authors as well as those of Sydney specialists, including many Committee for Sydney members, has already fed into our advocacy and published papers. They have also assisted with the development of this paper. The Committee would like to, in particular, thank Matt Lally and the team at Arup for their contributions and for co-authoring the Town Centre Renewal Taskforce's initial discussion paper. Together, they have had an influence on the work of important 'city-shapers' such as the NSW Department of Planning, Transport for NSW, the Greater Sydney Commission and indeed on the Federal Government's new approach to cities.

TODAY



This paper builds on work the Committee for Sydney commenced with our *Making Great Places: Density Done Well?* paper, which explored these essential features for town centres:

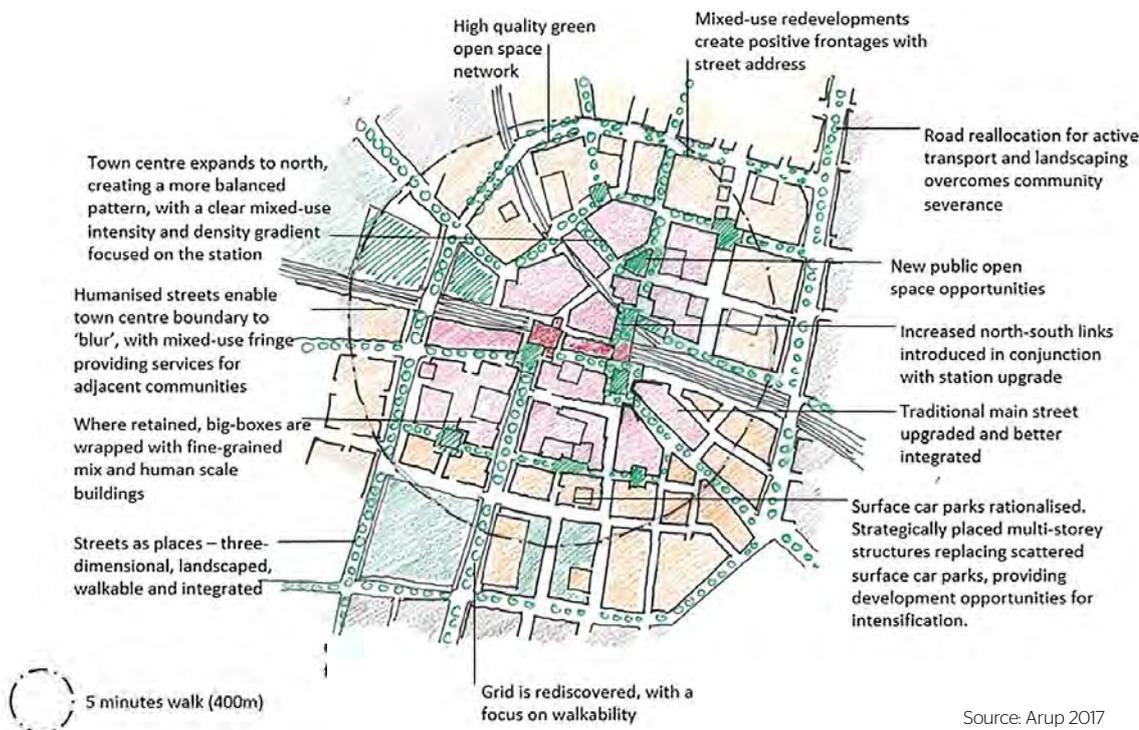
- **Streets not cars** – places where motor vehicles can be used but where design more heavily favours pedestrian and active transport users.
- **Fine grain and mixed use** – places that reward human curiosity at pedestrian speed, as seen in many attractive shopping precincts.

- **Order and variety** – the fine balance of contradictory and complementary built form qualities.
- **Connectivity and infrastructure** – the idea that an attractive neighbourhood is connected to other neighbourhoods and to jobs.
- **Diversity of people and experiences** – the idea that people interact with great places for different purposes, at different times. Access is equitable as different ages, income groups and communities all feel at home.

Of the five identified attributes common to successfully dense cities, none merely entail the packing together of more people within small spaces. Rather, higher density is explained as an *outcome* of other urbanising qualities. People choose to live in denser environments precisely because they hold other attractions.

The problem confronting urban policy makers is how to deliver this for town centres across Sydney. What is clear is that business-as-usual approaches are no longer suitable for meeting these challenges. This paper proposes a better approach.

POTENTIAL



2 Committee for Sydney. Making great places: density done well, September 2016, <http://www.sydney.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/CfS-Discussion-Paper-Making-Great-Places-Density-Done-Well.pdf>

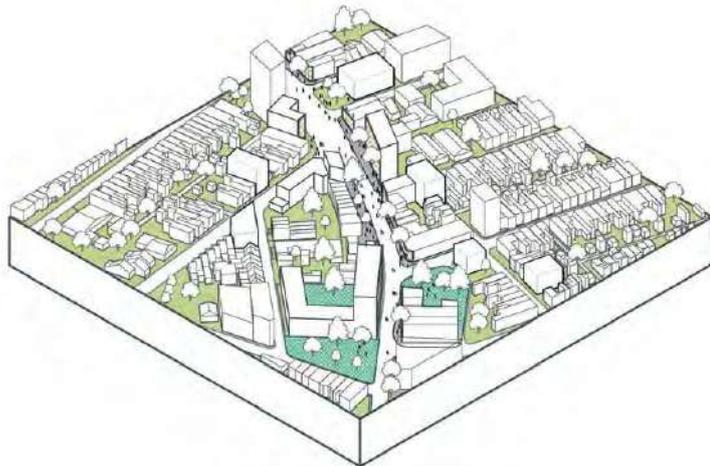
QUALITY AT ALL DENSITIES

While higher densities enable amenity of a more specialised nature within close proximity to our homes and can sustain better transport connectivity and high quality public spaces, this does not mean that every town centre should be high-density. Quality centres

are possible at almost all scales, and local centres within low-medium density areas must also play a part if Sydney is to provide services and employment within 30 minutes of where all Sydneysider's live.

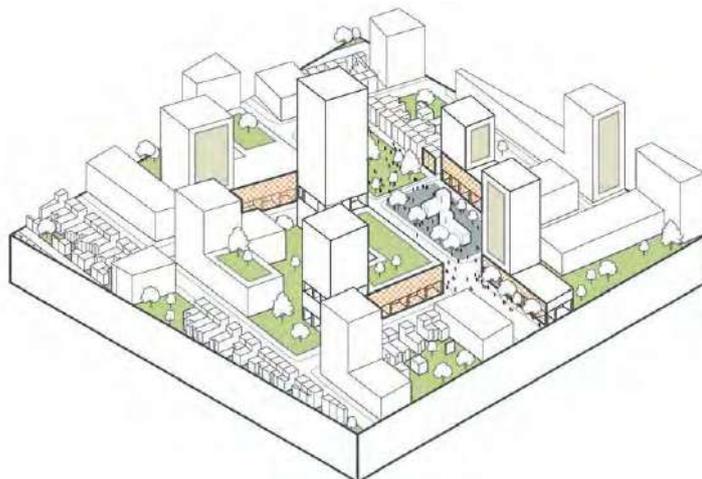
LOW-MEDIUM DENSITY

- **Education:** A public school in the suburb
- **Health:** A Local GP
- **Transport:** Primarily car, with some bus access
- **Open space:** Primarily private
- **Employment:** Some main street retail and small business offices



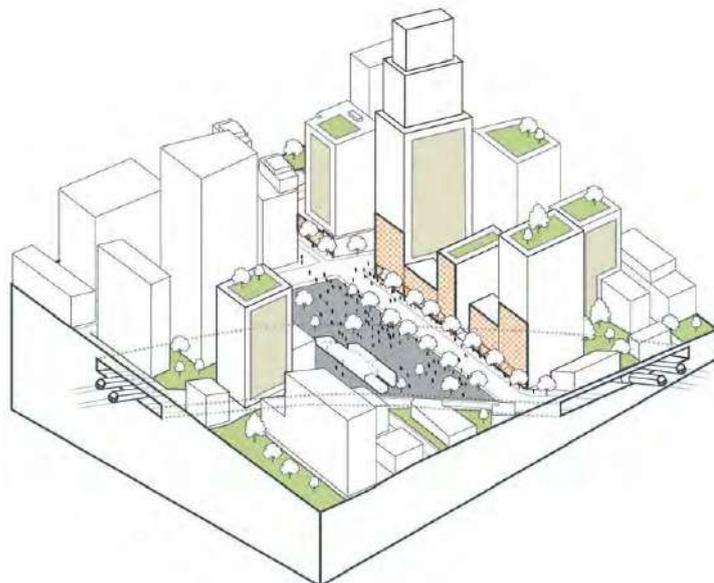
MEDIUM DENSITY

- **Education:** Multiple schools and childcare within the local area
- **Health:** Hospital locally accessible
- **Transport:** Bus or light rail and cycling, with some walking
- **Open space:** Mostly consolidated communal green space
- **Employment:** Ground floor commercial, co-working areas and retail



HIGH DENSITY

- **Education:** Multiple schools and higher education within the local area
- **Health:** Specialist medical care locally accessible
- **Transport:** Integrated public transport with high cycling and walking use
- **Open space:** Communal, hard and soft with high quality amenities
- **Employment:** Business hub with global reach and supporting services







WHY TOWN CENTRES?

THE GREAT INVERSION

The Committee's research has confirmed that within a greater city region, certain town centres and precincts disproportionately have the assets, amenities, connectivity and mix of uses to attract competitively sought labour, capital and investment. Unlike the previous era in which manufacturing jobs were dispersed, the current generation of knowledge jobs around the world have tended to cluster and concentrate in higher-density parts of cities, which are often described as 'innovation districts' or 'innovation precincts'.

Research also shows that residential preferences are shifting. Time-hungry, multi-tasking households with no or smaller families are increasingly driving a demographic and social trend toward denser city living. More broadly, residents of all demographics have increasingly shown a willingness and capacity to down the size of their home for location and amenity. Sydney's attractiveness as a global talent hub has also contributed to changing preferences, with the balance of migrant workers demonstrating a stronger preference for denser city living.

This turn-around in preferences and urban fortunes has been defined by leading urbanist Alan Ehrenhalt as 'The Great Inversion'. Ehrenhalt describes this as a recent trend whereby the historical shift towards suburbia and the distancing from the inner city by the aspirational class is now being reversed. This framing echoes earlier research by Richard Florida and his emphasis on the locational choices of what he called 'the creative class'.

For much of the past 50 years, the landscape of innovation has been dominated by places like Silicon Valley – suburban corridors or spatially isolated corporate campuses accessible only by car, with little emphasis on the integration of work, housing and recreation. Today, businesses are increasingly moving downtown. Many companies and start-ups seek to integrate themselves as part of the fabric of the cities in which they are located, frequently indicating a preference for mixed retail, residential and commercial spaces.

The Committee believes that similar shifts are being witnessed in Sydney. Without policy intervention, this

shift has the potential to exacerbate the structural divides between the 'compact city' closer in to the CBD and the 'sprawl city' further out. The Committee regards overcoming this divide as one of the most imperative objectives of public policy for Sydney and believes that town centre renewal is critical to achieving the GSC's desired rebalancing of Sydney. Town centre renewal will also deliver on two further critical and interlinked agendas: the growing of the knowledge economy, and an increase in the number of walkable precincts across Sydney's 'sprawl city', with commensurate benefits for the livelihoods and wellbeing of Sydney's residents.

The Committee is not the first to consider the challenges for town centres as cities transition through a period of rapid re-urbanisation. In 2014 the Greater London Authority commissioned a report that investigated the challenges of declining high streets and the need to find sites for additional housing.

The Authority's report:

"advocated the Mayor's support be directed at those London town centres which have the potential for intensification, which are under threat of decline as a result of structural change and where there is the commitment and capacity to deliver densification".³

In 2015, London First noted:

"There is great scope to make better use of land in town centres, particularly given the evolving nature of local demands. Changes in consumer expenditure and behaviours, driven in part by the impact of the internet and multi-channel shopping, as well as by the growth of large shopping centres, pose a number of challenges to many town centres, especially mid-sized centres. Well designed housing, complemented by leisure and community facilities can breathe fresh life into many of these centres".⁴

3 "Accommodating growth in town centres: Achieving successful housing intensification and high street diversification", MaccreeorLavington, Peter Brett Associates, 2014

4 London First, "Redefining Density, September 2015

When preparing for these challenges, it is critical that policy makers acknowledge the importance of good place-making for Sydney's existing and emerging town centres. Place-making and place-management will be substantial determinants of the future economic strength and job density of each of those centres. The knowledge economy thrives in places with concentrations of mixed-use assets. Places with such assets command higher premiums in the market, which in part explains the success of the Parramatta city centre. While Parramatta's geographic centrality contributes a lot to this success, it must also be acknowledged that Parramatta has also thrived because of its amenities, diversity and mix of uses – including a significant university complex, an increasingly walkable environment, a wide choice of cafés, bars and restaurants, a fast developing cultural and retail offer, a widening range of housing provision, and good access to public transport. Place-management is not some potentially marginalised discussion about urban design. It is core to why some places succeed while others fail. It is also critical for understanding where jobs will go in the next decade – necessitating a more detailed discussion about how policymakers should leverage the re-urbanisation of Greater Sydney to distribute the benefits more equitably across Sydney.

WHAT TOWN CENTRES ARE, AND WHAT THEY ARE NOT

Rather than viewing Sydney as a vast undifferentiated conurbation requiring citywide urban management, there are growth opportunities to be found in conceiving it instead as being the sum of many individual town centres with distinctive social, cultural, and economic identities. Small areas of greater Sydney have developed defining emblematic reputations that directly contribute to their on-going growth. The once low-cost suburb of Surry Hills became the haunt of artists, designers, and other 'creatives' that now define its regional attractiveness. Cabramatta developed a strong and positive reputation as the Vietnamese centre of Sydney.

This paper is not a guide for renewal of major centres like Parramatta, that have already embarked on excellent renewal processes. Rather, this paper proposes that there are many other town centres worthy of renewal in addition to those identified as 'strategic centres' by the GSC Greater Sydney

Region Plan. Smaller local centres such as Panania, Guildford and Padstow currently possess many of the attributes of larger town centres, such as small 'fine-grain' shopping precincts, locations next to railway stations and a low-scale built form that is capable of more intense development.

In this paper, the term 'town centres' specifically excludes exurban 'big box' retail centres that have been popular in recent years. In addition to the size and type of buildings that give them their name, access to big box retail centres is primarily by cars that are parked on large surface parks surrounding each centre. Typically, big box retail centres are located at the edges of Australian cities. Examples in Sydney can be found at the edges of airports, abandoned manufacturing precincts and close to large freeways. Though some town centres include large enclosed shopping malls, these are often located within larger, more complex precincts and contribute in more useful ways to a thriving town centre.

Business parks have become popular in recent years, though they differ from the office precincts that are sometimes found within town centres in that they are predominantly located within disconnected, park-like surrounds with large, at-grade parking facilities.

A characteristic common to both 'big box' retail centres and business parks is that they primarily accommodate a single use. Further, they are generally disconnected from surrounding land uses and development, meaning that the principal means of access is by car. Consequently, they almost always include large areas devoted to car parking.

In contrast, today's town centres typically represent some concentration of mixed-use development set within a larger, single-use residential area. Town centres are also frequently served by some degree of public transport infrastructure to enable access to jobs, though the Committee acknowledges that for more distant and disconnected centres, travel times to access the larger centres where most high value jobs currently concentrate can be prohibitive.

Inherent in the concept of a town centre is that it comprises many different 'actors' – individuals and groups – each with distinct and overlapping interests and concerns. Town centres are effectively collective entities. It is in this attribute that they represent in microcosm the lived experiences of all city dwellers.

At a macro level, the idea that a city can offer diverse experiences is fundamental to its global attractiveness. Town centres are often judged on their capacity to provide the same qualities. It is therefore critical to recognise that enhancing the dynamic mix of experiences in town centres requires coordinated intervention. Isolated 'silo'-based intervention – such as traffic flow improvements in response to congestion or a shopping centre development isolated from other uses – is likely to impact adversely on other important and valued town centre qualities, such as pedestrian amenity. Whether or not the GSC will be able to achieve its desired rebalancing of Sydney will largely be dependent on whether the urbanisation of Sydney's town centres is managed through a new holistic method or by using more traditional 'silo'-based interventions.

Considerations for greenfield town centres

Much of this report is focussed on retrofitting and adapting Sydney's existing town centres – but there is also an important consideration about ensuring that new town centres adhere to best practice. Increasingly, where new development and densification marks the creation of new town centres, taking steps to achieve a vibrant, walkable and multi-use centre is vital. This will be especially important when considering the population growth of the Western Sydney Parkland City, which will require a number of new centres to support predicted population and jobs growth. One example of a new town centre done well is Rouse Hill.



ROUSE HILL TOWN CENTRE

The GPT Group's Rouse Hill Town Centre has delivered the traditional streetscape of a town centre in a greenfield development. Within the town centre are significant commercial and retail activities along with public open space, a library and a community centre. The downtown is vibrant and pedestrian friendly.

There is a diversity of street typologies across the town centre, as well as integrated transport and housing diversity, with a range of apartment types and sizes and a nearby transport interchange.

Rather than retail being confined to a single area as in many recent Sydney town centres, the layout of the centre has pedestrian streets connecting the precincts with awnings and roofing to provide weather protection. Within the retail layout there are active public spaces, with the leisure square, town square, and market square.

Over the last 10 years the centre has hosted a range of community events for its customers, including the Rouse Hill Rumble, Billy Cart Derby, and the first health and wellness festival, Be You, Be Well in October

last year. In partnership with the Hills Shire Council, the centre hosted the first Hills Illuminate last year which introduced an outdoor light show to the Hills in the lead up to Christmas. This year the world leading freestyle motocross stunt show, the Freestyle Kings, performed aerial tricks down the centre's Main Street.

As a result of an intentional placemaking process, Rouse Hill town centre contributes outdoor and family friendly community experiences that cannot be found in a traditional shopping centre environment.



Some existing features of Sydney's town centres

Each of Sydney's town centres have unique defining features, yet the underlying urban characteristics of many centres are remarkably similar, reflecting their historical evolution and the common, metropolitan-wide planning policies that have steered their development.

Sydney's town centres typically have some or many of the following features:

A rail and/or bus station at the centre serving as a focal point but often with tracks that are difficult to cross, dividing the centre into segments. This has resulted in semi-circular development where one side of the tracks grows, and the opposite side lies fallow.

Poor radial bus connections from the rail station to the immediately surrounding suburbs with transit instead geared towards moving people into the Sydney CBD.

Highly dominant roads with large arterials or ring roads that severely constrain pedestrian access between the town centre and adjacent neighbourhoods.

Large institutions on town centre fringes such as hospitals, colleges and universities which provide many of the jobs in the area but which are often poorly connected to the centre.

Large, introverted, car-oriented shopping malls with significant space devoted to large above-ground or surface parking lots.

An underlying grid of streets, usually a legacy of their nineteenth-century development and predating the advent of the automobile. This is not always the case in newer town centres.

Remnants of a traditional nineteenth-century style main street, affordably accommodating small businesses and specialist retailers, but often struggling economically and poorly integrated with nearby shopping malls.

Small-holding, low-rise retail strips, sometimes with distinctive ethnic businesses that serve local and regional needs.

Rigid mono-functional land use zoning, often with a series of introverted areas – such as shopping districts, commercial cores exclusively dedicated to office space, or a neighbouring industrial estate, typically with little residential zoning mixed into the centre itself.

Surrounding residential areas that lack a diversity of housing typologies, typically with large, homogenous low-density suburbs surrounding the town centre, with separate enclaves of more modern medium-density housing and recent high-rise tower blocks.

A limited night-time economy with most centres quiet after 6:00pm.

Municipal facilities, often a council chamber and offices, located near the centre, as well as other social infrastructure such as police station, courts, libraries, community and arts centres.

Limited quality green spaces in the centre of towns, with a lack of urban canopy to reduce heat and provide shading for residents during the day.

The GSC's Greater Sydney Region Plan has identified thirty-four strategic centres and over 200 local centres. Each of these could be considered to be either an established or emerging town centre.

The GSC acknowledged that each of these strategic centres differs in scale and current capacity to provide jobs and services. For example, only a few have major commercial precincts. Others such as Leppington, Frenchs Forest, Marsden Park and Narellan have significant opportunities to grow, driven by population growth or new infrastructure.

For the identified strategic centres, the GSC's future expectations for all were similar, including:

- high levels of private sector investment
- flexibility, so that the private sector can choose where and when to invest
- co-location of a wide mix of land uses, including residential
- high levels of amenity and walkability
- areas identified for commercial uses, and where appropriate, commercial cores.

While the Committee does not consider the list of thirty-four strategic centres to be an exhaustive list – indeed there are many promising emerging town centres across Sydney such as Melrose Park that are under development – this list reflects a useful list of the current key town centres across Sydney.

The GSC identified a further 200 local centres which were defined as being slightly less developed, but which still contain land zoned for commercial uses and which have a supermarket that is greater in size than 1,000sqm. Some of these areas are likely to become future strategic centres as Sydney's population continues to grow.

Local Government should consider the recommendations of this paper when planning the development of these emerging centres, as it is invariably easier to plan a centre properly from its inception than it is to retrofit and restructure a centre that has already been established.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT IS CENTRAL TO TOWN CENTRE RENEWAL

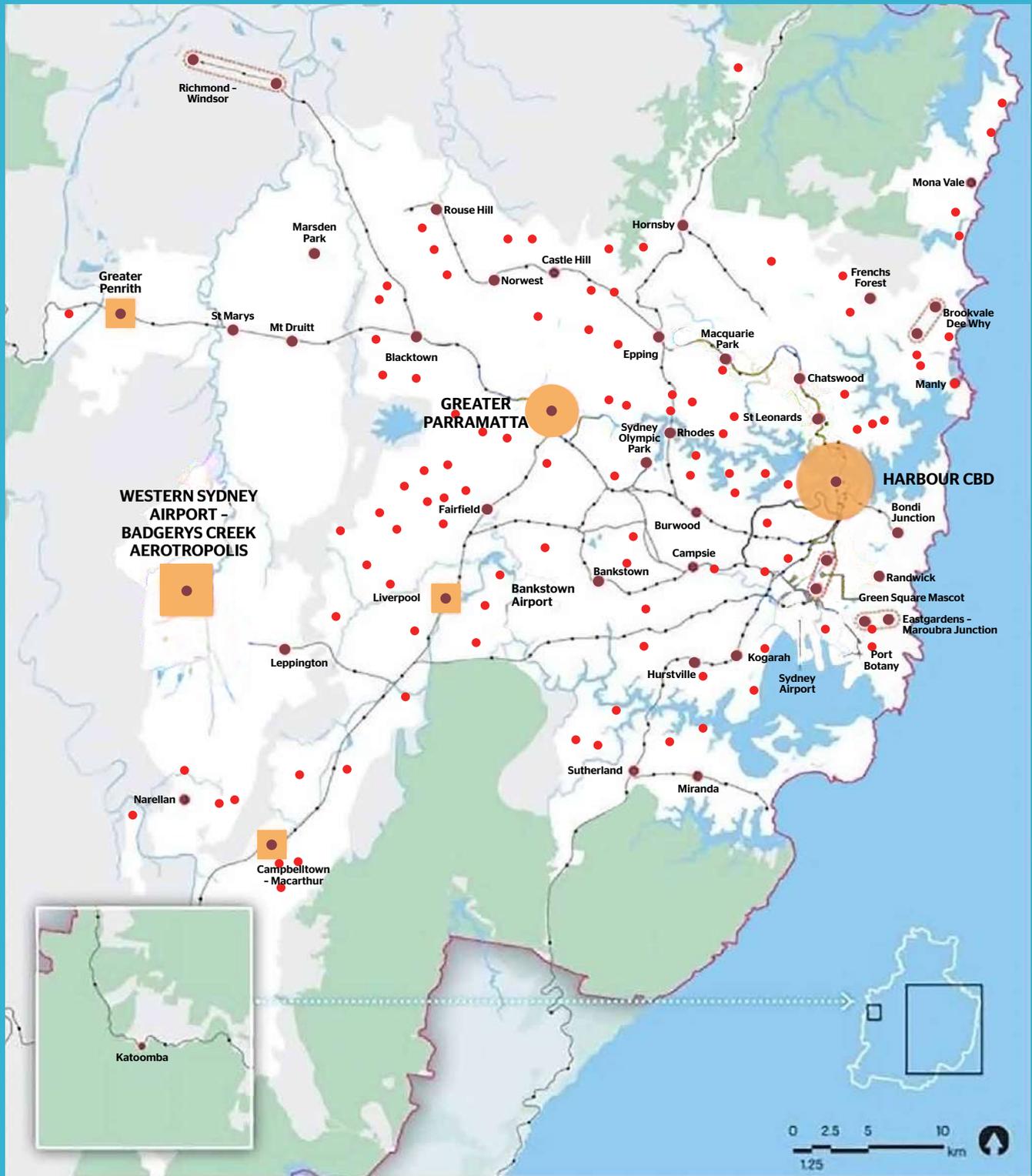
The GSC's *Greater Sydney Region Plan* has confirmed the need to rebalance the city. The Committee believes that rebalancing will only occur following a process of town centre renewal across the city. Such transformation is not possible without empowering Local Government to lead this process. No level of government cares as much about local centres or is as well placed to advocate for the tailored policies and investments that town centres require. Despite this, Local Government often lacks the resources or powers necessary to deliver ambitious town centre revitalisation.

Presently, Local Government is limited to playing the role of convenor. Even when a Local Government establishes a strategy for town centre renewal, they must then corral support from other public-sector agencies, not for profit organisations, education or health providers, private sector developers and employers to support and help deliver on their ambitions. This is frequently a convoluted, complicated and intractable process.

To better empower Local Government, the Committee has called for several key reforms. The first of these is to remove Local Government rate pegging to give councils the financial strength necessary to drive a program of rejuvenation. The second is to build on the Federal Government's City Deals fund by introducing a similar 'Town Centre Renewal Deal' program, which will establish a framework for the collaboration necessary to drive holistic town centre renewal. The final recommendation is to introduce a town centre renewal 'Challenge Fund' program, modelled on similar programs utilised by the United Kingdom in the 1990s. These recommendations are discussed in more detail later in this paper.

“Presently, Local Government is limited to playing the role of convenor. Even when a Local Government establishes a strategy for town centre renewal, they must then corral support from other public-sector agencies, not for profit organisations, education or health providers, private sector developers and employers to support and help deliver on their ambitions. This is frequently a convoluted, complicated and intractable process.”

THE GREATER SYDNEY COMMISSION'S STRATEGIC AND LOCAL TOWN CENTRES



- | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| Region Boundary | Urban Area | Local Centre |
| Waterways | Metropolitan City Centre | Train Station |
| Protected Natural Areas | Metropolitan City Cluster | |
| Metropolitan Rural Area | Strategic Centre | |

THIRTEEN FEATURES OF SUCCESSFUL TOWN CENTRES

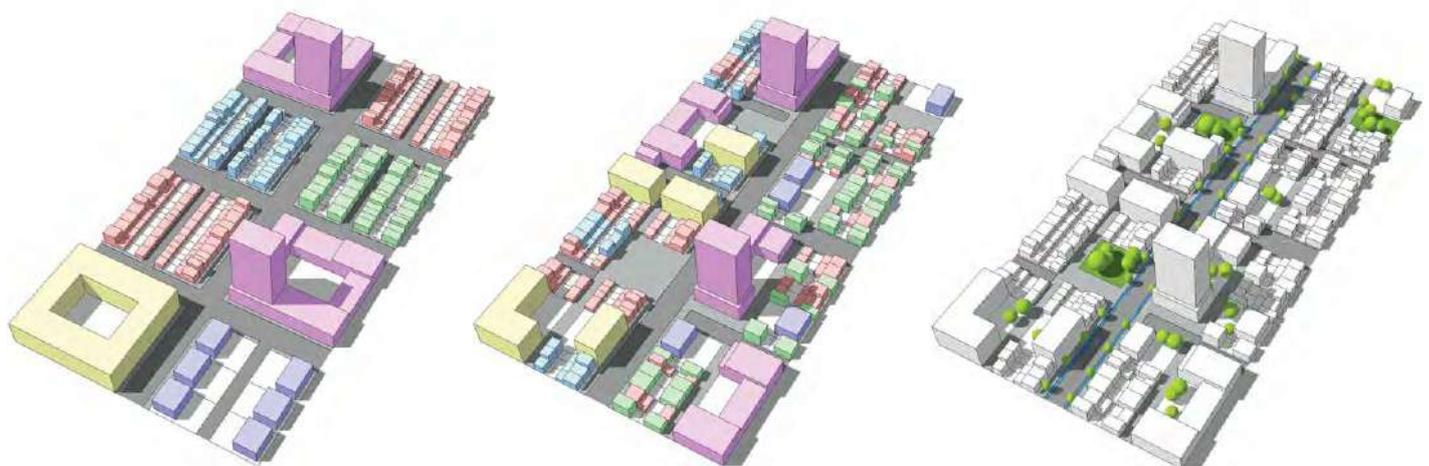


The Committee has considered a range of national and international case studies to help develop the following thirteen features of successful town centres.

A FINE-GRAIN, INTERESTING MIXTURE OF USES

Design that offers vibrant and diverse town centre experience, with mixed-use street frontages designed for human scale interactions and an intermingling of shop-fronts, workspaces, civic and recreational facilities.

MIXING USES RESULTS IN BETTER PLACES - AND MORE AMENITY



Often we assume that in order to maximise the density of different uses, we have to build in large blocks. In this design, uses are separated, resulting in monotonous spaces, lacking in public realm and vibrancy.

However, it is entirely possible to mix the types of use within each block without any loss of density. In doing so, greater diversity and vibrancy can be achieved.

This method of fine grain, mixed-use spaces also increases the amount of public realm and walking/cycling options.

A VARIETY OF RESIDENTIAL BUILDING TYPES AND TENURES

A strategy to create inclusive communities that include apartments within the town centre core and family-sized houses or terraces on the town centre fringe within easy reach of a range of amenities that meet the needs of the 'missing middle'. This also means diversity of tenure, where social and affordable housing is mixed with properties for rent and sale.

In *How to Make an Attractive City*, Alain de Botton argues that beauty is vital to belonging. According to de Botton, cities require "order" if they are to be perceived as beautiful. Order is the reason locals and tourists love Paris and New York. However, excessive regularity can be "soul destroying, relentless and harsh." In other words, people

love cities offering order and variety. Sydney's Paddington provides a good example of a suburb that contains residential housing that provides a well-regarded balance of order and variety. The planning challenge is how to transition from one form to another while maintaining public acceptance of the change.

EAST VILLAGE

Developed by PAYCE, this mixed-use building near Green Square covers an entire block yet contains 32,540 square metres of retail, commercial and light industrial, including a shopping centre, an Audi car-service facility, a Virgin Gym, commercial offices and 206 apartments – and which rewards pedestrians with attractive and interesting ground level activities.

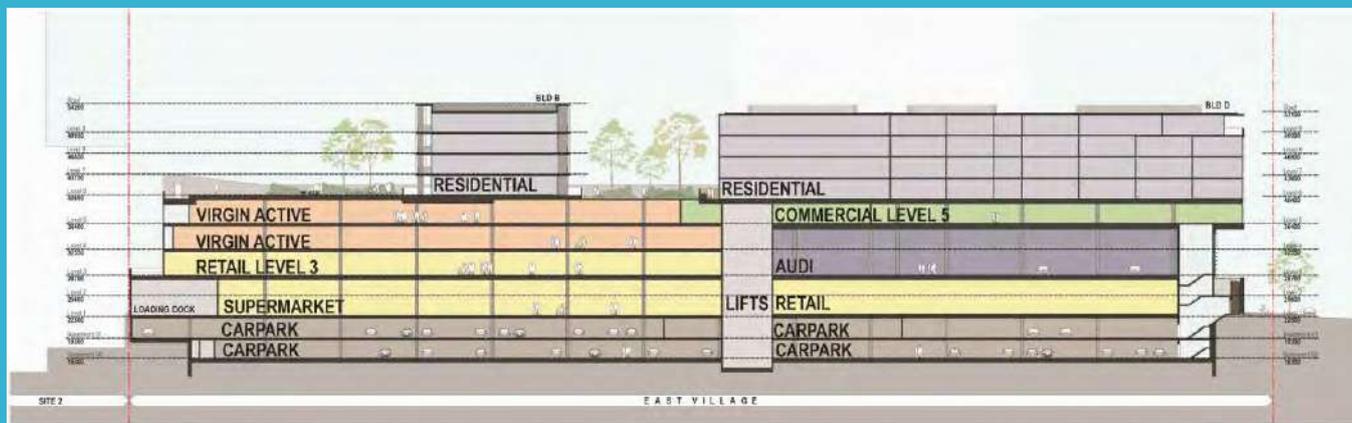


Image: PAYCE.

HIGH DENSITY DEVELOPMENT SITUATED AROUND PUBLIC TRANSPORT NODES

A local strategy that promotes mixed use transit-oriented development is already a feature of many successful town centres. Public transport connectivity linked with a high density of people living and working in close proximity draws new economic

activities like retail and cafés to cater to these residents and visitors, while higher values drive improvements in the type of businesses and quality of offer available.

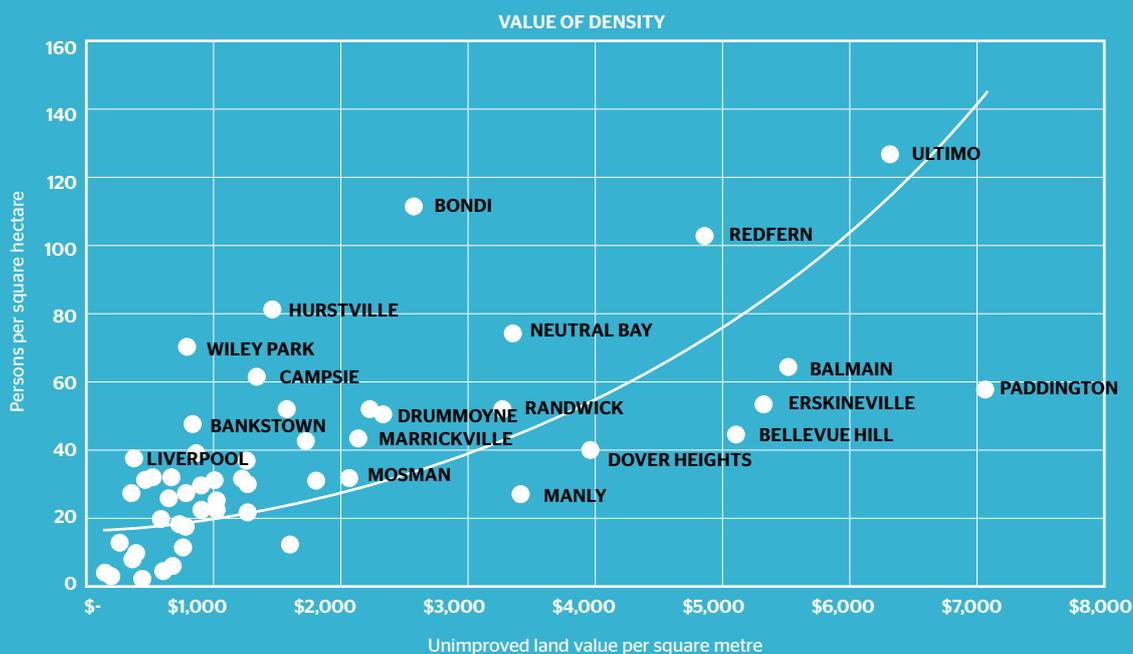
HIGH DENSITY-PRICE CORRELATION

Many instinctively believe that people don't want to live in higher density neighbourhoods and prefer the space and privacy of a large backyard. That dense neighbourhoods are too crowded and will result in ghettos, more crime and anti-social behaviour. That there is insufficient infrastructure to support the extra people and traffic and congestion will worsen. No doubt many people consciously think this is true, but unconsciously they behave as if it's false. The price

of land is a good marker of collective preference and reveals the places most people really prize. Places where people want to live and work have much higher land values than less desirable areas. Even a vague notion of Sydney's property prices will tell you that high density suburbs are more expensive than low density ones. Much more. The fact is, that when given the choice, increasing numbers of Sydneysiders are choosing higher density living and working, over

the alternative. People with choice are literally voting with their feet and their wallets for well-designed places which provide the economic, health and social benefits of walkable higher density. The challenge is to bring these benefits to more of Sydney - and in ways which reinforce the identity and uniqueness of places rather than uniformity.

THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT TREND LINKING HIGHER DENSITY WITH HIGHER LAND VALUES IN SYDNEY



Source: NSW Valuer General and profile.id

A FRAMEWORK FOR WALKABLE URBANISM

An intensification of development based around a network of pedestrian routes that are a pleasure to use and which connect the centre to surrounding neighbourhoods and facilities. These precincts are predominantly compact, connected, and often built to a grid lay-out.

Walkable urbanism is important from both a health and economic perspective. Research published in the

Lancet concluded that a compact city model in which land-use density and diversity are increased and distances to public transport are reduced results in lower rates of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and respiratory disease. In *Cities Alive: Towards a Walking World*, Arup estimates that for people living in a walkable environment, the risk of early death is reduced by 22% and mental health improves by 33%.

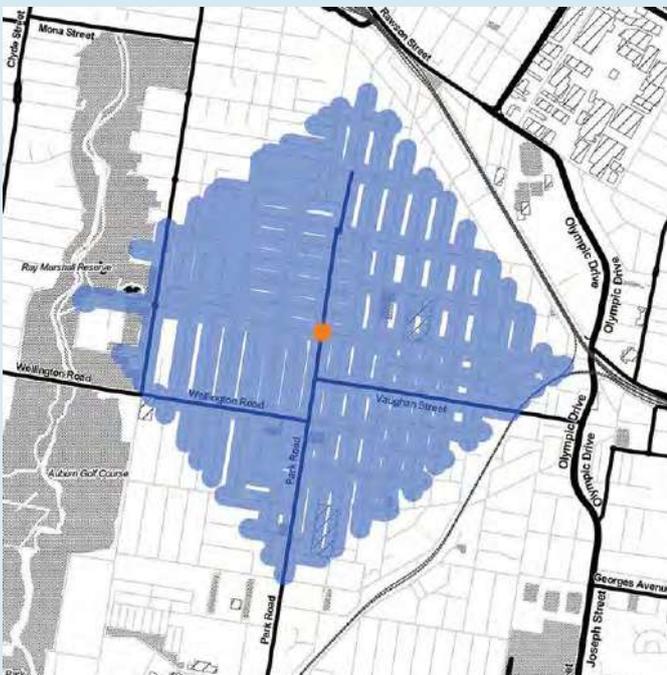
From an economic perspective, research by Christopher Leinberger

found that cities and towns with the highest levels of walkable urbanism are often “also the most educated and wealthy (as measured by GDP per capita) – and, surprisingly, the most socially equitable”. A separate analysis by CEOs for Cities of property values in the US showed that a single point increase in Walk Score – which ranks the walkability of individual addresses on a scale from 0-100 – can add between US\$500 and US\$3,000 dollars to the value of a property.

A DENSE PATTERN OF STREETS PROVIDES GREATER WALKABILITY

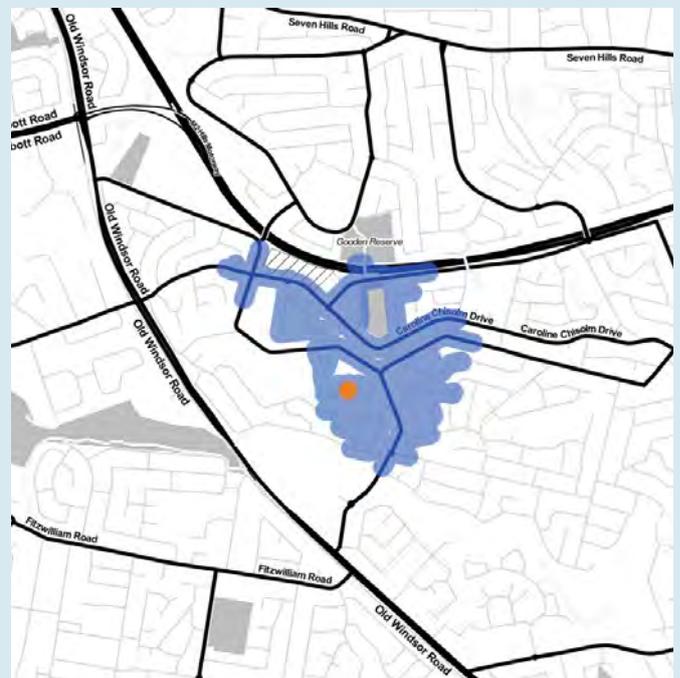
One of the strengths underlying many of Sydney’s town centres is a grid of streets. This format, rather than either Los Angeles-style superblocks or spaghetti-like meandering streets with cul-de-sacs, can deliver significantly greater

accessibility to services, retail and entertainment offerings within a short 15-minute walk. More locally, the grids of Auburn allow access to three times as many hectares within a 15 minute walk than Winston Hills.



Auburn

5km south-east of Parramatta
Grid street layout



Winston Hills

5km north-west of Parramatta
Circuit and cul-de-sac street layout

Source: AURIN E-tools using PSMA Street Network (August 2017) data

MAIN ROADS RETROFITTED AS ATTRACTIVE AVENUES OR BOULEVARDS

Streets that are redesigned as three-dimensional, interesting, people-oriented places that are well-landscaped, tree-lined, faced with building frontages and that are a pleasure to stroll along. Often called 'complete streets', these redesign programs focus on retrofit techniques, including road diets, where excess vehicle pavement is repurposed for pedestrians and cyclists. An example of existing complete streets is the award-winning Bondi Junction Complete Streets Project led by RobertsDay.

The RobertsDay project was commissioned by Waverley Council to provide advice on how to better integrate transport, urban design, landscape and place making. The Council now has a 20-year plan which involves greening and beautifying the footpaths and public places, making meeting places more vibrant and appealing, and improving connections for cycling, walking and access to public transport.

AN APPROPRIATE RANGE OF SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Services to support the diverse needs of a growing population – including schools, libraries, health facilities, leisure facilities, child play space and a variety of different types of public open space. In areas with limited free space, this often requires innovative design solutions, such as high-rise schools.

The GSC's Greater Sydney Regional Plan aims to "deliver inclusive places for people of all ages and abilities that support healthy, resilient and socially connected communities by... co-locating schools, social, health, sporting, cultural and shared facilities". This ambition should be reflected in the development of local town centre renewal strategies.

The City of Parramatta has developed a Draft Social Infrastructure Strategy to outline a long term direction for social infrastructure provision. The Draft Strategy will be used by City of Parramatta Council to identify priorities for future social infrastructure, to direct sound decision making about planning, funding, delivering and negotiating for social infrastructure. Other councils have demonstrated that individual assets can be used to deliver a wide range of programs and uses for the community. A notable example of this is the Bankstown Arts Centre.



BANKSTOWN ARTS CENTRE

The Bankstown Arts Centre contains studios, galleries, and meeting rooms that can be booked for many different occasions. The facility occupies a re-used industrial building near the fine grain retail centre just

to the south of Bankstown Station. Linking social infrastructure into the town centre has improved the ability for the town centre to attract and retain people throughout of day.

IMAGE: Bankstown Arts Centre

A HIGH QUALITY PUBLIC REALM

Open, public space accessible to all and programmed for activation as well as being part of a wider joined-up, public open space network of green and urban spaces. Sydney's emerging Green Grid will support this process, though there is much the city can learn from international leaders in this space. For example, many European cities offer diverse public spaces that are adaptable to different uses during the day and night – Amsterdam's public squares become stages for major events while Rome's public squares offer alfresco dining and people-watching throughout the day and night.

If we want residents to spend more time outdoors, we need to make open public spaces more comfortable and interesting. The recent summer heatwaves across Western Sydney remind us that we have too often created public places that are hostile to outdoor activities – defined by concrete and bitumen surfaces that absorb and intensify heat, with little to no shade to alleviate the summer sun. Town centre renewal needs to invest in planting trees to provide shady and comfortable open spaces for residents, and to counter the urban heat island effect.

Finally, effort needs to be spent on ensuring that councils are appropriately leveraging their natural assets. The Committee for Sydney's recent report, Sydney's Water Future, noted that the "city is crisscrossed with open drainage canals and swales. Once babbling brooks and streams are now stagnant and weed infested. Concrete scars on the urban landscape". The report recommended that Sydney "restore these waterways and turn them from fenced-off eyesores into linear urban parks" which could be activated by "providing a sequence of accessible paths for pedestrians and cyclists". Local councils seeking to do so would be working in conjunction with NSW Government Architect's Greener Places strategy to link the Green Grid to the Blue Grid, connecting a network of parks and green space across Sydney through a supporting network of waterways and streams.

MILLIONTREESNYC, AMERICA

The MillionTreesNYC project, launched in 2007 and completed two years early in 2015, massively expanded the urban canopy of New York with one million new trees. MillionTreesNYC expanded the urban canopy of New York by 20%, providing the city with significant cooling, carbon mitigation and improving the look and amenity of many neighbourhoods. The project even allowed members of the public to get involved – requesting free trees for specific parts of their local area and allowing them to view a 'tree map' of their city online.

New York's project is not alone. The Australian Government's 20 Million Trees program kicked off in 2014 and funded numerous small-scale programs to plant trees. Six western Melbourne councils put together a joint proposal to provide their area of the city with one million new trees. The NSW Government Architect recently released its draft Greener Places policy, which pledged five million new trees across Sydney and an increase in the city's overall tree canopy coverage from 16% to 40%. To capitalise on this program, town centre renewal projects should include a targeted strategy to increase local canopy cover and to ensure that open, public spaces include sufficient shading to make those spaces attractive during the warmer periods of the year.

"The Committee for Sydney's recent report, Sydney's Water Future, recommended that Sydney restore these waterways and turn them from fenced-off eyesores into linear urban parks which could be activated by providing a sequence of accessible paths for pedestrians and cyclists."

RATIONALISATION OF PARKING AND SERVICING PROVISION

Car parks located in accessible locations that minimise unnecessary vehicular cross-centre movement. This is frequently done through parking space consolidation that abolishes at-grade parking and which facilitates a movement towards multi-storey parking. This subsequently frees up space for development, new public open space, and innovative street redesign opportunities.

Photo: Bertrand Rieger



VAUBAN, GERMANY

Vauban, a brownfield development of a town centre in Freiburg, leads the world in sustainable development. The physical and financial separation of car parking from buildings has been an important component of their sustainable transport strategy. Centralised garages provide parking

for residents and businesses within the precinct, removing parking from almost all residential streets and private garages. Residents must choose to lease or purchase a space as a separate cost to purchasing or renting their property. This has made the cost of car parking an upfront, separate, and optional expense for

residents; one that many choose not to pay. Similarly, removing parking from individual dwellings has resulted in many of the key town-centre streets being pedestrian only, or mixed-use – making for a vibrant and safe town centre.

A UNIFYING 24-HOUR IDENTITY AND BRAND

Town centres are attractive in part because they embody values, attributes, associations, identities, and distinctive qualities. This embodiment is referred to as a town centre 'brand'. A range of promotional measures can be deployed to market town centres and help define their brand. An effective communications strategy is central to achieving this rebranding, both through traditional means such as local press and through social media platforms.

Arts and culture can also significantly enliven public spaces, facilitated by a well-developed strategy for animating town centres. Such a strategy will frequently seek to increase a town centre's locational attractiveness, and more broadly boost its 24-hour economy, supported by a program of good marketing to disseminate these qualities.

"Arts and culture can also significantly enliven public spaces, facilitated by a well-developed strategy for animating town centres."

INNOVATIVE TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

A willingness by Local Government to trial new initiatives, similar to the Business Improvement District programs currently being used in the United Kingdom and United States.

CHATSWOOD RENEWAL

In the past, Chatswood as a destination had a mixed reputation. In 2011 a substantial investment in Chatswood's centre saw the construction of the Concourse, a performing arts centre together with 3,000 sqm of retail and 6,000 sqm of open space plus a 5,000 sqm library. The Chatswood mall was also refurbished to become more pedestrian friendly and mall markets were opened twice a week.

To catalyse new private sector developments following this investment, Willoughby City Council engaged brand managers to develop a Brand, Strategy and Marketing Plan.

Following the redevelopment and rebranding,

- Events at the Concourse have included internationally acclaimed performances of the English Ballet and many other international and Australian artists. Local talent is also showcased, with the Willoughby Theatre company continuing to produce sold out events with The Willoughby Symphony Orchestra and Choir not far behind.
- Chatswood itself is now largely viewed as a safe and enjoyable night-time destination, with further expansion of both Westfield and Chatswood including new late-night dining options.
- Commercial vacancy rates have dropped as more businesses and jobs relocate to the centre.

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS (BIDS)

Originating in the US where they are now commonplace, BIDs have gained in popularity internationally. They provide a mechanism for the local authority and local businesses to work together to put in place additional services or projects to improve town centres, often funded by an additional levy. The most successful examples often support town centre management initiatives and are underpinned by a clear business plan with a strategic vision.

TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT (TCM)

Successful partnerships will often involve a form of TCM, focusing on the 'operational' issues such as environmental quality, safety, security and accessibility. TCM models take many different forms, either set up with formal structures and funding arrangements, or as an informal place management scheme, which can nonetheless be effective in delivering positive outcomes. Usually jointly financed between the council and private bodies, TCM partnerships can coordinate action plans to promote positive experiences and add vitality through professional marketing programmes and place activation. International best practice highlights that a pre-requisite for effective TCM is good interdepartmental working, adequate resourcing and an agreed overall strategy.



The Liverpool Health, Education, Research and Innovation Precinct

A LOCAL SMART CITY STRATEGY

Local Government policies that recognise digital technology as an enabler for positive user experiences and for effective town management, from wayfinding and accessibility, through event awareness and product purchasing, to enabling data-driven city management.

When undertaking town centre renewal, these technologies should be backed by a smart city strategy that embeds smart thinking into all future decision making for the new town centre.

The Committee for Sydney's *#WeTheCity3* report highlighted the \$6 billion renewal of Melrose Park by PAYCE as a prime example of how urban renewal and smart city planning can be delivered hand-in-hand. The project offers an opportunity to develop a proof of concept and minimum viable product for several initiatives that, if worthwhile, can be scaled across the suburb, the local government area and Greater Sydney.

MELROSE PARK

PAYCE is developing a Smart Suburb in its \$6 billion renewal of Melrose Park. The project is being planned as a data-driven mixed-use development, offering technology-enabled infrastructure and tailored software solutions to enhance the experience of residents, visitors and workers. The project is exploring the development and handover of digital tools to Parramatta Council in the same way that developers have created and maintained landscaping of public spaces.

The smart city initiatives rolled out across the development will be co-designed with Parramatta Council and focused with input from the community.

The scope of the program includes smart energy, water and waste management, the deployment of sensors, open access to data, the development of dashboards, the engagement of the market to develop solutions for improved mobility and to deliver on the other priorities of Parramatta Council.

CENTRE DESIGN WHICH FOSTERS START-UP AND SMALL BUSINESSES EMPLOYMENT GROWTH

A compact ecosystem of town centre facilities and services with relative ease of accessibility is a fertile environment for companies that benefit from having both an online and physical presence. While Sydney's global CBD has drawn much of the focus for start-up support, town centres can provide fertile ground for the growth of small businesses. GoGet was founded in Newtown, while Car Next Door started in Bondi. Proximity of innovation precincts to town centres offers a competitive advantage in related industries – in Sydney many of town centres enjoy close proximity to health and education innovation precincts, offering opportunities for these locations to support flourishing economies. Whether this is the university-linked innovation districts of Ultimo-Pyrmont or Macquarie Park, or the opportunities of world-class medical research in Liverpool, Westmead or Randwick, Sydney's town centres have the potential to provide job-hubs for start-ups across the city.

A STRONG RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND BUY-IN FOR A RENEWAL VISION

Historically, town centre renewal has almost always been more successful following a process to ensure community buy-in to the strategic vision. This requires an ongoing process of sincere community consultation and engagement. In other cases, it even requires securing a specific mandate from the community to deliver on the agreed upon vision.

LOCAL REFERENDUMS TO APPROVE INFRASTRUCTURE SPENDING

In cities and towns across the United States, residents are frequently asked to vote in special referendums to enact additional local taxes that will specifically fund new public transport projects. These taxes are used to cover the cost of a special Bond issue which provides the upfront capital needed to build a new rail or light rail service. If the public votes in favour of the proposal, the result is a binding contract between citizen, government and the purchasers of the Bond. The contract ensures that the public transport will be built and that the Bond obligations will be covered. If any of these obligations aren't met, the city or town is in default.

There are now hundreds of these contracts financing the largest expansion of American public transport in a century. There is no practical reason why a similar referenda model couldn't be used in Sydney. Such a process would arguably be well suited to the discrete geographical area of a town centre requiring renewal. This proposal needs not come in the form of a bond issuance, and instead could be associated with a temporary increase in Local Government rates, or if conducted through the state government, by a temporary increase in land taxes.

BARRIERS FOR RENEWAL



To renew Sydney's town centres, good will and an understanding of the value of quality local town centres will not be enough. There are key barriers that Sydney must overcome to achieve the desired outcome.

LACK OF RELIABLE KNOWLEDGE

Although both the challenges and opportunities of re-urbanisation are slowly being acknowledged by policymakers, it is arguable that they do not yet possess sufficient knowledge or prior experience to proceed with confidence and with the support necessary from the communities of Sydney. Further research is required – including learning from successful case studies of town centre renewal in Sydney and elsewhere. It is essential that these lessons be communicated to affected communities, including those being encouraged to invest in their town centres.

CONTRADICTORY POLICIES

While the GSC has gone some way towards rectifying this problem, Sydney continues to be hampered by an absence of coherent town centre focused policies. State planning policies identify the need for centre-based renewal, yet many land uses are rigidly codified to exclude the kind of mixed uses that are critical for well-functioning town centres. The Committee supports the development of a more comprehensive town centre renewal policy agenda to help drive the rebalancing of jobs sought by the GSC and the NSW Government, with statutory force applied where necessary to help ensure the delivery of local and regional plans. State and local policies should be linked with the broader objectives of the GSC through a clearly defined statutory hierarchy that ensures city-planning consistency.

RAPID POPULATION GROWTH

The rate of population growth presents significant challenges to town centre renewal. Governments and private development have often responded to this with policies and products that satisfy just one feature of this growth – the need for more residential accommodation. Suburbs developed with this singular focus are now frequently recognised as failing to provide for the more complex and diverse needs of a growing population. Sydney's town centres provide an opportunity to start redressing this shortcoming by embracing holistic planning for mix-used and well-serviced centre development.

PREDOMINANTLY MUNICIPAL APPROACH

Local Government has long promoted town centre renewal as a core ambition. These endeavours have tended to focus on policy settings, such as planning controls; improving existing business environments; attracting new businesses; lobbying to improve transport linkages to jobs; and undertaking local public improvement works. State agencies however have historically tended to provide utilities and services on an isolated 'silo' basis. While both the GSC and TfNSW have embraced a closer integration between transport and land-use planning, an even more holistic approach is necessary. This whole-of-government approach to town centre renewal and urban planning should also be supported by stronger links between the NSW Government and Local Government. This relationship should foster a genuine, respectful collaboration between both tiers of government, with dialogue and advice continuously flowing in both directions.

“The eye is naturally drawn to diverse, changing streets, which are enjoyable places to walk and spend time in. So, while site amalgamation is a useful renewal tool, it much be linked with clear design and care in creating good public realm.”

DEVELOPMENT THAT HARMS TOWN CENTRES

Large-scale development patterns outside of town centres have often complicated the more localised economic viability of the nearby centre. Continued growth of exurban big-box retail shopping has often hastened the demise of traditional high-street style retail offerings, most notably when insufficient attention has been given to maintaining the amenity and attractiveness of nearby town centres.

A discussion needs to be had around whether planning policies can be better used to constrain the development of single-use zoned local and regional 'retail precincts' in order to support mixed-use precincts linked with mass-transit public transport and residential density.

CHALLENGING LOT SIZES

Worthwhile larger-scale, mixed-use developments can be impeded in areas dominated by many small lots where individual owners can block the delivery of renewal projects. For a developer, the site amalgamation process represents complexity and risk. Assembling a string of fragmented properties to form a coherent development site is a complex task. If the private sector is to partner with delivering on town centre renewal, these commercial realities need to be acknowledged. However, this is not an excuse for dull or uniform design – as noted in *Density Done Well*, the eye is naturally drawn to diverse, changing streets, which are enjoyable places to walk and spend time in. So, while site amalgamation is a useful renewal tool, it much be linked with clear design and care in creating good public realm.

Similarly, in encouraging densification and mixed-use development, one challenge facing Sydney is that apartment buildings which adhere to the NSW Apartment Design Guide are sometimes challenging to deliver on older, narrow blocks. Innovative architectural solutions such as the Hills-Thalis multi-award winning 'Studios 54' project in Surry Hills can overcome such obstacles, though such innovative development can often be impeded by existing Local Environment Plan floor space controls and Development Control Plan controls for private open space.

In acknowledging these challenges, this paper supports achieving fine-grain density, while also recognising the value and activity that larger retail and commercial buildings bring to town centres. Any plan for town centre renewal must consider whether existing lot sizes are acting as a barrier to successful town centre renewal.

“To ensure that the broader objectives of the GSC’s rebalancing of Sydney is achieved, greater effort will be required to ensure that all arms of government are working in unison.”

LACK OF COORDINATION BETWEEN COMPETING INTERESTS

Coordinating many interests is a further barrier to town centre renewal. Vivid examples of a failure to properly coordinate can be experienced in the many town centres ruined by high capacity roads, which were enlarged to satisfy only one urban demand – increased car access and non-stop throughput. Parramatta Road presents an infamous example of this. The very first task of coordination should be to correctly identify and understand what the competing interests are. This is particularly difficult where it entails community interests, largely because in many instances the community is not homogenous nor is it aware that its interests are being actively reconsidered. Even when some semblance of agreement is initially achieved, the importance of strategic coordination needs to persist to ensure that delivery over time continues to match the community’s initial expectations.

Physical renewal is not the only feature of successful town centres. The multitude of activities that renewed town centres will subsequently host requires on-going coordination and management. The combination of coordinated renewal and on-going precinct management is often referred to as town centre governance, without which successful renewal is unlikely. To ensure that the broader objectives of the GSC’s rebalancing of Sydney is achieved, greater effort will be required to ensure that all arms of government are working in unison and not developing individual projects that run directly contrary to this goal. Better collaboration will also be needed between state government, Local Government and the private sector to prevent inappropriate and counterproductive development.

POOR TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE APPRAISAL AND PROJECT DESIGN

Within town centres, individual land holdings are linked by collectively-owned land which is then improved upon to deliver footpaths, roads, rail lines and the like. This collectively-owned land allows us to provide the transport corridors that are fundamental to the linking of homes and jobs. Assets such as transport corridors can take a long time to assemble and the infrastructure within those corridors must be extremely durable. For example, Sydney’s Harbour Bridge was completed in the mid 1930’s and many of Sydney’s rail lines are even older.

It is vital when infrastructure is planned that it designed to accommodate long-term urban growth. Future transport

projects should be evaluated and planned on their capacity to deliver the long-term objectives of the GSC’s Greater Sydney Region Plan. This should include a specific requirement that all future evaluations of mass-transit projects consider the transit need of future communities in line with forecast long-term population growth.

Equally a problem is the issue of project design selection being undertaken using an overly limited consideration of costs and benefits. Specific design elements are adopted with too little consideration of their broader impact on surrounding economic growth, or their longer-term impact on future development opportunities. An example of this dilemma can be seen with the renovation of shopping precinct around Chatswood Station. Here, the line was on-grade, which meant that there was no way to traverse the tracks without a tunnel or bridge, resulting in the severing of the two precincts. Similarly, transport upgrades around Bankstown Station improved disabled access but at the cost of further severing precinct continuity with ramps and hand-rails. Contrasting these examples is Sydney Olympic Park station, which is highly visible but with tracks below grade so that pedestrian access is unimpeded. While the Sydney Olympic Park station design may have required a larger upfront capital investment, the decision to place the station below grade has removed a major potential impediment to catalysing future economic development around the station. Such considerations should also be included when undertaking an appraisal of the appropriate project design for specific transport projects that intersect with local town centres.

UNDERSUPPLY OF SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Town centre renewal is unlikely to be achieved without commensurate consideration of how future private development is supported by 'social infrastructure', including public facilities such as libraries, hospitals, schools and universities. Many young families are forming in inner city medium density renewal districts that, when initially planned, were thought of as likely to only ever be attractive for single and double person households. This has resulted in areas where initial school space demand assumptions were incorrect, generating significant pressure on existing schools to accommodate many more new students than previously planned for. Planning for service delivery needs to be done with an assumption that town centre revitalisation will likely result in a substantial change to local demographics. Earlier assumptions that higher density development will not be attractive to young families will also need to be revisited.

LOW QUALITY PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Many existing town centres are simply unattractive. Public realm quality is often unsatisfactory. Some town centres appear worn down because of poorly maintained or tenanted private development. In other centres, the private development may be new but the public realm is dominated by ugly transport infrastructure or by excessive car-dependency and orientation. Public perceptions of amenity may be intangible but they are highly important. Perceptions of the attractiveness of precincts and buildings have long influenced investment decisions, directly influencing the local economy and supply of jobs. Town centre renewal needs to include a strong focus on amenity if it is to result in the jobs rebalancing of Sydney sought by the GSC.

LACK OF 24-HOUR ACTIVITIES

Town centre vitality can often transcend appearance. For example, many famous laneways in Melbourne thrive despite the unpropitious appearance of the buildings which are located around them. This is because vital town centres operate both day and night and are characterised by a multitude of attractions that are accessible to all segments of the local population. By contrast, monocultural town centres that operate by exclusion rather than attraction – ones that exclude many groups such as the very young and the old – can be problematic. Town centres that are 'dead' after dark are little different to the suburbs that they sit within. Town centres need to be designed and managed in a way that is accessible and interesting for the nearby local population. The Committee for Sydney's report, *Sydney as a 24-hour City*, contains recommendations which could assist in this regard.

SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SYDNEY AS A 24-HOUR CITY REPORT

- State government departments and councils should review opening hours of services such as libraries and gyms to assess demand for night-time services.
- In major urban centres, late-night shopping should be extended to Friday and Saturday. Councils should allow shops to open until at least 10pm without formal development approval.
- Local Councils responsible for major night-time precincts should pilot 'Night-time Business Improvement Districts' as a genuine partnership between councils and local businesses involved in the 24-hour economy.
- Planning controls should be amended so that any new development with a residential component within 100 metres of an entertainment venue will have to assess the noise from that venue and design and build to manage the noise.
- Amend the SEPP Exempt and Complying Codes 2008 to allow for small scale arts venues as a temporary use under all zonings except Residential.
- Councils across Greater Sydney could consider introducing a scheme similar to the 'Purple Flag' project in the UK, an accreditation process that allows members of the public to quickly identify town and city centres that offer an entertaining, diverse, safe and enjoyable night out. Councils should also work on cross boundary night-time economy strategies.
- Transport for NSW should work with councils to develop an integrated transport strategy for major night-time employment and entertainment precincts.



POORLY MAPPED MARKET DEMAND

Town centre renewal needs to be responsive to expressed needs and demands. Frequently, demand is not clear-cut but emerges slowly and often in competition with other conflicting demands, such as the need for residential amenity amongst vibrant cities. Difficulty in reliably identifying durable demand is therefore a barrier to town centre renewal. More effort needs to be spent on identifying and planning for durable demand without compromising on other areas that are critical to positive town centre renewal.

INSUFFICIENT TIME DEDICATED TO RENEWAL

Town centres do not develop – or redevelop – overnight. Even if a new and urgent redevelopment need is correctly identified, it often takes time for it to be met through the development process. This time scale increases when the projects required to meet those needs happen to concurrently cut across the interests of many other town centre ‘actors’. To balance these competing priorities, sustained, long-term commitment to a plan for urban renewal is necessary, with an acknowledgment that some longer-term interest may only appear long after a project commences. Town centre planning should not be undertaken on ad-hoc, short term and reactive basis, even when an individual project appears to satisfy an isolated and immediate problem.

A LACK OF APPROPRIATE INVESTMENT FINANCE AND FUNDING

Finally, town centre renewal is not possible without investment. Some finance and funding models are more suited than others to particular aspects of town centre renewal. The Committee has long advocated new ways to fund public transport projects through value capture. It has also supported the uncapping of Local Government rates to further support the financial capacity of Local Government to deliver town centre renewal. The Committee has also called for the creation of a new round of ‘Town Centre Renewal Deals’ which would operate at the state-to-local government level, and which would leverage joint private sector investment into our town centres. Finally, the Committee has called for the creation of a Town Centre Renewal Challenge Fund, modelled on similar initiatives used across the United Kingdom in the 90s to successfully drive town centre renewal in challenging suburbs.

PROCESS FOR ACHIEVING TOWN CENTRE RENEWAL

While there are many specific objectives that this paper seeks to achieve, each of these will need to be delivered through a coordinated process to drive town centre renewal. To deliver on the GSC's desired rebalancing of Sydney, the following process should be followed:

- **Audit** - local Government led benchmarking Audits should be undertaken to identify any obstacles to the delivery of successful town centres.
- **Plan** - local Government or other interested parties should develop Town Centre Renewal Plans with assistance from the GSC.
- **Funding** - a Town Centre Challenge Fund should be introduced to drive the rebalancing of Sydney through a series of town centre redevelopment projects.
- **Governance** - a Town Centre City Deals program should be instituted to help drive collaboration across all levels of government and with relevant stakeholders.
- **Delivery** - special purpose Town Centre Delivery Vehicles should be established to drive the redevelopment of individual town centres.
- **Outcomes** - baseline data across a range of indicators should be captured for use in ongoing evaluation and analysis.

AUDIT - IDENTIFYING THE BARRIERS TO TOWN CENTRE RENEWAL

This paper observes that while Sydney's town centres have many unique characteristics, both positive and negative, there are a number of common traits. Accordingly, each individual Town Centre Renewal Plan and its delivery must be informed by a detailed account of a centre's condition at the outset. This will entail an initial urban 'health check' or Audit, the details of which will form the foundation for subsequent intervention. The Audit should identify which of this paper's thirteen features of successful town centres are currently present in each town centre and to what extent, as well as each of the specific obstacles that are preventing the delivery of those features which are presently lacking.

The Audit should also compare Sydney's town centres to one another. Few town centres would concede that they offer an insufficient 'variety of residential building types and tenures', though the quality and diversity of offerings differs markedly across Sydney's town centres. Equally, most town centres endeavour to deliver at least some 'public realm', but the placement, accessibility and design of that realm varies substantially from town centre to town centre.

In recognition of this, the Audit should be broader than a simple box-ticking exercise and should instead attempt to evaluate the quality of each of the thirteen features, informed not just by an internal council evaluation, but also by an honest evaluation of community and business sentiments. To ensure these evaluations are objective and sufficiently relative, the Audit should include a degree of benchmarking against other comparable town centres across Sydney.

This Audit could theoretically be undertaken by anyone interested in the renewal of their town centre but to achieve best results should be commissioned by Local Government as the key stakeholders in local centres. The Audit process should also identify any key partners that will need to be engaged to drive the process of renewal, including all relevant government departments and organisations.

AUDIT IDENTIFYING THE BARRIERS TO TOWN CENTRE RENEWAL

Local Government interested in achieving town centre renewal should Audit their town centres to identify shortcomings and obstacles to the centre's successful redevelopment.

PLAN – DEVELOPING TOWN CENTRE RENEWAL PLANS

Drawing upon the information gathered through the Audit process, Local Government should then develop a holistic Town Centre Renewal Plan for the audited town centre.

The Plan's ambition should be sufficiently broad ranging and should not be limited to simple or small-scale changes that can already be funded through general revenue. While such changes could theoretically be included as individual components of a plan, the primary focus of the Plan should be on tackling those obstacles which have been identified as more difficult for Local Government to improve on their own, and as such are likely to require coordination across multiple government departments and with private sector stakeholders.

The Plans should anticipate which stakeholders will need to be engaged and at which stage of development that engagement should occur. The Plans should also draw heavily on information gained through community and business

sentiment testing conducted during the official Audit process. In instances where a redevelopment is likely to require collaboration with a specific state department or departments, further input should be sought from those agencies during the development of the plan.

The Committee notes that even well-crafted plans for town centre renewal may encounter initial resistance from government departments that have competing priorities. To facilitate a more respectful and collaborative dialogue between NSW Government and Local Government during the Plan development stage, resources and staff at the Greater Sydney Commission (GSC) should be made available to assist Local Government with the development of their town centre renewal strategies. Such a policy would require expanding the remit of the GSC to take on a delivery facilitation role but would have the added benefit of ensuring that town centre renewal plans align with the GSC's Regional and District Plans. GSC Town Centre renewal advisers would ideally be placed on secondment to work directly at council offices and should be

deployed on an advisory rather than decision making basis. Their role would ideally also involve facilitating input from government departments during the Plan development stage.

In instances where new levies or revenue streams will be required to fund the Plan, or where renewal will require the compulsory acquisition of privately held land, a rigorous community consultation process will also need to be undertaken during the Plan development stage to ensure a substantial majority of the community supports the proposals and the associated revenue raising measures. This could be achieved through a referendum style process similar to that used in the United States and as discussed earlier in this paper. Assuming the above process has been followed, each Town Centre Renewal Plan should have been developed with a strong foundation of community, private sector and government consensus.

Finally, the Town Centre Renewal Plan should be developed with the intention of being used to formally bid for funding from the proposed Town Centre Challenge Fund.

RE-IMAGING CAMPBELLTOWN CBD

Campbelltown City Council recently released its draft report, *Re-Imagining Campbelltown CBD*, which was prepared by Deloitte, Kinesis, Jacobs and Cox. The report sets out the foundations for the re-imagining of Campbelltown-Macarthur, in acknowledgement of the key strategic centre's position as a metropolitan cluster city within the Greater Sydney Commission (GSC) Greater Sydney Region Plan, with secondary centres playing a vital role supporting the region's Metropolitan CBD.

The report presents a plan to create "Australia's Greenest City" through new employment and investment initiatives aimed at attracting, and supporting, the next generation of jobs, homes and lifestyle, for one of the fastest growing economic regions in the country. It outlines a

series of principles, commitments and indicators to help drive a centre renewal strategy that encompasses most of the recommendations of this report. Most notably, it contains a strong focus on expanding access to open space, embracing better road-user hierarchies, improving walkscores, ensuring a diverse mix of land uses, embracing a diversity housing types and tenures, developing an arts and culture strategy, delivering smart city strategies, and encouraging initiatives to increase effective job density.

Campbelltown City Council will now establish an administrative vehicle to realise the value of Council's landholdings, leading the transformation of strategic and secondary precincts and partnering with the private sector to deliver outcomes.

PLAN DEVELOPING TOWN CENTRE RENEWAL PLANS

Local Government should then develop a Town Centre Renewal Plan to holistically address challenges identified by the Audit, with guidance provided from the Greater Sydney Commission.



FUNDING – CREATING A TOWN CENTRE CHALLENGE FUND

Once Town Centre Renewal Plans have been finalised, they should be presented to the NSW Government for potential joint funding through the proposed Town Centre Renewal Challenge Fund.

The proposed Town Centre Challenge Fund would provide funding and statutory support to local authorities and communities that can demonstrate their commitment to renewal. Linked to and in parallel with this paper's proposed Town Centre Renewal Deals initiative, the fund would:

- Undertake a competitive process to identify town centres where Local Government and community have a vision for achieving best practice renewal;
- Be contingent on a town centre renewal plan being agreed upon by all town centre renewal participants;
- Be structured and managed to attract contributions from private investors and other financial markets;

- Permit a variety of town centre growth investments including affordable housing, infrastructure funding, business investment and joint venture projects;
- Be supported by enabling legislation that would provide a regulatory framework designed to reduce risk and grow investor interest.

When developing plans for submission to the Town Centre Challenge Fund, Local Government should not structure its proposal on the assumption that the proposed Town Centre Challenge Fund will be the sole or overwhelming funder of renewal. It is likely that project funding will be awarded to those projects which have identified alternative revenue streams to help support the development process.

To assist in this process, the Committee notes that a wide variety of town centre finance models already exist internationally, and which could be adapted to help Local Government fund town centre renewal. International models usually involve a strategic levy or tariff-based funding, such as a Business Improvement District or Community Infrastructure Levy.

Other options also remain available to Local Government and other stakeholders wishing to fund renewal, including:

Existing investment

Both Local and State Government have budgets allocated across different departments for investment in the geographical catchment for town centre renewal. Similarly, many private sector partners make significant financial investment into their local communities through new commercial, retail and residential opportunities. These sources of funding and co-contribution should be pooled where relevant to assist the goals of the Town Centre Renewal Plan.

Local Governments can also bolster their own financial capacity by identifying sites that are in ownership but surplus to needs. Blacktown and Penrith are already leveraging their surplus sites to fund new city improvements, while the City of Sydney has shown that in some instances, it is possible for local council to leverage new development for public benefit. Councils around Sydney should share their learned experiences to further build the collective knowledge base around public-private joint development opportunities.

Value capture

Greater infrastructure investment can also accelerate town centre renewal. Much recent attention has been paid to opportunities for governments to 'capture' the value of their investment to pay for infrastructure projects, and the Committee has long argued that these opportunities should be explored where appropriate. Where town centre renewal initiatives can be clearly demonstrated to deliver a benefit to private sector partners, similar options should be explored.

Uncapping Local Government rates

While there are significant exceptions to this analysis, four decades of rate capping by State Governments has left Local Government in Sydney under-resourced and underfunded. Local Government in NSW now levies the lowest rates in Australia. This lack of resources is already causing significant problems for our city. While households may be better off, our public realm and local infrastructure is struggling to live up to our community expectations. If

Local Government is already struggling to service the existing needs and expectations of their communities, they will be unable to service a city of eight million people in the future.

Where local communities are hesitant about rates being uncapped, linking the ability for Local Government to raise money to a clear objective of renewing local town centres will help secure a better compact with the community through an acknowledgement that their contribution will be hypothecated towards a specific project or series of projects.

FUNDING

CREATING A TOWN CENTRE RENEWAL CHALLENGE FUND

A competitive Town Centre Renewal Challenge Fund should be created by the NSW Government to select the sites most deserving of state funding for town centre renewal.

CASE STUDY: THE SINGLE REGENERATION BUDGET CHALLENGE FUND (UK)

The Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) was introduced in the UK in April 1994. The SRB was designed to bring about economic, physical and social regeneration in local areas by acting as a catalyst for regeneration by attracting supplementary resources from the private, public and voluntary sectors. It was designed to do this by addressing local need, stimulating wealth creation and enhancing the competitiveness of town centres as places in which business wished to invest and people wanted to live.

The main mechanism of delivery was the SRB Challenge Fund, which laid down the strategy and the ground rules for allocating "renewal funding". Through the Challenge Fund, local authorities were able to bid for partnership funds alongside private, voluntary and other public-sector bodies. A local authority was then given the key role in designing the urban regeneration plans for their area. Any combination of local partners could submit Challenge Fund bids.

There were no fixed policy boundaries, and bids could vary from single objective thematic bids concerned with business support or affordable housing supply, to multiple objective integrated regeneration bids concerned with a wide range of economic, social and environmental challenges.

In a 2007, a Government-commissioned *National Evaluation of the Single Regeneration Budget* concluded that the Challenge Fund had been a "cost effective and innovative approach" for area renewal. It also found that "the lack of formally defined boundaries under SRB was a strong feature of its design and greatly assisted the regeneration process". Across the local areas which been supported by the Challenge Fund, the National Evaluation concluded that:

- Household incomes improved: there was a statistically significant increase in those employed full-time; the proportion of those unemployed fell in all the SRB areas

at a slightly sharper rate than the national rate and the employment rate increased at a rate slightly above the national average.

- Satisfaction with accommodation and the quality of the area increased significantly, bringing it close to the national average.
- There was an increase in parents believing the local area was a good place to bring up children.
- There was an increase in the number of people feeling very or fairly safe walking alone at night in their local areas – in contrast to the national trend, which showed a slight decrease.
- There was a significant increase in the proportion of those feeling closely involved with their community.

Source: Communities and Local Government, Urban Research Summary Number 25, The Single Regeneration Budget: final evaluation, 2007, accessed on 2nd March 2018 at https://www.landecon.cam.ac.uk/pdf-files/cv/pete-tyler/SRB_RESEARCHSUMMARY_2007.pdf



GOVERNANCE – ESTABLISHING TOWN CENTRE RENEWAL DEALS

Once the proposed Town Centre Challenge Fund has identified which Town Centre Renewal Plans will be recipients of funding, a governance structure will need to be established to help drive renewal.

The Committee notes that no single entity currently has the capacity to assemble all the skills and interests necessary for town centre renewal other than government. Despite this, many existing state agencies are constrained in what they must deliver for the public – with each department responsible for individual aspects but none having an over-arching capacity to drive renewal.

Town centre renewal therefore requires a singular vision to achieve a specific goal that is mutually agreed upon by all key stakeholders. This must then be delivered by a team empowered to coordinate and efficiently deliver each element of town centre

renewal, which would include an engagement mechanism to partner with government agencies and the private sector.

Australia has contemporary experience with such a model – the City Deal. The model in its current format is designed for whole regions, but this paper argues that the concept should be adapted to address the smaller, in geography if not complexity, town centre renewal projects.

The Committee believes ‘Town Centre Renewal Deals’ would primarily be developed as a partnership between State Government, ideally with the coordination of the Greater Sydney Commission, and the relevant Local Government Authority and major private sector contributors to individual town centres. The proposed Town Centre Renewal Deals would bring together key stakeholders around a shared vision for renewal.

To manage complexity and competing priorities, they will require robust governance to keep stakeholders collectively aimed at the right goal.

The Town Centre Renewal Deal team would need to:

Establish broad-based partnerships

Town Centre Renewal Deals should include partnerships between:

- Local Government authorities;
- Expert advisers, including planners, architects, urban designers, legal advisers, and commercial and financial experts;
- Relevant state agencies, including Transport of NSW, RMS, NSW DPE, UrbanGrowth Development Corporation, Landcom, and Sydney Water;
- All relevant funding agencies;
- Community housing providers;
- Private landowners, both small and large;
- Community representatives;
- Representatives from major health and education facilities, including hospitals, universities and TAFEs;
- The Federal Government, but only in the event that town centre renewal will require development on Commonwealth owned land or involvement of office spaces rented by Commonwealth Departments.

Participation must be expressed in partnerships that are robust, durable and expressed contractually. Well-tested delivery models such as public/private partnerships could also be employed to ensure effective ongoing partnerships.

This paper notes that the recent Western Sydney City Deal included the formation of a Planning Partnership agreement between the NSW Government and local councils in the area. Growth Infrastructure Compacts have also been extended to the Western Parkland City, while Collaboration Areas will be utilised to bring different government agencies and other stakeholders together to tackle more complex issues involving multiple jurisdictions of responsibility. Several of these structures could be replicated, or even enhanced upon, when establishing a partnership model for the proposed Town Centre Renewal Deals.

Strengthening of a shared town centre vision and strategy

Although the development of a shared town centre vision and strategy should have been achieved during the initial Town Centre Renewal Plan development process, there remains a need to ensure ongoing commitment to this vision. This is critical in order to avoid a situation where subsequent investments are made by NSW Government Departments which directly conflict with the Plan.

The Town Centre Renewal Deal should formally establish a positive and specific town centre vision, which will address the existing town centre shortcomings identified through the Audit process, while securing consensus agreement on centre renewal policy goals and the new desired urban character. It should also identify specific delivery requirements, including project timeframes and failure indicators. Once consensus is secured on the shape and strategy of the local Town Centre Renewal Deal, it should be granted statutory authority through the signing of contracts which bind partners in its delivery.

Commit to long delivery program

Town centre renewal takes time. Partnerships and funding commitments must endure for many years, and in highly complicated cases, decades. The structure of the proposed Town Centre Renewal Deal must allow for a formal process of revision in order to ensure sufficient flexibility to react to unforeseen developments. Revision to the Town Centre Renewal Deal should be undertaken on a similar consensus-building basis to secure input from all existing stakeholders.

Establish strong town centre renewal management arrangements

The partnerships essential to town centre renewal are durable only if well managed. Formal management structures need to be established and be made widely accountable. We suggest that existing governance structures are inadequate for this task as they are too fragmented, are subject to disruptions that challenge long-term commitment, and that they often have insufficient authority to deliver holistic town centre renewal. The use of a dedicated Town Centre Renewal Delivery Vehicle to drive the ambitions of the Town Centre Renewal Deal will be vital. This body could be chaired by Local Government, a NSW Government Department such as UrbanGrowth, or through a more delivery-focused GSC. What is critical is that the body is structured so that each of the Town Centre Renewal Deal participants are represented on a partnership basis. This coordinating body would then be well placed to act with authority as a localised Town Centre Renewal Delivery Vehicle. To ensure that the competing interests of these partnerships are appropriately balanced and to ensure that taxpayer investments are appropriately protected, strict governance standards will need to be introduced drawing on best practice models both within Australia and overseas.

GOVERNANCE ESTABLISHING TOWN CENTRE RENEWAL DEALS

Town Centre Renewal Deals should then be jointly developed by the relevant Local Government Authorities and the Greater Sydney Commission to bring stakeholders together around each site's long-term renewal program.

DELIVERY – CREATING SPECIAL PURPOSE TOWN CENTRE RENEWAL DELIVERY VEHICLES

This paper has identified barriers that limit even a well-resourced, well-governed entity to deliver renewal to town centres. Consideration must be given to delivery mechanisms that provide options for the acquisition of land and resources to achieve renewal goals.

Unlike the power of “eminent domain” in the United States, which allows a broad definition of public purpose and which can enable acquisition for redevelopment, legislation in Australia is more restrictive. What is required is a process through which State and Local Government can put a scheme of redevelopment to the community, and with community support, implement it.

Broader powers will need to be provided to Town Centre Renewal Deal authorities to assist in the aggregation of sites for town centre renewal as a public purpose, where that development is directly implementing the Town Centre Renewal Plan, as has been drafted in direct consultation with the community, including through public exhibition of the scheme during the Plan development stage and through a formal process for adoption.

Internationally, this is relatively commonplace model. For example, in the United Kingdom, the Town and Country Planning Act allows compulsory purchase to “facilitate

the carrying out of development, re-development or improvement” for the area’s economic, social, or environmental wellbeing. Such scheme must be confirmed by the Secretary of State. Similarly the UK Local Government Act permits a council to implement a scheme of redevelopment with the approval of the Local Government Minister. In many overseas cases where compulsory acquisition is used, the measure of compensation is also set at significantly higher rate than ‘fair market value’.

The exercise of compulsory acquisition will inevitably lead to questions regarding how those land owners who involuntarily sell their land will be recompensed. The Committee notes that there exists within the community a sentiment that the NSW Government has not done compulsory acquisition well in recent years. Effort will be needed to ensure that the delivery schemes of redevelopment are fair and thus able to gain support from the community.

Nonetheless, there are precedents in NSW for using compulsory acquisition powers to facilitate development – the UrbanGrowth Development Corporation is already empowered to acquire the land for the renewal of precincts that have been identified as future growth centres.

The NSW Local Government Act does not however provide powers to councils to easily implement schemes to facilitate the redevelopment of town centres. Given the vital role that Local Government plays in leading town

centre renewal, Town Centre Renewal Deals and their associated Town Centre Renewal Delivery Vehicle will need to be imbued with the powers required to carry out such schemes, including through the compulsory acquisition of land, but only following a process of robust community engagement that secures public buy-in for the overarching renewal plan.

This paper also strongly emphasises that the proposed compulsory acquisition powers need to be strictly limited in their applicability. This paper is not proposing that Local Government be given an open-ended right to engage in the compulsory acquisition of private property. Rather, the new powers should remain the exclusive domain of the Town Centre Renewal Delivery Vehicle and should only be applicable insofar as is absolutely necessary to deliver on the objectives of the Town Centre Renewal Plan. The proposed compulsory acquisition powers should thus be considered as a more limited replica of rights already afforded to the UrbanGrowth Development Corporation when undertaking its own redevelopment projects.

DELIVERY CREATING TOWN CENTRE RENEWAL DELIVERY VEHICLES

Special purpose Town Centre Renewal Delivery Vehicles should then be created and given appropriate powers and resources to deliver the Town Centre Renewal Deal.

OUTCOMES — MONITORING IMPACTS AGAINST BASELINE DATA

Once a clear process has been established to audit, plan, fund and deliver on town centre renewal, a need exists to continuously monitor existing projects to help inform future projects and to better deliver on value for money. To do this, baseline data needs to be secured and optimum future outcomes defined around clear success criteria.

Defining success criteria

Town centre renewal will take many years to achieve. The challenges encountered, and the methods employed to meet them will change over time, but the fundamental outcome may not differ that much from what can now be foreseen. In considering how policymakers should measure if town centre renewal has been successful, the Committee for Sydney has proposed the following traits, which would form the basis for success in town centre renewal:

- **Location specific, not generic**
Sydney's future town centres will be stridently unique. They will each have physical, urban, social and cultural characters that are found nowhere else in Sydney. Their attractiveness will depend on these new characteristics and will motivate visitors and new residents to go there.
- **Local jobs and businesses supported by good links to major centres**
In addition to better access to Sydney's main business districts, good work and business opportunities will have occurred in Sydney's town centres.

- **Diversity**
Though they will each have their own strong character, Sydney's future town centres will also accept people of all ages and cultures. A key element will be the variety between town centres, from small scale centres with local identity to large centres with CBD precincts and high-density residential developments.
- **Well-integrated urban transformation**
All of Sydney's town centres will develop by building on their positive existing qualities and the taming of those that detract from their liveability and identity. A feature will be that each element will be delivered and sustained in close coordination with interdependent counterparts. For example, upgrades to rail services and facilities will precede the taming of motor vehicle traffic to ensure that residents and visitors are not left without transport options during periods of change.
- **Walkability**
A key feature of Sydney's transformed town centres will be their walkability. Cars will not be banished but will co-exist with pedestrians, who will have right-of-way. A measure of walkability will be the ease and safety by which the aged and very young find getting to and around town centres.
- **Greater density**
The Committee has long advocated for greater urban residential density. Sydney's town centres will be exemplars, where greater density will combine with existing distinctive attributes to deliver richer urban experiences.
- **Appropriate large-scale, mixed-use development**
Many town centres host large-scale single-use retail malls that present blank facades to pedestrians. These land-holdings have a place in Sydney's future town centres but will host additional uses, including residences above, and will also face the street.
- **Complementary fine-grain mixed-use development**
Many Sydney town centres will also celebrate the fine grain that results from smaller holdings and the energies of many different landowners. Fine-grain retail is a feature of retail strips along Oxford Street, Paddington, inner Liverpool city, and Crown Street Surry Hills. In many of Sydney's town centres there are opportunities to build on top of single storey retail premises, thereby retaining the existing fine-grain character while increasing residential density, possibly including small office uses, and engaging the less capital intensive entrepreneurial energies of many smaller land holders.
- **Night-time economy**
Vibrant evening and night-time economies are signature features or many attractive urban precincts worldwide. Sydney's renewed town centres will host reasons to be there at all hours, not just during or either side of traditional business hours.
- **Strong public transport focus**
It is axiomatic that private vehicle use as the principle transport mode is anathema to the walkable urbanism promoted in this paper. Therefore, Sydney's renewed town centres will be complemented with strong, highly used and accessible public transport, enabling quick convenient access to other town centres, including those in Parramatta and central Sydney



- **Great urban design**

Often a catch-all term for all the positive physical attributes of urban public places, Sydney's future town centres will exhibit all the attributes of fine-grain, contextual relationships, 'edges', public space, landscaping and all the other qualities that comprise good urban design.

- **Social infrastructure**

Town centres must contain more than varied retail opportunities. They must also include social resources that appeal to a variety of future residents. Traditional aged-care clubs and childcare centres will be joined by new types of social infrastructure, such as combined uses in the one building that attract a variety of users over long periods of any day.

- **Digitally enabled and data-driven**

Town centres must consider how technology will change how citizens engage with spaces. They must also build in feedback-loops that allow new technology or ways of interacting to facilitate changes in their design and use automatically, building truly 'smart cities'.

Monitor impact

Effective town centre transformation programmes strike the right balance between projects and are implemented according to a clear but flexible strategy. To ensure that each Town Centre Renewal Plan is being delivered effectively and as intended, it is important that base line data is captured and that a broad

range of indicators are used for its ongoing evaluation. For example, when evaluating economic performance, ongoing data collection should occur around footfall, place vitality at both day and night, and perceptions from a visitor, consumer and business perspective. The urban policy context equally needs to be monitored in order to benefit from any changes not evident at the commencement of the renewal process.

OUTCOMES MONITORING IMPACTS AGAINST BASELINE DATA

Baseline data should then be collected across a series of quantifiable metrics to support ongoing evaluation and analysis.



The Committee for
Sydney

The Committee for Sydney thanks member organisations that have contributed to this research, including the following Town Centre Renewal Taskforce members:

AECOM
Aqualand
Arup
Blacktown City Council
Celestino
City of Parramatta
City of Sydney
Clayton Utz
Cox Architecture
Deloitte
Elton Consulting
Ethos Urban
FutureCity
GPT Group
Kinesis
KJA
Landcom
Liverpool City Council
Office of the Government Architect
PAYCE
Penrith City Council
RobertsDay
Shopping Centre Council of Australia
Stockland
Sydney Water
Thales
Tract
UrbanGrowth NSW Development Corporation

The Committee for Sydney

Level 27
680 George Street
Sydney
NSW 2000

sydney.org.au
@Committee4syd
committee@sydney.org.au
+61 2 9927 6511