



BLACKBUTT VILLAGE: ORCHARDTOWN ROAD PLACE PLAN

23 July 2020



This document is the final stage of work undertaken as a part of preparing the Blackbutt Village, Orchardtown Road Place Plan. It has been designed to be printed as an A4 landscape double sided document.

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INTRODUCTION

Place Score was engaged by City of Newcastle to work collaboratively with Council, stakeholders and the community to develop a Place Plan for the future Blackbutt Village: Orchardtown Road. This document incorporates the findings from various stages of research and consultation with the Blackbutt Village community.

PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Blackbutt Village is a small, neighbourhood commercial centre located in the suburb of New Lambton in Newcastle, in close proximity to Blackbutt Nature Reserve and John Hunter Hospital. It sits on the corner of Orchardtown Road and Carnley Avenue, at the cross roads between the suburbs of New Lambton, Kotara East and Kotara.

This Place Plan for Blackbutt Village defines the problems we want to solve, the objectives for place, a shared vision for the future Blackbutt Village, and Community Place Directions. It is the outcome of a collaborative process involving consultation with Blackbutt Village's community and stakeholders since May 2019.

The Place Plan integrates the findings from two research stages:

Stage 1 - Onsite Research and Options Review

- Onsite Street Place Experience (PX) Assessment of Orchardtown Road
- Review of four proposed concept options based on Orchardtown Road Place Principles

Stage 2 - Concept Feedback

- Concept Design Feedback Survey
- Online Visioning Survey

(Due to government isolation requirements the planned Visioning Workshop was transferred into an online survey)

The aims of the Place Plan are to provide:

- A high level brief for the development of a final design for Orchardtown Road
- Strategic objectives for investment in the area
- Key directions and recommendations for the future of Orchardtown Road



Aerial of Blackbutt Village, Orchardtown Road with the study area indicated in red

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A variety of research and stakeholder engagement methods contributed to the development of this Place Plan. Qualitative and quantitative research was undertaken to inform the strategic decision making process. Please find below research summary:

Tasks	Date	Participation	Purpose
Desktop Review and Analysis	June 2017	<i>n/a</i>	To review policy documents and past community engagement results and understand the current state and the future aspirations for Blackbutt Village, Orchardtown Road.
Street Place Experience (PX) Assessments	15-19 June 2019	50 responses (residents, workers, visitors)	To identify the attributes that contribute positively or negatively to the place experience of Orchardtown Road (between Carnley Avenue and Freyberg Street), New Lambton; considering parameters such as aesthetics, sense of welcome, activities, uniqueness, and the perceived level of care. The findings of this engagement aggregated with the Care Factor results helped to determine the priorities for improving the Town Centre.
Concept Design Review and recommendations	17-19 Oct 2019	<i>n/a</i>	To identify the best concepts to submit to the community and provide guidance for the feedback and visioning surveys, and the subsequent Place Plan.
Concept Design Feedback Survey	2 Mar to 24 April 2020	102 participants	To seek feedback on the Draft Concept Design for Orchardtown Road to understand if the design is meeting the needs of the community.
Formal submissions	27 Mar to 24 April 2020	11 submissions	To seek feedback on the Draft Concept Design for Orchardtown Road to understand if the design is meeting the needs of the community.
Visioning Survey	27 Mar to 24 April 2020	39 participants	To share the findings of research conducted so far and to develop a shared vision and directions for the future of Blackbutt Village, Orchardtown Road.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

This project involved the following deliverables:

A. PX Assessment Report

The PX Assessment captured the community's assessment of Orchardtown Road's performance.

B. Concept Options Review

This report reviewed Concept Options against findings from Place Score's PX Assessments, Care Factor Surveys, City of Newcastle 2017 Survey results, and Place Principles and proposed improvements.

C. Concept Feedback and Visioning Summary Report

This report provided a summary of two community surveys - the Draft Concept Design Feedback Survey and the Visioning Survey.

D. Blackbutt Village: Orchardtown Road Place Plan

This report brings together the findings of all the research conducted so far to deliver a high level brief for the development of a final design for Orchardtown Road.

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**BLACKBUTT VILLAGE:
ORCHARDTOWN ROAD
PLACE PLAN**

PLACE PLAN SUMMARY

This Place Plan has been developed to guide the development of the final design for Blackbutt Village, Orchardtown Road. It defines a shared Place Vision and Community Place Directions that provide the framework for decision making at all scales and across multiple disciplines.

Blackbutt Village is a small, neighbourhood commercial centre located in the suburb of New Lambton in Newcastle, in close proximity to Blackbutt Nature Reserve and John Hunter Hospital. It sits on the corner of Orchardtown Road and Carnley Avenue, at the cross roads between the suburbs of New Lambton, Kotara East and Kotara.

THE PROBLEMS WE WANT TO SOLVE

Engagement conducted with the Blackbutt Village community in 2019 helped to identify the following problems to solve:

A LOCAL COMMUNITY PLACE WITH NOWHERE TO STAY OR GATHER

LOW QUALITY PLACE EXPERIENCE

UNSAFE AND UNPLEASANT WALKING & CYCLING EXPERIENCE

PRIORITISATION OF PRIVATE VEHICLES

PLACE OBJECTIVES

Based on the problems to solve, the community identified the following objectives for the future of Blackbutt Village, Orchardtown Road.

A HIGHLY VALUED LOCAL COMMUNITY HUB

A GREAT PLACE FOR CUSTOMERS

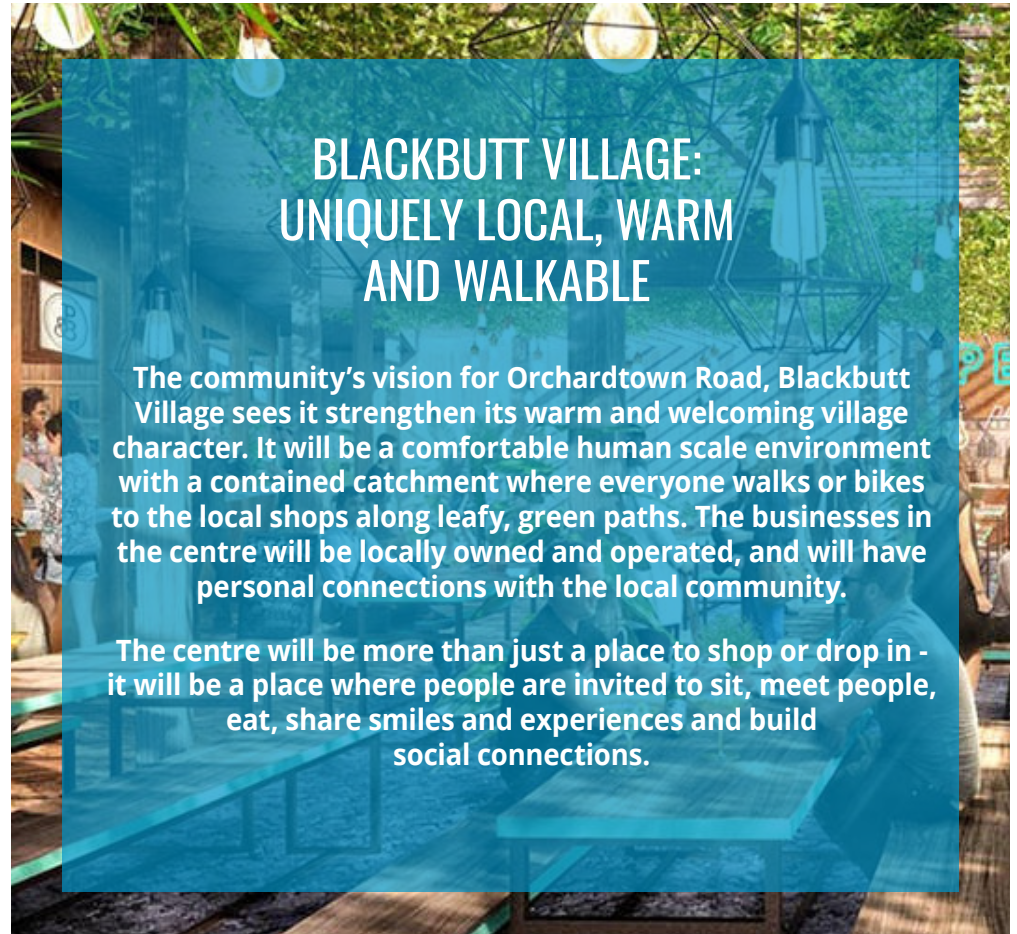
SLOWER AND ENJOYABLE FOR WALKING AND CYCLING

HAVING BALANCED INVESTMENT IN MOVEMENT AND PLACE



PLACE VISION: BLACKBUTT VILLAGE, ORCHARDTOWN ROAD

The following Place Vision synthesises the community's aspirations for their ideal future. It aligns all stakeholders around a clearly articulated vision of what we want to achieve.



COMMUNITY PLACE DIRECTIONS

While the Place Vision captures the purpose and personality of the place we intend to create, Place Directions provide the overarching approach to make that happen.

Place Directions can be applied to any sector - urban design, urban planning, landscape design, economic development, social planning, and so on. They should be used to guide various aspects of place right from planning for how people can get to the place to how to engage with them and make them stay longer.

The following 3 overarching Place Directions have been informed by the Place Vision and the consultation with the Blackbutt Village community in 2020:

MORE SOCIAL

Support and encourage people to build connections with each other and with the local businesses

MORE GREEN

Offer a green, shaded and relaxed environment

MORE COMFORTABLE

Offer a human scale environment with warm and organic finishes

A TOOLKIT FOR DECISION MAKING

This document can be used as a framework for guiding further development of the Draft Concept Design for Orchardtown Road. By using the Place Vision and Place Directions as a checklist for assessing design/ investment decisions, City of Newcastle can:

- evaluate the benefits/return on investment of proposed actions/projects
- filter ideas and prioritise the investment/actions/projects that will tick most of the boxes (have the most positive impact)

ACTION / PROJECT	PLACE VISION Does the action/ project help to achieve a place that is uniquely local, warm and walkable?	COMMUNITY PLACE DIRECTIONS		
		MORE SOCIAL Does the action/ project facilitate more social interactions amongst people; and amongst people and businesses?	MORE GREEN Does the action/ project make the physical environment more green?	MORE COMFORTABLE Does the action/ project increase the comfort of accessing and staying within the village?

Checklist for decision making / evaluating projects or actions against the Place Vision and the Community Place Directions

PLACE OBJECTIVES

Past engagement with the Blackbutt Village Community helped to identify the problems to solve and the objectives for improvement of the village. Ideas were focussed on creating a local community hub offering an improved customer place experience, slower and enjoyable access for active transport users and balanced investment between infrastructure for movement and staying.

THE PROBLEMS WE WANT TO SOLVE

The key to a successful Place Plan is to identify the problems we want to solve. This ensures that over time we do not become disconnected from purpose and invest in things that do not help us get to where we want to go.

There are four challenges that have been identified through the community engagement as limiting Blackbutt Village, Orchardtown Road's potential.

From this...

A LOCAL COMMUNITY PLACE WITH NOWHERE TO STAY OR TO GATHER



To this...

A HIGHLY VALUED LOCAL COMMUNITY HUB

- Providing accessible and well maintained public open spaces that facilitate social interaction, special events, play, exercise or relaxation
- Enhancing existing social businesses by providing additional space for outdoor trading



LOW QUALITY PLACE EXPERIENCE THAT DOESN'T SUPPORT SPENDING TIME



AN IMPROVED CUSTOMER PLACE EXPERIENCE - MORE ATTRACTIVE, GREENER AND MORE COMFORTABLE

- Providing street greenery and tree cover, providing shade and creating a visually pleasant public space that everybody wants to spend time in
- Improving the physical comfort and convenience of public places to encourage longer stays by providing well-placed comfortable seating for eating and resting, and facilities such as water bubblers



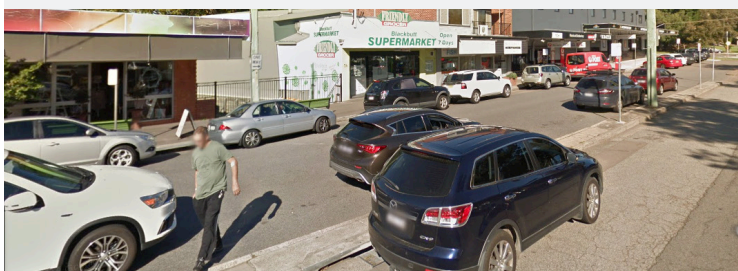
PLACE OBJECTIVES

Place Objectives define what success would look like once the Place Plan is delivered.

The objectives were defined by synthesising the findings from community consultation conducted in 2019.

From this...

UNSAFE AND UNPLEASANT WALKING AND CYCLING EXPERIENCE



To this...

A SLOWER AND MORE ENJOYABLE WALKING AND CYCLING EXPERIENCE, SAFE AND SEPARATED FROM CARS

- Ensuring a safe, comfortable and enjoyable walking experience that would encourage people to get out of their cars
- Providing legible cycling links between Blackbutt Village and key destinations such as Blackbutt Nature Reserve



PRIORITISATION OF VALUABLE LAND AND MODAL CHOICE TO PRIVATE VEHICLES



A BALANCED INVESTMENT BETWEEN PLACE AND VEHICLE INFRASTRUCTURE

- Reallocating current excessive space for car movement and parking to pedestrian-oriented public space where people can sit, stay, eat and socialise



OUR VISION FOR BLACKBUTT VILLAGE: ORCHARDTOWN ROAD

The Blackbutt Village, Orchardtown Road Place Vision captures stakeholder and community aspirations for their ideal future. It aligns all stakeholders around a clearly articulated vision of what we all want to achieve.

PLACE VISION



WHAT DO THE VISION WORDS MEAN?

UNIQUELY LOCAL - A PLACE THAT IS AT THE HEART OF ITS LOCAL COMMUNITY - THE PREFERRED CHOICE OF RESIDENTS TO BUY FROM LOCALLY OWNED BUSINESSES

WARM - A PLACE WHICH LOOKS AND FEELS COMFORTABLE AND INVITES PEOPLE TO STAY LONGER

WALKABLE - A PLACE WHICH IS LINKED TO ITS SURROUNDING RESIDENTIAL CATCHMENT VIA GREAT WALKING PATHS

CAPTURING THE LOOK AND FEEL OF THE FUTURE BLACKBUTT VILLAGE

The Place Vision aligns all stakeholders around a common goal for the future:



The community would like to see seating coupled with shade where people can congregate



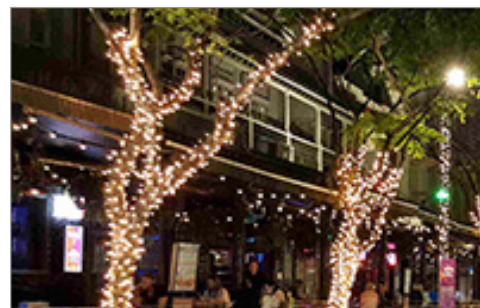
The community would like to see opportunities for informal gathering



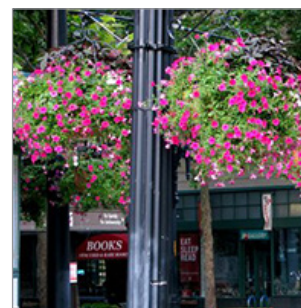
The community would like to see elements such as street libraries and community noticeboards



The community would like to more opportunities for outdoor dining



The community would like to see public realm that is well lit at night, that feels safe and allows night time trading



The community prefers a more formal style for the public space. However, it should not be rigid or use materials such as concrete and metal

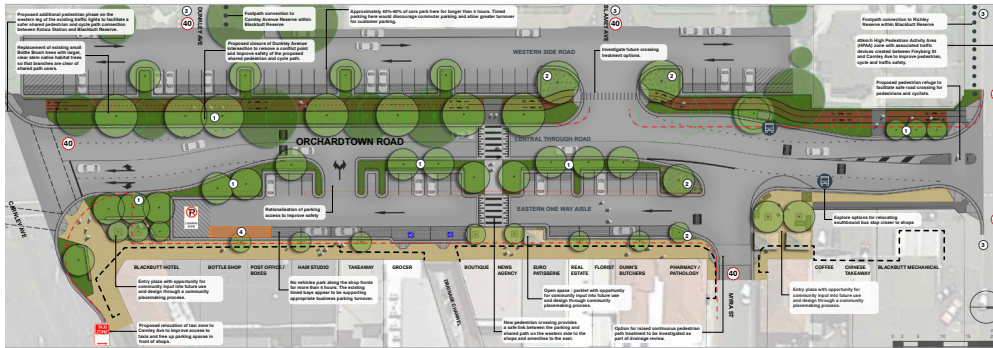


The community would like to see improved amenity in the public realm with the addition of water bubblers

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ON DRAFT CONCEPT DESIGN

Place Score conducted an online feedback survey with the Blackbutt Village community regarding the Draft Concept Design for Orchardtown Road in March - April 2020. 101 respondents participated in the survey revealing overwhelming support for almost all the proposed actions of the Draft Concept Design.

PROPOSED DRAFT CONCEPT DESIGN



Orchardtown Road New Lambton Public Domain and Traffic Plan, City of Newcastle 20/02/2020

KEY

- PROPOSED STREET TREE
 - EXISTING STREET TREE TO BE RETAINED AND PROTECTED
 - EXISTING STREET TREE TO BE REMOVED
 - EXISTING KERB EXTENTS
 - SHOP AWNING EXTENTS
 - PROPOSED GARDEN BED
 - PROPOSED CONCRETE PAVEMENT
 - PROPOSED POROUS PAVING
 - PROPOSED SHARED PATH (MATERIAL TO MINIMISE TREE IMPACT)
 - PROPOSED FOOTPATH CONNECTIONS TO BLACKBUTT RESERVE
 - TRAFFIC SPEED CUSHION
 - PEDESTRIAN CROSSING
 - BUS STOP
 - TAXI ZONE
 - 40KM/H HIGH PEDESTRIAN ACTIVITY AREA (HPAA) EXTENTS
- 1** PROVIDES SHADE TO CAR PARKING SPACES, IMPROVES THE VISUAL AMENITY OF THE STREET AND HELPS REDUCE TRAFFIC SPEEDS
 - 2** PROPOSED RAIN GARDEN WHICH ABSORB WATER RUNOFF FROM ROADS AND PASSIVELY IRRIGATE THE PLANTING
 - 3** CAPACITY AVAILABLE IN SURROUNDING STREETS TO ABSORB COMMUTER PARKING DISPLACED BY PROPOSED TIME RESTRICTIONS
 - 4** OPTIONAL OPEN SPACE / PARKLET FOR COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ON PROPOSED DESIGN

77%	Support - Increasing greenery/ green spaces
64%	Support - Improving public open spaces
50%	Concern - Reducing 25 car parking spaces
47%	Support - Reducing 1-2 parking spaces in front of shops to create useable public open space
62%	Support - Increasing driver, pedestrian and cyclist safety by relocating parking spaces from the busy main through road, to reduce vehicle conflict
69%	Support - Increasing access to local businesses through timed (not paid) parking in order to reduce all-day commuter parking
85%	Support - Proposed 40 km/hr High Pedestrian Activity Area
88%	Support - Proposed mid-block pedestrian crossing linking the shops to the western side road
88%	Support - Proposed signalled pedestrian crossing to be incorporated into the western side of the existing traffic lights at the intersection of Carnley Avenue and Orchardtown Road
80%	Support - Proposed pedestrian priority path crossing in Myra Street
72%	Support - Proposed median strip refuge and extended kerb at the intersection of Freyberg Street and Orchardtown Road
77%	Support - Proposed shared path connection on the western side of Orchardtown Road
66%	Support - Pedestrian crossing at the intersection of Blamey Avenue and Orchardtown Rd
66%	Support - Proposed closure of the intersection of Dunkley Avenue and the main through-road of Orchardtown Road to increase driver, cyclist and pedestrian safety
81%	Support - Making the pull-in lane outside the shops one-way southbound, to improve traffic flow and driver/pedestrian safety
63%	Support - Proposed relocation of the southbound bus stop, in order to be closer to the shops
78%	Support - Proposed relocation of the taxi rank to Carnley Avenue in order to improve access and free up parking space in front of the shops
60%	Support - Overall draft concept plan strikes a balance between place and vehicle infrastructure improvements

COMMUNITY PLACE DIRECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Community Place Directions provide the approach to adopt in order to realise the Place Vision. Engagement with the Blackbutt Village community in March - April 2020 revealed a preference for more social activity, increased greenery and a more comfortable village environment.

COMMUNITY PLACE DIRECTIONS

Place Score conducted an online feedback survey regarding the Draft Concept Design for Orchardtown Road and an online Place Visioning Survey in March-April 2020. The findings from both the surveys and formal submissions to City of Newcastle regarding the Draft Concept Design informed the following 3 Place Directions:

MORE SOCIAL - Connections between people; and between people and businesses

MORE GREEN - Leafy, soft and relaxed

MORE COMFORTABLE - Human scale, organic and welcoming

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been informed by the Community Place Directions and aim to guide further development of the Design Concept for Blackbutt Village, Orchardtown Road.

IDENTITY

STRENGTHEN THE VILLAGE-LIKE CHARACTER BY OFFERING A MORE SOCIABLE, GREEN AND COMFORTABLE ENVIRONMENT

VEGETATION

OFFER A CONTINUOUS CANOPY OF SHADE TREES AND GREENERY AT EYE LEVEL

ACTIVITIES

PROVIDE SPACES FOR INFORMAL INTERACTION, OUTDOOR DINING AND SMALL SCALE EVENTS AND MARKETS

ACCESS AND CONNECTIVITY

ENSURE SAFE, EASY AND COMFORTABLE ACCESS TO THE CENTRE BY DIFFERENT MODES

STREET FURNITURE

ENSURE STREET FURNITURE PLACEMENT, LAYOUT AND DESIGN SUPPORTS COMFORTABLE OUTDOOR STAYS AND SOCIAL INTERACTION

PARKING

CONSIDER REALLOCATION OF CAR PARKING SPACES TO SUPPORT SAFE AND COMFORTABLE STAYING AND MOVEMENT SPACES FOR PEDESTRIANS

IDENTITY

STRENGTHEN THE VILLAGE-LIKE CHARACTER BY OFFERING A MORE SOCIABLE, GREEN AND COMFORTABLE ENVIRONMENT

Community input derived from the Place Visioning Survey identifies that the community values the local village feel and the convenience the businesses offer.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Support and incentivise locally owned and operated businesses
- Ensure the design offers low-scale, intimate public spaces for outdoor trading and socialising
- Create a brand that places Orchardtown Road at the heart of the local community

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE



WHAT DOES THIS NOT LOOK LIKE



ACTIVITIES

PROVIDE SPACES FOR INFORMAL INTERACTION, OUTDOOR DINING AND SMALL SCALE EVENTS AND MARKETS

Community feedback suggests the preference for informal social opportunities, seating, outdoor dining and small scale events.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide generous footpaths allowing people to pause and talk to one another
- Provide free and comfortable seating for individuals and groups close to the shops where people can sit, socialise and eat
- Install interactive community features such as a street library, a community noticeboard, etc.
- Organise and provide spaces for small scale events such as fresh food and handmade products markets, community skill sharing workshops, etc.
- Explore different pavement treatments to define welcoming staying spaces near street intersections

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE



WHAT DOES THIS NOT LOOK LIKE



STREET FURNITURE

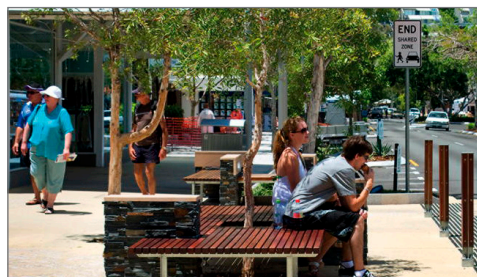
ENSURE STREET FURNITURE PLACEMENT, LAYOUT AND DESIGN SUPPORTS COMFORTABLE OUTDOOR STAYS AND SOCIAL INTERACTION

Community feedback suggests the preference for visually soft, warm and organic materials over standard metal finishes for street furniture.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Place seats under the canopies of shade trees
- Orient seats to face each other in order to allow group interaction
- Use wood and lighter materials for street furniture that make the public space appear warm, flexible and welcoming

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE



WHAT DOES THIS NOT LOOK LIKE



VEGETATION

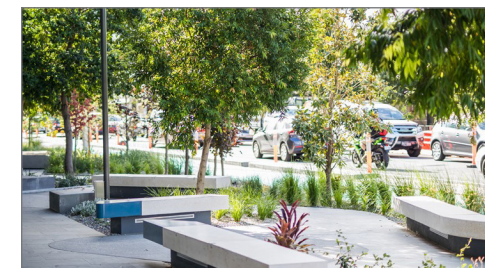
OFFER A CONTINUOUS CANOPY OF SHADE TREES AND GREENERY AT THE EYE LEVEL

Community feedback suggests the preference for traditional and structured planting over abstract or quirky planting elements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Plant large trees to provide shade to the walking paths and staying places such as the proposed kerb extension at the pedestrian crossing
- Integrate green edges and planters with seating spaces
- Install hanging planter baskets on light poles and awnings

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE



WHAT DOES THIS NOT LOOK LIKE



ACCESS AND CONNECTIVITY

ENSURE SAFE, EASY AND COMFORTABLE ACCESS TO THE CENTRE BY DIFFERENT MODES

Over two thirds of respondents support improvements to pedestrian, driver and cyclist safety as proposed by the draft Concept Design.

Over 80% of respondents agree with the changes in relation to speed limits and pedestrian priority crossings in the area.

Over 60% of respondents agree with the proposed changes in relation to improving visibility, traffic flow and public transport connection to the shops.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Proceed with the Draft Concept Plan actions prioritising safe, easy and comfortable access for different modes
- Install green and comfortable walking paths in the wider walking catchment of the centre
- Provide cycling connections between the centre and key destinations such as Blackbutt Nature Reserve

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE



PARKING

CONSIDER REALLOCATION OF CAR PARKING SPACES TO SUPPORT SAFE AND COMFORTABLE STAYING AND MOVEMENT SPACES FOR PEDESTRIANS

Community feedback identifies that the community is split 50/50 on an overall reduction in car parking spaces. Reduction in car parking should therefore demonstrate a clear benefit. There is significant support from two thirds of respondents for an improved public realm and paths for walkers and cyclists.

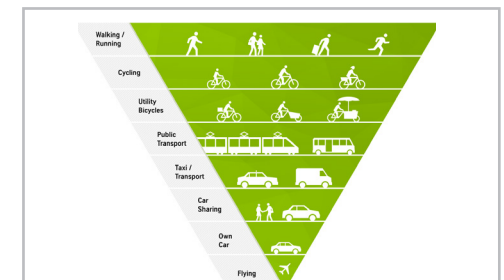
Timed parking as a method of reducing all-day commuter parking is supported, with 69% of respondents in agreement.

There is some community concern that a reduction in car parking spaces may result in parking issues in the surrounding residential streets.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop a clear communications plan to promote the benefits of reduction in car parking spaces
- Explore expanding the proposed mid-block landing space (kerb extension area) for pedestrian use
- Trial a weekend transformation of few car parking spaces into a parklet - provide grass and planter boxes and seating and encourage the community to utilise the space for informal gatherings

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE



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FOR MORE INFORMATION
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