

Urban Renewal Strategy Newcastle

Frequently Asked Questions

July 2014

WHAT IS THE VISION FOR NEWCASTLE'S CITY CENTRE?

- Newcastle and the surrounding Hunter region have undergone significant economic change. It is now evolving beyond its industrial and manufacturing origins towards a more economically diverse regional city relying increasingly on services and knowledge-based industries.
- As the second biggest city in NSW, Newcastle has over 155,000 residents and this is expected to grow to 190,000 by 2031. By 2036, the city centre is also expected to accommodate an additional 10,000 jobs and 6,000 homes.
- Amidst this economic change and growth, and with its location and setting between the river and the ocean making it a compact, unique, and people-friendly city, Newcastle now has the opportunity to continue to evolve, to strengthen its position as the Hunter region's capital, and to become a vibrant economic, residential and tourist hub.
- This is why the NSW Government has worked with the City of Newcastle Council, key government agencies, local businesses and the community to develop a vision to transform and revitalise Newcastle's city centre.
- This will help to make Newcastle a vibrant regional hub and an attractive destination for business, residents and visitors, providing more investment and employment opportunities and retail and other services.

WHAT IS THE NEWCASTLE URBAN RENEWAL STRATEGY?

- The Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy, announced by the NSW Government in 2012, is a 25 year plan to revitalise Newcastle. It sets out a roadmap to achieve the vision for the city centre.
- The Strategy includes a number of place-based, economic and transport initiatives designed to drive urban renewal and support growth in the city centre.
- The Strategy's objectives are to:
 - Introduce new planning controls to promote activity and development and well-located land uses to support the creation of 10,000 new jobs and 6,000 new homes
 - Make physical improvements to the city's significant public spaces
 - Drive economic initiatives that support renewal
 - Promote transport, access and connectivity to and within the city centre

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HOW WILL THE URBAN RENEWAL STRATEGY REVITALISE NEWCASTLE?

The Strategy includes a number of key elements to achieve urban renewal:

- Diversify the economy
- Establish new retail uses
- Recognise Newcastle's heritage as an asset
- Attract more residents to the city and fund renewal and upgrade works
- Re-establish Hunter Street as Newcastle's main street
- Revitalise the Hunter Street Mall and the East End to encourage a boutique retail, entertainment, leisure and residential precinct
- Position the West End for long-term growth
- Create a university presence and educational hub at Civic
- Connect the city with its waterfront and improve access to and within the city centre
- Support greater use of public transport and create a connected walking and cycling network
- Improve the efficiency of the road network and manage car parking

WHAT HAS HAPPENED SO FAR?

The Government has made a number of announcements to help shape the future of the Newcastle city centre:

- Removing the heavy rail between Wickham and Newcastle stations and constructing a new, fully accessible interchange for rail, light rail and buses at Wickham, with all services on one level for easy transfers.
- Establishing a light rail service at high frequency between Wickham and the beach.
- \$340 million from the proceeds of the Port of Newcastle lease, together with \$120 million from the Hunter Investment & Infrastructure Fund and Restart NSW, will be used for the revitalisation of the Newcastle CBD, the delivery of the new transport interchange at Wickham, and light rail in the city centre.
- Amending the Newcastle Local Environmental Plan 2012 (LEP) to establish a new planning framework and drive renewal in the city centre.

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- Creating a Development Control Plan (DCP) for the city centre to provide detailed planning controls to ensure that new development meets high standards of design and environmental quality.
- UrbanGrowth NSW is working with the GPT Group on the master planning and redevelopment of key sites around the Hunter Street Mall in the East End.
- Construction of the \$94 million law courts complex at Hunter and Burwood Streets is set to be completed in 2014.
- \$25 million in funding has been allocated to the construction of The University of Newcastle's NeW Space campus at Civic, which will house the University's law and business faculties.
- The Hunter Development Corporation contributed \$2.8 million towards the redevelopment of the Empire Hotel site, which will include affordable dwellings.

WHEN WILL THE CHANGES BE IMPLEMENTED?

- The Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy is a 25 year plan. The initiatives in the Strategy will be delivered over the short, medium and long-term.
- Implementation will occur through amendments to the planning controls contained in the Newcastle Local Environmental Plan 2012 (LEP) and an implementation plan.
- Announcements will continue to be made on important milestones over the life of the Strategy.

WHAT ARE THE CHANGES TO THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN?

- The changes to the LEP contained within the Urban Renewal Strategy include:
 - Zoning land and providing appropriate controls for Newcastle's city centre to promote urban renewal, the creation of a quality urban environment, good design outcomes, and the realisation of jobs and housing targets for Newcastle's city centre in accordance with the Lower Hunter Regional Development Strategy
 - Delivering housing choice and affordability by accommodating a wide range of residential dwelling types and densities

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- Managing development of the city centre in a sustainable way and preserving Newcastle's heritage by setting maximum building heights and floor space ratios for commercial, residential and mixed use development
- Promoting pedestrian and vehicle connectivity with adjoining areas and within the city centre

WHAT COMMUNITY CONSULTATION HAS OCCURRED?

- The Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy and the proposed changes to the planning controls contained in the LEP were twice placed on public exhibition providing the community with the opportunity to have their say on the proposed changes.
- First exhibition:
 - The Strategy and the proposed changes to the LEP for zoning, height and floor space ratio controls were first exhibited for four months from 14 December 2012 until 19 April 2013.
 - Over 400 people attended two community sessions held in Newcastle on 20 February 2013 and regular meetings were held with stakeholders.
 - A total of 420 submissions were received from councils and council groups, State Government agencies and local MPs, industry groups, non-government organisations and the general community.
- Second exhibition:
 - Amendments to the proposed planning framework reflected in a draft amendment to the State Environmental Planning Policy (Urban Renewal) were placed on exhibition between 5 March 2014 and 21 March 2014.
 - At the same time, proposed changes to the Newcastle Development Control Plan (DCP) were exhibited to allow the community to review the more detailed planning and design guidelines that will support the LEP. This exhibition occurred between 5 March 2014 and 4 April 2014.
 - A total of 266 submissions were received in response to the proposed changes to both the LEP and the DCP.

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WHAT ISSUES WERE RAISED IN THE SUBMISSIONS?

- Submissions made during the first exhibition were mainly concerned with the NSW Government's decision to terminate the rail line at Wickham.
- There was broad community support to enhance the city centre.
- Feedback also included comments around zonings and land use.
- Submissions made during the second exhibition mainly expressed concern that the increased height across sites in the East End owned by the GPT Group and UrbanGrowth NSW would adversely impact on the heritage character of the precinct, resulting in loss of views and overshadowing.
- Submissions also raised issues relating to traffic and car parking and the length of the exhibition period.

WHAT HAS CHANGED IN RESPONSE TO COMMUNITY FEEDBACK?

- In response to issues raised during the first exhibition, the department proposed further changes to the planning controls, including changes to the height or floor space ratio controls on key sites. These changes were open to public feedback during the second exhibition period.
- The NSW Government has made the decision to terminate the railway line at Wickham. Since the first exhibition took place, the NSW Government's vision for Newcastle has incorporated light rail through the city centre.
- The department responded to submissions raised during the second exhibition relating to the impact of the proposed height on the GPT Group/UrbanGrowth NSW sites, in particular concerns about the potential for the height of these sites to detract from views and disrupt the skyline view of Christ Church Cathedral.
- The maximum building height on the GPT/UrbanGrowth site has been reduced by 10.6m from RL 69.5m (approximately 20 storeys) to RL 58.9m (approximately 17 storeys) to match the height of the parapet of the Christ Church Cathedral's nave.
- This will ensure that the Cathedral tower remains a prominent element in the city's skyline.
- The City of Newcastle and the Joint Regional Planning Panel will have flexibility to allow a variation of up to 10 per cent subject to the building design being reviewed by a design review panel.

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- The department also responded to a number of other issues raised during the exhibitions. Further information is contained in the Newcastle City Centre Finalisation Report.

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT?

- The Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy includes a number of transport initiatives to support better connections and access to and within the city centre. These initiatives are an important component of the city centre's revitalisation, and of creating an active and liveable city.
- As well as creating a new, fully accessible transport interchange at Wickham and establishing light rail between Wickham and the beach, the Strategy incorporates:
 - Better connections for pedestrians and cyclists
 - Dedicated cycle lanes
 - New connections across the railway line – re-connecting the city centre to its waterfront
 - Better management of city traffic
 - Innovative solutions to car parking in the city centre
 - Upgrading the road network and key intersections
- The Newcastle light rail project, including route development and community consultation is being managed by UrbanGrowth NSW and Transport for NSW.

HOW WILL HERITAGE BE PROTECTED?

- The Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy preserves the unique character of Newcastle, including protecting key views, vistas and city landmarks.
- The Development Control Plan provides guidance on re-purposing heritage buildings in addition to the guidelines that already exist. This will ensure that new development conserves and enhances the cultural significance of heritage items important to Novocastrians.

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WHAT WILL BE THE LIGHT RAIL ROUTE?

- Consultation was undertaken on light rail route options and the final route was announced in May 2014.
- The route will use part of the existing rail corridor east of Wickham before moving south onto Hunter Street and Scott Street to maximise urban renewal opportunities while avoiding impacts on the Hunter Street Mall.
- Further community consultation on the detail of the light rail solution will be undertaken as part of the light rail environment assessment process.
- Transport for NSW is responsible for investigating opportunities to expand the light rail network in the future.

HOW WILL THE DISUSED RAIL CORRIDOR LAND BE USED?

- The community will be consulted on possible future uses of Civic and Newcastle railway stations and disused rail corridor land as part of the revitalisation of Newcastle.

WHAT IS DESIGN NEWCASTLE?

- The Design Newcastle initiative, launched in June 2014, is being run by UrbanGrowth NSW. It involves the community in decisions about public space, heritage and transport through engagement methods such as online forums and a community summit.
- Feedback gained from the Design Newcastle consultation will be used to guide the creation of a more detailed urban renewal plan.

WHERE CAN I ACCESS FURTHER INFORMATION?

- All information is available at:
 - <http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/revitalisingnewcastle>
 - Planning & Environment (Newcastle Office) Level 2, 26 Honeysuckle Drive, Newcastle
 - City of Newcastle, Administration Centre, 282 King Street, Newcastle
 - Planning & Environment (Head Office) Information Centre, 23-33 Bridge Street, Sydney, telephone 1300 305 695 or email information@planning.nsw.gov.au