DESIGN GUIDE

DRAFT

URBAN DESIGN

FOR REGIONAL NSW

A guide for creating healthy built environments in regional NSW
Design objectives for NSW

Seven objectives define the key considerations in the design of the built environment.

Better fit
contextual, local and of its place

Better performance
sustainable, adaptable and durable

Better for community
inclusive, connected and diverse

Better for people
safe, comfortable and liveable

Better working
functional, efficient and fit for purpose

Better value
creating and adding value

Better look and feel
engaging, inviting and attractive
Regional NSW is full of vibrant and diverse cities, towns, and villages located across coastal areas, rolling tablelands, alpine snow fields and vast outback areas in the west of the State.

The historic patterns of development that have created these unique places face contemporary challenges. Changes to local populations, industries and the nature of work, as well as increasing climate extremes and natural hazards, influence how these places plan to adapt for the future.

Local councils in the regions are at the forefront of managing this change, planning for growth and change in their communities that have implications for their built environments.

Urban design plays a direct role in shaping lives in built environments. A well-designed built environment responds to the needs and aspirations of local people, now and in the future. Good urban design adds to the community’s cultural, economic, and physical wellbeing by creating safe, healthy and socially inclusive places that meet the needs of children, young people, families, individuals, people with disabilities and seniors.

Past urban design guidance has usually been developed with a metropolitan focus, and does not necessarily apply to regional and rural environments.

I’m proud to launch the first-ever draft guide for Urban Design for Regional NSW. Building on the approach to design in Better Placed, this guide provides practical guidance that responds to the challenges and opportunities facing regional NSW, and shows how good urban design contributes to improving life in regional NSW.

This includes providing guidance on how to boost our main streets and town centres, increase walking and cycling, improve the design of our subdivisions that interface with surrounding rural and coastal landscapes, and leverage opportunities from our diverse natural, historic and cultural assets – including our rich Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Our desire to put design front and centre to create healthier built environments, improve liveability, and help regional NSW communities reach their potential is central to this guide.

I urge everyone to read the draft guide and provide their feedback. Together we can improve the quality of built environments in regional NSW.

Anthony Roberts MP
Minister for Planning
Minister for Housing
Special Minister of State
Design has a crucial role to play in regional NSW to ensure quality of life in our cities, towns, and villages. It helps create healthy, happy and prosperous communities.

The draft guide Urban Design for Regional NSW has been developed to help achieve this aim. It will support the goals and directions of the regional plans developed by the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE).

The draft guide acknowledges the unique conditions in regional NSW, which differ from those in metropolitan centres. There are many settings such as heritage towns, landscapes and buildings, culture, historic agricultural practices, and beautiful landscapes. We would like to celebrate and enhance these.

The role of urban design in this process is crucial. Urban design takes a holistic approach to the ongoing creation of cities and towns, which balances social, environmental and economic factors. This extends to coordinating the requirements and interfaces of infrastructure, public spaces and buildings to ensure design outcomes lead to a positive public domain and the creation of thriving and sustainable communities.

Government Architect NSW (GANSW) has a long history of design leadership, with a proven record of delivering high quality built environments. In the past two years, our office has focused on supporting government and industry by offering tailored design guidance and advisory services. In this new strategic capacity, we provide thought leadership and champion design excellence across government.

We take an integrated collaborative approach in the strategic advice that we provide to government. In this role, we support the DPE with its vision of making NSW a great place to live and work. Better Placed: An integrated design policy for the built environment of NSW (GANSW 2017), provides a clear definition of what makes a well-designed built environment. This guide builds upon those principles.

Improving the quality of life for all people in our urban environments in regional NSW requires better integration of design thinking and problem solving in the building process. This document outlines the importance of urban design and how to approach it – to support everyone involved in the design, planning, and development of our built environment.

This draft guide is now available for review by everyone with an interest in urban design in regional NSW.

Peter Poulet
Government Architect
About this document

This guide is for local councils, government agencies, regional industries and businesses, and local communities engaged in transforming the built environment, across regional NSW.

It has been prepared with reference to the nine regional plans released by the DPE. The regional plans outline a series of goals, directions, and actions for the sustainable future development of each region. This guide is a key implementation tool to help councils create a well-designed built environment. It responds to an identified urban design resource gap in regional NSW, the recognition of the impact of good quality design on regional communities, and the need for targeted practical assistance.

This guide is a non-statutory document and applies to the nine NSW regions beyond Greater Sydney as shown in Figure 1.

There is a broad range of urban environments in NSW – including large metropolitan areas, and small settlements. Similarly, there are significant variations in the level of urban design expertise across councils. This guide is a draft for comment. Case studies are being developed to co-incide with the release of the final guide.

Metropolitan areas of Greater Newcastle and Wollongong

The NSW Government has released several strategic plans in recent years which recognise the metropolitan areas of Greater Newcastle and Wollongong and their connections to the Greater Sydney Region. By 2056 the wider region stretching from Greater Newcastle, Central Coast, Greater Sydney and Wollongong will have a population approaching 10 million.

Greater Newcastle and Wollongong are metropolitan areas with highly urbanised inner-city areas, supported by a network of centres and surrounding suburbs. The scale, diversity and complexity of the built environment within Greater Newcastle and Wollongong is different to many centres, towns and villages across NSW.

Government Architect NSW in collaboration with the DPE, and the Greater Sydney Commission, will develop an urban design guide for metropolitan areas (including Greater Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong) to complement this guide. Issues relevant to Greater Newcastle and Wollongong and other emerging high-growth urban centres will be considered as part of the future metropolitan guide.

Better Placed

This guide builds on the objectives and values of Better Placed: An integrated design policy for the built environment of NSW (GANSW 2017). Critically, the guide provides a road map for local government decision-makers, development applicants and local communities to work towards addressing urban design priorities in their regions to ensure healthy built environments.

It describes processes to achieve good urban design, and how to assess built environment outcomes against the Better Placed objectives.

Other key documents supporting Better Placed

Greener Places (GANSW 2017) is a green infrastructure policy to guide the planning, design and delivery of green infrastructure in urban areas across NSW. Greener Places aims to create a healthier, more liveable and sustainable urban environment by improving community access to recreation and exercise, supporting walking and cycling connections and improving the resilience of urban areas.

Good Urban Design (GANSW 2018) is a draft Urban Design Guide that expands on Better Placed and Greener Places by advocating an integrated design approach. It outlines strategies to ensure a well-designed built environment and advances good design and amenity through evaluation, in accordance with the Better Placed design objectives.

Figure 1: NSW Regions
How this guide is structured
The guide is structured in three parts, plus an appendix:

- **Section 1: Supporting regional NSW**
  Explains the context for urban design in regional NSW, and outlines the purpose of the guide, and its intended audiences.

- **Section 2: Explaining urban design**
  Provides an overview of good urban design process, and the considerations for regional NSW in regard to the Better Placed objectives for the design of the built environment.

- **Section 3: Regional urban design priorities and project types**
  Outlines urban design priorities for regional NSW, as well as the factors driving change and the typical projects for urban design.

- **Appendix: Regional profiles**
  Presents snapshots of the nine NSW regions, including summaries of the key challenges and opportunities for the design of their built environments.

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Government Architect NSW acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land and pays respect to Elders past, present and future. We honour Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ unique cultural and spiritual relationships to place and their rich contribution to our society. To that end, all our work seeks to uphold the idea that if we care for Country, it will care for us.

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SUPPORTING
ONE REGIONAL NSW
1.1 The importance of regional NSW

Regional NSW has a strong sense of place and identity shaped by its people and history. Its vast and varied landscapes are home to many unique cities, towns and villages. Creating healthy built environments is important to the ongoing wellbeing of regional communities. It depends on good urban design and its integration with quality development, planning processes and practices.

This guide provides an opportunity to celebrate the unique places in regional NSW. These opportunities extend to encouraging healthy lifestyles, access to significant environmental areas, lower housing costs, and access to regional food sources. There is a strong connection between rural and urban land use – and the role each plays in supporting the other.

The landscape, activities on the land and in the towns, and the influence of climate are prominent features of most areas. Good urban design protects and enhances the unique natural and cultural assets of a place, which in turn can attract social and economic investment. Good design of the built environment provides people with safer, more sustainable and more attractive places to live and work that positively influence community identity and promote longer term health benefits.

This guide acknowledges that across NSW, Aboriginal people are the traditional owners of the land, and have an ongoing connection to this land. It acknowledges a strong belief among Aboriginal people that if we care for Country, it will care for us. This is supported by the knowledge that the health of a people and their community relies on a strong physical and emotional connection to place. Conserving Aboriginal heritage, and respecting the Aboriginal community’s right to determine how it is identified and managed, will preserve some of the world’s longest standing spiritual, historical, social, and educational values.

Regional NSW urban design opportunities
The Appendix to this guide provides an overview of each of the nine regions – including major challenges and opportunities for urban design, which cover a range of factors:

**Physical factors**
- including the built environment (human-made aspects of the environment, parks, roads, buildings, infrastructure, and utilities)
- including the natural environment (natural aspects of the environment, such as topography, landform, rivers, vegetation, ecosystems and climate).

**Social factors**
- including population and demographics, community services and needs, accessibility and mobility.

**Economic factors**
- including industries, business, employment, land use, and development which supports the economy.
What is urban design?
Our built environment is always a work in progress. It requires continual involvement from urban-minded disciplines. Urban design operates across and between architecture, landscape architecture, planning, and development to establish a shared vision to ensure a well-designed built environment. In GANSW’s **Good Urban Design**, the practice of urban design is described as a cohesive and connected understanding of strategic urban design and urban design actions.

**Strategic urban design** is the framing and solving of problems at a strategic level, intended to influence decision-making across design, planning, development, and government. It focuses on the social, environmental, and economic factors when developing a vision. **Urban design actions** are the understanding and articulation of regulatory or programmatic objectives, which a designer brings together in strategic and practical ways into a cohesive and collaborative approach.

The role of urban design is to translate public policy or programmatic objectives, planning, development, and the allocation of resources into a framework for other designers to work within. It is overarching but flexible, to allow for further design inputs to deliver high-quality built environments for individuals, organisations, and communities.

Urban designers are advocates for smart growth, drawing in additional skills and partners to cut across disciplines, boundaries, and agendas. The urban-minded designer must consider all aspects of design, planning, engineering, social policy, ecology, infrastructure, and landscape architecture. Urban design must be forward-looking by pairing vision with practicality to improve quality of life, public space, and places for people. There is demand for suburban growth management in regions of NSW as demographic and population numbers shift. Urban design is not limited to cities, it can be applied to suburban centres and regional towns.

Urban designers are people-centred and place-centred professionals, keepers of a community’s shared values, who advocate for the vitality, liveability, amenity, performance, and physical character of buildings, places, and spaces. People are central to urban design.
Better Placed sets out seven objectives to achieve in the design of the built environment:

**Better fit**
contextual, local and of its place

**Better performance**
sustainable, adaptable and durable

**Better for community**
inclusive, connected and diverse

**Better for people**
safe, comfortable and liveable

**Better working**
functional, efficient and fit for purpose

**Better value**
creating and adding value

**Better look and feel**
engaging, inviting and attractive

Better Placed advocates for a well-designed built environment. A well-designed built environment is a healthy built environment that is:

**Healthy** – for all members of our communities, promoting physical activity and walkable environments, social cohesion, and community safety and security to support people’s wellbeing.

**Responsive** – to the needs and aspirations of local people, now and in the future, inviting innovative use and habitation, interaction, productivity, and enjoyment.

**Integrated** – by drawing together the relationships between parts and elements, considering interfaces at multiple scales and working to common goals and aspirations.

**Equitable** – by presenting opportunities for all segments of our community so residents and visitors have access to and can move about freely between public domain, infrastructure, open space, and buildings.

**Resilient** – to the dynamic, challenging conditions of our time, to adapt and evolve while retaining essential qualities and values.

For more information see Better Placed: An integrated design policy for the built environment of NSW (GANSW 2017).

Urban design and the NSW planning system
The recent amendments to the NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act) included the object “to promote good design and amenity of the built environment”. Urban design plays an integral role in the NSW planning system to support the creation of high-quality built environments. Planning regulations and processes are designed to facilitate the orderly and economic use and development of land. These are coupled with urban design processes to ensure that land-use and infrastructure planning create the right framework to achieve design quality in the built environment.

How urban design process relates to Better Placed
Better Placed responds to key challenges and directions across NSW, including health, climate resilience, rapidly growing population, changing lifestyle and demographics, infrastructure and urban renewal and the need to regularly review major projects.

This guide looks at design in a regional context, and outlines how we can use the Better Placed values, principles and approaches – based on good design – to addresses issues which are specific to regional areas.

For more information see Better Placed: An integrated design policy for the built environment of NSW (GANSW 2017).
1.2 Purpose of this guide

This guide presents strategic advice on how we can work together to achieve good urban design in regional areas. It is for everyone involved in the design, planning, and development of the built environment in regional NSW to improve the delivery of better places.

The guide's aims are:

1. Foster better urban design methods through the objectives and processes of Better Placed
   While ‘place-based’ thinking and an integrated design approach are generally considered best practice, these methods are essential in addressing the urban design priorities for regional NSW.

A place-based approach will help enable regional cities, towns, and villages to identify, acknowledge and celebrate their own unique identities.

Similarly, taking an integrated design approach promotes interdisciplinary collaboration to achieve better design outcomes. The integration of urban design with planning practice fosters better consideration, coordination, visualisation and more certain resolution of the impacts of built form, materials, public space and functioning places.

2. Address the conditions that characterise regional NSW
   Regional NSW comprises a range of settlement types that are subject to specific development trends and issues as well as a greater interface with the natural environment. In addition, distance from larger centres mean specific social and economic challenges relating to jobs, housing, services, and facilities.

3. Promote well-designed and healthy built environments
   A well-designed built environment is a healthy built environment. Health outcomes are influenced at different stages of the strategic planning and design process and are a particular consideration for remote communities.

4. Create clear and workable guidelines for a broad range of users
   This guide provides practical advice for a range of groups. In particular, it is intended to help councils in developing urban design capacity to complement their strategic planning roles. It also provides advice on communicating urban design considerations to other stakeholders and communities.

5. Address the identified regional urban design priorities
   This guide specifically responds to trends and urban design priorities identified through engagement with councils. It acknowledges the breadth of regional NSW and the varied conditions that exist even within local government areas, and aims to help councils formulate and implement urban design strategies to address the priorities in the context of resource, funding, and implementation constraints.

6. Support and complement the regional plans
   The regional plans highlight a need to create healthy built environments and improve liveability in the cities, towns and villages of regional NSW. Research has highlighted the key issues facing these settlements (described in the regional profiles in the Appendix). This guide describes urban design techniques to address these issues in the context of the local conditions identified in the regional plans.
1.3 Who is involved?

The advice presented in this guide can be adopted by multiple user groups and audiences in NSW. It provides an opportunity to identify, through good design process, how to address the major issues affecting health and liveability within cities, towns, and villages.

This guide provides support to these multiple users, by explaining the processes and steps required for good design outcomes. Intended users are:

**Local government**

To assist in guiding and assessing projects:
- building the case for better design
- expanding knowledge, capacity building, and design literacy
- informing the process for local government-procured projects in regional areas
- supporting assessment of project outputs (proposals)
- guiding discussion with applicants for development approval
- to assist in developing or adapting development control plans
- informing improvements to particular controls, which will influence good built form and the quality of the outcomes for the public domain.

**State government**

To reinforce the importance and value of design rigour and good process, and the importance of visionary leadership to facilitate the right outcomes for the built environment:
- expanding the role of strong stewardship in the delivery of healthy, well-designed built environments
- building the case for better design
- expanding knowledge and design literacy
- explaining what good design outcomes look like and how they might be measured
- providing a resource for explaining the merits and potentials of major project proposals
- supporting the design review process and reinforcing its value.

**The public – individuals and communities**

To involve, engage and interest more people, build awareness and promote the importance of good design:
- informing discussion and debate by providing evidence of good practice and appropriate standards of quality
- explaining what good design is and how it is made obvious in the built environment
- demonstrating and reinforcing why good design is important and valuable in the built environment
- educating the public about design process and outputs by building on Better Placed
- providing a resource to inform thinking about significant proposals
- allowing those interested to delve further into design process and expected outcomes.

**Design practitioners**

To explain and demonstrate effective, comprehensive, design processes:
- describing good outcomes without being specific or detailed
- supporting client communications about process, rigour, expectations, and outcomes
- supporting discussion and negotiation with authorities, clients, developers, builders, owner-builders, and home owners
- to clearly articulate expectations and requirements for process and outcomes, for all project types and scales
- raising standards of projects generally
- explaining the benefits and value of good design
- explaining the need for, and value of a comprehensive process
- reinforcing the sense of responsibility to the wider built environment
- establishing that all projects contribute and are important in the built environment
- supporting practitioners in regional NSW.
1.4 Understanding urban design priorities for regional NSW

A diverse range of factors influence the built environment of cities, towns, and villages across regional NSW. These include different geographic conditions, climate, topography and socio-economic factors.

Engagement with councils across regional NSW has identified seven urban design priorities for creating well-designed built environments.

These are:

1. Leveraging the historic and cultural assets of places
2. Integrating with the natural environment and landscape
3. Revitalising main streets and regional town centres
4. Improving connectivity, walkability, and cycling
5. Balancing urban growth
6. Increasing options for diverse and healthy living
7. Responding to climate impacts.

These priorities need to be addressed through implementing good design at all levels, from regional and local policies, programs and strategies, to local development approval processes and community consultation.

In regional NSW there are four typical project types where these priorities can be addressed through urban design processes:

1. Public realm and open spaces
2. Town centres and main streets
3. Infill development in existing neighbourhoods

This guide provides advice on how to achieve the best outcomes when undertaking projects in these four areas.
EXPLAINING
2.1 The importance of good design process

Better processes, better outcomes

Design is a process and an outcome; a way of thinking that results in the making of places.

Well-designed built environments are the outcome of good design process. Iterative, exploratory, and collaborative design processes should be grounded in research and analysis and framed by a carefully considered brief.

Design draws together many fields of expertise. It integrates different types of knowledge and synthesises multiple, often competing requirements into a coherent and engaging outcome that meets the needs of many and diverse groups.

An urban design process will involve exploring a range of options and testing scenarios. This testing ensures the ultimate objectives for the project are met. It may incorporate multiple layers of feedback from experts, along with consultation with community groups and end users.

For regional NSW, good urban design processes can lead to good urban design outcomes that enhance the identity of a place, meet technical and legislative requirements and respond to a community’s needs and aspirations. Urban designers provide distinct design strategies, plans, and actions, which are imperative to renew, construct, restore or preserve cities, towns, villages of differing configurations, scales, and locations.

The urban design team may include or draw on many different built environment professionals and specialist consultants – including architects, landscape architects, urban designers, planners and engineers. All relevant disciplines to a project should be involved from the start of the design process in order to identify and overcome challenges and create new opportunities for places through collaboration.
2.2 Better Placed objectives

Better Placed identifies seven objectives that encompass the key considerations for good design outcomes.

Achieving these will ensure that our cities and towns, our landscapes, our buildings and our public domain in regional NSW are healthy, responsive, equitable, integrated and resilient.

This guide details the seven objectives in relation to urban design, and the key urban design priorities for regional NSW. These objectives form an important framework for understanding the value that urban design and good places bring to communities. They are also important when undertaking urban design work as a built environment professional for a developer or landowner, and equally important for councils when assessing the urban design merits of projects in the planning system.

Design objectives for NSW

Seven objectives define the key considerations in the design of the built environment.

- Better fit
  contextual, local and of its place

- Better performance
  sustainable, adaptable and durable

- Better for community
  inclusive, connected and diverse

- Better for people
  safe, comfortable and liveable

- Better working
  functional, efficient and fit for purpose

- Better value
  creating and adding value

- Better look and feel
  engaging, inviting and attractive
OBJECTIVE 1.

Better fit
contextual, local and of its place

The diverse landscapes and cultures of regional NSW underpin the character and identity of a rich variety of places.

Celebrating existing cultural and natural assets
Culture and landscape are fundamental to shaping regional places and are intrinsically linked with memory, meaning, and identity. Good urban design will identify important regional assets, of both Aboriginal and European heritage, and create proposals which draw on their valued attributes and enhance their contexts. For example, this might include the adaptive re-use of a heritage building for a new public use or connecting a town’s public space to a locally significant landscape feature.

Responding to grain, scale, and form
Urban grain, scale, and form are important physical attributes that influence a place’s character and the experience of the public domain at street level. Regional towns and cities often have a distinct urban form and grain along their older main streets that differs from newer residential areas. New development should respond sympathetically to the valued characteristics of an area through good urban design. This includes relating to the predominant scale, height, density, and grain, and ensuring important views and vistas are maintained, such as to important civic buildings or distant hills.

Using good siting, configuration, and landscape
How buildings and open space are arranged has an influence on the character of an area. Important considerations for siting buildings include setbacks and how these relate to the street and adjoining buildings, maintaining view corridors, and incorporating natural features such as mature trees, stands of native vegetation and local waterways.

OBJECTIVE 2.

Better performance
sustainable, adaptable and durable

A well-designed built environment ensures that both current and successive communities are able to enjoy living in a place which is sustainable and resilient.

Responding to the regional environment
Regional places are susceptible to changing environmental conditions that can have an impact on their social and economic performance. Urban design in regional NSW communities needs to create a resilient built environment that enables places to adapt to change.

Enhancing performance
New development needs to be built to perform efficiently over time. The public domain should be designed and constructed in a way to ensure longevity of use by many people for different applications. Using quality, durable materials in high-traffic areas, incorporating water sensitive urban design, and deciduous trees to provide shade and sun in different seasons, are ways to improve the environmental performance of urban areas.

Using land efficiently and carefully
Balancing land use for primary production alongside the provision of housing, open space and infrastructure to support regional communities in urban centres is crucial to their sustainable performance in the long term. Alternatives to greenfield development include development in infill areas where ageing building stock could be renewed and new housing introduced that complements local character.

Adapting new technology
New technologies are improving building materials, methods and systems. Integrating these into new development can enhance the long-term performance of the built environment in changing regional conditions.
OBJECTIVE 3.

Better for community
inclusive, connected and diverse

Good urban design brings people together and supports thriving communities. The public domain is the setting for civic life and so its design needs to provide for, and welcome all people.

Attracting people
Main streets and other key public spaces in a regional city or town have a key role in attracting locals, visitors and tourists through their distinct urban characters, functions and uses. This in turn benefits local businesses that supply important goods and services to the local community.

Places for social exchange
Communities change, grow, and evolve over time. The creation of a variety of well-designed public spaces for people to come together is vital to successful communities. In regional areas, where there are long distances between places, this becomes even more important to reduce social isolation. Both large and small public places have their role in fostering social exchange and cohesion - town squares that can hold markets and events, or wide sidewalks that allow for outdoor dining, or benches to just sit and rest.

Working with communities
Communities understand and know their places intimately – the areas that don’t work so well, and the areas where there are aspirations to improve the built environment. Involving communities in the urban design process is crucial to the future success of regional places. Enabling local groups to contribute their vision for a place, knowledge and feedback, supports building stewardship of the built environment.

OBJECTIVE 4.

Better for people
safe, comfortable and liveable

Urban design at all project scales shapes the safety, comfort and liveability of the built environment where people live, work and play.

Feeling at ease
The design of the built environment influences personal safety and comfort, and allows people to move about to undertake their daily lives with ease. Integrating passive security measures improves safety such as active uses along street frontages for different times of day – this could include shopfronts facing public spaces or homes with living spaces or kitchens overlooking the street. Providing for thermal comfort and weather protection is also critical in the urban design of our streets, parks, gardens, squares, and other public spaces.

Healthy and liveable neighbourhoods
A well-designed neighbourhood should support the health and lifestyle of people of all ages. Incorporating the right balance of housing types, open space and services assists achieving good levels of liveability. This means using urban design to create places that encourage physical activity as well as passive recreation, such as tree-lined streets, beautiful parks and homes with access to private and communal open space to enjoy a summer dinner, relax outdoors or have a vegetable garden.

Optimise the interface with the natural environment
The setting of regional cities, towns and villages has significant interface with surrounding natural landscapes. This can include areas of bushland, desert regions and waterways. Green infrastructure such as park systems and creek corridors have a key role in integrating and connecting urban settlement with these areas.
OBJECTIVE 5.

Better working
functional, efficient and fit for purpose

Good urban design process will ensure that design outcomes are functional and fit for purpose. This includes designating uses that are appropriate for a place, and ensuring detailed design responds to needs of people and communities.

Form and functionality
The function and use of a site, whether it be part of the public domain or private developable land, should generate formal design outcomes that are fit for purpose. Elements such as landscape, heritage buildings, or solar access, all have an influence on design decisions. The resulting built and urban form should reflect these considerations.

Economies of scale
The process of master planning urban projects brings economies of scale that can improve efficiencies in the detailed design and physical realisation of a project. A coordinated design process that brings together all stakeholders and the right experts can be advantageous for final outcomes in a number of ways. For example, thoughtful configuration of site access points, servicing arrangements, or locations of public open space can improve the viability of a project, and enable the efficient use of land.

Design robustness
A good design process will ensure the urban outcome can withstand its function for the life of the development – whether it be public open space, new housing or the adaption of a heritage building. High quality materials and craftsmanship are important to ensure robustness.

OBJECTIVE 6.

Better value
creating and adding value

Value should be considered in terms of social and environmental benefits, not just economic return on investment. The way a community values an urban project is a good indicator of its success. Projects that bring value can have a significant flow-on impact on other aspects of places and communities.

Community benefits
Good design can bring many benefits to communities – social, environmental and economic. For example, the renewal of existing unused open space could create a new park, or the renewal of an ageing building could introduce a new use that reignites interest in the area.

Holistic integration
Designing for the holistic integration of all the core elements which make up urban environments can strengthen and add long-term value to a project. Depending on the project, considering the integration of streets, parks, squares, housing, interfaces with the private domain, connections to services and other land uses can generate a comprehensive design response that increases overall success. This approach can be taken to the smallest of projects such as an amenities block within a park, or the upgrade of an old shopping arcade linking a high street to a rear lane.
OBJECTIVE 7.

Better look and feel engaging, inviting and attractive

The interface between the public and private domain needs to be visually appealing and function well to provide for the health and liveability of communities. Urban design has an important role in creating built environments that inspire and lift the spirit, engage the senses, and stimulate the imagination.

Spatial quality
Good spatial quality can be achieved through the careful design of built form and open space that considers the physical and sensory experience of users. The design of a place can respond to sunlight at certain times of the day, create a sense of openness to the sky, and shape the pedestrian experience at street level by setting the scale of buildings in relation to the width of the street.

Material and detail
Materials used within the public realm should be high quality and fit for purpose. Details and finishes should be true to their materials, providing richness and tactility, inviting different uses and interactions.

Places to enjoy
Places with an attractive look and feel, invite people to stop by and enjoy them - whether by a river, in a town square or at a regional park. Good urban design and planning makes provision for these places and realises their physical potential through quality materials, landscaping and amenities.
2.3 Better process for urban design

Good design outcomes rely on an effective, tailored, participatory and timely process, which integrates all relevant inputs, considerations and perspectives on the design challenges and opportunities.

This section builds on the Design Process outlined in GANSW’s guide on Implementing Good Design, by expanding the considerations, actions and approaches that contribute to better processes and outcomes, particular to urban design.

This section identifies the key steps to achieve good urban design outcomes.

1. Understanding the site – through detailed site visits to document site character and to observe how it operates particularly in its broader context.

2. Review all the background material – that has previously been done to date on the area or site – understand the basis for previous work and identify where there are gaps.

3. Involve community and stakeholders early – to understand key issues or opportunities which will assist in informing vision and subsequent decisions.

4. Understanding the problem – clearly identify the problem, whether it be driven by a range of social, economic or environmental factors and articulate the ‘case for change’. Then identify who needs to be involved – determine the range of inter-disciplinary skills required to respond to the problem.

5. Understand key challenges and opportunities – undertake detailed analysis work through mapping, graphics and engagement with stakeholders to clearly understand the design and delivery challenges, and the opportunities.

6. Develop a strong vision and objectives – which set the base starting point for the project.

7. Develop an initial concept and supporting principles – a clear design intent or concept illustrates the key urban decisions that will support the vision and its potential.
CREATE

1. **Development of the concept ideas which look at different ways of coming at the problem** – to create innovative and inspiring responses to place.

2. **Develop scenarios or options** – which consider different ways of being able to achieve the vision and concept.

3. **Develop evaluation tools at the outset** – developing scenarios or options should be coupled with a rigorous system for evaluating and comparing options, involving stakeholders and local communities. The evaluation should be a combination of quantitative and qualitative review, but should allow consistent and reliable application to all options. The evaluation of options and scenarios should occur against economic, social and environmental objectives of the project and the overarching vision.

   Repeating evaluation as the urban design is refined provides a strong framework for effective design resolution.

4. **Utilise Design Review Processes** – independent design review is integral to inform assessment of projects, survey opinions and test solutions. Review panels should involve a range of stakeholders including residents and local business.

DELIVER

1. **Staging** – understand the realm of time and how this affects the delivery of the proposal.

   Ensure that the staging keeps the vision intact and strong, and is flexible for changes over time – whether they be economically (market) driven or technically driven.

2. **Approach investment from a whole-of-life perspective** – developing design ideas is naturally affected by cost and other technical constraints, but the focus on cost in the early design stages should be considered in the context of long-term value and benefit.

   While different development types and procurement models provide varying potential for this, the design process should prioritise and seek long-term value, rather than short-term cost savings.

   A holistic approach to cost analysis, coupled with highly skilled design thinking, results in continual value creation and cost savings throughout the life of a development. A design process committed to a long view of a development’s performance will focus on designing for reduced energy/resources demand, lower maintenance costs, and increased flexibility and adaptability of use to meet changing needs.

3. **Design the procurement methodology for the project** – the procurement strategy and process should invite innovation while seeking to ensure quality and durability of the outcomes.

   The process of design, engagement of specialists, transition to delivery/construction, and ongoing management, can significantly influence the outcomes. Contemporary procurement strategies seek to engage new ideas and approaches, delivering greater openness and transparency, and creating wider opportunities for participation.

4. **Undertake post-occupancy evaluation of projects** – evaluating and understanding how a space is used and occupied, and how it functions and performs, is an important part of urban design capability and learning from experience, to inform future design processes. Such evaluation can also inform possible future configurations and use of a building.
REGIONAL URBAN DESIGN PRIORITIES
THREE

AND

PROJECT TYPES
3.1 Seven urban design priorities for regional NSW

This section of the guide discusses the seven regional urban design priorities in detail. Understanding what is important in undertaking urban design is crucial to ensure good outcomes and that projects respond to community needs.

1. Leveraging the historic and cultural assets of places
2. Integrating with the natural environment and landscape
3. Revitalising main streets and regional town centres
4. Improving connectivity, walkability, and cycling
5. Balancing urban growth
6. Increasing options for diverse and healthy living
7. Responding to climate impacts.

Four typical projects for urban design:
1. Public realm and open space
2. Town centres and main streets
3. Infill development in existing neighbourhoods
4. Greenfield development in new neighbourhoods
### 3.2 Key regional trends

Key trends presented in the table below have emerged from the nine regional profiles and engagement with councils. The trends point toward seven urban design priorities for regional NSW – which are the basis for the guidance in this part of the document.

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<td>1. Leveraging the historic and cultural assets of places</td>
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<td>natural assets and local materials that could be used to enhance character</td>
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<td><strong>Development interfacing with native landscapes</strong></td>
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<td>opportunity to use street tree plantings to enhance green corridors for biodiversity and recreation</td>
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<td><strong>Fluctuating social and economic activity in regional centres</strong></td>
<td>3. Revitalising main streets and town centres</td>
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<td>competition for main street activity from new out-of-centre development</td>
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<td>highways bypassing town centres in some locations</td>
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<tr>
<td>opportunity to provide attractive places and spaces for community events and gatherings</td>
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<tr>
<td>potential for economic development initiatives to focus on unique or locally distinctive assets</td>
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<td><strong>High levels of car dependence</strong></td>
<td>4. Improving connectivity, walkability, and cycling</td>
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<tr>
<td>opportunity to enhance conditions for walking and cycling through improved and direct paths and routes</td>
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<td>potential for improved connections between town centres and surrounding suburbs</td>
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<td>future-proofing new urban areas for public transport services through street design and connectivity with existing neighbourhoods</td>
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### Seven Urban Design Priorities for Regional NSW

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<th>Key Trends in Regional NSW</th>
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<td>market pressure for greenfield development on urban fringes</td>
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<td>impacts of greenfield development on rural land and native landscapes</td>
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<td>challenges in funding infrastructure and services for new urban areas</td>
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<td>responding to community expectations for design quality of infill development</td>
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<td><strong>Population and demographic changes</strong></td>
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<td>fluctuating populations (driven by a range of factors such as seasonal employment opportunities and tourism)</td>
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<tr>
<td>reduced average household sizes</td>
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<td>seasonal traffic congestion and pressure on public facilities such as beachside open space/facilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>more housing choices to meet diverse households and changing population needs</td>
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<td>well-located social housing with access to services</td>
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<td><strong>Climate change, increasing temperature extremes and natural hazard risks</strong></td>
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<td>poorly located and oriented buildings</td>
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<td>managing energy costs for heating and cooling</td>
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<td>urban heat island effects</td>
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<td>natural hazard risks – bushfire, flooding, drought, coastal erosion, snow and ice</td>
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1
Leveraging the historic and cultural assets of places

The built environment of regional NSW is strongly defined by historic assets of European cultural heritage; however, these were preceded by places and landscapes tied to Aboriginal culture. History is a shared story that plays out across regional cities, towns, and villages. Acknowledging and caring for the assets that represent the culture of communities helps to define places and contribute to their identity.

Urban design can enhance the presentation of these assets, and incorporate them into the changing built environment in meaningful, respectful, and useful ways. This means they can be preserved for future generations and remain part of the public realm.

BENEFITS

Leveraging the historic and cultural assets of places through effective urban design brings a range of benefits:

- enhances the sense of place, identity, unique characteristics and defining qualities of towns and urban areas
- encourages increased economic activity by creating distinct and attractive places for businesses to trade and invest
- encourages increased tourism activity by creating distinct and attractive places for people to visit
- reinforces local identity and belonging by preserving assets of shared meaning and value - this in turn provides people and communities with sources of civic pride that inspire the continued care and protection of these assets
- improves the value of the building or space and the overall place
- allows future generations to be able to learn and benefit from significant buildings or spaces, their history and importance
- strengthens connections to place, which supports a sense of community.
2 Integrating with the natural environment and landscape

Daily experiences with rural and native landscapes are a unique aspect of life in many areas of the State. Regional cities, towns, and villages interface more directly with the natural environment, and this requires careful planning and design to integrate urban development sustainably and attractively.

Engaging with natural environment elements in and around regional urban areas can provide multiple ecosystem benefits. It can enhance biodiversity in native flora and fauna populations, as well as enhancing the lived experience through tree-lined streets, better access to green open spaces, waterways and unique landscape elements.

BENEFITS

Integrating with the natural environment through effective urban design brings a range of benefits:

- Creates interconnected networks of open space such as creek corridors and park systems that provide amenity for local residents and visitors – these create expanded opportunities for walking and social activities to support people’s health and wellbeing
- Mitigates climate impacts and temperature extremes through extensive vegetation in urban areas for shade and cooling
- Enhances regional centres with attractive and amenable streets and public spaces through considered design and selection of landscaping and vegetation
- Supports local plant species which are particular to a regional area, to support and protect local flora, fauna, increasing urban biodiversity and also strengthen a place’s natural identity
- Improves water and air quality by expanding green infrastructure
- Improves the quality and increases the value of the public realm
- Strengthens and reinforces the environmental, economic and social value of regional environmental elements such as bushland, rainforests, mountains, deserts, rivers or lakes.
3

Revitalising main streets and regional town centres

Main streets and town centres are the heart of many regional communities. They typically contain the biggest concentration of public and commercial facilities including places for people to regularly socialise. They also host major events, parades and festivals which celebrate the culture of an area and generate investment.

Good urban design practice leads and coordinates improvements to the public domain and main street areas. This can improve the attractiveness of town centres, and enable them to better accommodate public events and celebrations. Improvements can boost the vibrancy of main streets to make them places where locals and visitors want to spend more time, and where businesses want to invest.

BENEFITS

Revitalising main streets and regional town centres through effective urban design brings a range of benefits:

- makes towns more inviting, vibrant and interesting, which attracts people to visit and live in the area
- creates new or improved places for people and communities to gather, meet and interact that are safe, enjoyable and equitable
- encourages walking to get to, and around, the town centre, which reduces car dependence
- creates a more diverse mix of uses and activities meeting the needs of locals and visitors
- attracts businesses and visitation through improved building and shopfront presentation which boosts economic activity
- leverages natural, historic and cultural assets, to reinforce the character of town centres
- supports new development, employment, business opportunities and prosperity by concentrating density and commercial activity.
Improving connectivity, walkability, and cycling

In practical terms, private cars will continue to be the dominant form of transport in many regional areas. However, there are opportunities to reduce car dependency near urban centres through good urban design, planning, and better public transport connections.

Urban development which is compact and well-connected rather than dispersed, reduces distances and is better suited to walking and cycling. These alternative forms of transport provide health benefits by encouraging people to be active. They also help to make places feel safer through “passive surveillance”, due to pedestrians and cyclists using streets and public spaces.

Extending streets from existing neighbourhoods, to connect with streets in new urban areas, makes it easier to move around by foot, bicycle, public transport or car.

**BENEFITS**

Improving connectivity, walkability and cycling through effective urban design brings a range of benefits:

- Facilitates increased activity and improved community health, including physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- Encourages walking which increases pedestrian traffic in town centres which improves local business exposure and reduces car dependency.
- Creates more walkable blocks within a regional city or town.
- Creates more sustainable development and reduces environmental impacts.
- Facilitates social interaction and activity, which strengthens community cohesion.
- Reduces traffic congestion, car parking demand and air pollution.
- Makes streets and spaces feel more vibrant, interesting, and safe, by having more people present.
Balancing urban growth

Urban design and strategic planning sustainably balances the consolidation and distribution of new development. In regional areas, there is typically pressure for new development to occur at larger scales on greenfield sites outside town centres. However, the long-term impacts of dispersed, and sometimes isolated fringe development, have both high economic and social costs.

Good urban design creates holistic new neighbourhoods that include appropriate facilities and services to support residents and businesses. It also identifies opportunities for infill development closer to existing town centres that uses established facilities and services, supporting local economies.

BENEFITS

Balancing urban growth through effective urban design brings a range of benefits:

- Balances development to locate density appropriately across different urban settings, considering sensitivities of heritage areas, environmental areas or other influencing factors.
- Provides new dwellings within a city or town centre where there are opportunities which do not compromise local values towards heritage and place.
- Reduces car dependence and increases urban mobility through people living closer to town centres and in more walkable neighbourhoods.
- Boosts main streets and regional town centres, through urban consolidation and increased local population living in close proximity.
- Protects productive agricultural land around cities and towns – including for local food options.
- Protects biodiversity and mitigates natural hazards by keeping urban development to a compact form and area rather than dispersed across the rural landscape.
- Increases housing choice through mixed development types in both existing neighbourhoods and greenfield settings.
6
Increasing options for diverse and healthy living

Changing populations and demographics in regional NSW require predominant housing forms and densities to be rethought and supplemented by other options. In particular, the ageing population in regional areas means that urban design and planning must allow for the needs of the elderly across most cities, towns, and villages. Proximity to essential services and a well-designed public domain make places attractive to live for both young and old.

Some communities are experiencing high rates of population growth and areas with seasonal job and recreational opportunities see temporary influxes of people. Increasing housing choice in regional areas by tuning density and mix, can help provide the right level of amenity for people’s differing lifestyle needs to ensure ongoing health and well-being.

**BENEFITS**

Increasing options for diverse and healthy living through effective urban design brings a range of benefits:

- creates built environments which are more diverse, varied, and vibrant
- attracts new residents through increasing housing choices and types, which can respond to varying needs and reinforce community stability
- retains local populations and allows households to evolve and adapt over time in the same town, for example young people moving from the family home to a smaller home
- ensures sustained health of the environment, the economy, people, and communities.
Responding to climate impacts

The varied climate zones, landscapes, and topographies across NSW generate different weather and temperature conditions that impact urban settlements. Climate change is creating less predictable weather patterns, extreme temperatures, and natural hazards such as bushfires, drought, and flooding.

Urban design and planning of new development can mitigate some of these risks and create more comfortable environments. Integrating urban design with stormwater, roads, streets, parks, and open spaces has the potential to generate innovative multi-functional solutions to manage the impacts of extreme weather events while positively contributing to the appearance and function of a local area. Well-orientated development with the right setbacks, materials, and exterior openings, provides the right level of sun exposure, saves energy and is good for the environment.

**Benefits**

Responding to climate impacts through effective urban design brings a range of benefits:

- Improves amenity, health, and safety for communities in the public realm, in extreme conditions.
- Responds to and celebrates an area’s predominant climate, for example a semi-tropical climate, or hot arid climate.
- Mitigates risk and protects against natural hazards, such as flooding and extreme heat, to create safer, resilient towns and stable property values.
- Reduces a development’s environmental footprint through more compact urban development.
- Reduces energy costs by integrating passive environmental design features.
3.3 Four typical projects for urban design

The seven urban design priorities for regional NSW will typically be applied to four types of projects. These are:

1. Public realm and open space
2. Town centres and main streets
3. Infill development in existing neighbourhoods
4. Greenfield development in new neighbourhoods
1
Public realm and open space

The public realm is the most important place to apply urban design. It needs to be designed to facilitate civic pride, social cohesion, a sense of community, and support peoples’ health and wellbeing. As part of the public realm, open space is an important element in regional NSW and a defining characteristic of most local areas. Well designed and landscaped parks and gardens can reflect the local character and climate.

URBAN DESIGN GUIDANCE FOR PUBLIC REALM AND OPEN SPACE

Leveraging the historic and cultural assets of places

Preserve and improve assets of shared meaning and value to enhance the public realm, sense of place and defining qualities of towns and urban areas:

— Retain and reuse existing buildings of historic or community value to improve their appearance and function. This can prompt further improvements, inject new uses and increase economic activity by creating distinct and attractive places for businesses to trade and invest in. This can also provide communities with sources of civic pride that inspire the continued care and protection of these assets.

— Design new open spaces or enhance existing open spaces with consideration of the existing historic or cultural assets – both built or landscape assets, which may be located within the vicinity.

— Investigate ways in which a space might provide a curtilage or the setting to a significant heritage asset.

Integrating with the natural environment and landscape

Design the public realm to connect with surrounding natural features such as prominent topography, water bodies and native landscapes:

— Facilitate physical and visual linkages to key landscape features and landmarks.

— Establish active edges to development facing landscape areas or features, to enhance visual permeability and safety.

— Align urban development and built form to the topography and landscape form.

Embed green infrastructure as a network within new and existing public open spaces:

— Create and enhance streets by planting street trees and integrating other forms of vegetation and landscaping into the street design.

— Designate creeks and waterways as open space assets and biodiversity corridors for enhancement and protection.

— Establish new or revitalised green connections between new and existing open spaces to form continuous networks.

— Ensure that new public realm and open space opportunities can form part of a wider ecological framework connecting with surrounding regional landscapes, national parks and river systems.

— Integrate existing natural features such as bushland and waterways into new public domain proposals, with a strong connection to the natural identity of the place.

Design public open spaces and streetscapes to support biodiversity:

— Incorporate extensive vegetation and natural landscape spaces.

— Ensure adequate size and continuity of open spaces to support and protect biodiversity.

Revitalising main streets and regional town centres

Enhance existing public spaces, such as existing squares, or parks to strengthen the success of the public realm:

— Use space which may be under-utilised to form new areas of public domain, such as carparks, vacant blocks, laneways.

— Integrate commercial and retail uses to interface with the public realm.

— Design public spaces in town centres to cater for a range of uses including events, celebrations and fresh food markets.
Improving connectivity, walkability and cycling

Improve streetscape amenity to encourage walking and cycling:
— Establish or improve pavements and cycling paths through centres or suburbs.
— Increase street trees, lighting, shade and other infrastructure which creates desirable walking conditions.
— Create new or enhanced street links, laneways or through-block connections to improve accessibility between main streets and beyond.
— Integrate new pedestrian crossings at key points to improve walking connectivity between local destinations within a city or town.
— Design the public realm for people of all abilities by aiming to reduce steps and steep gradients. In areas where steep topography is a prevailing characteristic of the place, investigate opportunities to integrate level access through lift access or ramps.
— Integrate walking and cycling routes with existing parks, bushland and river corridors to facilitate a connected network of open spaces.
— Investigate opportunities to transfer excess road space over to cycling and walking uses instead of cars.
— Locate walking and cycling paths close to each other to improve natural surveillance and safety.

Locate community infrastructure to encourage walkable access:
— Establish community nodes or hubs located centrally in towns or neighbourhoods to provide space for local and out of town residents to gather.

Balancing urban growth

Provide sufficient open space to cater for current and future populations:
— Refer to Greener Places for specific guidance to determine the quantity, quality and uses of open space.

Increasing options for diverse and healthy living

Design open space and park improvements to meet the needs of local communities:
— Provide areas for both active recreation, such as active cycle paths or skate parks, and passive recreation such as areas to sit and read to cater for intergenerational needs and for people of all abilities.
— Design sporting facilities to be multi-purpose, to cater for a range of activities.

Improve safety and accessibility:
— Ensure there are active frontages around the perimeter of parks for passive surveillance.
— Select and position landscape to maintain visibility through and within parks.
— Locate lighting in the public realm and open space to improve safety at night.

Responding to climate impacts

Apply environmentally sustainable design principles to manage temperature extremes in the public realm:
— Use trees, low-level planting, shade devices and water features, as well as appropriate materials, for shade and natural cooling to reduce heat gain in the public realm.
— Ensure building setbacks and heights allow for appropriate solar access and shading of the public domain.
— Provide continuous shade canopies along main streets and in town centres.
— Integrate landscape and built structures to provide shade and comfort to play areas and other open spaces, including seating and picnic facilities.

Design a resilient public realm:
— Use materials that are durable and resilient to minimise the need for ongoing maintenance and replacement.
— Integrate water sensitive urban design elements to improve water management, including the possibility of flooding through the public realm.
— Design new public squares, parks and gardens to respond to the local climate context, for example if located in or near coastal areas, to take advantage of prevailing breezes, or if located inland to respond to extensive heat.
PUBLIC REALM AND OPEN SPACE

Process

DISCOVER

Understand how the public realm and areas of open space are being used in the local area:
— Who is using the space?
— What is the space being used for?
— Does the use of the space change according to the time of day or day of week?
— What is the current condition of the built and natural elements within the space?
— Is the space fit for its intended purpose – do the existing components and materials perform in terms of durability and aesthetics?

Review background planning information.
Relevant documents may include higher level strategic planning directions relating to the design or use of public space such as the area’s Regional Plan and Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS).

The council’s Local Environmental Plan (LEP) will contain controls which may apply to the design and use of public space such as land-use zoning, building heights and heritage listed items.

The council’s Development Control Plan (DCP) may contain more detailed controls applicable to the project which ensure the design quality meets the aspiration of the area.

The council may also have local strategies with implications for the design of the public realm – such as for open space, recreation, public domain, cycling, local traffic management and park management.

Involving local community and stakeholders early.
— Engage with the community and stakeholders to understand their priorities, and integrate their aspirations into projects early.

Understand the problem, and related challenges and opportunities.
— Is the public realm and open space adequately meeting the needs identified in the background information?
— Are the current community needs being provided for – these could be verified through a public consultation process or survey?
— Are there opportunities to improve the function of the space – to make it work better, or for a broader range of activities?
— Are there local conditions that affect how the space needs to be designed – such as temperature, seasonal variations in use, the needs of locals versus tourists and visitors?
— Identify the most appropriate urban design tools to respond to the specific problem.

Create

Develop a strong vision and objectives.
— Use all the information gathered to develop a strong overarching vision and objectives.

Investigate the unique qualities of the place and explore how these can be enhanced.

Develop different options for ways to improve the design of the public realm and open space.
— Examine different options with regard to the function of the space, the likely cost, and the time required to make changes.
— Can the design of the public realm and open space be used to complement related objectives of the council – such as economic development, environmental management, heritage conservation?
— Identify the different elements that require attention: paved surfaces; landscaping; ovals and playing fields; seating and outdoor furniture; lighting; amenities such as toilets.
— The development and testing of design options for the public realm and open space is unlikely to require planning studies or changes to planning controls.

Develop the project proposal using the most appropriate tools for creating the design outcome, for example a masterplan or urban design framework.

Refer to GANSW Advisory Notes:
Overview master planning process
Master plans
Strategic Frameworks
Urban Design Frameworks
Implementation Plans

Refer to GANSW Policies and Manuals:
Greener Places
Good Urban Design.

Deliver

Identify and secure funding sources.
— Funding may need to come from a range of sources, and could be over an extended period of time.

Develop a program of works – including staging.
— Proposed works to improve the public realm and open space may be exempt development, meaning that no planning approval is required.
— Alternatively, more substantial proposed works may require approval by way of a complying development certificate, or development application.
The upgrade of a much loved boat harbour and waterfront in Tweed Heads by Aspect Studios has created a multi-functional civic park and designed landscape. A part of the design integrates existing trees with a new timber decked area that provides a shaded place to sit overlooking the beach. Image: Simon Wood.

Albury Council’s Murray River Experience master plan connects a series of river landscapes, parks, playgrounds, public artworks and amenities along Albury’s interface with the iconic Murray River. A community wood fired oven at Hovell Tree Park is one of many delights town visitors and residents can enjoy along this extensive green infrastructure network. Image: Simon Dallinger.

The design of Orange Regional Museum by Crone Architects includes outdoor stepped seating that can be used as an amphitheatre to watch events and performances or as a place to sit and enjoy the sun. Image: Troy Pearson.
Town centres and main streets across NSW have historically played a major role in creating a sense of place. They typically perform a range of functions – as a major concentration of shops and services, the primary location of civic buildings and facilities, an important place for public events and gatherings, and a focus point for local and regional transport services. Urban design can help to facilitate these different roles to create town centres and main streets which are vibrant places for locals and visitors.

**URBAN DESIGN GUIDANCE FOR TOWN CENTRES AND MAIN STREETS**

**Leveraging the historic and cultural assets of places**

**Enhance the value of historic and character buildings:**
- Retain and restore historic buildings, landscapes, public spaces and elements of local value, incorporating them in new development to maintain their visibility and prominence.
- Reuse historic buildings by adapting them for new purposes, especially when they are underused. Adaptive re-use opportunities have the potential to integrate uses which may be complementary to other uses within the city or town.
- Create interpretive opportunities to encourage people to engage with local cultural heritage.
- Acknowledge and respect Aboriginal heritage and culture by integrating or preserving sites of significance.

**Ensure that new development is sensitive to the local immediate context of an established main street or town centre:**
- Respond with building heights, setbacks and footprints which are appropriate to neighbouring historic and cultural assets and their development patterns.
- Propose uses which are complementary to adjoining uses of historic or cultural value.

**Integrating with the natural environment and landscape**

**Relate main streets and town centres to surrounding natural features:**
- Facilitate physical and visual linkages to landscape features such as prominent topography, water bodies and native vegetation.
- Open-up areas of a town centre or a main street to a natural asset such as a river or bushland to increase access and enjoyment through new access points and walkable connections.
- Use local species of trees to foster a local streetscape character.

**Continue green infrastructure networks through main streets and town centres to improve urban amenity, build local character and support biodiversity:**
- Plant street trees and integrate other forms of landscaping into the street design to create continuous green connections between open spaces to outer areas. This could include connecting with established street tree corridors and wind-breaks that define entry into towns.
- Ensure adequate size and continuity of open spaces and landscaping to support habitat for flora and fauna such as local bird and insect species.

**Revitalising main street and regional town centres**

**Enhance the public realm:**
- Upgrade streetscapes and public space through improvements to landscaping, pavements, street furniture and lighting.
- Provide seating, shelter, vegetation, lighting, play spaces and other features to encourage people to spend time in streets and public spaces.
- Make new or improved pedestrian connections.
- Create spaces for events and gathering such as small squares and areas for outdoor dining.
- Use public art to create places which are distinctive, and which reflect local identity.

**Plan for a range of retail options and other uses to increase activity and patronage in town centres:**
- Concentrate retail activity in town centres, and limit retail activity in dispersed locations.
- Locate council offices, libraries, schools, tertiary education and other institutional and community uses within town centres.
- Increase land-use mix and density, encouraging housing above shops and mixed-use redevelopment close to town centres, shops, community facilities and public transport.

**Encourage building improvements and street activation:**
- Restore and reactivate existing buildings, such as council assets and inject new uses.
- Maintain continuous, active, and interesting street frontages including allowing low-cost, temporary uses to activate empty shopfronts.
- Investigate facade and tenant-led improvement programs for main streets to help improve activation and strengthen the quality of the place.
- Identify opportunities for immediate place-making improvements which can complement longer term goals.
Improving connectivity, walkability and cycling

Locate community infrastructure within town centre walking catchments to encourage walkable access:
— Co-locate community infrastructure such as new libraries, halls and child or aged care centres with retail uses and public transport stops. This also increases pedestrian traffic that can boost local economic activity.

Improve streetscape amenity to increase walking and cycling:
— Establish or improve footpaths and cycling paths to ensure they are generous enough to accommodate pedestrian numbers during busy periods such as on weekends or in tourist season.
— Increase street trees, street lighting and shading which improves walking conditions.
— Introduce appropriate traffic calming measures and car parking where a main street is also a major traffic thoroughfare, to balance the needs of vehicles and pedestrians.
— Increase permeability of centres by utilising laneways or creating new through-block connections to improve accessibility.
— Provide cycling end-of-trip facilities for cyclists who are commuting or touring, such as cycle parking and places to rest.

Balancing urban growth

Establish sufficient densities to support the viability of town and neighbourhood centres:
— Design for a mix of housing types, sizes and densities, which increases the resident population in neighbourhoods to support local shops and services.
— Identify opportunity sites for desired future development in town centres rather than on urban fringes, such as a major public building or supermarket.

Develop built form controls to manage development to support local character:
— Ensure height limits, setbacks, and allowable floor space ratios are coordinated to ensure that the scale and bulk of new development is sympathetic to the character and identity of the centre and main street.
— Create controls that maintain existing lower-scale street-wall development with higher levels required to be set back further from the street.

Increasing options for diverse and healthy living

Plan for a variety of denser housing types appropriate to town centres and main streets that can benefit from proximity to local business and services:
— Encourage mixed-use and medium to higher density residential developments in town centres to provide a diverse range of housing types such as shop-top apartments, live-work units, terraces and maisonettes which are appropriate to the location and can support different household configurations.

Ensure provision of sufficient quantity and quality of open space and community infrastructure to support current and future populations:
— Provide adequate connections with nature and outdoors through green infrastructure to support mental and physical health.
— Provide a range of community uses which support the anticipated demographic changes.
— Design buildings to ensure amenity of the public domain is optimised for all, for example, maintaining solar access to important public spaces, streets and parks.
— Encourage a variety of communal spaces within residential developments that can also interface with the public realm and facilitate social interaction, such as generous entry lobbies, courtyards, meeting rooms, roof decks or garden spaces.

Design town centre public spaces to be multipurpose areas which can accommodate a range of activities to attract different groups.
— Incorporate spaces for incidental meetings. For example, large public squares might also be supplemented by nearby smaller public spaces such as pocket parks.

Responding to climate impacts

Guide the design of built form to reduce reliance on mechanical heating, cooling and ventilation:
— Ensure development demonstrates appropriate orientation, materials, external solar shading, natural ventilation opportunities, thermal mass and other passive climate devices to suit specific local climatic conditions, throughout the year. Architectural elements such as green roofs, fixed awnings and colonnades can shade buildings and hard surfaces to reduce urban heat-island effect.

Design the public realm to provide comfort and shelter during extreme heat:
— Use street trees, low-level planting, shade canopies and water features, as well as appropriate materials, to provide shade, natural cooling and reduce heat gain.
— Ensure building setbacks and heights allow for appropriate solar access and shading of public domain.

Protect the built form against natural hazards:
— Integrate water sensitive urban design strategies to manage stormwater without disrupting the quality and character of the public domain.
— Create integrated urban design and engineering solutions for town centres and main streets in proximity to coastlines, rivers or bushland to mitigate risk of damage from floods, fire, or other climate-related events.
Process

DISCOVER

Understand the role and function of the town centre and main street, with its potential to attract people to the area:
— What is the role of the town centre and main street with regard to the surrounding area?
— Are there other town centres or retail facilities in the local area or region that complement or compete with the area?
— What is the mix of land uses in the area?
— What are the functions – retail, recreational, services, civic functions?
— How are businesses in the area performing?
Is the town centre/main street a popular place to be?
— What is the condition of the built and natural elements?
— Understand the prevailing characteristics which provide the main street with a unique identity.
— Review and investigate proposals which might impact on main streets – e.g. out of town shopping centres.

Review background planning information.
Relevant documents may include higher level strategic planning directions which encourage or designate change in particular town centres such as the area’s regional plan and LSPS.

The local council’s LEP will contain controls which apply to the town centre and main street such as land-use zoning, floor space ratios, building heights, heritage listed items.

The council’s DCP may contain more detailed controls, such as footpath controls, applicable to the project, which ensure the design quality meets the aspiration of the area.

The council may also have local strategies with implications for change in town centres and main streets – such as for open space, recreation, public domain, cycling, local traffic management, economic development and tourism.

Involve community and stakeholders early.
— Understand their priorities. Stakeholders who have an interest in the centre or main street may include business owners, tourist operators, local Aboriginal communities and representatives.

Understand the problem, and related challenges and opportunities:
— Is the town centre/main street adequately meeting the needs of all groups?
— Are the current community needs being provided for? – these could be verified through a public consultation process or survey.
— Are there shop fronts which are vacant?
— Identify the most appropriate urban design tools to respond to the specific problem.

Develop a strong vision and objectives for the main street and centre.
— Use all the information gathered from analysis and the engagement with the community and stakeholders.

Investigate the positive natural and built qualities of the place to enhance the area’s potential and identity.

CREATE

Facilitating change in a town centre and main street may require amendments to planning controls.

Detailed studies which may be required to inform changes to planning controls, include:
— Transport and traffic analysis
— Social infrastructure analysis
— Heritage analysis
— Environmental analysis
— Social analysis
— Economic and employment analysis.

These studies can be used to inform the development and testing of options, to inform necessary amendments to the LEP and DCP.

Develop the project proposal using the most appropriate tools for creating the design outcome, for example a masterplan or urban design framework.

Refer to GANSW Advisory Notes:
Overview master planning process
Master plans
Strategic Frameworks
Urban Design Frameworks
Implementation Plans

Refer to GANSW Policies and Manuals:
Design for Heritage.

DELIVER

Identify and secure funding sources.
— Funding may need to come from a range of sources, and could be over an extended period of time.

Develop a program of works – including staging to carry out the works in a way which is viable for the council and other key stakeholders.
— Depending on the type of work proposed, approval may be required by way of a complying development certificate or development application.
— Incorporate temporary ‘meanwhile’ uses to facilitate early activation.
(Above) The pedestrian environment of Maitland’s town centre has been transformed through landscaping, street lights and seating in the Maitland Levee Project. Urban design by McGregor Coxall uses colours, materials and vegetation that builds on the visual character of the local area. Image: Brett Boardman.

(Left) The High Street Bowral development has created a new open-air retail arcade and walkway between two-storey commercial buildings in the town centre. The retail and commercial tenancies benefit from increased foot traffic and varied shopfront design that generates a vibrant yet intimate pedestrian atmosphere for shopkeepers to display their goods. Image: Glenn Macari.

(Top) Tamworth residents were invited to participate in the upgrade redesign of one their main streets. A festival day was held by the local council to present design options for locals to test out and vote on their preferred option. Landscape and urban design by Spackman Mossop and Michaels gave shape to the community’s vision for their public realm as a ‘blank canvas’ with moveable street furniture and trees to allow for flexibility during Tamworth’s Country Music Festival. Image: Genevieve Harrison.
Infill development in existing neighbourhoods

New development in existing neighbourhoods can occur in different ways. In some cases, a single dwelling will be replaced with a new dwelling to better accommodate the needs of the owner. In other cases, the change involves an appropriate increase in dwellings on the same land, with amenity to support. This is typically in response to an identified need for more housing in an existing neighbourhood – to make better use of existing services and infrastructure, and to reduce the need for greenfield development. The locations for infill development are guided by strategic planning documents.

URBAN DESIGN GUIDANCE FOR INFILL DEVELOPMENT IN EXISTING NEIGHBOURHOODS

Leveraging the historic and cultural assets of places

Identify the features of a place which give it its local character, and look for opportunities to incorporate these into new infill development.

Ensure that new development is sensitive to the local immediate context of an established area through:

- Building heights and footprints appropriate to neighbouring historic and cultural assets.
- Uses which are complementary and appropriate to adjoining uses of historic or cultural value.

Enhance the value of historic assets:

- Retain and preserve historic buildings, landscape areas, trees, public spaces and elements of local value. Adapt them for new purposes where appropriate, especially when they are underused.
- Sensitive incorporate historic and cultural elements in new development to maintain their visibility and prominence.
- Integrate uses which will enrich the quality and identity of the building.
- Create interpretive opportunities to encourage people to engage with local cultural heritage.

Integrating with the natural environment and landscape

Connect and engage urban development with natural features:

- Facilitate physical and visual linkages to features and landmarks such as local hills or rivers, or managed and designed landscapes.
- Align urban development and built form to the local topography and landscape.

Embed green infrastructure as a network within new and existing urban areas:

- Create and enhance streets by planting street trees and integrating other forms of vegetation and landscaping into the street design.
- Establish new or revitalise existing green connections, such as bushland corridors, or creeks and waterways, between open spaces to form continuous green infrastructure networks.

Design public open spaces and streetscapes to support biodiversity:

- Integrate existing natural biodiversity systems so that habitats including fauna and flora are protected and continue to add richness to the landscape.
- Ensure adequate size and continuity of open spaces to support and protect biodiversity.

Revitalising main streets and regional town centres

Improve and revitalise areas of the public realm:

- Enhance existing streetscapes through landscape and planting, pavement and street furniture, lighting and public art encouraging people to spend time in streets and public spaces.
- Create new or improved pedestrian connections within infill areas increasing through-block links.
- Create larger and smaller spaces for events, gathering, festivals and outdoor dining.
- Increase comfort and safety through natural surveillance and improved lighting.

Encourage a range of retail options and other uses within infill areas:

- Integrate appropriate levels of retail uses in infill areas to increase activity in neighbourhoods.
- Create and maintain continuous, active, and interesting street frontages.

Improving connectivity, walkability and cycling

Guide infill residential development to support public transport viability, walkability, and local town and village centres:

- Link development with existing shops, community facilities, public open spaces and public transport to increase patronage and to create walkable and accessible neighbourhoods.
- Enhance existing street networks which are permeable and provide direct access to centres, with a street hierarchy to support different activities.

Locate community infrastructure in town centres, or co-locate with shops and public transport stops to encourage walking and accessibility.
Improve streetscape connectivity and amenity to encourage walking and accessibility:
— Integrate street trees, street lighting, drainage and other infrastructure to improve walking conditions.
— Create new or enhanced street links or through-block connections for pedestrians and cyclists to improve accessibility.
— Identify opportunities for new or embellished open space and enhanced connections for walking and cycling – for example within renewal sites, existing green belt areas or along river banks.

Balancing urban growth

Review key existing infrastructure such as green infrastructure (open space), social infrastructure (community, education and health facilities) and movement infrastructure (streets, public transport) and identify areas where enhancements are required to support increased populations.

Investigate the constraints and opportunities for amalgamation of lots:
— Understand the minimum number of lots required for successful economic development and to create good urban design outcomes.
— Ensure small-scale infill development does not compromise other longer-term opportunities.

Encourage infill development and urban consolidation to maximise previously developed land and reduce pressure on greenfield sites:
— Identify sites for urban infill opportunities.
— Encourage landowners to redevelop for appropriate infill housing development.
— Encourage and facilitate redevelopment in town centres, such as housing above shops.

Increasing options for diverse and healthy living

Plan for a variety of housing types and complementary uses within infill areas to meet community needs and address projected demographic changes.
— Ensure developments contribute to the provision of a diverse range of housing types across infill areas which are appropriate to the location and can support different household configurations.
— Design subdivision plans for a range of lot sizes and configurations to enable diverse housing options.
— Encourage student housing, community and affordable housing, retirement housing and other residential development types.

Ensure provision of sufficient quantity and quality of open space and community infrastructure to support current and future populations:
— Provide adequate connections with nature and outdoors through green infrastructure to support mental and physical health.
— Provide a range of community uses and services which support the anticipated demographic changes.
— Design buildings to ensure amenity of the public domain is optimised for all, for example, maintaining solar access to important public spaces, streets and parks.

Reinforce economic and employment opportunities:
— Improve accessibility between residential development and retail/commercial areas.
— Design for a range of varied uses for different groups in the community and their needs. For example, health facilities, independent retail and other specific service needs.

Encourage communal spaces within residential developments that facilitate social interaction:
— Create courtyards, meeting rooms, roof decks or garden spaces which provide communal access and facilitate social activity. For example, community gardens to grow fruit and vegetables which suit local conditions.
— Create inviting, safe, and attractive lobbies, corridors and other shared spaces to encourage lingering, meeting and social exchange.

Responding to climate impacts

Guide the design of built form to reduce reliance on mechanical heating, cooling and ventilation:
— Ensure buildings are designed to suit local climatic conditions all year, including correct orientation, external shading, natural ventilation, thermal mass and other passive devices such as deciduous trees, green roofs and walls to reduce heat gain.

Design the public realm to provide comfort and shelter during temperature extremes:
— Ensure building setbacks and heights allow for approximate solar access and shading of public domain.
— Ensure that measures to respond to urban heat island effect are integrated, such as increasing urban tree canopy to provide shade in summer.

Protect built form against natural hazards:
— Review existing urban drainage systems to identify upgrades which may allow for a more holistic, water sensitive and attractive approach to manage stormwater linking into green infrastructure networks.
— Minimise housing in bushland.
— Use integrated urban design, landscape and engineering solutions for infill development in proximity to coastal, riverine, or bushland environments to mitigate risk of damage from floods, fire, or other climate-related events which are particular to a region.
Process

DISCOVER

Understand the role and character of existing neighbourhoods:
— How is the neighbourhood functioning?
— What role does it play in relation to the surrounding urban area?

Review background planning information. Relevant documents may include higher level strategic planning directions which encourage or apply to infill development in particular locations such as the area’s regional plan and LSPS.

Existing neighbourhoods may be affected by SEPPs which make particular types of development permissible, and/or which place constraints on development.

The local council’s LEP will contain controls which apply to existing neighbourhoods such as land-use zoning, floor space ratios, building heights, heritage listed items.

The council’s DCP may contain more detailed controls, such as setback controls and landscape controls applicable to the project, which ensure the design quality meets the aspiration of the area.

The council may also have local strategies with implications for potential greenfield development areas – such as for housing, retail and industrial lands, open space, recreation, public domain, cycling, local traffic management.

Involving community and stakeholders early.
— Engage with the community and stakeholders to understand their priorities.

Understand the problem, and related challenges and opportunities.
— What are some of the key issues that are facing the area? This may include housing which doesn’t suit the needs of the community, and areas which have not reached their full potential to create attractive, thriving places.
— How do the priorities of the community and stakeholders relate to the priorities in background planning documents?
— Understand the implications of site amalgamations.
— Identify the most appropriate urban design tools to respond to the specific problem.

CREATE

Facilitating infill development in an existing neighbourhood may require amendments to planning controls.

Detailed studies which may be required to inform changes to planning controls, include:
— housing demand analysis
— transport and traffic analysis
— social infrastructure analysis
— open space analysis
— heritage analysis
— environmental analysis
— social analysis
— economic and employment analysis.

These studies can be used to inform the development and testing of design options, and to inform necessary amendments to the LEP and DCP.

Develop the project proposal using the most appropriate tools for creating the design outcome, for example a masterplan or urban design framework.

Refer to GANSW Advisory Notes:
Overview master planning process
Master plans
Strategic Frameworks
Urban Design Frameworks
Implementation Plans

Refer to GANSW Policies and Manuals:
Greener Places
Open Space for Recreation
Bushland and Waterways
Urban Tree Canopy

DELIVER

Identify the most appropriate approval pathway for the type of development proposed.

Identify options for staging of development to ensure the right design outcomes.
Troppo Architects’ design for a commercial infill site on Bay Street Byron Bay responds to the warm subtropical climate of the region and contributes to the area’s local character. Borrowing elements from regional vernacular buildings, the project combines verandas, slatted screens and corrugated iron roofs to create generous outdoor rooms that can be flexibly used by owners, tenants and customers in all weather conditions.

Image: Troppo Architects.

The contemporary design of the High Street Bowral development continues the predominant heights of historic parapets and street awnings using a variety of materials to both match and complement the streetscape.

Image: Glenn Macari.
Greenfield development in new neighbourhoods generally occurs on previously undeveloped land. The location of greenfield development is guided by strategic planning documents, with subsequent land use planning identifying areas which are suitable for urban development, and areas which need to be retained for environmental management and non-urban purposes. Detailed planning for new neighbourhoods determines the location of new streets, open space, infrastructure and buildings, and different land uses.

**URBAN DESIGN GUIDANCE FOR GREENFIELD DEVELOPMENT IN NEW NEIGHBOURHOODS**

Leveraging the historic and cultural assets of places

Manage the interface of new neighbourhoods with existing natural and rural areas, including coastal environments, bushland, agriculture, and land used for the extraction of mineral resources, to ensure that valuable areas are protected and enhanced through change to an area.

Ensure that areas of Aboriginal and European heritage are protected.

Integrating with the natural environment and landscape

Connect and engage urban development with natural features to form a key focus of the development concept:

— Integrate physical and visual linkages to landscape features and landmarks.
— Ensure new development addresses existing natural areas positively for visual permeability and safety.
— Align urban development and built form with the prevailing topography and landscape.
— Ensure that the natural surrounds weave into new development, so that there is no clearly defined edge and the transition from urban to rural fringe areas provides a seamless landscape, reducing the impact to existing natural areas.

Embed green infrastructure as a network within new and existing urban areas:

— Enhance streets by planting street trees and integrating other forms of vegetation and landscaping into the street design.
— Designate creeks and waterways as open space assets and biodiversity corridors for enhancement and protection.
— Establish new or revitalised green connections between new and existing open spaces to form continuous networks.
— Retain significant areas of existing tree canopy, and complement with new landscaping which can form a green canopy to provide shade in summer.

Design public open spaces and streetscapes to support biodiversity:

— Incorporate extensive vegetation and natural landscape spaces into new neighbourhoods.
— Ensure adequate size and continuity of open spaces to support and protect biodiversity.

Improving connectivity, walkability and cycling

Plan for a network of interconnected streets with regular block sizes, to help facilitate walking and cycling.

Connect streets and pathways in new neighbourhoods with existing streets and pathways in adjacent urban areas.

Design streets in a way that will improve connectivity and legibility – aim to connect through to other places rather than terminate as a cul-de-sac.

— Retain high amenity areas, such as land adjacent to waterways, for public access.
— Provide a network of new open space with different qualities and functions to meet the needs of future residents.
— Connect public transport stops to surrounding areas with direct routes for walking and cycling.

Guide residential development to support public transport viability, walkability, and local town and village centres:

— Increase density and planning for compact neighbourhoods around town centres, shops, community facilities, public open spaces and public transport to increase patronage.
— Create street networks which are permeable and provide direct access to centres, with a clear hierarchy of street types to support different activities.

Locate community infrastructure to encourage walkable access:

— Locate community infrastructure in town centres.
— Co-locate community infrastructure with retail centres and public transport stops.
Balancing urban growth

**Contain low-density greenfield development on the urban fringe:**
- Establish clear boundaries for future growth at a strategic planning level.
- Provide a diversity of lot sizes and housing types to balance density in a measured way.
- Facilitate compact development, providing varied allotment sizes, different types of housing, parking and open space to minimise use of land.
- Limit dispersed development which has the potential to impact on semi-rural and rural areas.
- Locate new local shops within walking distance of most dwellings, in the most accessible places such as street corners.
- Plan new neighbourhoods with direct connections to existing streets to ensure seamless integration which facilitates walking and cycling.

**Increasing options for diverse and healthy living**

**Guide the extent and type of new development to suit the anticipated new community:**
- Provide new housing and other complementary uses to meet community needs and address projected demographic profiles.
- Provide adequate green infrastructure including a network of green spaces and corridors to improve connectivity with nature and outdoors, and support mental and physical health.

**Support delivery of appropriate development and housing responsive to demographics:**
- Provide a diverse range of housing types and mixed-use development, such as apartments, houses above shops, housing with home offices, terraces and manor homes which are appropriate to the location and different household configurations.
- Encourage student housing, community and affordable housing, retirement housing and other residential types.
- Incorporate adaptable housing to respond to changing demands and accessibility needs.
- Ensure subdivision plans contain a range of lot sizes and configurations.
- Provide a range of community uses which support the anticipated demographic changes.

**Reinforce economic and employment opportunities, to retain residents in areas of declining population:**
- Increase the density of housing development around town centres and commercial areas.
- Enhance conditions to attract business, such as improving the quality of the public realm.
- Improve accessibility and connections between residential development and retail or commercial areas.

Encourage communal spaces within residential developments that facilitate social interaction:
- Create courtyards, meeting rooms, roof decks or garden spaces which provide communal access and facilitate social activity.
- Create inviting, safe, and attractive lobbies, corridors and other shared spaces to encourage lingering, meeting and social activity.

Encourage new developments which respond to local conditions to foster a sustainable lifestyle
- Optimise opportunities to create developments which harness sustainable living, by responding to the local landscape and climate. For example, opportunities for communal small farm holdings, either in inland areas or in coastal areas.

Responding to climate impacts

**New built form design in greenfield areas can play a significant role in providing comfort and shelter during extreme heat, with lower reliance on mechanical cooling and ventilation:**
- Orientation, external solar shading, natural ventilation opportunities, thermal mass and other passive climate devices should be integral to building design.
- Ensure buildings are designed to suit specific local climatic conditions, throughout the year.
- Integrate from the outset trees, green roofs/walls, lightweight materials, and other devices to shade buildings and hard surfaces to minimise urban heat-island effect and reduce heat absorption.

Design the public realm to provide comfort and shelter during extreme heat:
- Establish extensive tree planting for shade and natural cooling, particularly in hotter areas.
- Use trees, low-level planting, shade devices and potentially water features, as well as appropriate materials, to reduce heat absorption and build-up.
- Ensure building setbacks/heights ensure balance of solar access and shading of public domain.
- Provide continuous shade awnings or integrate colonnades for new shopfronts.

Protect built form against natural hazards:
- Integrate generous levels of tree canopy to reduce temperatures and the heat island effect.
- Integrate new open space with existing waterways to assist with flood mitigation.
- Increase drainage capacity in streetscapes using water sensitive urban design and integrating planting.
- Use urban design, landscape and engineering solutions for coastal, riverine, or bushland-proximate development to mitigate risk of damage from floods, fire, or other climate-related events.
Process

DISCOVER

Understand the area proposed for greenfield development:
— What are the defining features of the land and how can this shape the character for new development?
— How is it located in relation to existing urban areas?
— How can it facilitate compact and efficient development, so that impacts on surrounding land are reduced?

Review background planning information.
Relevant documents may include higher level strategic planning directions which may identify particular areas as a priority for new greenfield development or apply to greenfield development in particular locations - such as the area's regional plan and LSPS.

Potential greenfield development may be affected by SEPPs which make particular types of development permissible, and/or which place constraints on development.

The local council's LEP will contain controls which apply to potential greenfield development areas such as land-use zoning, floor space ratios, building heights, heritage listed items.

The council's DCP may contain more detailed controls, such as setback controls and landscape controls applicable to the project, which ensure design quality meets the aspiration of the area.

The council may also have local strategies with implications for potential greenfield development areas – such as for housing, retail and industrial lands, open space, recreation, public domain, cycling, local traffic management.

Involve community and stakeholders early.
Engage with communities and stakeholders to understand their priorities.

Understand the problem, and related challenges and opportunities.
— How do the priorities of the community and stakeholders relate to the priorities in background planning documents and the need for new housing?
— How can new development respond to the wider landscape of the area to create a strong sense of place?
— Identify the most appropriate urban design tools to respond to the specific problem.

Develop a strong vision and objectives.
— Use all the information gathered to develop a strong overarching vision and objectives which can respond to the interests of the broader community of a town or city.

CREATE

Facilitating new greenfield development involves a detailed planning process which ultimately results in the setting of new planning controls to allow urban development.

Detailed studies which may be required to inform changes to planning controls, include:
— housing demand analysis
— transport and traffic analysis
— social infrastructure analysis
— open space analysis
— heritage analysis
— environmental and biodiversity analysis
— social analysis
— economic and employment analysis
— retail market analysis.

Firstly, high-level structure planning for the proposed greenfield development area may identify:
— land suitable for urban development
— land for environmental management
— location of urban centres
— major road and transport corridors
— industrial land.

More detailed neighbourhood planning (such as precinct plans) then provides greater detail regarding:
— street layout and lot sizes
— location of open space, schools, and community facilities.

All of this work is used to ultimately inform amendments to the LEP and DCP – to facilitate the desired outcomes.

Refer to GANSW Advisory Notes:
Overview master planning process
Master plans
Strategic Frameworks
Urban Design Frameworks
Implementation Plans

Refer to GANSW Policies and Manuals:
Greener Places
Good Urban Design
Open Space for Recreation
Urban Tree Canopy
Bushland and Waterways.

DELIVER

Depending on the type of work proposed, approval for proposed development may be required by way of a complying development certificate or development application.

Consider staging of works to help provide urban amenity early in the development process.
(Above) New homes added to Glenray’s St Michaels site for residential care at Bathurst, are orientated to create a sense of community around the original building, as well as face out onto the surrounding landscape. The homes are designed to respond to the character of the existing 1950s building through the use of facebrick and gabled roof forms to create a welcoming village environment. Image: courtesy of Integrated Design Group Architects.

(Left) The Lismore Baptist Community services social housing provides residents a variety of places where they can interact with their neighbours or enjoy some private open space. Balconies, entry porches and screened patios connect with the outdoor and community spaces with different levels of outlook and privacy. Image: courtesy of Integrated Design Group Architects.

(Top) Street trees and street parking are integrated along Broughton Avenue to provide shade, screening and create a beautiful tree-lined entry into Tallimbar Village. Hard surfaces along the street have been minimised through the design of a wide grassed verge that can absorb rainwater and reduce heat gain in front of homes. Image: Department of Planning and Environment.
Regional profiles
These regional profiles incorporate issues raised through engagement with councils, reflected in the challenges and opportunities for urban design.

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**CENTRAL COAST REGION**

**REGIONAL CONTEXT**

With an ideal warm temperate climate, the Central Coast offers favourable conditions for an active lifestyle and outdoor-focused living. The region’s geography, including its ocean coastline, waterways, wetlands, and forests have guided the location of settlement. The predominance of these natural features has contributed to an urban form characterised by dispersed development and a high degree of interface between urban areas and natural environments.

Gosford, the region’s first centre of settlement, became a town in the 1880s, supported by rail access to Sydney, and highway links in the 1930s. Today the strategic centres of Gosford, Erina, Woy Woy, Tuggerah, Wyong and Warnervale are a focus for employment, shopping, services, and community events. Although the region is serviced by the Central Coast and Newcastle rail line, limited integration of transport and land use has contributed to reliance on private vehicles.

The region’s strategic location between Greater Sydney and Greater Newcastle will continue to attract new residents, jobs, business, and investment, particularly around existing urban and employment areas, the Warnervale–Wadalba release area, the Northern and Southern Growth Corridors, and existing rural villages. Planning and urban design frameworks can help guide good built environment outcomes in these growing urban areas into the future.

**KEY STATISTICS**

| POPULATION 2016 | 339,550 |
| POPULATION 2036 (PROJECTION) | 415,050 |
| URBAN CONCENTRATION | 96% |
| CLIMATE ZONES | Warm temperate |
| GROSS REGIONAL PRODUCT (GRP) 2016 | $17.4 billion |
| MAIN INDUSTRIES (BY GRP) 2016 | Manufacturing, Construction, Rental, hiring and real estate services, Healthcare and social assistance |
| MAIN INDUSTRIES (BY EMPLOYMENT) 2016 | Healthcare and social assistance, Retail trade, Construction, Accommodation and food services |
| COUNCILS | Central Coast |
### CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR URBAN DESIGN

#### Physical factors – built environment
- Creating better design outcomes across a range of urban contexts, including town centres and surrounding suburbs
- Managing urban growth and development while protecting the existing ‘Central Coast lifestyle’
- Enhancing governance and stewardship of the design of new development
- Revitalising town centres to provide attractive places to live and work
- Linking pedestrian and cycling infrastructure between and within centres, and to open space and waterfront areas
- Enhancing streetscapes through active street frontages and reduced prominence of car parking

#### Physical factors – natural environment
- Protecting community-valued environmental lands that are under threat from urban development expansion
- Negating natural hazards, such as bushfire and flooding
- Leveraging the region’s strong natural assets which make it unique

#### Social factors
- Ageing population and changing social fabric
- Need for greater housing diversity, including social and affordable housing
- Promoting and increasing non-car travel modes, such as walking, cycling, and public transport
- Opportunity to improve health outcomes through active travel modes and passive and active recreation
- Long commuting distances for some workers to Greater Sydney or Greater Newcastle

#### Economic factors
- Providing more local employment opportunities, particularly for young people
- Planning for the revitalisation of Gosford City Centre through built form and public domain strategies – in the context of its role as the regional capital of the Central Coast
Located in the heart of NSW, the Central West and Orana Region contains a diversity of natural and built environments. The southern and eastern parts of the region are characterised by the varying topography of hills and mountains with higher rainfall, cooler temperatures, and fertile farming land. The northern and western areas are characterised by lower rainfall but flatter slopes and plains, supporting more extensive agricultural production. These differences in geography and climate broadly align with proximity to the Great Dividing Range and beyond to Sydney.

European settlement of the region occurred followed the landmark crossing of the Blue Mountains from Sydney in 1813, with a denser pattern of settlement clustered in the south-eastern part of the region. Settlements in the western areas of the region typically established adjacent to rivers.

The era in which cities and towns were established has had a strong influence on the architectural style of buildings, and the urban design qualities of streets and public spaces. Town centre buildings constructed in the 1800s and early 1900s typically placed a strong emphasis on the design of detailed front facades, and were positioned close to the street. These are buildings which reflect the dominant cultural values of the time in which they were constructed.

Today, Bathurst and Orange are a focus for economic activity and housing, and Dubbo plays a specific role as an economic hub and provides services to many dispersed communities across the western part of the State. All of these regional cities are supported by a network of strategic centres and local centres, each with their own distinct character and assets. The region's central location in the State, diversified economy, and strong network of cities and centres will attract new residents, jobs, business and investment. Good urban design practices and consultation with communities can help to ensure that current values are protected and enhanced as new development occurs.
## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR URBAN DESIGN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Physical factors – built environment</strong></th>
<th><strong>Social factors</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to improve main streets with enhanced street furniture, landscaping, awnings, and footpaths, including better access for people with a disability</td>
<td>Ageing population and meeting the challenge of providing adequate services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential to reduce car dependency by improving links for walking and cycling</td>
<td>Uneven distribution of population growth, with the highest rates of growth projected across larger urban cities and centres, with other smaller towns and villages likely to remain relatively stable or in some cases decline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to enhance residential amenity through improved subdivision design, including improving solar orientation</td>
<td>Need for more multipurpose public spaces and facilities for different uses and events, to encourage social activities and outdoor, year-round recreational destinations in regional towns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential to enhance local planning and urban design knowledge, particularly in master planning – to ensure good connections with existing settlements, and mitigate risks from natural hazards</td>
<td>Opportunity for better public transport servicing from rural suburban areas to town centres, and between regional towns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preservation of local character through the adaptive re-use of heritage buildings</td>
<td>Opportunity to provide more tourist accommodation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing effluent disposal and waste disposal in smaller remote communities, and improving localised or onsite waste processing</td>
<td>Fluctuating local populations in some communities, with seasonal and itinerant worker influxes and new mining ventures creating increased demands on housing and infrastructure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Physical factors – natural environment

- Managing risks of flood-prone land in urban areas. This includes managing land uses on flood-prone land, maintenance of river levees, and managing flood risks in vast areas of the north-west of the region with flat topography, and other urban settlement locations at risk of rapid inundation from flood waters.
- Managing risks of bush-fire prone land
- Adapting to temperature extremes – heat and cold, frosty climates

### Economic factors

- Challenges associated with attracting skilled labour and trades in remote areas of the region can affect the quality of built environment outcomes and ongoing building maintenance.
- Higher relative costs for business and development in some parts of the region, due to travel distances.
The Far West is the largest region in NSW. It is characterised by a hot, semi-arid climate and desert landscapes, but also contains rich farmlands, rangelands and internationally significant wetlands. Since the 1820s, agricultural and mining has shaped the location and size of towns. This is particularly evident in the case of Broken Hill, which in 1911 was the largest settlement in NSW beyond Sydney, due to local mining activity.

The region’s main local settlements are small and dispersed, and provide services to their surrounding areas. Intense heat, particularly in summer, affects liveability, and can limit options for outdoor recreation. Social connectivity is also challenged by the vast distances between towns. The southern part of the region is closer to Adelaide than to Sydney, and towns such as Wentworth and Balranald have strong cross-border relationships with settlements in Victoria.

The region is home to some of Australia’s most significant indigenous cultural heritage items. Cultural heritage, “outback” landscapes, the Barwon-Darling river system, World Heritage wetlands, and remote towns which reflect the history of settlement – all combine to give the region a character which is distinct from other parts of New South Wales. The region’s population is projected to remain relatively stable or in some instances decline, however, high levels of transient workers and tourists see many populations fluctuate throughout the year. Good urban design provides the opportunity to celebrate the unique landscape, character and heritage of centres, towns and villages across the Far West and leverage new economic opportunities to support the highly resilient and self-reliant communities across the region.
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR URBAN DESIGN

### Physical factors – built environment
- The preservation of local character through the rehabilitation, restoration and adaptation of historically significant buildings, as well as mining sites, for contemporary uses
- Opportunity to enhance local expertise in planning and urban design
- Challenge of monitoring, controlling and reducing airborne lead-dust contamination in urban areas from mining operations – and associated health implications

### Physical factors – natural environment
- Temperature extremes – extreme summer heat and cold, frosty conditions in winter
- Natural hazards, such as drought, flooding and bushfire
- Water security challenges

### Social factors
- Challenges associated with limited population growth
- Providing adequate housing, facilities and healthcare for an ageing population
- Opportunity for better public transport and connectivity over vast distances between regional cities and smaller centres
- Fluctuating local populations associated with seasonal, itinerant workers and new mining ventures creating increased demand on housing and infrastructure
- Need for public spaces and facilities for different uses and events – to encourage social activities and outdoor, year-round recreation places in regional towns

### Economic factors
- Fluctuating economic conditions aligned with mining or agricultural industry
- Cost of construction and availability of skilled labour and trades in remote areas can affect the quality of built environment outcomes and ongoing building maintenance
The Hunter is located within the State’s fastest growing corridor which extends from the northern edge of Sydney to Newcastle. The region’s population and economic activity is focused on the Greater Newcastle metropolitan area, with Newcastle city centre at its heart. A network of coastal towns and villages across the region experience a warm temperate climate, while inland centres experience a cooler climate which is mild temperate.

European development of the region extended inland in the 1800s from the coastal colonial base of Newcastle, towards pastoral land in the Hunter Valley – and accelerated through the gold rushes of the 1850s, and coal mining operations. Inland settlements are characterised by town centres containing historic buildings which contribute to a local sense of character. Growth pressures in some of these towns have increased since the opening of the Hunter Expressway, and coastal settlements experience seasonal population variations related to tourism in summer months.

Initiatives such as the revitalisation of Maitland’s High Street, and the opening of a university campus in Newcastle City Centre, have helped attract people to the region’s town centres and make them a greater focus for activity.

The region contains high-value, protected natural environments including the Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park and parts of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. A national biodiversity corridor connecting Victoria to Queensland also extends through the region. These areas add to the Hunter’s amenity, and combine with a range of built environments to give the region its character. Good urban design will help guide the growth, renewal and revitalisation of Greater Newcastle and other cities and centres throughout the Hunter Region, while ensuring their sense of identify and community values are protected.
### CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR URBAN DESIGN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical factors – built environment</th>
<th>Physical factors – natural environment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improving integration of urban planning and transport planning to reduce car dependency and improving connectivity to public transport services and active transport, such as walking and cycling</td>
<td>Managing impacts on air, water, and soil quality associated with industrial and mining activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting more medium-density infill development in existing urban areas which is sympathetic to local character, and reducing pressure for new urban release areas</td>
<td>Improving the quality and biodiversity of urban areas through more green spaces, street trees and landscaping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing vegetation and alterations to the landscape as part of establishing urban areas</td>
<td>Managing stormwater quality and quantity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving the quality of the streetscape where new housing is occurring</td>
<td>Managing environmental hazards, including flooding, bushfire, and mine subsidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving pedestrian activity and passive surveillance through design</td>
<td>Managing sensitive coastal and wetland ecosystems impacted by flooding and climate change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing the provision and sequencing of infrastructure for town centres and greenfield development</td>
<td>Managing the impacts of land uses near protected areas of natural environment, including koala habitat, and national parks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving local design skills and awareness of urban design</td>
<td><strong>Social factors</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing heritage assets</td>
<td>Managing housing affordability and increasing housing diversity to meet the needs of the community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Social factors</strong></th>
<th><strong>Economic factors</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meeting the needs of an ageing population</td>
<td>Balancing the need to generate development with a longer term focus on design quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generating more local employment opportunities, particularly for young people</td>
<td>Diversifying the local economy of some areas and town centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring shared community values are maintained and enhanced when areas experience renewal and change</td>
<td><strong>Managing heritage assets</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating high-quality, inviting and inclusive public spaces for people of all ages</td>
<td><strong>Managing natural environment</strong></td>
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**Draft Urban Design for Regional NSW / Appendix: Regional profiles**
The geography and landscape qualities of the Illawarra-Shoalhaven Region have strongly influenced its pattern of settlement. Development is focused in areas between the coastline and a corridor of land with high environmental values including the Illawarra Escarpment, drinking-water catchment areas, national parks and State forests. The northern part of the region has a warm temperate climate, with a mild temperate climate in the south.

Wollongong and Port Kembla were established as urban areas in the 1830s, and became a hub of industry, with local coal mining activity attracting heavy industry. Connections with Sydney were strengthened from 1885, with the opening of the railway line. The port of Port Kembla was established in the 1890s and is now used for general cargo as well as the export of coal.

The urban character of the region is diverse. Central Wollongong is characterised by higher density development, with surrounding suburban neighbourhoods with opportunities for increased integration of land use and transport around train stations. Nowra is a major regional centre on the Shoalhaven River. Smaller coastal settlements have a high level of interface with the natural environment, and inland centres such as Berry and Milton are characterised by main streets lined with historic buildings. Good planning and urban design practices will support the future prosperity of Wollongong and the surrounding network of centres while ensuring the protection of great lifestyles and connections with stunning landscapes and biodiversity.
### Challenges and Opportunities for Urban Design

#### Physical factors – built environment
- Balancing the need to generate development with longer term design quality
- Limited availability of land suitable for development
- Improving greenfield subdivision design to better respond to natural environmental features
- Enhancing local character, including adaptive re-use of heritage buildings
- Minimising negative impacts on amenity caused by new development, including overshadowing of private open space
- Improving active transport connections, including pedestrian and cycling links
- Providing new areas of quality public open space
- Renewing existing urban areas to create a high-quality built environment

#### Physical factors – natural environment
- Managing natural hazards, including flooding, sea level rise, shoreline recession, and bushfire
- Minimising impacts from development on natural environmental features, including endangered wildlife areas, natural heritage areas, and areas with steep natural topography
- Minimising impacts on sensitive water catchment areas
- Building resilience to impacts from climate change
- Promoting energy-efficient design to lower running costs
- Balancing pressure for urban expansion with environmental protection

#### Social factors
- Improving connections to key services, including for the more isolated communities in the southern part of the region
- Improving public transport connectivity, particularly for urban areas not serviced by train stations
- Minimising negative impacts from new development, e.g. overshadowing and visual and acoustic privacy
- Providing quality and diverse housing options to meet the needs of the community, including affordable housing
- Managing impacts on housing availability affected by holiday rentals and seasonal population peaks
- Increasing recognition of Aboriginal culture and heritage
- Supporting higher densities in centres while protecting the identity and character of places and minimising negative impacts
- Creating great public places that better facilitate community interaction and social cohesion
- Improving access to social infrastructure

#### Economic factors
- Improving public transport connections to key employment areas
- Revitalising town centres to support new economic opportunities
The New England North West Region is characterised by its diversity of landscapes and climates. The eastern part of the region, which is dominated by the Great Dividing Range, contains elevated tablelands with a cool temperate climate and includes World Heritage-listed rainforests such as the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park near Armidale. The western part of the region includes slopes and plains which experience a hot, dry summer and cool winter and includes many rich environmental assets, including the internationally listed Gwydir Wetlands near Moree.

The region's cities and smaller centres are a focus for population and economic growth. In 2016, the region's seven largest centres of Armidale, Glenn Innes, Gunnedah, Inverell, Moree, Narrabri, and Tamworth accommodated 59% of the region's population.

Historically, the region's European settlements grew mainly from the development of cattle and sheep grazing, and mining. By the 1880s, railway lines connected the major regional centres, and encouraged economic and population growth. Historic buildings in town centres continue to provide a strong visual connection to European settlement history.

In the years ahead, the highest rates of population growth are projected for Tamworth and Armidale and the supporting network of strategic centres, while other smaller towns and villages are likely to remain relatively stable or in some cases decline. The application of good urban design practices will support the growth and development of the regional cities, while also helping to enhance the local character and improve place-making for all urban areas across the region.
# Challenges and Opportunities for Urban Design

## Physical factors – built environment
- Opportunity to improve local skills and awareness of urban design
- Balancing the preservation and adaptation of unique buildings and streetscapes of historic character, with a desire to attract new commercial development
- Responding to changes in land use and freight networks from a future inland rail corridor
- Design responses to natural hazards, including flooding and bushfires
- Adapting to extreme temperature fluctuations, including hot summers and cold winters which require climate responsive building and urban design

## Social factors
- Improving accessibility and mobility for the ageing population wishing to ‘age in place’
- Improving housing diversity and affordability to meet the needs of the community
- Supporting and promoting growth of new residential areas
- Supporting high quality design outcomes in town centres

## Economic factors
- Increased cost of construction and complex logistics related to development in remote areas
- Balancing feasibility constraints with a desire for high-quality urban design and environmentally sustainable design outcomes
- Building resilience to changes in industries supporting local economies and communities, including in agriculture and mining
The North Coast Region's subtropical climate with warm, humid summers and mild winters, has resulted in a landscape, and way of life, distinctly different from the rest of regional NSW. It contains the most biologically diverse natural environment in the State, characterised by an extensive network of national parks which contain 15 World Heritage-listed areas, and a vast collection of endemic plants and animals.

Combined with the natural beauty of coastal landscapes and hinterland areas, the climate has contributed to the region experiencing strong growth in population and tourism. In the northern part of the region, these growth pressures have been magnified due to increased connectivity with south-east Queensland. The region's broad range of housing types has also made it an attractive place to live.

Historically, European settlement of the region increased from the 1820s, with development extending southwards from Brisbane, and northwards from Kempsey. Inland towns were established in response to grazing, farming, and forestry. The region's climate encouraged buildings that were elevated, and made of lightweight materials. Over time, this style of architecture has become less pronounced in the region's cities and strategic centres – but is still prominent in the smaller coastal and hinterland centres.

Over three-quarters of future population growth is projected to occur in the Port Macquarie-Hastings, Coffs Harbour, Lismore and Tweed local government areas, with other areas projected to experience modest population growth. Additionally, ongoing improvements to the Pacific Highway which traverses the region, will drive economic growth and bring communities closer together. Good urban design will help guide the growth and development of the regional cities and enhance the distinctive and diverse character of communities across the North Coast.
### CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR URBAN DESIGN

#### Physical factors – built environment
- Enhancing climate-responsive urban design outcomes in urban areas
- Promoting energy-efficient design outcomes
- Managing risks from natural hazards, including flooding in low-lying areas
- Enhancing the street character of town centres
- Managing pressure for out-of-centre retail development, which can reduce activity in existing town centres
- Improving the design and connection of street networks in new urban areas
- Improving design outcomes for street design, footpath design, street-tree planting, and water-sensitive urban design initiatives
- Improving the design of new subdivisions and master plans

#### Physical factors – natural environment
- Protecting and enhancing natural assets
- Design responses to natural environmental features, including steep topography, wetlands, natural hazards, and erosion especially in coastal areas
- Building resilience to extreme weather events, including high rainfall and major storms
- Improving connections between town centres and surrounding natural environmental features such as waterways and coastal areas

#### Social factors
- Improving connections to social infrastructure and services
- Improving provision of specialist health services to support an ageing population
- Increasing housing diversity to meet the needs of the changing community, including more couple and single-person households, and providing social and affordable housing options
- Improving public transport connectivity and accessibility, and reducing car dependency

#### Economic factors
- Reducing the cost of greenfield housing development for both the developer and the homeowner
- Easing local road congestion affecting amenity and productivity – planning for a Coffs Harbour bypass is underway
- Promoting renewal and revitalisation in the main streets and town centres
- Supporting medium-density infill development in existing urban areas which is sympathetic to local character
- Promoting opportunities for creative industries in town centres
- Improving design of the public domain design in town centres to encourage commercial activity
- Proximity to south-east Queensland provides economic and employment opportunities
From east to west, the climate and geography of the Riverina Murray Region varies greatly – from the green, rolling hills around Tumbarumba with its cool temperate climate, to the flat, wide plains around Hay with its hot, dry summers. Expansive irrigation areas, including those associated with the Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers, also result in areas with highly regulated natural environments, to provide fertile conditions for agriculture – and support the region’s title as the “food bowl” of Australia.

The distribution of regional cities and urban centres across the region helps to facilitate access to essential services. Settlements along the Murray River have strong relationships with centres in Victoria – with the local character of these places influenced by their cross-border relationships. This extends to the sharing of infrastructure and resources, and is particularly evident in Albury’s relationship with Wodonga.

The amenity of the Murray River creates pressure for urban development adjacent to or near the waterway. Relative proximity to Melbourne, including the area around Moama on the Victorian border, also adds to demand for holiday and weekender accommodation.

Like other parts of regional NSW, the character of places is influenced by the timing of, and reason for, settlement. European settlement of Hay related to the location at which a popular stock route crossed the Murray River. The town of West Wyalong, in the north of the region, was developed in the 1890s following the local discovery of gold. Griffith and Leeton display a particularly distinctive character, having been established by the NSW Government as part of the Murray Irrigation Area, and influenced by Walter Burley Griffin. Good urban design will help protect and enhance the distinctive character and qualities of settlements across the region, while also helping to guide development of good built environments in the growing regional cities.
### CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR URBAN DESIGN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical factors – built environment</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supporting the establishment of new residential development in high-growth areas, while ensuring quality of design and construction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supporting the revitalisation of town centres through the adaptive re-use of historical buildings</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balancing the demand for new greenfield development opportunities with the protection of biodiversity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Locating and designing new development to minimise the impacts of natural hazards including bushfire and flooding</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<td>Reducing car dependency and improving active transport connections, including walking and cycling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accommodating the needs of ageing populations which migrate from smaller centres, towns and villages to larger regional cities for lifestyle reasons and to access better services</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic factors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supporting medium-density infill development in existing urban areas which is sympathetic to local character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing the viability of public transport services within existing urban areas and in new greenfield areas by increasing transport demand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allocation of funding towards the revitalisation of main streets and town centre improvement projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing well-located opportunities for commercial development in town centres, leveraging growth opportunities in agribusiness and value-adding manufacturing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SOUTH EAST AND TABLELANDS REGION

REGIONAL CONTEXT

The South East and Tablelands Region is characterised by a diversity of landscapes, including coastlines and estuaries, alpine environments, and green hinterlands. Each of these landscapes is associated with differences in climate, settlement patterns, economic opportunities, and lifestyle. This results in a region with considerable variations in its built environment and local character.

The proximity of Canberra, on the western edge of the region, also plays a significant role in shaping the form and location of urban development, with areas close to the capital facing pressure for increased suburban and rural-residential housing development. Further afield, the influence of Canberra generates economic development associated with holiday and tourism development in the southern, coastal parts of the region, particularly around Batemans Bay, and further towards Merimbula.

The north-eastern part of the region is subject to development pressure associated with its proximity to Western Sydney with associated demand for housing development in the Southern Highlands and Goulburn. Proximity to the Western Sydney Airport may add to this effect, with potential implications for economic development.

The era in which the development of different settlements took place, has also affected their local character – with buildings in the centre of Bowral and Young displaying different architectural qualities to those in the more recently developed centres of Jindabyne and Queanbeyan. Urban design can help guide the growth and development of new urban areas, while retaining and enhancing shared community values.

KEY STATISTICS
## Challenges and Opportunities for Urban Design

### Physical factors – built environment
Challenges associated with connectivity over large distances between settlements, particularly in the south of the region

- Increasing public transport connectivity and accessibility
- Challenges associated with steep topography – particularly in alpine areas

### Physical factors – natural environment
Managing natural hazards including bushfire, and flooding and erosion in coastal areas

- Balancing the demand for new urban areas and the provision of infrastructure and utilities with protecting and enhancing native vegetation
- Minimising impacts of urban development on sensitive natural environments including alpine areas, and coastal areas with estuaries and wetlands
- Protecting and enhancing Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage

### Social factors
Challenges in improving active transport connectivity, including walking and cycling, associated with challenging topography in some locations

- Some communities are isolated from key services, particularly in the south of the region
- Provision of infrastructure and services to meet the needs of the ageing population
- Supporting greater housing diversity to meet the needs of the ageing population and seasonal workforces in some agricultural and tourism areas

### Economic factors
Population peaks in holiday periods place increased demand on housing and infrastructure in alpine and coastal areas of the region

- Responding to traffic congestion issues in peak periods, and increasing local mobility
Appendix p58-77

1. 2016 New South Wales, State and Local Government Area Population Projections, Department of Planning and Environment

2. 2016 New South Wales, State and Local Government Area Population Projections, Department of Planning and Environment

3. The proportion of the region’s population living in urban centres and localities (contiguous urban areas which each contain a population of approximately 200 or more people), Tablebuilders, Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016


5. Remplan, December 2017

6. Remplan, December 2017

7. Remplan, December 2017

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GANSW publications

The following policies, guides, and manuals are published by Government Architect NSW, Sydney:

2017 Better Placed: An integrated design policy for the built environment of NSW

2018 Greener Places: An urban green infrastructure policy for NSW

2018 Greener Places manuals:
- Open Space for Recreation
- Urban Tree Canopy
- Bushland and Waterways

2018 Evaluating Good Design

2018 Implementing Good Process

2017 Start with the Place

2018 Good Urban Design – strategies for realising Better Placed objectives

2018 Design Guide for Heritage

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GANSW Advisory Notes

Advisory Notes are part of the Better Methods series of documents that provide specific advice on ways to improve design process and include the detailed urban design advice as listed below. For a complete list of advisory notes, please visit ga.nsw.gov.au

Overview: Creating better places

How to develop a design brief

How to select consultants

Collaboration

When to get design advice

Good design and design excellence in the planning system

Overview: master planning process

Strategic visioning

Strategic frameworks

Urban design frameworks

Masterplans

Implementation plans

Green infrastructure spatial framework

NSW SDRP pilot program: Guidelines for project teams
The Department of Planning and Environment

Regional Plans
2016 Central Coast Regional Plan 2036
2017 Central West and Orana Regional Plan 2036
2017 Far West Regional Plan 2036
2017 Hunter Regional Plan 2036
2015 Illawarra and Shoalhaven Regional Plan 2036
2017 New England North West Regional Plan 2036
2017 North Coast Regional Plan 2036
2017 Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036
2017 South East and Tablelands Regional Plan 2036

2015 State Environmental Planning Policy No.65 Design Quality of Residential Apartment Development

2015 Apartment Design Guide

2018 Low Rise Medium Density Design Guide

2018 Planning Circular PS 18–001 Stepping up planning and designing for better places: respecting and enhancing local character

Other publications


NSW Health (2016), Building Better Health: Health considerations for urban development and renewal in the Sydney Local Health District, NSW Health, Sydney.

PIA (2016), Through the lens: megatrends shaping our future, Planning Institute of Australia, Canberra.


Urban Design Compendium (2000), Homes and Communities Agency, UK
Where it fits

**Better Placed**

An Integrated Design Approach describes a way of working involving all aspects of the built environment and at all scales of design, combining places, spaces, time, fields of work, and disciplines who work towards integrated outcomes.

Better Placed both responds to and informs our local and regional context, supporting NSW priorities and the role of design, bringing together multiple interests, fostering integration and coordinated responses.

**Better Methods**

Better Methods provides overarching advice on good design processes including advice sheets, design review, evaluation and procurement methods.

**Outcomes**

The Good Urban Design is part of a suite of design guides which describe how to achieve good design outcomes.

GANSW is collaborating with other state agencies and local councils to develop approaches specific to scale, typology and condition.

**Advisory Notes**

Advisory Notes are part of the Better Methods series of documents that provide specific advice on ways to improve design process – for example, how to select consultants and how to develop a brief.

**Case Studies**

Gathering case studies that demonstrate real life scenarios where good design adds value to a place is part of an ongoing process of evaluating and promoting the objectives of Better Placed.
Glossary
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>A</strong></th>
<th><strong>Adaptable</strong></th>
<th>A building, place, or space that is able to adjust to new conditions, or to be modified for a new purpose.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adding value</strong></td>
<td>Leveraging and building on the existing characteristics and qualities of a building, place, or space to increase social, environmental, and economic benefits to the community.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attractive</strong></td>
<td>A building, place, or space that is aesthetically pleasing, or appealing.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
<td><strong>Better Placed</strong></td>
<td>Integrated design policy for the built environment of NSW, published by GANSW (2018) – refer to GANSW website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Built environment</strong></td>
<td>The constructed environment, understood as distinct from the natural environment. It includes all aspects of our surroundings made by people. The built environment includes cities and towns, neighbourhoods, parks, roads, buildings, infrastructure, and utilities like water and electricity.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong></td>
<td><strong>Comfortable</strong></td>
<td>A building, place, or space that provides physical and emotional ease and wellbeing for its people.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Connected</strong></td>
<td>A building, place, or space that establishes links with its surrounds, allowing visitors and residents to move about freely and sustainably.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Contextual</strong></td>
<td>A building, place, or space that responds to the context in which it is designed.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Context</strong></td>
<td>The physical, social, cultural, economic, environmental, and geographic circumstances that form the setting for a place or building.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>D</strong></td>
<td><strong>Definition</strong></td>
<td>The configuration of building type and its relationship and interface with the wider built environment.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Design process</strong></td>
<td>A series of actions or steps taken to achieve a particular end. Design processes are not linear; they are iterative, collaborative, and circular, where feedback and ideas are intertwined and continual. Design processes help provide solutions to complex problems where many inputs and concerns are needing to be resolved.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Design review</strong></td>
<td>A process that offers independent, impartial advice on the design of buildings, infrastructure, landscapes, and public spaces. It can be a formal or informal process. For large projects, it is best done by panels comprising leading, cross-disciplinary built environment experts providing independent early assessment of proposals. Design review for a smaller, simpler project might be internal consultation with colleagues. GANSW manages a formal design review process – for more information see NSW State Design Review Panel.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Design review panel</strong></td>
<td>A panel comprising a diverse group of people with expertise in design and the built environment. The panel offers independent, impartial advice on the design to achieve the best built outcome for stakeholders and the community.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Design thinking</strong></td>
<td>Creative strategies designers use in the process of designing.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Development</strong></td>
<td>An initiating process. It implements methods and actions required in the improvement of cities, precincts, buildings, places, or spaces with a socio-economic impact.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Discipline</strong></td>
<td>A particular field of knowledge or speciality, such as design, development, and planning.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Diverse</strong></td>
<td>A building, place, or space that embraces a richness in use, character and qualities.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Division</strong></td>
<td>The consideration of legislative or regulatory frameworks impacting decisions. The balance between public space and subdivision, land use, built form, height, massing, scale, site constraints, community needs, infrastructure, and open space.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Durable</strong></td>
<td>A building, place, or space that is built to be able to withstand wear and pressure.</td>
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<td><strong>E</strong></td>
<td><strong>Efficient</strong></td>
<td>A building, place, or space that is constructed and functions with minimal wasted effort.</td>
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<td><strong>Engaging</strong></td>
<td>A building, place, or space that draws people in with features that arouse interest.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Equitable</strong></td>
<td>A built environment that is fair and accessible for all citizens.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluation</strong></td>
<td>Design evaluation happens at several stages throughout the design process – from early design concepts through to highly resolved proposals that are close to final review. It relies on expert advice that responds to established criteria or objectives.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>F</strong></td>
<td><strong>Fit for purpose</strong></td>
<td>A building, place, or space that works according to its intended use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Form</strong></td>
<td>The expression or articulation of a built outcome considering building type, function and use. The architectural expression depends on materials, detailing, colour and texture.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Functional</strong></td>
<td>A building, place, or space that is designed to be practical and purposeful.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Good design | A phrase that encapsulates the aspirations of Better Placed including its vision for NSW, definition of good process, and outline of objectives for the built environment. Good design creates useable, user-friendly, enjoyable, and attractive places and spaces, which continue to provide value and benefits to people, the place, and the natural environment over extended periods. Good design brings social, environmental, and economic benefits, and builds on these benefits over time – continually adding value. See Better Placed for more information.

Governance | The overarching model or framework of rules and practices that govern a particular project, company, or group of people who are working together.

Grain | The urban pattern resulting from the arrangement and size of the buildings on their lots and the subdivision pattern. Fine grain is the fine texture resulting from small and frequent subdivisions.

Green infrastructure | The network of green spaces and water systems that deliver multiple environmental, economic, and social values and benefits to urban communities. This network includes parks and reserves, backyards and gardens, waterways and wetlands, streets and transport corridors, pathways and greenways, squares and plazas, roof gardens and living walls, sports fields and cemeteries. Green infrastructure is the web of interrelated natural systems that underpin and are integrated into our urban fabric.

Healthy | A building, place, or space that promotes positive social, emotional, mental and physical health for its people.

Inclusive | A building, place, or space that embraces the community and individuals who use it.

Integrated | A built environment that links communities and functions and activities within a cohesive place.

Integrated design approach | A way of working that helps bring together disciplines, scales, times, and places into a more effective spatial practice. It requires strong leadership and governance, shared responsibility, and an understanding of the role and value of design across the life cycle of a project.

Interface | A point where two systems, subjects, elements, or organisations meet and interact.

Inviting | A building, place, or space that is welcoming to visitors, community, and individuals.

Layout | The distribution and logic of streets, parks, squares, and public space that determines where private assets or institutions are placed.

Liveable | A built environment which supports and responds to people's patterns of living, and is suitable and appropriate for habitation, promoting enjoyment, wellbeing, safety, and prosperity.

Master plan | A framework document showing how development will occur in a given place and including building parameters like height, density, shadowing, and environmental concerns. It is a visual document that details a clear strategy or plan for the physical transformation of a place, supported by financial, economic, and social policy documents which outline delivery mechanisms and implementation strategies.

Of its place | A building, place, or space that relates to its surrounds.

Open space | Land that has no buildings or other built structures, which is accessible to the public, including green space.

Outcome | The result of a process, generally having a final product.

Place | A social and a physical concept – a physical setting, point, or area in space conceived and designated by people and communities. In this sense, place can describe different scales of the built environment – for example, a town is a place and a building can be a place.

Precinct | A designated area within real or perceived boundaries of a specific building, place, or space. A precinct can be of various scales and often responds to a study area of a particular location.

Program | A schedule of uses and functions specific to a building, place, or space, which is outlined in the briefing stage of a project.

Public domain | The collective, communal part of urban areas, with shared access for all. It is the space of movement, recreation, gathering, events, contemplation, and relaxation. The public domain includes streets, pathways, rights of way, parks, accessible open spaces, plazas, and waterways that are physically and visually accessible regardless of ownership.

Quality | The standard of something, measured comparatively against things of a similar kind.

Resilient | A building, place, or space that can withstand or recover from difficult conditions.

Responsive | Buildings, places and spaces that react positively to place and local character and context.

Safe | A building, place, or space that protects its people from harm or risk of harm.
| **Scale** | The relative size or extent of something – scale is a device used to quantify objects in a sequence by size; for example a city scale, or a building scale. In architecture, scale is also used to describe a ratio of size in a map, model, drawing, or plan. |
| **Spatial framework** | A design and research document that is produced to provide background understanding and analysis for a particular area or place. It is completed before traditional design stages or master plan phases of a project. The framework follows a process of analysis, data collection, and reporting in order to propose a delivery strategy and vision for the area being analysed. |
| **Spatial geography** | The distribution or placement of people, assets, and built outcomes. It is the broadest scale applying to the social context, natural environment, and economic framing that combine as the competing forces impacting a precinct, city, site, or building. |
| **Spatial practice** | The action of understanding, responding, and thinking spatially across interrelated disciplines and scales and for multiple users with varying needs and aspirations. Urban design brings together multiple disciplines, scales and users in a dynamic spatial practice. |
| **Strategy** | A plan of action designed to achieve an aim, vision, or outcome. |
| **Strategic framework** | A statement of aims and objectives for the physical regeneration of large areas of land or parts of the urban area. It may consider a much wider area than a master plan. It functions as the brief for the spatial layout. It is based on analysis of baseline data and may incorporate potential implementation processes. |
| **Strategic urban design** | The framing and solving of problems at a strategic level, intended to influence decision-making across design, planning, development, and government. It embeds good design and establishes the frameworks for better built outcomes. |
| **Sustainable** | Relates to the endurance of systems, buildings, spaces, and processes – their ability to be maintained at a certain rate or level, which contributes positively to environmental, economic, and social outcomes. |
| **Topography** | The spatial configuration of the natural and artificial physical features of an area. |
| **Typology** | The comparative study of physical or other characteristics of the built environment and their classification into distinct types. |
| **Urban design** | The understanding and articulation of regulatory or programmatic objectives, which brings together strategic and practical aspects into a cohesive and collaborative way of working. Urban design is applicable for cities, towns, villages of differing configurations, scales, and locations. |
| **Urban design actions** | The practical use of design elements that acknowledge regulations, stakeholder needs and aspirations, and all aspects of design, planning, engineering, social policy, ecology, infrastructure, and landscape architecture. Urban design actions advocate for design quality and ensure amenity is delivered as intended. |
| **Value (of design)** | A measure of what design is worth. Value is not merely related to economics, but includes an understanding of social and environmental factors as components contributing to the value of good design. |
7.

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