

01. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Government Architect NSW (GANSW), supporting the Central Coast Coordinator General and in close collaboration with a consultancy team led by CHROFI, has initiated work to support the ongoing revitalisation of the regional city of Gosford.

The Urban Design and Implementation Framework (UDIF) will help to shape the continued development and renewal of the Gosford City Centre and support implementation of the Central Coast Regional Plan 2036 vision for Gosford. Capitalising on government and private sector investment in Gosford and taking a place based approach will strengthen its role as the regional capital and benefit current and future residents of the entire Central Coast.

The UDIF will build on previous work, plans and strategies undertaken for Gosford City Centre by the NSW Government and the former Gosford City Council (now Central Coast Council), including the 2008 Our City, Our Destiny Masterplan and the 2007 Revitalising Gosford City Centre Plan.



1.1 Introduction

The need for the UDIF has arisen from the growing consensus that a vision needs a framework for implementation. These strategies and recommendations will enable quality outcomes to be delivered.

Engaging with stakeholders and communities, undertaking urban design analysis and developing strategies and recommendations for collaborative implementation fosters confidence, development and investment. Done carefully, with focus on natural attributes, amenity, public domain and quality, it has the potential to transform quality of life, stimulate the economy, and enhance the environment.

The UDIF is a design-led methodology, balancing multiple and sometimes competing agendas. It is for all agencies, levels of government and industry to plug in to for action. It builds on the vision of the regional plan, which has consensus. We need to synthesise and ensure action starts now to deliver tangible outcomes for the community.

A future focus

A place-based narrative has been developed in response to the analysis, engagement and consultation that reflects the very strong landscape qualities of the city and region. This complements the strategic planning vision for the regional capital while providing tangible qualities for people to connect with and support.

This series of statements contained in Section Two provide a guide to the immediate focus while ensuring any work contributes to deliver the long-term vision.

The current context

There have been several ad hoc responses to support revitalisation in the city centre including sporadic development of new buildings, largely in the residential market concentrated around the fringe of the city centre itself.

There remains a run-down appearance in the buildings and vacant shops, with poor quality public domain and way finding, poor pedestrian amenity and poor connectivity with surrounding areas.

Previous plans have:

- not resolved issues relating to investment in public domain and the city's key public places
- led to individual developments but not significantly improved the public domain or overall attractiveness of the city
- not inspired confidence and investment in the Gosford City Centre.

However, there has been progress with the establishment of new government projects and jobs (Hospital, Australian Tax Office) within the city centre and commitments for a regional library and arts centre. This has built both momentum for change and boosted private sector investment confidence.

The Urban Design and Implementation Framework

The UDIF has identified a different approach to the revitalisation of Gosford City Centre, one that takes a place-based approach and prioritises interventions in terms of implementation and deliverability, with potential catalytic impact. This approach focuses on key public places where there is existing momentum in terms of public and private sector investment, identifying public focused initiatives in the overall city centre renewal.

The UDIF proposes an urban logic to assist with decision-making and outlining recommendations. It provides an implementation plan to guide rejuvenation, growth and foster good design and a high quality public realm.

In some cases, the UDIF presents options or scenarios to be tested further. This early release of the work to date is for exhibition and is designed to trigger discussion and inform ongoing work. It is designed to build confidence, and reveal potential partners and business and community champions for change and revitalisation.

The final UDIF will provide a series of recommendations regarding the design of places and spaces to support delivery of the vision for Gosford City Centre. It will also provide recommendations relating to governance, infrastructure and other matters that will be critical to the ongoing urban renewal and quality outcomes for Gosford.

Focus on public domain for great places

Throughout the engagement for this framework a consistent theme has been the need for a focus on the public domain. GANSW believes Gosford's future is contingent upon the creation of a network of great, well-connected places that attract further investment, particularly from the private sector.

Detailed urban design studies of the key places in the city centre will provide a framework and specific guidelines to help shape and guide the design of new projects. This approach will protect what is special and important while adding value and improving amenity across the city centre to inform and develop clear planning controls e.g. sunlight access to public domain at key times and views to the city's landscape setting, to enable greater certainty to both developers and the community.

Great places and cities don't happen by chance. They are designed and continue to be designed to manage their transformation over time.

Beyond place-based recommendations

Delivery of the overall vision for the city centre and the UDIF will require commitment to several actions, beyond the delivery of place-based recommendations. Cooperation and coordination across all levels of government will be required to achieve the desired outcomes. Future growth is dependent on strong leadership and governance, focused on coordinated and integrated delivery.

New governance and delivery arrangements are required to maintain momentum of revitalisation and to ensure it remains a priority for all levels of government. A coordinated governance role can help maximise opportunities and enable potential investment in cultural infrastructure, promote night-time activities, and soft infrastructure to draw visitors and tourists.

The UDIF also recognises a need for updated planning controls for the city centre to remove complexity and create the best possible framework for investment and development. Any amendments to planning controls need to be progressed quickly to avoid uncertainty. Absolutely key to success is supporting and securing commencement on approved development projects that contribute to delivering the vision for Gosford by bringing people and keeping them in the town centre.

Merit based assessment and design review processes early in the life of projects will assist in delivering better design processes and outcomes as well as streamlining the process.

To be successful, the design of key public places needs to immediately translate into state and local contributions plans that can be applied and negotiated with developers, as development occurs. The delivery of these actions needs to be coordinated and include short, medium and long-term priorities.

By providing an integrated design approach, we can collaboratively create the framework for the delivery of great places, spaces and buildings that attract and retain residents, jobs, tourists, and further investment.



Image: James Worrall

1.2 A future focus overview

**THE SUCCESS OF THE REGION IS DEPENDENT
ON THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF ITS CAPITAL.**

Gosford is changing. A reimagining of the city as an active urban centre helps emphasise its distinctive natural setting and helps it to become a destination and attractive regional capital.

The city's revitalisation entices investment, optimises potential and improves quality of life. Gosford will be a desirable place to live, work and play.

Imagine if Gosford was characterised by its active waterfront, well-connected places, civic heart, and considered development with social, environmental and economic impact.

Gosford would realise its potential with lively streets, attractive lifestyles, safe neighbourhoods, greener places, and better-connected transport systems and communities.

Supporting the Regional Plan vision

The Regional Plan vision is for Gosford City Centre to become the capital of the Central Coast.

A place based narrative has been developed in response to the analysis, engagement and consultation that reflects the very strong landscape qualities of the city and region. This complements the strategic planning vision for the regional capital while providing tangible qualities for people to connect with and support.

The series of statements contained in A Future Focus (Section Two) provide a guide to the immediate focus while ensuring any work contributes to deliver the long-term vision.

The UDIF is not a design solution, but informs possible design, planning and development outcomes. It establishes a vision including a set of recommendations and implementation plan for the renewal of Gosford.

NARRATIVE:

It's time for Gosford to fulfill its role as the capital of the Central Coast. Gosford brings together all the best characteristics of the region: water, natural beauty and an urban centre.

Connect the people to its city and the city to its landscape.

Unlock the potential to create great places for people. An approach that puts the public domain and its people first.

Revitalising Gosford is not just one place or building, it is a network of well-connected places that create an attractive capital city with lively streets. An attractive city is a platform for investment with short-term returns and long-term growth.

Kibble Park is the civic heart of Gosford. It is a place for celebration, learning and exchange. It is a central meeting place the brings the character of the bushland hillsides into the heart of the city.

A place to arrive and to spend time, where the landscape, water and city centre come together.

The expansion of the hospital is a major investment in the future of Gosford. By connecting the hospital to the main street, it provides greater opportunities for innovation and learning.

A network of engaging places and connections create a strong public framework which ensures Gosford is resilient, diverse and adaptive as it develops.

Effective leadership, coordination and integration enables a common outlook and a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of key disciplines, agencies and consultants.

1.3 The study area

The UDIF helps connect the local community to its urban centre, and the centre to its breathtaking natural setting. It conceives of an attractive city to arrive and spend time. The UDIF makes visible and values the outcomes that matter most to people and place. There is a focus on the city centre and leveraging current investment.

The UDIF advocates for a considered approach that fosters investment with short-term returns and long-term growth without lessening the social, environmental and economic impact that will facilitate the area as a destination. It emphasises the role and value of design across the Framework's life cycle.

This is a commitment to creating long-term, systemic connections. This will build and share collective knowledge and generate unique insights that continually add value. The UDIF aims to establish alternative pathways. It will build strong, enduring and productive relationships across sectors for the public good, including the community, industry and government.

There are three key focus areas.

The Civic Heart

Geographically in the centre of the city, this study area focuses around the open space of Kibble Park. This open space is adjacent to the existing Gosford Library and its proposed re-location, multiple government and administrative functions, and significant private developments like the Imperial Centre and Bonython Tower.

Kibble Park is a central meeting place that can bring the character of the bushland reserves into the heart of the city. The focus on this area is to create a centrally located, attractive and connected open space and town square.

North City

The North City area includes the expanded Gosford hospital site, the schools west of the station, the station park and the station precinct. This latter comprises the crossing of the railway line and includes the eastern side of the station.

The hospital is a major investment in the future of Gosford. By connecting the hospital to a re-imagined rail corridor and main street, its potential is expanded to start a new generation of innovation in the northern end of Gosford.

The focus on this area is to provide a gateway precinct with pedestrian connections, improved walkability and an attractive public domain.

South City

The waterfront parklands bring the locals, the landscape and the water together. This area looks at the waterfront and its relation to Gosford City Park, the Leagues Club Park, Gosford stadium, the Australian Tax Office building, the Finance building and a potential Baker Street extension.

This is focused on providing a sense of place and a strong identity for Gosford. It will guide the opportunities to maximise the contribution of the next stage of development while ensuring public access and amenity. A place to arrive but also to spend time.



1.4 Building on previous work

Our City, Our Destiny

The result of extensive community consultation, ‘Our City, Our Destiny’ was a high-level master plan which articulated the community vision for the Gosford City Centre with five key precincts.

Our City Our Destiny forms the most comprehensive master plan to date for the city centre and was the basis for further detailed urban studies on transport, movement and street upgrades. Strategies and precincts identified in the master plan have built a strong base for the UDIF. The UDIF will update the master plan and provides recommendations to support implementation of the urban design framework.

What has happened since Our City, Our Destiny?

1. The early recommendations to start in the centre did not take place, and the waterfront development went out to market (The Landing)

Waterfront development proposals failed to get off the ground as it was poorly received by the community, leading to the market process being cancelled. Community critique ranged from the scale of development proposed, blocking views to water from the city and privatisation of waterfront. Given the scale and design proposed, there was risk that the development may have soaked up the limited demand and activation away from the city.

Lessons Learnt

There is a need to test and define detailed public outcome with commercial feasibility and delivery scenarios. Socialise this with community before going to market to help manage community expectations as well as reduce development risk for proponents.

2. Market incentives (Bonus FSR) and general encouragement to submit Development Applications to improve market occurred. This included collecting Section 94 contributions to pay for public projects outlined in Our City Our Destiny.

A number of Development Applications submitted, but they have not resulted in many projects going to construction, resulting in limited on-ground change and Section 94 contributions. There have been signs of stagnation as people may have stopped investing in the short term with the hope of a big windfall when the market turns. In addition, research for this UDIF by HillPDA has evidenced that residential development does not directly strengthen Gosford’s regional offer.

In general, it is not the approval process or development envelope capacity that is limiting growth within Gosford, but demand is limiting development. The solution isn’t about improving market confidence

for developers to participate, but about increasing sales price to make the development feasible. Simply put, banks aren’t sentimental, they need evidence of significant percentage of pre-sale at a price point high enough to finance the development.

Lessons Learnt

Establish city growth scenarios in line with demand forecast. In the short term, strengthening Gosford as a regional capital is unlikely to be driven by the market and S94 contributions. Hence forward public investment is needed to drive change.

Messaging needs to be managed regarding city growth. Both the UDIF and Our City Our Destiny reports highlight that the fundamental components that can help shape and make a significant regional city are there for the taking in Gosford but demand is likely to build slowly.

Government led renewal should focus on strengthening Gosford’s offer as a regional centre in addition to providing housing and employment to meet the goal to make Gosford a regional capital.

‘The ‘life’ of the city is not just from the people who live and work there but broad range of visitors who come from the region and beyond that come to satisfy different needs and desires.’

What is different about the UDIF?

The broad objectives, principles and city framework in the UDIF are essentially the same as Our City Our Destiny. What is different is a recognition of the physical scale of the city, market demand, Gosford’s specific role as a regional capital and how this impacts on recommendations for implementation.

1. Physical Scale of the City

Gosford City is physically large. It has similar footprint to Sydney central business district with the length of Mann Street from Etna Street to the waterfront is equivalent to the distance between Sydney Town Hall to Circular Quay.

2. Market Demand

The projections for dwelling and employment is limited relative to scale of city and current planning envelope. The dwelling projections are 120 - 200 units per year. The commercial floor space projections are 40,000 sqm over 20 years. This is in line with Gosford City’s share of Regional Plan targets.

3. Regional Capital

Regional capitals need to offer functions and attractions of type, scale and quality not available in a local centre, to draw users from the broader regional catchment.

Examples are:

- Public services: regional hospitals, court
- Educational: TAFE and University
- Cultural: museums, galleries, library
- Public space: regional parks, playgrounds, public squares, pools
- Professional services: regional scale and specialisation of services not available locally
- Retail, F&B & accommodation: regional scale and quality of retail, dining and night offering
- Events: regional scale sports, community and visitor events
- Transport: regional rail, bus, airport

1.5 Purpose of the document

The final UDIF will articulate a future focus for Gosford and provide recommendations and implementation strategies. The UDIF can be used to guide infrastructure investment and design decisions to rejuvenate the city centre, preserve the natural setting, invigorate places, and reposition Gosford as the regional focal point for commerce and high living standards.

The Framework will consist of:

- A future focus: explaining Gosford's potential and envisioned future, and supporting the regional plan vision
- The Urban Logic: using the historical setting and citywide analysis of Gosford, together with an understanding of previous work, to identify the place-based approach and way forward
- The process to date: outlining what we heard (state/local government, industry, and community participants)
- The need to capture the extensive feedback we have received since the workshops and including this to better inform the decision process
- Early recommendations and an implementation framework with urban outcome evaluation criteria.

This document provides the extensive analysis and work to date including early recommendations for public comment.

The UDIF will achieve its ambition by:

- Putting people and place first and identifying how these can be considered in the overall design and renewal process.
- Acknowledging city-shaping is not just about one place or building, but rather a network of well-connected places with an active street life, walkability and connectivity.
- Outlining an integrated approach to ensure private and public needs, desires, and aspirations are effectively brought together into a shared ambition.
- Highlighting the potential impact and opportunities associated with government and private sector investment in Gosford, including public-sector investment projects such as the expansion of Gosford Hospital, the arrival of the Australian Tax Office, and the DFSI.
- Providing a spatial and urban logic to inform decision-making to better coordinate and integrate public and private sector projects to best leverage their potential.
- Identifying opportunities to foster better coordination, outcomes and integration.
- Identifying clusters of projects particularly those that both individually and collectively will have a catalytic effect and attract further investment. These projects can be progressed in stages in the short, medium and long term and encourage decision makers and project teams to think holistically when prioritising and funding infrastructure and other investment.

The UDIF builds on previous work



1.6 The process to date and what we heard

Our process is focused on people and place, to maximise opportunity and provide Gosford with a competitive advantage. It aims to make Gosford a more desirable regional capital that attracts people to live, work, visit and invest in the centre.

In bringing together many voices with different points of view, we fostered a shared understanding and created a common ambition better suited to people and place.

Concurrently, it was important to review the previous plans produced to understand their vision (section 6.2) and undertake urban analysis (section 3.4).

To build momentum and collective understanding, a series of workshops and surveys sought to identify commonly held aspirations and the strategic steps the community, industry and agencies will need to take to achieve them.

Design-led workshops are the fairest and fastest way of understanding the needs and objectives of different groups of people belonging to a community. These workshops, their methods and key findings informed the UDIF and will help to achieve a better, future Gosford.

SOME OF THE KEY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES RAISED INCLUDE:

With significant public investment underway (hospital expansion, Australian Tax Office and Finance building, regional library, arts centre) there is potential for rejuvenated market confidence

There is great potential for Gosford to offer a high quality lifestyle with good links to Sydney, good transport and a strong sense of community

An inconsistent approach to planning and development over time

Public domain upgrades are needed to provide more trees, and improve parks and gardens, streetscapes, and public art to attract people and further investment

There is opportunity to rethink Gosford Station Interchange, upgrade Kibble Park and William St Plaza, connect the station to the Hospital, and to link the stadium to the water

An improved precinct transport network is needed to reduce car dependency in Gosford for better pedestrian access/footpaths, reduce impact from traffic, provide bike paths/hire, and better linkages over the station and rail line

There is the need to encourage a greater diversity of activity and people into the centre

We should encourage active usages, night-time economy, diverse users (youth, aging population) and uses, space for sports and outdoor recreation/family areas with shelter throughout the centre and along the water

Support Gosford as a cultural capital with diverse arts and music, with an active, public waterfront

Revitalisation of Gosford should support the development of a distinctive commercial centre which can compete with other centres, offering a greater variety of retail shops, food and beverage, events, but there has not been significant investment in the public domain

Many DAs have been lodged however only a small proportion are progressing



Image: Salty Dingo



Image: Salty Dingo

1.7 Summary of early recommendations

State and regional level strategies and actions

Foster a place based approach and focus on public domain

- Develop Place based strategies to focus activity and investment in and around the priority places
- Establish Place managers for Gosford's key places with a focus on the use and activation of places.

Improve regional access and movement

- Prioritise and focus transport investment to improve connections for people across the Central Coast into Gosford to support its role as a regional capital
- Prioritise place-based integrated transport plan with car parking strategy
- Fast track joint DPE/Central Coast Council car parking review and strategy (to be developed jointly with transport plan above)
- Support and plan for reduce journey times by rail to Sydney from the Central Coast and particularly Gosford

Leadership, coordination and integration

Leadership and coordination

- Build on the existing role of the Coordinator General to maintain momentum and ensure a holistic approach to Gosford
- Manage development by establishing a case management approach for major applications
- Coordinate and support delivery, including the coordination of activity around Government land and projects

Streamlining and de-risking the planning process

- Provide statutory weight to the urban design principles promoted in the UDIF
- Establish a case management approach to manage major applications
- Establish a Government Architect led or endorsed Design Review Panel for Gosford central business district
- Work with relevant agencies to fast track referral processes
- Implement simplified, flexible and streamlined planning controls with for Gosford central business district

Infrastructure requirements and developer contributions

- Prepare an updated schedule of infrastructure projects and public domain works to increase certainty about the provision of infrastructure
- Prepare a revised s94A plan (now s7.2 plan) based on the updated schedule of infrastructure
- Finalise the Central Coast Council review of the performance of the existing S94A plan and other approaches to developer contributions and provide transparency on where contributions are being spent
- Develop a plan to spend current funding on projects identified in the UDIF that will have a high impact and build confidence.

1.8 Next steps and process going forward

To ensure the community has a say in the preparation of the UDIF, it will be prepared in stages. The community will have the opportunity to comment on each of these stages and this feedback will inform a complete, final UDIF.

The NSW Government, Central Coast Council and a range of stakeholders will have a role in responding to the UDIF recommendations and delivering the ongoing revitalisation.

The stages in preparation of the UDIF are outlined in the adjacent table.

GOSFORD REVITALISATION

FROM APRIL 2018

- 1 Revitalising Gosford Discussion Paper
Gosford's Civic Heart: Place-based report #1
Discussion Paper & Place-based Report #1
For consultation
- 2 Gosford's Northern Precinct –
Hospital to Railway: Place-based Report #2
For consultation
- 3 Gosford's Waterfront Precinct:
Place-based report #3
For consultation
- 4 Consultation closes on all discussion
papers and final report
- 5 Government Architect NSW final report on
Gosford Revitalisation released for comment
- 6 Government response to final report from
Government Architect NSW