GO!SFORD

URBAN DESIGN IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK
PLACE REPORT 1 – THE CIVIC HEART

CHROFI
TYRRELLSTUDIO

GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT
NEW SOUTH WALES
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
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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.
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 will strengthen its role as the regional capital and benefit current and future residents of the entire Central Coast.

This Place based report explores and describes in greater detail the issues, constraints, uses and opportunities associated with Kibble Park. It considers the park in relationship to Mann St, surrounding built form and landscape in order to fulfill its potential as the Civic Heart of Gosford.
1.1 Preamble

Great places and cities don’t happen by chance. They are designed and continue to be designed to manage their transformation over time. The need for the UDIF has arisen from the growing consensus that a vision needs a framework for implementation. The implementation of strategies and recommendations will enable the urban design outcomes to be delivered.

When undertaking urban design analysis and developing strategies and recommendations for collaborative implementation engaging with people 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 for people, stimulate the economy, and enhance the environment.

### 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 leaving a run-down appearance, and building stock as well as empty shops
- delivered limited development contributions for public domain infrastructure.

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 UDIF report

The UDIF has identified a different approach to the revitalisation of Gosford City Centre, one that takes a place-based approach. It prioritises and focuses interventions spatially and 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, prioritising public focused initiatives in the overall city centre renewal. The 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.

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.

The UDIF is a design-led methodology, balancing multiple and sometimes competing agendas. It is for all agencies, levels of government, industry and the community 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.

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.

### The three places which the UDIF will plan in the most detail are:

- City Centre middle: Kibble park and the civic heart
- City Centre north: the health and education precinct
- City Centre south: the waterfront

This report provides the detailed urban design framework for Kibble Park: the civic heart.

### Purpose of this Report

This Place Based Report provides guidance to help shape and inform the development of the next stages of planning and investment decisions in Gosford.

This report will inform:

- Early urban design advice to assist with shaping and the assessment of time sensitive projects ensuring that they contribute positively to the vision for Gosford e.g. Regional Library and RPAC.
- Development of new and emerging planning controls for the city centre and the three places
- Contribute to the schedule of projects to be included in the preparation of state and local infrastructure contribution plans
- Public and private sector investment decisions in the three key places
- Pre-application advice to developers
- Consideration of planning proposals and applications including proposed design review processes
- Negotiation of voluntary planning agreements (VPA) and the potential inclusion of regional and community facilities in proposals
- Potential partnerships opportunities for mixed use projects
- Inform and support bids for funding e.g. upgrades in public realm, active transport, etc,
1.2 Why a Place Based Approach

Based on what we’ve learnt from past reports and master plans, as well as insights gained through the UDIF work, a targeted place based approach is recommended.

— Places have been identified as important because they are in strategic locations where there is a confluence of existing amenity, public space, public investment plans and private development opportunity. They build upon what’s already happening.
— They are in locations that can drive footfall between them.
— It concentrates and ‘gathers’ investment around it. In turn, there is an opportunity for one investment to feed off another.
— It also concentrates activity on-ground rather than in buildings or privately-owned places.
— Low risk of implementation. Centres around a public space that can be delivered quickly by government to lead the renewal. The first move doesn’t need private sector partnership, multi-agency agreements, etc.
— Relative to buildings, public space can create a greater visible transformation per dollar invested. In addition, approval path and construction times are likely to be quicker.
— The public space is to be a high quality regional attractor to strengthen Gosford’s role in the region. This will also boost private investment viability around it by improving visual amenity and bringing people to the focus area.
— This provides government opportunity to lead conversation with developers who benefit from this public investment on VPAs – whether this is contributions, accommodation of key public functions such as cultural facilities, new TAFE or university space, or encouraging land-uses that strengthen Gosford as a regional centre.

By clustering investment around a public place, there’s an opportunity to create focus, synergy and momentum – increasing visitation, strengthening viability for investment and provide government greater power to lead the market.

The large scale of the study area encompassing Gosford city centre necessitates a targeted approach to development and investment.

It is important to consider, the scale of Gosford city centre relative to Sydney, which has a comparatively tight urban structure, short distances between transport modes and vibrant activated streetscapes are already established.

Dealing with this scale of city centre requires key opportunities to be identified for a focused approach to activity and investment.

Whilst activation of the waterfront is desirable, it will not necessarily help to activate the heart of the city. Gosford has the potential to have a series of activated and interesting places along a connected network. Gosford has many important ingredients including the northern anchor of a hospital and education region, a central station, Kibble Park in the heart of the city, and a beautiful waterfront with public open space.

Connected, with a network of pedestrian and cycle friendly routes to both the bushland and the water, the city can focus on making these ingredients work to their full potential. As a network they are stronger than any single project or place.
The potential of Gosford

The city of Gosford has enormous potential; the structure of the city has all the ingredients to be a successful regional capital. The reality on the ground is not as favourable. Public investment is needed to change the reality of Gosford.

Role of Gosford

Gosford’s role extends beyond the immediate towards a local, regional and state context.

Its role as a regional capital brings with it aspirations, including:

— Civic and Cultural role as the heart of city centre with the provision of services for a regional city providing employment and residential
— Prominent commercial core functions — professional services, civic services (such as banks, police, court house, government agencies, Council, or regional library facilities)
— Consolidation of government and professional services
— Accessible city that is the focus of efficient movement networks.
1.3 Green Infrastructure Strategy

The development of a Green Infrastructure Strategy, like Parramatta Ways or Greater Sydney Green Grid, can support the establishment of a network of well-connected places that create an attractive capital city with vibrant street life. An attractive city is a platform for investment with short term returns and long term growth.

Green Infrastructure is the network of green spaces, natural systems and semi-natural systems including parks, rivers, bushland and private gardens that are strategically planned, designed and managed to support a good quality of life in an urban environment.

Green Infrastructure is as crucial to the city as transport, cultural and communications infrastructure. It delivers a range of benefits including:
— Healthy living
— Mitigating flooding
— Improving air and water quality
— Cooling the urban environment
— Encouraging walking and cycling and enhancing biodiversity and ecological resilience
— Absorbing and transforming waste.

A green infrastructure strategy supports improved active movement

Creating a more connected city through active movement paths and networks is a priority for Gosford. Prioritising active movement serves to connect the city, integrate the community and promote individuals’ health and well-being.

The UDIF proposes to develop an active movement network that is integrated with green infrastructure connecting the city with its landscape. Connect Gosford City with its neighbouring areas for recreation and everyday access.
1.4 Creating three places

When we examine the scale of Gosford, we understand that the city is large and spread out relative to regional cities of similar population catchment. By creating key places within walking distance to each other, they become stepping stones to navigate across the city.

By starting at the centre of the city with Kibble Park, we can ensure all three places identified can be a connected network which encourage footfall between each other.

Enabling a network of connected places allows us to cluster public domain improvements and investment in key areas of the city.

Kibble Park: The Civic Heart

Geographically in the centre of the city, this study area in focus 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.

It is a central meeting place that brings 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.

1.5 The Civic Heart design principles

Improve way finding, pedestrian access, social infrastructure and align with a city centre plan for the Green Grid (place design with identity, social infrastructure design, usable open space, how people use places and how they move between them, improve orientation and navigation.

Building design needs to promote street frontage activity, connectivity, mobility, and visual impact.

Ensure there is an attractive public domain and acknowledge how buildings interact/address the public space. Consider the relationship of buildings to each other and the public domain.

For each of the three study areas, identify what are the significant areas that we need to maintain an important aspect to/from.

Ensure solar access and limit/prevent overshadowing in accordance with specific place based report.

Identify and protect view corridors.
The importance of Mann Street

Mann Street is a fundamental part of the structure of Gosford. It is the primary spine that connects different areas of the city along its length. It provides a clear way finding and organisational line to the city.

As a high street, it offers a historically important civic quality to the city. It has a fine grain streetscape that is human scale, offering diversity of shopfronts and reflecting the city’s history as a regional centre.

In similar ways to Sydney’s George Street, it changes character along its length. To the north, there are larger sites generally of service functions, which transition to the core retail strip from the railway station to Georgiana Terrace, then to the older heritage streetscape to the south, terminating at Memorial Park which overlooks Brisbane Waters.

The place based approach reinforces the essential structure of the city, strengthening diversity of city experience and use along this spine.
02. KIBBLE PARK: THE CIVIC HEART

Kibble Park is a unique place in Gosford, identified consistently by the community as the heart of the city. Geographically it is in the centre of Gosford located adjacent to Mann St connected through William St Plaza. It is close to the station and connected in the east to the loop road of Henry Parry Drive.

As the only significant open space in the centre, the area has the potential to operate at a scale that can make it a regional destination. It is a central meeting place that brings the character of the bushland reserves into the heart of the city.

The park has a significant amount of public and private development commencing around it bringing, residents and new commercial space. Many important regional functions are focusing on this civic heart, including the new regional library, local courts and government services.

Significant private developments are also underway in this place, including Bonython Tower under construction, the Imperial Centre development, and other investments along Mann Street. It is also adjacent to the main regional shopping facility of the Imperial Centre.

By concentrating investment in this place, there is the possibility to create both a moment of green relief and a place of civic and commercial intensity in the heart of the city.

Starting with Kibble Park creates a great place in the heart of the community, rather than at its edges. The park, under local government ownership, is a logical and realistic place to start. It doesn’t have the complex challenges of the waterfront, and is ready to start whilst the hospital is under construction.

Changes in the heart of the community have the potential to ‘ripple’ their impact in all directions. Creating a strong public open space with key principles can protect this public asset from future neighbouring developments.

A central civic space working to its full potential can draw on and support the people, businesses, jobs and services that will surround it.
2.1 Why Kibble Park?

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2.2 Kibble Park – Strategic Position in the City Network

Kibble Park draws the sense of the wider bushland landscapes into the heart of the city.

It is the key moment where the north-south urbanity of Mann Street meets the bushland character of the east-west connections.

Kibble Park becomes the centre of a wider green circulation network linking the northern city centre, station and waterfront.
2.3 Kibble Park – Strategic Position in relation to regional attractions

Kibble Park and the surrounding area is in a great location to build on existing and future regional attractions with additional commercial, tourist, cultural and educational facilities.

These include:
— Regional Library
— TAFE
— Large Shopping Centre
— Mann St Retail
— Railway Station
— Bonnython Tower
— Kibbleplex
2.4 About Kibble Park

History
The history of Gosford highlights it has:
— civic importance
— a place for the community
— places of heritage significance
— had recent years of decline
— maintenance issues
— capacity to grow

What do locals say
The UDIF process involved consultation with the local Gosford community. Kibble Park is a community hub; valued by all who live and work in the centre.

“The Imperial Shopping Centre which is recognised as a big attractor with its multiple entrances, as well as the Youth Arts Warehouse and the Employment and Training Australia Secondary College.”

“Improvements are needed in the public domain of the city centre to make Gosford a place where people want to live.”

“Kibble Park is poorly maintained and is limited in the events it can host. It needs services, amenities, and to function as the civic heart of the city.”

“There is lack of provision of office and commercial spaces.”

“Overall safety needs to be improved in Gosford, including Kibble Park.”

“I walk through the park on my way to the station but rarely stop”

“The library is a great building. It would be great if we could find a new use for it.”

“It is great to have somewhere to stop with the kids but I wish the playground was better and the fountain worked.”

“We are starting to see a few fun new restaurants and cafes open up but not many stay open in the evening or on weekend.”
Values
— Important public green space in the centre of the city
— Views to the hills
— Busy at lunchtime – people working and studying nearby use it
— Markets and events in Kibble Park bring the community together
— Connection to the Imperial Centre and car parking
— Close to the station
— History associated with Byblos restaurant and the library

Constraints
— Not attractive enough to draw people to Gosford
— The park is cluttered which reduces its flexibility
— Perceived safety problems particularly at night
— It is hidden from the street
— Poor accessibility and connections across the park
— Lack of greener
— Cars cut off space from the Imperial Centre and take up space
— Conflict with loading and servicing
— Issue with maintenance
— Fountain never works
— Taxis are ugly
— Location of stage doesn’t work for events

Opportunities
— Declutter to create a sense of space
— Ensure design allows for flexible use including performances, markets, outdoor movies and festival
— Visual and physical connections to Presidents Hill and Rumbalara Reserve
— Improve connection to Mann Street
— Maintain sunlight to public spaces
— Reuse library for public use – gallery, temporary exhibitions, meeting space, town hall
— Active uses that attract diversity range of people surrounding the park
— Additional footpath eating for restaurants and cafes
— Night-time and weekend activity
— Something to protect the space from traffic on Henry Parry Drive
— Improve pedestrian and cycle access to the park
— Temporary road closures of surrounding streets for special events
— More outdoor dining opportunities
— Food trucks in the short term to kick start the market
— University/TAFE presence
— Better playground
— Water feature that kids can play in to cool down.

“We need more Sunday trade, somewhere to have dinner after work, more options to take the family”
2.5 Civic Heart design principles

1. Create a green room – respite for the growing city
2. Relocate activity to the edge and activate where people move
3. Re-purpose library as a public building – possible Town Hall, meeting place, flexible exhibition space. Investigate upgrade or new cafe integrated with park
4. Create a civic plaza and connect to Mann Street with active edges. Increase visual connection between Mann St and the park. Streetscape upgrade to Mann Street
5. Establish through connection street at Watt Street
6. Align connection to new regional library. Explore secondary connections between regional library, TAFE, Conservatory of Music and Council
7. investigate opportunity to retain public parking in part of future development behind an active edge to Henry Parry Dr.
8. Connect park to reserves with tree planting along Donnison Street
9. Locate development height to minimise overshadowing of Kibble Park.
2.6 Detailed Urban Design principles

1. Activity to the edges

The park is cluttered. Scattered park activities, vehicle access and car parking take up much of the space.

Move the park uses to the edges to create active streets and diverse edges for people to gather. The open space can breathe.

2. An iconic green room

Planting a frame of Eucalyptus trees creates an alternative green room with shaded edges. The park becomes iconic, grounded by a beautiful borrowed view to President’s Hill.

3. Great Civic Spaces

Mann St Plaza and the re-purposed library become flexible event spaces for day and night activation.
4. **Ensure sunlight access to the park**

Locate height in surrounding developments to minimise overshadowing of park and public domain. Ensure solar access for 4 hours to 50% of the park between 9am and 3pm at the winter solstice. Refer to built form principles.

5. **Active street frontages**

Protect and promote the fine grain retail of Mann Street. Ensure active and defined street frontages to all park edges. Re-purpose library as a public building. Investigate upgrade or new cafe integrated with park. Curate diverse offerings for different demographic segments and for activation during day and night, weekday and weekends.

6. **Reduce dominance of cars**

Vehicle access is retained around the park in the short and medium term, but with reduced road widths and shared surfaces with clear pedestrian priority. Future servicing or parking entries not to be located on Mortimer Lane or William Street adjacent to the park, or where active street frontages are proposed.

7. **Connect with nature**

Protect view corridors to President’s Hill and Rumbalara Ridgeline. Refer to built form principles.
2.7 Built form principles

1. 2-3 storey podium height with a fine grain and active frontages to key places and streets

2. Ensure ground floor facade of the plaza buildings achieves sun throughout the day

3. Provide setback to upper levels above podium

4. Slender East/West tower forms, aligned to protect view corridors to Rumbalara ridgeline

5. Setback slender north/south orientated tower forms to allow shadows to move quickly across Kibble Park

6. Protect view corridors to Presidents Hill from Kibble Park

7. Ensure solar access for 4 hours to 50% of the park between 9am and 3pm at the winter solstice
View 2: Mann St – A new Civic Square to Kibble Park
2.8 Precedents and character

A green room that brings the quality of the bush reserves to the city
Improve pedestrian and cycle access to the park

Ability to draw community together for functions and events
Trees on the edges
Flexible and adaptable spaces in the middle
A place for all ages to play
Better playground
Water feature that children can play in

A moment of quiet in the city for multiple users
Temporary road closure for special events
Food trucks/more outdoor dining

Connecting a main street to open spaces and pathways along the river
Encouraging the activation of the rear of buildings
Landmarks and icon

Lizard Log by McGregor Coxall
Image: Simon Whitbread

The Goods Line by Aspect Studio, CHROFI
Image: Simon Whitbread

Maitland Riverlink by CHROFI
Image: Matt Abbott

The Goods Line by Aspect Studio, CHROFI
Image: Simon Whitbread

Mountain Kiosk by CHROFI
Image: Matt Abbott
2.9 What we heard

This table captures a summary of feedback from workshop 5 that relates to Kibble park and the surrounding area - now, opportunities for the future and the role it can play in making Gosford a regional capital and great place.

Each grey square represents the relative number of mentions each issue had during the workshop.

## GREEN LINKS
- Link reserves to the city
- Trees
- More parks and gardens, better quality existing parks, botanical gardens
- Fountains that work
- Retail the natural ecology
- Better connections to Rambulara Reserve and Presidents Hill

## PARKING
- Parking at night (noting council car park at Baker St shuts at 8pm)
- More short term parking (currently used by commuters)
- Consider charging for parking (debated)
- More commuter parking, parking for workers

## TRANSPORT OPTIONS AND ACCESSIBILITY
- Better public transport options, other than the car, more direct bus routes
- Better pedestrian access and accessible footpaths for all (will help things feel closer)
- Reduce through traffic on Mann St, including buses. Make Mann St for people
- Better signage and way finding
- Infrastructure to feed in and be coordinated

## SAFETY
- Improved safety – particular at night, and for women
- Passive surveillance
- Lighting

## DESIGN
- A distinct design style, not cookie cutter
- Improved public domain and streetscape, public art, better footpaths, bins,
- Make use of the Gosford Sandstone
- Integration of arts and design, cultural trail
- Quality first, not low budget, which will entice further investment
- Wider footpaths
- Link people to specific quality of place

## SOCIAL
- Diversity of users (youth, aging population)
- Improved social agenda, mental health, bring everyone along
- More people will attract more people
- Indigenous history of President’s Hill and other locations respectfully displayed

## PROGRAMME AND ATTRACTORS
- Active usages at all hours, 7 days
- Night life (after 5pm), including small bars
- Drawcard for tourists
- A cultural hub linked to the library
- Library
- Start-up/ Entrepreneurial Hubs
- Youth place to occupy, youth entertainment
- Space for sports and outdoor recreation
- Improve Kibble Park – only half functional, including the fountain, shade
- Coordinated activities and events
- Family playground with BBQs, shelter

## IDENTITY
- A big clear idea, not band-aid solutions
- Action, lots of plans that have not come to fruition
- Coordinated events to create a cultural destination
- Improved Reputation and status
- Sense of a civic or cultural heart
- A sense that things are changing
- Express the region’s history – e.g. as a citrus producers
- Be modern
- Atmosphere

## ECONOMY
- More variety of retail and jobs
- More high quality shops, culture and arts

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