Capitalising on government and private sector investment and taking a place-based approach to Gosford will strengthen its role as the regional capital and in doing so will benefit the existing and future residents of the entire Central Coast.
In April 2016 the NSW Planning Minister Mr Anthony Roberts appointed Lee Shearer APM as Coordinator General for the Central Coast. At the time of the appointment the Minister indicated that a key ministerial priority for the Coordinator General was to develop a plan to revitalise Gosford CBD.

In July 2017 the NSW Government Architect (GANSW) was engaged by the Coordinator General to develop an Urban Design Framework (UDF). GANSW collaborated with CHROFI to review the previous plans developed for Gosford, the Regional Plan and conducted numerous stakeholder workshops. The resultant UDF provides a consistent, forward-looking vision for Gosford and will help shape the continued development and renewal of the Gosford City Centre.

Gosford has been shaped by a rich history and is defined by its natural setting and diverse communities with a strong local identity.

The city has existing regional functions and attractions and the investment in the hospital expansion, Australian Tax Office and Finance Building provide Gosford with opportunities for attracting knowledge jobs, and health, education and professional services. Gosford’s population growth, together with an ageing local population and diverging family ‘type’, creates demand for a greater mix of residential development, all of which impacts the built environment.

There have been several ad hoc responses to support revitalisation in the city centre including sporadic development of new buildings, largely residential, concentrated around the fringe of the city centre. 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 Performing Arts Complex. This has built both momentum for change and boosted private sector investment confidence.

The scale of Gosford

By comparing Gosford to Sydney, Gosford’s large regional city footprint is evident. The high street of Mann Street between the hospital and the waterfront is 1.4km long, which is similar to the length of Sydney’s George Street between Townhall and Circular Quay. It is not a walk done every day. This scale comparison is contrasted by a relatively small population of people living in the centre. A city of this scale needs a greater density of visitors, residents and businesses to feel active as a regional capital.
Enabling a network of connected places allows the clustering of public domain improvements and investment in the city.

Improvements in the public domain will create an attractive city that can be a platform for investment with both short term returns and sustainable long term growth. With the public domain and green infrastructure creating a desirable place to live and work, private and public investment can provide the final ingredient for change.

The recommendations and advice in this report champion good design, support development opportunities and protect the public domain for all by placing a value on solar access, views, and consistent built form controls.
Vision for Gosford

The Central Coast Regional Plan 2036 shapes the development of the region. The UDF provides a way forward to help deliver Gosford as the regional capital and a smart hub.

The revitalisation of the city centre will entice investment to energise the city, attract new residents, businesses, tourism, and culture. Gosford’s renewal can help the Central Coast optimise its potential and improve people’s quality of life, ensuring that the region is a desirable place to live, work and play.

Gosford will be characterised by its well-connected revitalised places, its civic heart, desirable waterfront, and great amenity. Under strong and clear stewardship, Gosford can realise its potential as a renewed urban centre, reinvigorating citizens with a shared sense of place.

The distinctive natural setting and diverse communities provides a strong local identity that is catalytic to well-designed places with vibrant streets, attractive lifestyles, safe neighbourhoods, greener places, and better-connected transport systems and communities.

Gosford will be a destination for commerce, culture and recreation, with great places for everyone.

The following statements and photographs capture the opportunities for Gosford’s revitalisation.

1. 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.

2. This framework connects the people to its city and the city to its landscape.

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

7. 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.
3. This framework unlocks the potential to create great places for people. An approach that puts the public domain and its people first.

4. 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.

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

8. A network of engaging places and connections ensures Gosford is resilient, diverse and adaptive as it develops.

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

**Foster a place-based approach and focus on public domain**
Throughout the engagement for this framework a consistent theme has been the need for a focus on the public domain.

Gosford's future is contingent upon the creation of a network of great, well-connected places that can attract further investment, particularly from the private sector.

Recommendations include the development of place-based strategies to focus activity and coordinate public and private investment in and around the priority places identified in the UDF and along the routes that connect them.

**Provide green infrastructure**
Nature and green spaces in an urban environment can improve the social wellbeing and health of the people living, working in, and using the city centre.

Recommendations support improvements to current green spaces, creation of new green spaces, identification of linkages to adjoining networks, street tree and urban canopy projects, water management and recycling.

**Respect and enhance built form**
Gosford's existing built environment forms a strong base for the city to grow.

Gosford is layered with unique urban assets including heritage buildings, rail infrastructure and a high street with a strong north-south axis through the centre of the city.

Detailed urban design and built form principles for the key places in the city centre provide a framework and specific guidelines to help shape 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 to enable greater certainty to both developers and the community.
Leverage regional importance
Sporting, health and transport infrastructure assets contribute to the identity and definition of Gosford as a regional capital.

The Central Coast Stadium, the hospital precinct and Gosford train station were identified in community consultations as three of Gosford’s major landmarks. These major facilities are strategic regionally significant centres of activity: forming and defining Gosford’s point of difference as the regional centre of the Central Coast.

Prioritising and focussing transport investment to improve connections for people across the Central Coast into Gosford to support its role as a regional capital.

Streamline planning controls
The UDF identifies a need for updated planning controls for the city centre to remove complexity and create the best possible framework for investment and development.

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 reducing risk and streamlining the process.

Provide strong leadership
Future growth is dependent on strong leadership and governance, focused on coordinated and integrated delivery.

A coordinated governance role can help maximise and promote opportunities, a consistent approach to design excellence, support inward investment, and enable potential investment in cultural infrastructure, promote night-time activities, and soft infrastructure to draw visitors and tourists.
The UDF builds on previous work, plans and strategies undertaken for the Gosford City Centre by the NSW Government and the former Gosford City Council (now Central Coast Council). It incorporates findings from the 2008 Our City, Our Destiny Masterplan and the 2007 Revitalising Gosford City Centre Plan along with existing studies prepared by the Central Coast Council.

Urban Design Framework and recommendations
To view the Gosford City Centre UDF, visit Government Architect NSW website at www.ga.nsw.gov.au

To view the new planning controls, visit the Central Coast page of the Department of Planning and Environment’s website at www.planning.nsw.gov.au