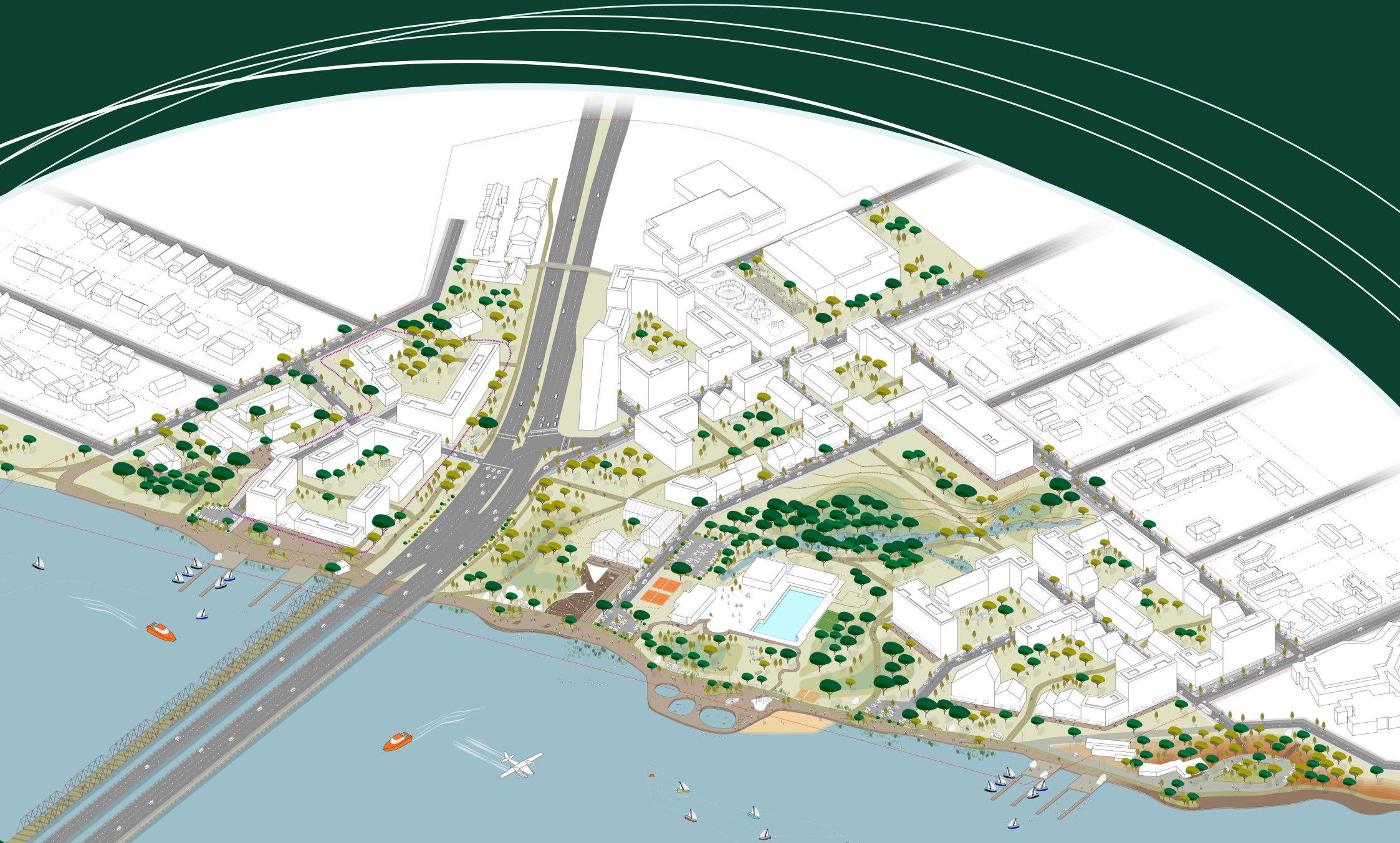


Nowra Riverfront Activation Plan

2023



Acknowledgement of Country

Paying our respects

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge all Aboriginal people of the Shoalhaven, the Jerrinja, Wandj Wandian, Wodi Wodi, Bherwerre, Murramarang, Budawang and Aboriginal members of Roseby Park and Wreck Bay communities and value their long, rich cultural and spiritual connections to the Shoalhaven area. This is evident in the stories, ceremonies, the natural landmarks and the sacred objects embedded in the landscapes and waterways throughout this region.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Acknowledgement of community

This report was developed based on broad community engagement and consultation. It also draws from a consultation process facilitated by Yerrabingin on Connecting with Country.

We want to thank everyone who participated in the engagement process, which is the essence of this document.

We want to thank the people who were interviewed and those who participated in the engagement workshops throughout February-May 2023.

Without the support from the local community we would not have been able to carry out this project, develop and document knowledge about existing qualities, challenges and aspirations for the future development of the Nowra Riverfront Precinct.



Landscape of the Nowra Riverfront
Nowra, New South Wales, Australia
Photo: Shoalhaven City Council

Nowra Riverfront Activation Plan and Consultation Report

August 2023



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NRAT - Nowra Riverfront Advisory Taskforce

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Team behind this document

arki_lab is an urban design and consultation office specialised in engagement with citizens and users.

They were commissioned for this project to make sure an ambitious and thorough engagement process was carried out as the basis for activating the Nowra Riverfront Precinct.

The activation plan was developed in close collaboration with Shoalhaven City Council and NRAT (Nowra Riverfront Advisory Taskforce)

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1 INTRODUCTION



Photo from Stakeholder Workshop
Nowra, New South Wales, Australia
Photo: arki_lab

Preface

Purpose and role of the Activation Plan

A strategic document

This document lays out an overall strategy for the revitalisation and future activation of the Nowra Riverfront Precinct.

The activation plan is strategic document that represents the overarching directions along which the Nowra Riverfront Precinct will be activated in the coming years.

These directions are presented as a series of key design actions, which suggest future improvements to the area. An overall visualisation of how these action could look, if implemented, is also included.

This document is not a master plan for the future of the Nowra Riverfront Precinct, but instead shows how the suggested design actions could look in practice.

The Nowra Riverfront Activation Plan was commissioned by the Nowra Riverfront Advisory Taskforce established by the NSW Government and carried out by urban consultancy arki_lab - Designing Cities with People in collaboration with the Shoalhaven City Council.

The plan was developed through extensive involvement of the local community and stakeholders in the precinct, building upon a significant body of technical studies.

To the greatest possible extent, the Nowra Riverfront Activation Plan reflects the visions of the community as well as the sum of local knowledge gathered through involvement, consultation, analysis and strategic planning.



Sunrise over the Shoalhaven River
Nowra, New South Wales, Australia
Photo: Shoalhaven City Council

The story of Nowra

Site overview and history

Project site

The Nowra Riverfront Precinct is a low-lying terrain that is located on the southern riverbank of the Shoalhaven River, where a beautiful view of the nearby mountains can be seen. The Princes Highway cuts the Precinct in two, with the majority of the Precinct on the western side. South of the precinct lies the Nowra CBD and to the west is the Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital. East of the precinct lies Mavromattes Reserve and a residential area.

The riverfront is currently undergoing big changes, as a new four lane highway bridge for Princess Highway is being constructed to support northbound traffic. After construction, the middle bridge will handle southbound traffic and the historic Nowra Bridge will be reopened as a dedicated pedestrian and cyclist bridge. Furthermore, the impending redevelopment of Shoalhaven Hospital will also influence the Nowra Riverfront Precinct.



Sailing at the Shoalhaven River

Nowra, New South Wales, Australia

Photo: Shoalhaven City Council

The story of Nowra

Site overview and history

Flooding & site history

The area has historically been subject to severe floods, which is one of the reasons why urban redevelopment on the riverfront has not been realised despite other opportunities in this location.

Future flooding from high hazard riverine flooding in the Lower Shoalhaven River is inevitable, and activating the Precinct with flooding in mind is paramount.

The current flood investigations suggest that raised fill pads may facilitate a level of development in some locations that is compatible with the flood risk. The nature and extent of development shown on the activation plan will ultimately depend on the outcomes of the flood impact and risk assessment.

Flooding of the Nowra Riverfront 1978

Nowra, New South Wales, Australia

Photo: Shoalhaven City Council

Nowra Riverfront today & tomorrow

A precinct with potential for activation





Shoalhaven District
Memorial Hospital

Paringa Park

Nowra
Aquatic Park

Princes Highway

Ortho photo of the Nowra Riverfront
Nowra, New South Wales, Australia
Photo: Shoalhaven City Council



Photo from the Nowra Riverfront
Nowra, New South Wales, Australia
Photo: arki_lab

Previous work

What we are building on

Honouring the groundwork

The Nowra Riverfront Activation Plan builds on a number of previous and concurrent studies and reports. These have all informed the design decisions and suggestions made in creating the Activation Plan.

The studies have been significant in understanding the vision and aspirations for the site, the physical constraints that exist because of flooding, land ownership, the cultural history and natural attributes that should be preserved and enhanced.



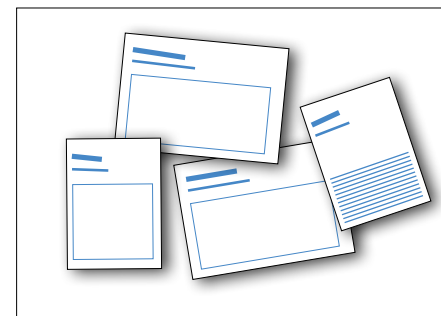
**Nowra Riverfront
Place Vision Report**
Placescore



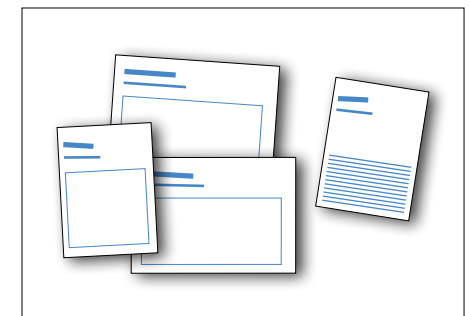
**'Connecting With Country'
Framework**
Yerrabingin



**Nowra Riverfront Strategic
Directions & Proposed Planning
Controls Report**
Studio GL



**Initial planning investigations -
flooding, open spaces**
SCC



Open space concepts
KI Studio

Summary

Main points of the Activation Plan

Design actions

The activation plan proposes a series of design actions intended to revitalise the precinct. These include:

- **Activation of the riverfront.** A boardwalk along the river will strengthen the connection to the waterfront and increase pedestrian and bicycle mobility. Community centered initiatives will be attractive for locals and tourists alike and create life at the riverfront.
- **Implementation of a hierarchy in road infrastructure to increase mobility and safety for all modes of transport.** Improving the conditions for soft infrastructure, including bikes and pedestrians will have a high priority.
- **Higher density housing, including affordable housing, while maintaining a human scale.** An increase in urban density can be a driver for activation of the precinct. The focus will be on designing from a user perspective and creating a human scale experience.
- **Improvement and extension of green space in flood-prone areas.** The goal is to preserve as much existing nature as possible, including native trees. The existing and new green areas will create a green connection between east and west areas and towards the river. They will also provide natural public spaces for recreation and play.
- **Designing with Country.** The cultural landscapes are enhanced, and accessibility to the riverfront is increased. The water will be celebrated by centering activation of the whole precinct on the riverfront.
- **Curated opportunities for retail and commercial redevelopment.** Enhanced commercial opportunities in certain areas of the Precinct will enable lively activities such as markets, cafés, restaurants and bars - activating the Precinct and complementing the CBD.
- **Rethinking parking to minimise kerbside parking while adding extra functions to parking structures.** The intention is to create optimal parking opportunities, that improves accessibility to the precinct which can be hubs for new activities.

The biggest challenges

An overview of the issues and concerns in community and policy

Why mention the issues and concerns?

The activation of the Nowra Riverfront Precinct can cause some different issues and concerns, both in the local community and policy.

To accommodate and acknowledge these, some of the most common concerns are listed here.

It is important to acknowledge and address these concerns throughout the future activation of the Precinct.

Issues and concerns

Is the plan set in stone?

No. The plan is conceptual and a visualisation of the views expressed by community members, with input from urban professionals and local policy makers. The plan is not set in stone – the detail level serves to demonstrate how the overarching principles of the report could look in practice and does not dictate specific developments.

Will the increased housing density detract from the green and blue qualities of the precinct?

The denser housing areas have been strategically placed to respect and preserve the existing natural qualities of the precinct. The urban courtyard housing typology and human-scale design help ensure that development meets the existing landscape at eye level without dominating it.

What about parking?

The activation plan makes effort to consolidate parking in dedicated structures, including a proposed multifunctional structure at the SEC and better utilisation of the hospital parking structure. Based on community feedback, the plan presented here also provides increased riverside and curbside amenities.

Will the proposed tower ruin the entrance to Nowra?

The scope of this document isn't to propose design solutions. The location of a landmark building was chosen to emphasize the entrance to Nowra. The example of a high rise was due to an increased demand for housing and tourist accommodation.

Other feedback was received on operational issues - e.g. council should fix the roads.

These concerns are not within the scope of this report but have been passed on.



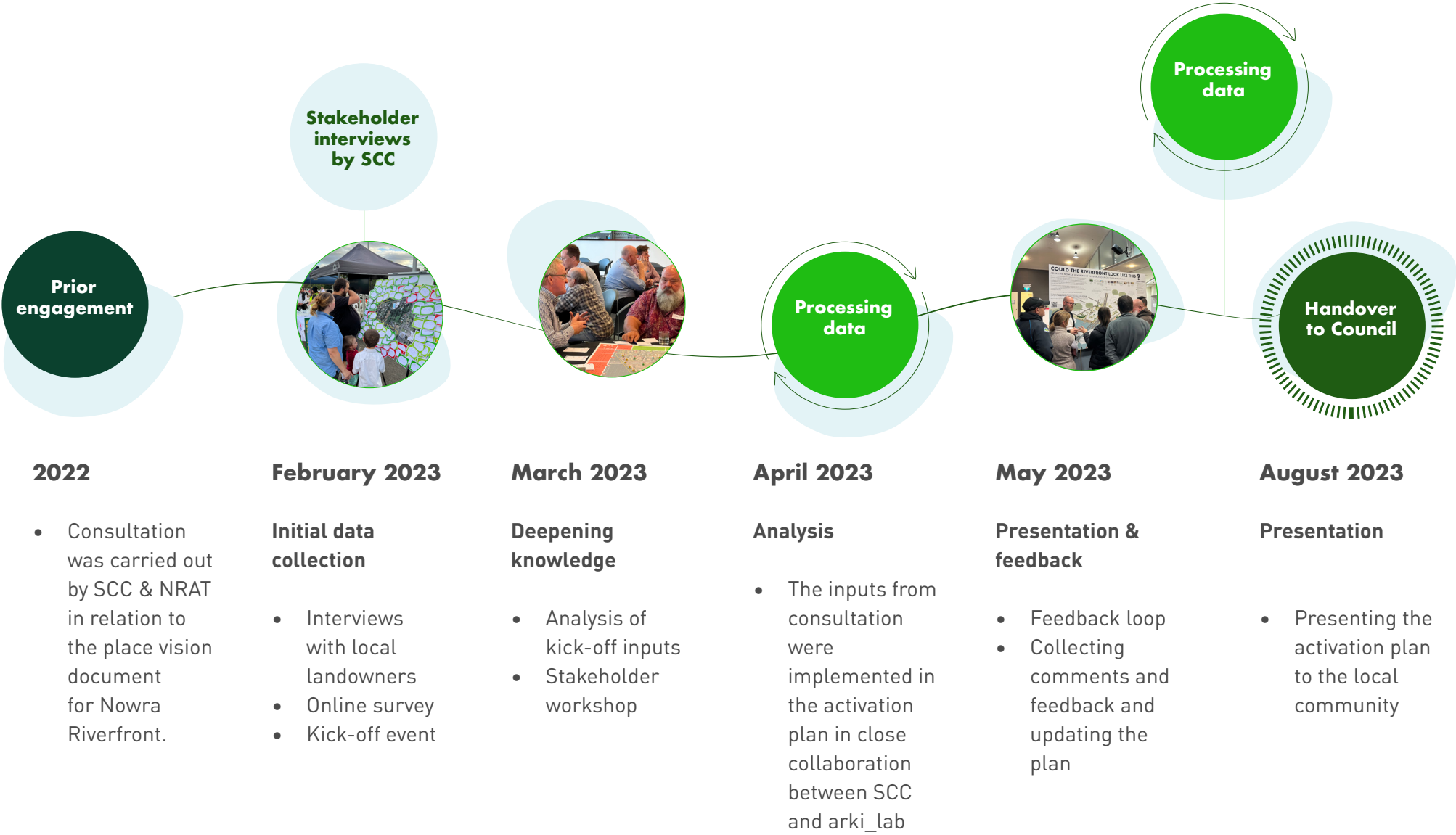
2 CONSULTATION PROCESS



Kick-off event at the Nowra Riverfront
Nowra, New South Wales, Australia
Photo: arki_lab

Timeline

An overview of the consultation process



Visioning exercise

SCC workshop prior to arki_lab commission

2022

Nowra Riverfront Place Vision

A Place Visioning workshop was held in late 2022 with key stakeholders including Shoalhaven City Council, the Nowra Local Aboriginal Land Council, Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District, Department of Regional NSW, Department of Planning and Environment, Transport for NSW, and the Federal Member for Gilmore.

The Project Vision addresses the potential of improvements to the Riverfront precinct which provide flood-resilient amenity and improved access for the local community, so they can safely use and enjoy the open spaces and river as part of a network of public places across the CBD.

The precinct will work in harmony with the natural environment and flow of the river, providing a high-quality landscape for users to enjoy and be nurtured by time in nature. The transformation will be founded in a deep respect for Country that will contribute to healing and reconciliation with the local Indigenous community, their values and knowledge.

Development will focus on complimenting the Nowra CBD as the pre-eminent economic centre with sufficient commercial activities by increasing the customer base through increased housing, housing choices and short-term accommodation within walking distance.

Survey and interviews

Qualitative and quantitative data collection

February — April 2023 Digital survey

The digital survey had the purpose to attain representative baseline measurements of different parts of the Nowra Riverfront Precinct, to understand the general need for improvements and focus for the upcoming activation.

The survey was set up with a series of thematic questions such as how well the area is connected depending on transportation mode, the experience of existing green spaces and the opportunities for commercial life and cultural activities. Lastly, it asked the survey respondents to explore their aspirations for the future Nowra Riverfront Precinct.

The survey is used to identify the focal points for the Activation Plan and substantiate the inputs from the other consultation initiatives.

February 2023 Landowner interviews

Four landowner interviews were conducted by SCC with guidance from arki_lab, to make sure the local landowners had a say and were on board in the future activation of Nowra Riverfront Precinct.

The interviews gave important insights and information to frame the future consultation process and inform the design of the stakeholder workshop. Through the qualitative data, we attained a general understanding of the important themes and discussions in the area from a landowner perspective.



**231
Survey
respondents**

**4 Landowner
interviews**

Connecting with Country

An overview of Yerrabingin's consultation work

Yerrabingin Community Engagement

Yerrabingin has concurrently undertaken consultation with local cultural stakeholders throughout their community engagement process. Although consultation is targeted at everyone in the local community, there is a need for culturally appropriate engagement, emphasising the voices of Traditional Owners of the region.

The Connecting with Country Framework engaged with the local Aboriginal community on their aspirations for the riverfront. Through a collaborative presentation and workshop of the draft master plan with Yerrabingin, changes have been made to align the plan with the themes and aspirations expressed by the Aboriginal community in the Yerrabingin consultation.

Themes to notice

The key themes Yerrabingin's engagement identified were cultural landscapes, accessibility and water. The engagement process highlighted significant opportunities to meaningfully embed culture into the riverfront by connecting it with the environment, improving accessibility, caring for the health of the river and creating welcoming spaces for the community to gather and share stories. The cultural values of the area need to be acknowledged as an important part of the coming development and identity of the precinct.

Water and water stories are an important priority for the Shoalhaven community. This is reflected in the Activation Plan by supporting multiple opportunities to connect the community to the Shoalhaven River and activate educational experiences e.g. with culturally appropriate signage and interactive play with water.

This is also done through the activation of the river edge and how the previously enclosed waterways on site are brought to the surface to expose the cultural landscape history.

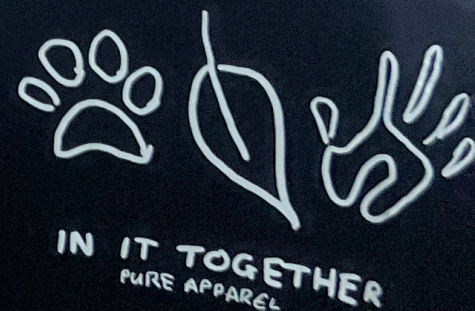


Photo from the Nowra Riverfront
Nowra, New South Wales, Australia
Photo: Yerrabingin

“Water and water stories are the connective tissue of the Shoalhaven community.

Recentring these stories within the masterplan enables both physical and spiritual connection to water.”

— Connecting with Country Concepts Report

April 2023

Photo from the Nowra Riverfront
Nowra, New South Wales, Australia
Photo: Shoalhaven City Council

Kick-off information stall

Connecting with the community at the bridge walk

February 23rd Meeting the community

To connect with as many local and visiting people as possible, a kick-off information stall was put up in connection with a community bridge walk on the new Nowra Bridge organised by Transport for NSW.

The format was an open walk-in information stall with a map of the project site and cards with the option of writing down challenges, potentials and ideas for Nowra Riverfront.

The information stall was crucial in establishing local resonance early within the project, and over 300 important inputs were gathered to inform the design of the further consultation process and Activation Plan.

**306 inputs for
analysis**

**1000+
community
participants**

Kick-off event at the Nowra Riverfront
Nowra, New South Wales, Australia
Photo: arki_lab

Stakeholder workshop

Mapping and engaging local stakeholders

March 28th
Share, listen, solve

The stakeholder workshop activated different actors in the local community to engage them in a focused setting with time for detailed discussions, sharings and idea generating.

The format was an arki_nopoly game session of 2 hours duration. arki_nopoly is a trademark engagement tool and method developed by arki_lab. It allows groups of 4-5 people to walk through their experiences of qualities, issues and possible solutions for a project area. It is ideal for allowing people of all ages and roles to engage with in-depth discussion and idea generation, while recording these exchanges as data points for later analysis.

Through gamification, it offers a great way to facilitate discussion among people with different (and sometimes conflicting) opinions and turn complex concepts into more comprehensible ones.

The workshop allowed for quality discussions between local stakeholders and policymakers, and provided arki_lab with 160 inputs for analysis and design of the Activation Plan.

25+
participants

**160 inputs for
analysis**

Photo from Stakeholder workshop
Nowra, New South Wales, Australia
Photo: arki_lab

Feedback loop

Draft Activation Plan

May 24th Did we hear you right?

A feedback drop-in session showcasing a draft version of the Activation Plan was carried out in the Shoalhaven Entertainment Centre, to make sure the community had an opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns. More than 40 people attended and had discussions with arki_lab and representatives from SCC and NRAT.

The main purpose of the drop-in session was to listen to feedback, both good and bad, and make sure to implement it in the Activation Plan. Feedback on the plan took place in both digital and physical spaces, as the plan was also socialised on Council's Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn pages, with a link

COULD THE RIVERFRONT LOOK LIKE THIS ?

JOIN THE NOWRA RIVERFRONT FEEDBACKLOOP ON THE 24TH OF MAY

This first draft activation plan for the Nowra Riverfront Precinct is based on extensive engagement with local community members and stakeholders throughout early 2023. The plan is not a technical drawing and is not intended to consider all planning regulations. Rather, it is a visualisation of the aspirations and opinions expressed during the engagement process and illustrates how the Riverfront Precinct could be activated in the future.

The plan focusses on creating a better connection to the Shoalhaven River, improving green spaces and public life, enhancing walking and cycling connections as well as respecting and promoting the natural and cultural heritage of the area.

Your comments and thoughts on this draft plan are very welcome!

The Nowra Riverfront Activation Project team and project consultants arki_lab invite you to a **Feedback Drop-in Session on Wednesday 24 May 2023, at the Shoalhaven Entertainment Centre from 5:00pm to 6:00pm**. Here we'll talk about the draft plan in detail and get as much feedback as possible to help us improve the activation plan further.

Building on the shoulders of



DESIGN STORIES

- 1. Introduction
- 2. Vision
- 3. Strategy
- 4. Design Principles
- 5. Design Outcomes
- 6. Design Solutions
- 7. Design Implementation
- 8. Design Monitoring
- 9. Design Evaluation
- 10. Design Conclusion



Scan this QR code to access the feedback session information.

For more information, visit the project website.

For more information, visit the project website.

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40+
community
participants
(at event)

directing the community to provide feedback and comments via the Get Involved online survey.

The feedback event created a space with room for discussions and inputs to be written down for later analysis and implementation.

69 inputs from event
3 e-mails
28 inputs from social media
37 survey respondents

Photo from Feedback loop
Nowra, New South Wales, Australia
Photo: Shoalhaven City Council

Main findings summary

An overview of the main findings

Life on the river

Throughout the engagement process, the river has been a central point of conversation. The most prevalent topic at the kick-off event, and a core theme of the Connecting with Country consultation, was maintaining and strengthening the Precinct's connection to the river became a guiding principle for the development of the activation plan.

Community input has highlighted three aspects in particular: improving access to the riverfront, enabling riverfront activity and celebrating the cultural connection to the river. The strategic actions in the activation plan have been developed with these in mind.

Infrastructure

Throughout the workshops and surveys, there was a near-consensus on the pressing need for improvements in infrastructure. The survey showed that the problem is experienced most severely by car and public transport, however improvements in pedestrian and bike infrastructure were the most requested. While the first draft of the activation plan consolidated parking to a large extent, the feedback loop made evident a need for continued riverside parking access, which is implemented in this version. Many also emphasised the need for improved accessibility and road maintenance.

It is easy to get around within the Nowra Riverfront Precinct

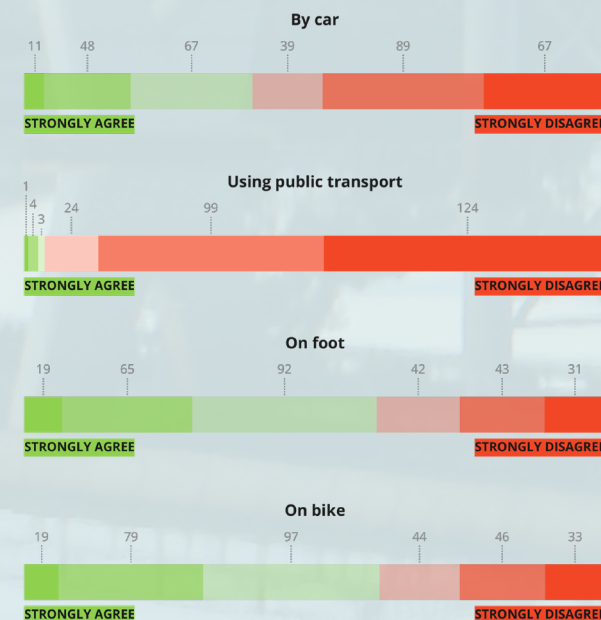


Photo of Nowra Bridge

Nowra, New South Wales, Australia
Photo: Shoalhaven City Council

Housing

The need for housing within the Precinct has been consistently raised throughout the consultation process. While many emphasised the importance of providing accommodation for key workers, community and tourists, there was also concern of the impact high density construction had on the natural qualities and identity of the area.

The activation plan strives to reconcile these positions by increasing density in strategic locations in order to promote more affordable housing while preserving and extending natural green space and respecting the riverfront. The scale and typologies of the proposed housing provides a community feel at street level as well.

Green space

There is a strong appreciation for the existing nature and green space in the precinct. At the same time, most feel that they are underutilised as public spaces. The activation plan improves access to both green areas and the river, while providing better opportunities for play and recreation in these areas. The consultation process also showed a strong appreciation for the importance of natural and cultural heritage in this aspect, emphasising endemic species and areas like Paringa Park and the riverfront.

Activities and city life

The community who use the Nowra Riverfront Precinct expressed a strong desire to see improved opportunities for recreational activities in the Precinct. This could be achieved through improvements to public amenities such as playgrounds, picnic and BBQ spots, sports facilities and access to the river in the form of river pools and kayaking/paddleboarding. Participants in the workshops and surveys also expressed a strong desire for more commercial options such as cafés, food trucks, event spaces, local shops etc.

I think there is a good selection of activities/uses for me in the Nowra Riverfront Precinct





3 STRATEGY & DESIGN PRINCIPLES



Photo from Kick-off event
Nowra, New South Wales, Australia
Photo: arki_lab

Activation plan

Concept drawing of suggested activation



Legend

Concept drawing details

The plan is a schematic and is not 'set in stone' nor a detailed design for each site. It is suggestive as to how the precinct could be developed, based on extensive data from consultation work.

- 1 Turn the grid**
Turn roads perpendicular to the water to improve connection from the CBD to the water
- 2 Boardwalk**
Create a riverfront boardwalk to improve access and activate the riverfront
- 3 Green spaces**
Preserve existing nature with native trees that have environmental and cultural significance
- 4 Civic life**
Create a space that primarily serves civic life to enable community activities
- 5 Urban courtyard typology**
Allow differentiated public, semi-private and private zones

- 6 Commercial life**
Open up the buildings to pedestrians at eye level
- 7 Extension of Aquatic Centre**
Improve the experience and environment of the centre by connecting it to the riverfront
- 8 River pools & sandbank**
Allow possibilities for engaging with the water, in line with Indigenous consultation findings
- 9 Watersports and activities**
Activate the river with opportunities to use the river as a recreational space
- 10 Public toilets**
Accessible and maintained public toilets
- 11 Public transport**
Improve public transport, including bus routes for better car-free access
- 12 Parking structure**
Increase parking options with a multi-purpose structure incorporated in the urban fabric

- 13 Civic square**
Activate the space between Shoalhaven City Council and Shoalhaven Entertainment Centre
- 14 Festival square**
Activate the riverfront with opportunities for bigger gatherings, markets and celebrations
- 15 Public Wharf**
Extend the wharf to a square, that allows cafes and restaurants with outdoor seating
- 16 Opportunity site**
Potentially suited for tourist accommodation and curated commercial opportunities
- 17 Building on raised ground**
Respect flood prone areas and increase residential density on raised ground
- 18 East side of Princes Highway**
Pending on the final results of flood investigations

Infrastructure

Design principles

Turning the grid towards the water

Turning the roads to be perpendicular to the riverfront creates a clear connection all the way from the CBD to the water. A direct approach to the water will enhance encounters with the river and champion the waterfront area. Sharp turns will be reduced by turning the roads, which will create connectivity and safer access for cyclists and pedestrians.



An interwoven road network

A clear hierarchy in the network of roads and pathways will improve the conditions for motor vehicles, bikes and pedestrians. An interwoven road network creates increased connectivity towards the CBD and a manageable connection east to west of the riverfront precinct. Implementing a grid in the network of roads creates smaller and bigger building plots, which will improve development potential.



Riverfront boardwalk

Creating a soft traffic boardwalk will strengthen the connection to the waterfront and create opportunities for activities. The boardwalk should be implemented on the premise of soft traffic, to increase the mobility of pedestrians and bicycles. The boardwalk connects Ben's Walk with existing riverfront paths and the wharf, which binds together the eastern and western side of the precinct. Redevelopment on the riverbank requires further flood investigations to ensure viability of solutions and to mitigate known flood hazard.



Zoom in

Infrastructure

Creating a human-scale road hierarchy

The roads in the Precinct should be strategically placed, with smaller paths and roads joining the parks, greens spaces, and buildings, whilst bigger roads stay on the outskirts of the Precinct, away from the waterfront.

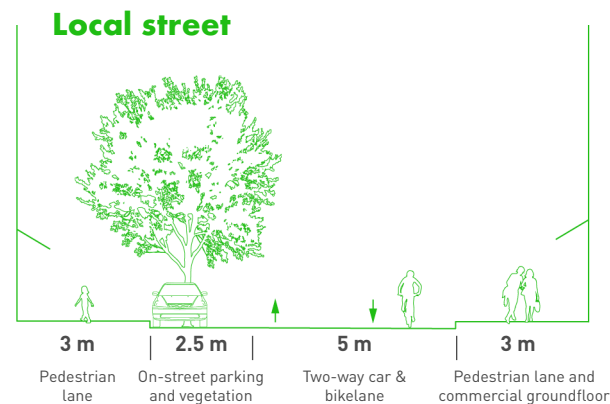
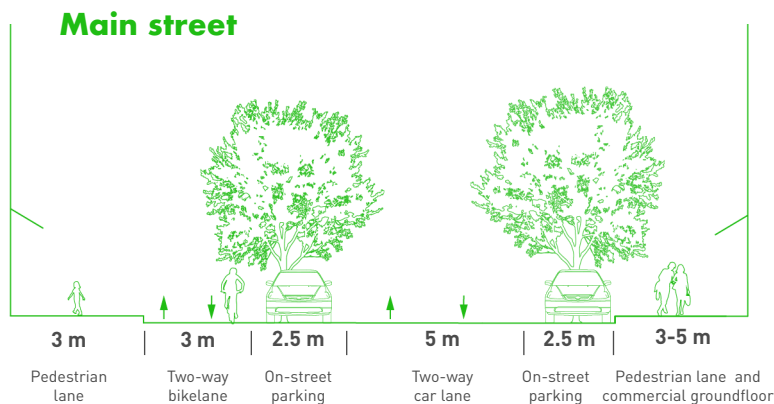
A suggested road hierarchy includes **main, local and community streets**.

Alongside the roads and paths vegetation is needed to soften the hardscape. Trees provide shade for pedestrians and parked cars in the on-street parking areas.

The **main streets** are present to ensure unhindered car access to the Precinct. These are placed in the outskirts of the Precinct to decrease heavy traffic close to the waterfront.

The **local streets** are designed for both transportation and commercial life at the ground level of the buildings. These streets have slow car traffic and connect the residential and commercial areas as well as the CBD and riverfront. They also connect the area to its surrounding facilities and public transportation network through bike and pedestrian paths.

The **community streets** will support a safe and sustainable community, and are designated for soft traffic cutting through from the CBD and along the riverfront. The community streets will connect the network of roads enhancing movement between housing and across green spaces.



Landscape

Design principles

Preserve and add nature

Existing nature that has cultural, environmental and aesthetic significance should be preserved. This includes native trees and other species. The preserved nature is supported by adding green areas where there is potential to enhance riparian stability and increase biodiversity. The existing and proposed green areas will be connected by new green paths that move west and east and towards the river. This will serve as a way to combine green spaces and improve accessibility for soft traffic.



Build on the high ground

It should be acknowledged and respected that the Nowra Riverfront Precinct is subject to flooding. The Activation Plan considers the initial results of flood investigations which are still being finalised. Parks and green spaces should be implemented in flood prone areas, where there is no building potential. In accordance to the flood investigation yet to be finalised, housing densification should be restricted to raised ground with lower flood risk, or areas where it is feasible to mitigate flood risk in compliance with flood planning controls.



Highlight local heritage sites

To pay tribute to the local community and the history of the precinct it is recommended to increase awareness of and accessibility to local heritage sites such as Paringa Park as well as Water stories in relation to Shoalhaven River. The Flood Boat, which needs to be displayed and protected, and Graham Lodge are also important highlights. The preservation and improvement of local heritage sites creates welcoming spaces for the community to gather, learn and share stories.



Zoom in

Landscape

Respect the existing landscape & site history

Caring for the existing landscape and the history of the site is central to developing the future Precinct in a mindful and holistic way. Preserving and enhancing the stories of the site through landscape design creates a rich and diverse identity for the area, telling the tales of the Nowra Riverfront ecosystems, cultural heritage and historical events throughout the years.

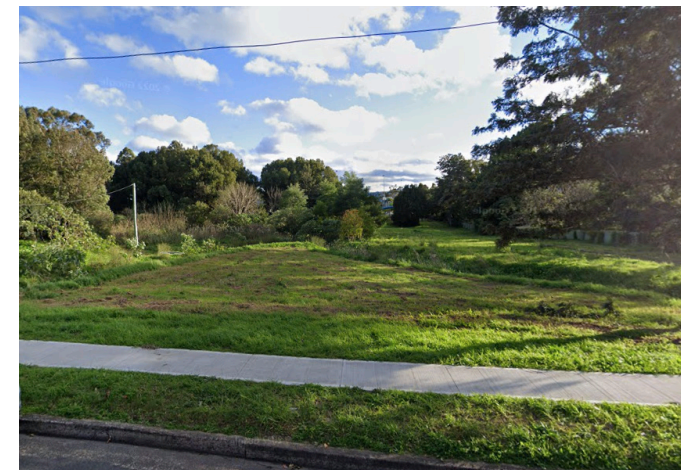
The Activation Plan takes into consideration

the context outside the site boundaries in order to make sure the initiatives reach into their surroundings in a meaningful way. This includes Paringa Park, which holds significance as a sacred place.

The focus on the exiting landscape and local heritage sites creates First Nations enterprise opportunities e.g. to lead tours or offer workshops of foraging, kayaking, storytelling etc.

Left photo: Jacaranda trees in bloom and the heritage bridge at the Shoalhaven River
Nowra, New South Wales, Australia
Photo: Chillby Photography

Right photo: Significant cluster of trees in the central open space of the Precinct
Nowra, New South Wales, Australia
Photo: Google Earth



Urban life

Design principles

Courtyard housing typology

Implementing a courtyard housing typology with 'urban courtyards' creates possibilities for differentiated private, semi-private and public zones. Courtyards formed by using housing typologies of varying heights, shapes and depths stimulate different user experiences with a variety of spatial forms and functions. Spaces between buildings promote activity and safety, and provide shared spaces with more exposure to sun. They also promote the movement of people through buildings by opening up the courtyards.



An active ground floor

Combining commercial and green spaces on the ground floor minimises the footprint of buildings at the pedestrian level. By opening up the buildings to pedestrians instead of creating walls with no access points or permeability, an enhanced living precinct is created with opportunities for more cafés, restaurants and shops. An active ground floor includes proposed new squares, a parking structure and the boardwalk, which all allow different hubs of city life to arise.



A city for people - not cars

Designing from a user perspective creates a human scale experience, especially in-between buildings. Through placing commercial, public and green spaces on the ground floor, it is possible to create a connection between pedestrians and large-scale, multi-story buildings. Also the variety in street dimensions and spaces serves to prioritise pedestrians, which creates an improved walkable area.



Zoom in

Urban life

Create an active & attractive riverfront

One of the main initiatives/focuses for the Nowra Riverfront Activation Plan is to create an active and attractive riverfront.

The boardwalk enables people to get close to the water, and allows space for activities to happen right next to the water. Amenities such as riverpools and a sandbank would facilitate activities next to the water, but will need further flood investigation to determine if feasible.

Extending the Nowra Aquatic Park towards the river will also serve to activate the riverfront and seek to improve the experience of the park, environment around the park, accessibility, public nodes and overall experiences.

Activation will also happen by increasing facilities for watersport activities, and implementing other casual sports infrastructure, such as beach volley nets, tennis courts and Futsal-pitches.

Spaces for new activities at the riverfront attract locals and tourists, which will be essential for creating a lively precinct.



Principal section: a possible landscape design activating and protection from flooding. An active river zone at severely flood prone area



4 STRATEGIC ACTIONS



Photo from Kick-off event
Nowra, New South Wales, Australia
Photo: arki_lab

Intertwining public transport with the precinct

Public transport & parking

"There are nearly no taxis and not much public transport, so any time there is any event on you've got no chance of getting home if you wanted to have an evening out with a couple of drinks."

- Survey respondent

Suggested actions

- A new bus route that intertwines with the network of roads
- New bus stops close to the riverfront activities
- More frequent buses, especially at night, to create opportunities for commercial and cultural life and promote fewer cars
- Public transport on the river such as a water taxi

Why?

When asking about the accessibility around and within the Nowra Riverfront Precinct, the most frequent answer during the consultation processes was to improve the conditions and accessibility of public transportation. A road network built on the terms of pedestrians implies creating better public transport from the eastern to the western side, across Princes Highway and from the CBD towards the riverfront. An improvement of public transport both on land and on the river will help shift the focus from car-oriented planning to soft and collective traffic.

The survey respondents found the Precinct most difficult to access by public transport compared to other modes of transport while navigating it by foot or bike was rated the easiest (see diagram on page 30). At the same time, it was highly requested to improve and develop pedestrian infrastructure at all engagement events. The most highly suggested improvements were better connection to Ben's Walk, routes along the riverfront and connection to the CBD.



Bus stops placed strategically and close to attractions where accessibility is a requirement e.g. near the waterfront.

Coogee Beach, Sydney, Australia.
Photo: Unknown



Good public transport is a necessity for citizens without a car, especially for children, young people, elderly and people with disabilities.

Nørrebrogade, Copenhagen, Denmark.
Photo: arki_lab

Minimizing empty fortified space

Public transport & parking

“Provide more public parking spaces to support the whole precinct - they could also be used for markets and events as needed.”

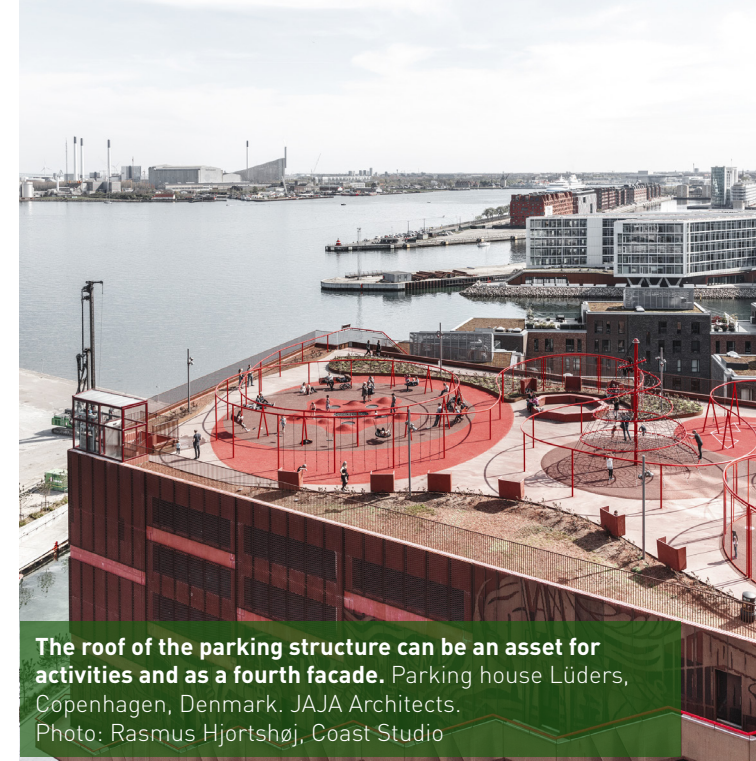
- Stakeholder workshop participant

Suggested actions

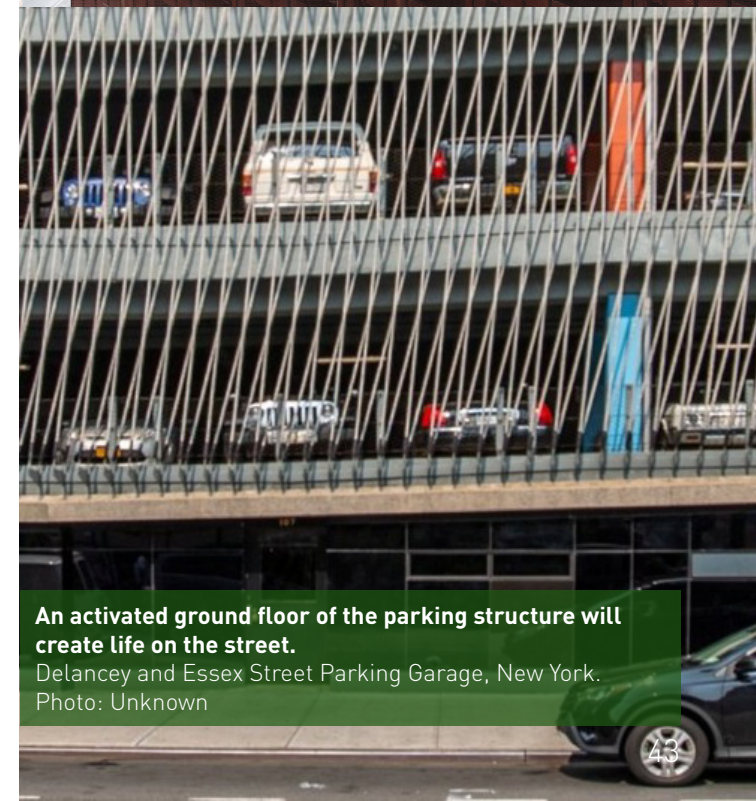
- Residential on-street parking
- Parking structures for high load
- Small parking pockets close to riverfront
- Utilise the hospital parking by subsidising the parking space

Why?

Activation of the Nowra Riverfront requires a focus on the soft traffic close to and along the riverfront. Placing parking strategically by creating parking opportunities within walking distance is therefore necessary in order to create a car free boardwalk that primarily serves pedestrians and cyclists. Proposed are small pockets of parking at the end of the roads to the riverfront, with the option to convert them into market places when not used. On-street parking with vegetation should still be possible in the precinct, but to a lesser extent. Furthermore, a better utilisation of the existing hospital parking structure will help alleviate car parking problems. Finally a new parking structure close to the Shoalhaven City Council and Shoalhaven Entertainment Center is suggested to decrease on-street parking in the area. A parking structure relieves the high load of parking, and offers opportunities for commercial life on the ground floor and an activated rooftop. Flexible uses and design of a parking structure helps incorporate the structure into the urban fabric.



The roof of the parking structure can be an asset for activities and as a fourth facade. Parking house Lüders, Copenhagen, Denmark. JAJA Architects. Photo: Rasmus Hjortshøj, Coast Studio



An activated ground floor of the parking structure will create life on the street. Delancey and Essex Street Parking Garage, New York. Photo: Unknown

Adding culturally appropriate elements

Designing with Country

“Public art e.g. local animal sculptures and Indigenous interpretative signage.”

– Kick-off workshop participant

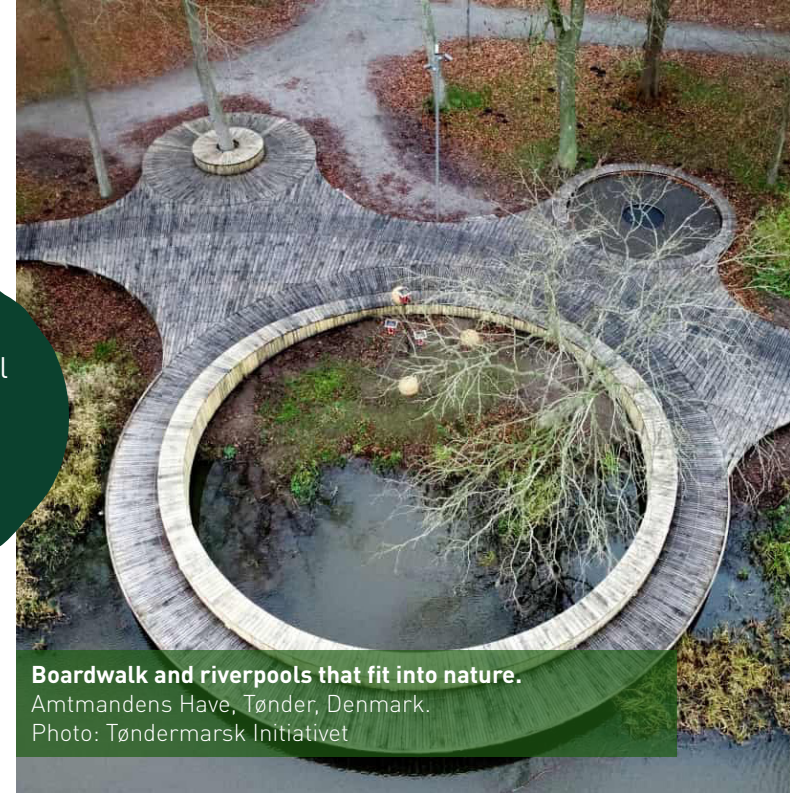
Suggested actions

- Create a soft, organically shaped boardwalk that fits into the landscape
- Implement riverpools and a sand bank for activities that allow connecting with water
- Design a park around Graham Lodge
- Provide culturally appropriate signage and highlight nature

Why?

To enhance and activate the cultural and natural landscapes of the precinct, the suggested river boardwalk and other landscape designs along the river should be of organic nature. The river ecosystems could also be improved by implementing more riparian vegetation.

Signage and wayfinding should be added to better communicate spaces with significant cultural value. Additional communal and cultural spaces for community gatherings add something new to the precinct. These could be placed in the central open space, in close proximity to the big tree cluster. Spaces for public art exhibitions could be placed in the landscape or along the riverfront.



Boardwalk and riverpools that fit into nature.

Amtmandens Have, Tønder, Denmark.

Photo: Tøndermarsk Initiativet



Vegetation in the water to support biodiversity

Minghu Wetland Park, China. Turenscape Landscape

Architecture

Photo: Turenscape

Attention to existing landscape values

Designing with Country

Keep
natural features -
river views, trees."

- Kick-off participant

"More Jacarandas.
Make Nowra something to be
proud of."

- Kick-off participant

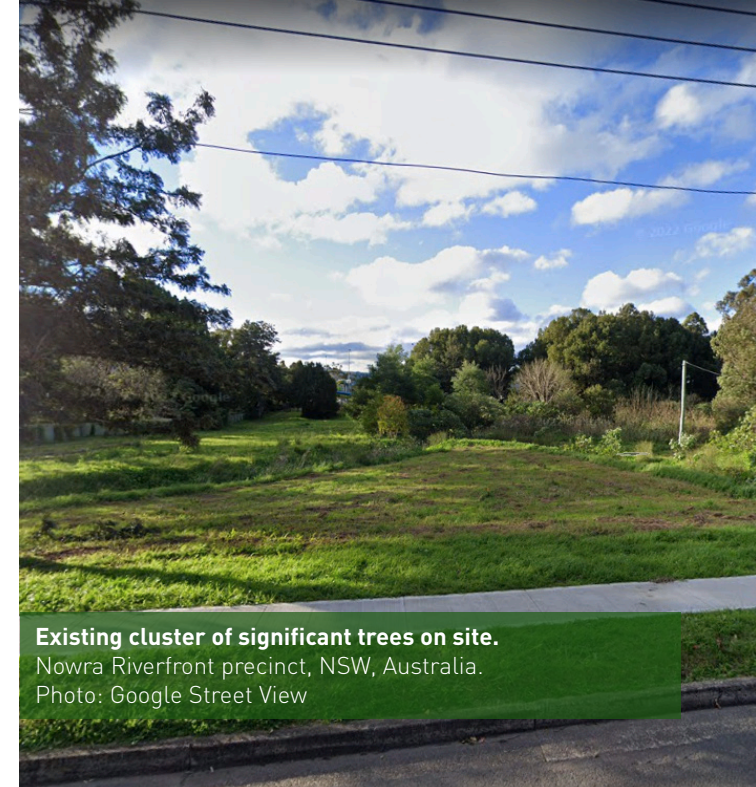
Suggested actions

- Preserve as much existing nature as possible, specifically the central big cluster of trees
- Use native plant and tree species
- Acknowledge and respect landscape spaces with an Indigenous cultural meaning, e.g. Paringa Park

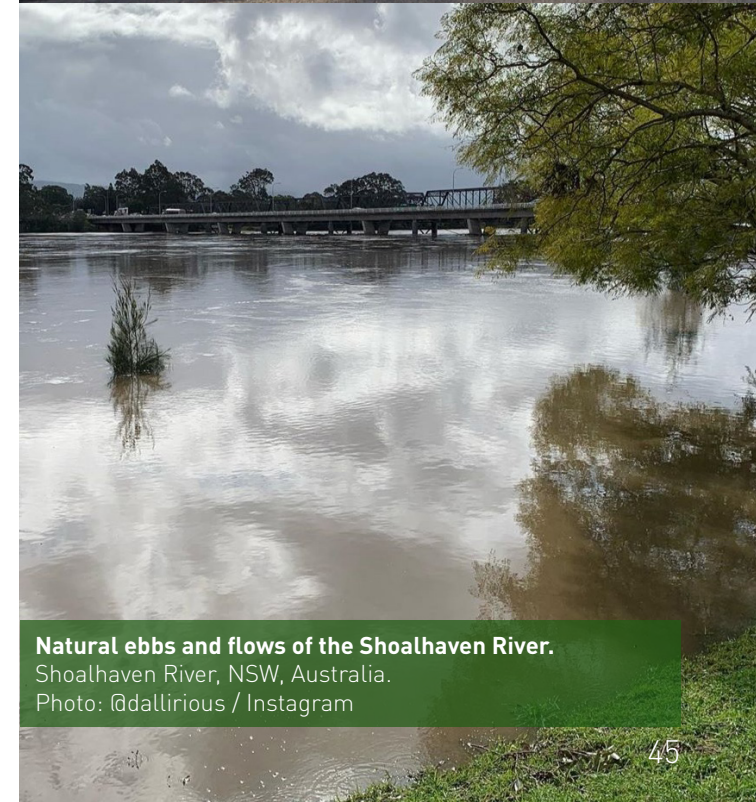
Why?

The landscape in the Nowra Riverfront Precinct is truly special and full of potential for recreational and educational experiences. This landscape is mentioned in various ways throughout the data, especially with a focus on preservation and additional green spaces.

The central part of the Precinct holds an existing open green space with a cluster of significant trees that have to be preserved. This is a flood prone area and is kept clear from urban development, which instead is placed in its periphery. This central open space serves as a green and blue lung of the surrounding urban development and community. The river has intrinsic value as an ecosystem and natural element, and should be sensitively activated.



Existing cluster of significant trees on site.
Nowra Riverfront precinct, NSW, Australia.
Photo: Google Street View



Natural ebbs and flows of the Shoalhaven River.
Shoalhaven River, NSW, Australia.
Photo: @dallirious / Instagram

Getting close to the water

Life on the river

“The road near the pool should be permanently blocked off from the highway to reduce through traffic and make it safer for pedestrians and cyclists.”

- Survey participant

“Reactivate the waterfront. Riverpools riverpools can't say it enough.”

- Kick-off workshop participant

Suggested actions

- Move the motorised traffic away from the riverfront, to create access to the water on soft traffic's terms
- Implement a boardwalk with possibilities for direct access to the water and a variety of seating options
- Improve conditions for water sport activities
- Investigate project precedents from similarly hazardous riverfront environments to ensure viability of solutions

Why?

A primary goal of the Activation Plan is to get close to the water and create a lively environment along the riverfront. The first step is to focus on the non-motorised infrastructure and move the cars back into the landscape, away from the waterfront. This creates accessibility to the water on pedestrians and cyclists' terms, and will create a better environment for commercial and community activities, which is essential for a lively precinct.

The suggested boardwalk is just one example of an action that could be done to get close to the water. A boardwalk will create a strong identity for the area, and foster a new life whilst connecting the Precinct to the river.

A boardwalk that allows different ways to stay and move along the riverfront.

Islands Brygge, Copenhagen, Denmark. BIG, JDS Architects
Photo: Thomas Vraaby

A smooth transition between land and water.

Park Somerlust, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Felixx.
Photo: Jeroen Musch

Activating the riverfront with strategic activities

Life on the river

“Interactive activities for kids along the entire waterfront. Activities of retail frontages along a waterfront walk.”

- Kick-off workshop participant

Suggested actions

- Arrange a sequence of urban spaces along the riverfront for all ages
- Extending the active Aquatic Centre area with river pools and a sandbank
- Placing cafes, restaurants and shops along the riverfront
- Drawing spaces for civic purposes close to the waterfront allowing community activities to happen

Why?

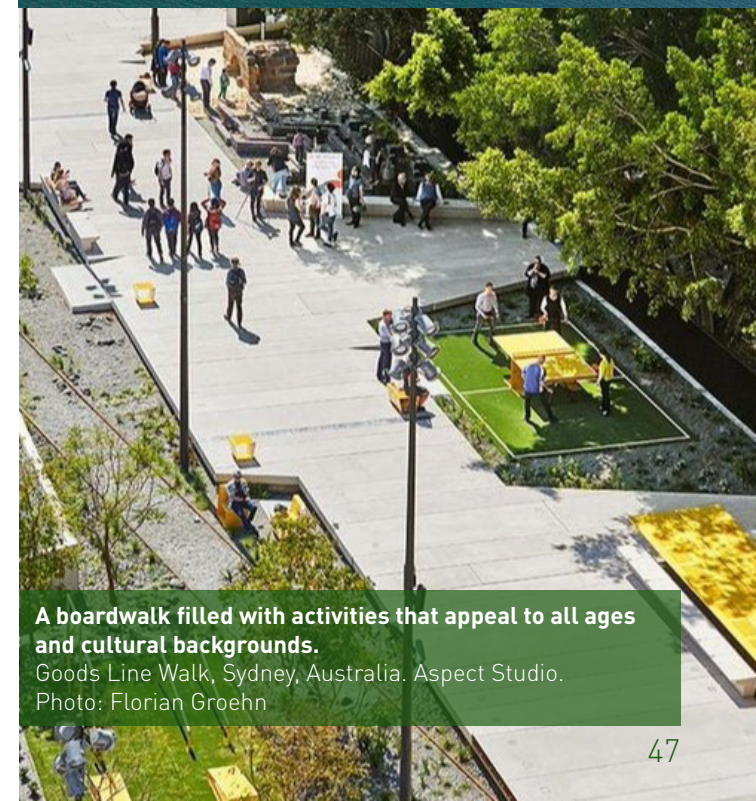
Vibrant civic life along the riverfront will be supported by a variety of public spaces, with opportunities for a range of activities and events. Throughout the community inputs it was clear that there was a desire for more activities to happen along the riverfront. Different activities close to the water, such as smart seating possibilities, playgrounds and casual sports activities were strongly suggested. The activities should appeal to all ages and cultural backgrounds, both locals and visitors.

An extension of the existing Nowra Aquatic Centre will activate the riverfront further by connecting the existing pool complex with a proposed sandbank and new river pools. The sandbank and river pools should refer to natural shapes, and thereby intertwine the urban hardscapes and pavings with the natural landscape. The activities must be flexible and compatible with flooding.



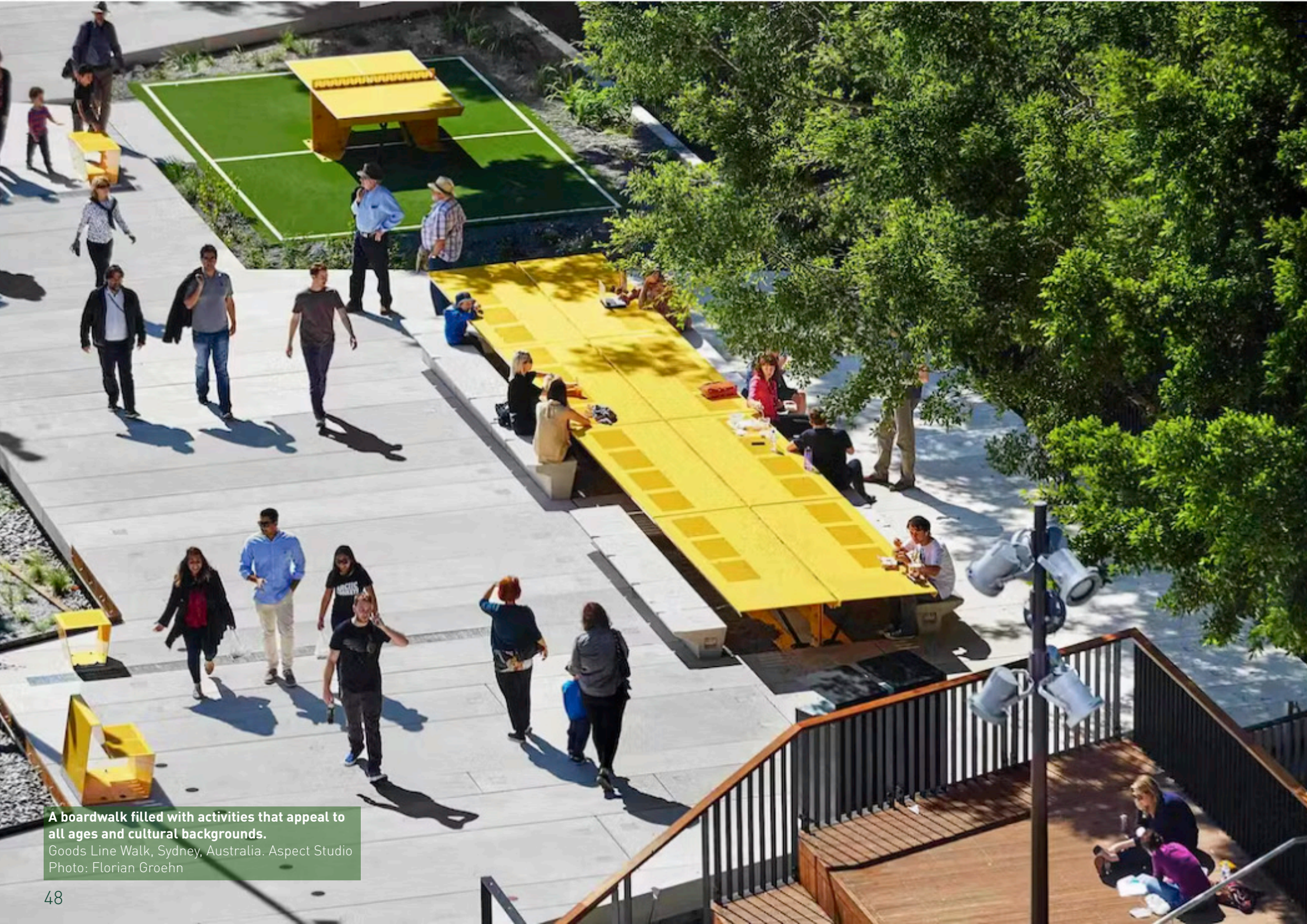
Riverpools with organic shapes to harmonise with the landscape.

Østre og Vestre Søbad, Silkeborg, Denmark. Sweco Architects.
Photo: Sweco Architects



A boardwalk filled with activities that appeal to all ages and cultural backgrounds.

Goods Line Walk, Sydney, Australia. Aspect Studio.
Photo: Florian Groehn



A boardwalk filled with activities that appeal to all ages and cultural backgrounds.
Goods Line Walk, Sydney, Australia. Aspect Studio
Photo: Florian Groehn

Build to create human-scale & diverse housing

Housing & neighbourhood

Suggested actions

- Design building volume and facade articulation to create welcoming and comfortable spaces
- Make strategic increases in housing development to activate the precinct
- Offer mixed housing types, incl. affordable housing for key workers
- Implement a diverse-looking urban development that stimulate the senses

Why?

The future housing development of the Precinct was one of the more contentious topics in the consultation processes. Among the kick-off event participants who addressed the subject, roughly half believed that the area has underutilised potential for denser and higher housing development. An equally sized group, however, was sceptical about development plans, especially concerned with the impact of high-rise development.

An urban development in line with human-scale design accommodates this two-sided debate. A diversity in heights, shapes and depths built on a small footprint allows the amount of housing to be increased in a way that does not appear too dense.

The future housing development should provide opportunities for mixed residential housing, affordable housing and housing for key workers of the Precinct. More housing in the area will activate and promote life, provide eyes on the street and create better conditions for local community.

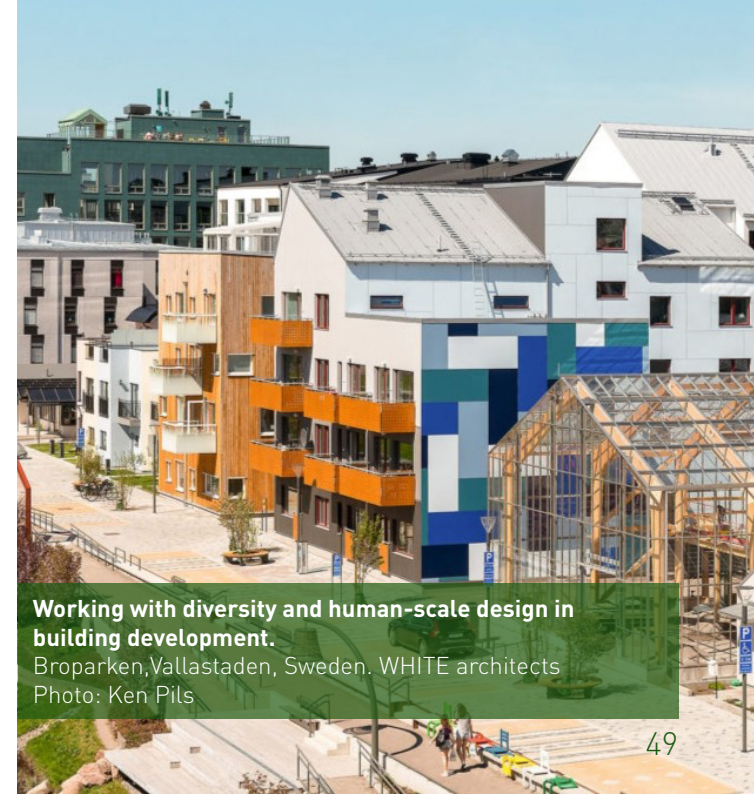
“Make real affordable housing.”

- Kick-off workshop participants



Creating facades that stimulate and activate the people walking by.

Borneo-Sporenburg, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.
Photo: arki_lab



Working with diversity and human-scale design in building development.

Broparken, Vallastaden, Sweden. WHITE architects
Photo: Ken Pils

A new typology for social neighbourhoods

Housing & neighbourhood

Suggested actions

- Create urban courtyards nurturing social neighbourhoods
- Create possibilities for differentiated private, semi-private and public zones
- Allow access between buildings creating a flow and accessibility between buildings
- Community activities in courtyards e.g. playgrounds, community gardens and water landscapes

“Community housing!”

– Kick-off workshop participant

Why?

An increase of housing in the Precinct requires a building typology in a human-scale. A courtyard typology, will activate the spaces between buildings and allow a social neighbourhood to grow. Creating spaces that differentiate between private, semi-private and public zones will accommodate different needs for the users. A courtyard typology created from diverse building types will serve specific user groups through addressing their spatial needs, including exposure to the sun, circulation patterns and accessibility within the building. Creating open spaces for passing through will open up the courtyards and promote the movement of people between the buildings.



An urban courtyard typology enables more green space for everyone and establishes community spaces in semi-private courtyards between buildings.

Straussvej Courtyard, Copenhagen, Denmark. BOGL.
Photo: arki_lab



Urban courtyards give the possibility for shared costs for common area maintenance and increased biodiversity.

Marmorbyen, Copenhagen, Denmark. 1:1 Landskab.
Photo: 1:1 Landskab

Connecting green spaces across the precinct

Parks and green space

Suggested actions

- Preserve existing green space as much as possible, embodying riparian and biodiversity values
- Create more green areas in the gaps between built up areas
- Combine green areas with a green belt and continuous path system, possibly connecting to existing open spaces outside the Precinct

"There are no proper parks available. "

- Survey participant

Why?

The Nowra Riverfront Precinct is already associated with existing green areas and natural surroundings. The Activation Plan suggests highlighting the already existing green areas, incorporating them into a larger network of green spaces in the Precinct. Creating new green areas in the gaps around and within the urban development creates room for recreational activities like picnic areas, playgrounds and community spaces.

The plan provides a central strategy to create a new green belt with a cohesive path system for pedestrians and cyclists. It combines the green areas and improves the accessibility for soft traffic and enhances the experience of moving around the Precinct through its connected green areas. The green spaces are also important in relation to flood mitigation, Urban Heat Island (UHI) and general climate regulation.



Working with landscape topography and winding paths to create differentiated outdoor spaces.

Gellerup New Nature Park, Aarhus, Denmark. SLA.
Photo: SLA/Rasmus Hjortshøj.



Paths through the green spaces as the fastest and healthiest route with space for both pedestrians and cyclists.

The Green bike route, Copenhagen, Denmark.
Photo: Unknown

Embracing water in the landscape

Parks and green space

“Encourage the flooding area with a park or public space.”

- Stakeholder workshop participant

“Native plants as an amenity, embrace the flooding.”

- Kick-off workshop participant

Suggested actions

- Re-establish the existing creek
- Revegetation and restoration of natural drainage systems
- Use endemic species resilient to flooding
- Use sensitive landscape design e.g. constructed wetlands and riparian vegetation to remedy flooding

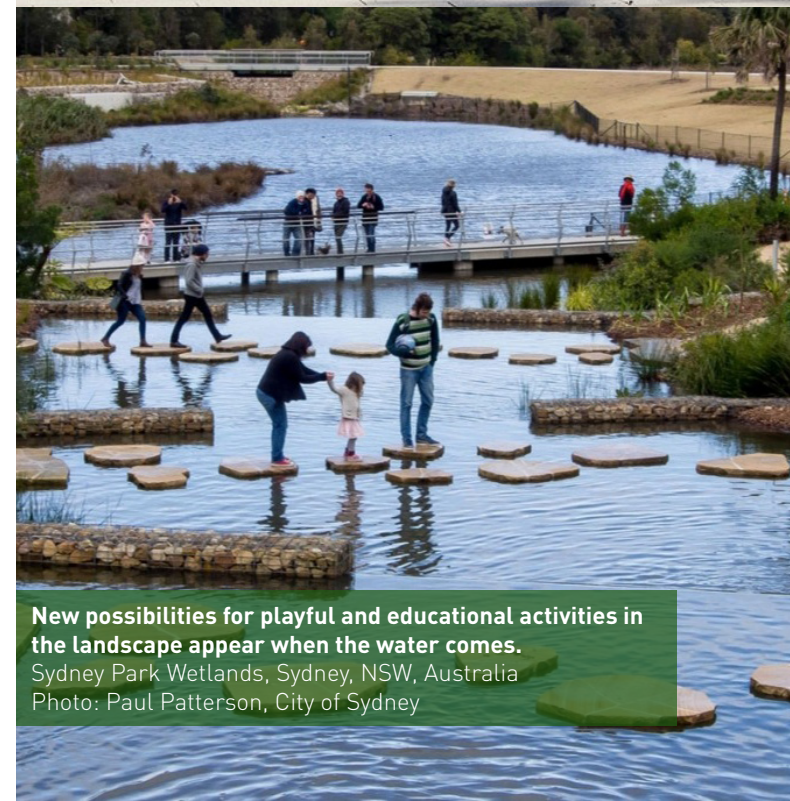
Why?

The Nowra Riverfront Precinct is subject to frequent and high hazard flooding. The Activation Plan acknowledges this and works strategically with the water instead of working against it. It aligns with the future directions of the Lower Shoalhaven River Coastal Management Program. Embracing the flood prone areas and utilising them for park and landscape development will serve to increase biodiversity, but also create possibilities for new activities to happen as the landscape changes. This could be done by designing landscapes for different use when the area experiences flooding, creating interchangeable landscape features that enable people to walk over, in or along the water in the parks throughout the precinct. Design developed in consultation with the local Aboriginal community can meet the wishes for culturally appropriate design with connection to the water as it changes in the landscape. Re-establishing the creek will support possibilities for rewilding and a natural drainage system.



Working with nature, not against it by embracing the water when it rises.

Oaklands Park and Wetland, Adelaide, Australia
Photo: Sam Noonan



New possibilities for playful and educational activities in the landscape appear when the water comes.

Sydney Park Wetlands, Sydney, NSW, Australia
Photo: Paul Patterson, City of Sydney



Working with nature, not against it by embracing the water when it rises.
Oaklands Park and Wetland, Adelaide, Australia
Photo: City of Marion

Activating the public spaces in the precinct

Public space & commercial life

“We need cafes, public area, plaza, outdoor dining.”

- Kick-off workshop participant

Suggested actions

- Create public spaces, each with their own unique use and function
- **The new civic square:** connecting the Shoalhaven Entertainment Centre and Shoalhaven City Council
- **The festival square:** for festivals, concerts and markets close by the riverfront
- **The public wharf:** sailboats, cafes, restaurants right on the riverbank

Why?

Improving public space was a need addressed by many locals. The Activation Plan creates a variety of public spaces that can be used for different things, making sure that the spaces are varied in use and don't compete for the same kind of activities. This gives community activities a physical platform, which results in the Precinct having more spaces that attract commercial and cultural life. A civic square between the Shoalhaven Entertainment Centre, Shoalhaven City Council and the proposed parking structure will create a 'city square'. This will allow activities in the entertainment centre to spill out and fully utilise the space. A 'festival' square along the boardwalk would allow bigger community events such as concerts, theatre and markets - a space for celebration right next to the waterfront. The existing public wharf could be developed as a marina with floating docks to accommodate marine activities, and become a space for more cafes and restaurants.



Creating opportunities for flexible use

Public space & commercial life

Suggested actions

- Create a diverse area with mixed housing, local commercial and cultural life
- Place commercial life strategically in spots with good exposure and public life e.g. street corners and close to the riverfront
- Commercial and local office area close to the Shoalhaven Entertainment Centre and parking structure

“Make sure there is commercial life.”

“Coffee shops/cafes and restaurants along riverside (both sides). Beautiful open space to enjoy and utilize.”

- Kick-off workshop participants

Why?

Beside public spaces, many people requested more commercial opportunities, such as cafés and restaurants. The Precinct has a plethora of future possibilities grounded in the existing activities already present there, and commercial life should be highly prioritised as an initiative to activate the precinct further. Many expressed a desire for a café in a park or by the water. The Precinct should not compete to become the new CBD, but rather appear as a mixed housing area associated with commercial, cultural and community life in green surroundings. Commercial life should be strategically placed, using ground floor facades around the green spaces, on relevant local streets and along the suggested boardwalk. A small commercial and office oriented area for local businesses, offices and tourist accommodation is suggested next to the Shoalhaven Entertainment Centre and Shoalhaven City Council, with the new civic square as the unifying space in between.



Commercial life close to the riverfront and green spaces.

Domino Park, Brooklyn, NY. James Cornerfield Operations
Photo: Barrett Doherty



Opportunities for festivals, community events and markets along the riverfront green space.

Guldborgs Plads, Copenhagen, Denmark. 1:1 Landskab.
Photo: arki_lab



5 WHAT'S NEXT?





Photo from Stakeholder workshop
Nowra, New South Wales, Australia
Photo: arki_lab

An active document

Using this document and planning the future process

This document is meant to be used to start conversations and help both visualise and shape how the Nowra Riverfront Precinct should and could be activated, with aspirations, visions and ideas from the local community as the stepping stone.

Keep engaging the locals!

It is of great importance to actively engage the local community in the development of the local area, to ensure the work carried out thus far continues to further activate the Precinct. Contact is already established, and a recommendation is to implement a project group including local actors and representatives that can meet up a few times yearly alongside the work of SCC and NRAT. This way, the precinct activation stays rooted in the community.

Phasing

The Activation Plan is meant to be realised with phasing. The plan as it is right now shows everything at once, whereas the reality will be a development divided into many smaller projects with their own timelines and processes.

The Activation Plan is a tool to keep the activation aligned and on track, and should be used as a guideline for the many different projects that the coming activation of the Precinct will spur.

Priorities in order

We suggest prioritising developing the river boardwalk, as it is a strong and consistent aspiration of the local community to improve access to the riverfront. It is also a great starting point because it creates new opportunities for local commercial life to spring up and for community life to take place.

