

# Revitalising Newcastle Submission

*Positioning Newcastle to  
become Australia's first  
regional city of the  
Asia-Pacific*

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The Property  
Council of  
Australia is  
the leading  
advocate for  
Australia's  
biggest  
industry –  
property

# Who We Are

*The Property Council champions the interests of more than 2200 member companies that represent the full spectrum of the industry, including those who invest, own, manage and develop in all sectors of property. Creating landmark projects and environments where people live, work, shop and play is core business for our members.*

## 1.1 NATIONAL INFLUENCE

Our industry represents one ninth of Australia's GDP (the largest of any sector), employs 1.1 million Australians (more than mining and manufacturing combined) and generates \$72 billion in tax revenues to fund community services

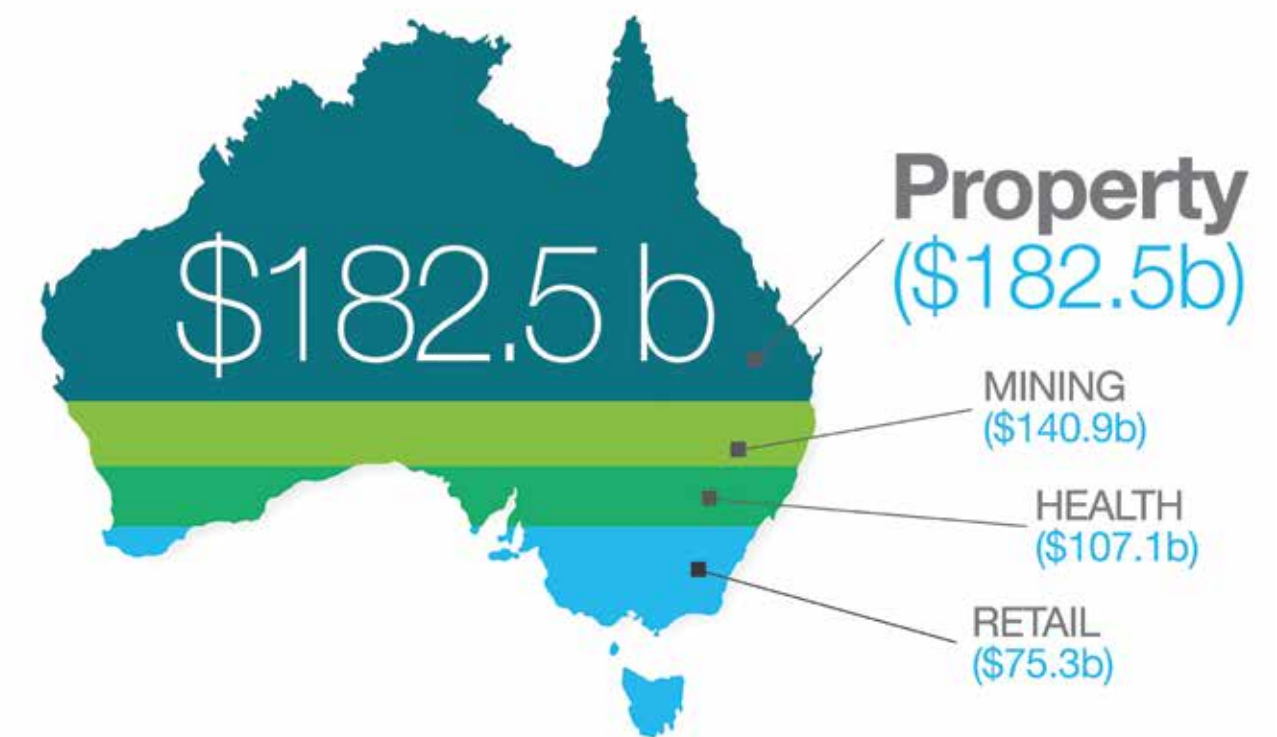
## 1.2 REGIONAL IMPACT

The property industry contributes \$3.6 billion to economic growth, pays \$1.4 billion in wages and generates 23,190 jobs in the Hunter.

Led by a powerful cohort of local professionals and backed by the strength of the NSW Division, the Property Council's Hunter Chapter is responsible for the most comprehensive industry submissions to Government on regional policy settings and hosts regional NSW's premier business networking events.

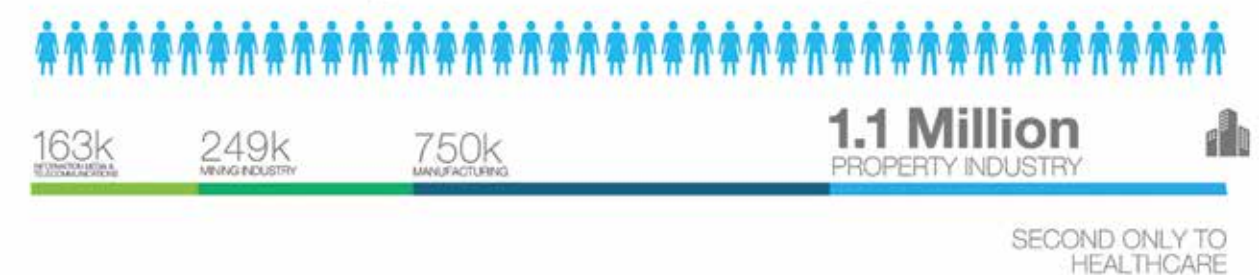
In 2015-16 our two key policy priorities are finding the best development solution for revitalising Newcastle's city centre and unlocking residential supply on the urban fringes to maintain the Hunter's current growth trajectory.

## AUSTRALIA'S BIGGEST INDUSTRY



## THE BIG JOB CREATOR

Which industry is Australia's 2<sup>nd</sup> largest employer?



Which sector touches the lives of Australians?



# Vision

*A thriving industry  
creating prosperity, jobs  
and strong communities*

# Mission

*To champion a strong  
property industry*



# How we develop policy

*Following release of the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy (NURS) in December 2012, we immediately established the Newcastle Renewal Taskforce - a local industry brains trust – to advise government on the city centre's revitalisation.*



## **2.1 LOCAL EXPERTISE**

The Taskforce has been resourced to commission independent research and consult widely with business and community leaders on strategic priorities for the City.

Over the past three years, the Taskforce has made comprehensive submissions to the NSW Government built on the intellectual capital, extensive experience and key market insights of our members, validated by independent research and grounded in truth on various policy proposals including;

1. 2012 Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy
2. 2013 Newcastle Light Rail Project
3. 2014 SEPP Amendment (Newcastle City Centre)
4. 2014 Newcastle Development Control Plan
5. 2015 Mine Subsidence Remediation Fund

Where appropriate, those submissions have been supported by an integrated marketing campaign plan to raise community awareness of the benefits of these new policy settings.

Additionally, we conduct regular briefings with senior public sector executives, elected representatives and relevant Ministers to share the latest market intelligence.

Led by Hunter Chair Edward Crawford and coordinated by NSW Regional Director Andrew Fletcher, Taskforce members are appointed to provide expert advice and guidance to distinct Government submissions based on relevant skills and experiences.

# Taskforce on Revitalising Newcastle Submission



*Peter Macadam*  
**DIRECTOR**  
Organisation  
*Colliers International*  
Speciality Role  
*Commercial*



*Glen Spicer*  
**DIRECTOR**  
Organisation  
*EJE Architecture*  
Speciality Role  
*Urban Design*



*Paul Muir*  
**PROJECT DIRECTOR**  
Organisation  
*Coffey*  
Speciality Role  
*Environment*



*Edward Crawford*  
**DIRECTOR**  
Organisation  
*Crawford Robinson*  
Speciality Role  
*Investment*



*Mark Hocking*  
**NEWCASTLE MANAGER**  
Organisation  
*Rider Levett Bucknall*  
Speciality Role  
*Infrastructure*



*Monica Gibson*  
**REGIONAL DIRECTOR**  
Organisation  
*CityPlan Services*  
Speciality Role  
*Planning*



*Murray Evans*  
**PARTNER**  
Organisation  
*PwC*  
Speciality Role  
*Finance*



*Richard Anderson*  
**GENERAL MANAGER**  
Organisation  
*Stronach Property*  
Speciality Role  
*Residential*



*Angus Rose*  
**SENIOR ASSOCIATE**  
Organisation  
*DWP Suters*  
Speciality Role  
*Urban Design*



*Neil Petherbridge*  
**DIRECTOR**  
Organisation  
*Northrop Consulting Engineers*  
Speciality Role  
*Engineering*



*Andrew Fletcher*  
**NSW REGIONAL DIRECTOR**  
Organisation  
*Property Council of Australia*  
Speciality Role  
*Advocacy*





Klyde Warren Park



2.2 WORLD'S BEST PRACTICE

Taskforce members completed a study tour in July 2015 to guarantee their signature piece of urban renewal policy would be informed by world's best practice.

The delegation visited four major US cities and inspected urban renewal projects regarded as global leaders for transforming post-industrial land to;

- ✓ Create Destinations
- ✓ Improve public amenity
- ✓ Connect communities
- ✓ Encourage Investment
- ✓ Stimulate Demand

The Taskforce analysed each project according to;

- Design
- Financing
- Implementation
- Community Engagement

Central importance was given to meeting with and learning first-hand from the community leaders, city officials and private developers that made those projects happen.

In developing this submission, the lessons and experiences from the study tour have been complimented by independent research, design workshops and broad consultation.



High Line



Light rail



Hudson River Park



2.3 BROAD CONSULTATION

In October 2015, the Taskforce convened the Transforming Newcastle Summit to bring together regional industry bodies, professional associations and community groups – as well as the major investors, property owners and developers in the City Centre.

The Transforming Newcastle Summit had the following aims;

- Widen the net of good ideas
- Test the thinking behind MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY
- Agree on a unified set of recommendations to the NSW Government

**The Transforming Newcastle Summit reached unanimous agreement on;**

- ✓ **The guiding principles of MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY**
- ✓ **The urban design features of MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY**



# What we believe

### 3.1 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

For more than a decade, the Property Council of Australia has believed in a core set of advocacy priorities for the City of Newcastle:

1. Targeting distinct precincts as the building blocks for revitalising the city centre
2. Opening the city back up to its waterfront
3. Connecting it all with an integrated transport network.

In December 2012, these strategic priorities were announced as NSW Government policy with release of the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy (NURS).

We believe in the NURS and other policy settings announced by the NSW Government in relation to revitalization of the city centre, including;

- A world-class multi-modal transport interchange at Wickham
- Light rail from the Wickham Interchange to Newcastle Beach
- Activation of Hunter and Scott Streets linked to light rail
- Increasing the supply of new housing
- Additional public domain enhancements
- Purchase of The Store building.

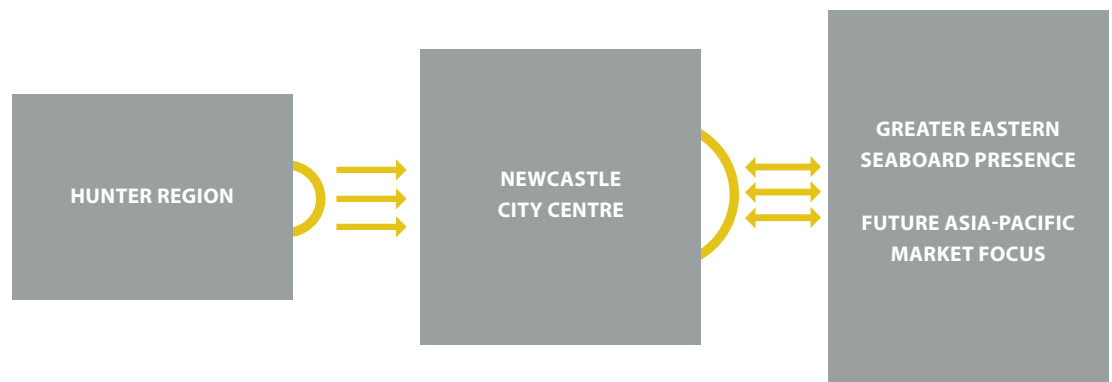
### 3.2 CITY VISION

We believe in the NSW Government's vision of Newcastle as Australia's first regional city of the Asia-Pacific.



### A VISION FOR NEWCASTLE AND THE REGION

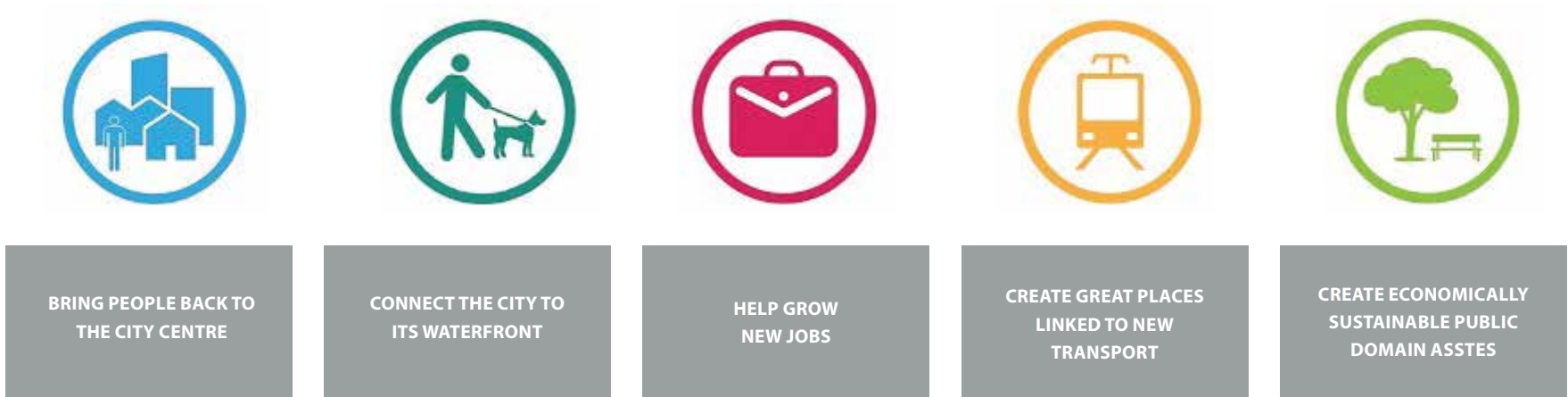
Regional capital and longer term 'first regional city of the Asia-Pacific'



Source: UrbanGrowth NSW Community Engagement Forum

### 3.3 TRANSFORMATION OBJECTIVES

We believe in the NSW Government's objectives for the Newcastle Urban Transformation and Transport Program (NUTTP) and their alignment to Newcastle Council's 2030 Community Strategic Plan.



Source: UrbanGrowth NSW Community Engagement Forum

### 3.4 PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

We also believe the NUTTP can be improved to future-proof the City Centre through ambitious design, enhanced connectivity and innovative finance solutions.

OVERVIEW	OBJECTIVE	OUTCOME
Free the shackles	<b>Innovative &amp; site specific development solutions</b>	Fast-track revitalisation of the City Centre
Build a destination	<b>Globally competitive tourism infrastructure</b>	Stimulate demand and grow jobs
Retain our distinctive character	<b>Incentives for adaptive reuse of heritage buildings</b>	Conservation of heritage assets
Move more people further	<b>Hunter transport plan</b>	Meet targets for public transport ridership
Correct market value	<b>Industry access to the mine subsidence Remediation Fund</b>	A level playing field for investors
Model of sustainability	<b>Build on existing green credentials</b>	Shift perceptions of Newcastle from an Industrial City to a Green City

# Our contribution to the discussion

*As part of their community engagement process, UrbanGrowth NSW started a discussion forum to share ideas on how Newcastle could become a world-class, harbour front city. These are some of the comments from our members*

*How can Newcastle best encourage tourists to visit the city centre? It might be a historical landmark, a not-to-be-missed attraction, a unique shopping experience – in fact, almost anything.*

“Newcastle needs globally competitive tourism infrastructure and an attraction to anchor the destination which has significance for the entire Asia-Pacific region”

**“We need our own Sydney Opera House, Guggenheim Museum or MONA”**

“Australia’s second oldest city needs to celebrate its indigenous and convict history”

“Like Edinburgh Castle, we should fire the guns at Fort Scratchley every day at 1:00pm”

“The Australian Surfing Hall of Fame”

“The most effective tactic for encouraging visitation to the city centre is to provide modern, clean, reliable public transport that runs on 5 minute headways”

“Micro-gyms, a harbourfront fitness trail and children’s play spaces”

“A skate plaza designed by Tony Hawk, capable of hosting international championship events”

“Make use of the harbour and Hunter River for urban kayaking and other water based activities”

*How do we encourage young Novocastrians to stay in or return to the Newcastle city centre for tertiary education and work?*

“Design a city with unrivalled liveability – one based on recreation and leisure to reflect our coastal lifestyle”

“We need a sustainable 24/7 living city culture”

“Vibrant eat streets which trade late and offer entertainment”

**“We’ve got the best beaches on the east coast and Australia’s best wine region on our doorstep, but our public domain and level of amenity doesn’t come close to competing with capital cities – we need to fix that as a priority”**

“A technology incubator in the city centre”

“A VFT service to Sydney – or even just a faster train service to Sydney would be a good start”

“Align University of Newcastle faculties with business incubators in the city centre”

“A second university campus in the city centre offering Asia-Pacific studies”



*Are there any great national or international examples of public domain that you would like to see in Newcastle?*

“Potsdamer Platz in Berlin is a shining example of how a post cold war wasteland was transformed in to mixed use development incorporating entertainment, retail, commercial and residential opportunities.”

“Newcastle deserves public domain designed specifically to attract families of the same quality you find at Maggie Daley Park in Chicago”

“New public domain will only pay a social and economic dividend if it’s an active space that is well programmed, like Klyde Warren Park in Dallas.”

“A scaled down version of Washington’s National Mall”

“Brisbane’s Southbank”

**“There needs to be a governance framework established for the long-haul which has Government representation but is owned and controlled by the community”**

“Ultimately, the NUTTP’s elements should be such people magnets that their maintenance and improvement is self funded through the likes of increased property taxes, parking revenue and concession rents”

*Is it important to attract a mix of new residents, employers and workers, and visitors to ensure a thriving and sustainable city centre? Why?*

“Our community leaders and elected representatives need to promote diversity as a significant advantage,”

“We know for a fact that by bringing people together who have different backgrounds, values, attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions to try and solve problems, we get more and different ideas, more and better ideas, because people don’t all think the same way.”

“Now, whether it’s a company or a city, the way to achieve economic benefit is through innovation.”

“If Stockton were rezoned to cater for higher density and a mix of other developments, it would give young people another affordable housing option close to the city centre and all that it offers”

*What are the best qualities and assets in Newcastle city centre? How can we enhance these to create an even more attractive destination?*

“Our best city assets can be found in the rich stock of heritage buildings – they define the fabric of the place.”

“The city centre has some remarkable natural assets from the harbour to the beaches and within one hour drive you can be in world heritage wilderness or tasting premium Hunter Valley wines with a world-class vigneron.”

**“Newcastle Council needs to actively encourage more Surf House style developments along our coastline and provide incentives for developers to take on 4 and 5 star hotel projects”**

*Where are the best locations to create connections between the city centre and the waterfront and why?*

“Any axis which connects the city to the waterfront and provides clear site lines – the obvious ones are at Civic, Darby Street and Perkins Street.”

*What sorts of features or activities could be incorporated into new pedestrian and cycle connections, to enhance the experience of using them? It might be paving type, public art, lighting, trees and plants, cafes, coffee carts or other features.*

**“Urban art and landscaping that allows people to be as active or as passive as they like”**

“Free Wi-Fi and charging stations”

“Shade structures, pop-up vendors, food and beverage concessions, small event platforms for buskers and LED lit pathways”

“Permanent, oversized games such as chess, chequers and backgammon, along with table tennis tables and a petanque court”

“A pavement surface that is friendly towards prams and mobility scooters, as well as pedestrians and cyclists”

*What kinds of industry should Newcastle be known for in the future?*

“Tourism”

“Emerging technology, renewable energy initiatives and creative industries.”

“Meds and Eds”

*How do we build on Newcastle’s economic strengths in for example resources, health and education to create a centre of excellence?*

“Forge stronger links between town and gown, so that the University and city are joined at the hip”

**“Ramp up the international capacity of Newcastle Airport”**

“Make the urban renewal precinct NSW’s first Tax Increment Financing District to encourage corporate relocations”

# Opportunities for revitalising Newcastle

*The four opportunities for revitalisation of the City Centre prepared by UrbanGrowth NSW for the community engagement process reflect the wide range of views expressed during Design Newcastle in 2014.*

## **5.1 OPPORTUNITY 1-3: GREENWAY, HARBOUR WEST, HARBOUR PLAY CITY**

These represent marginal change to the urban design of Newcastle. They;

- DO NOT meet the NSW Government's strategic priorities
- DO NOT meet the suite of transformation program objectives

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Reject Opportunities 1-3 as not satisfying key criteria for revitalisation of the city centre.

## **5.2 OPPORTUNITY 4: HARBOUR ENTERTAINMENT CITY**

Of the concepts and plans put forward by UrbanGrowth NSW, Harbour Entertainment City realises the most opportunity for revitalisation of the city centre and has the best potential to achieve the transformation program objectives.

Harbour Entertainment City has several commendable features which could deliver;

- Green open space from Perkins Street to Watt Street
- Mixed use development in the West End
- Access from the city to the waterfront at
  - o Civic
  - o Market Street
  - o Perkins Street
  - o Newcomen Street
  - o Bolton Street
- Regional Playspace
- Activation of Hunter Street
- Relocation of bus terminal to West End
- A dynamic attraction at Newcastle Railway Station
- Entertainment Precinct

Unfortunately, Harbour Entertainment City is constrained by not integrating Foreshore Park, failing to leverage all the natural advantages on offer and being less ambitious than the second city of NSW deserves.

*Opportunity 4: Harbour Entertainment City (courtesy of UrbanGrowth NSW)*





*While Harbour Entertainment City  
satisfies the UrbanGrowth NSW checklist  
for revitalising Newcastle, it falls short of  
the Baird Government's City Vision:*

**To re-establish  
Newcastle city  
centre as the  
Hunter's civic  
capital with a  
greater eastern  
seaboard  
presence with a  
view to becoming  
Australia's first  
regional city of  
the Asia-Pacific**

# Maximum Opportunity

## Asia-Pacific City

The Newcastle Renewal Taskforce has made leveraging all the natural advantages on offer part of the key criteria for revitalising the City Centre in a checklist that expands the thinking of UrbanGrowth NSW. The resulting Opportunity Matrix clearly demonstrates the potential for an urban design that creates a City Centre which is authentically Novocastrian and positions Newcastle as Australia's first regional city of the Asia-Pacific. That design is MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY.

	GREENWAY	HARBOUR WEST CITY	HARBOUR PLAY CITY	HARBOUR ENTERTAINMENT CITY	ASIA-PACIFIC CITY
Public Domain Enhancements	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
West End Mixed Use Development		✓	✓	✓	✓
Civic Mixed Use Development		✓	✓	✓	✓
Civic Link		✓	✓	✓	✓
Market Street Connection		✓	✓	✓	✓
Hunter Street Revitalisation			✓	✓	✓
Regional Playspace			✓	✓	✓
Green Open Space from Perkins to Watt Streets			✓	✓	✓
East End Mixed Use Development			✓	✓	✓
Newcastle Railway Station Attraction				✓	✓
Cycle Transitway					✓
Procession of Public Plazas					✓
Darby Common					✓
Urban Lounge					✓
Colonial Park					✓
Harbour Skate Plaza					✓
Newcastle Labyrinth					✓
Festival Park					✓



# Maximum Oppportunity Guiding principles

*To achieve the City Vision, MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY has been designed to make the Newcastle City Centre a destination.*

## **7.1 DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT**

Creating a destination is achieved by offering a broad range of products, experiences and services that are linked along the value-chain and served by both public and private sector interests.

Building a reputable brand over time which attracts new residents and visitors to the City Centre will require a governance framework for the long-haul which has destination development as its driving ambition. It must commit to a continuous process of coordination and development of amenities, facilities, products and services that support the local community to deliver quality experiences for visitors and enhance residents' well-being.

## **7.2 PEOPLE MAGNETS**

To achieve the transformation objective of bringing people back to the City Centre, MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY has been designed to offer vibrant and inviting public spaces, as well as passive outdoor spaces. Cafe, bar, kiosk and restaurant opportunities along with play spaces activate and give purpose to public space distinct from passive outdoor areas. More than simple parkland, these diverse spaces are pleasurable and interesting - inviting people to engage with their city. The choice of spaces and flexibility of uses means that urban dwellers from all walks of life will find something attractive to their sensibilities.

“If what we see and experience, if our country, does not become real in imagination, then it never can become real to us, and we are forever divided from it... Imagination is a particularizing and a local force, native to the ground underfoot.”

Wendell Berry, poet

### 7.3 INTEGRATED TRANSPORT

To achieve the transformation objective of creating great places linked to new transport, MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY has been designed to provide a multi-modal network which offers the opportunity for mass transit in an environmentally sustainable way.

**The design of MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY promotes porosity, connectivity and openness of movement for pedestrians.**

Darby Common, a new public plaza at the junction of two cycle routes with views and access to the harbour, includes plans for bike storage, change facilities and a bike share station. Increased car parking spaces in the East End is recommended beneath the existing Newcastle Railway Station to cater for new residents and substantial annual visitation.

### 7.4 STIMULATE DEMAND

To achieve the transformation objectives of growing new jobs and creating economically sustainable public domain assets, MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY has been designed to stimulate demand with a series of catalytic developments of public amenity which will boost Newcastle's standing as a liveable city.

As the Atlanta experience has proven, a city which scores highly on the liveability index will attract new residents and new investment.

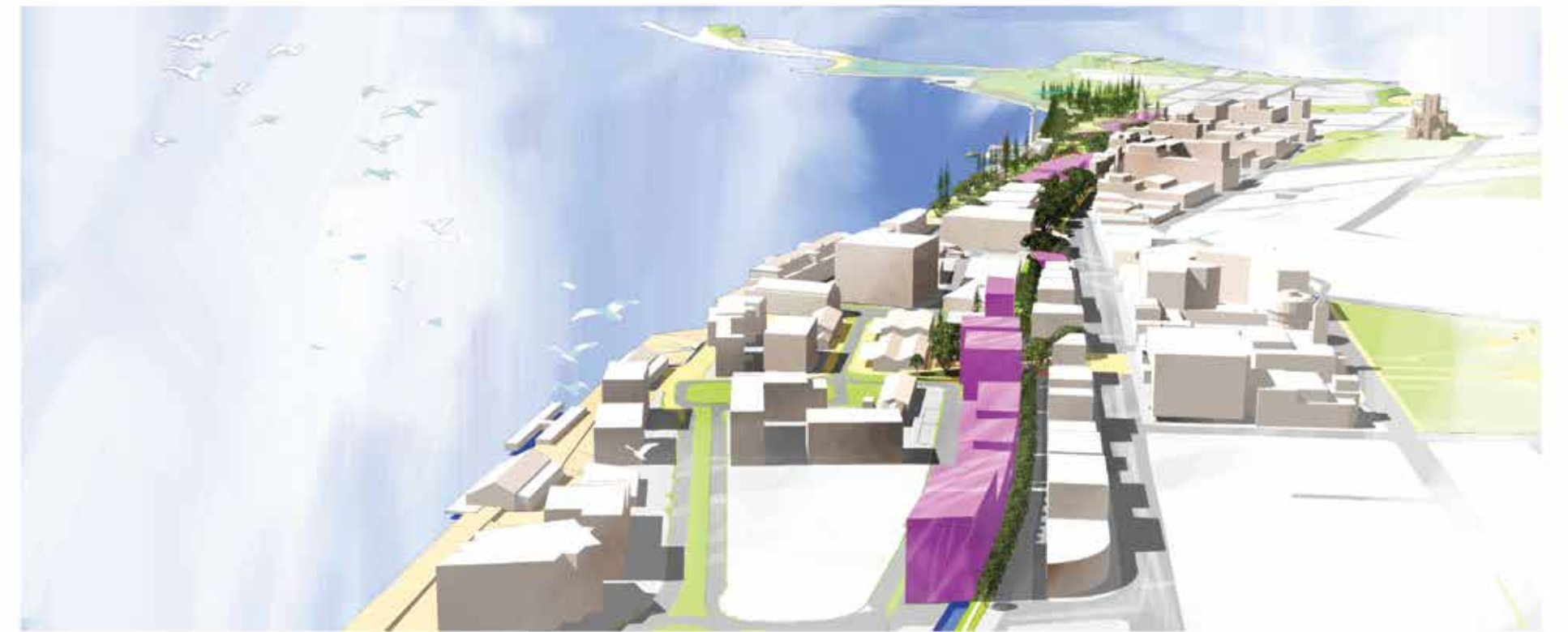
As a city where people want to live, it has also been successful in attracting the global headquarters of major corporations seeking a competitive advantage by recruiting and retaining a smart workforce.

Through this economic development, the city can capture a portion of the increment in property values to fund further improvements to transport networks and public amenity.

Wherever this model has been applied, the city has found itself on a pathway to economic growth and sustainability.

MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY recommends that Newcastle adopts this model to become a globally competitive and connected city.

*Aerial looking East from Wickham*



*Aerial looking West from Foreshore Park*





# Maximum Oppportunity The game changers

*Debate around future use of the heavy rail corridor has been dominated by the conspiracy theory that truncation was a sop to “greedy developers” who have been “eyeing off” valuable harbor front land not subject to mine subsidence.*



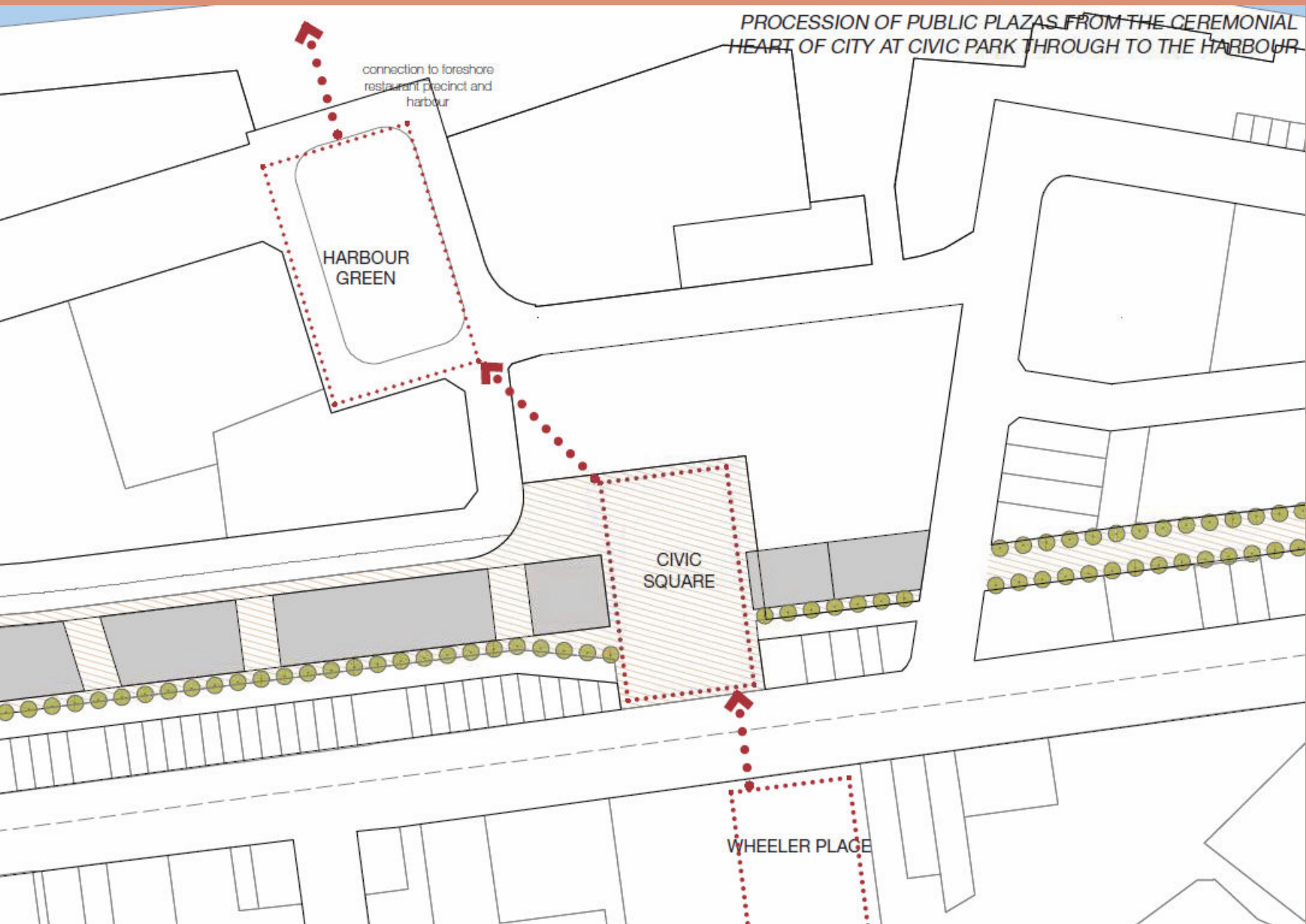
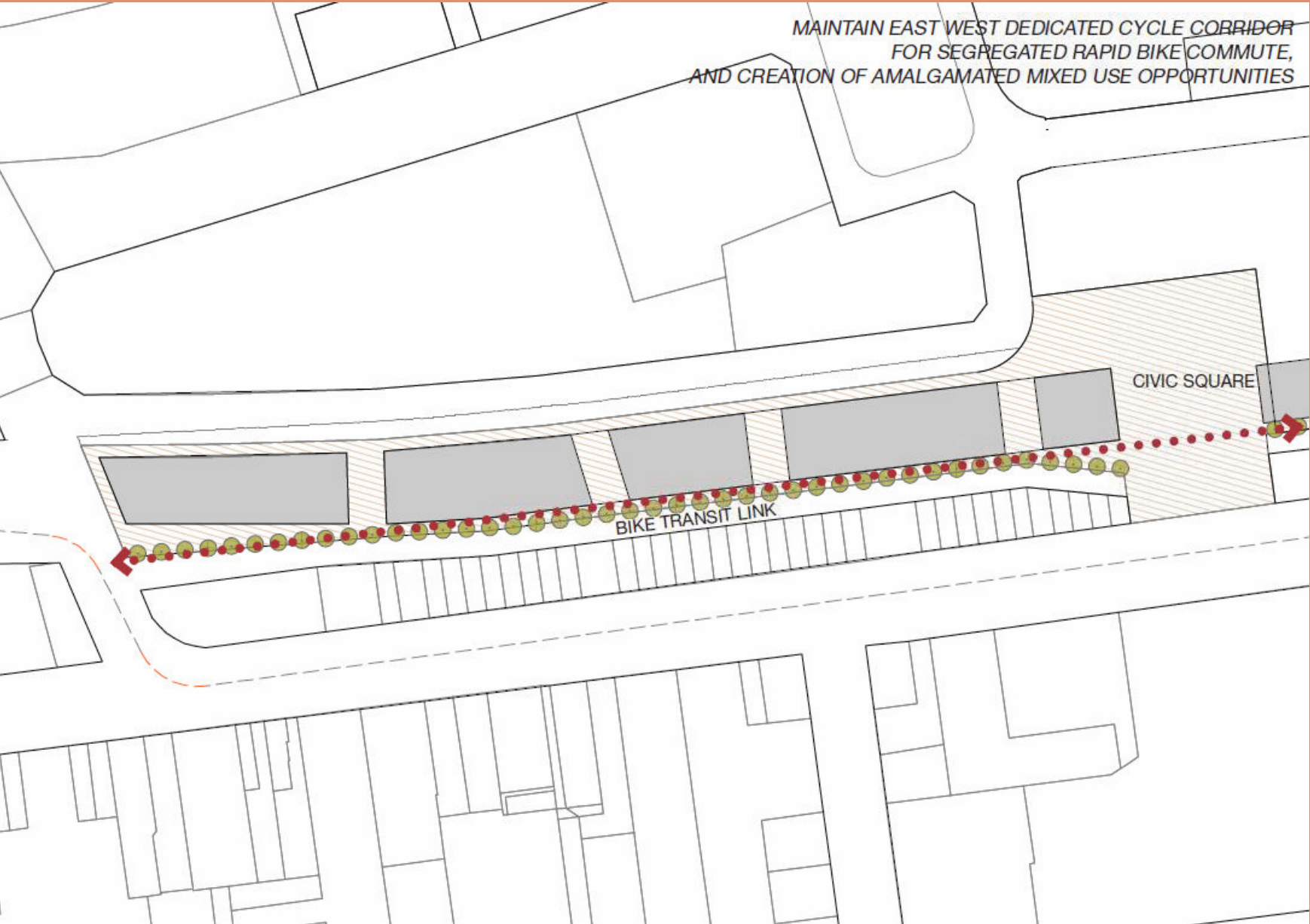
### 8.1 APPLY THE RHETORIC

Debate around future use of the heavy rail corridor has been dominated by the conspiracy theory that truncation was a sop to “greedy developers” who have been “eyeing off” valuable harbor front land not subject to mine subsidence.

When the then NSW Minister for Planning, The Hon. Pru Goward MP, announced at Hunter Outlook '15 that some development would occur in the corridor, it was seen by some as proof of those theories and was given significant media attention. The minority groups opposed to change and economic developments for Newcastle remained persistent and were successful in obtaining a court order preventing the NSW Government from removing any heavy rail infrastructure.

This led to the NSW Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, The Hon. Andrew Constance MP, introducing the Transport Administration Amendment (Closure of Railway Line at Newcastle) Bill 2015 to parliament on 16 September 2015. The purpose of the bill was to end the market uncertainty and ensure the Newcastle Urban Transformation and Transport Program could proceed without delay.

The bill subsequently became legislation after passing the Upper House on Thursday 15 November by just two votes – those of the Shooters and Fishers Party MLC’s - and on Tuesday 20 October, work commenced to remove the ugly, archaic infrastructure which had formed a 2.2km physical barrier in the city centre.





Since 2005, the Property Council of Australia has been unequivocal and unwavering on recommending these policy settings;

1. Removing heavy rail infrastructure from the City Centre is a pre-condition of sound urban design for Newcastle.
2. Heavy rail services must be replaced by a rapid transit system along the dominant axis of the City Centre – Hunter Street.
3. The existing heavy rail corridor must be preserved for East-West movement across the City Centre.
4. Large scale and/or high-rise development along the length of the heavy rail corridor is not possible due to site constraints.

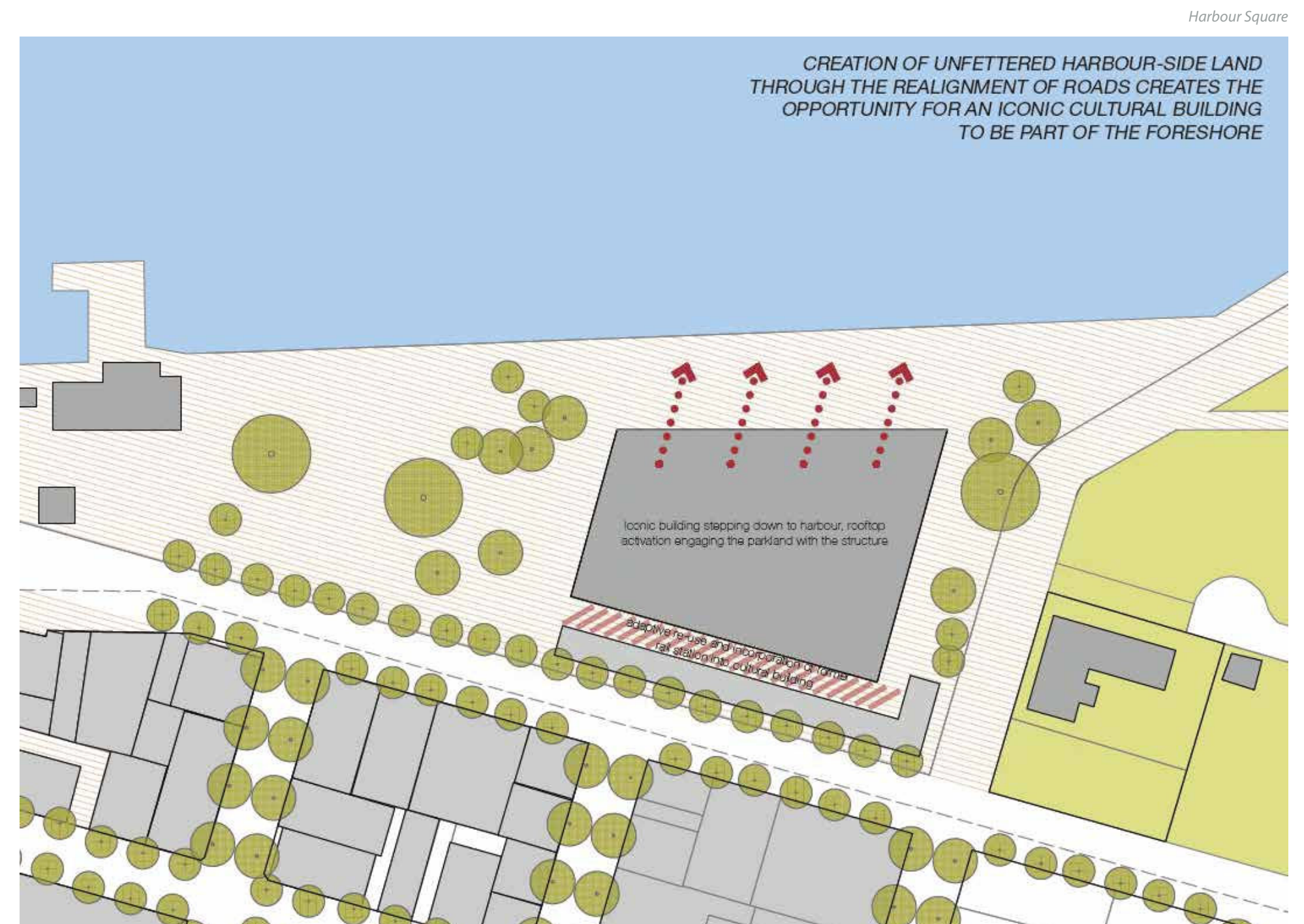
And for the preceding decade, groups and individuals opposed to these policy settings have described our public statements as rhetoric at best, and at worst, blatant lies.

MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY is proof that the Property Council of Australia means what it says.

**MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY**  
recommends more open space than UrbanGrowth NSW

**MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY**  
recommends more public amenity than UrbanGrowth NSW

**MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY**  
recommends fewer developable sites than UrbanGrowth NSW





### 8.2 FREE THE SHACKLES

At the heart of MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY is innovation, aspiration and ambition.

It takes a holistic approach to urban design, improves existing public amenity, eliminates duplication of under-serviced space.

MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY is based on the area defined as the Newcastle Urban Renewal Precinct by the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy 2014 Update.

### Central to the design of MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY is the inclusion and activation of Foreshore Park.

The four opportunities identified by UrbanGrowth NSW are artificially constrained by a Study Area Map which has its eastern edge at 4 Wharf Road and does not include Foreshore Park.

The Study Area Map prevents the UrbanGrowth NSW schemes from leveraging all the natural advantages and assets the city has to offer.

It means the UrbanGrowth NSW schemes have wasted opportunities for revitalisation of the City Centre.

### 8.3 A NEW CITY EDGE

To achieve the transformation objective of connecting the city to its waterfront, MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY has been designed to establish a new city edge to the harbourfront by realigning Wharf Road with Scott Street Queen's Wharf.

The effect is to create unfettered harbour-side land and enough open space for a New Urban Icon.

### 8.4 A NEW URBAN ICON

MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY repurposes the heritage listed Newcastle Railway Station as an iconic landmark building stepping down to the waterfront, with activation of the rooftop engaging the public space with the structure.

MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY has conceived this new urban icon as home to the National Indigenous Cultural Institute (NICI) and largest collection of indigenous Australian art and artefacts anywhere in the world.

Representatives of the Awabakal Aboriginal Land Council have been consulted on the concept of NICI and provided their full support. NICI would be designed to provide an immersive experience which educates and entertains the visitor.

Through a combination of art exhibitions, interpretive displays, performance spaces and teaching facilities, NICI will celebrate Australian Aboriginals as the oldest continuous culture on earth in a way that connects with the visitor's soul.

NICI's architecture would not only fulfil its function as a showcase for indigenous Australian culture, but also succeed as a sacred space and an experience in its own right for all who visit.

Incorporating restaurants, cafes and tourism related retail, NICI folds out of the ground and forms a piece of furniture within the urban lounge.

Able to be traversed, used as tiered seating and iconic in its architectural language, the NICI is a key focal point for the city and beacon to tourists, school students and general public alike.

NICI's proximity to Festival Park can offer overflow seating and staging for major events, as well as offering casual breakout space with harbour views for city workers.

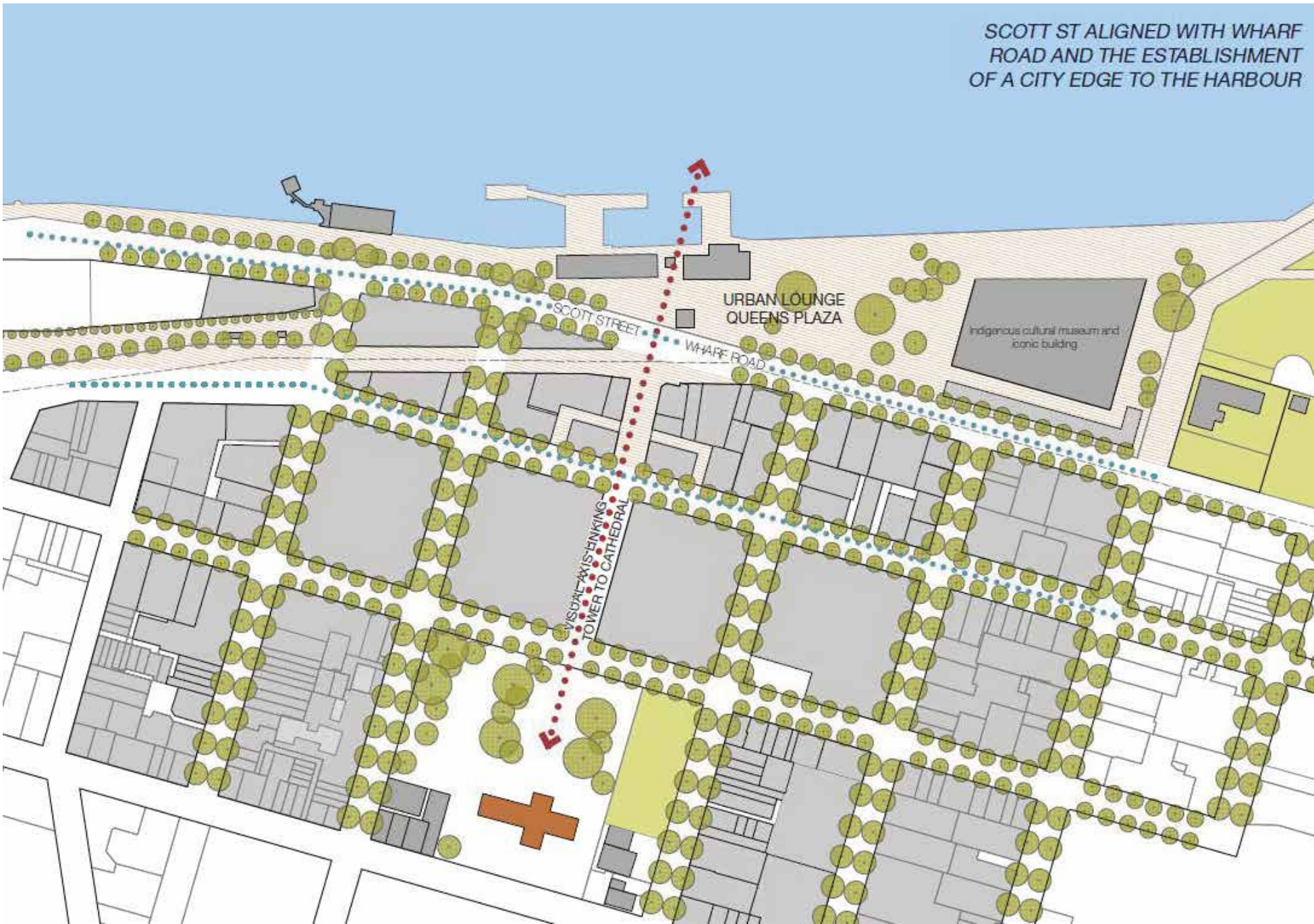
**NICI will be the attraction that anchors Newcastle's City Centre as a destination. It will be our Sydney Opera House . . . our Guggenheim Museum . . . our MONA.**

Without NICI (or a comparable attraction) to draw international visitors to Newcastle, billions of potential tourism dollars will leak to Sydney and beyond as Newcastle Airport becomes a secondary gateway to Australia from the Asia-Pacific region and China in particular.

If Newcastle fails at Destination Management by not providing globally competitive tourism infrastructure, time-poor visitors from the Asia-Pacific region entering Australia through Newcastle Airport will transfer directly to other destinations and take with them a job creating, high-yielding revenue stream for the Hunter. MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY has been designed to capture those valuable export dollars for investing in the continuous improvement of the City Centre and wider Hunter Region.



Urban Lounge



Wharf Road realignment



# Maximum Oppportunity Design features

## 9.1 FESTIVAL PARK

Festival Park is an informal, large open space with a functional purpose.

This is the region's backyard . . . a space for Australia Day celebrations . . . world-class concerts and festivals of every colour.

It is our premier parkland where people gather en-masse to experience the events that represent our collective identity.

All Festival Park spaces and activities would be focussed towards the harbour for greater engagement of the existing fabric and reorienting the City back towards the waterfront.

In order to pay the City an economic and social dividend, Festival Park needs to be made a competitive major events venue with the following initiatives, facilities and infrastructure;

- Harbourside Staging
- Natural Amphitheatre
- Ferry Terminal
- Restaurant and Kiosk
- Extension of Joy Cummings promenade to create Festival Park's western edge
- Pedestrian-style paving treatment and traffic calming measures on Wharf Road
- Refurbished Rail Sheds as a multi-purpose event centre
- New amenities block





### 9.2 NEWCASTLE LABYRINTH

Newcastle Labyrinth provides Festival Park with a crafted spiritual pathway designed for quiet reflection and meditation. A labyrinth has only one path that leads from the outer edge in a circuitous way to the center. There are no tricks to it and no dead ends. Unlike a maze where you lose your way, labyrinths are increasingly popular in urban environments as a spiritual tool to help people find their way. Labyrinths are acknowledged for their therapeutic and medical benefits.

### 9.3 HARBOUR SKATE PLAZA

Harbour Skate Plaza is an active recreation and leisure space for adolescents which offers considerable potential for positive youth development.

A well designed and managed Harbour Skate Plaza will become a hub for community life reflected in values of personal freedom, self expression and cooperation.

It will be a catalyst for healthy community life in which young and old socialise, have fun, develop new skills, make new friends, hang out and much more.

### 9.4 REGIONAL PLAYGROUND

The Regional Playground is a semi-formal recreation space for all individuals.

Offering installations to play on, in and to simply look at, the Regional Playground will incorporate a water maze, splash-pad, urban art installations and kinetic playthings to encourage innovation and playfulness / joy. **It will be a magnet for the young and the young-at-heart.**

### 9.5 COLONIAL PARK

Absorbing the areas surrounding Customs House, Paymasters Cottage and the former Convict Lumber Yard, Colonial Park will embrace unique modes of interpretation to reveal the rich history of early European settlement in Newcastle.

MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY relocates the Customs House carpark to facilitate a holistic landscape approach and provides a meeting place for school groups, heritage tours and ghost tours.

### 9.6 URBAN LOUNGE

Urban Lounge is where the East-West Link converges with the North-South Axis and makes a logical meeting place.

A semi-formal plaza incorporating urban art installations, a mixture of hard and soft landscape treatments and diverse range of product offerings, Urban Lounge acts as the gateway to NICI and Festival Park.

The design of the Urban Lounge will promote opportunities for participation, co-curation of events, engagement with adjacent communities, and new technology to widen its potential reach.

The Urban Lounge is a public space with flexibility of use to enable the easy implementation of events and programmed cultural overlays.

It also honours the Dangar Axis, with a monument to the spiritual (Christ Church Cathedral) at one end, and a monument to the temporal (harbour) at the other.

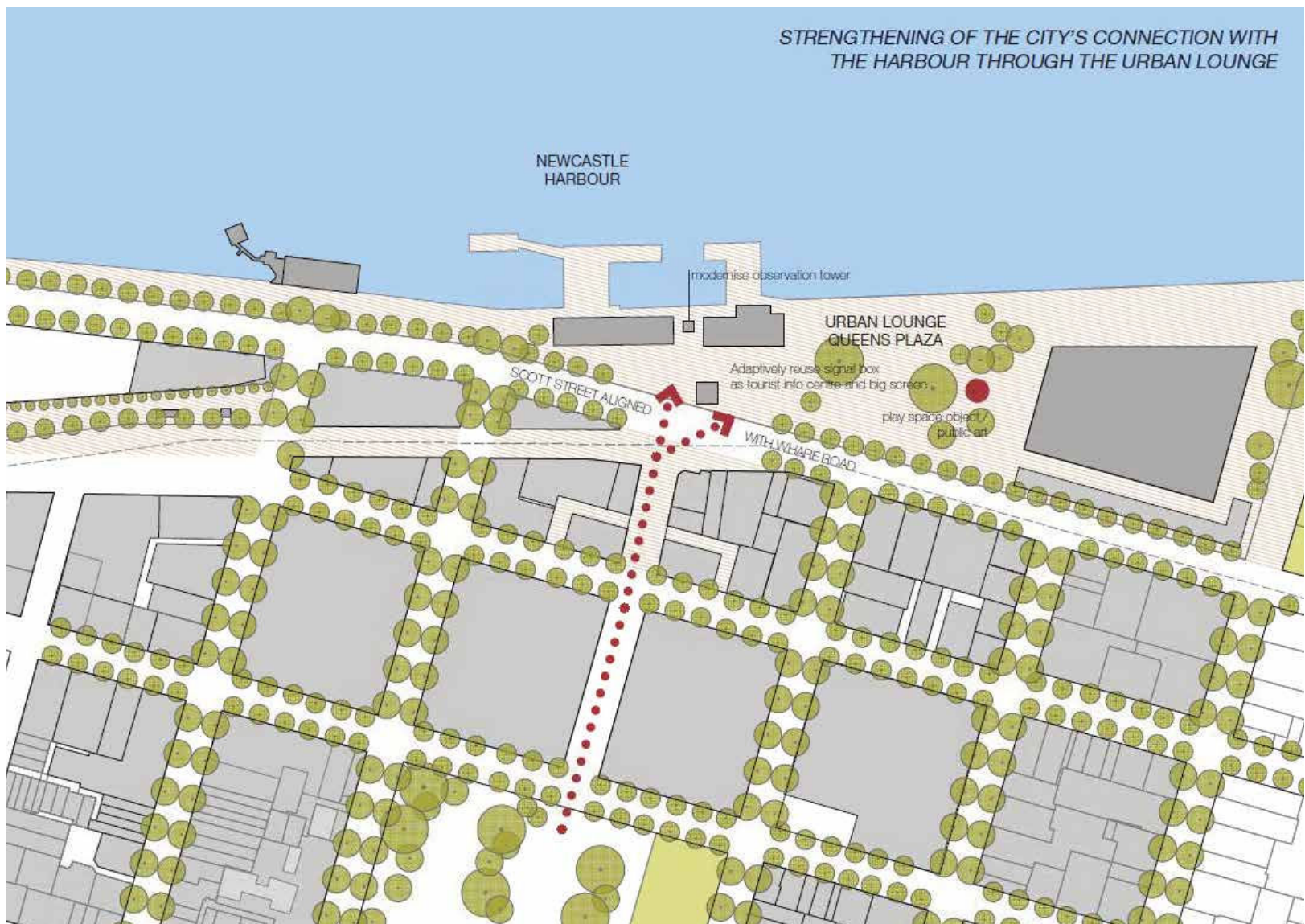
MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY has a refurbished Queen's Wharf precinct to permit activation and converts the observation tower to a Bungee Light Tower.

MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY repurposes the Railway Signal Station as a Visitor Information Centre incorporating a digital screen for showing sporting events, information reels and news tickers.

Similar to Melbourne's Federation Square, Urban Lounge is an everyday place that welcomes people to enjoy the relaxed Novocastrian way of life, a space where inner city residents live their lives, eat, drink and socialise.

**Whether it's a beer, a coffee, a bite to eat or simply getting together to watch the football on the big screen, the Urban Lounge offers comfort in an authentically Novocastrian way.**

Aerial looking West from Foreshore Park



Terras Queen's Wharf





### 9.7 DARBY COMMON

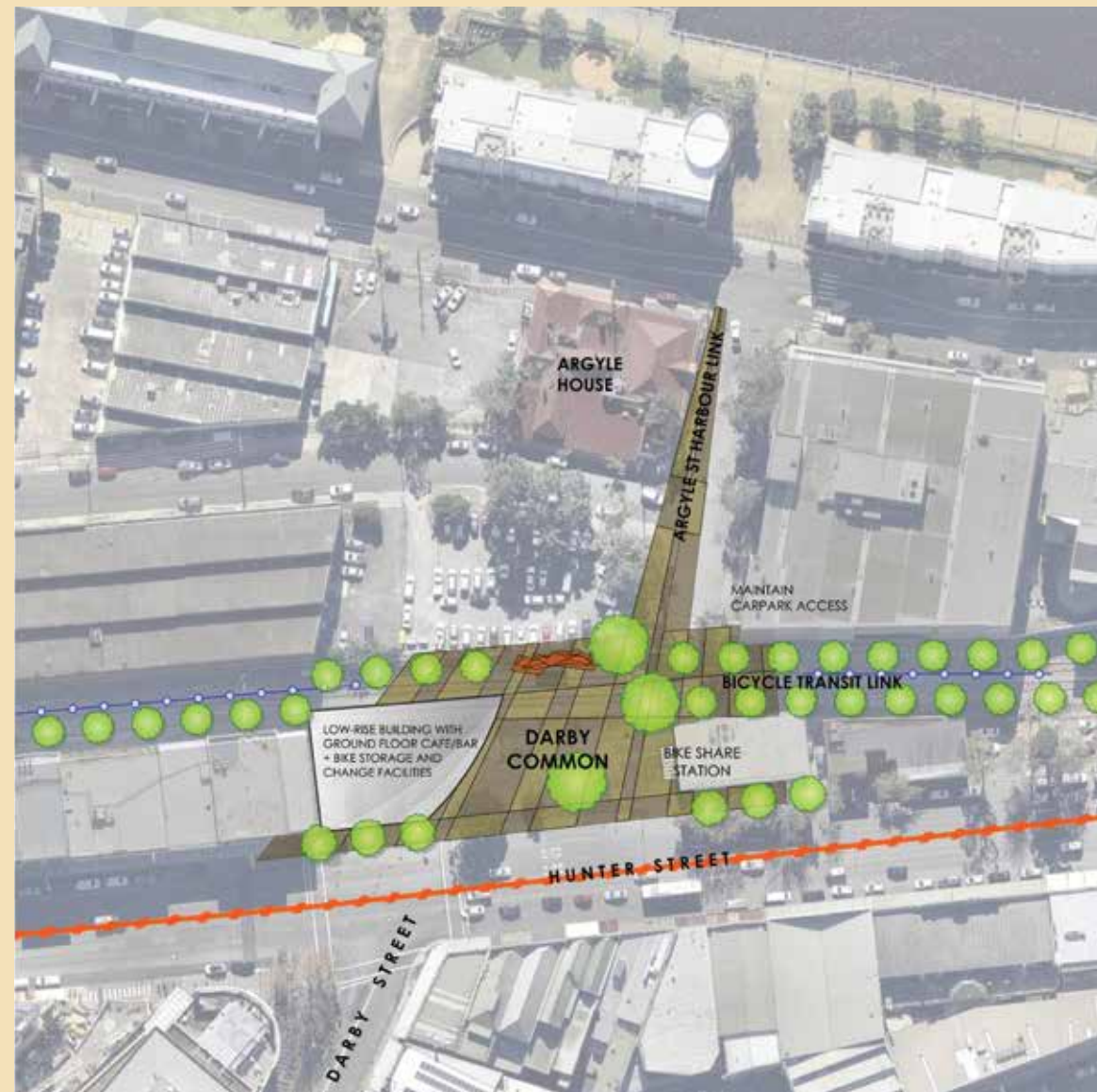
MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY rejects the UrbanGrowth NSW suggestion that the best use of land at the nexus of two arterial traffic flows into the City Centre is as a developable site. Not only is the site's feasibility marginal, it would break the visual and physical connection to Argyle House and beyond.

Rather than sacrifice the opportunity for another connection between the city and waterfront, MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY establishes Darby Common - a place of relief and meeting for the cyclist commuters and joyriders like – with views and access to the harbour.

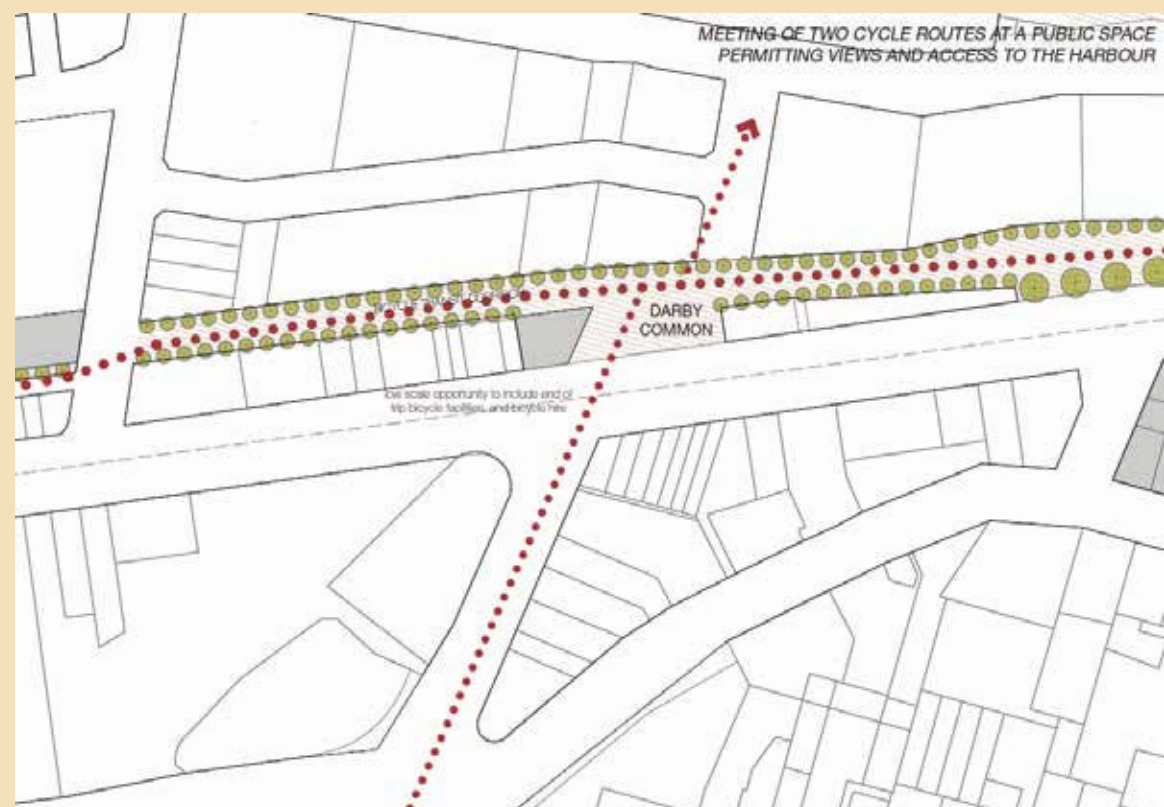
Darby Common is a public space with soft and hardscape treatments, bike racks and a low-rise building with ground floor café/bar, secure bike storage, change facilities and bike share station.



Terras Perkins Street



Terras Darby Common with precedent images



### 9.8 PROCESSION OF PUBLIC PLAZAS

MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY establishes a procession of public plazas from the ceremonial heart of the city at Civic Park through to the harbour.

Civic Square is a formal piazza that provides a meeting place for city workers and residents. On the site of the former Civic Railway Station, it links Civic Park and Wheeler Place to Harbour Green and Honeysuckle. It is an important node on the East-West link with significant day time and night time commerce.

MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY gives traffic calming measures to Hunter Street and part time pedestrianisation (evenings) to strengthen the link and activation through Civic Square.

MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY aspires to bookend Civic Square with a mixed use development which signals a gateway to the harbour.

### 9.9 CYCLE TRANSITWAY

MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY preserves the heavy rail corridor as an East-West link across the City Centre and transforms it to a Cycle Transitway for rapid bike commute.

West of Civic Square, opportunities exist to amalgamate sites for mixed use development and maintain up to 12 metres width of segregated road and landscaped cycleways for a safe and rapid bike commute.

MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY imagines the Cycle Transitway as a captivating urban environment with great broadcast potential as the final stage of a future "Tour de Newcastle".

### 9.10 CAR PARKING

MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY recognises the need to provide more car parking in the City Centre and recommends subterranean facilities at NICI and a multi-level station behind the Newcastle Regional Art Gallery.





# Maximum Oppportunity Integrated transport network

## 10.1 TRANSPORT STRATEGY

The following guiding principle was applied in preparation of the NURS:

*Transport access and connectivity - Maximise accessibility and convenience of public transport to and within the city, and prioritise a range of transport modes to reduce private vehicle use. Promote connections and way-finding between precincts and to the waterfront that encourages pedestrian activity throughout the city centre.*

The NURS has the following key component:

*A strategy to promote transport, access and connectivity to and within the city centre.*

The key transport recommendation of our Taskforce's submission to the NURS was;

*Bring forward a Hunter Transport Plan that interlocks with the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy.*

Nearly three years since release of the NURS and the Taskforce submission;

- There is no Integrated Hunter Transport Plan.
- The market is uncertain about the future transport network.
- Public transport use continues to decline.

An integrated plan for all modes of transport is made more urgent by the completion of major urban renewal projects such as the Newcastle Courthouse redevelopment, University of Newcastle CBD campus and ICON Central Apartment Tower.

Investors and Novocastrians are craving to know how the future transport network will operate.



# 10.2 Top 10 transport recommendations

*1. The NSW Government's first transport policy imperative for Newcastle and the wider region is to deliver market certainty*

by releasing the Hunter Transport Plan.

*2. Revision of proposed Newcastle light rail*

to better integrate The Store, existing car parking, bus and heavy rail operations and to future-proof connections to key activity nodes with significant Park & Ride opportunities including the Broadmeadow Entertainment & Sporting Precinct and the University of Newcastle's Callaghan campus.

*3. Leverage NSW Government purchase of 'The Store' building*

to allow the development and delivery of a transformative precinct plan which supports effective interchange, facilitates urban renewal and creates new value.

*4. Articulate a vision for public transport across the Hunter*

to show the community how enhanced connectivity and integration of all transport modes will shape urban renewal and improve liveability.

*5. Creation of a geographically focused Hunter transport body*

to provide a governance structure which allows the region to determine public transport outcomes.

*6. Investigate opportunities for further transport reform*

to support a focus on door-to-door customer journeys through greater focus on interchange and multi-modal integration.

*7. Utilise private sector expertise*

to develop and deliver Hunter transport services modelled on world's best practice, as has been achieved elsewhere including Sydney, Melbourne and the Gold Coast.

*8. Leverage operational savings from existing inefficient transport services*

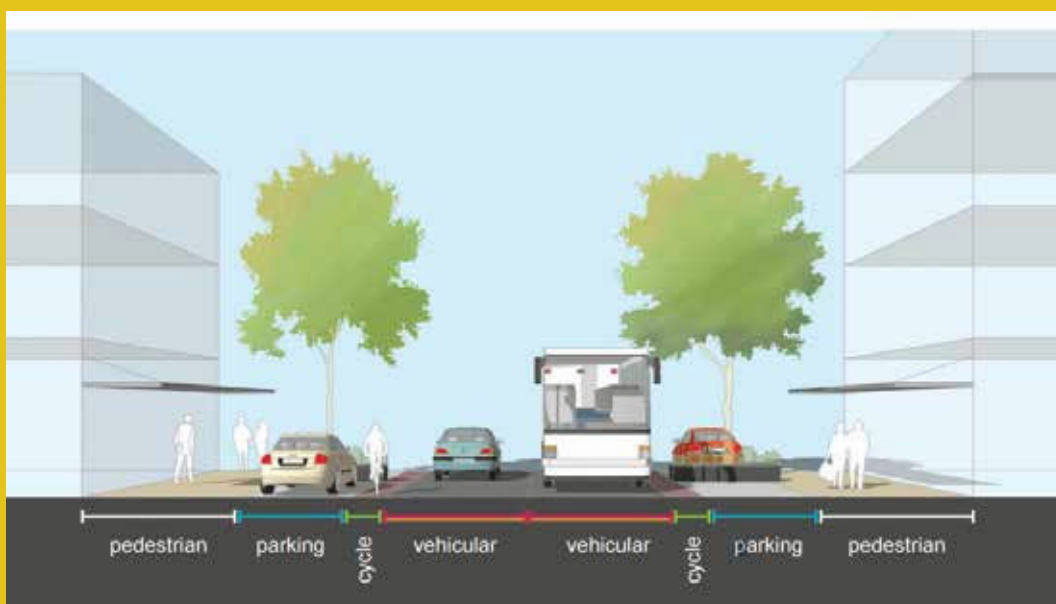
to partially fund transport enhancements, including expanded light rail network.

*9. Work with local property partners*

to provide future funding of local infrastructure.

*10. A Memorandum of Understanding between Transport for NSW and Newcastle City Council*

to acknowledge Council's role in transport planning and define how the parties will work together to implement and deliver the NUTTP's transport component.



# Maximum opportunity The Enablers

## 11.1 HERITAGE CONSERVATION

As Australia's third oldest city, Newcastle is home to some of the best examples of late 19th century and Academic Classical style architecture anywhere in Australia and the city should aspire to have world-class redevelopments within heritage precincts.

The Property Council of Australia has a clear policy which supports retaining Newcastle's heritage assets as a way to preserve the cities distinctive character and a key recommendation of our submission to the 2012 Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy was;

**A simple planning framework that provides concessions and incentives for the adaptive reuse of Newcastle's heritage buildings**

Indeed, one of the guiding principles of the 2012 Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy, agreed to by Newcastle City Council was;  
**Integrity and Viability. The adaptive reuse of heritage buildings should be encouraged and supported by a planning framework that encourages innovation.**

But in the three years since, no meaningful attempt has been made to apply this principle and it has fallen to the private sector to invest heavily in restoring some of the East End's heritage buildings that were crumbling eyesores. The Peniche Apartments development included restoration of the National Bank of Australasia building and the Wren Apartments development included refurbishment of the building's Art Deco façade and period details.

During our strategic analysis, the only concession that could be identified in recent years for heritage listed buildings was the waiver of section 94 contributions on the \$6 million redevelopment of the former Lucky Country Hotel. Disappointingly, the concession was not offered by council officers when the development was being assessed. It was the developer who identified the possibility and then had to commit further resources to have the concession applied.

A paradigm shift in approach is now required by Newcastle City Council to support proposals which seek to reinforce the existing integrity and fabric of Newcastle. The once magnificent Newcastle Post Office is the best case-in-point. The building has stood vacant for over ten years while its deterioration has gathered pace, and the current repair bill is now conservatively estimated to be \$20 million.

Creative solutions to repurpose and conserve the iconic building have been investigated by potential investors, including a boutique hotel development. These types of proposal could breathe new life into the site and generate the revenue needed to preserve the city's heritage for future generations. Unfortunately, none have progressed to development application stage, because Councillors refuse to reward innovative design by relaxing of car parking requirements and building height limits. The site is an embarrassment for Novocastrians and the building will remain a blight on the city whenever civic leaders make any commercial proposal unviable.

Our local political leaders must start demonstrating bold vision and flexibility around design schemes for heritage listed sites or accept responsibility for these assets being lost forever.

Cities around the world, from Sydney to Chicago, have proven a pragmatic approach that offers incentives such as trading unused floor space on heritage sites to nearby sites can help fund ongoing conservation. Newcastle must quickly do likewise.

MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY recommends an overhaul of relevant provisions contained within the 2014 Newcastle LEP to actively support the adaptive reuse of heritage assets.



# 11.2 Economic Initiatives

## FINANCING INFRASTRUCTURE

It is not the narrow and linear strip of land occupied by the former rail corridor which, of itself, will pay the Newcastle community large social and economic dividends. The challenge in extracting maximum value from the corridor is finding how it can best be integrated with surrounding land uses, with additional bulk or FSR where appropriate, to consolidate sites which the market finds attractive.

MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY recommends UrbanGrowth NSW enter into discussions with land owners adjacent to the corridor to explore how incentivising maximum land values could help pay for infrastructure. The Taskforce has also considered solutions in other parts of the city and identified the current site of the Newcastle Art Gallery and Newcastle Region Library as having potential.

MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY recommends Newcastle City Council assesses the feasibility of relocating these functions so the site could be released to market for an appropriate development.

## INNOVATIVE FUNDING

The Newcastle Urban Transformation and Transport Program (NUTTP) will require funding beyond the current envelope to pay for various initiatives.

A ground-breaking approach will be needed to secure;

- Co-operative funding from all levels of Government
- New tax arrangements which share the value uplift from new urban infrastructure
- Private sources seeking long term investment earnings, such as superannuation funds

The Property Council of Australia commissioned an extensive study by PricewaterhouseCoopers on the subject of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) as a method to fund public urban infrastructure in Australia. These concepts have been used extensively in the United States, and are increasingly prevalent in the United Kingdom.

The scale and staging of the NUTTP, along with a resilient regional economy, establish the ideal conditions for a TIF pilot program.

MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY recommends the Newcastle Urban Transformation and Transport Program be used to trial TIF as a method to accelerate investment in public urban infrastructure.

MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY proposes the following conceptual model;

1. The Newcastle TIF District be defined as the NSW Government's Newcastle Urban Renewal Precinct
2. Infrastructure NSW prepare costings and implementation plans for unfunded infrastructure projects in the final planning proposal.
3. NUTTP infrastructure projects access funding via NSW Treasury Corporation's Benchmark Bond Programme.
4. Incremental tax revenue originating from the Newcastle TIF District is used to repay the TIF Bonds.

## 11.3 GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

The Property Council of Australia commends UrbanGrowth NSW for recently completing the deepest and broadest community engagement process ever undertaken in Newcastle. The Revitalising Newcastle Community Engagement Plan was thoughtfully structured and faithfully executed. It has been highly successful in achieving community buy-in for the City Vision and program objectives.

MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY recommends UrbanGrowth NSW leverage the current positive sentiment for revitalising Newcastle by immediately establishing an ongoing Community Engagement Group or mechanism to be in place until Newcastle City Council finish consulting the community on the final Planning Proposal.

MAXIMUM OPPORTUNITY recommends the Community Engagement Group submit a proposal to the NSW Premier and Lord Mayor of Newcastle before 30 June 2016 to establish a Governance Framework for the long-haul, based on a public-private partnership model, whose purpose is to continually improve the competitiveness and liveability of Newcastle's City Centre.

Atlanta BeltLine Inc. (ABI) is one such model established for the purpose of managing the implementation of the Atlanta BeltLine project - the largest, most wide-ranging urban redevelopment program currently underway in the United States. Working with partners, including City of Atlanta departments, its functions include specifically defining the Atlanta BeltLine plan; leading efforts to secure federal, state and local funding; continuing the community engagement process; managing all vendors and suppliers; and serving as the overall project management office to execute the Atlanta BeltLine project.

# Maximum opportunity

## Summary of Key Recommendations

Cycle Transitway



**Reject UrbanGrowth NSW's Opportunities 1-3** (Greenway, Harbour West City and Harbour Play City) for not;

1. Meeting the NSW Government's strategic priorities for revitalisation of Newcastle's City Centre
2. Meeting the Newcastle Urban Transformation and Transport Program's objectives

Treat UrbanGrowth NSW's Opportunity 4 (Harbour Entertainment City) as the **foundation for an expanded and aspirational planning proposal**.

Preserve the heavy rail corridor as an East-West link across the City Centre and repurpose as a **Cycle Transitway**.

To achieve the City Vision, design the City Centre as a destination.

To achieve the transformation objective of attracting people, design the City Centre with **vibrant public spaces and passive outdoor spaces**.

To achieve the transformation objective of creating great places linked to new transport, design the City Centre to accommodate a **sustainable, integrated, multi-modal transport network**.

To achieve the transformation objectives of growing new jobs and creating economically sustainable public domain assets, design the City Centre to **stimulate demand** and boost Newcastle's standing as a liveable city.



Urban Icon



Regional Playground



Festival Park



Regional Playground



To achieve the transformation objective of connecting the city to its waterfront, design the City Centre with a **new edge to the waterfront** by realigning Wharf Road with Scott Street at Queen's Wharf.

Adaptively repurpose Newcastle Railway Station as a **New Urban Icon** stepping down to the waterfront, with activation of the rooftop engaging the public space with the structure. Make the New Urban Icon home to the **National Indigenous Cultural Institute (NICI)** and largest collection of indigenous Australian art and artefacts anywhere in the world.

Establish **Festival Park** as an informal, large open space where people gather en-masse to experience the events that represent our collective identity.

Establish **Harbour Skate Plaza** as an active recreation and leisure space for adolescents.

Establish **Regional Playground** as a semi-formal recreation space for the young and young-at-heart.

Destination Development



Establish **Urban Lounge** as a semi-formal plaza – an authentically Novocastrian public space - incorporating urban art installations and a diverse range of product offerings to act as the gateway to NICI and Festival Park.

Establish **Darby Common** as another connection between the city and waterfront to offer a place of relief and meeting point for the cycling community.

Establish a **Procession of Public Plazas** from the ceremonial heart of the City to the waterfront. **Overhaul heritage provisions** of the Newcastle LEP to actively support innovative design solutions for the adaptive reuse of heritage assets.

Establish the Newcastle Urban Renewal Precinct as **Australia's first Tax Increment Financing District**.

Establish a **Governance Framework** for the long-haul to continually improve the competitiveness and liveability of Newcastle's City Centre.

Harbour Skate Plaza



Darby Common



Urban Icon



Governance



People Magnets

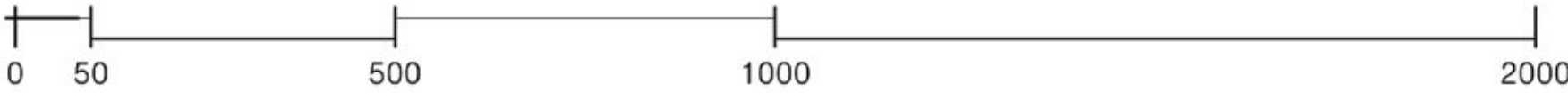




# Asia-Pacific City Map



2 overall  
SK01 A1 Scale: 1:5000



- BICYCLE TRANSIT LINK
- PROPOSED LIGHTRAIL ROUTE
- OPEN SPACE/PARKLAND
- PAVED PEDESTRIAN AREA
- POTENTIAL MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT



