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AUTHORITY**



Acton Waterfront

Place Plan



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Prepared for City Renewal Authority
by Place Laboratory in collaboration with
Hames Sharley, Mantra Studios & democracyCo



Foreword

Lake Burley Griffin is a nationally significant and much-loved feature of Canberra and its landscape character. It's one of the defining elements that makes Canberra such a beautiful city and wonderful place to live and visit.

Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin's original plan intended that the city's public street and space network would continue down to the lake in West Basin, connecting the city centre and Lake Burley Griffin.

In 2006 the National Capital Authority amended the National Capital Plan to allow the city centre to connect it to the waterfront at West Basin. These amendments, which included the reclamation of approximately 2.86 hectares of lake bed to create a new public park, a lake wall and waterfront promenade on the Griffins' intended 1913 alignment, were passed by both houses of the Federal Parliament.

The National Capital Plan envisages Acton Waterfront as:

"... a vibrant cultural and entertainment precinct on a waterfront promenade. The area will create a new city neighbourhood, extending the city to the lake with a cosmopolitan mixture of shops, businesses, cafés, recreation, tourist activities and accommodation".

The ACT Government, through the City Renewal Authority, is progressing the Acton Waterfront works, in line with the National Capital Plan, to bring everyday life to the lake. Stage 1 of the project was completed in 2018 in conjunction with the design and delivery of Henry Rolland Park.

To deliver the remaining stages of the Acton Waterfront, the City Renewal Authority's aim is to create an accessible and attractive destination on the lake edge with safer and more direct connections to the city that will encourage more locals and visitors to enjoy the lake.

A community panel consisting of local residents, businesses, community groups, advocacy groups and other stakeholders participated in two place plan focused workshops.

The purpose of the workshops was to continue a long standing dialogue with the community, confirm the relevance of the previous community engagement results related to this project and identify any gaps.

The community panel provided input to and feedback on the place themes and their importance; the future users and how the place needs to be designed for them; and the potential key elements of Acton Waterfront.

The *Acton Waterfront Place Plan* is a culmination of the ideas generated at the workshops.

The place plan establishes not only the look and feel of Acton Waterfront but also how the place will be experienced by people.

The quality of the experiences offered ranges from the everyday to the extraordinary. It is all about the human scale, personal perceptions, and individual as well as community participation in the place.

The creation of a development that responds to these place criteria needs to permeate through the whole breadth of the Acton Waterfront - from the architecture, public spaces and management right through to the daily events and programming.



Malcolm Snow, Chief Executive Officer

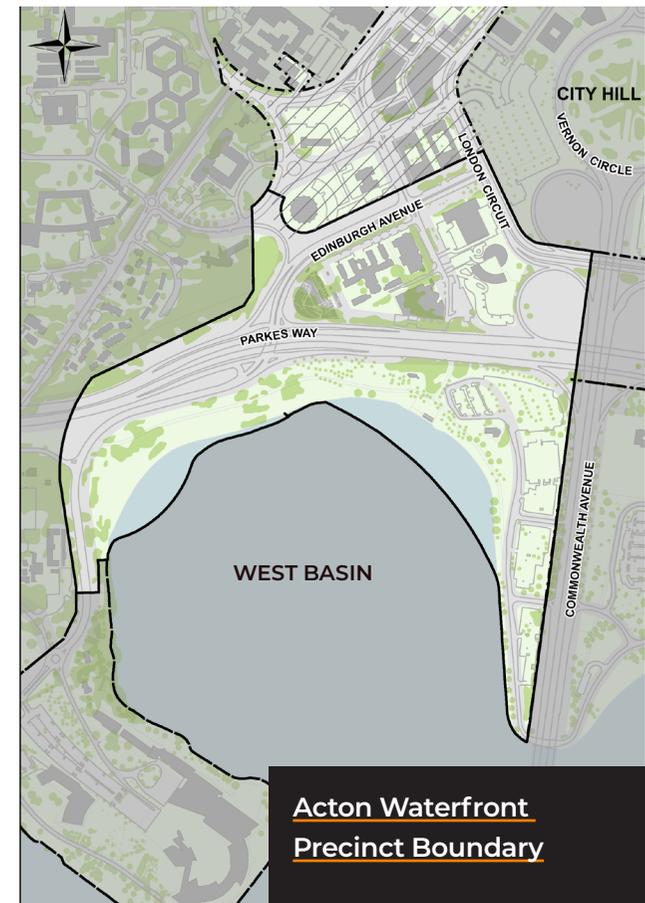
Introduction

BACKGROUND

Acton Waterfront is a key gateway to the Canberra city centre, located on the northern edge of Lake Burley Griffin's West Basin.

The Acton Waterfront that this place plan refers to is bounded to by Commonwealth Avenue and Parkes Way and extends westward toward the Acton Peninsula. It also includes a parcel of land adjacent to Commonwealth Avenue, between London Circuit and Parkes Way.

The Acton Waterfront at West Basin was envisaged under the National Capital Plan, and includes the reclamation of approximately 2.86 hectares of lake bed to create a lake edge on Griffin's intended 1918 alignment and construction of a waterfront promenade. Stage 1 of the promenade was completed in 2018 along with Henry Rolland Park.



PLANNING CONTEXT

The proposal for Acton Waterfront to align with the Griffins' original plan dates back to at least 2004 when the National Capital Authority released its *Griffin Legacy* document. This was translated into amendments to the National Capital Plan in 2006, paving the way for the ACT Government to design and build an urban lakeside destination connected to the city centre.

Indicative master planning for the area was completed in 2013 as part of the ACT Government's broader "City to the Lake" project.

Starting with the formulation of this place plan, the City Renewal Authority is in the process reviewing the development planning principles for Acton Waterfront, using a modern, best-practice placemaking approach.

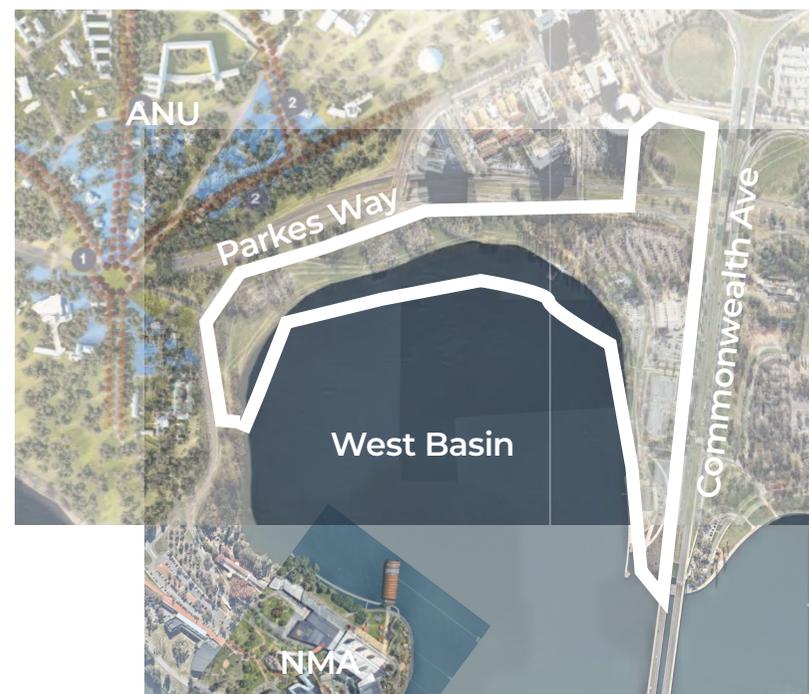
This review will take into account the Commonwealth's objectives for Acton Waterfront (as outlined in the West Basin Precinct Code), which are to:

- Extend the city grid of streets and paths to connect to the lake.
- Create a public waterfront promenade in the Central National Area.
- Enhance the range of tourism and recreation experiences available on Lake Burley Griffin.
- Curate a built environment which demonstrates design excellence.
- Curate a West Basin precinct with a mix of uses and a public domain which demonstrates urban design excellence.
- Provide continuous public access around West Basin with links to the surrounding national attractions.
- Contribute to the visitor and recreation experience of the Lake Burley Griffin parklands with a waterfront promenade that supports entertainment, accommodation and leisure uses.
- Enhance Commonwealth and Edinburgh Avenues as important physical, visual and symbolic links of Canberra.
- Reinforce Commonwealth Avenue, a significant approach route and vista to Parliament House, as a corridor of activity, leading from the city into the Parliamentary Zone.
- Reserve land for a significant public building, cultural attraction or landscape space on the water axis on the western shore of West Basin.
- Ensure environmental sustainability including energy efficiency and water sensitive urban design measures.

There is a body of historical work that has been completed over the years in respect of Acton Waterfront. Key studies include:

- Urban Strategy: Linking City Centre to the Lake, Hill Thalix (2013);
- City to the Lake: Master Plan Feasibility Report, ISG Projects (2014);
- City to the Lake: Implementation Plan, ISG Projects (2014);
- Stage 1, Waterfront Development Design, Chin Civil (2015);
- Stage 2, Waterfront Development Design, Chin Civil (2018);
- Light Rail Stage 2 Reference Design, Arup (2018);
- Parkes Way re-design Scoping Design/Reference Design, Arup (2018);
- Acton Peninsula Precinct Draft Structure Plan, NCA (May 2017).
- West Basin – Site Investigation Report (Stage 1), Cardno, 2018.

This place plan and the themes and principles outlined within it provide a reviewed position on the direction for the master planning and development of Acton Waterfront.



Composite site plan showing location of Acton Waterfront in the context of the ANU Master Plan (2019) and National Museum of Australia Master Plan (2019).

PURPOSE

In 2017 the City Renewal Authority was established to lead the renewal of Acton Waterfront, the city centre, Northbourne Avenue corridor, Dickson group centre and Braddon (the City Renewal Precinct).

The Authority applies a design-led and people-focused approach to renewal and restoration projects for the ACT Government. At the request of the government, the Authority is updating the planning and design framework for the Acton Waterfront to reflect the planning of stage 2 of Canberra's light rail network and a changing city centre.

Further planning, including spatial master planning, detailed designs and timing of works will also consider the changed economic circumstances driven by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The review has resulted in the development of this place plan that will guide the detailed design of this highly significant place.

The waterfront will be the heart of a socially and environmentally sustainable precinct built for people to use every day of the year.

New parks and places for people are being built, bringing life to underutilised and seldom-used public spaces.

We are working with the community, small and large businesses and the ACT and Federal governments to create new spaces and places that are of exemplary design quality, attract people and stimulate investment.

We are activating the precinct with events, activities and attractions that bring people into the city and to the waterfront.

What is a place plan?

Place planning is a community-led planning process that enables community and stakeholders to have a greater say within their local area.

Unlike conventional master plans, a place plan doesn't necessarily include a spatial resolution, land use plan or concept designs, but does go further than the current planning system to include the community needs and aspirations to inform the future design. A place plan captures the essence of the community values and provides guidance on how a place should look and feel, landscape and urban characters, relationships between people, built and natural environment, and seeks to create a better place.

The process of place planning

There is no standard format of the place plan or place planning methodology. Each project needs to be devised to respond to the unique community needs and aspirations, and site specific issues of the built and natural environment.

The *Acton Waterfront Place Plan* was delivered through a series of sequential steps as shown in the diagram below, following the overall project methodology set out in the City Renewal Authority's *Brief for the Acton Waterfront Review - Place Planning & Urban Design*. The process enables a robust and relevant analysis of Acton Waterfront sense of place, informed by research, consultation, and in-depth studies including development of baseline information, future audiences, and site specific place performance measures.

The place plan components have been confirmed with the community and stakeholders at key milestones.

Diagram of key Place Plan components and process - Acton Waterfront

Background analysis + place influences report

Factors which may influence the future character of the Acton Waterfront were thoroughly investigated, including various urban planning documents, cultural and heritage background, site conditions, urban context, future audiences, including local and international benchmarking.

Early engagement activities

Previous community consultation outcomes were summarised in order to understand baseline community needs and aspirations.

Themes (confirmed with the community)

Place themes are the tools used to define the character and experience of a place. Like our first impression of a person is often defined by how they walk, talk, and dress, place themes are represent key gestures of a place that convey the meanings and values a place holds.

Place themes are usually derived from these three sources:

Universal themes that human society has been pursuing regardless of time. These themes derive from the deep desires in human nature.

Response to the social issues and trends of the time.

Expression of the special qualities of a place, giving the place a point of difference in a broader context.

Principles (confirmed with the community)

Place principles translate the abstract place themes into a more tangible form of guidance. Some of them may focus on the spatial outcome of a place, others may relate to place programs and governance.

The place principles of this project also give emphasis on the Acton Waterfront as a holistic, integrated precinct, rather than a narrow perspective of separate development parcels.

Place plan

A succinct document that summaries the place planning process and captures the aspirations of Acton Waterfront.

The place plan will be used to evaluate the City to the Lake Master Plan and be the basis for amendments to the plan. They will also underpin design strategies in the next project phase, ensuring any design proposals are aligned with the big vision for the place.

Place Themes

Theme 1: Respecting the Griffin Legacy

A place that contributes to both the legacy plan and everyday life.

Why this theme is important to Acton Waterfront?

- The legacy plan establishes the hierarchy of special places, vistas and key connections.
- A destination built upon many small attractions is adaptable to grow and change.
- Balancing and combining the benefits of a city location with the amenity required by both local residents and visitors.

Look and feel:

- Scenic
- Varied views to the lake and landmarks
- Relaxed and peaceful feel
- Big gestures and powerful landscapes with interesting details
- Generous, open and coherent green spaces
- Contrast of scales and heights within a low-rise setting
- Fine grain that is welcoming and interesting
- Festive and special

How does this create better outcomes?

- Acton Waterfront is integral to the West Basin Precinct and broader city geometry.
- Reinforces connection between the city centre and the waterfront.
- Cohesive, integrated and well-designed places that are highly desirable to spend time.



Canberra has two identities, the national capital and a city for everyday life. These two identities are manifested in two very different scales. One scale is often perceived from the bird's eye view featured with long vistas, axes and commanding geometry shapes.
The Griffin Legacy – A Policy Framework



The other is the human scale at eye level, which is about comfort, social interaction, and intimate connection with built and natural environment.

Theme 2: Contemporary garden city

Nature based solutions that reinforce the relationship between the place and environment.

Why this theme is important to Acton Waterfront?

- The garden-city movement is one of the key concepts behind Canberra that guides the character of the capital's planning and development.
- Living with nature is a universal theme in the history of urban settlement. It is also a strong branding tool.

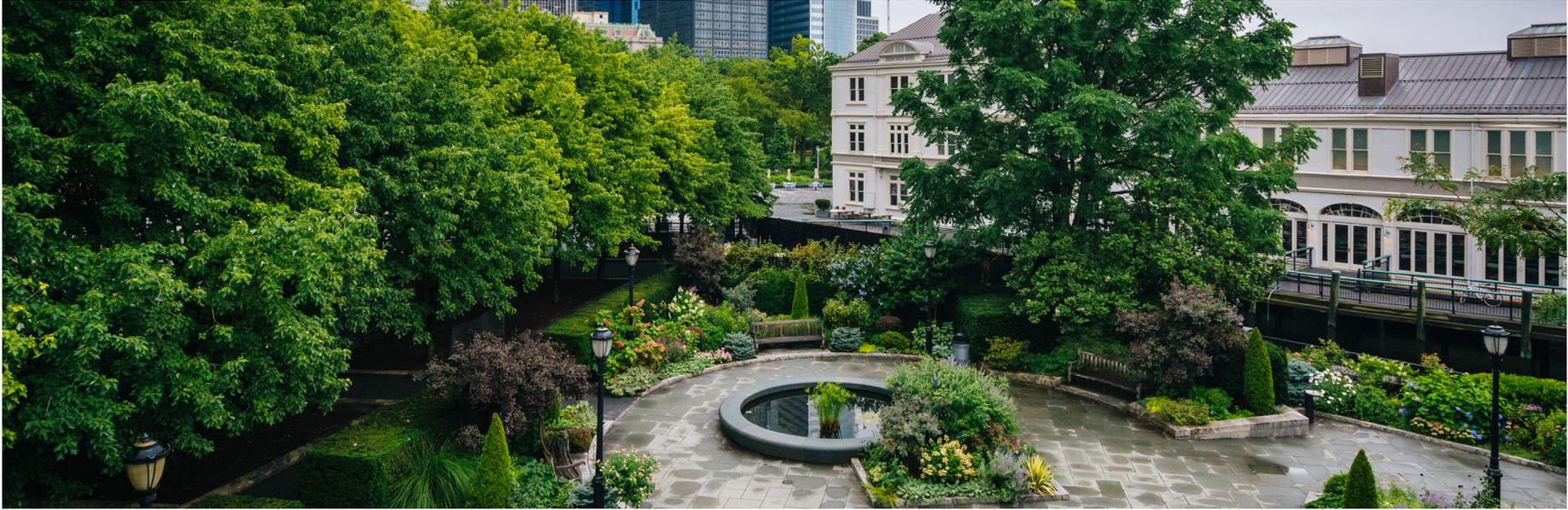
Look and feel:

- A breathing point for the city
- Relaxed and healthy
- Access to nature
- A place that matures and gets better over time
- Ample greenery
- Green streetscapes
- Habitat for urban wildlife

- Innovative green infrastructure
- Responsible use of resources (including investigation of secondary water for irrigation)

How does this create better outcomes?

- Effective design can be regenerative and improve the natural environment.
- Well designed buildings can reduce energy and water demand, and create spaces that are more comfortable for people.
- A healthy environment improves the wellbeing of Canberra citizens and visitors.
- Resilient design approaches can adjust to changing environmental conditions.
- Contributes to Acton Waterfront's distinctive brand which will attract people.



The garden city was an urban planning concept developed by Ebenezer Howard in the late 19th Century. Its core idea was to use nature-based solutions to solve specific social and environmental issues of the era. Some of the acute urban issues in British cities during

Howard's time included overpopulation, housing shortage, high rents, air pollution, urban slums and lack of sunlight and open spaces.

Today we are facing a different set of challenges in our urban environment, such as high environmental footprint, climate change, water pollution, waste and recycling, lost natural habitat, lack of urban vitality, unhealthy lifestyle, loneliness, high living costs, and rapid advancement of new technologies.

Responding to these challenges and opportunities we are facing today requires a new interpretation of the garden city concept to be adapted for the Acton Waterfront.



environmental
management



shift of
aesthetic values



expanded social
values



3-dimensional
experience



identity and
brand

Theme 3: Community place

A resilient community makes a place resilient.

Why this theme is important to Acton Waterfront?

- Community is the soul of a place, which gives it a distinctive look, feel and a sense of belonging.

Look and feel:

- A family place
- A friendly environment for children and elders
- A village feel
- Playful and lively
- Relaxed and cosy
- Healthy and active
- Pleasant to walk around
- Many free community activities
- Connectedness and a sense of familiarity
- Pride in and empowerment by one's own community

How does this create better outcomes?

- Supports social interaction by creating welcoming places.
- A greater sense of belonging that strengthens community connections.
- Streets and public spaces which feel welcoming, accessible and safe. Attracting more people to use the spaces.
- Contributes to Acton Waterfront's distinctive brand, which will attract people.



A sense of community cannot be created through a single big move, but rather by many small gestures. A community focused place provides a range of opportunities for neighbours to meet and interact in informal settings.
Lei Zhang, PLACE Laboratory



Indoor public space for people meet, work or have lunch. It also has a cafe and can be used for events.



Community activities such as a markets activate the public spaces.



Space for people to exercise pets in a community meeting place.

Theme 4: Foreshore for people

Foreshore solutions that reinforce the relationships between the people, place and the water.

Why this theme is important to Acton Waterfront?

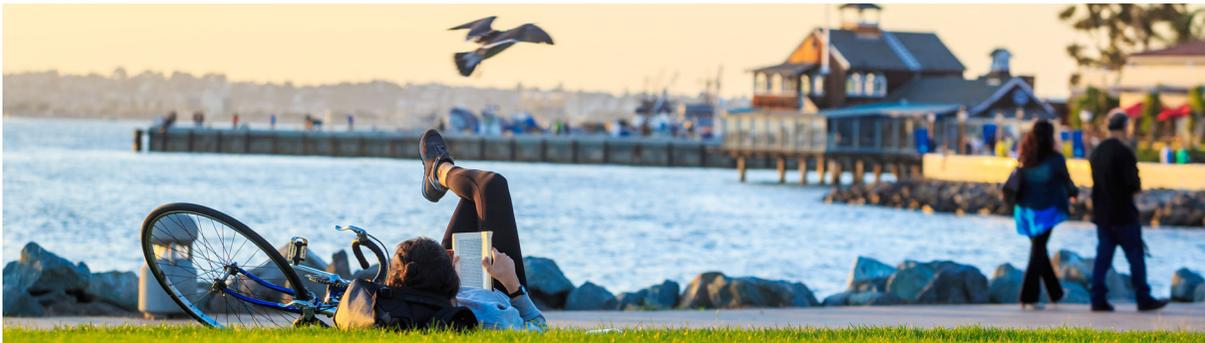
- Unique opportunity to create an active and engaging waterfront, directly adjacent to the city.
- Living by water is a universal theme in the history of urban settlement. People are emotionally attached to water.

How will this look and feel?

- Scenic water view
- Living water
- Tangible and interactive
- Healthy
- Lively and fun
- Festive and vibrant
- Peaceful and relaxed
- Both natural and urban

How does this create better outcomes?

- Uniquely Canberra spaces that locals can be proud of and offer memorable experiences.
- Enjoyable water-focused spaces for people, all year round.
- Liveable spaces that support a healthy lifestyle and community wellbeing.
- Interesting, safe and comfortable spaces to attract people and investment.
- Environmentally responsive and sustainable spaces that improve the relationship between people and nature.



A people-centred foreshore provides many opportunities for people to engage with water and nature. The combination of small casual moments and large organised events contributes to making memorable experiences.

Theme 5: Connections as journeys

Combine physical and emotional experiences.

Why this theme is important to Acton Waterfront?

- Journeys influence how we experience a city. We miss out on too much by taking the shortest route from A to B.
- An appealing journey encourages walking and cycling.

Look and feel:

- Walkable length
- Comfortable and attractive
- Shade and sun
- Greenery
- Seasonal change
- Interesting things to see
- Rhythm
- Something to anticipate
- Exploration and discovery
- Arouse emotions

- Interesting
- Sociable and friendly
- Good active travel connections (cycle paths, footpaths and light rail)
- Key destinations

How does this create better outcomes?

- Builds connections between Acton Waterfront and surrounding destinations including the city, ANU and the National Museum of Australia.
- Supports positive social interaction, creating welcoming places.
- Streets and public spaces that feel welcoming, accessible and safe, attracting more people to use the spaces and walk around.
- Promotes healthy and responsible living by promoting cycling, walking and light rail to get around.

Seattle Olympic Park is a great example of bridging the city to the waterfront through an enticing journey. For a long time Seattle was separated from Elliott Bay foreshore by a major highway and railway. A new waterfront park was designed to connect the city to its waterfront. By manipulating the orientation and elevation of the path to provide carefully framed views of the bay, city, railway and highway, gardens and sculptures the place is slowly revealed to visitors.



The boardwalk abutting Henry Rolland Park will shortly be extended by the City Renewal Authority as part of the Acton Waterfront Stage 2 works.

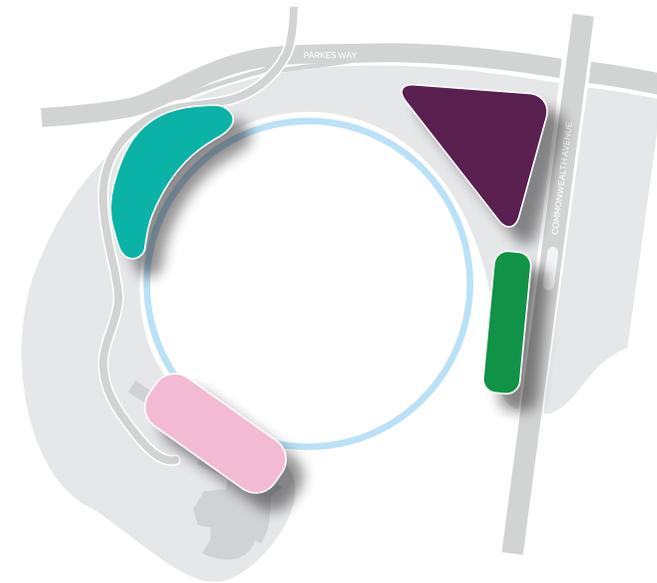


Place principles

Overview

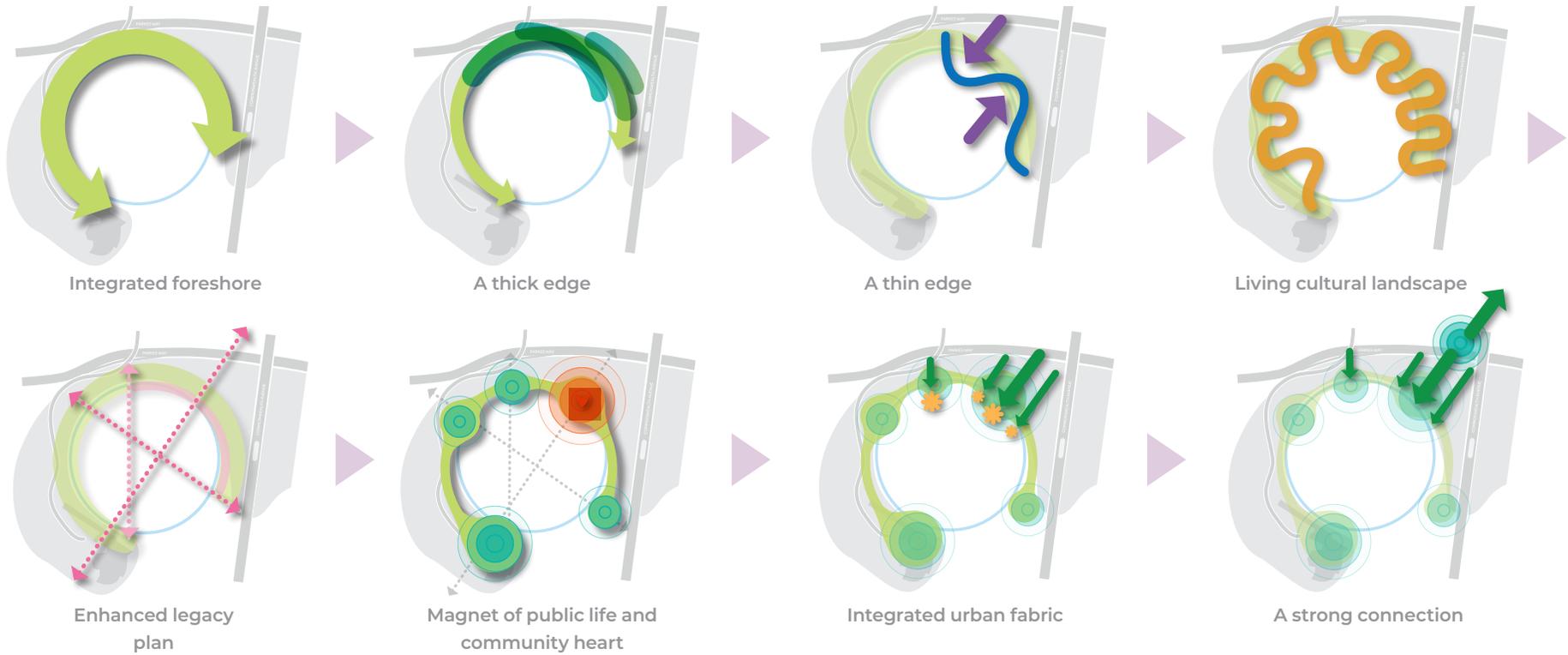
The foreshore area of Acton Waterfront has been evolving over many years. A number of recent master plans propose new designs for different sections of the foreshore area, such as ANU Master Plan, *National Museum of Australia Master Plan*, and *City to the Lake Master Plan*.

However, a lack of holistic planning and vision for the waterfront may lead to fragmented design approaches and compromise the integrity of the West Basin precinct and its ability to realise the intent of the place themes outlined here. The following is an overview of the proposed place principles. While focused on Acton Waterfront, emphasis is also given to a coherent treatment of the foreshore as a continuous and connected precinct.



The risk: A fragmented foreshore area

Acton Waterfront Place Principles



Principle 1: Integrated foreshore

Plan Acton Waterfront as a coherent precinct and continuous journey.

Below are the key strategies to achieve an integrated foreshore, which should also be used as a guide for Acton Waterfront.

- Ensure continuous travel paths for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Provide generous green space, parks and play spaces to bring the foreshore together.
- Establish a coherent design language while still offering a diversity of experience.
- Co-ordinate different open spaces, balance open and intimate spaces, active and immersive moments, to achieve engaging experiences.

Key elements of an integrated foreshore:

A combination of a continuous high-quality boardwalk and public path along the foreshore.

- A combination of formal/informal and natural/urban landscape settings within the foreshore.
- Well maintained and irrigated lawn with trees and garden beds.
- A series of vantage points for expansive views across the lake.
- Diversity of spaces of different sizes, amenity and activity offerings.
- Urban furniture throughout including seating, benches, picnic settings, shade structures, public toilets, bins, bike racks and drink fountains.
- A minimum 30 per cent tree canopy coverage across the site (in accordance with ACT Government Living Infrastructure Plan).
- Public art, including performance spaces.
- Segregated path for cyclists.



A foreshore area with generous green spaces, providing a coherent background for a diverse range of active and passive recreational activities.



Principle 2: A thick edge

Layered green infrastructure to protect and filter run-off and enhance habitats.

The lake is the most important asset and focus of the Acton Waterfront, giving the precinct a unique character and a point of difference from other inner-city areas. The water quality is vital to the success and functionality of the foreshore's open spaces.

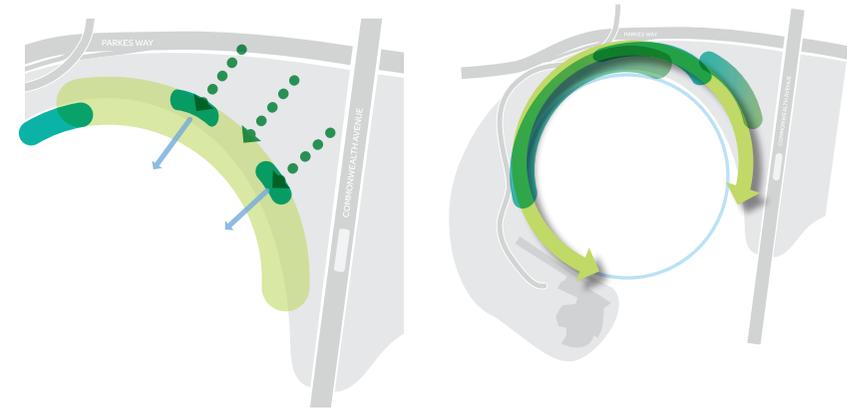
A thick edge integrates green infrastructure and best-practice water management systems to support healthy waterways. It ensures the lake is available and accessible for a range of recreational uses including swimming and boating.

The thick edge incorporates both natural and water habitats into urban planning.

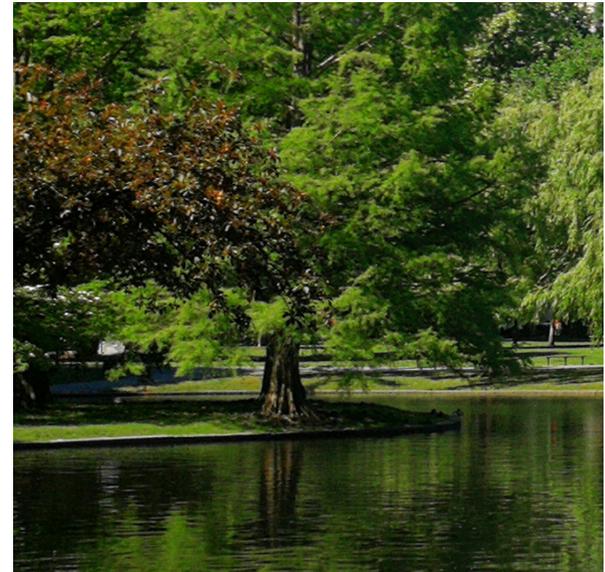
A thick edge allows local ecological communities to mature and evolve over time and offers greater environmental amenity and resilience to the urban and natural environment.

Key elements of a thick edge:

- A combination of a continuous high-quality boardwalk and public paths along the foreshore between the Commonwealth Avenue Bridge and the National Museum of Australia.
- A combination of formal/informal and natural/urban landscape settings within the foreshore zone.
- A waterfront maximised for public use, including flexible spaces to accommodate large events.
- Well maintained and irrigated lawn with trees and garden beds.
- Uses secondary water sources for irrigation.
- A series of vantage points for expansive views across the lake.
- Majority of the Water Sensitive Urban Design infrastructure integrated into the streetscapes.
- Urban furniture throughout including seating, benches, picnic settings, shade structures, public toilets, bins, bike racks and drink fountains.
- A minimum 30 per cent tree canopy coverage across the site (in accordance with ACT Government Living Infrastructure Plan).
- Public art and performance spaces.
- Segregated path for cyclists.



A thick edge is green and can be manifested in many ways, such as rain gardens, stormwater treatment ponds, wetlands, green roofs or underground stormwater tanks.



Principle 3: A thin edge

Push and pull the edge to create different ways of interacting with the water.

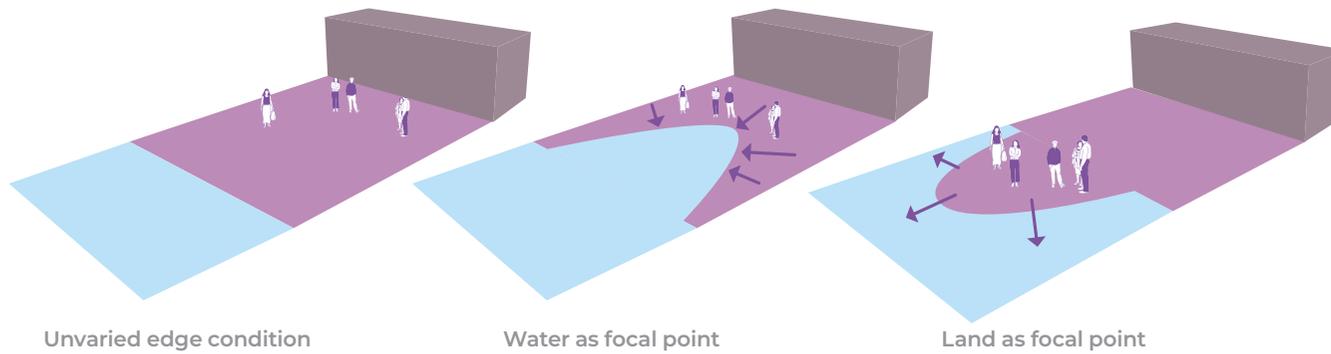
A thin edge encourages a different relationship between people and water, and the city and lake. It provides many different ways for people to experience the lake, from launching a boat, waterfront dining, playing on the shoreline, to swimming in the lake.

The lake is no longer an abstract concept on a map or a distant view from the mountains, but a tangible landscape feature for everyone to enjoy regardless of age or ability.

A thin edge also creates varied experiences and views along the lake. Like a good story, it reveals itself gradually. A successful waterfront leads people through a journey of discovery. Diverse water edge experiences are critical to a successful waterfront destination.

Key elements of a thin edge:

- Consistent edge condition maintaining the formal arc of the Griffin plan.
- An engaging waterfront experience (including spaces for dining and small-scale retail).
- Launching facilities for boating.
- Hire and storage facilities for recreational boats/kayaks/paddle boards etc.
- A series of vantage points for expansive views across the lake.



Unvaried edge condition

Water as focal point

Land as focal point

A diverse waterfront experience is largely determined by the water edge treatment and interfaces with adjacent built forms and land uses. By simply manipulating the shoreline, the sense of space and focal point can be changed and diversified.



A thin edge eliminates the barriers between people and the lake, and offers more opportunities to interact with water in many ways.

Principle 4: Living cultural landscape

Support Indigenous storytelling and cultural practices.

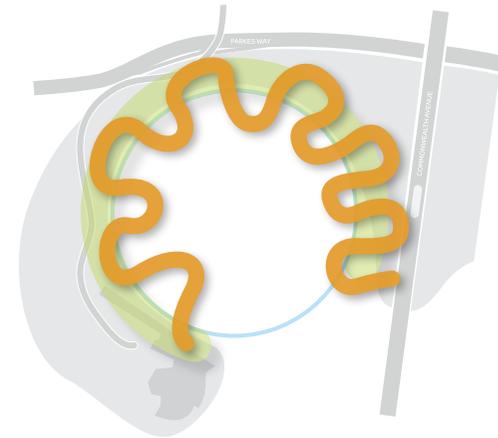
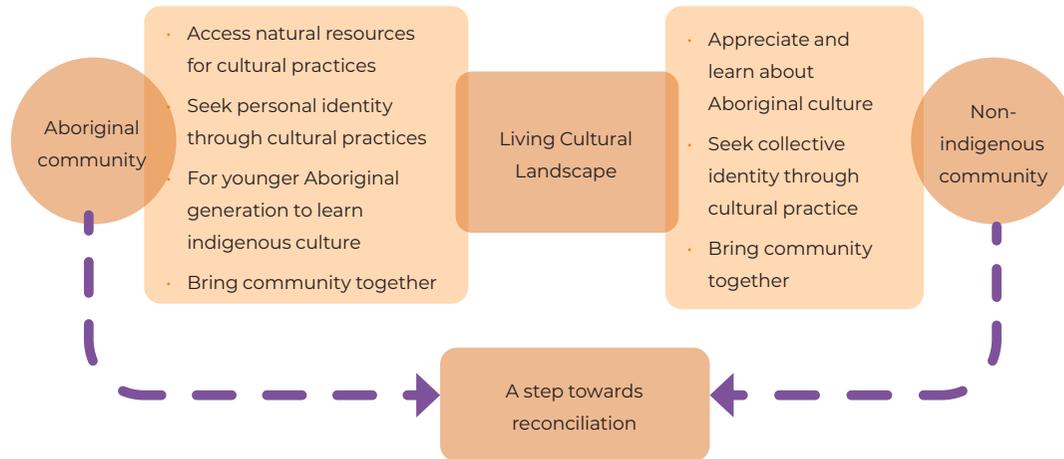
First Nations communities living in urban areas are facing many challenges, such as access to natural resources for cultural practice, and passing on practical skills and environmental knowledge to younger generations.

Acton Waterfront provides an opportunity to rethink the model of urban landscape in Australia, to prototype open space management and operational systems, which are more environmentally responsive and socially inclusive. A living cultural landscape not only showcases native landscape, but also provides natural resources for Aboriginal communities to practice traditional cultural activities. It is a natural cultural institution that brings Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities together in an informal landscape setting.

Key elements of a living cultural landscape:

Meaningful engagement with local First Nations people to identify Indigenous values of relevance and opportunities for recognition and conservation of their cultural heritage within the Acton Waterfront.

- A combination of natural systems and green infrastructure interventions showcasing reconciliation and a commitment to reinstate the natural environment.
- Cultural tourism, such as guided tours and activities.
- Interpretation and signage.
- Partnerships with institutions, local First Nations and multi-cultural groups.
- Cultural exchange and education programs.
- Inter-generational gathering spaces.
- Plant materials that showcase and support traditional cultural practices.
- Extension of the Living Cultural Landscape to the National Museum of Australia.



Yarrabingin bush tucker garden at South Eveleigh, NSW, is an example of living cultural landscape, where the garden is designed and maintained by First Nations people. Cultural tours, commercial functions, community activities and skill training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are regularly hosted in the garden.

Principle 5: Enhanced legacy plan

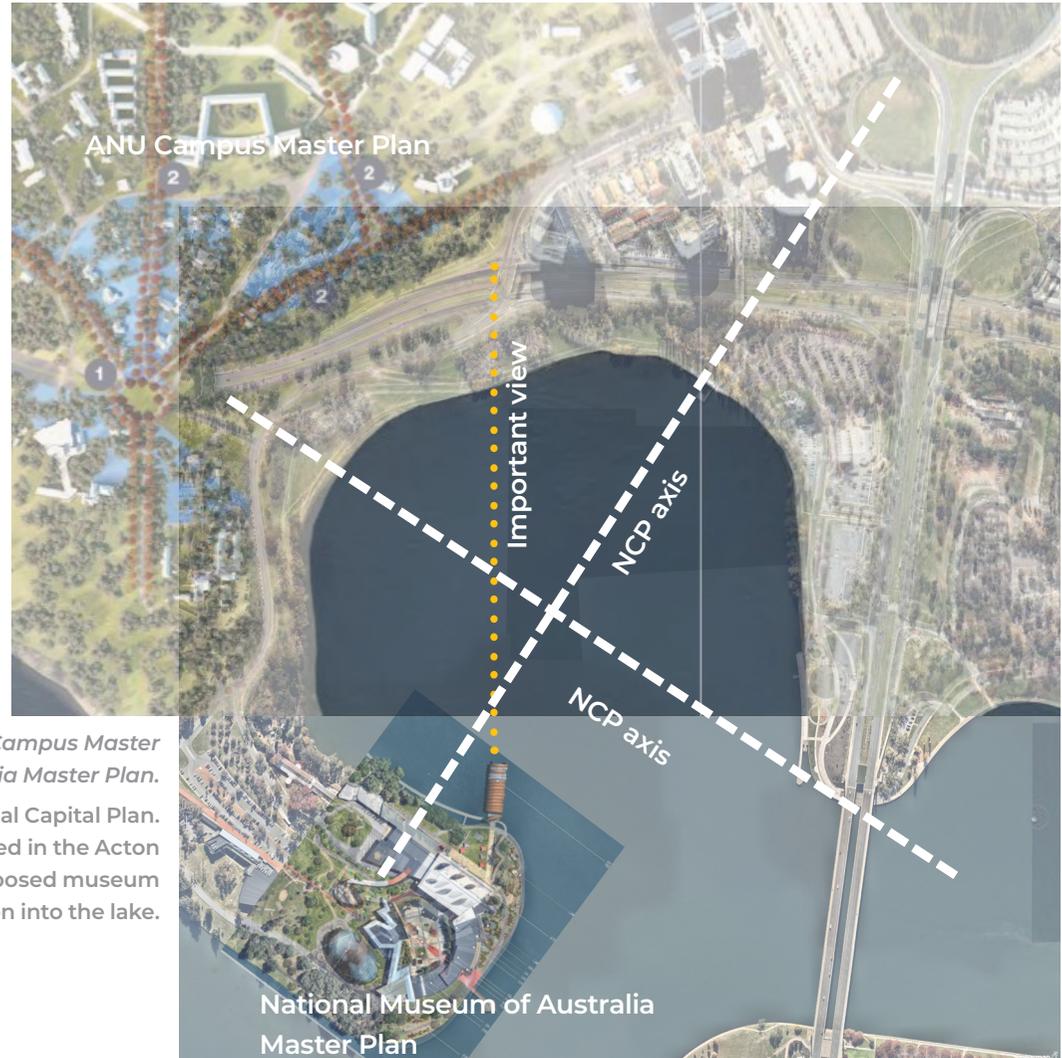
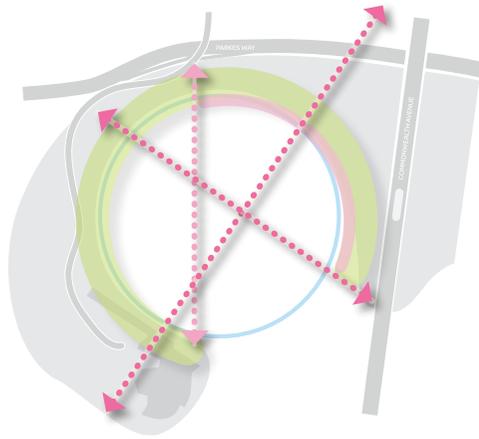
Enhance Griffin Legacy by acknowledging spatial hierarchy, views and key axes.

The National Capital Plan establishes the hierarchy of special places, vistas and key connections. A strong integration between Acton Waterfront and the city can only be achieved by acknowledging these spatial requirements.

The National Capital Plan identifies two significant axes connecting Acton Waterfront and the National Museum of Australia; ANU campus and Commonwealth Avenue Bridge. Another important view corridor emerges along the termination of Edinburgh Avenue and the proposed National Museum of Australia extension in the lake as identified in the *Acton Peninsula Structure Plan (DRAFT)*.

Key elements of an enhanced legacy plan:

- An urban structure that reflects the wider radial city grid patterns and has a greater correlation with the National Capital Plan's indicative urban structure.
- Significant view corridors along Commonwealth Avenue to West Basin/Lake Burley Griffin.
- An urban structure that frames views along streets through and to the lake from the city centre and Commonwealth Avenue.
- A strong and formal built edge along Commonwealth Avenue together with additional elements such as acknowledging the alignment of Marcus Clarke Street through the site.
- Vantage points on the foreshore that align with important axes.
- A contemporary interpretation of the garden city concept to the built form, infrastructure and social programs.



An aerial image of Acton Waterfront overlaid with the current *ANU Campus Master Plan* and *National Museum of Australia Master Plan*.

The white dashed lines are significant axes identified in the *National Capital Plan*. The yellow dashed line is an important framed view to be considered in the Acton Waterfront based on Acton Peninsula Structure Plan and the proposed museum extension into the lake.

Principle 6: Magnet for public life and a community heart

Triangulate activities to encourage social interaction and make community activity highly accessible and visible.

A civic heart has its unique role in a city. It is a place where community activities become more concentrated and visible, contributing to social cohesion and urban vitality.

Responding to the significant axes and view lines, five main activity nodes are identified within the West Basin precinct, including the National Museum of Australia, three foreshore destinations within Acton Waterfront, and one node where the ANU campus meets the lake.

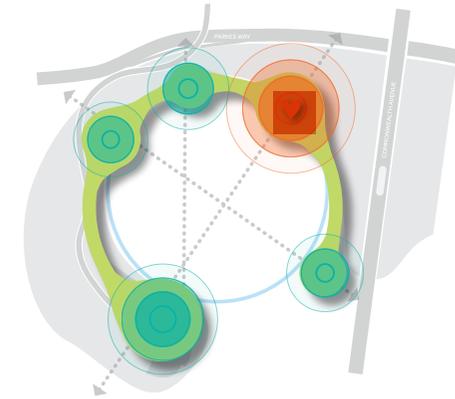
Each of these nodes has distinct look and feel while also being complementary. Some are urban, some are natural and calm. They draw people to them by offering a variety of public amenities and recreational activities, ensuring the community needs and aspirations are captured in the public realm.

Canberra's climate presents a great challenge in fully utilising the open space across the seasons.

A mix of indoor and outdoor community spaces, and innovative solutions for seasonal adaptive uses of public space are required to provide all-year-round activity.

Key elements of magnet for public life & a community heart:

- A cluster of destinations each with a diverse but complementary offer connected by pedestrian and cycle links.
- A consolidated but small-scale commercial and retail area at the intersection of the main street and boulevard.
- Opportunity for food trucks and temporary cafes/restaurants to activate the foreshore during construction of the development lots.
- A centrally located playground close to the heart of the development and other retail/food and beverage activity.
- A more accessible foreshore and boardwalk for all that does not discriminate (by using stairs and long ramps).
- Shade and weather protection structures to provide protection for people using seating and play areas.
- A multi-purpose community space.
- Public art and performance spaces.
- Space for large events



A magnet of public life is created by triangulation of different activities and user groups. Successful public destinations are often family friendly and encourage social interactions. With low birth rates nowadays, it is observed by social researcher, Hugh Mackay, that dogs have become the new social lubricant to bring people together.



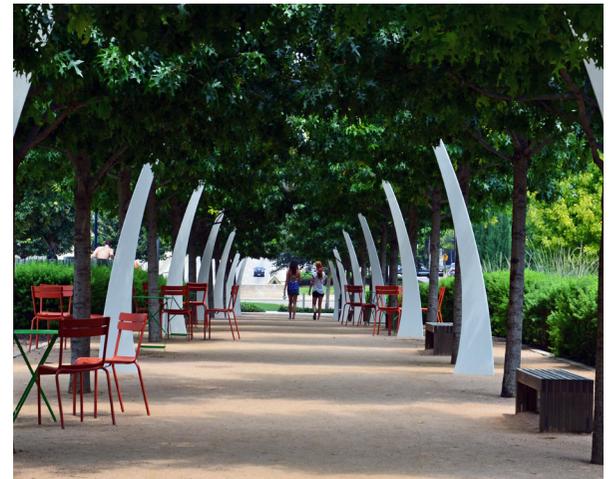
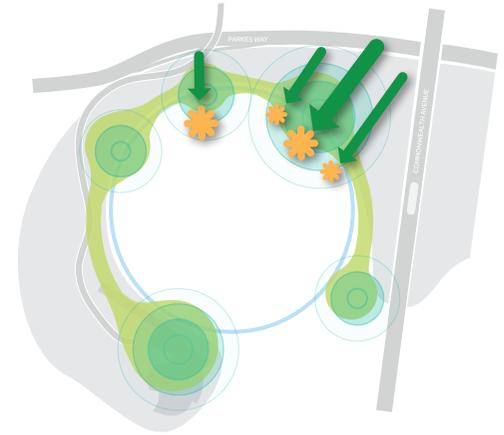
Principle 7: Integrated urban fabric

Weave foreshore into urban structure through logical street pattern and connections.

The foreshore area and urban fabric are integral components of the Acton Waterfront precinct. The street network is an extension of the foreshore both visually and functionally. With deliberate relationships between the streets and foreshore destinations, each street has unique character identified by the different vistas towards the lake. Meanwhile, the integration also is also achieved in an integrated water management system from the streets to foreshore water treatment ponds and wetlands.

Key elements of an integrated urban fabric:

- Streets that support a richness of human activity and social connection.
- Quality, durable and low-maintenance streetscape materials with rich textures and subtle colours that are part of a consistent design language across the development.
- Precinct approach to green infrastructure (power, stormwater and grey water)
- Barrier-free movement for people of all ages and mobility levels.
- Footpaths, shared paths and cycleways with generous proportions.
- Majority of the water sensitive urban design infrastructure integrated into the streetscapes.
- Art and sculpture incorporated in the public realm to celebrate the identity and cultural history of Acton Waterfront.
- Shade trees to soften streets, paths and cycleways.
- A combination of carefully curated hard and soft landscape materials to favour a sense of green in all streets and open spaces.
- Private landscape interfacing with public spaces (including streets and open space).



Principle 8: Strong connections

Create a strong tie between the city and lake through an engaging journey.

A strong connection between the city centre and Acton Waterfront is critical for the precinct to succeed as a viable development and as a major city destination serving the broader Canberra community.

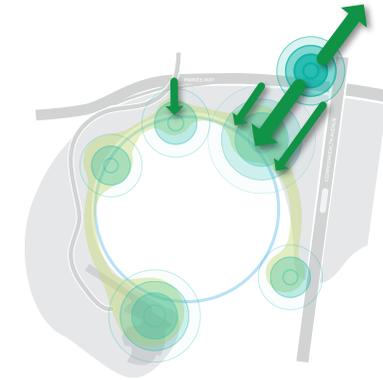
A legible network of streets, cycle paths and pedestrian paths enhances connectivity and accessibility to the lake from the city.

This can be further extended to create a viable connection, by ferry to the National Museum of Australia.

Innovative and feasible solutions need to be developed to bridge the gap and physical barrier presented by Parkes Way.

Key elements of strong connections:

- Multiple direct vehicle, pedestrian and cycle connections between the city centre and Acton Waterfront.
- Easy pedestrian connection to light rail stops.
- Walkable public spaces that are easy to navigate and have shade, generous proportions, shelter, places to rest, and points of interest.
- An enhanced and attractive journey for pedestrians and cyclists over Parkes Way in the form of a land bridge/deck park.
- A slip lane/tunnel from Commonwealth Avenue to Parkes Way west to prevent high volumes of non-local traffic passing through Acton Waterfront.
- Ferry landings adjacent to key nodes including near Henry Rolland Park to link together the light rail stop, Acton Waterfront and the National Museum of Australia.
- A direct cycle connection to Marcus Clarke Street and destinations beyond.
- A pedestrian and cycle connection to New Acton via a shared path bridge over Parkes Way.
- Shared path connection to the western and central loops.



A strong pedestrian link is green, comfortable and interesting. Its form varies, from direct and framing a vista, or can be sensuous and implied so as to stimulate curiosity. A good connection is a journey in its own right.



Magnets of public life

Destinations in Acton Waterfront

Six major destinations are identified around Acton Waterfront. Each of these destinations contributes a distinctive function and public life offer to the overall experience of Canberra's city core.

The site analysis and baseline studies undertaken as part of the project identified the need for more urban park destinations in the city and along the lake foreshore.

Although Canberra has abundant open spaces, most of them cannot support diverse recreational activity for extended periods of time due to the shortage of public amenities and activities to hold people in the space for longer.

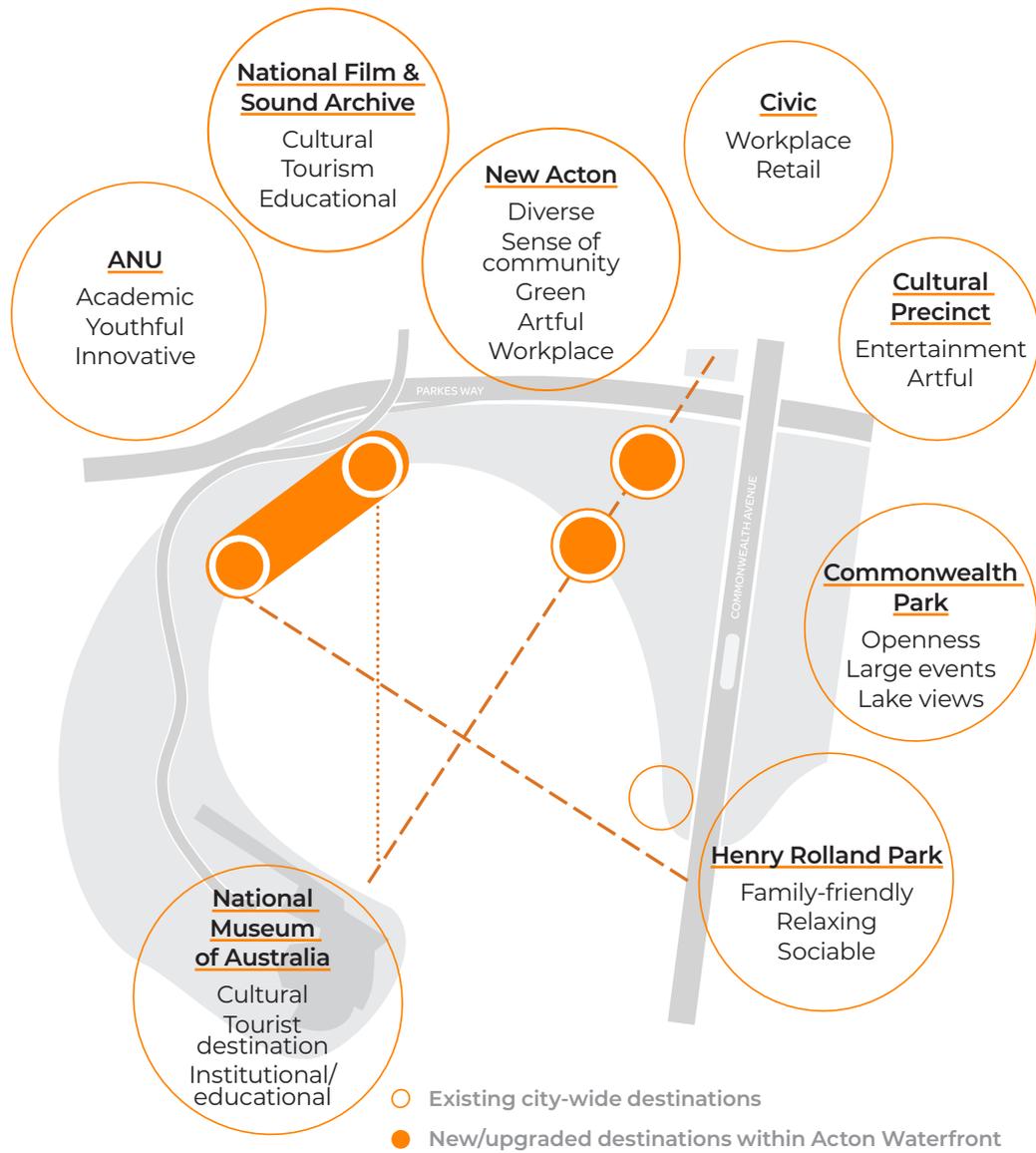
This finding, along with identification of the future Acton Waterfront audiences and their needs, led to the development of two important roles for Acton Waterfront:

- A destination for everyday life, supported by a network of small destinations, such as parks, cafés, restaurants, convenience stores and community facilities. These activities enable the precinct to function as a community.

- A major foreshore recreational destination for the broader community of Canberra and tourists. Acton Waterfront provides a series of the big and small activity nodes providing a spectrum of passive and active recreation that represent a mix of family friendly, cultural, and water-related activities opportunities.

The place character and visitor experiences at each of the destinations are described in the following pages in this section. The four designations within Acton Waterfront are:

- The Heart
- Henry Rolland Park
- Cultural Landscape
- Streets and Lanes



Four key activity nodes are identified in the Acton Waterfront precinct including the existing Henry Rolland Park. The locations of the destinations are direct responses to the important axes and view lines identified in the National Capital Plan and current master plans of significant surrounding sites.

Destination 1: The Heart

Sociable, intergenerational and energetic.

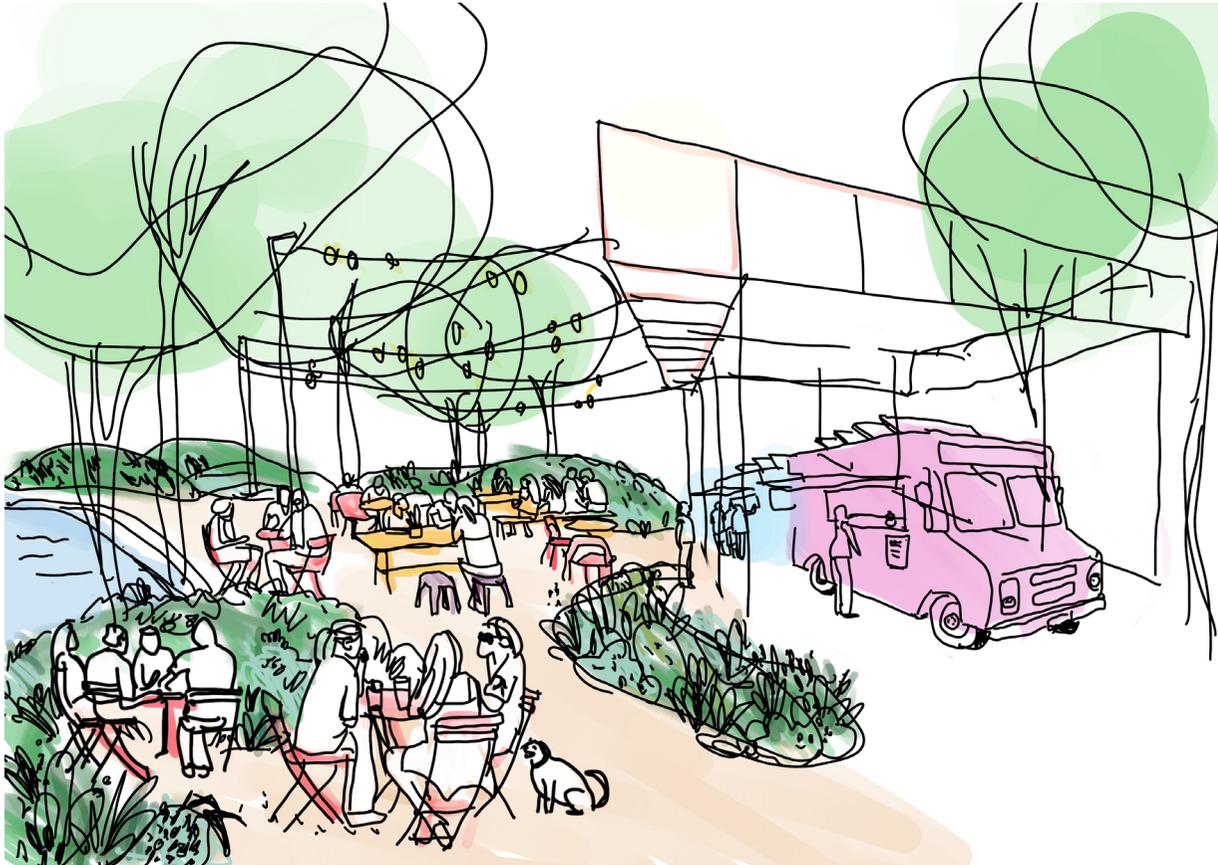
The Heart is the largest anchor destination along the foreshore area. It supports many types of hospitality and recreational activities for people of all ages and abilities. Some of the key experiences at this destination include:

- Green space – lawns, gardens and trees are the dominant surface treatment of the space.
- Major playground - a drawcard of families. The playground provides play experiences for children of different age groups, from toddlers to early teens. It also provides opportunities for parents and elderly people to be involved in physical activities.
- Foreshore dining – a diverse and affordable dining destination. The promenade offers a wide range of food and drink options, from weekday lunches and takeaway dinners to special occasions.
- Event space – a combination of flexible spaces for events of different scales ranging from major to small, with power and water connections.

- Multi-functional shade structure/pavilion and public facilities – large shade structures provide weather protection for everyday uses and community gathering.
- A community space supporting a variety of activities including co-working and business centre, gallery, fitness, a meeting place for community groups and public toilets.
- Waterfront promenade - a pedestrian street central to the foreshore area. The street can also be used as event space on a temporary basis.







Gardens and multifunctional shade structure/pavilion

Varied lake edge creates special moments bringing activities closer to the water. Gardens with a variety of small shrubs form wind barriers and enable extended cross-seasonal useage. Large pavilions with flexible design can be adapted for different uses, such as seating areas with moveable tables and chairs, group fitness classes, performance stage and weekend markets.

sit amongst greenery

decorative lighting

multi-functional shade structure

garden next to the lake

filtered views
to the lake

seasonal outdoor dining

community activity

touch the water

weekend markets

seasonal food options

tables for groups

dog friendly dining

Destination 2: Henry Rolland Park

Family friendly, relaxing and sociable.

Henry Rolland Park is a major waterfront destination, which is family friendly, relaxing and sociable.

Recently installed public amenities and landscape features in Henry Rolland Park include:

- Large event lawn
- Fitness equipment
- Shelters
- BBQ
- Pontoon with kayak launch
- Boardwalk
- Seating
- Lighting
- Public art







Large event lawn

A large open lawn consists of undulating landforms framed by clusters of trees and garden.

Destination 3: Cultural Landscape

Immersed in nature and access to water sports.

The Cultural Landscape defines the western foreshore between the National Museum of Australia and Edinburgh Avenue. Compared to the other destinations in the precinct, this location is a predominantly vegetated space. Its natural landscape setting features soft water edge treatments, large areas of mass planting, lawn and groves of trees. The living cultural landscape is another important theme integrated into the landscape concept, providing a platform to listen and learn about indigenous culture.

The primary visitor experiences here include water-based activities, family gatherings and cultural activities.

Some of the key visitor experiences and landscape features at this destination include:

- Continuation of an informal boardwalk and path to the National Museum of Australia.
- Swimming beach on the lake edge.
- Kayak launching ramp.

- Cultural interpretation, signage and wayfinding.
- Small-scale natural play area near the family gathering area.
- Pavilion with public toilets, change rooms and storage area – the building design can potentially be incorporated into the level changes at Edinburgh Avenue.
- Gathering areas and amenities to support Indigenous cultural practice, workshop and educational programs and cultural programs.
- Stormwater treatment ponds and wetlands.
- Infrastructure and service provisions for temporary events.





Swimming cove





Living cultural landscape

The living cultural landscape is a design narrative threaded through the landscape design. It provides another level of meaning to the landscape and a link to the national cultural institutions and organisations in the Acton Peninsula precinct.



Destination 4: Active Streets and Lanes

Sociable and green.

A well-designed streetscape can improve quality of life, the local environment and boost local businesses rather than simply move vehicles from place to place. As a destination, the street network can provide an engaging and memorable visitor experience, different to that of parks.

Within Acton Waterfront, the streets and lanes need to be designed as places in which everyday life happens.

Key experiences that occur in the streets are:

- A place where you get to know others.
- The green and comfortable streets connect you to nature and make you feel relaxed.





Summary

The aim of the *Acton Waterfront Place Plan* is to apply a best practice approach in creating an waterfront precinct that will be acclaimed for its design, sustainability and sense of community. It will be a precinct Canberrans will be proud of.

The place plan was formulated in consultation with the community to capture their needs and ideas for this project.

The place plan envisages a place for all Canberrans. With new parks and public spaces for people being built to bring life to underutilised public land.

It will be a place with a green heart - with lots of trees and grass and plants – but it will also have play spaces, cultural spaces, dining and entertainment options, the flexibility to cater for both everyday uses and special events, and importantly, it will make great connections to the existing city centre.

It will respect the national significance of the location, with its magnificent views, while also focusing on the human scale, ensuring that it is both a functional and comfortable place for people to spend time in.

The place plan is consistent the planning intentions set by the Commonwealth's National Capital Plan and builds on the ACT Government's 2013 City to the Lake plan

(Urban Strategy: Linking City Centre to the Lake, Hill Thalís)

to reimagine the project with the priority on making great public spaces first.

The place plan considers and acknowledges the underlying project parameters and assumptions which have evolved since the completion of the earlier City to the Lake plan, including planning for Stage 2 of Canberra's light rail network.

Consideration in further planning will also have to be given to the changed economic circumstances driven by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Importantly, the place plan establishes the “look and feel” of Acton Waterfront and explores how the place will be experienced by people. The quality of the experiences offered ranges from the everyday to the extraordinary. It prioritises the human scale, personal perceptions, community and individual participation in making a successful place.

The quality of built form, landscape and public places are an integral part of this experience. The response to the themes and principles outlined in this place plan will permeate through the whole breadth of the Acton Waterfront – from its architecture and public spaces right through to its daily use and activation.



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