

Canberra Civic and Cultural District

Development Master Plan 2025

A vision for Canberra's civic and cultural heart

The City Renewal Authority has developed a bold new Master Plan to guide the creation of the Canberra Civic and Culture District - a lively, modern cultural destination.

This exciting project will reshape the heart of the city, creating a vibrant place full of art, events, and experiences for locals and visitors alike. It's a key step in bringing the ACT Government's vision for Canberra as a leading arts destination to life.

Location

The Cultural District is located to the east of City Hill, bounded by Vernon Circle, London Circuit, Constitution Avenue and Northbourne Avenue. It includes key institutions and destinations such as the ACT Legislative Assembly, the Canberra Theatre, the new lyric theatre, the Multicultural Centre, Canberra Museum and Gallery, the North Building, Civic Square, Constitution Place, Ainslie Place.

Creating a great destination

The Cultural District has many elements needed for a great destination — unique cultural attractions, a central location, and a mix of public spaces, arts venues, and civic buildings. It welcomes over 450,000 visitors each year and is home to more than 500 workers, the busy Legislative Assembly, and many creative organisations.

With the new 2,000-seat lyric theatre on the way, even more people will be drawn to the area, making it an even more vibrant and exciting place to visit.

Community engagement

The Canberra Civic and Cultural District Development Master Plan has been developed through engagement with stakeholders and the wider community between 2023 and 2025, to ensure it meets community needs and achieves the ACT Government's vision. It is now time to share the Master Plan with the wider community and stakeholder organisations.



Principles for the Cultural District



Connection to Country



Extend Civic Square and reinforce the Griffin legacy



Support, strengthen and activate the public space



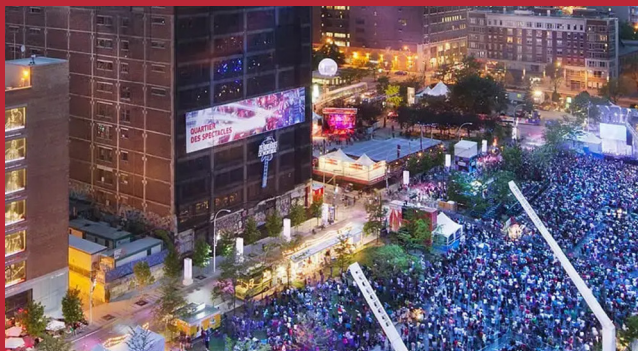
Reimagine cultural infrastructure and underpin the commercial viability



Support daytime activity and a thriving night time economy



Create a locally loved, and globally admired destination



Create a resilient and flexible location with strong place management and governance

Improvements across the Cultural District

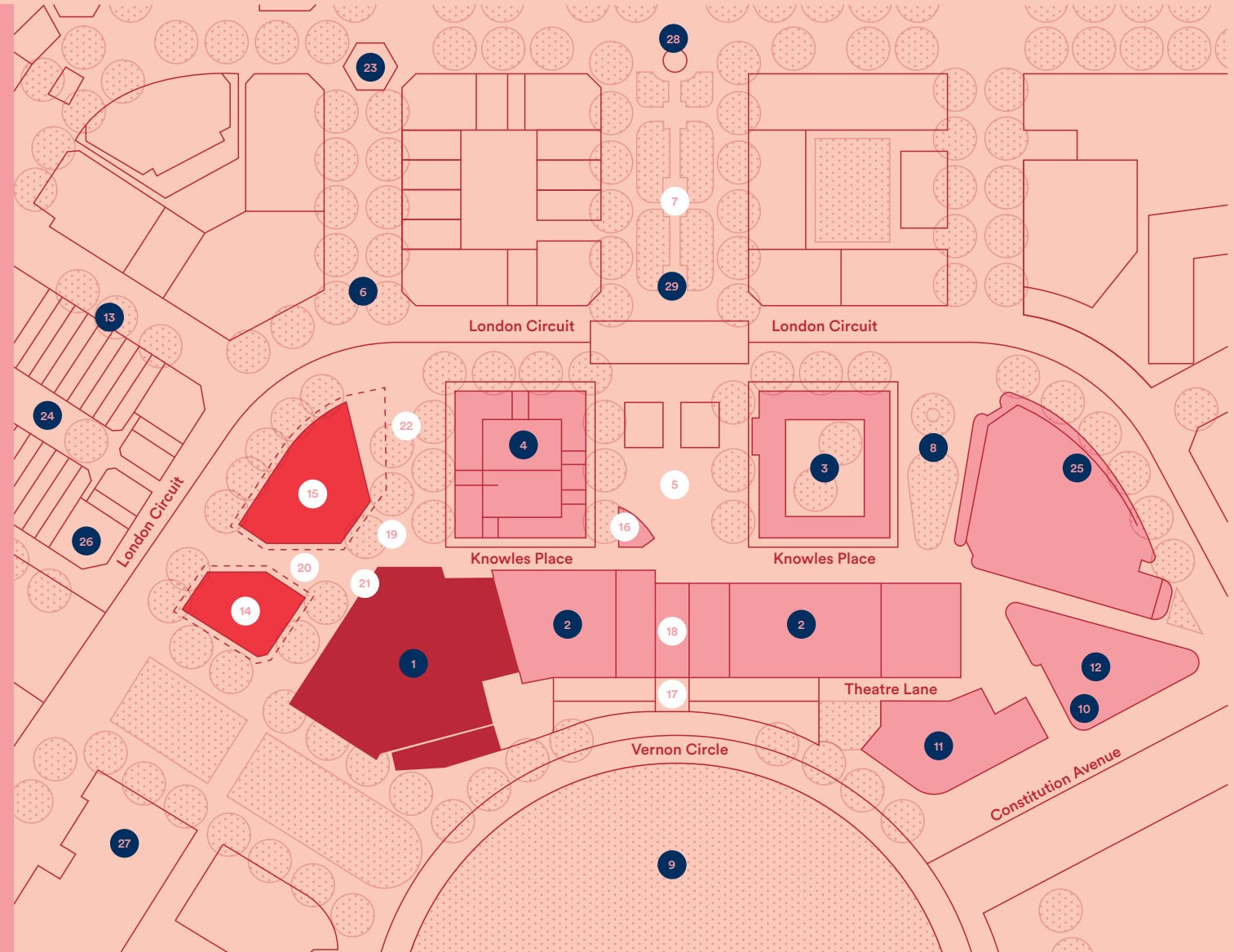
- Upgraded public spaces to support a wide range of community and cultural activities year-round, with flexible layouts that can adapt to different uses.
- Consistent design elements to connect and unify all the public spaces across Civic Square, London Circuit, Ainslie Place and City Walk.
- Pedestrian-friendly connections to link key areas within and around the Cultural District, with welcoming entry points and safer, easier-to-navigate streets.
- Improved landscaping, public art, paving, signage, and lighting to enhance character, safety, and overall appeal.
- New and refreshed buildings and spaces to encourage collaboration between Canberra's arts and cultural organisations.
- More trees planted to create cooler, greener spaces, reduce urban heat, and support sustainable water use.
- Streets that encourage walking with shade from trees and clear sightlines to improve comfort and safety.
- Design to support daytime activity and night-time economy, with inviting spaces and experiences that attract visitors.
- Unique laneways, plazas and spaces designed for food and beverage opportunities to encourage people to stay longer.

The Canberra Civic and Cultural District Development Master Plan 2025



Legend

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| 1 New lyric theatre | 16 'The Fin' (kiosk/ticketing or similar) |
| 2 Existing - Canberra Theatre Centre | 17 Future Vernon Circle drop-off |
| 3 South Building - ACT Legislative Assembly | 18 Future accessible link |
| 4 North Building - Canberra Museum & Gallery | 19 Potential link through ground level or North building |
| 5 Civic Square with new ephemeral water feature and landscape upgrades | 20 Proposed Lyric Plaza |
| 6 Petrie Plaza | 21 Proposed 'foodies lane' |
| 7 Upgraded Ainslie Place (shared zone) | 22 Basement carpark entry to Block 23 |
| 8 Legislative Plaza | 23 Civic merry-go-round |
| 9 City Hill | 24 Verity Lane |
| 10 A by Adina Hotel | 25 220 London Circuit |
| 11 Section 40 (new commercial building) | 26 Sydney Building |
| 12 KPMG Building | 27 London Central development |
| 13 Civic Bus Interchange | 28 Canberra Times Fountain |
| 14 Block 23 - Building 1 | 29 ACT Memorial |
| 15 Block 23 - Building 2 | |
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| Existing/in development |
| Features proposed in Master Plan |



Changes to key areas within the Cultural District

Civic Square

Revitalisation of Civic Square with new landscaping and artwork to make the area brighter, more appealing, accessible and suitable for events and activities. Changes proposed in the master plan include:

- More trees and furniture to create cool and welcoming places to rest.
- An improved and accessible walkway to connect City Hill and Vernon Circle with Civic Square.
- The opportunity for a walkway to activate the ground floor of the North Building, which would be designed to respect the building's historic features.
- Possible remodelling of the 'fin' building (the current Civic Library) to reopen Knowles Place and create a clearer, safer path between Lyric Plaza and Civic Square.
- New ground-level water features that can be turned on or off as required as an alternate to the current fountain to make Civic Square suitable for hosting events. This would also add a fun and interactive element to the space.
- Design elements to Connect with Country, created in collaboration with First Nations people.
- Possible extensions to the northwest corner of the North Building and the southwest corner of the South Building to meet space needs while still respecting the site's Conservation Management Plan.

Future development of Block 23

Two new buildings on the site of the old theatre car park between London Circuit, Knowles Place and Northbourne Avenue are expected to feature a mix of uses such as hotels, office space, cultural facilities and community spaces as well as basement parking including disability parking spaces.

The ground floor of the two new buildings is anticipated to provide spaces for shops, restaurants and bars.

Lyric Plaza is envisioned as a new public plaza between the North Building and the new Lyric theatre, connecting Theatre Lane with Petrie Plaza and City Walk, with opportunities for retail, food, beverage and cultural uses.

Ainslie Place

The redesign of Ainslie Place aims to create a more inviting and enjoyable space for people to spend time as well as an events hub.

An enhanced pedestrian connection between Civic Square and Ainslie Place will build a sense of inclusion within the Cultural District.

Pedestrian safety will be improved by making the area a shared zone where pedestrians have priority.

The addition of a central open area will create space for gatherings, public art, events, and play.

Existing mature trees and heritage features will be protected as part of the redesign.

