

Cowes Activity Centre Plan



MRCagney
John Mongard Landscape Architects

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1. A Plan for Cowes

Cowes is currently a pleasant and unique town with friendly people. It is a popular tourist destination in the summer months. The evolution of the town in recent times has brought significant challenges in ensuring that a people focused environment and vibrant character is protected and further cultivated. This report and its Activity Centre Plan is the outcome of a collaborative design approach incorporating extensive community engagement in early December 2014. It presents a vision for the town and seeks to reinvigorate Cowes for residents and visitors into the future.



1.1. A Process to Make Cowes Great

Towns that engage people to invent their future places succeed and prosper. An ongoing conversation, between the people who use the spaces and those who manage and maintain them, provides a great practice for placemaking. This is much better than the manufacturing of places for the community in a disengaged way. The gaps and overlaps that always exist in towns can be addressed in an ongoing process where the dwellers (the residents, the owners and traders, and also the visitors) all feel like they are contributing to the change process. When the process moves from plans and ideas and into building, local people can, and will, continue to own the changes and be active participants in the ongoing placemaking.

For generations now, Cowes has been manufactured. It has been built with rather poor quality infrastructure, and with little indepth conversation with its community. No real sense of consistent quality has driven the placemaking to date, and no one appears to have a driving vision about the town as a complete place and destination. While a large body of planning work has been completed, this has never been translated into notable action, and a sense of frustration in the community has emerged about how Cowes looks and works.

A new process has begun, starting with the tent of ideas held in the town square in December 2014. This process is already enacting change at both the large and small scale. By creating a new practice of placemaking with the community, the council has created an energy and a positive mood where actions, not just words, are now required.

The community is highly supportive of the renewal strategies and is poised to be part of effecting change.

Each stage of placemaking should involve the following steps:

1. Talking about Cowes together
2. Designing Cowes together
3. Planning and Building Cowes together
4. Caring for Cowes together.

1.2. The Placemaking Story

A walk in the early morning along the Cowes Esplanade is a world class experience. Sitting on a balcony overlooking the historic jetty is a place worth coming for. The people from Cowes know and value their foreshore and they clearly want this quality and experience to be improved and extended into the main street, which at the moment they say has a two dollar shop quality to it. In truth even the main esplanade has become sadly run down, and in the summer, thousands of people converge on facilities that are not up to the level of these demands.

The community say the placemaking should start at the Jetty Triangle where events and people converge the most, and then seamlessly join into Thompson Avenue, creating a beachside link which encourages beach and shops to feed off each other. Thompson Avenue would be retrofitted to allow two corridors of shade trees, gardens and market spaces to be created, thus achieving in the midterm a single tourism destination. An improved promenade will link the two headland points with new play, picnicking and destination activities such as a skatepark.

In the longer term the next two blocks of Thompson Avenue will receive a facelift, with the roundabout at Chapel Street converted into a people centred intersection allowing easy passage toward the cultural, transit and health precinct. The library square will be activated by new tourism information, and Wi-Fi facilities. A transit centre and an all-day car park will allow visitors to be brought to Cowes at the top of the main street thus giving life to the whole of Thompson Avenue.

A new bikeway and an improved walking experience will allow the esplanade to be connected to the shopping centres and all the way to the RSL. Other shaded bikeways, walkways and promenades will be created over time around Cowes to eventually create a town for promenading, and a town worth visiting all year round.



1.3. The Planning Story

The silver stars mark the 'sweet spot' in town. This unique and picturesque foreshore is the place the community value the most. What the community really want is a town that rivals the foreshore. "We are losing our sense of being somewhere special". The existing character is hard to define and Cowes has not created a clear sense of what it wants to be.

Planning is important as it can help to create a future character for Cowes: a destination town that people want to spend time in all year round. This can be achieved by making the most appropriate development for the town easiest to deliver.

The town is shifting away from the unique foreshore, the place most important to all who live and visit there. There is a need to contain the town and refocus it back towards its greatest asset. The community want a more compact and walkable town and in response it is proposed to reduce the size of the town to a more comfortable walking distance.

The area to the north of Chapel Avenue has a strong tourism and entertainment focus. It also has potential as a high quality living area, particularly with views to the foreshore. A combination of planning controls are required to attract the right type of development to this part of town. By increasing heights within this area, more people can be attracted to live and visit. This in return supports business viability. It also provides an incentive to the development community to improve quality. No building setbacks plus the requirement for active uses such as cafes, bars and restaurants to be provided at ground level will promote animation of the footpath and will capitalise on the quality of the views.

Thompson Avenue needs to have a consistent character along its entire length. Applying planning controls and good design principles to development will ensure better outcomes.

These include: the incorporation of large windows to connect the building to the street; provision of street awnings between the building and the footpath edge for shade, comfort and uniform frontage; active uses at ground level; and increased heights on key street corners to provide views of the foreshore.

The centre of town is currently lost in the sea of red dots and needs to be more clearly defined. Active frontages draw in passers-by. It is proposed to rezone land around Settlement Road to reflect the change in land use pattern. This will encourage a range of uses and introduce housing choice at the edge of the centre. The combination of a compact urban form, a pleasant main street and a vibrant foreshore will assist Cowes to become a more authentic and contemporary seaside destination.

Set-Up Shop participants identified the 'sweet spot' in town with silver stars, and the 'centre' of town with red stickers.



1.4. The Movement Story

Cowes will be a destination re-built. Part of that is to allow, and in fact encourage, people to move around the centre in a way that they enjoy, that allows them to interact with all the centre has to offer and for the centre to be economically prosperous.

Quite often, in analysing and providing for movement around a centre to achieve the things discussed above, discussion of how people get to a centre can take over the argument. In this case, we have a clear mandate from the people of Cowes to make their centre function properly. All the good things in Cowes happen after you get out of the car. The view, the beach, the shade of the trees, the restaurants, the shops, the people, and last but not least the watering holes, are all elements to enjoy as a human, not trapped in a car. To achieve this we must investigate a better balance between the car and the other modes.

Currently the movement system is segregated and significantly weighted in favour of the car. Our strategy is centred on returning the balance to pedestrians in the first instance, then cyclists, public transport users, and then motor vehicles.

The reason this is important is because people out of their cars are more in touch with the centre. They create a more vibrant atmosphere and they are more inclined to wander around and actively participate, creating a more sustainable centre. Cowes should be, and can be, a boutique, active and vibrant destination.



Current streetscapes in Cowes, particularly the Thompson Avenue roundabouts, discourage pedestrian activity



The following list of issues has been derived from our review of key strategic planning documents, the considerable feedback from the community during the Set-Up Shop, along with detailed site analyses. A number of actions are recommended to address these key issues.

2.1. Fix the Foreshore

Issue:

Cowes' north facing beach and foreshore precinct is a unique feature that is not currently enjoyed to its fullest potential. Its character and natural beauty has been undermined by the introduction of a car park to the Jetty Triangle site and Mussel Rocks. The community wants the foreshore protected but also enhanced to provide event space, meeting places, walking trails and allow for other forms of informal recreation.

Actions:

- Remove foreshore car park and create a new, high quality, 'village green' event space and piazza linking the beach to Thompson Avenue;
- Remove bins and signage that disrupt beach views from key spots such as Thompson Avenue and local restaurants;
- Renovate foreshore public toilet blocks, and remove concrete planter boxes;
- Provide an alternative location for tour boat tenancy in the foreshore area adjacent to the jetty;

- Renovate the historic rotunda for use as a cafe type tenancy, including outdoor seating areas;
- Remove Esplanade parking near Thompson Avenue to provide wider and flatter footpaths, footpath dining decks, landscaping and pedestrian friendly streetscapes;
- Keep the jetty kiosk open and operating more regularly;
- Provide a bike path along the foreshore;
- Provide flat and level alfresco dining decks on Thompson Avenue, and remove the existing ramp on the western side of Thompson Avenue;
- Provide a new foreshore skate park at Mussel Rocks; and
- Provide a street level foreshore boardwalk along the beach side of The Esplanade.

2.2. Connect the Two Ends of Town

Issue:

The expansion of the commercial centre to Settlement Road has occurred with limited economic justification. This linear expansion of the town has resulted in vacancies and has created a dis-connect between the foreshore and the new Woolworths and Coles precinct. The general perception is that the old centre of town is the 'sweet spot', and primarily caters for tourists, while the newer Woolworths and Coles precinct is generally for residents. Current planning policy supports this perception. The redeveloped town square in front of the Cultural Centre has only had limited success in drawing people to the middle part of town.

2. Key Issues and Priorities

There is a need to activate the Council owned land in the centre of the town in order to draw pedestrians from the supermarkets back towards the foreshore, in effect providing the missing link.

Actions:

- Improve the quality of building awnings and other forms of shelter and shade to encourage walking along the full length of Thompson Avenue between Settlement Road and The Esplanade;
- Redevelop the library and Cultural Centre site into a high quality, active public space that will attract pedestrians and tourists up Thompson Avenue;
- Provide a formalised all-day car park on the Council site behind the Cultural Centre;
- Install 10 minute limits for The Esplanade parking spaces to create drop-off and pick-up points for beach goers;
- Provide a bus transit zone within the all day car park to connect users of the car park to key attractors;
- Provide new bus stops on Thompson Avenue outside Coles and Woolworths; and
- Provide bus drop-off and pick-up facilities at opposite ends of the lower end of Thompson Avenue to promote walking through the main street by tourists. Landscaping between parallel parking bays can be used to ensure there is not adequate room for multiple buses to layover on The Esplanade in order to drop off and pick up in the same location. Buses can instead utilise the existing layover provided on Findlay Street.
- Rezone land to reduce the size of the commercial core and prevent further linear expansion of the town centre beyond a walkable distance.

2.3. Recreate Streets for People

Issue:

Streetscapes in Cowes are presently designed around cars at the expense of pedestrian and cyclist accessibility and safety. The cumulative impact results in a town where residents and tourists do not routinely walk or cycle, and are not encouraged to interact with the town as they otherwise could.

Actions:

- Reduce the footprint of the Thompson Avenue / Chapel Street intersection by replacing the roundabout with traffic



- signals in order to improve pedestrian connectivity and safety for bicycle riders;
- Provide a non-signalised mid-block pedestrian crossing outside the Cultural Centre and Anglican Church on Thompson Avenue;
- Relocate the existing on-road bicycle lanes on Thompson Avenue from behind angle parking bays to between the kerb and angle parking bays in order to remove car and cyclist conflict zones;
- Provide parallel parking bays in place of existing angled bays on Thompson Avenue between The Esplanade and Chapel Street in order to provide improved landscaping and footpaths;
- Improve bike paths and connections on Settlement Road for school children;
- Provide new footpaths on Findlay Street;
- Formalise a walkway on 'Lovers Walk'; and
- Provide a bikeway on Steele Street.

2.4. Reinvigorate the Character of Cowes

Issue:

The architectural quality of Cowes is drab and forgettable, and lacks a sense of consistent character. With an absence of memorable historic buildings or other built form assets, the main street struggles to engage the interest of visitors and inspire them to stay and wander for prolonged periods.

Actions:

- In the short term, provide screening to reduce the aesthetic impact of the existing Exeloo on the main street;
- Rationalise the provision of signage and develop a consistent theme;
- Rationalise the provision of bins and implement more frequent cleaning and collection regime, particularly during peak holiday season;
- Address footpath trading and remove obstacles on the footpath;
- Implement an incentive scheme to encourage tenants to improve existing facades and shopfronts;

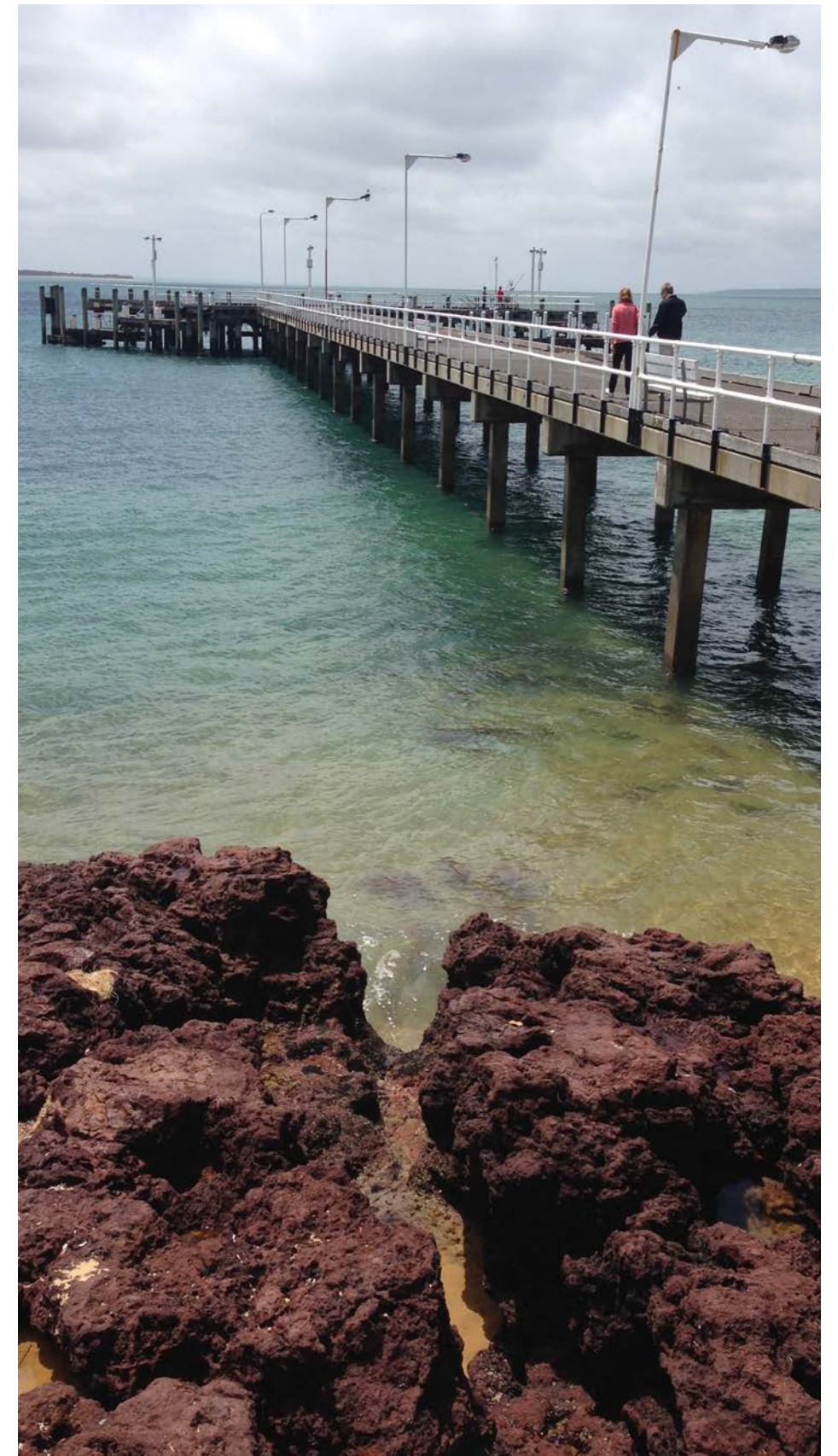
- Encourage public art; and
- Prioritise high quality re-development of the library and Cultural Centre precinct.

2.5. Make Good Development Easy to Deliver

Current planning provisions do not encourage the type of development that will make Cowes great. The type of development that should happen in Cowes needs to be the easiest to provide.

Actions:

- Encourage high quality development along the foreshore that activates this space at different times of the day and provides for quality accommodation for both residents and visitors;
- Encourage active frontages along The Esplanade and Thompson Avenue to create more vibrant and safe streets;
- Encourage passive surveillance and allow for landscaping which contributes to a safer, more attractive public realm in residential areas on key walking streets;
- Develop clear building and urban design controls to facilitate better built form outcomes for the town;
- Introduce more flexible land use zones to encourage a better mix across the town as a whole and avoid separation of land uses;
- Maximise the efficiency of the central car parking area and encourage people to walk around the town in order to support local businesses along with improving the health and wellbeing of the community;
- Minimise pedestrian and vehicular conflicts and the visual impacts of access and parking; and
- Seek a cash in lieu contribution towards the provision of a central all day car park, whereby developers can provide a per space payment if minimum parking rates cannot be satisfied on-site.



3. Background and Context

3.1. About the Community

Cowes has a predominantly Anglo-Saxon community with average population spread, income and home ownership characteristics. Whilst the population continues to age, more families have established homes in the area in recent years.

2011 Census:

- Population: 4,053
- All Private Dwellings: 4,521
- Occupied Private Dwellings: 1,676 (38.3%) (Victoria: 88.7%)
- Median age: 51 (Victoria: 37) Unemployment: 6.2% (Victoria: 5.4%)
- Median Household Weekly Income: \$735 (Victoria: \$1,216)
- Median Personal Weekly Income: \$445 (Victoria: \$561)
- Average people per household: 2.1 (Victoria: 2.6)
- Average motor vehicles per dwelling: 1.5 (Victoria: 1.7)

3.2. Visitors and Tourism

Phillip Island has been a key tourist destination for visitors from Melbourne and further abroad for many years, with visitors drawn to the beachside and island atmosphere, natural attractions, and the international GP circuit.

Cowes itself benefits from visitors to these attractions to some extent. However it also attracts a large number of visitors in its own right, particularly during summer. While the permanent population is approximately 4,000 people, peak holiday season sees the population swell to upwards of 50,000.

Features of Cowes and surrounds which appeal to the visitor market include: the north-facing Cowes foreshore; wildlife coast cruises; kayaking; Penguin Parade; local markets; wildlife parks; museums; the Phillip Island Chocolate Factory; the Island Summer Carnival; Phillip Island GP Circuit events; mini-golf; scenic flights; along with wineries and breweries. These attractors all contribute to the significant tourism sector in town which is vital to the town's prosperity.

As the largest settlement on Phillip Island, Cowes functions as the primary municipal, retail, service, community and recreational centre. Situated at the northern end of the island, Cowes boasts one of the few northern-facing beaches in Victoria. The town has traditionally been orientated towards this foreshore area.

Thompson Avenue is the main street in town and houses various clothes and souvenir shops, take-away food tenancies and restaurants (amongst other retail and commercial activities). The Esplanade hosts several low-rise holiday apartments, bars, and cafes.

Construction of a new Woolworths and Coles towards the southern end of Thompson Avenue has spread typical town centre activities over a larger area and has made the true centre of town more difficult to define. There is now a perceived division, with tourist activities at the northern end of Thompson Ave and The Esplanade, and resident activities (supermarkets, hardware, etc) towards the southern end of Thompson Avenue.



The Cowes foreshore

3.3. Heritage and Town Character

The Cowes township has a long history stretching back to 1868. In 1870, the iconic jetty was constructed at the end of Thompson Avenue, and formed the gateway to the town for visitors arriving by the steam boat Genista right up until the mid-20th century.

From the 1870's, beginning with the construction of the Isle of Wight Hotel and adjacent Phillip Island Hotel, Cowes became an attractive guest house destination for visitors from the mainland. Until the 1950's, visitors could hire a horse drawn vehicle to visit Phillip Island's beaches and townships, and by the 1920's, visitors began to congregate to view the penguins at Summerland Beach at dusk. During this early period of settlement, locals planted the Golden Cypress trees that flank Thompson Avenue. These trees remain a symbol of the town to this day.

The first car ferry to Phillip Island, the ex-Sydney Killara, began operating from San Remo in 1933. In 1940, the first bridge to the island was opened. Visitor numbers to Cowes greatly increased, however load limits on the original bridge remained a major impediment to tour bus traffic until the current bridge was constructed in 1971.

Despite the rich history of the town, the current streetscape offers few reminders of Cowes' past. The burning down of the Isle of Wight hotel in 2010 has left a further hole in the character of the town's architectural heritage.

The historic jetty, foreshore rotunda, jetty kiosk, cenotaph and beach wall (constructed from reclaimed Pentridge Prison stone) are all unique aspects of the town's heritage. However, the expansion of the town centre down Thompson Avenue has resulted in a largely uninspired built form.

Despite this, the essential charm of Cowes as a beautiful beachside destination remains, and there is tremendous opportunity for it to be further enhanced.

3.4. Existing Urban Structure

Thompson Avenue forms the central spine of the town as the main street. It terminates at The Esplanade which provides access to the unique foreshore. The current town centre extends over 1 km in length to Settlement Road. The town centre has also developed along small sections of Chapel and Church Streets.

The northern part of the town has extensive views of the water from Chapel Street, especially between Warley Avenue and Steele Street. At the bottom of Thompson Avenue there is a magnificent vista across the jetty to the water. Views of the water are available along the length of The Esplanade.

Development at the corner of The Esplanade contains long blank walls that do little to activate this important corner, particularly given the significant view line to the water.

When viewed from the water The Esplanade is fronted by older style developments which look tired and dated. This area needs to be redeveloped with more contemporary and high quality buildings which capitalise on this picturesque foreshore location.

Between Chapel Street and The Esplanade, buildings largely front directly onto the footpath. There is no consistent building character, with a mismatch of awning types, building design and quality. There is a need for the buildings in this block to work together to create a consistent, but not monotonous, overall image and character.

The centre of the town is not clearly defined and lacks activity and a key focal point. In essence, it represents the missing link between the two ends. Planning policy supports the clear separation of convenience and tourist functions at each end of the town but it does not articulate a vision for the central area.

Setbacks are wide and building heights are 1-2 storeys. There are vacancies at the Old Coles site and the Civic and Cultural Buildings are not designed in a way to activate the town square. Key uses such as the library do not have a street presence to draw in pedestrians.

The character along Thompson Avenue changes dramatically over the 1 kilometre distance. At Settlement Road, the setbacks from the street are wide and the height of buildings is predominantly 1-2 storeys. The new supermarket developments are single storey and have been designed so that large blank walls face the street. They lack visual interest, do not provide natural surveillance of pedestrians and make no positive contribution to the street character. The large car parks and crossovers dominate the streetscape. The town is expanding in a linear direction which is shifting the focus of the town to the south.



The Cowes jetty in 1935

3.5. The Seasonal Economy

Cowes experiences a significant swell in population during the peak holiday season. The influx of visitors places short term pressure on facilities and services. During the Set Up Shop community engagement process, many residents highlighted issues such as traffic congestion, lack of parking and businesses struggling to stay open during winter. It is tempting for the community to encourage decision makers to design infrastructure and make significant policy changes in order to alleviate the pressure of these short peak seasons. However, the consequences of only planning for the peaks means that for the majority of the year the town will no longer function effectively.

It is important for the community to change their mindset to focus on making Cowes a better place to live and visit all year round rather than placing too much emphasis on planning for seasonal peaks.

3.6. Rate of Change and Growth

A review of the list of planning permits within the Cowes Town Centre boundary reveals that there is limited pressure for development within the town centre. Over the past ten years there have been around 393 planning permit applications lodged within the study boundary. Of these, 195 were received in the past five years. The majority of planning permit applications lodged along Thompson Avenue relate to liquor licensing, signage and requests for reductions or waivers to car parking requirements. A small number of planning permit applications relate to shop top housing or office development over retail.

3.7. The Town's Planning

Cowes is recognised as a Town within the settlement hierarchy of the Gippsland Region and future growth is encouraged. A settlement boundary for Cowes was established in 2010 and this informed the town centre boundary established by Bass Coast Council for this project.

Cowes has been the subject of a plethora of strategic planning documents including:

- Cowes, Silverleaves, Ventnor and Wimbleton Heights Structure Plan 2010;
- Phillip Island and San Remo Design Framework 2003 including Appendix A Urban Design Report - Cowes Foreshore Precinct 2003;
- Phillip Island Integrated Transport Strategy 2014;
- Car Parking Study for Cowes CBD 2012;

- Bass Coast Township Study 2014; and
- Cultural Precinct Study 2012.

These documents have established a broad strategic framework for the development of the town in order to inform the Bass Coast Planning Scheme. However, they have not delivered tangible results on the ground.

The focus of this Plan is to provide Bass Coast Council and the community of Cowes with clear direction on how to deliver positive change and develop Cowes as a destination in its own right and a quality place within which to live, work, shop and play. A review of the previous strategic planning documents has highlighted a number of key issues which are addressed in Section 5.5 of this Plan.



The Cowes jetty in the present day

4. Engaging Cowes

In order to engage with the local community, the project team 'set-up shop' in a marquee tent on the civic town square between the 3rd and the 9th of December 2014. In addition, face-to-face surveys with local traders, special interest group meetings and open community meetings were undertaken.

A tremendous response was received to our invitation for community involvement, including:

- Over 500 visitors to the tent;
- Close to 1000 unique ideas and suggestions;
- 9 special interest group meetings;
- Face to face survey of 59 traders; and
- Over 250 hours of direct engagement.

Questions which were posed to the community to assist the placemaking process focussed on the following:

- What issues exist within the town?
- What is the most special thing in Cowes?
- What ideas are there to improve the town centre?
- What would you do to improve the town right now?
- What would you do to improve the town in the future (20 years)?
- What should Cowes look like?
- How do we get life into the centre of town?
- How can we attract tourists to the town in winter?
- How do we get people walking more?

The community response is loud and clear. We have identified the following key areas and recurring themes:

4.1. The Foreshore

- Release the town's 'sweet spot': This represents the priority issue for the community. The majority of residents support the removal of car parking to create more space for pedestrians. Community preference is for an enhanced foreshore which provides for: boardwalks and alfresco dining; walking trails from Mussel Rocks to Erehwon Point; lighting; a formalised Lovers Lane; erosion control; trees; benches; BBQ facilities; exercise stations; outdoor amphitheatre; life guard station (with secure storage); an improved playground; and a skate park. There is some community debate over dogs on leash on the foreshore. There were also requests to extend walkways to Silverleaves to the east and the Yacht Club and beyond to the west. The Geelong Foreshore, Flinders, Mooloolaba and Noosa were provided as rejuvenation examples by the community.
- Heritage: The community values key heritage items located within the foreshore area, including the kiosk, cenotaph, rotunda and the old sea wall. There is a demand for heritage and interpretative trails that link to the remainder of the town. A few members of the community stressed the importance of the chicory kilns in the Island's heritage.

"Fix the foreshore first - it's the jewel. Then role out the red carpet into the main street"

- Commercial Uses on the Jetty Triangle: The kiosk is integral to the foreshore, however the community expressed frustration regarding the opening hours. There were a number of requests to amend the lease to ensure the kiosk is open all year round. Various options for additional commercial space within the site were identified by the community.
- Focus on the Waterfront and The Esplanade: There is a general consensus that The Esplanade should be the entertainment focus of the main street and incorporate cafes, bars and restaurants to capitalise on the views and natural beauty of the foreshore. The main street needs to be better integrated with the foreshore through the creation of people places.



Local radio broadcast from the Set-Up Shop marquee tent

4.2. People Spaces

- **Event Space:** There is strong support for 'people places' and event space within the town. The Jetty Triangle and Civic and Cultural sites were identified as the most important spaces.
- The 'Night Market' was consistently raised as important for injecting activity into the town centre. Different interest groups had various opinions on the location of the markets and whether it should involve street food. Mornington market was identified as a good example of a street market.
- **Pedestrian Priority:** There is almost unanimous support for an improved walking environment along the section of Thompson Avenue between Chapel Street and The Esplanade. Community suggestions included creating a mall, making the street one way to the north, or designing a shared space. There were also requests to remove the 'give way to vehicles' stencils on all pedestrian crossings. The community identified a number of key areas where



A plan to make Cowes great

footpaths and crossings needed to be improved within the town centre and around the school.

4.3. Thompson Avenue

- **Character** - Over time, the character of Thompson Avenue has been lost. The community clearly wants the shops and main street to 'become part of the itinerary', with a more consistent look and feel incorporating colour, signage, built form, furniture, landscaping and lighting. When asked to describe a future character, the community identified places like Mornington, Sorrento, Daylesford, Noosa, Port Fairy, Mooloolaba and Cairns. Character themes considered ideal for Cowes included: casual; relaxed; coastal; nautical; rustic; elegant; beach; marine; and 'colour and light'.
- **Function** - The community asked for better management of footpath trading in order to reduce clutter and obstacles on the footpath. They also requested more shade in car parks, regular cleaning of footpaths, more trees, as well as planting and colour within the street and on roundabouts in order to 'soften' the town. Some community members indicated an interest in trialling extended trading hours in the summer.
- **Fractured Business Community** - Traders respond to seasonal demands differently and as a result some close down over winter, which impacts on the vibrancy of the town. There is a general concern about absent landlords not taking responsibility for maintenance of their property. The community would like to see greater commitment by traders to maintain the streetscape and buildings. Trader incentives such as Council providing paint for maintaining shop fronts or a rate rebate were suggested as possible solutions.
- **Bins** - The location and frequency of collection of street bins is a significant concern. The general response to the problem has been to provide more bins. Rationalising and better locations for bins, in conjunction with more frequent collection, may be a more appropriate response.
- **Public Art** - The community highlighted the need for artist space and a gallery in Cowes. Murals and sculptures were the most popular suggestions made by the community for public art.
- **Wayfinding and Information** - There is a demand for street noticeboards advising of community events. Way finding signage was identified as being required to provide clearer directions to key facilities. A need to better sign post off street parking was also raised.



The Set-Up Shop marquee tent

- **Public Toilets** - There is a demand for better distribution of public toilets within the town and improved directional signage to facilities. More regular cleaning in summer is considered to be required. There is a clear direction from the community to move the Exeloo in the long term and to refurbish the foreshore toilets.

"Connect the pier to the main street experience"

- **Environmental Sustainability** - Some members of special interest groups visited the tent to raise the issue of climate change, in particular the need for Council to better plan for sea level rises. However, on the whole, environmental issues did not register as significant by the community. Some suggestions included: erosion control on the beaches; better treatment of water sensitive urban design; need for solar street lights and solar power for Council buildings; green waste collection and mulching for garden beds; more permeable paving; protection of remnant vegetation and sea grasses; introduction of a 'plastic bag free' Cowes; and use of an EV garbage truck for street and beach maintenance.

4.4. Movement

- Cyclists - Very few raised issues regarding cycling and it was generally acknowledged that there is minimal bike culture in the town at present. There is a desire by school children to improve the bike path on Thompson Avenue. Other interest groups requested a shared path on Settlement Road and a bike path to Ventnor along the foreshore.
- Public Transport - There is a demand for improved public transport, better bus stops, and for the current taxi and bus layover area to be re-located. The community identified the land to the rear of the Civic and Cultural site as a possible option.
- Parking - General requests for 15 minute car parking spaces, scattered around the town at appropriate businesses, were made. Some traders and residents requested parking to be changed from 1 hour to 2 hours in order to allow people more time to linger in the town. There is a demand for an all-day car park to service visitors to the beach and parking for businesses and employees off the main street. It was highlighted that there is no RV parking in Cowes.
- Car Ferry - Generally, most people were not against the car ferry but rather they were more concerned about its future location. While the majority of the community do not want it located on the Cowes Foreshore, some of the traders indicated their preference to have it in the town. Other locations identified include the Anderson Street Boat Ramp, Yacht Club and Caravan Park.



4.5. Structure

- **Capturing the Shifting Centre** - When asked to mark the centre of town on a map, the response from the community highlighted the shifting focus of the town towards the south around the new shopping centres. There is a general concern that the town centre is getting too big, and that the middle of town is missing activity and has poor links to the tourism end of the main street.
- **Activate the Holes in Town** - The community identified a number of under-utilised, vacant or unfinished sites. Of particular note, the community wants to see the Isle of Wight site cleaned up immediately and in the short term develop a high quality tourist/restaurant/retail development. The old Coles, the Continental, Warley Hospital, Civic and Cultural, and the Olive Justice sites were also nominated as key sites to revitalise within the town.
- **Improved Community Facilities** - A high proportion of respondents identified the need to improve facilities in town for young people and families. The highest priorities recorded were for a swimming pool, hospital, skate park, cinema and library.
- **Town Square** - Community opinion was mixed regarding the design of the town square next to the Civic Centre. The need for more shade was identified. Key interest groups want to redevelop the site with upgraded facilities and an active frontage to Thompson Avenue. Other suggestions included linking the space in front of the Anglican Church with the town square to create a town common.
- **Sense of Arrival** - The importance of the avenue of Golden Cypress trees as the entrance to town was acknowledged, despite differing opinions on the species. Some community members would like to see the trees up-lit and art/themes interlinked along the avenue to create a sense of town identity. The community would also like to bring back the sense of arrival to the foreshore that existed previously, when visitors could only come by sea to Cowes.

4.6. Cowes as a Destination

- **Branding** - The community identified a current lack of branding for Cowes. Valued elements including a north facing beach, family orientated seaside atmosphere, relaxed island atmosphere and the avenue of Golden Cypress were all flagged for improved promotion.
- **Tourism** - The community identified possible tourist events including: a winter fishing competition; historic Melbourne to Cowes Yacht Race; Art, Food and Wine; Craft; Surf Museum; eco-tourism; NYE fireworks; Cup Day celebrations; and music festivals. A number of people expressed concern about the absence of decorations or banners in the main street for major events like Christmas, Easter, etc.

"We are losing our sense of being somewhere special"

- **Free Independent Tourists (FITs)** - Some community members identified the need to better cater for self-drive penguin tourists in order to facilitate more overnight or weekend stays at Cowes.
- **Shuttle Bus** - Tourist operators advised that a feasibility study is being undertaken to develop a shuttle bus service to key tourist destinations.



A plan to make Cowes great

By MRCagney & John Mongard
Landscape Architects

4.7. Administration

- Service Delivery - There is a strong perception amongst the community that more funding allocation to capital works projects on Phillip Island and improved project delivery is required. The perception is that tourism dollars are not benefitting Cowes.
- Action - The community have plan fatigue. Widespread support from the community exists for Council to follow the final plan and to ensure its long term delivery.

4.8. Traders' Survey

- What's Special in Cowes? - Traders highlighted the foreshore (particularly the beach and views) in addition to the casual and relaxed atmosphere and friendly community as the positive and unique feature of Cowes that should be retained.
- What should we improve now? - Traders provided mixed responses to this question. The most frequent response (28%) focussed on improvements to the appearance of the street including the quality of the shop fronts, more regular cleaning footpath paving, better lighting, increased planting, regulated footpath trading, and better maintenance of toilets and bins. Over 22% indicated that they want to see more activities for families. Over 9% indicated they would like to see the foreshore enhanced.
- What should be improved in the next 20 years? - According to traders, the focus of the next 20 years should be to enhance the character and quality of the town centre (61%) and provide more activities for families (22%). Some traders (16%) expressed concern about the impact of growth and change on the relaxed atmosphere and lifestyle of Cowes.
- Additional Ideas - Traders floated various additional ideas including: provide free Wi-Fi in the main street; directional signage to rear car parks; better lighting; increases in Council bin allocation for restaurants; pictorial signage at the town entrance; banner on the maritime lights; and better communication and co-ordination between event staff and traders.



5. A Plan for Cowes: Placemaking Strategies

THE TOWN NETWORK:

Promote walking and off street parking

Consultation with the community has revealed minimal existing cycling culture in Cowes, despite Melbourne having a relatively high bike usage in the metropolis. The community recognises the opportunity and need to encourage cycling as an active transport mode for recreation, sport, and tourism.

Bike lanes on Thompson Avenue will be relocated between the kerb and angled parking bays, rather than the vulnerable current location behind reversing parked cars. An esplanade shared walkway/bikeway will be created to allow east/west bike movement across Cowes. Other paths will be built to allow cycling from the south to The Esplanade.

1. The Foreshore Triangle Parkland - The Sweet Spot
2. The beach piazza
3. All day carparks
4. Transit Centre
5. Mussel Rocks and Erehwon Point activity areas
6. Thompson Avenue North (the destination place)
7. Thompson Street / Chapel Street intersection
8. Cenotaph stairs and terrace
9. The Missing Link (Thompson Avenue Mid Block)
10. New bus stop on Thompson Avenue
11. Bikeways on Thompson Avenue
12. Lovers Walk
13. Foreshore Esplanade
14. Town bikeway and footpath
15. Civic facilities improvements





When asked to describe a future character, the community identified places like Mornington, Daylesford, Port Fairy, Mooloolaba and Cairns.

Character themes considered ideal for Cowes included: casual; relaxed; coastal; nautical; rustic; elegant; beach; marine; and 'colour and light'.

5.1. The Foreshore Triangle Parkland

The centrepiece of the foreshore precinct will be the new 'village green' - a versatile grassed common area flowing down from a terraced stage surrounding the historic Cenotaph. Replacing the Jetty Triangle car park, the village green will be the primary event space in Cowes, and will better suit the needs for burgeoning markets and community gatherings.

A pathway will be retained along the rock wall to provide access to the jetty, foreshore footpaths for people with disabilities, and for servicing of the jetty kiosk. Other cafe and tourism outlets are anticipated to activate the use of the triangle.

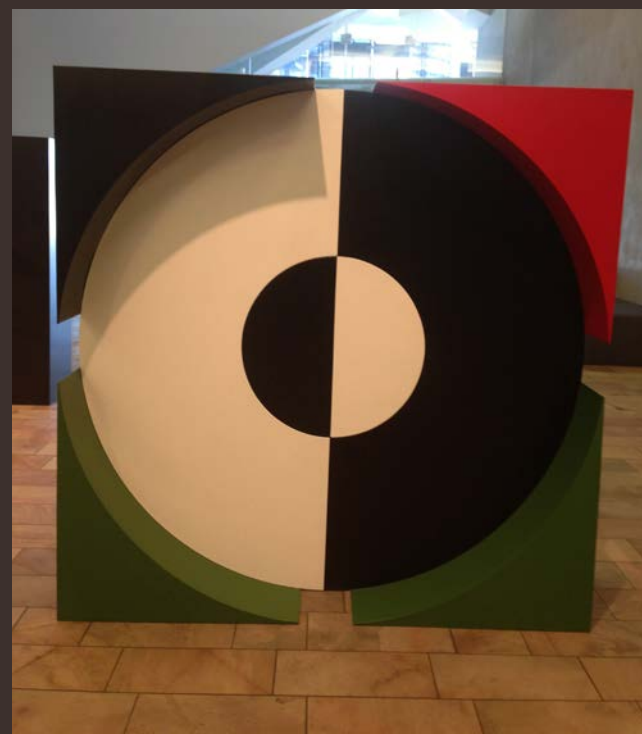
Parallel parking bays on The Esplanade will be resumed and the existing footpaths widened and levelled to create street-side dining either side of Thompson Avenue. On the beach side of The Esplanade, existing footpaths will be revamped to create a foreshore boardwalk overlooking the beach and grassed hill.

The civic precinct lacks street presence and misses opportunities to activate the town with civic life. Shade and greenery will be returned to the cultural and civic precinct in the short term, and existing benches and seats will be moved to better locations offering relief from the summer sun.

The current location of street furniture blocks event trailers and carts from accessing the square, preventing the space from fully achieving its intended purpose - it is not currently a place where people congregate, and it's not a place where community events are held. Simply by moving seating, the square can be made into a much more versatile area.

In the longer term, a placemaking plan which creates new civic facilities, an all day car park and transit centre, and a medical health precinct will create the mix of uses to give the midblock a vital role in the town's revitalisation. The cultural precinct will be redeveloped to create an active fronted site linking the two active ends of the main street, creating a true focus for events and activity. A new iconic library and art gallery activating the town square and attracting visitors and residents will be a key outcome in facility improvements for the main street.





Sculptural elements which double as play elements, seats or lights will be introduced into the town centre to create visual landmarks and focal points.

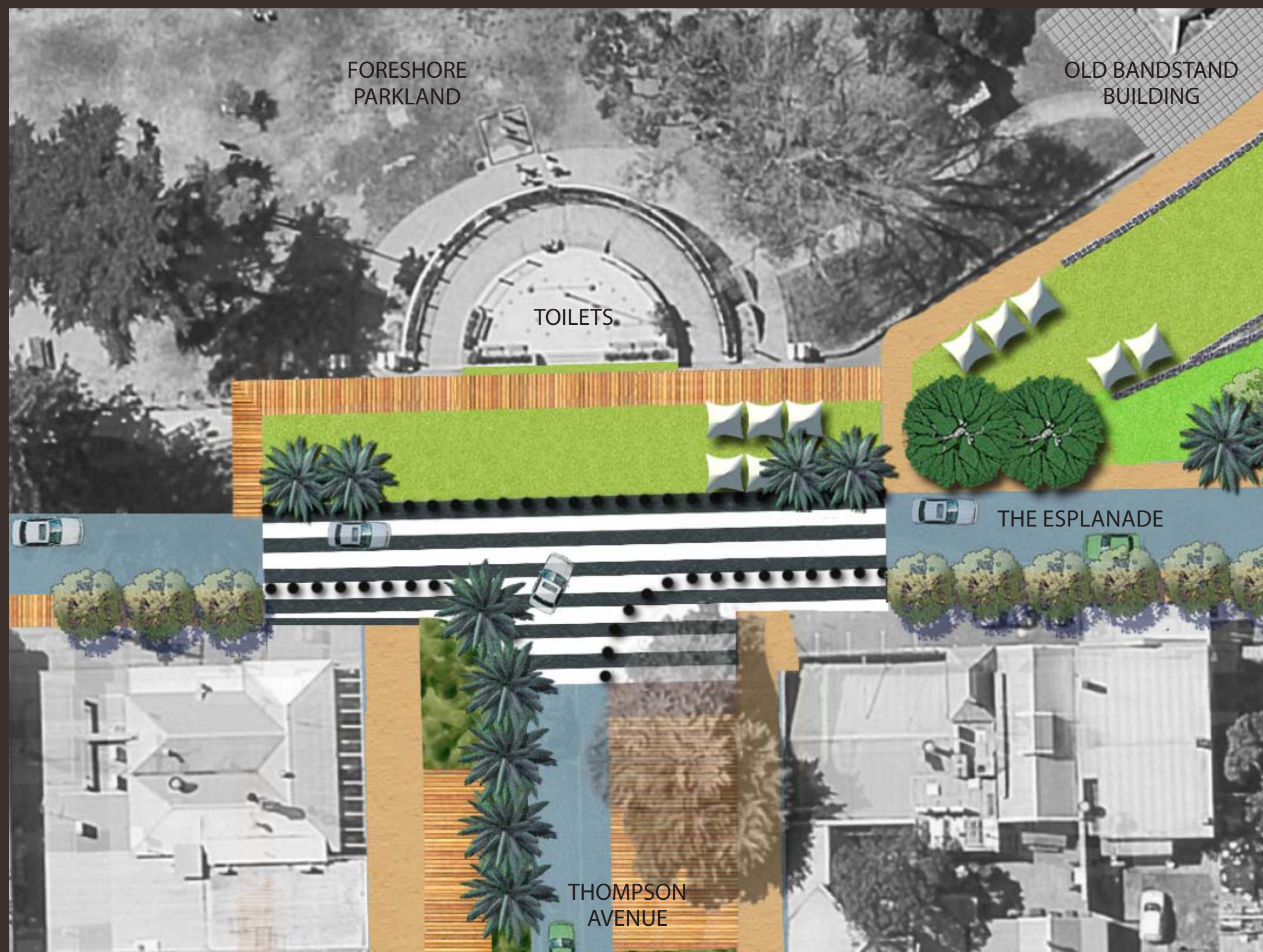


A plan to make Cowes great

By MRCagney & John Mongard
Landscape Architects

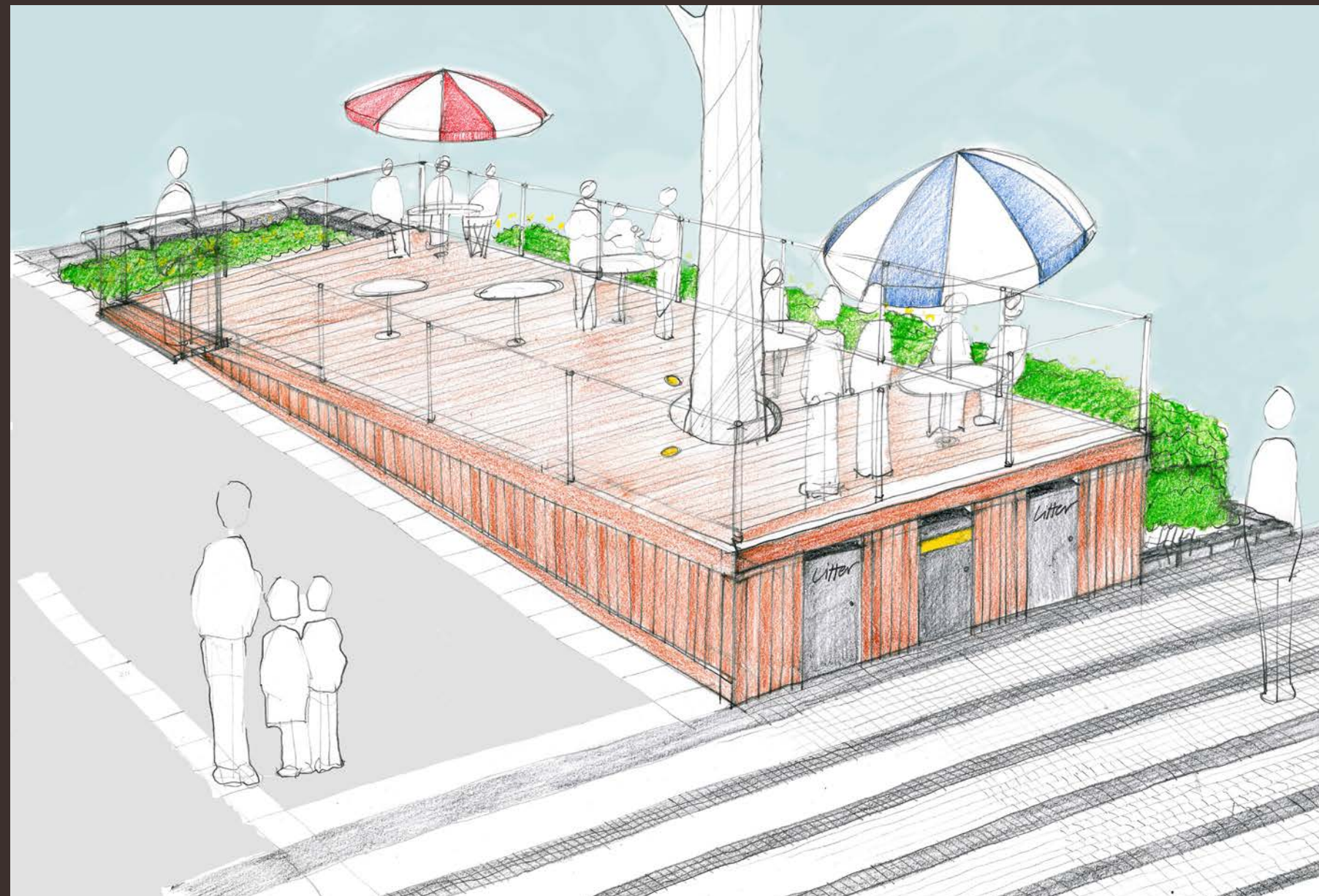
THE MISSING LINK:

Piazza linking beach to
Thompson Avenue



A plan to make Cowes great

By MRCagney & John Mongard
Landscape Architects



View of Cowes alfresco deck



A plan to make Cowes great

By MRCagney & John Mongard
Landscape Architects



5.2. Thompson Avenue

Thompson Avenue North: The Destination Place

This part of the main street is Cowes' main tourism entertainment area, but it has become rundown. Thompson Avenue from The Esplanade to Chapel Street will refocus on creating a highly appealing environment in which to spend time, with pedestrian prioritised streetscapes, and a lively town centre atmosphere.

Existing angle parking bays use large areas of key main street real estate, and will be replaced by better landscaping, more shade, and flat outdoor dining areas to create a more vibrant, compact main street.



View of Cowes bench / bin / planter



A plan to make Cowes great

By MRCagney & John Mongard
Landscape Architects

THOMPSON AVENUE & CHAPEL STREET:

From roundabout to walkable intersection

The community has identified traffic congestion issues associated with the signalised pedestrian crossing outside Woolworths. This has, in turn, highlighted a lack of pedestrian connections along Thompson Avenue. Pedestrian movement across Thompson Avenue will be aided by a new non-signalised pedestrian crossing outside the Cultural Precinct, converting the existing school crossing on Thompson Avenue near Settlement Road to a permanent crossing, and converting the Thompson Avenue - Chapel Street roundabout to a smaller footprint signalised intersection.

While there is often a general community aversion to traffic signals, a signalised intersection directly addresses community preferences for better pedestrian outcomes which roundabouts inherently do not achieve. Roundabouts have larger footprints, with resultant disruption to desired walking paths, higher vehicle speeds, increased risk to cyclists, and the requirement for pedestrians to give way to vehicles (contrary to typical priority controlled intersections).

Street corners can be vital focal points of activity where people meet and interact. The current roundabout pushes the street corners apart, rather than pulls them together. A four-way intersection (albeit signalised to cope with summer traffic) is considered, on balance, to be better suited to delivering the community's vision for Cowes.

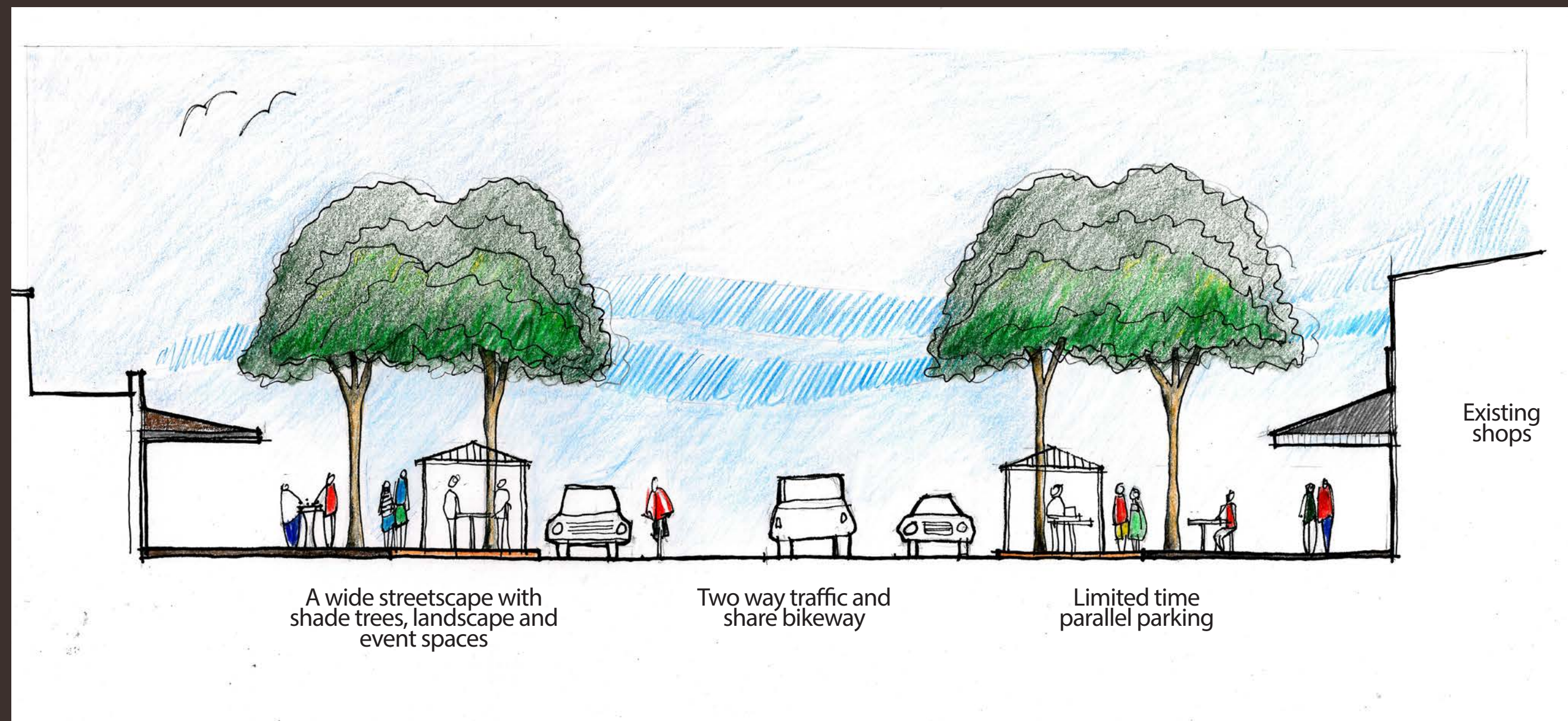
Prior to detailed design, it has been suggested that the VicRoads 'SmartRoads' methodology be examined as a possible methodology to determine the appropriate outcome for this intersection. For the overall Thompson Avenue movement system, MRCagney is generally supportive of the 'SmartRoads' methodology, but it is not as well suited to a genuine street environment. Our desire is to create a street that prioritises people and activity above traffic flow.

The provision of additional and improved crossing opportunities for pedestrians is likely to reduce the load on the signalised Woolworths crossing. Ultimately, signalisation at the Woolworths pedestrian crossing should be removed pending Vic Roads consent, resulting in reduced delay for pedestrians and vehicles, recognising that the posted speed limit and low speed road environment poses little risk to pedestrians.

LEGEND

1. Angled parking converted to short-stay parallel parking
2. Wider pedestrian corners
3. Improved pedestrian crossings
4. Central medians with deciduous shade trees
5. Cross town bikeways
6. Replace roundabout with intersection





Section through Thompson Avenue North: Showing avenue trees and markets with parallel parking

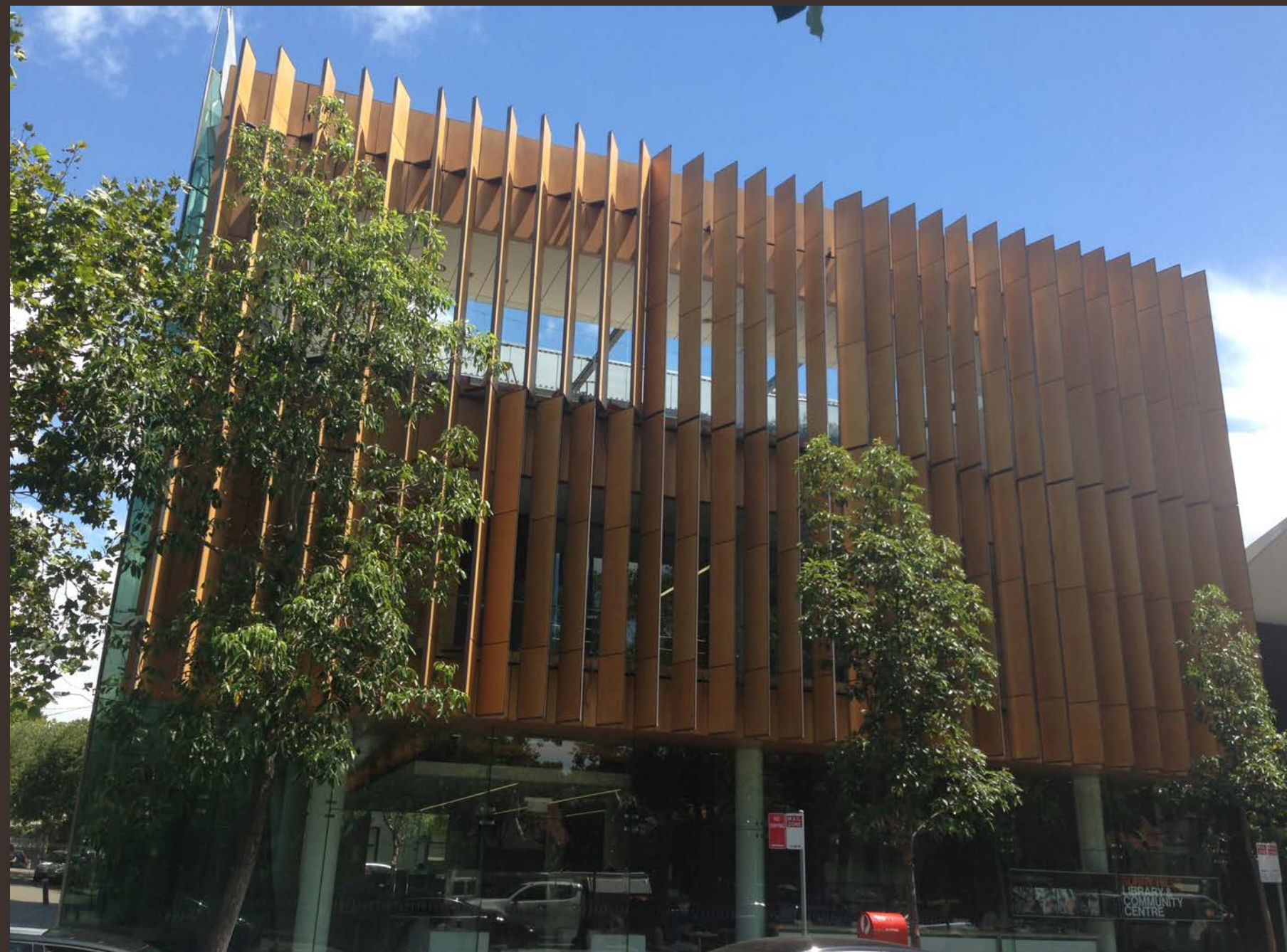
THE MID BLOCK:

Intergrated culture/health/transit uses

The civic precinct lacks street presence and misses opportunities to activate the town with civic life. Shade and greenery will be returned to the cultural and civic precinct in the short term, and existing benches and seats will be moved to better locations offering relief from the summer sun.

The current location of street furniture blocks event trailers and carts from accessing the square, preventing the space from fully achieving its intended purpose it is not currently a place where people congregate, and it's not a place where community events are held. Simply by moving seating, the square can be made into a much more versatile area.

In the longer term, a placemaking plan which creates new civic facilities, an all day car park and transit centre, and a medical health precinct will create the mix of uses to give the midblock a vital role in the town's revitalisation. The cultural precinct will be redeveloped to create an active fronted site linking the two active ends of the main street, creating a true focus for events and activity. A new iconic library and art gallery activating the town square and attracting visitors and residents will be a key outcome in facility improvements for the main street.



A new landmark building would attract visitation and activate the town square

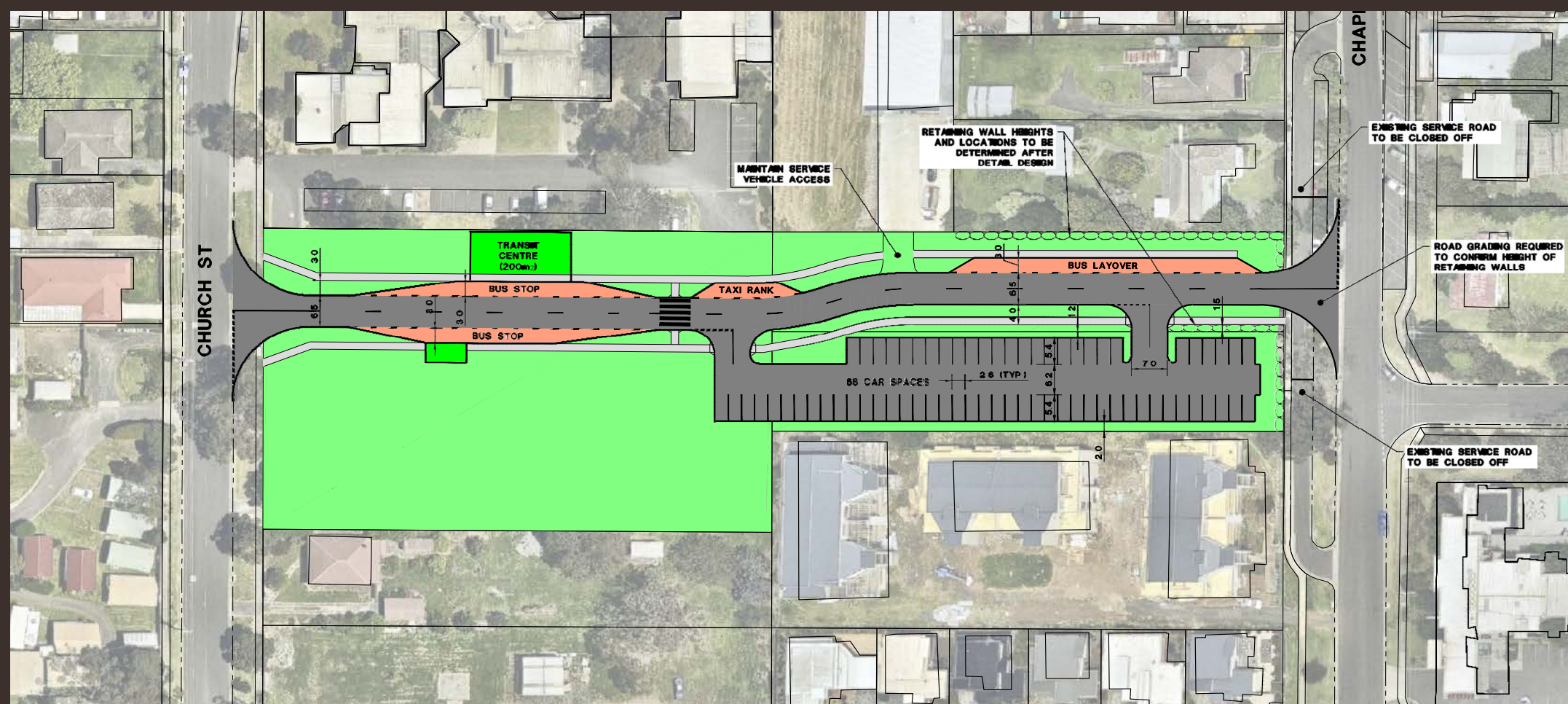
LEGEND

1. Town Square
2. Tree planting with seating in church grounds
3. Improved customer service building with community uses
4. Improved civic square
5. Path to all day carpark, transit centre and community facilities
6. Bikeway between carpark and footpath
7. Potential hydrotherapy / aquatics facility
8. Potential health and well being centre
9. Future use to be determined



A plan to make Cowes great

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Landscape Architects



5.3. All Day Parking and the Transit Centre

The community has raised issues relating to access and parking in Cowes during peak season, in particular the need to support day-long visits to the beach and town centre from tourists driving from the mainland. A long term (all-day) car park provided on the Council owned land fronting Chapel and Church Streets, behind the Cultural Centre precinct, will allow visitors to easily park and to spend a full day in Cowes. This location is ideal in that it actively encourages visitors to walk through the whole of the main street. Short term (10 minute) parking limits will be applied to some angle parking on The Esplanade to create convenient drop-off areas for children or for people carrying heavy items, prior to parking in the long term car park.

The long term car park will also include a bus station and transit centre on Chapel Street, taking advantage of the existing service lane. All tourism and local buses will unload people in this central location, alleviating current confusion about bus unloading in Cowes.

The community expressed strong concerns about the dearth of public transport options both in Cowes as well as for connecting to other key locations on Phillip Island. The bus station, servicing V-Line routes and tour bus operators, in addition to new bus stops outside Coles and Woolworths on Thompson Avenue, will go some way to addressing these concerns.

The location of existing bus facilities will also be modified to aid favourable movement of visitors through the town, in a similar fashion to the recommended approach to parking. Tour buses that currently drop-off, layover and pick-up passengers on The Esplanade will be influenced, through street design and enforcement, to drop-off on Bass Avenue. They would then layover on the existing Findlay Street facility, and pick-up at the top of Thompson Avenue (either at the new bus station or existing Chapel Street bus stop), thus drawing foot traffic through the town centre and past key businesses. Simple landscaping measures limiting kerbside access to buses will prevent buses dwelling on The Esplanade where they currently interfere with views and people's access to the Cowes foreshore.

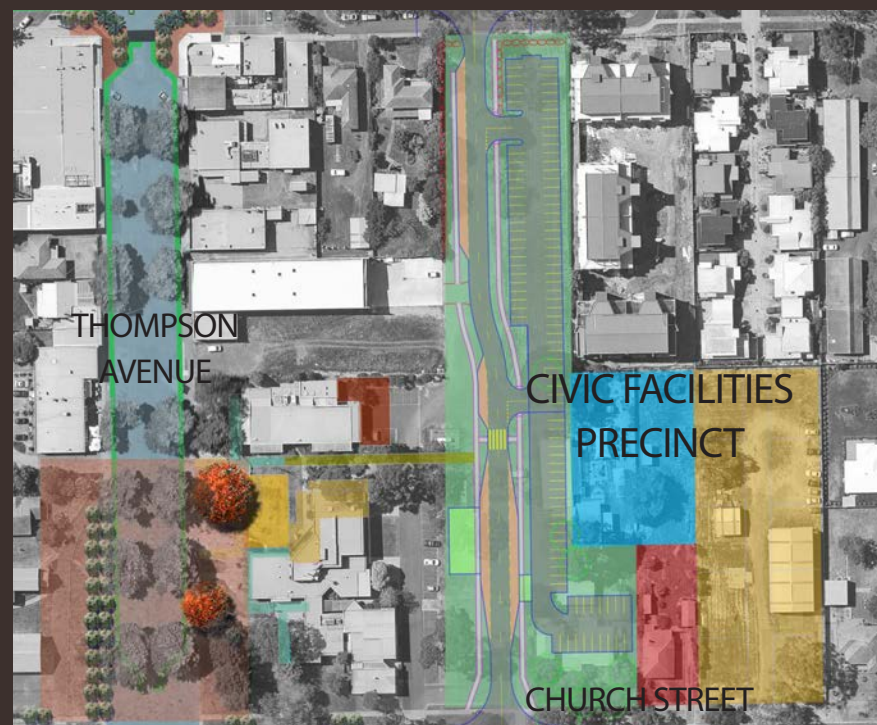
The existing taxi rank on The Esplanade opposite Thompson Avenue will be relocated outside The Continental Hotel in order to improve foreshore amenity. This relocation also anticipates the redevelopment of the Isle of Wight site. The taxi rank on Chapel Street will also be removed in place of a new taxi rank adjacent to Woolworths and Coles, reflecting the relocation of Coles to the current site. The Chapel Street bus stop may remain to accommodate local bus services in the short term.

5.4. The Civic Facilities Precinct

The civic facilities buildings provide a home for a range of valued community services and groups. These facilities form a destination in the centre of Cowes, which is currently a dead spot intown due to the low scale nature of adjacent activity and pedestrian movement.

The Cowes Activity Centre Plan identifies the need to create a stronger anchor and destination in the towns' mid-block. The civic town square has failed to attract people and needs an active building fronting it to make better use of it. A destination building with interesting architecture, providing Wi-Fi / digital hub, tourism information, customer service, and public toilets, possibly associated with a contemporary library was identified during the town centre masterplanning as a way to best activate the precinct. All of these facilities need to be directly engaged and functionally connected to the main street to achieve these overriding placemaking goals.

There are good precedents for small civic buildings with multiple facilities and landmark qualities. The Surrey Hills Library and Community Centre is a landmark building which sits on a main street and a civic square. It provides Wi-Fi lounge space facing the street, public toilets and public library facilities. Above, there is child care and the neighbourhood centre runs a function room with a commercial kitchen. Whilst having a larger footprint than the potential library space at Cowes, it gives an example of an integrated civic building which is part of the town's life.



A new customer service centre could have free wi-fi lounge areas to attract visitors



Shared spaces, storage and activity areas could be provided in compact forms



A new customer service centre could activate the town square and streetscape





LEGEND

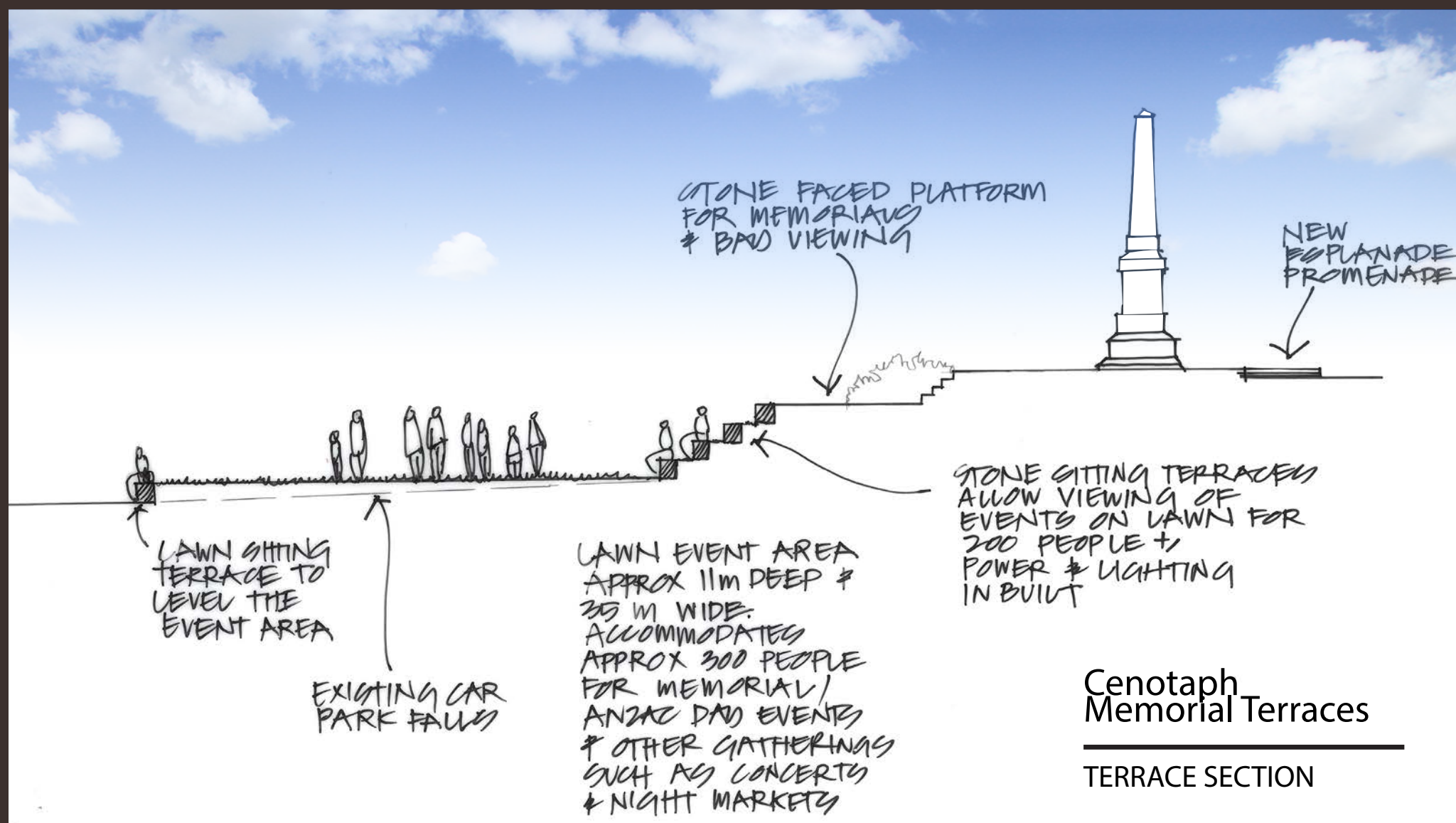
1. Improved jetty entry
2. Retain asphalt laneway for service vehicles
3. Improved beach access
4. Small children's play area
5. Retain existing stone wall and create all abilities path
6. Power, lighting and level areas for markets and events
7. Remove asphalt and create level grass terraces
8. Stone paving around old bandstand building
9. Build stone walls
10. Esplanade decked walkway
11. Refurbished path and toilet area
12. New cobbled intersection, paving and bollards
13. Remove portion of stone retaining wall and build sitting terraces and steps to Cenotaph
14. Sitting platforms
15. Avenue of shade trees and lawn / gardens
16. Esplanade promenade using existing asphalt and wheelstops
17. Shade shelter and deciduous shade trees
18. Disabled access car park

COWES THE JETTY TRIANGLE

The Sweet Spot

A plan to make Cowes great

By MRCagney & John Mongard
Landscape Architects

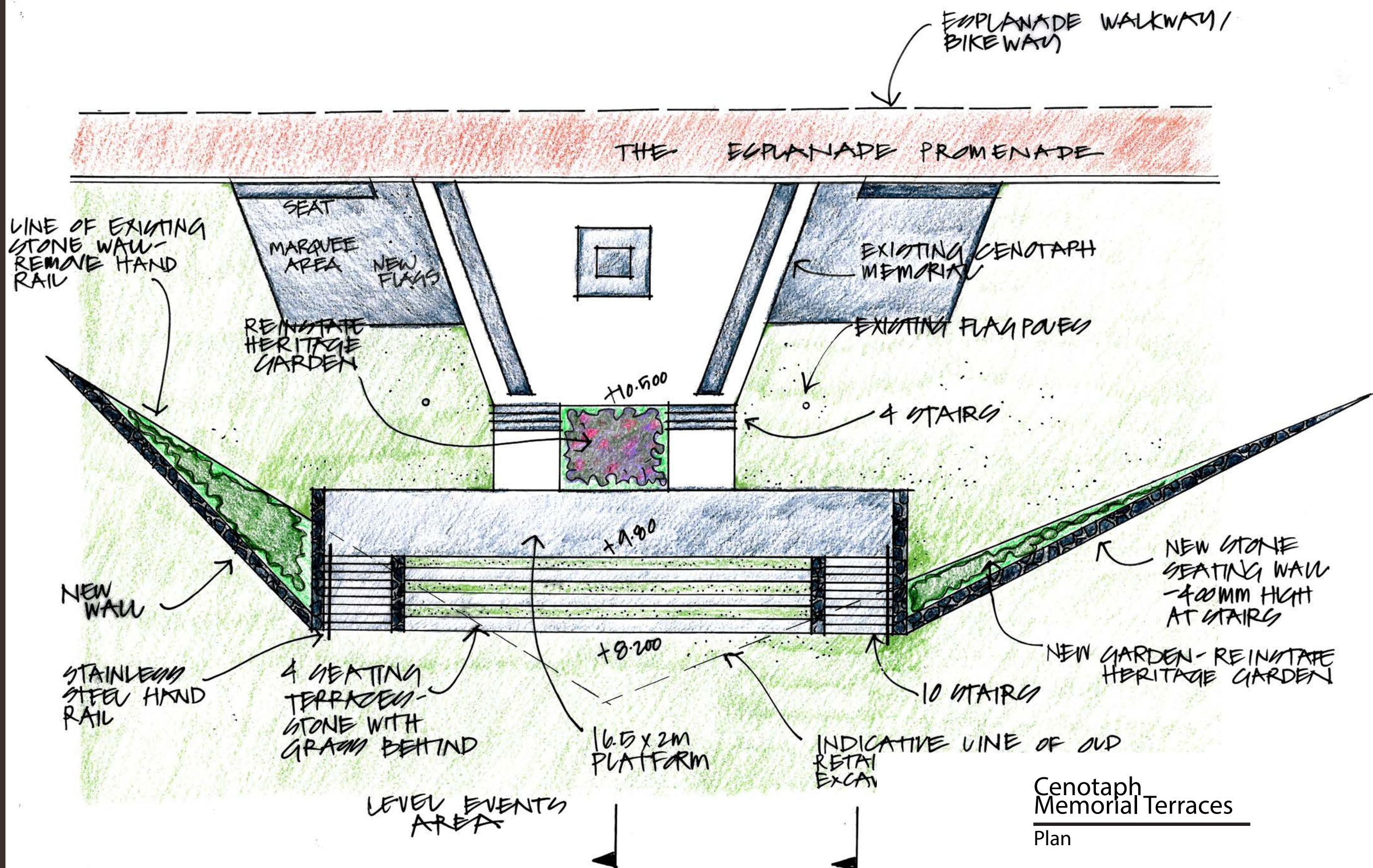


The Foreshore Memorial Parkland will feature terraces which will allow for much more efficient and active night markets and large events

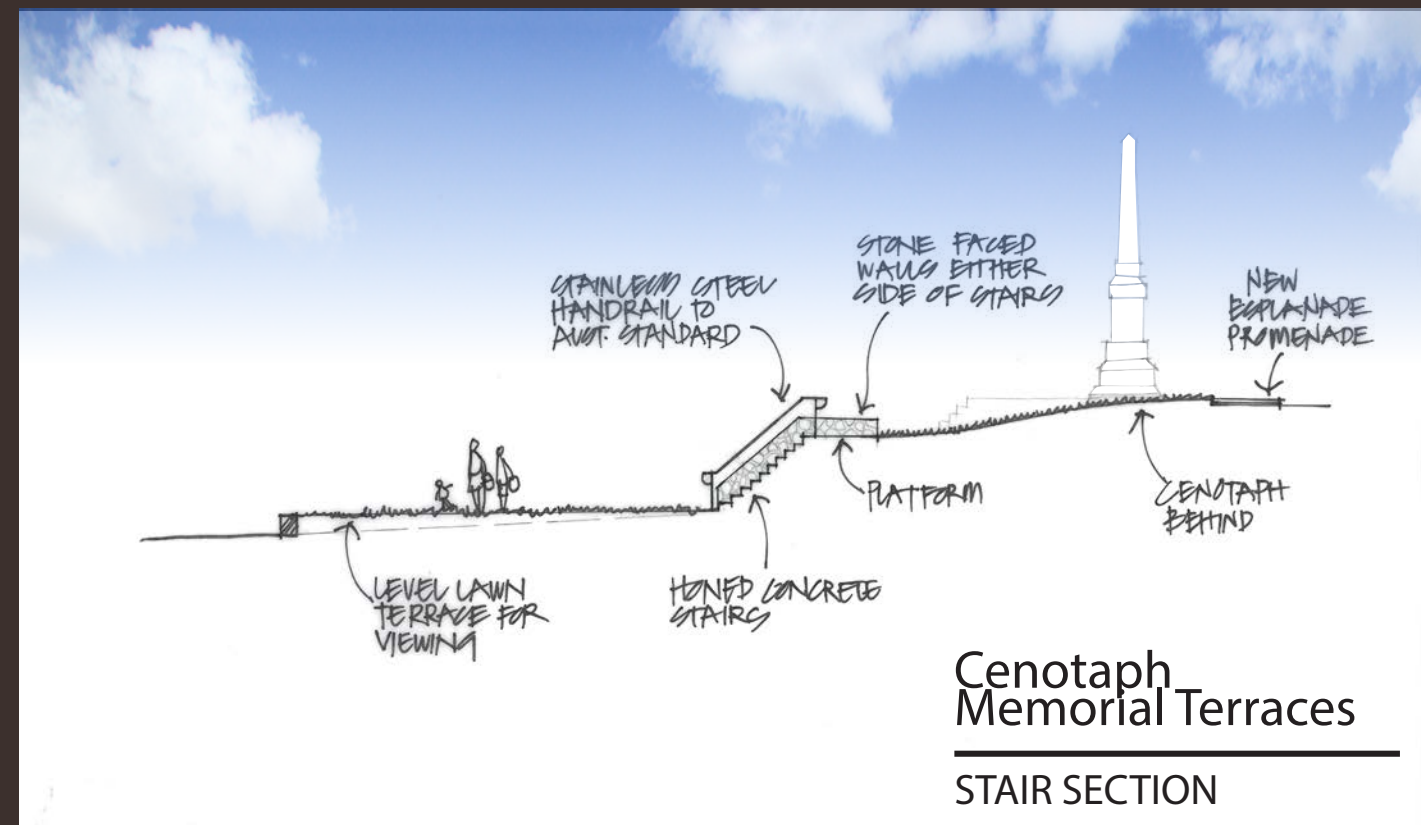


A plan to make Cowes great

By MRCagney & John Mongard
Landscape Architects



The Terraces to the Anzac Cenotaph have been designed to improve Anzac Day celebrations with new platforms, illuminated flags and marquees



A plan to make Cowes great

By MRCagney & John Mongard
Landscape Architects

THE MUSSEL ROCKS DESTINATION:



1. A new destination skatepark will fulfill one of the community's key desires



2. New play facilities, lawns and gardens will replace gravel. On street parking will service the destination



3. Better picnic shelters will create more attractive rest places

THE EREWHON POINT DESTINATION:



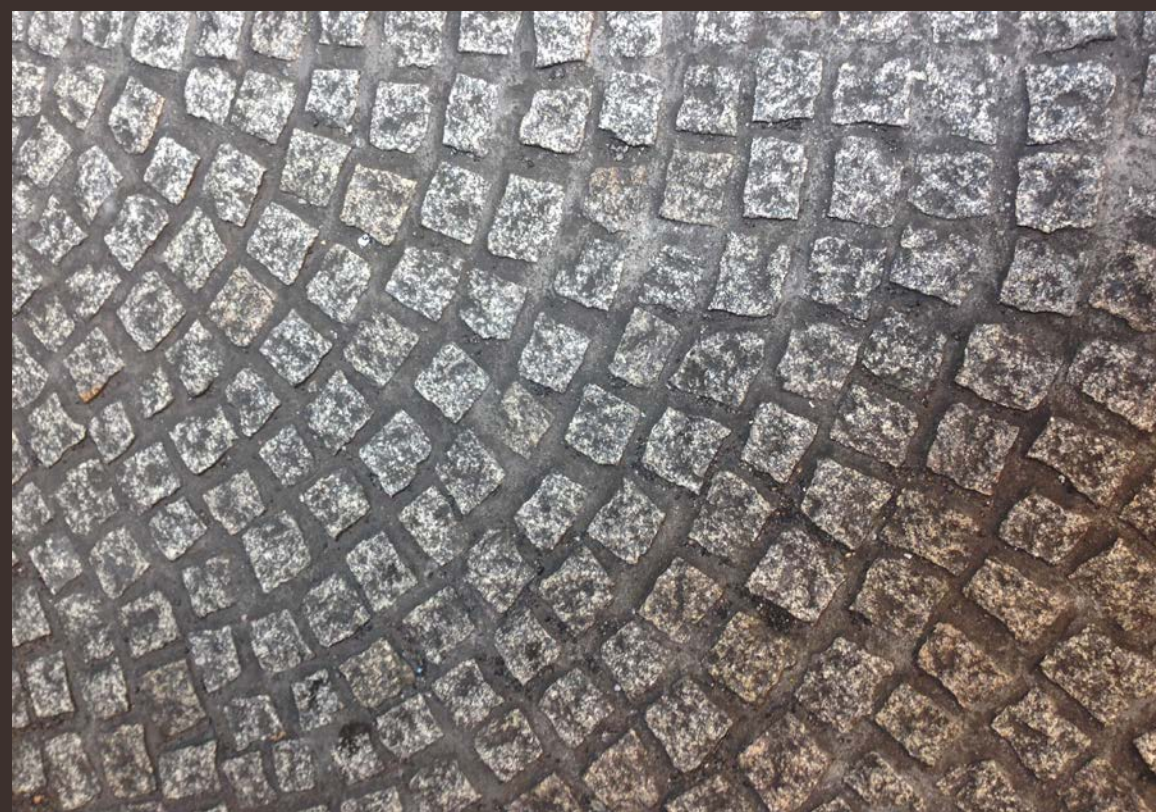
1. A major drawcard will be a large climb / slide playground to compliment existing play facilities

2. High quality exercise stations can be introduced to the esplanade area to add more activities for residents and visitors

3. Erehwon Point can be revitalised by adding a more integrated landscape with more shelter and picnic facilities

A plan to make Cowes great

By MRCagney & John Mongard
Landscape Architects



Street textures will focus on stone and Australian hardwoods

A plan to make Cowes great

By MRCagney & John Mongard
Landscape Architects



Furniture will have crafted elements and points of interest



A plan to make Cowes great

By MRCagney & John Mongard
Landscape Architects



The Foreshore will feature creative storytelling, improved fencing and great outdoor dining settings



Plantings will create year round colour with a focus on robust and site specific species



Advanced deciduous trees will provide shade to activity areas

A plan to make Cowes great

By MRCagney & John Mongard
Landscape Architects

5.5. Short Term Works

Cowes has a backlog of public works to do, both in terms of community expectations and also the run down nature of street and foreshore facilities and infrastructure.

Out of all the works that could be done, some projects will achieve quick positive feedback.

The short term actions were identified by the community as things to do in the next six months.

We have done strategic budgeting for these works, and \$230,000 would be required to build these immediate items.

These projects have commenced already, and the cenotaph platforms are due for completion by Anzac Day, 2015.

1. Roundabout and Main Street Landscape \$8,500

Add colour and freshen up landscape. Replace all the grasses on the main street with mixed, colourful plants. Relocate grasses to the foreshore.

- Jan - Plant selection to replace hedged grasses
- Liaise with gardeners
- Planting plan
- Feb - Install / liaise

2. Irrigation to Erehwon Point \$10,000

Prepare design / construct specification, contract irrigation provider.

- Feb - Liaise with gardeners
- March - Design & construct specification / plan
- April - Install

3. Promenade Walk \$58,500

Remove damaged timber bollards on foreshore near Blue Bamboo on the Esplanade with wheelstops. Re linemark 90deg bays and centreline: allow 2m path beside stone wall from Thompson Avenue to Erehwon Point. Place 300mm wide continuous kerb.

- Feb - Liaise with engineer re drainage / parking / survey
- March - Set-Out plan & detail

- April - Structural Eng. Input (footing)

- May - Install

4. Foreshore Painting Project \$30,000

- April - Liaison painter re -systems
- Research colour options & schedule
- Select colour / paint systems for: 2 toilet facades, bandstand structure, other key structures

- May - Quote liaison

- June - Install

5. Tidy up signage / bin locations \$10,000

- Feb - Liaison Council
- March - Relocation plan / removal schedule
- April - Install

6. Cultural Precinct - Town Square \$7,000

Larger deciduous shade tree, relocate two benches

- Feb - Remediation layout plan
- Locate central shade tree
- Relocate two benches (plan)
- March - Source advanced deciduous tree / procure
- Tree planting detail
- April - Brief gardeners
- May - Install

7. Exoloo Screen / Plantings \$20,000

Repaint facades. Install glazed toughened glass privacy screen, Plant shade tree and garden.

- Feb - Design plan / elevation / detail for toughened glass screen
- Feb - Planting plan (street corner)
- March - Quote liaison
- April/May - Install

8. Signage Removal Project \$10,000

- Feb - Identify defunct / illegal / inappropriate signs from roundabout to toilet
- March - Schedule for removal / itemise
- Relocation of signs as required
- April - Briefing
- May - Remove / relocate signs

9. Cowes Bins / Gardeners Works \$50,000

Investigate an alternative waste management system for Cowes.

Design Cowes litter bin (120ltr bins with new screen).

Remove bins from Thompson Ave intersection and Esplanade toilets and trial new bins (8 of). \$20,000

- Feb - Liaison to discuss new maintenance system with gardeners
- Feb - Assist with set-up of maintenance regime for town centre gardeners

10. New Paint to Street Furniture \$11,000

Repaint light poles, bollards, benches and railings in new dark receding colours

11. Enforcing local laws \$5,000

Remove illegal / non-conforming stall and signs, create a signage policy.

12. Anzac Memorial Platforms \$10,000

Design and build platforms or Anzac Day memorial celebrations

(Council estimated contribution)

Total \$230,000

The Foreshore needs to be a destination for young people of all ages. Creative play focal points can be introduced into key activity spaces.



A destination climb and slide structure to Erehwon Point



Mussel Rock Point, a focal point with a creative swing



The Triangle Foreshore: small destination focal points, including carousel and exercise structures



A plan to make Cowes great

By MRCagney & John Mongard
Landscape Architects

5.6. Key Major Action Projects

The big ticket public projects that the community want the most are:

1. The renovation of the Jetty Triangle into the town's sweet spot as a destination and also the link back to Thompson Avenue, the Beach Piazza (\$2.2 million, including design, project management and contingencies).
2. The transit centre (estimated at \$ 560,000).
3. The all day car park (estimated at \$ 775,000).
4. The Mussel Rocks Point skatepark and play destination (estimated at \$570,000).

While the Mussel Rocks skatepark has been identified as a major action project based on community consultation, a feasibility assessment is recommended to confirm the suitability of the site for such use.

Other Town Actions

All of the initiatives on the adjacent Forward Works plan have also been costed to allow whole of town place making and forecasting into the next twenty years.

Many of these projects are suited to co funding through the state and the federal governments, particularly traffic calming, sustainable transit, bikeway and healthy walkways initiatives.

The total cost of all these other capital works, excluding the key major action projects, is in the order of \$11 million. This in the order of \$1.1million per annum, spread out over ten years, assuming no additional government grants or contributions.

Major Action Projects

1. The Jetty Triangle Parkland (the sweet spot) \$2.2million

Realise Cowes most important 'sweet spot'

Remove carparks, create lawn terraces for events / sitting, create steps / terraces for larger gatherings. New lighting, furniture, play, public art, picnic areas and circulation ways.

Activate the link between Thompson Street and the foreshore. Create cobbled slow-zone crossing piazza linking main street to the foreshore.

Remove kerbs and place illuminated bollards, furniture and plantings. Narrow approach lanes and create better gardens and alfresco areas.

Detailed design must be compliant with relevant State and Federal disability legislation to provide equal access, including the provision of suitable PWD parking bays.

2. All Day Carpark \$775,000

All day carparking in the Cultural and Civic precinct.

3. Transit Centre \$560,000

All day carpark and transit stop including small driver station with toilet and a full length awning, in the Cultural and Civic precinct.

4. Mussel Rocks \$570,000

New skate park, picnic shelters and landscape works

Secondary Action Projects

5. Thompson Avenue North (the destination place) \$4.1million

Consolidate the tourist destination function of Cowes by improving the northern block of the main street with the creation of avenue trees and gardens, parallel parking, alfresco timber decks and new timber bench furniture, lighting and public art.

6. Thompson Street / Chapel Street Intersection \$455,000

Remove roundabout and replace with pedestrian priority intersection.

7. The Missing Link (Thompson Avenue Mid Block) \$510,000

Streetscape and town square works to activate the mid block and the cultural precinct.

8. New bus stop on Thompson Avenue \$75,000

New in lane bus stop on Thompson Avenue at Coles and Woolworths.

9. Bikeways on Thompson Avenue \$144,000

New bike way both sides of Thompson from Chapel to Settlement. Bikeway located between kerb and end of carparks. New carstops to each carpark.

10. Lovers Walk \$80,000

Formed deco pathway along Lovers Walk from Steele Street to Coghlan Road.

11. Foreshore Esplanade \$1.0million

Boardwalks, footpath and parking improvements.

12. Town bikeway and footpath \$360,000

New footpath and bikeway in identified locations.



Jetty Triangle areas to be renovated

THE FORWARD WORKS PLAN:

1. The Foreshore Triangle Parkland (The Sweet Spot) and The Beach Piazza
2. All day carparks
3. Transit Centre
4. Mussel Rocks and Erehwon Point activity areas
5. Thompson Avenue North (the destination place)
6. Thompson Street / Chapel Street Intersection
7. The Missing Link (Thompson Avenue Mid Block)
8. New bus stop on Thompson Avenue
9. Bikeways on Thompson Avenue
10. Lovers Foreshore Esplanade facilities improvements
11. Foreshore Esplanade
12. Town bikeway and footpath



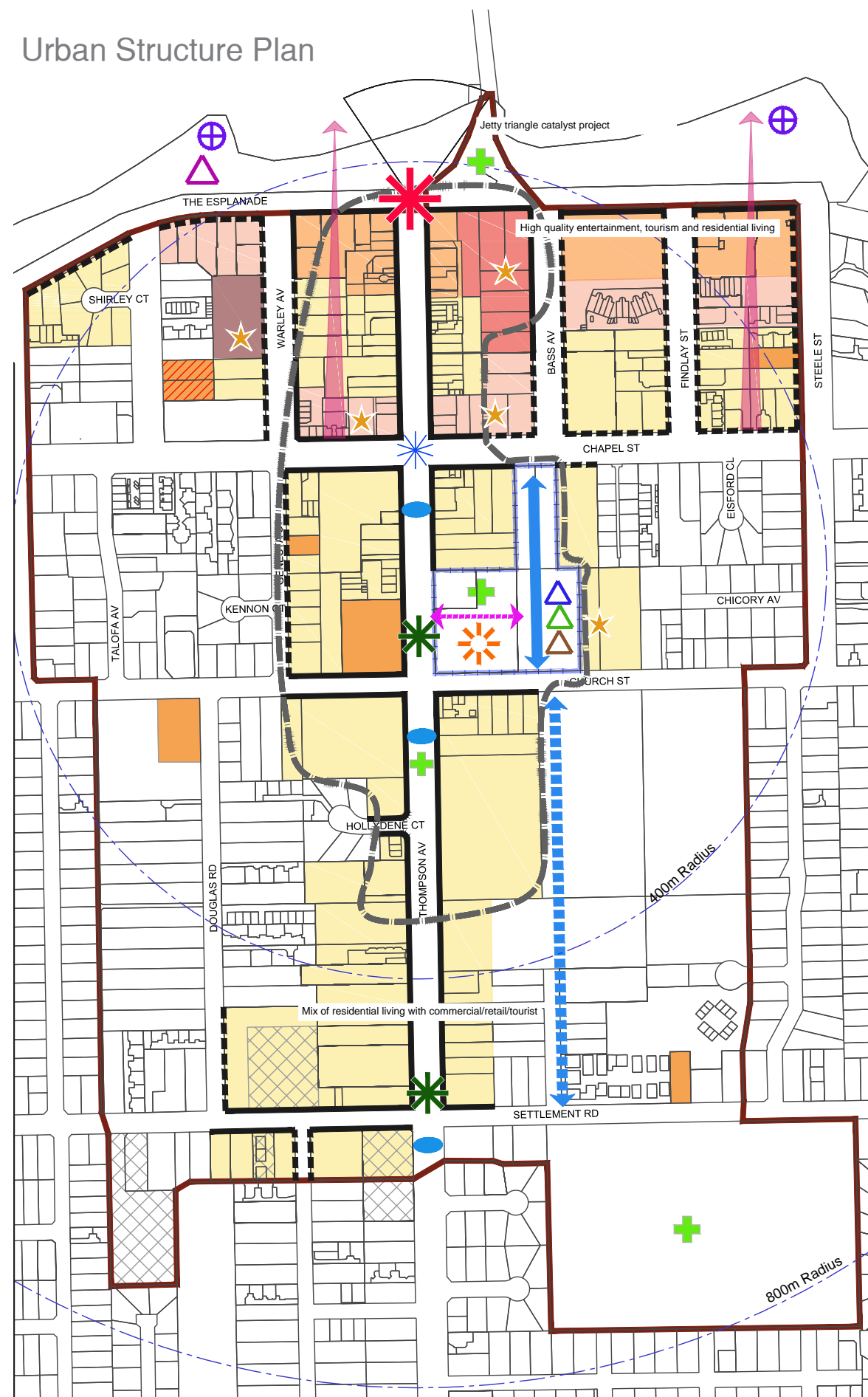
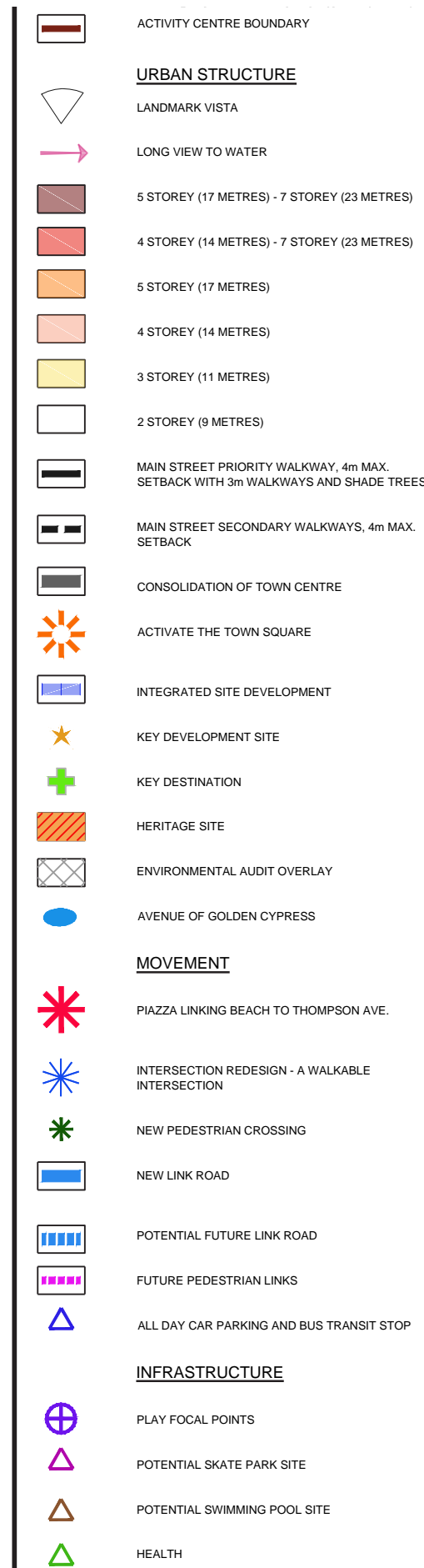
The Forward Works Plan relates to the cost numbers on the adjacent page

6. A Plan for Cowes: Planning Strategies

Current planning provisions do not encourage the type of development that would make Cowes great. It is extremely difficult to navigate the many layers of land use and development controls over the town. Planning is an important component of this plan as the changes recommended will encourage the form of development that will make Cowes an attractive, vibrant and safe seaside village and a destination in its own right on Phillip Island.

The 'urban structure' of a town refers to the pattern of arrangement of development blocks, streets, buildings, open and public space and landscape. It is the inter-relationship between all these elements that work together to make a place. The urban structure creates the coherent framework of the town. Issues with the existing urban structure and character of Cowes include:

- The town centre is over 1 km in length and contains two distinct retail areas. If this trend continues these areas will operate independently and not function as a coherent town.
- The centre of the town is not clearly defined and lacks activity and a key focal point, and represents the missing link between the two ends. The Civic and Cultural buildings are not designed in a way to activate the town square. The library does not have a street presence to draw in pedestrians.
- Thompson Avenue is the central spine of the town but has not been developed in a uniform way. The character of the street changes dramatically from the north to the south and there is no consistency in heights, setbacks, site coverage, active frontage, building styles and awnings. The result is that the town has no recognisable character.
- The Isle of Wight site remains vacant and is the landmark site for the town. The current character of The Esplanade does not make a positive contribution to the unique beauty of the foreshore.
- There is a concentration of single, high traffic generating land uses (i.e. major supermarkets) in one location. This concentration does not make a positive contribution to the built form character of the town or the streetscape.
- There is a noticeable absence of alternate forms of housing provided within the town to support the changing lifestyle needs of residents and to allow people with better access to the town's services.
- The area around Settlement Road is undergoing change through urban renewal. Vacant land is being marketed as suitable for residential development.



By MRCagney & John Mongard
Landscape Architects

A plan to make Cowes great

Proposed changes to the urban structure to address these issues are shown in the urban structure plan. More detail on how the planning controls can encourage positive change are provided in Appendix C.

6.1. Creating a Compact Town

The community has requested a more compact and walkable town. As reinforced in the previous sections, the outcome of this plan will be to improve streetscapes and manage access and parking in order to encourage more walking within the town. However, the overall size of the town is a factor in walkability. It is a recommendation of this plan to consolidate the commercial core to just south of the major supermarkets. Infill, redevelopment and intensification of the consolidated town centre will be encouraged prior to extending the town centre in the future.

6.2. Economics of the Cowes Activity Centre

The MRCagney team has sought specialist economic advice on the Activity Centre to give some perspectives on the opportunities and risks in the development of the Cowes centre. The report attached as Appendix E was based on the following data:

- Various statistical data published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics
- Bass Coast Economic Outlook 2012-2017, Essential Economics
- Coles Planning report and related plans (2008)
- Woolworths Supermarket Proposal - Economic Evidence

Generally from a demographic perspective, the main variance identified is the potential for the centre to attract more 'weekenders' to become longer stay residents. This could significantly change the long term economic outlook for retail in the centre.

Specific retail opportunities identified are:

- Specialist retail;
- Cafe/dining;
- Discount department stores;
- Bulky goods; and
- Office space.

Consequences for the Activity Centre

This economic advice is a reasonably positive interpretation of the existing data confirming that the Activity Centre Plan should be firm on its desired outcome. Without firm guidance in the plan, left to its own devices the market could potentially head in a direction that would ultimately be to the detriment of the centre.

Specialist Retail

Through an increasingly attractive public realm, and by concentrating development north of Church Street, the plan maximises opportunity for more specialist retail that the market may demand. This opportunity will be further enhanced by the parking policy, which encourages walking from parking spaces on the edge of the centre.

Cafe/Dining

The recommendations in the plan for increased intensity of development in the centre, more 'park once and walk' behaviour and an improved public realm will enable more cafe/dining opportunities.

Discount Department Stores

A discount department store in Cowes seems unlikely on face value. However as detailed in the economic report, proponents are experimenting with these 5000sqm footprints in relatively small centres. This is by no means a trend, but a possible eventuality, probably dependant on a higher than predictable growth rate. The report points out that a higher growth rate would be because of weekenders transferring to more permanent resident status, indicating potential higher spends.

If this does eventuate, it is considered that this development would better serve the town if it was situated north of Church Street, and we have made land use changes to reflect this. Of course commercial land is often developed in a mixed use zone. However, this would give Council better control to hopefully prevent big box, blank wall developments that encourage visits by car only. Our preference is for integrated development, encouraging more pedestrian visits, which will further enhance opportunities for specialty retail and cafe/dining.

Bulky Goods

There is potential for Cowes rather than Wonthaggi to attract homewares style bulky goods stores. The Activity Centre Plan has incorporated land use and parking interventions that will discourage these car-based retail uses to stay out of the town centre core and encourage more active and vital pedestrian based uses.



Office Space

There is potential for more office use in the town centre core which is encouraged as a first floor use in the plan.

Risks to Cowes

As we have already identified there is currently a developing 'dead-spot' in the middle of Thompson Avenue. This is partly because of the inactive land uses, the church on one side and the Council facility on the other, combined with the slight shifting of retail activity with the newer Coles and Woolworths facilities locating south of Church Street.

The Activity Centre Plan has made provision to limit this spread of retail and within reason contain this continuing stretching of the centre down Thompson Avenue, which as the economic evaluation confirms, would occur without intervention. It is still possible however that retail will develop in the mixed use zone. The economic evaluation identifies the risk that if the Chapel to Church Street stretch of Thompson Avenue can't be revitalised due to the inherent dead space as described above, the centre may turn into two centres. That is the active waterfront specialty retail, cafe/dining block between Chapel Street and the Esplanade, and the supermarket, discount department store and possible bulky goods from Church Street to Settlement Road. It would be customary for these types of developments to have significant parking associated with them. This would promote a split centre with a large amount of car trips between the two nodes.

It is imperative that this 'split' does not occur. It will reduce pedestrian activity, vitality and the overall energy and appeal of the centre. This makes the proposed revitalisation of the current town square and the potential renovation of the Council buildings to accommodate more active uses, vital to the centre's prosperity. The economic report suggests the best way to activate this block is to move Council and the Church to another location and let the market create more active uses such as specialty retail and cafe/dining in its place. It is considered, however, that a mix of diverse housing (the market has already shown some appetite for this), specialty retail and cafe/dining, a new active frontage to the Council facility and some pop-up/market activity on the Church site, will see this block become another interesting and textural part of the Cowes centre.



'Dead' land uses Thompson and Church Streets



Active Esplanade and Potential Big Box Division of Thompson Avenue



6.3. Introduce a Mix of Land Uses

Each end of the commercial core will be zoned mixed use. The mixed use zone is most suited to areas undergoing renewal.

The change in zoning will not compromise the function of existing businesses in the area but it will provide for medium density housing. Creating a diverse mix of land uses within the town is important as it extends the hours of activity in the town centre and widens the range of goods and services within walking distance. The introduction of housing and tourist accommodation at both ends of the town also benefits business by bringing more people to the town and offers an alternative form of housing for the population. The idea is to have more people living and walking around the town at different times of the day and year in order to support the viability of the businesses. This zoning provides sufficient flexibility to respond to the changing market conditions in Cowes.

6.4. Activating Key Sites in Town

Vacant, undeveloped and underutilised sites leave 'holes' in the town and affect the coherent town structure and present a poor image. This affects investment and makes it difficult for Cowes to market itself as a key destination on Phillip Island. Many of these sites have been left vacant or un-used for many years. Council owns a significant land holding in the centre of town that largely remains under-utilised. The introduction of new uses to this area is key to re-activating the centre of the town and attracting people back to this area.

Two key sites have been identified as playing a key role in reinventing Cowes as a destination. These are the Isle of Wight and the Warley Hospital sites.

To ensure that future development of these sites achieves the best development outcomes for the town, it is proposed to apply a development plan overlay to each of these sites. Appendix D includes a conceptual site layout plan and a schedule to the development plan overlay which detail the form and conditions for future use and development of these sites.

To streamline the planning process to allow for these sites to be ready for development sooner rather than remaining vacant for years to come, the Development Plan Overlay exempts a planning permit application from notice and review, provided that it complies with a development plan that has been approved by Council.

6.5. Improve Town Character

The town is currently a mismatch of heights, setbacks and building styles. There is no uniformity or essential character within the town. The intention is to amend the planning controls in order to encourage a more coherent townscape.

The community want The Esplanade to be the tourist and entertainment area of the town so that people can enjoy being close to the water and the footpath can be activated with bars, cafes and restaurants and utilised at varying times of the day and night. Planning can help facilitate this desired future character. The goal is to introduce people to this area and encourage them to use this area in different ways i.e. eat at a restaurant, live, and/or visit as a tourist. By increasing heights within this area more people will be attracted to live there and visit. This also provides an incentive to the development community to deliver higher quality development.

The height and design of development along Thompson Avenue including setbacks and site coverage is made more consistent by this plan in order to create a more coherent building character along this street and allow for residential accommodation above shops. Applying good design principles to development will ensure better outcomes. These include the incorporation of large windows to connect the building to the street; and provision of street awnings between the building and the footpath edge for shade, comfort and uniform frontage.



Alfresco outdoor dining will improve the character of Thompson Avenue



The Isle of Wight site is a landmark site that must be activated.

7. Summary

The people of Cowes have high expectations for this project. The significant number of separate engagements during the Set-Up-Shop, and the overwhelming response by the community, are indicative of a town community who wants some action, and who wants some results.

The Set-Up Shop not only provided views from a large cross section of the community. The direction they gave the team was very clear.

The town want a destination rebuilt. They want to 'bring back' their foreshore. They want to revitalise Thompson Avenue. They want to bring the town back together and for it not to keep stretching. They want the streets of Cowes to be full of people.

This report is about actions that will deliver these outcomes. There are immediate, short term and long-term actions. These will require funding and support from a variety of sources. However, one thing is clear. There can be no doubt of the appetite from this community for positive change, and exactly what they would like to see done.

Future investment in Cowes is a win for Phillip Island, a win for Bass Coast and a win for Victoria.



MRCagney Pty Ltd
Level 1, 134 Flinders Street
MELBOURNE, VIC, 3000
melbourne@mrcagney.com
www.mrcagney.com
+61 3 8680 2388

John Mongard Landscape Architects
The Design Bank, 89 Grey Street
SOUTH BRISBANE, QLD, 4101
mail@mongard.com.au
www.mongard.com.au
+61 7 3844 1932

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Landscape Architects