

## ITEM 1 WOLLONGONG PUBLIC SPACES PUBLIC LIFE

In 2014, Council committed to commence a review of the Revitalising Wollongong City Centre Plan (2007). To inform this important work, Council engaged Gehl Architects to partner in the preparation of a Public Spaces and Public Life Study. The overarching objective of Public Spaces and Public Life is to inform a process of creating resilient places that are liveable today and sustainable tomorrow, investigating the relationships between people's quality of life and their built environment and using data to inform decision making and to measure change.

Analysis gathered during 2014 was shared with the community in November 2014. Input and commentary received during this period has informed the refinement of a draft report *A City for People, Wollongong Public Spaces Public Life 2015*. This includes refined analysis of the City Centre and Recommendations in the form of a City Centre vision, City wide actions, and six public life projects.

This report seeks Council endorsement to progress to community engagement, to share *A City for People, Wollongong Public Spaces Public Life 2015* with the community, to open a conversation to seek input which will inform any further refinement of the City Centre vision and recommendations.

### RECOMMENDATION

The draft report "A City for People, Wollongong Public Spaces Public Life 2015" be exhibited for community input for a minimum period of 12 weeks (commencing 14 November 2015 to 6 February 2016).

### ATTACHMENTS

- 1 A City for People, Wollongong Public Spaces Public Life 2015
- 2 Public Life Data Wollongong 2014

### REPORT AUTHORISATIONS

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### BACKGROUND

#### 2007 Vision

In 2007, Council endorsed the Revitalising Wollongong City Centre Plan (2007), also known as the City Centre Revitalisation Strategy, which had been prepared by the NSW Department of Planning. The Strategy is a suite of four documents setting the strategic framework for the City Centre: (1) City Centre Vision, (2) Local Environmental Plan, (3) Development Control Plan, and (4) Civic Improvement Plan. It works to inform and guide the delivery of a revitalised City Centre.

The 2007 Vision set a 25 year strategic framework for the City Centre aimed at attracting 6,000 new residents and 10,000 new jobs.

Eight years following the endorsement of the City Vision, it is important to review the progress to date and test how we are progressing.

## **Key Achievements**

There have been significant achievements made following the 2007 Vision, including implementation of the Green Bus; delivery of significant improvements along the Blue Mile; Crown Street Mall Revitalisation; Keira Street Revitalisation; Crown Street Façade Renewal Project; and the Bathers' Pavilion. There has also been a range of footpath renewal work and other maintenance associated with City Centre Renewal.

Importantly, there have been a range of private industry led investments in the City Centre to deliver positive change. This includes the introduction of new small bars and cafes; GPT's major Wollongong Central retail redevelopment, private and public health investments and new mixed-use developments.

The Wollongong City Centre LEP 2007 introduced significant increase in building height and floor space ratios. In 2010, the LEP and City Centre DCP were incorporated into the Wollongong LEP 2009 and Wollongong DCP 2009, respectively.

## **The Approach**

In March 2014, Council engaged Gehl Architects to partner in developing Wollongong Public Spaces Public Life. The partnership enabled staff to learn the methodology developed by Jan Gehl over the past 40 years. Gehl Architects is based in Denmark and have extensive experience working with cities around the world to convert high-level liveability aspirations to on-the-ground, practical and tangible City change. The Gehl philosophy is based on encouraging life in a City, improving the public spaces, which will lead to improved building stock. If more people are using the City, the economics and life of the City will increase.

The approach is based on gathering data about our City to enable Council and the community to inform future planning of the City; strengthen a data driven approach to decision making and infrastructure delivery; and allow change in the City to be measured over time.

## **Informing the Analysis**

Since March 2014, Council has been working with Gehl Architects to gather a range of data about our City. A team of students and Council staff have been collecting data about how people use the Wollongong City Centre. Pedestrian counts recorded the number of people moving through our streets and where people spent time and enjoyed the City.

Through field work and desktop research, over 60 data sets have been collected and analysed, including quality assessments of City streets and buildings, data on traffic planning, urban planning, parks, recreation, and community, cultural and economic development. The data has informed an analysis of the City.

## **Additional Counts**

Pedestrian counts during 2014 were undertaken at a time when Crown Street Mall, Keira Street and at the new GPT development (corner of Keira and Crown Streets) were under construction.

In February 2015 additional pedestrian counts were taken as a comparative exercise. These counts reinforced pedestrian patterns recorded in 2014 with minor variations. This information has been considered in the refinement of the analysis in the draft report.

## **Sharing the Analysis**

Between March and November 2014, Council worked with Gehl Architects to collect data about the City and develop the City Centre Analysis. This included 10 exhibition boards which shared some of the data collected to allow the community to begin to interpret this information.

In November 2014 Council shared the analysis with the community. The purpose of this process was to inform the community of the early analysis and data gathered about the City and explain the methodology.

Information was made available on Council's web page (approximately 4,500 visits); information kiosks were held in the Mall during Friday markets; material was displayed in the City Library and in the Administration Building Foyer; notices were placed in the newspaper; presentations were made to Neighbourhood Forum 5 on 3 September and 3 December 2014; and City Centre facts were displayed on corflute signs around the City.

Partner and Managing Director, Ms Henriette Vamberg, presented two City Talk Forums on 18 March and 5 November 2014. The first focussed on Gehl Architects and their approach, the second on the early City Centre Analysis.

## **The Lively City – Linkages Grant**

Council was successful in being awarded a Linkages Grant, partnering with University of Wollongong and the University of Tasmania, to undertake a qualitative research project investigating Wollongong City Centre as the Lively City.

This research spans two years and will support the quantitative data collected through Wollongong Public Spaces Public Life with qualitative data. While this work does not replace community consultation around Wollongong Public Spaces Public Life, it will support and inform the project.

In July 2015, a comprehensive survey called Impressions of Wollongong, was distributed to over 9,000 residents in the suburb of Wollongong, and to randomly selected residents in the Northern Suburbs and Southern Suburbs to ask about individual perceptions of the Wollongong City Centre.

The role of the survey was to qualify community impressions of the City Centre. The survey asked people to draw the City as they remembered it, and asked how often

people visited the City day and night. Importantly, the survey asked respondents to let us know their impression of the City during the day and at night, and for their impressions of various City attributes (streets, sense of place, atmosphere, sense of belonging, business). The survey was developed following extensive research into understanding the qualities of a lively City and asked respondents to reflect on their own perception.

The early findings of this research support the recommendations of Wollongong Public Spaces Public Life. It will provide us with a benchmark to measure community perceptions about the City Centre and will continue to inform the process.

### **PHD thesis on Wollongong City Centre Parks: Qualitative insights to how residents living in low – and high-rise City Centre apartments make sense of parks as part of their everyday life**

The project consulted with 341 respondents through a survey of adult residents living in low-rise and high-rise apartments in the Wollongong City Centre; semi-structured interviews to explore park narratives, and accompanied walks to explore the lived experience of City Centre parks in Wollongong.

The qualitative findings were used to provide valuable insight into the way people value City Centre parks and spaces, and their perceptions of these places.

### **Shaping Wollongong**

A Property Council initiative, Shaping Wollongong was developed in 2012, identifying a vision for the City. The work developed including the Ambitions and actions, as well as the community input into this process, (the 3,000 ideas from the ‘ideas-a-thon’) informed the development of Wollongong Public Spaces Public Life.

### **Other City Centre Community Consultation/Feedback**

Discussions were held with staff around relevant City Centre projects and their associated community engagement processes. The community input gathered for the Evening Economy, ‘In the Midnight Hour’ and other relevant City Centre projects also informed the development of Wollongong Public Spaces Public Life.

## **PROPOSAL**

A City for People, Wollongong Public Spaces Public Life, brings together a refined city analysis and presents recommendations in the form of a City vision, key City actions, and six public life projects. The report, guided by Gehl Architects provides a critical analysis of our City, acknowledging the weaknesses we face in order to improve them.

## Vision Overview

### City Centre Vision

The current 2007 Vision for the City is:

*“As the regional city for the Illawarra Region, Wollongong will be a vibrant centre for jobs, key regional services, cultural activity, entertainment and tourism. Jobs will focus on high growth industries that build the city’s strengths in business services, health, education, retail, tourism and cultural activities.”*

The draft 2015 Vision has been simplified to: *“In the 21st century, Wollongong will be a more people oriented, sustainable and liveable city.”*

The draft Vision is about what Wollongong City Centre aspires to become. It is intended to set a clear direction to guide decision making and priorities in the City over time. The draft Vision is underpinned by actions which inform short, medium and long-term implementation across the City.

The draft Vision is underpinned by twelve aspirational goals for delivering the Wollongong City Centre of the future. These are themed as follows:

- Celebrate the uniqueness
- Develop a human scale City
- Grow a living City
- Create a pedestrian friendly City

The review of the City Centre Vision found that many aspects of the 2007 endorsed Vision remain relevant and appropriate to guide City revitalisation. The draft 2015 Vision presented refines elements of this Vision and builds on them, understanding current City challenges.

The most significant changes/variations between the 2007 vision and the draft 2015 goals are:

- to include reference to the importance of the City’s historical identity – Indigenous, European and Industrial heritage.
- to include an aspiration that the scale of the City Centre be reviewed to deliver a tightly defined City Centre, rather than the current area which extends from Stuart Park to Ross Street and west to Gwynneville.

The other variation is the approach to implementation. A number of the key actions of the 2007 Vision were focussed around large infrastructure investment projects including Crown Street Mall, MacCabe Park, Station Precinct and the Foreshore which required significant capital investment.

The draft 2015 Vision promotes small interventions to align with longer term City aspirations. It promotes temporary and cheaper projects which step toward delivering

the long term Vision for City places to demonstrate progress against the Vision, and balance expectations in delivering longer term capital investment and policy.

## **Realising the Vision**

The draft report identifies a series of City Centre and place specific actions to deliver against the Vision.

Providing a balance of shorter term/temporary actions alongside longer term/permanent change offers a flexible and achievable framework for delivering Wollongong City Centre as a City for people.

The Vision is supported by a range of City Centre and area specific actions to inform short to long term priorities for implementation. The Vision will only be realised when the City works collaboratively to implement change.

City Centre actions focus around larger policy led review. The six unique public life projects are identified to bring together a range of high quality City experiences. Each project has a unique identity and role in the public life of Wollongong City Centre. The projects are supported by strategies that explore means to enhance the public life of these areas through offering quick, medium and long term actions.

The six public life projects include:

- 1 Rail Arrival
- 2 Western Crown
- 3 Crown Street Mall
- 4 MacCabe Park
- 5 Arts Precinct
- 6 Foreshore

## **CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION**

As noted previously, the analysis and data was shared with the community in November 2014.

The final document has been refined by Council officers from most divisions. Three Councillor workshops have also informed this project to date, the most recent was held on 20 July 2015.

If endorsed by Council, formal exhibition of Wollongong Public Spaces Public Life is proposed between 14 November 2015 and 6 February 2016, which will provide the opportunity for key stakeholders and the wider community to provide input. As part of the exhibition, the following engagement activities are proposed:

- a way finding experience guiding people between key locations within the City Centre;

- community information session at Viva la Gong;
- school visits;
- target feedback sessions with various stakeholder groups;
- consultation sessions at key locations; and
- information on Council's website.

## PLANNING AND POLICY IMPACT

This report contributes to the delivery of Wollongong 2022 goal. It specifically delivers on the following:

Community Strategic Plan	Delivery Program 2012-2017	Annual Plan 2015-16
Strategy	5 Year Action	Annual Deliverables
2.3.1 Wollongong's City Centre is revitalised and active	2.3.1.4 Improve policies and systems to support the revitalisation of the City Centre	Deliver the City Centre Revitalisation Strategy

If adopted, after the exhibition period, the 2015 Vision will replace the 2007 Vision is the key strategic document for the City Centre.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

*A City for People, Wollongong Public Spaces Public Life 2015* is a visioning document which will inform priorities and commitments into the future and alignment of work. At this stage of the process, we are seeking feedback from the community on the Vision, goals and actions identified to achieve the Vision. These will then be refined and the resources required to deliver these actions will be identified.

The intention is that the final document will provide a layer of support to guide decision making in the City Centre, to deliver a range of capital and non-capital works within the current program.

The draft recommendations present ways to deliver cheaper and less permanent infrastructure such as pilot projects, which will enable Council to test or trial a range of different projects in the public domain, test/measure outcomes and use this to inform decision making.

## CONCLUSION

Since early 2014, Council has been working to better understand the City Centre, and critically analyse its achievements and weaknesses. The draft report *A City for People, Wollongong Public Spaces Public Life 2015* sets out a critical analysis of the City Centre using a range of data about the people who use the City, its built form and transport networks. A draft Vision is presented with recommendations on how to deliver effectively against these aspirational goals for the City Centre.

This report seeks Council's endorsement to progress to community engagement, to share *A City for People, Wollongong Public Spaces Public Life 2015* with the community, to open a conversation to seek community input on the City Centre Vision and recommendations.