1
Introduction

1.1
Purpose, scope and vision

This introduction to the Central Sydney Planning Strategy (the Strategy) describes the Strategy's purpose, scope and guiding documents. This is followed by a vision for Central Sydney as a global city that is green, global and connected. A description is given of the nine aims that underlie the Strategy and the development controls and actions that are a key part of the Strategy's implementation.

Purpose

The Central Sydney Planning Strategy aims to ensure strong planning for Central Sydney. It outlines how Central Sydney will grow in the future and includes development controls to promote the type of growth and environment for Central Sydney to remain part of one of the world's truly unique and memorable global cities, recognising its role as the State and nation's economic, cultural and social engine. The Strategy builds upon Central Sydney's strong beginnings in urban planning and proposes nine aims for the protection and growth of a green, global and connected Central Sydney, today, tomorrow and beyond.

Scope

Central Sydney is the commercial centre and core of the Sydney Metropolitan Area. For the purposes of the Strategy, Central Sydney refers to the land that has been designated as B8 Metropolitan Centre Zone under the Sydney Local Environmental Plan (LEP) 2012 and its four precincts: the City Core, the Western Edge, Midtown and Southern (refer to 1_1).

Central Sydney is the only piece of land attributed this level of zoning in the state of New South Wales. The NSW Government prescribed three mandatory objectives for the zone:

- T*o recognise and provide for the pre-eminent role of business, office, retail, entertainment and tourist premises in Australia's participation in the global economy*
- *To provide opportunities for an intensity of land uses commensurate with Sydney's global status*
- *To permit a diversity of compatible land uses characteristic of Sydney's global status and that serve the workforce, visitors and wider community.*

How Central Sydney is referred to has changed over time, from a 'Business and Commercial Centre (County)' in the 1950s, a 'County Centre' in the 1970s, and a 'City Centre' in the 1990s to today's 'Metropolitan Centre'. Central Sydney is also referred to as the 'CBD' and the 'City Core'.

Importantly, the Strategy recognises Central Sydney's importance to metropolitan Sydney, New South Wales and Australia. It includes principles and actions that go beyond the confines of the B8 Metropolitan Centre to consider how Central Sydney should grow into the future as part of a larger, connected, multicentre metropolitan Sydney.

The Strategy represents an evolution of planning strategy for Central Sydney. Central Sydney has grown in line with best practice planning and sound objectives for over 40 years. Today's Central Sydney – its density, shape, skyline and structure – was imagined in 1971 under the City of Sydney's[1] first planning strategy, which set out numerous controls and concepts that are still in place today. Its growth was then subsequently influenced by new and updated local, metropolitan and state planning strategies. Now, the Strategy recognises that urban planning strategies need to be refined and reworked in response to changing environmental, social and economic conditions, so that urban centres can continue to perform their important roles to their people and nation.

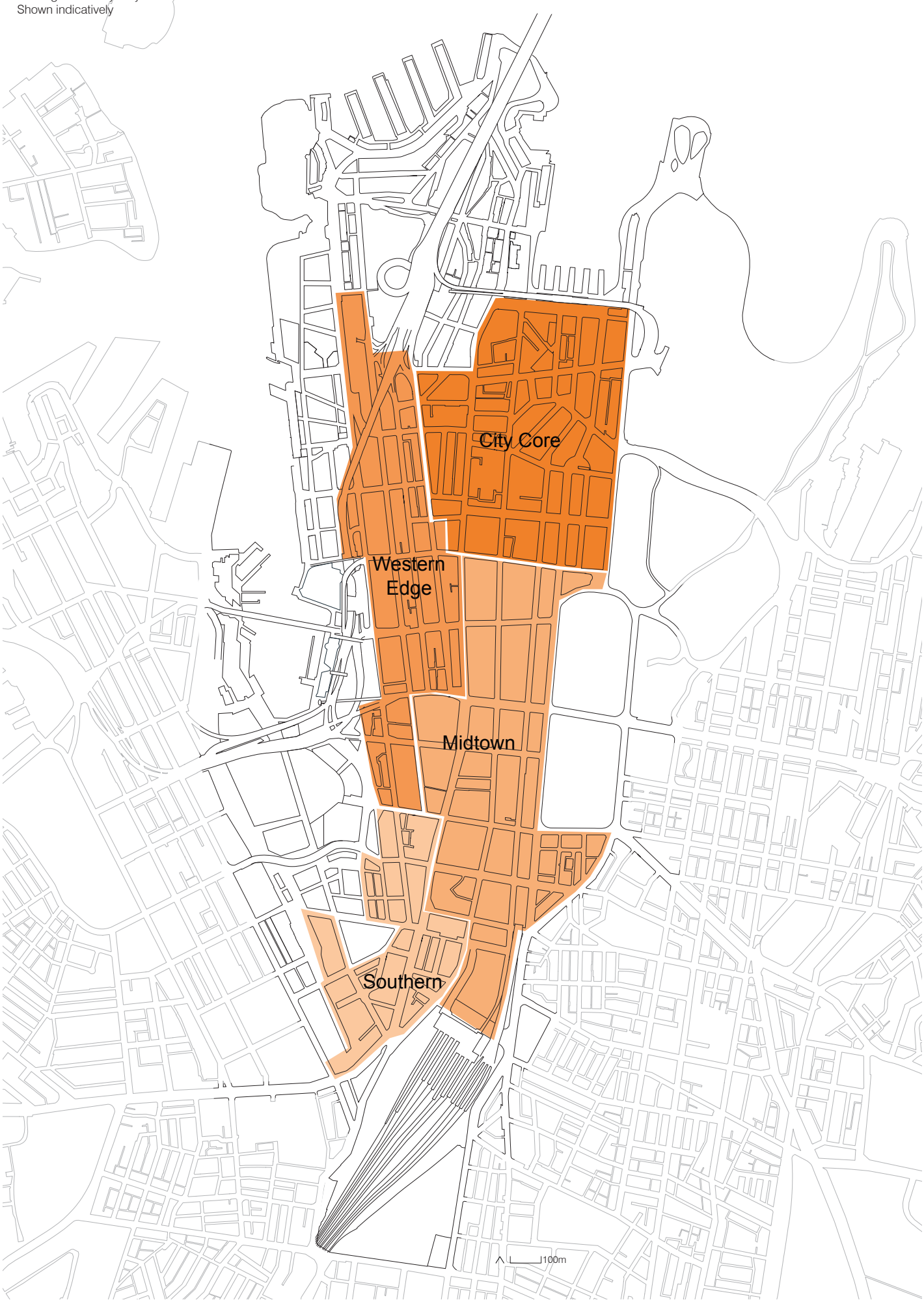
The Central Sydney Planning Strategy is the result of the Central Sydney Planning Review (the Review) that was initiated in early 2012 by the City of Sydney and reviewed the urban planning framework and controls that apply to Central Sydney and its surrounding areas. The Review, along with a range of other cross-organisational initiatives, was aimed at achieving the Sustainable Sydney 2030 vision of a green, global and connected City of Sydney.

The Strategy represents the key findings and recommendations of the Review. It analyses and presents a strategy for how Central Sydney has, will and should grow. The Strategy looks at its people and places, and the challenges of balancing land use and of moving people in, out and around the City of Sydney and metropolitan Sydney.

The Strategy aims to provide certainty, consistency and continuity for planning. It recognises that its successful implementation will require effective and efficient administration and that the plan, as a whole, carries a broad range of support from stakeholders, as it will involve working with landowners, business owners, residents and all levels of government. The Strategy envisages a planning framework that is simple and clear in regards to its objectives while acknowledging that to resolve something as complex as urban growth and development in Australia's only global city will sometimes require specific, tailored, technical solutions and controls. Finally, the Strategy expects that a reasonable balance will be achieved between public and private interests in the implementation of the Strategy.

[1] Depending on its context, the Strategy uses 'City of Sydney' to refer either to the City of Sydney Local Government Area or the City of Sydney organisation.

1_1
Existing Central Sydney Precincts:
Shown indicatively



Vision and Aims

Sustainable Sydney 2030 provides a vision for the City of Sydney as green, global and connected for 2030 and beyond. The Strategy seeks to build on this to create specific principles for the development of Central Sydney. The following principles were developed as part of the Central Sydney Planning Review and act as the basis for the Central Sydney Planning Strategy. Encompassing the same values as Sustainable Sydney 2030 – green, global and connected – the Strategy adopts nine principles to carry us to 2030 and beyond:

Green

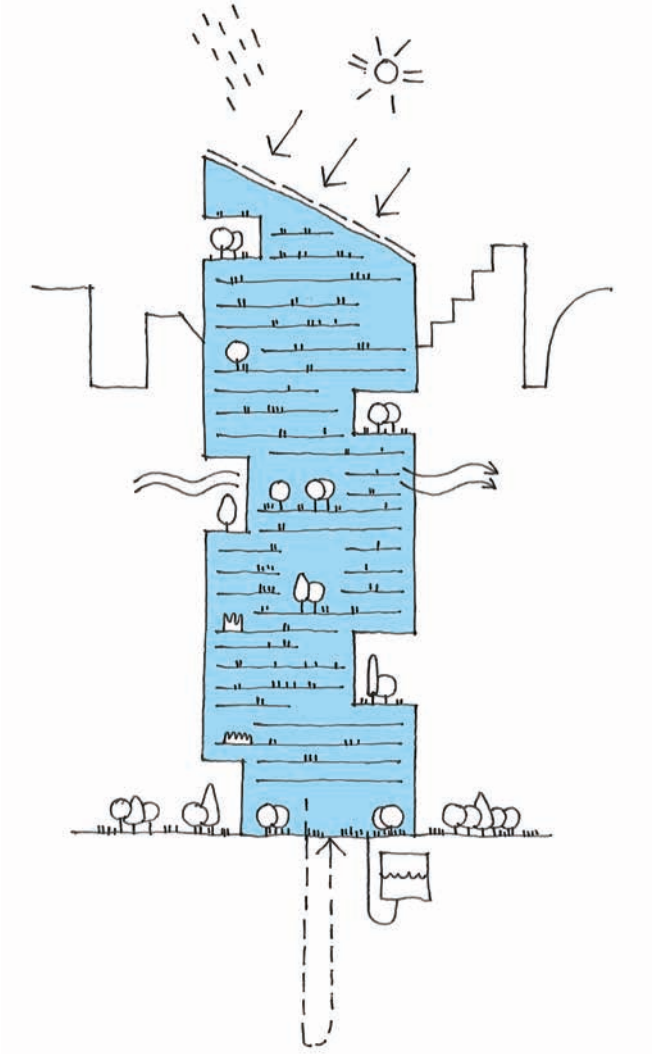
- Promoting sustainable buildings with great design and architecture
- Creating opportunities for beautiful parks and places
- Enabling the protection and adaption of our heritage

Global

- Ensuring a resilient and diverse economy
- Promoting efficient and effective transportation
- Making efficient use of land

Connected

- Supporting great streets
- Resulting in a city for people
- Ensuring strong community and service infrastructure is provided as growth occurs.



Sustainable buildings with great design and architecture

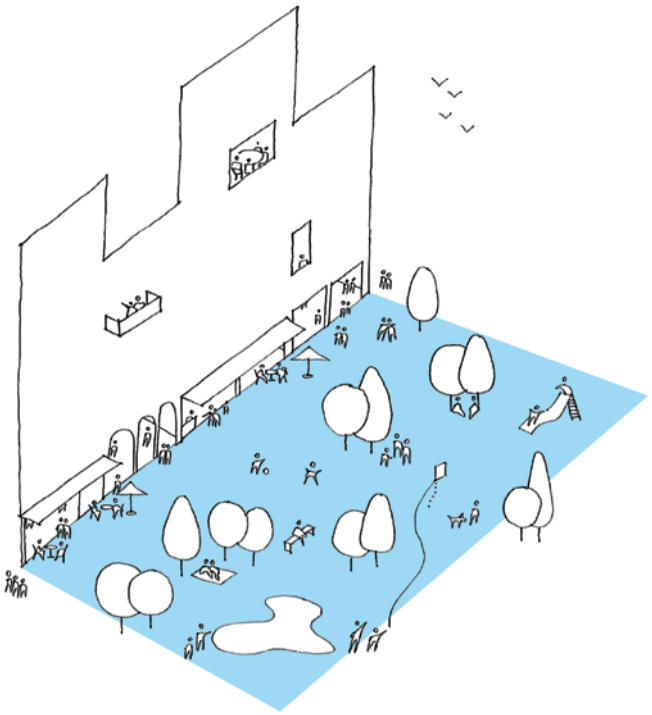
The Strategy will facilitate the development of buildings with great design and architecture that are functional and sustainable over their long-term life span. The Strategy's planning controls will minimise negative impacts on surrounding public spaces and neighbouring buildings, and protect the city from overshadowing and wind effects in the streets.

Great architecture contributes to the health and productivity of a city's workers and residents, and to the enjoyment of visitors. A great building creates a healthy and inspiring space for living and working with a sense of space, light and thermal comfort within the building. Great architecture and buildings make a city enjoyable to be in. They are an essential feature of Sydney's global image: a city with a diversity of great contemporary and heritage buildings set within a spectacular landscape. This Strategy encourages buildings that are healthy, inspiring and productive places for people. All buildings should be comfortable, safe and high quality, offering positive and memorable experiences for those who use them. The buildings should be appropriate to their function as workplaces, cultural, retail, community or mixed-use spaces.

The Strategy promotes and encourages design excellence at every scale and level of detail, so that users of these created spaces find them inspiring, satisfying and comfortable – from appreciating a building's performance and proportions to touching its finishes and viewing its placement in the skyline.

The Strategy will facilitate sustainable buildings that will contribute positively to the city. These buildings minimise their overall negative impact on the environment and dependence on non-sustainable energy, and have obvious current and future benefits.

The Strategy will support tall buildings that contribute to Sydney's iconic skyline that includes the Opera House nestled in our famous harbour, and the many skyscrapers of the City Core – a beautiful skyline that reinforces Sydney's global image.



Opportunities for beautiful parks and places

The Strategy will preserve the comfort and enjoyment of parks and other public places as important spaces for the benefit of all.

Great parks and other public spaces contribute to how people experience, visualise and remember a city – this is especially true of Sydney, an outdoor city blessed with one of the world's most enviable settings and climates.

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Hyde Park, the Domain: these are examples of Sydney's unforgettable public spaces that provide space for recreation, rest, reflection, commemoration, celebration, and civic and social gatherings, and allow contrast and relief from the city's office blocks and towers.

A key approach for promoting the enjoyment of parks and other public spaces is to protect their access to direct sunlight, particularly during the middle of the day when it is most critical for public enjoyment and plant growth. This is best achieved through attention to building heights and the skyline.

The Strategy will also ensure buildings contribute to beautiful public spaces, not only their aesthetic qualities but also how they address their surroundings and frame a space.

Finally, the Strategy recognises the importance of beautiful public spaces to Sydney's image: their creation and protection, and keeping them maintained and updated – these actions all support major events, underlie tourism and strengthen Sydney's identity and brand.

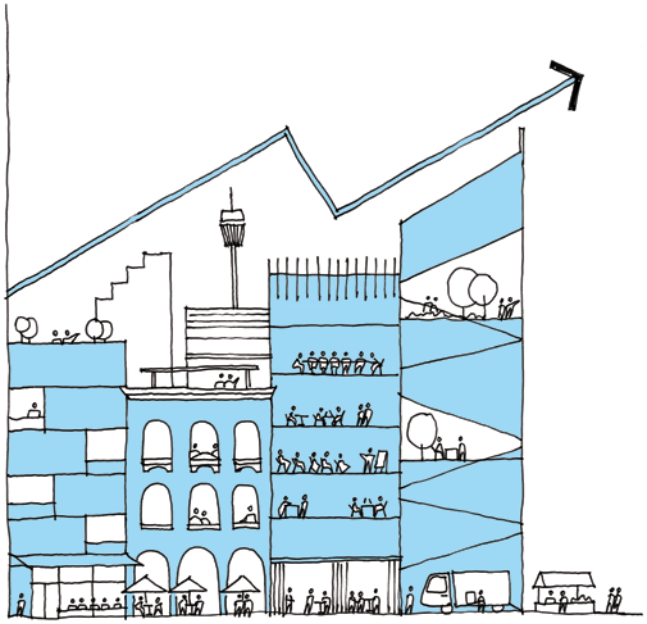
Protection and adaption of our heritage

The Strategy will continue to protect Sydney's heritage and seek innovative conservation methods. It will act to conserve, respect and celebrate the city's unique history through its buildings, places, objects and landscapes. It will do so by preserving heritage buildings, and by recognising and respecting special areas where groups of important buildings frame significant public space, and contribute to precincts of a shared character.

Sydney's heritage contributes to our distinctive identity, but change is constant. Historical buildings, precincts, structures and details are the physical expression of our history: they add to the image and memory of Sydney for visitors and residents. Sydney has some of the nation's most historically significant buildings. It's important to protect them so our collective heritage can be appreciated and understood by visitors to our city.

This Strategy will provide an improved experience of Sydney's heritage. By preserving and adapting our heritage, the layers of Sydney are built upon and enhanced to make a city that is authentic, human and soulful. Heritage buildings add quality and history to the streetscape, contributing layers of community and social significance. They are important for their intrinsic value as well as for their cultural significance.

They express different periods of time and progress and allow Sydney's major stages of development to be traced through the history and shape of its precincts. Importantly, they contribute diversity – different forms, functions and aesthetics – and provide breathing space between office towers and skyscrapers, and a contrast between the old and the new. The buildings express the city's personality and contribute to a perception of authenticity by retaining traces of past use and activity, while allowing for reuse and adaptation. At the same time, the appropriate adaptation of heritage buildings is encouraged for contemporary, economically productive and sustainable use. While the Strategy cannot define how growth can be achieved by incorporating heritage buildings into development schemes, it encourages the creative and innovative achievement of growth through heritage amalgamations, appropriate adaptations and, most importantly, through conversation – as any proposal that involves one of Sydney's unique heritage buildings will require unique consideration and collaboration outside of the planning framework.



A resilient and diverse economy

The Strategy will facilitate and encourage metropolitan Sydney's productivity, recognising Central Sydney's role as an economic engine and premier employment hub that benefits New South Wales and the nation. By positioning itself for sustainable and purposeful population and employment growth, Central Sydney can promote itself as a city open to new opportunities. Central Sydney's economy is competitive, high yielding, high value and innovative.

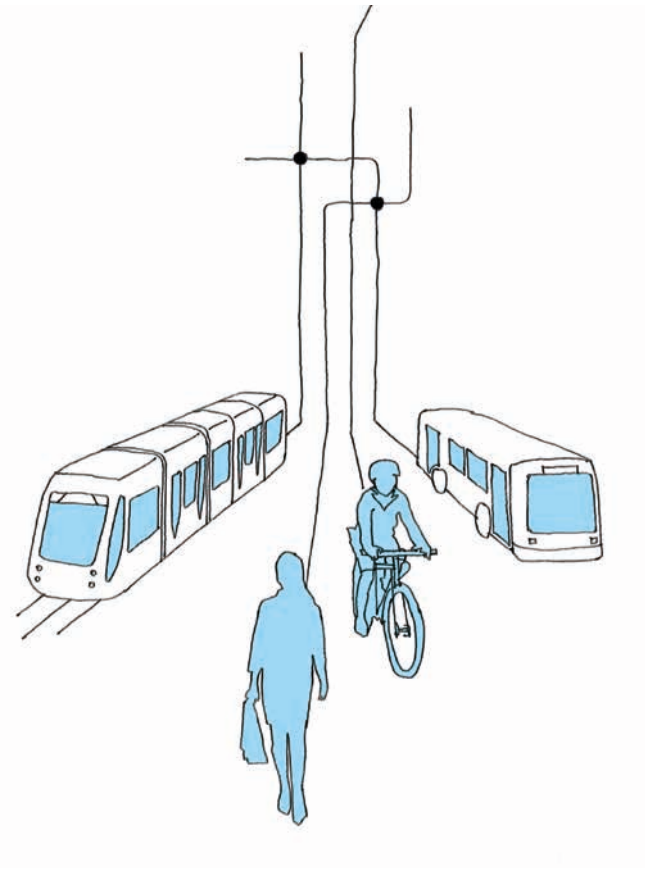
Central Sydney is the home of Australian and international companies, renowned cultural and tourist destinations, and vibrant shopping and entertainment quarters. It attracts industry through its significant competitive advantages: strong infrastructure, a magnificent location, a high quality of life and a skilled workforce. As a global city, it attracts talented workers and provides opportunities for innovation. It is important to maintain this role and position as a desirable environment for global firms, faced with competition from elsewhere in the country and the Asian region.

As Central Sydney grows, this Strategy will guide and encourage investment, matching it to Sydney's needs. It will clearly define a pathway for investors and developers to contribute to the city. With limited physical space for Sydney to grow into, land use must be carefully managed with attention to urban density.

This Strategy is medium-term with an eye beyond 2036. Whether the current economic cycle favours residential or commercial investment, the best use of space in the city is one that supports economic growth and facilitates an increase in productivity. While residential investment contributes to attracting industry and individuals to Sydney as a liveable and people-friendly city, this Strategy prioritises space to be occupied by a variety of commercial, retail and hospitality businesses.

The Strategy envisions industries located in close proximity in the city, creating anchors for clusters of firms and organisations to complement and compete with each other. Regular engagement between them improves learning and innovation, draws customers and improves efficiency, including through ease of transport, movement and communication. The Strategy will protect and provide opportunities for these known industry-based precincts, such as finance, media, law and design, and those yet-unknown today, those emerging and those growing.

The strategy also recognises that different centres of economic activity and investment in metropolitan Sydney will be a part of a complex interaction with the city, nation and world. It actively reinforces links with these other locations so that each is encouraged to play to its strengths and most advantageous roles.



Efficient and effective transportation

The Strategy promotes and prioritises modes of transport with the most efficient use of space – walking, cycling, light rail and metro. It champions improved public transport and the effective use of the city's space for these modes of transport as outlined in the NSW Government's Sydney City Centre Access Strategy.

Sydney's streets are the Central Sydney's public domain; they are its arteries, the way we move through and get around the city. As Sydney grows, the demand on our streets also grows. The Strategy promotes the most productive use of streets, balancing the different ways they are utilised.

A smart transport strategy contributes to the vitality of Sydney's streets by encouraging walking and cycling and effective public transportation. It helps residents, workers and visitors move around easily. It guides policy, services and amenities to best do this, recognising that while some streets carry more traffic than others and some are prioritised for public transport, all streets are important public spaces.

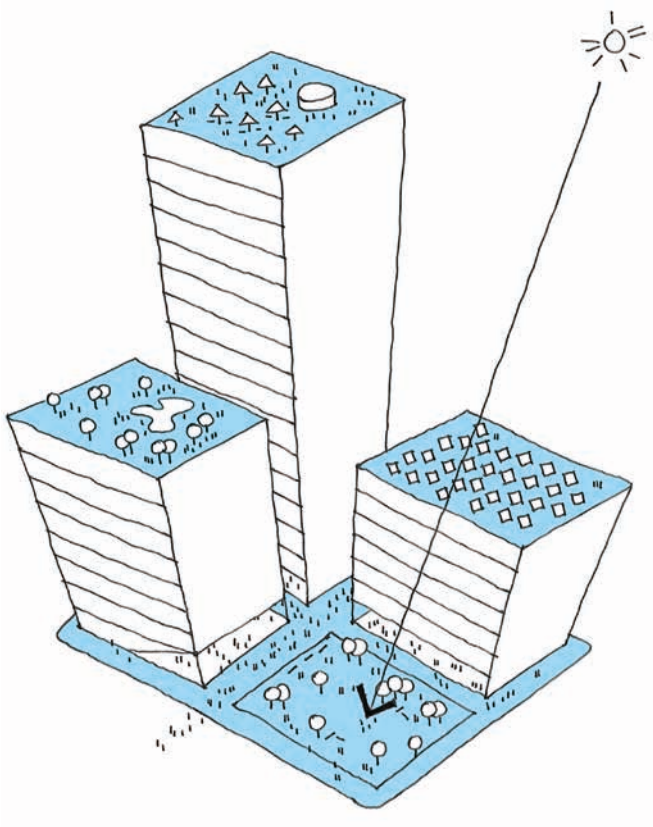
The Strategy supports the NSW Government's Sydney City Centre Access Strategy by addressing walking and cycling as the most efficient modes for short inner-city trips. This is because a higher proportion of workers in Central Sydney rely on surface transport rather than the rail network. Also, Sydney's inner neighbourhoods are rapidly growing; their residents will access Central Sydney most easily by walking and cycling. The Strategy supports Sydney in being a more accessible, attractive and safer city to explore on foot, by making walking quicker, more convenient, inviting and easy.

Public transport is fundamental to Sydney's role as a modern city, moving around increasing amounts of people, talent and knowledge in the service industries including finance and education, especially by rail and bus. The Strategy is reliant on the improved efficiency of the public transport network, particularly by planning better connections between modes of transport.

To benefit communities, urban consolidation and increased commercial development must be accompanied by high-quality transport infrastructure. The Strategy supports the progressive expansion of Sydney's emerging light rail network, superseding buses on very busy corridors, including Oxford Street, Broadway and parts of Elizabeth Street. The Strategy protects these corridors from incompatible development, such as major driveways.

Workers will continue to use private vehicles in Central Sydney but the proportion of work trips in private cars will decline as jobs and housing grow. The Strategy will stabilise the total parking supply in Central Sydney.

The Strategy will balance access to streets, footpaths and private land. It will maximise opportunities to consolidate sites for the delivery of services and goods. Where possible, sites will be encouraged to share basement connections with their neighbours and provide improved facilities for handling deliveries and goods through precinct-based freight hubs where last-mile deliveries are completed on bike. Basement and other underground connections may also help congestion and protect the amenity of streetscapes and major public transport interchanges.



Efficient use of land

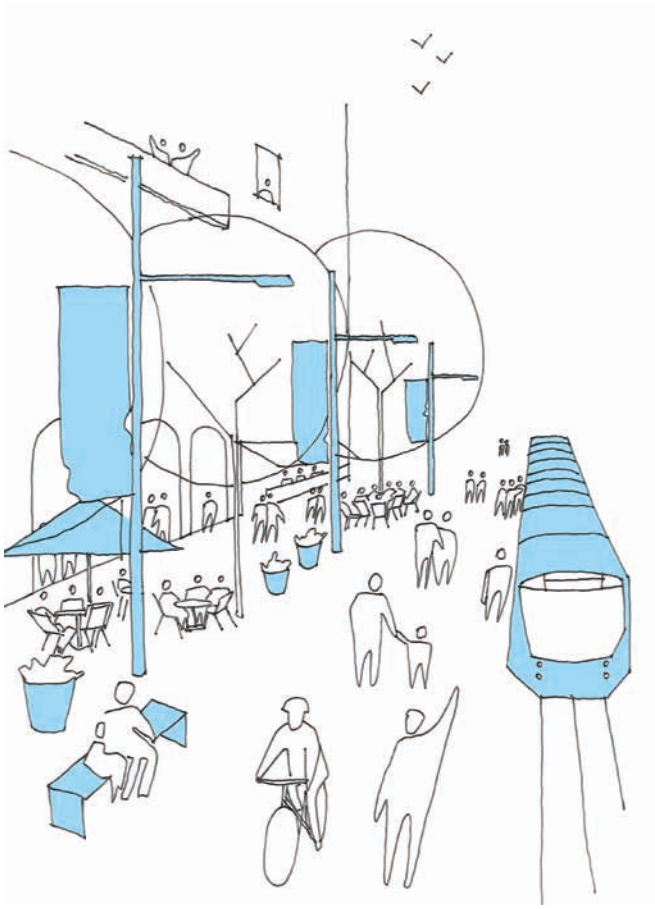
Maximising the efficiency of floor space within the height available in Central Sydney is the Strategy's key move for the efficient and productive use of land. Land is Central Sydney's most important asset. Sydney must make the most of it. We must ensure it is developed in a way that contributes to a productive city, a city that best utilises our space and land and is smart about the way we grow and encourage land use.

This benefits metropolitan Sydney, reinforcing its powerful economy, attracting investment and maintaining its global reputation, at the same time as promoting and protecting the Central Sydney's amenity. It is about a city that is adaptable and flexible, and resilient to changing economic climates. The best use of space will contribute to the most productive Sydney.

The Strategy goes beyond simple floor space ratio (FSR) calculations to consider function, form and interaction: what is expected for land use, the contribution to the public domain, and how buildings relate to each other. The Strategy will also encourage design excellence that references simple rules related to scale and built form. It will respect existing controls and permissions while prioritising the minimum requirements for comfortable and quality environments for users, the envisaged character of the precinct, and the needs of the city as a whole.

As Sydney is compact and growing, proactive efforts are needed to ensure efficiency and productivity. In acknowledging the limited space available, the Strategy will seek effective, creative and appropriate solutions. Floor space that is not committed to residential use increases our ability to stay adaptable. Where opportunities exist, the Strategy will maximise the benefits of available land by promoting amalgamation. In Central Sydney's limited space, larger towers are the most efficient and productive. Where sites redevelop together rather than on their own, they can achieve larger and higher developments that use land more effectively.

Finally, the Strategy supports sites to be self-sufficient. Redevelopment of sites will ensure adequate light, air and outlook, and will not prevent neighbouring sites from future redevelopment. Appropriate heights and setbacks of buildings from their boundaries achieve appropriate amenity in terms of light, shadow and outlook; the larger the site, the easier it is to accommodate those setbacks. The principles that encourage amalgamation and self-sufficiency go hand in hand.



Great streets

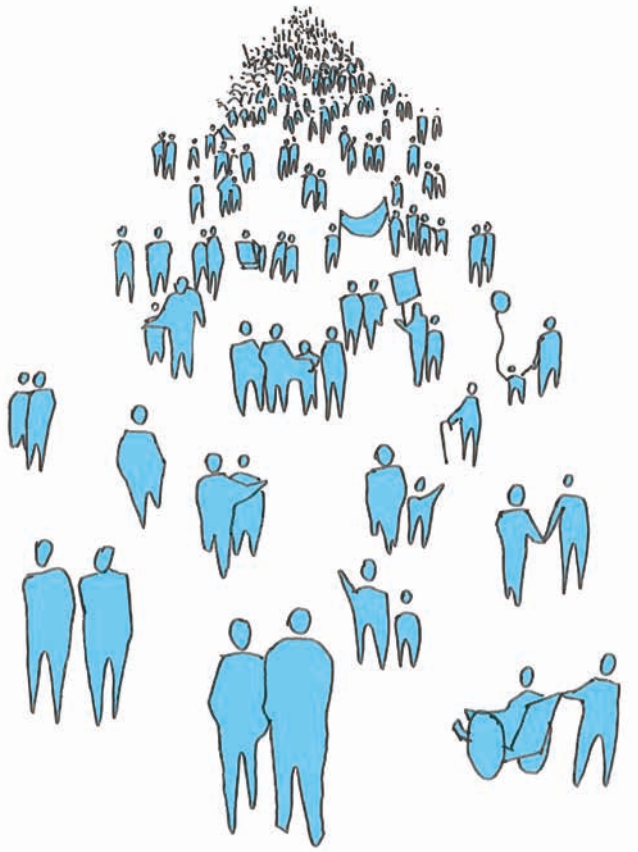
The Strategy elevates the importance of Sydney's streets as public spaces. It builds upon the principle that buildings must relate to the street, allowing for an exchange between street life and the life in buildings, contributing to the city's public life. It envisions a diversity of activity at street level by requiring buildings to have active frontages, where the front facades of buildings open towards the street, allowing active engagement between those in the street and those in the lower floors of buildings, and where the ground floor activities of buildings contribute to an interesting and dynamic street life.

Great streets are enjoyable, comfortable and safe for all people. They define what it's like to live and work in and visit Sydney. Sydney's streets and laneways form a network of public spaces that are functional, interesting, diverse, quiet, busy, big, small, impressive and intimate. Each street has a unique combination of elements – including architecture, light, air, scale, views and function – that makes it special.

They are also the infrastructure for people to easily get around, particularly by walking and cycling, and support an active and diverse retail economy. Just as important, great streets are those that draw people out of buildings, to engage in creative conversation, ideas and activities. It's important to the City's future to recognise the benefits of public spaces and prevent their erosion. Our streets are the location of day-to-day and recreational activities, increasingly so in a compact city centre that is growing in density and population. The amenity of our streets is therefore of more and more importance, particularly the protection of direct sunlight access. Street-level amenity plays a crucial role in establishing Sydney's character as a memorable and iconic global city with streets that are defined, lively, vibrant and comfortable.

The Strategy prioritises the comfort and enjoyment of Sydney streets. It envisions space between buildings for light to come through to the street and the minimisation of the uncomfortable effects of wind created by tall buildings. It encourages that an element of protection is integrated into the design of streets, so they are safe from the weather and people feel safe using them, including by being part of a healthy amount of activity on the streets, day and night. It includes the management of air quality.

As Central Sydney grows and increases in density, competition will intensify for the limited amount of space on Sydney's streets: the solution will be to find the most effective ways for people to get around in a safe and comfortable way. Walking and cycling save space and are the most time-efficient modes of transport; this Strategy will actively support them.



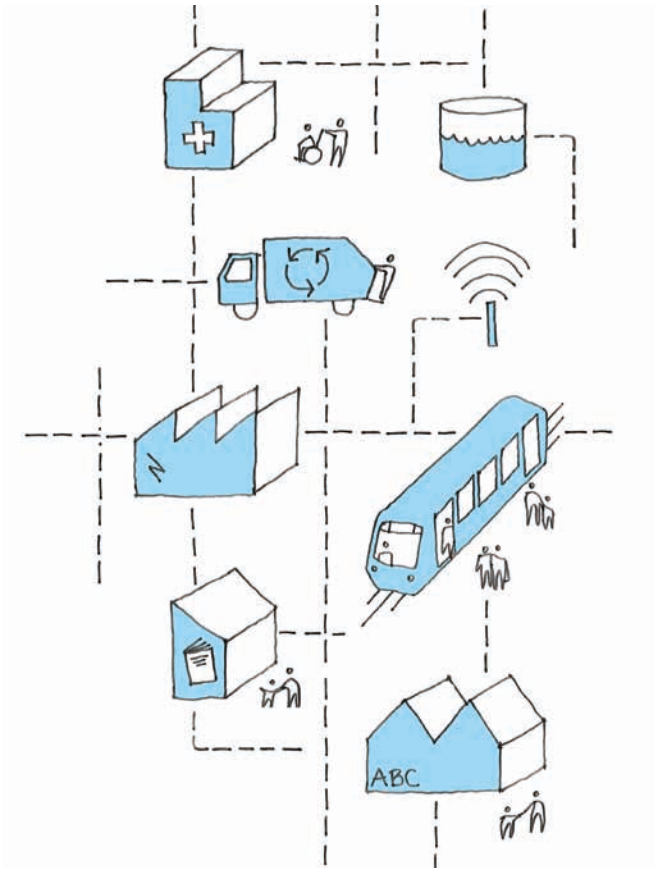
A city for people

The Strategy promotes Sydney as a city for people through actions that facilitate the values of liveability, inclusivity, tolerance and diversity. Sydney belongs to everyone: people of all ages and life stages; locals and visitors; workers, businesses and residents. Sydney's success and reputation is associated not only with economic outcomes but also with these non-economic values.

The Strategy elevates the quality of how people experience the city, whether at work or play, whether living in or visiting Sydney. Their increased enjoyment of the city leads to more benefits: attracting people to the city, supporting them to work and live, and encouraging their positive contributions to the city.

To achieve this quality and enjoyment, it is essential that people can easily get to the city, and then easily get around by public transport and by walking and cycling – the best way to get between the many services located in the city – along routes that are pleasant and comfortable.

Recognising that the city is of benefit to everyone, the Strategy seeks to facilitate spaces for public life. The city is a stage. Beautiful and memorable settings host musical events, art exhibitions, protests, celebrations and parades. They are activities that represent the diversity of how we as Sydneysiders participate in a city we love.



Strong community and service infrastructure accompanying growth

The Strategy will align urban growth with the delivery of appropriate infrastructure. A city exists first and foremost for its people. This means that as it grows, community and service infrastructure must grow with it to create an environment that is safe, pleasant and attractive. It should encourage social life with well-functioning community services such as schools and health and medical services. Significant investment is required to facilitate this infrastructure, and all levels of government must work together to achieve it.

When urban growth occurs without improving community and service infrastructure, the negative consequences are obvious. A lack of essential infrastructure means cities become unsustainable and unliveable, suffering social polarisation, urban decay and economic stagnation. It means failing transport, pressure on health and education services, unaffordable housing, damaging pollution and less access to public buildings and spaces.

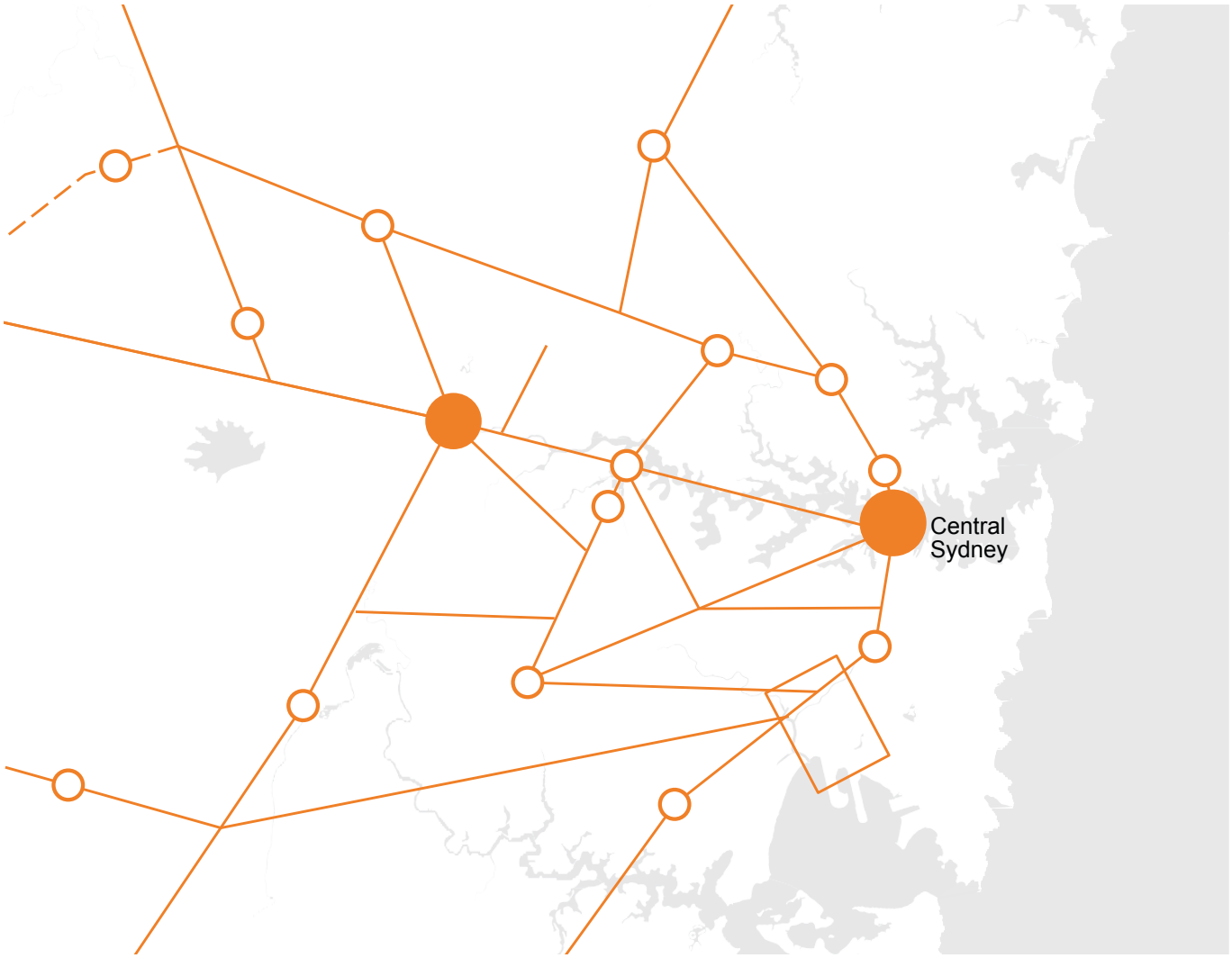
Community and service infrastructure must continue to grow. It must serve both current and future communities. Opportunities for the city's growth must consider what infrastructure is needed to support it. Developers will be required to work with the City in an accountable and efficient manner to deliver community infrastructure, including libraries, child care and cultural facilities, and service infrastructure such as light rail, footpaths and affordable rental housing.

Development and good community and service infrastructure go hand in hand towards a healthy, vibrant and sustainable city. This Strategy will facilitate developers to support the growth of infrastructure through transparent and straightforward planning controls and administrative processes.

Strategy development controls and actions

As Central Sydney grows, and opportunities for growth become limited, responsibility increases for the City of Sydney to plan for and promote the efficient, orderly and economic development of land through development controls. Development controls protect the public domain and public interest. They provide for sufficient development potential to meet reasonable demand. The Strategy comprises both a strategic plan for the development of Central Sydney and a system of development controls. The development controls are based on the controls contained in the Sydney Local Environment Plan (LEP) 2012 and the Sydney Development Control Plan (DCP) 2012.

A clear understanding and consistent application of Strategy's development controls will provide certainty to stakeholders, and result in achieving the future vision of Central Sydney as the engine for a dynamic green, global and connected City of Sydney that continues to grow and serve its people.

Some areas of urban planning are beyond the influence of development controls and will require further action as part of the Central Sydney Planning Strategy. Together with short-term, medium-term and ongoing actions and key moves, the Strategy identifies where the City can influence and work with Central Sydney's various communities and state and federal governments to ensure that Central Sydney can play its role in metropolitan Sydney maintaining its global status.

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Central Sydney: one centre in a multicentre metropolitan Sydney