Nelson Bay Town Centre & Foreshore IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM
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Introduction

This Improvement Program aims to provide a coordinated program of infrastructure and capital improvements recommended as part of the implementation framework of the Nelson Bay Town Centre and Foreshore Strategy (Nelson Bay TC&FS).

The Program provides details of projects, outlines design considerations, and details key delivery requirements, such as reliance on other project delivery timeframes within the Study Area, including guidance on where to from here.

Objectives of this Program are to:

- Identify improvements to the public domain
- Provide a framework to guide infrastructure and capital improvements to the public domain
- Facilitate the delivery of the Nelson Bay TC&FS
1.0 Context

2.1 Desired Future Character Areas

The character and design treatment for the public domain of Nelson Bay Town Centre and Foreshore reflects five character areas that make up the Study Area. These character areas provide the opportunity to focus and enhance activity within certain areas. They underpin the public domain revitalisation.

The section provides a description of the distinct characteristics of each of the areas and the corresponding illustration (figure 1) lists additional attributes that are to be enhanced and the types of development appropriate in those areas.

This section is then followed by listing the relevant planning and design principles to inform the required Nelson Bay Town Centre and Foreshore Public Domain Plan.

Village

A central pedestrian focused “village” area centred on Stockton Street north, Magnus Street, and Donald Street east. This area is characterised by consistent smaller shopfronts, intensive retailing, considerable pedestrian activity, footpath dining, and a sense of enclosure created by street trees and almost continuous awnings. Future development within this area should build upon its intimate “village” character.

Town Living & Commercial

This area surrounds the “village centre” to the east, south and west. At its core it is characterised by larger mixed use open sites, and therefore is a suitable location for larger developments that are perhaps not appropriate within the Village area. There is considerable pedestrian activity, and this should be encouraged through appropriate streetscape revitalisation works, but pedestrian levels are not as high as in the “village” area.

Surrounding the commercial core, this area in parts is dominated by residential and tourist apartment buildings and tourist accommodation. These extend to the upper levels of the natural basin surrounding Nelson Bay and return towards the shoreline to the east and west of the Town Centre. This area has a relatively low intensity of pedestrian activity and is characterised by multistorey buildings setback from the street frontage, and often features landscaping in the front setback.

Green Link

The “green link” provides the interface between the Town Centre and the Foreshore, and connections from east to west through Apex Park for pedestrian and cyclists. Apex Park is the focus of the green link. Government Road/Victoria Parade separates it and the Foreshore from the Town Centre. The green link is characterised by large open spaces, informal recreational facilities, such as the playground and picnic areas, and frequent wide angle views of Port Stephens waterbody. Further information and considerations of this area is provided under “Special Projects” on page 7.

Foreshore

The Foreshore is an area of intensive commercial activity incorporating sheltered marina moorings, Fisherman’s Co-operative, visitor and restaurant facilities and beach. In contrast to the “green link” the Foreshore has largely paved areas and a significant built element that includes the Marina commercial buildings, government offices, fish processing and retail areas and jetties. Further information and considerations on the future redevelopment of this area is provided under “Special Projects” on page 8.
Tourism and Leisure

A leisure and tourism focused area incorporates the Seabreeze Hotel and Nelson Resort sites. These sites are located at a main interface point between the Town Centre and the Foreshore and are highly visible. They are of critical importance in building a stronger flow of pedestrian activity between the Foreshore and the Town Centre.

A second leisure and tourism area is located around the Bowling Club and Landmark development, to the south of Dowling Street and is the location of accommodation facilities, and formal recreation uses such as bowling greens and tennis courts.

Figure 1: Planning and Design Considerations for Character Areas.
2.0 Public Domain Projects

3.1 Public Domain Plan

A Public Domain Plan is required to guide the works necessary to revitalise Nelson Bay Town Centre. Figure 2 summarises the main planning and design principles to guide the development of a Public Domain Plan. When preparing the Public Domain Plan or any streetscape improvements, the considerations set out below should be considered. Appendix 1 provides a comprehensive list of works.

Figure 2: Recommendations for the Nelson Bay Public Domain Plan
3.2 Public Domain Plan Components

3.2.1 Public Art

Public art is an important way to reflect the identity of Nelson Bay within the built environment and to interpret the culture of the area. Types of public art include; free standing art objects, artistic features within street elements such as street furniture, paving and water features, and public lighting. Public Art in Nelson Bay should:

- Contribute to cultural identity and assist in reflecting the local environment, and distinctive character areas
- Reinforce the town character and integrate the Waterfront and the Town such as through water and marine themes
- Be enjoyed and experienced by people of different ages and cultural backgrounds
- Respond to themes of people – both past and present
- Relate to the built environment
- Be of artistic excellence and integrity
- Be appropriate and safe.

The Public Domain Plan should identify sites that are appropriate for public art such as gateways, Apex Park and prominent open space locations. The Public Art Strategy should be a component of the Public Domain Plan.

3.2.2 Trees and Landscaping

Trees can create a more enclosed feel in streets and public spaces, frame vistas and view corridors, reduce the impact of large developments for pedestrians, and can provide a visual link between urban environments such as the Nelson Bay Town Centre with the surrounding wooded hills and vegetation. The following are guiding principles for the development of a Town Centre and Foreshore Landscaping Plan.

Plant selection should:

- Be indigenous where possible
- Enhance and protect identified view corridors within the Nelson Bay Town Centre and Foreshore Strategy
- Reinforce the identity and visual character of areas and streets by providing different street tree selections, including:
  - Village – Smaller scale trees in keeping with the intimate feel of Magnus Street, regular plantings, and preferably deciduous form to ensure sunlight in winter for pedestrians and on-street dining.
  - Town Living and Commercial – Larger tree species that reflect the scale of development (5 storeys). Species selection should include consideration of appropriate ‘form’ to frame identified view corridors and long streets such as Stockton Street.
  - Government Road and Victoria Parade/Stockton and Dowling Streets - People are likely to slow down through treed landscapes therefore consistent street tree planting are to be provided throughout the Town Centre and Foreshore – including the perimeter roads such as Government Road and Victoria Parade.
• Reinforce gateways to the Town Centre through a change in street trees/landscaping or avenue planting leading up to the gateway.

These elements are reflected in Figure 2.

A Landscape Plan should be a component of the Public Domain Plan.

3.2.3 Wayfinding Strategy

Signage should contribute to the character and amenity of the public domain. Signs should provide clear direction and information to locations and sites within the Town Centre and Foreshore. The development of a Wayfinding Strategy for Nelson Bay is required and the following are provided as guiding principles:

• Designs should be consistent and coordinated
• Reflect the relevant character areas
• Promote the natural environment of Nelson Bay
• Contain precise information
• Be easy to maintain
• Guide motorists, pedestrians and cyclists in accessing the Town Centre and the Foreshore
• Contain interpretive information about the natural environment and history of the area

The Wayfinding Strategy should be a component of the Public Domain Plan.

3.2.4 Lighting

A future lighting program in Nelson Bay will enhance the character areas, streets, and open space areas such as Apex Park. A future lighting program should:

• Reflect the importance of the street/character area. For example Magnus Street and Stockton Street, are more intense areas than the Town Living and Commercial area and should have more intensive lighting.
• Highlight important street trees such as the change between character areas and Town Centre gateways
• Provide a clear path across the green linking area and reinforce the link for pedestrians between the Foreshore and the Town Centre
• Enhance community public art
• Be safe, robust and cost effective, keeping in mind maintenance

A Lighting Strategy should be a component of the Public Domain Plan.
3.0 Special Projects

4.1 Green Link Area

The Green Link Area identified within Figure 3 provides the connection between a number of activity and character areas. The future development of this Green Link Area and how it relates to the surrounding character areas is a vital element in achieving the objectives of the Nelson Bay Town Centre and Foreshore Strategy.

The planning and design of the Green Link requires a holistic approach to deliver many of the recommendations of the Strategy in a comprehensive manner.

The following provides the main planning and design considerations for the future development of this area:

4.1.1 Apex Park Masterplan

Apex Park is located within the centre of the Green Link, the Town Centre and the Foreshore. The Park has evolved over time and represents layers of incremental works over a number of years. As a result it has gradually lost its sense of structure. Revitalisation works need to be carried out to ensure Apex Park is Nelson Bays Town Park and to ensure it contributes to the wider strategic aims of the Nelson Bay Town Centre and Foreshore Strategy. This should be carried out by preparing a Masterplan by a suitably qualified specialist/landscape architect. In order to provide guidance for a Masterplan a brief is provided within appendix X. The brief was informed by Stakeholders during the Strategy process.

It is recognised some specific regeneration work is required to the Park in the short term, such as the upgrading of the War Memorial and gathering area. However, any immediate work for Apex Park should consider the wider functions detailed within the Strategy and the details of the design brief (described in Appendix 2).
4.1.2 Road Connections

The current layout and location of Victoria Parade between the Town Centre and the Foreshore creates a disconnection between the two areas and remains problematic for pedestrians. The long term plans for Apex Park and the Foreshore redevelopment should include consideration of how the road system, being Victoria Parade and Teramby Road, effectively services these areas. Figure 3 demonstrates the importance of connectivity between the Town Centre and the Foreshore and the current road barriers to pedestrian activity.

Further, as detailed plans are developed for the Foreshore area they should include a review of the current configuration of the Victoria Parade/Teramby Road roundabout. The same can be said for the integration of the Yacaaba Street extension outlined within the Nelson Bay Town Centre and Foreshore Strategy.

Figure 3: Connections and barriers between the Town Centre and the Foreshore.
4.2 The Foreshore

The Foreshore Plan of Management prepared by Port Stephens Council and the Lands and Property Management Authority (LPMA) sets out the key actions and considerations for managing the Foreshore area and identified issues, outcomes and strategies for each management unit.

The Nelson Bay Town Centre and Foreshore Strategy recognised the aims of the Plan and has made further recommendations to assist in ensuring the Foreshore redevelopment actions are aligned with the strategic planning recommendation of the wider area.

The main planning and design principles to be considered for the Foreshore redevelopment are as follows:

- The promenade should be enhanced along the length of the waterfront for visitors through a continuous foreshore open space that provide no barriers for public access
- Alternatives should be sought to large amounts of car parking on prime waterfront open space
- Reinforce the shared pedestrian/cycle link that runs in a west-east direction.
- Pedestrian movement over all other forms of transport and enhance the connection to the Town Centre.
- Integrate with the Masterplan for Apex Park
- Provide facilities for disabled users
- Retain and enhance protected views identified within the Nelson Bay Town Centre and Foreshore Strategy including clear views of the water from the Town Centre (Stockton Street and Victoria Parade)
- Ensure a number of access points for pedestrians to the Foreshore
- Consider the provision of facilities that will attract a range of age groups, one such example was identified by Tomaree High School Students was the "Beach House" idea. The concept was taken from a development in Glenelg (South Australia). The facility is located on the waterfront and is a family entertainment centre with a range of activities for all ages, restaurants, and conference centre. The benefits of this type of development for Nelson Bay include:
  - It is an all year round indoor attraction that is not reliant on fine weather.
  - It would be the only attraction of its type on the NSW East coast
  - There is sufficient room within the Foreshore to locate such a development
  - It includes a function room
  - Older families would be attracted and as such could assist in attracting some of the families that may travel to the Gold Coast for similar attractions
  - It widens Nelson Bay's scope to attract tourists
Appendix 1 – Public Domain Plan Comprehensive List of Works

Note: these should be supported by a Public domain Strategy, Public Art Strategy and a Signage Strategy and signage Suite.

a. Seamless pedestrian route from Stockton Street to the water
   Work required:
   ▪ Consistency of pavement treatment and wayfinding “a distinctive priority route”
   ▪ Stockton Street treatments and wayfinding, including relocation of the stage
   ▪ Pedestrian crossing improvements, including distinctive pedestrian area pavement and possible “scramble” crossing
   ▪ Improved pathway through Apex Park
   ▪ Improvement to the Teramby Road crossing including a possible pedestrian overbridge

b. Prepare a Landscape Plan that includes:
   ▪ Stockton Street tree planting and streetscape treatment including lane linemarking to “narrow” the street
     Aim: To provide a distinctive corridor to the Town Centre and the waterfront
   ▪ Church Street avenue tree planting and lane linemarking to “narrow” the street
     Aim: To provide sense of entry and to reduce vehicle speeds

c. Government Road tree planting and street treatment

d. Church Street and Government Road intersection treatment
   Aim: To provide a termination point and further the sense of entry along Government Road.

e. Apex Park Town Park upgrade
   Aim: To provide landscaping and treatment commensurate with Apex Park’s role as the Town Park for Nelson Bay

f. Village Precinct (Magnus Street in particular) tree replanting
   Aim: to improve the low scale Village feel of the Precinct.

g. Public art: main target- Village Precinct and Stockton Street
   Aim: to bring the Bay to the Streets (evocative of the waterbody, local history and Indigenous significance)

h. Pedestrian wayfinding and Points of interest signage as per consistent signage suite.
i. Vehicular wayfinding signage as per consistent signage suite derived from the above

j. Introduce a scramble crossing on Victoria Parade

k. Cycle upgrades identified within the Port Stephens Cycleway Plan

l. Review the position of the podium currently within the view corridor on Stockton Street.

m. Review the current lighting and prepare a Lighting Strategy that integrates with the street tree Landscape Plan that includes the use lighting effects to highlight important buildings and public art; integrated lighting with street tree planting to ensure good illumination of the public realm, specifically the village character area and Apex Park at night time.

n. Review the state of paved areas and prepare a plan for maintenance and replacement. Should new paving be required it should consider: consistent patterns throughout character areas, be durable, darker colours, low maintenance.

o. Incorporating street furniture along movement corridors like Stockton Street, public open spaces, and public transport nodes and within public car parking areas. The opportunities to use street furniture as public art should also be acknowledged and explored.

p. Upgrade tourist information board signage

q. Upgrade the bus interchange
Appendix 2 - Apex Park Design Brief

This brief has been prepared by Port Stephens Council as part of the Nelson Bay Town Centre and Foreshore Strategy. The purpose of the brief is to collate the views of various stakeholders and to use this information to inform future development of the Park, including the development of a Masterplan by a suitably qualified Landscape Architect.

In addition to the items listed in the table below, the following strategic planning and design considerations, as raised within the Strategy, should also be considered:

**Timing considerations**

- One of the key outcomes for the revitalisation of Apex Park is to provide an effective link between the Town Centre and the Foreshore. The future design detail of the Foreshore is unknown, and future plans are likely to change the relationship between Apex Park and the Foreshore, it is recommended detailed future works are not carried out without first understanding the emerging changes to the Foreshore area.

- Consideration should be given towards the effectiveness of the overhead pedestrian bridge and consider how the Victoria Parade connection to the Town Centre can be improved.

**Future consultation**

- Future plans for the War Memorial should involve consultation with the local sub branch of the Returned Services League (RSL) as well as other stakeholders.

**Connection with surrounding areas**

- The design of Apex Park should integrate with wider theming work planned for the Town Centre and Foreshore including wayfinding standards, themes, and the recommended community art strategy.

- The Green Link Area should provide a continuous connection for pedestrians in a west/east direction and have an improved connection between Stockton Street and the Foreshore including connecting the Bridle Path with Laidler Walk.

- The strong axis between the Town Centre and the Foreshore should utilise treatments such as avenue planting and consistency of materials between adjoining character areas such as Stockton Street.

- The Stockton Street crossing point to Apex Park and the waterfront is the priority route for pedestrians. Treatments such as consistency in paving and materials and avenue planting through Apex Park should be considered.

- The protection and enhancement of view corridors, such as by the removal of the tree currently blocking the central view corridor from Stockton Street down to the foreshore.

- Review the Visitor Information Centre building. Options may include:
  - Opening the building up to the Apex Park, and improving its relationship with its setting
  - Replacing the existing structure with a more transparent structure that responds better to its setting.
- Undertaking the above and incorporating other uses, such as local area interpretation and a café.

- Potentially identifying alternative locations for the Visitor Information Centre as raised in the 2010 Port Stephens Tourism Diagnostic Study and Action Plan. Lot 1 DP 1155736 (43 Stockton Street Nelson Bay) may be a suitable alternative location for the Visitor Information Centre. The site is located to the West of the Nelson Bay Bowling Club and has a number of elements that suggest it may be a suitable location.

**War Memorial**

- Revitalisation of the current War Memorial and review of its location. Space surrounding the Memorial should be formalised and include a level gathering area for formal occasions. This space should consider universal access standards and cater for older people.

- The presentation of the memorial should be improved perhaps with a landscape backdrop.

- The ability to erect temporary shelter in poor weather conditions.

- Consolidate memorials within the park into one cohesive memorial area and create a 'path of discovery' where people could move around the space and reflect. This idea may include local stories and references.

**Park features and elements**

- Apex Park is Nelson Bay's formal “town square” and meeting place.
- Make it a place to attract people to the area and remember Nelson Bay.
- Amphitheatre/outdoor entertainment space with consideration of the role Fly Point Park already provides. (Perhaps an alternative to the Stockton Street Town Centre stage).
- Retain an area solely for passive recreation.
- Integrated landscape plan that links in with the wider street tree designs within the Town Centre.
- Structured landscape elements including an overall planting design. This may include a review of current trees and their appropriateness.
- Landscaping /corridor tree planting along Stockton Street through to waterfront.
- Water elements and references to the Foreshore location.
- A significant piece of public art/sculpture.
- Lighting program integrated with the wider street tree lighting program in order to invite people to walk through the park at night time.
- Interpretive information including educational references to local natural elements such as educational information regarding the local Marine Park and National Park.
- End of trip cycle facilities.
- Seated areas.
- Directional signage for surrounding tracks and cycleways.
- A space for all age groups.
- BBQs.
- More tables.
- Include water features.
- Improve the appearance of the embankment on Teramby Road.
- References to the Park's historical significance.