

# Central Laneways Masterplan

JULY 2016



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## Introduction

The North Sydney Centre is set to undergo significant change over the coming years, due in part to the arrival of a new Sydney Metro railway station. This new public transport infrastructure brings with it opportunities for further growth and development of the Centre, but also presents challenges for Council in managing this change.

Council is responding to these challenges by pursuing its program of review and renewal in the North Sydney Centre. It is critical that the amenity and attractiveness of the public domain continues to improve for the benefit of all who live and work in North Sydney.

The Central Laneways precinct has been identified as requiring particular attention with regard to its future use, function and treatment. The Sydney Metro Planning Study, adopted by Council in May 2016, recommended that a masterplan be developed for the precinct with the aim of guiding and securing improved public domain and pedestrian amenity outcomes associated with the Sydney Metro project and any other relevant development.

## Purpose of Document

The Central Laneways Masterplan represents a response to an urgent need to address identified deficiencies in the public domain, directly related to the impending arrival of new public transport infrastructure.

The Masterplan will form the basis for on-going planning and consideration of the public domain response for the subject precinct and its relationship with the proposed Victoria Cross Metro station and other surrounding development.

## Objectives

The objectives of the Masterplan are:

- To recognise the transformational nature of the Sydney Metro project and ensure that an informed and Council-endorsed basis exists for the achievement of positive change;
- To inform future decision making with regards to the public domain in the precinct;
- To ensure that the public domain response to the Metro and other development proposals in the precinct prioritises pedestrian amenity, movement and safety;
- To identify opportunities to improve the public domain and the wider amenity of the precinct;
- To facilitate the development of a unique and attractive urban precinct;
- To better integrate the precinct into the wider fabric of the North Sydney Centre; and
- To ensure that adjoining private development contributes positively to the public domain.

## Regional Context

The Central Laneways Precinct forms part of the North Sydney Centre, located on Sydney's Lower North Shore, 2km from the Sydney Central Business District. The North Sydney Centre is Sydney's third largest commercial centre, with some 820,000 m<sup>2</sup> of commercial floor space supporting over 50,000 jobs. The Centre is also home to a growing residential population, a product of on-going mixed use development outside of the Centre's commercial core.

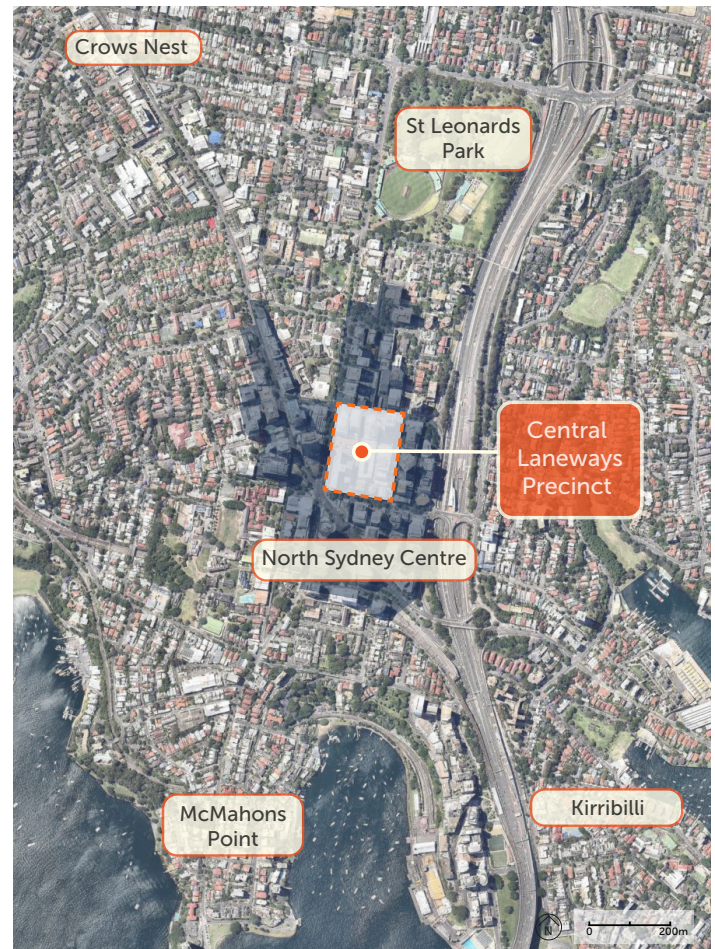


Fig. 1 - Regional Context

# Area Analysis

# Area Analysis - Precinct Boundary



Fig. 2 - Local Context

## Precinct Boundary

The Central Laneways Precinct is bound by Berry Street to the north, Walker Street to the east, Mount Street to the south, and Miller Street to the west. The Masterplan focuses on the internal street or laneway network comprising Denison, Spring and Little Spring Streets.

# Area Analysis - Pedestrian Movement and Destinations



Fig. 3 - Pedestrian Movement

## Pedestrian Movement and Destinations

The Precinct serves a number of important pedestrian functions, particularly in terms of north-south movement to and from the existing North Sydney Railway Station, via Greenwood Plaza. Permeability through the precinct is aided by a number of through-site links. Although varying in levels of accessibility, there is an important set of east-west linkages between Walker and Miller Streets, through the Tower Square, Shopping World and 94-102 Walker Street sites.

Footpaths are narrow and often cluttered. A shared pedestrian priority zone applies to parts of Denison and Spring Streets, although user experience suggests that its treatment and operation does not fit entirely within RMS guidelines or contemporary expectations of shared space.

Area Analysis - Vehicular Movement and Parking

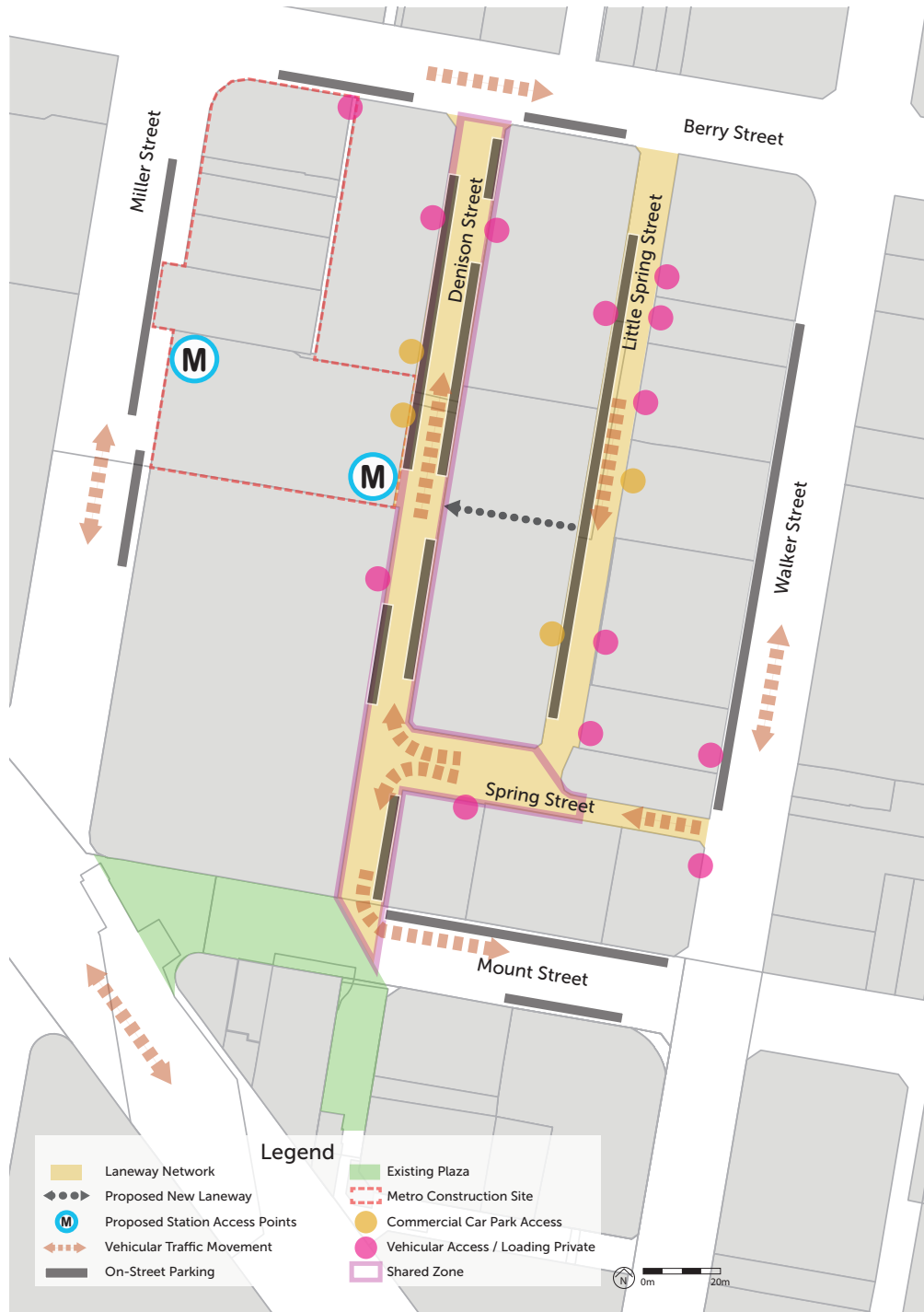


Fig. 4 - Vehicular Movement and Parking

Vehicular Movement and Parking

The internal laneway network serves a back-of-house function typical of inner urban laneways. In addition to loading and delivery docks, there are several car parks, both private and commercial, within the network. A number of on-street metered parking spaces, some of which operate as loading zones at varying times of the day, also exist. These elements contribute to the prevailing car-dominated character of the precinct.

A 10 kph speed limit applies to the pedestrian priority shared zone in parts of Denison and Spring Streets.

Outside of the precinct, Miller and Berry Streets are classified as State Roads under the NSW Roads Act.

Area Analysis - Land Use and Active Frontages



Fig. 5 - Land Use and Active Frontages

Land Use

The Precinct lies within the commercial core of the North Sydney Centre, and is therefore dominated by commercial and retail land uses. The Beau Monde tower is the exception, with the mixed use building serving a predominantly residential function. Shopping World and Tower Square are the two significant retail offerings within the Precinct. Tower square, however, forms part of the Metro construction site and is proposed to be demolished.

Active Frontages

The rear lane / service lane character and function of the internal street network is reflected by the predominance of non-active building frontages, particularly vehicular car park entries. The big box retail typology of Shopping World further contributes to this non-active character.

There are, however, small pockets of retail uses within the laneway network, particularly at its southern end, close to Brett Whiteley Place.



Area Analysis - Landscape and Open Space



Fig. 6 - Landscape and Open Space

Landscape and Open Space

The Precinct varies greatly in terms of landscaping, with Miller Street and Brett Whiteley Place the greenest spaces and therefore the location of most passive recreation and outdoor dining activity. Berry Square, privately owned yet publicly accessible, is popular for outdoor dining and more informal gathering / lunchtime activity.

The laneway network itself provides limited opportunities for recreation. Plans to extend Brett Whiteley Place will add significantly to the open space offering within the Precinct.

Recent efforts to plant street trees in Denison and Little Spring Streets have seen some softening of the otherwise gritty urban landscape. These trees are located within the parking lane of those streets.

Walker Street has recently received a major public domain upgrade, including new paving and tree plantings.



Rear MLC building, Denison Street



Rear of 88 Walker Street



Berry Square



Rear Firehouse Hotel, Little Spring Street



Narrow footpath on Little Spring Street



Vehicular entrance to Shopping World car park, Little Spring Street



Shop, corner Spring and Little Spring Streets



Smokers' nook, Spring Street



Outdoor dining, part of MLC building, southern Denison Street



MLC loading dock, Denison Street shared zone



Tower Square access, Denison Street shared zone



Motorcycle parking, southern Denison Street

The precinct is characterised generally by 'back of house' activities of commercial buildings, with numerous parking and delivery access points. The public domain primarily serves vehicular movement, with pedestrian amenity less than optimal, even within the designated shared zone. There are relatively few attractive opportunities for sitting, meeting, etc.



# Policy and Development Context

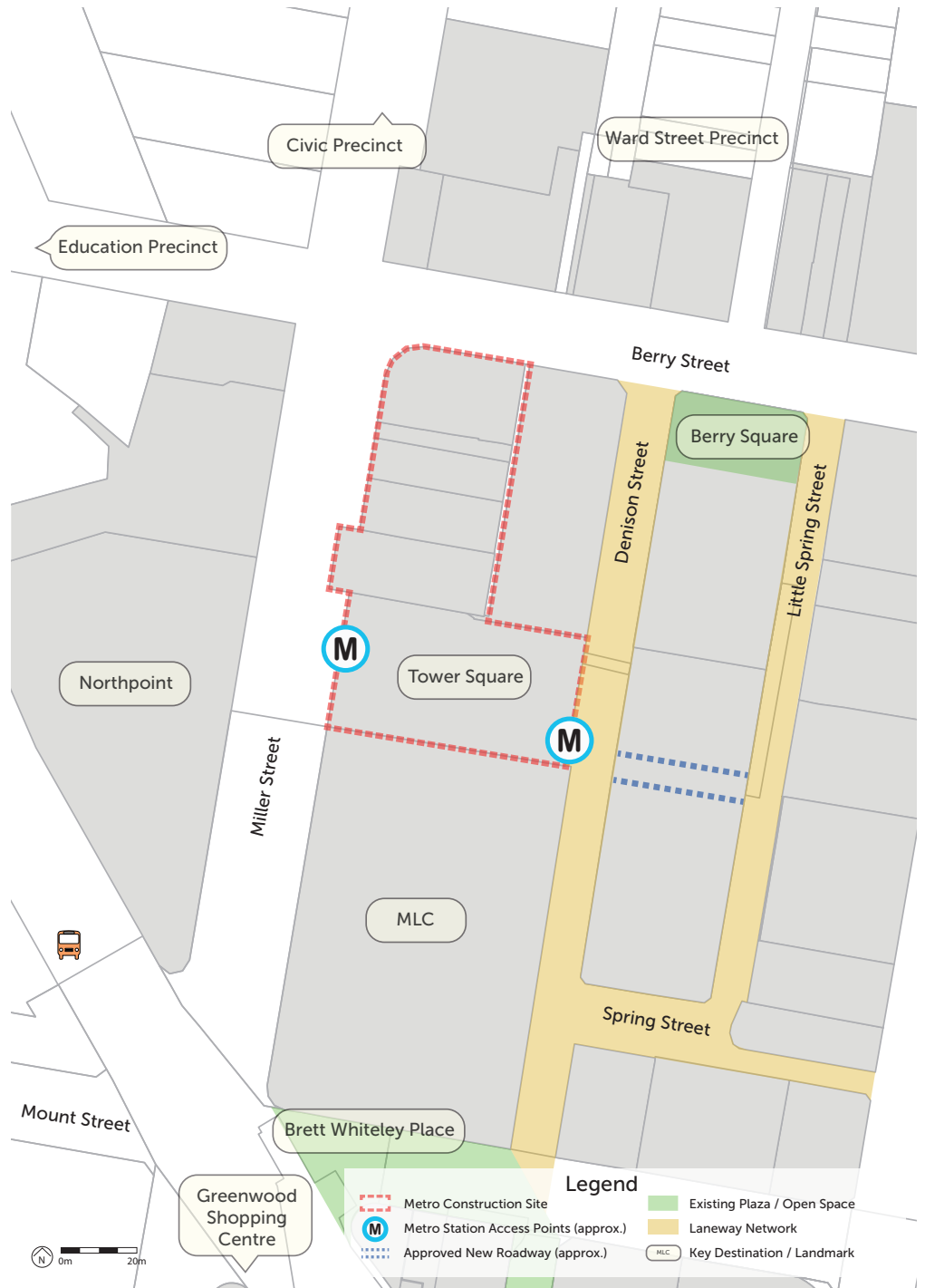


Fig. 7 - Victoria Cross Metro Site and Access Points

### Sydney Metro

The Sydney Metro City and Southwest project proposes a new metro railway station within North Sydney. The Victoria Cross station, as it will be known, will be located at the north western edge of the subject precinct. Access portals will be located both on Miller and Denison Streets, as shown in Figure 7.

The new station is expected to cater for around 14,000 passenger movements in the morning peak alone. Transport for NSW estimates that more than half of all movements in and out of the Victoria Cross station will occur at Denison Street. Preliminary pedestrian modelling

suggests that Denison Street in its current form will not adequately cater for the increase in pedestrian traffic in that street.

The arrival of significant transport infrastructure amplifies the need and opportunity for Denison Street and the laneways precinct to be re-engineered to cater for this expected influx of people. The opportunity to create something special in this precinct is further highlighted by the impending Metro development.

## Policy and Development Context - 1 Denison Street

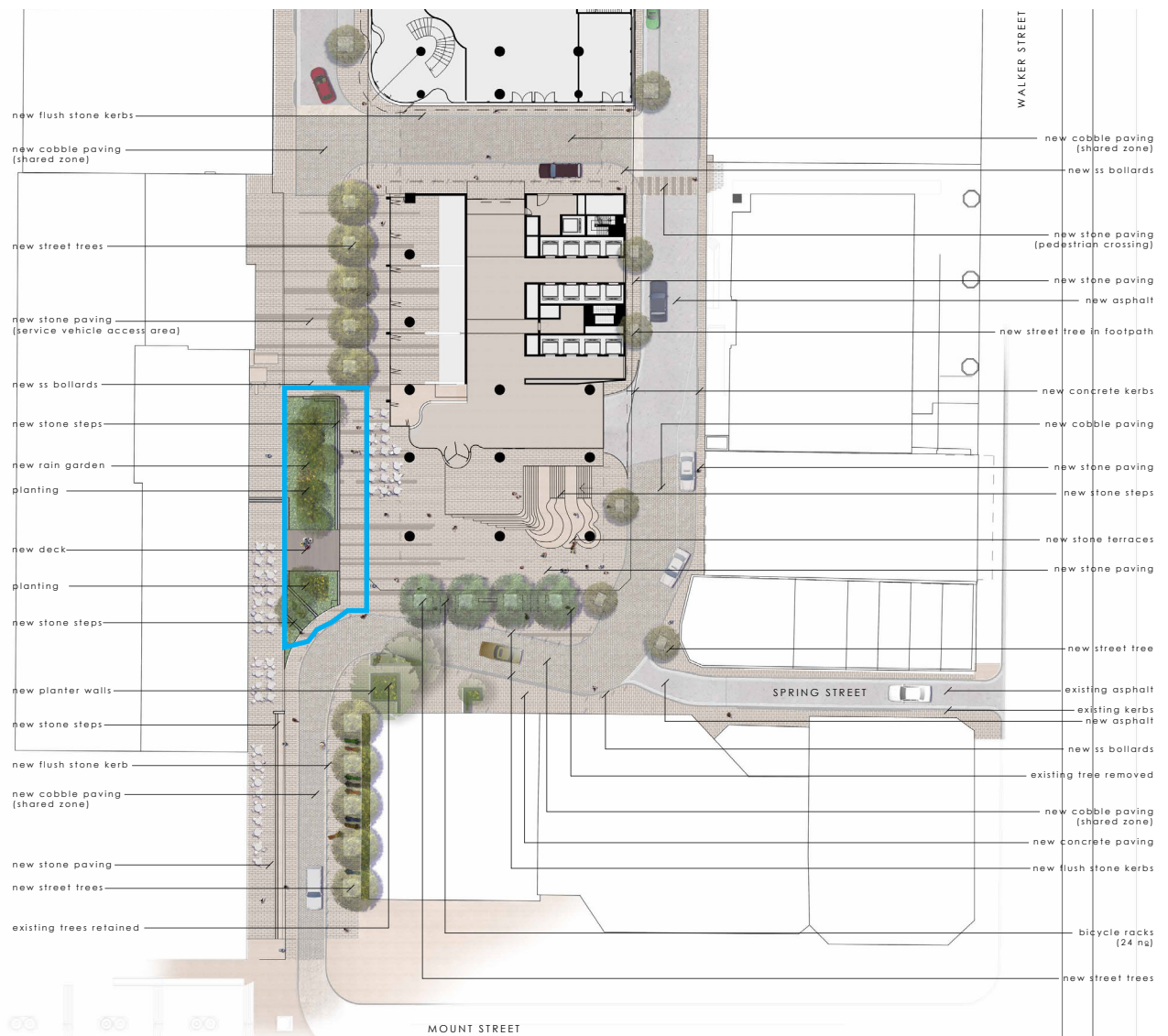


Fig. 8 - Approved Public Domain / Ground Level Plan, 1 Denison Street (extract)

## 1 Denison Street

A major commercial development approval exists for this site, currently known as 'Shopping World'. The approval proposes two important features.

Firstly, the closure of a portion of Denison Street from Little Spring Street northward to the southern edge of 155 Miller Street (approximately) is proposed, thereby creating a wholly-pedestrianised space of approximately 350 m<sup>2</sup> (marked blue on above plan). Under the approved plan, vehicular access around into Mount Street is maintained.

The new open space is enabled by the creation of a new roadway through the middle of the site. North bound traffic would travel along Spring Street, left into the new roadway, then continue north along Denison Street. Only vehicles accessing the existing MLC car park would be able to turn left when exiting the proposed new road.

Early planning for the design of the Metro suggests that an access portal would be located immediately at the alignment of the new laneway. This has potential impacts on the amenity and movement of Metro passengers coming to and from Victoria Cross station.

The development approval also indicates a number of commercial tenancies along Denison Street, affording the opportunity for outdoor dining.

The announcement of the Metro should trigger a rethink of existing plans, given the expected change in character and function of the precinct. It is considered that this may occur in any case, given the age of the development consent and that a new owner for the site is being sought.



# Policy and Development Context - Public Domain Audit

## B3.4 PLACES - 11 Spring Street, Little Spring Street and Denison Street

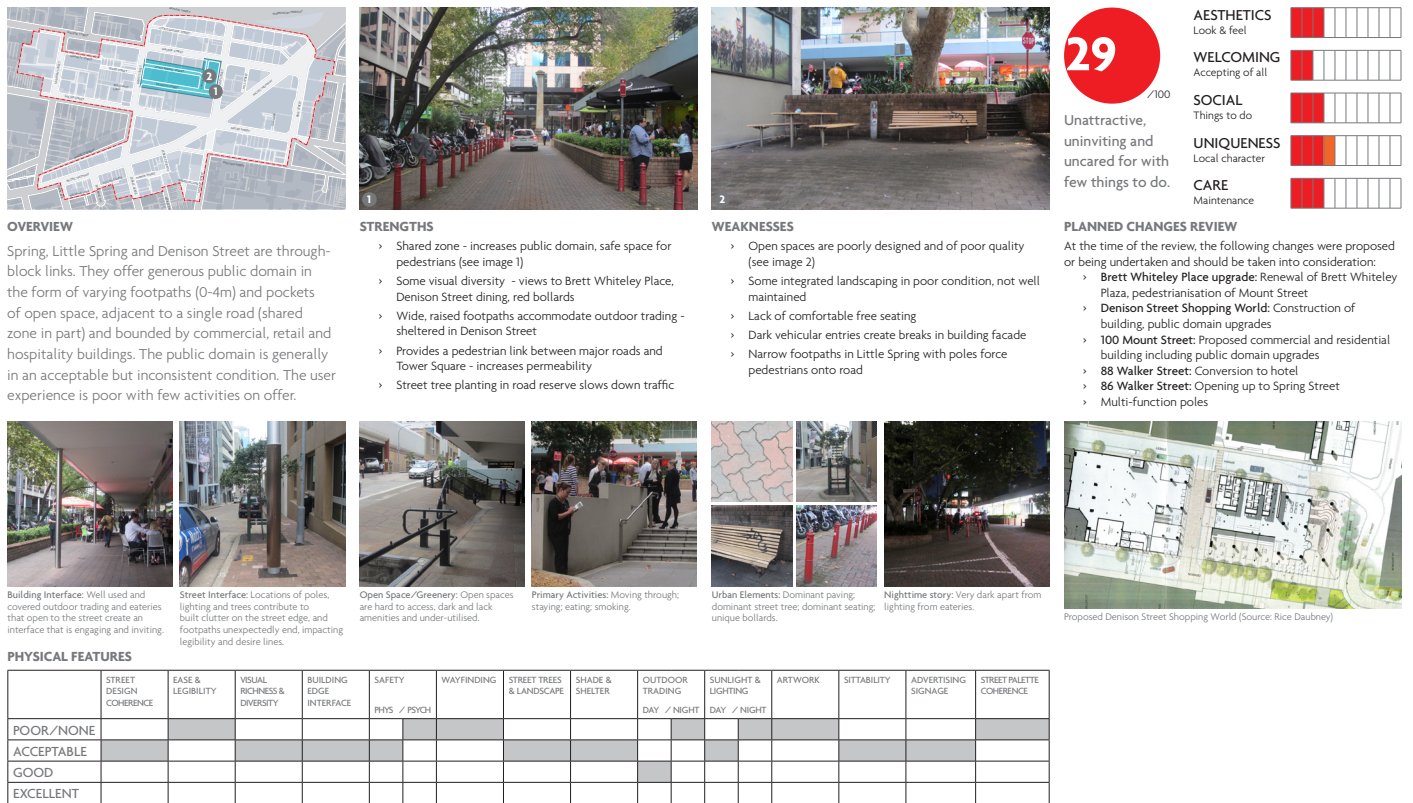


Fig. 12 - Public Domain Audit 2015 Extract

### Public Domain Audit

In 2015, Place Partners were engaged to undertake a public domain audit of the North Sydney Centre. A key component of that audit was a series of place rankings given to streets and spaces within the Centre based on the experience gained by users of those spaces.

The Central Laneways precinct fared poorly in terms of user experience, scoring just 29/100. The public domain was described as 'generally acceptable but inconsistent'. Although officially a shared zone, Denison Street does not necessarily read or operate as such.

It is worth noting also that the Audit was undertaken before the official announcement of the Sydney Metro. The weaknesses therefore are considered even more poignant given the impending arrival of this new transport infrastructure.

### Public Domain Strategy

Council intends to undertake a comprehensive public domain strategy for the North Sydney Centre. This Masterplan thus represents an interim policy statement with regard to the subject precinct, from which the wider strategy will build on.

# Challenges and Opportunities



# Challenges and Opportunities

## Key Challenges

The arrival of the Sydney Metro and Victoria Cross station presents challenges for Council in creating a safe and vibrant public domain. For the Central Laneways precinct, this means providing the capacity and urban environment that adequately caters for the expected increase in foot traffic in the area. It is acknowledged that the Laneways precinct will continue to play a role in facilitating both private vehicular movements to existing on-site car parks and loading, delivery and servicing functions.

Key challenges therefore include balancing the predominant existing use and character (vehicular traffic) with new priorities (pedestrian movement and amenity), and achieving better integration of existing and proposed development with the public domain imperatives of new transport infrastructure.

## Opportunities

There are however opportunities to achieve these objectives and at the same time create a distinctive urban precinct that contributes to the amenity, vibrancy and dynamism of the North Sydney Centre. There exist specific opportunities to:



Acknowledge the potential for the new Metro station as catalyst for change, particularly for improved public domain outcomes



Revisit, where possible, existing development approvals to address challenges and take advantage of new opportunities



Improve connectivity to and from Victoria Cross Metro, particularly to south eastern sector of North Sydney Centre



Increase activity and diversity of experience within the precinct and wider North Sydney Centre



Create a pedestrian focused precinct with a distinct identity



Create new spaces that engage and attract people and activity

# Key Moves

# Key Moves - Summary



Key Moves Summary

**1** Revisit 1 Denison Street Development Approval

**3** Implement Brett Whiteley Place Concept Plan

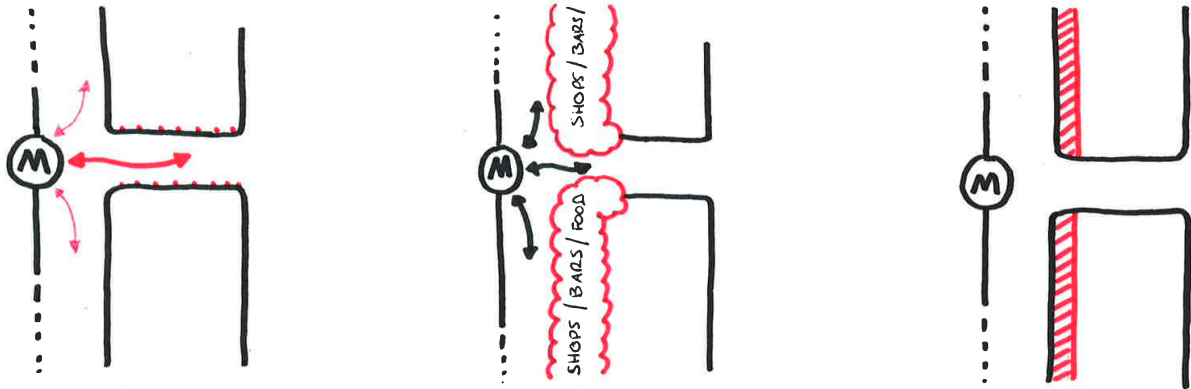
**2** Create a Pedestrian Priority Precinct

**4** Facilitate New Spaces and Activities

## 1

## Revisit 1 Denison Street Development Approval

There exists an opportunity to create new intimate urban spaces that acknowledge the changing function of Denison Street but retain an urban character that reflects its current function. The existing development approval at 1 Denison could play a major role in this vision.



### New Laneway

Revisit design and alignment of proposed new mid-block road way to ensure safe and efficient movement of pedestrians accessing Victoria Cross Metro station, and to optimise east-west pedestrian movement.

### Active Frontages

Increase number of shop fronts and other active uses where possible, particularly on Denison Street south of the proposed new road way, to take advantage of increased pedestrian presence and movement.

### Ground Level Setback

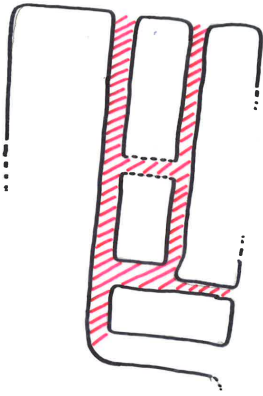
Maintain the proposed built form setback at ground floor on Denison Street to accommodate undercover outdoor dining and / or congregation around coffee shops etc.

Consider applying a similar setback north of the new road way also.

## 2

## Create a Pedestrian Priority Precinct

The impending arrival of Metro transport infrastructure requires the rethinking of spaces within the precinct, and a shift in priorities towards pedestrian movement and amenity.



### Shared Zone

Implement shared zones and appropriate design treatments throughout precinct.

### Private Vehicle Reduction

Remove metered parking spaces in key locations to reduce private vehicular movements within network and maximise pedestrian movement and safety.

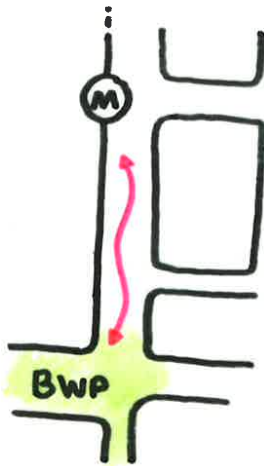
### Loading and Deliveries

Consider the establishment of loading and delivery times to reduce potential conflict with peak pedestrian movements.

## 3

## Implement Brett Whiteley Place Concept Plan

The implementation of the adopted Brett Whiteley Place (BWP) concept plan is given additional importance by the arrival of the Victoria Cross Metro station.



### Pedestrianised Space

Implementation of the concept plan as adopted would result in the closure of lower Denison Street, linking two new destinations and extending the pedestrian domain between BWP and Victoria Cross Metro.

### Integrated Network

The closure of the southern end of Denison Street would create an integrated network of pedestrian and recreational spaces encompassing Brett Whiteley Place, Elizabeth Plaza and Denison Street.

An alternative connection would then exist between the Victoria Cross Metro and the existing North Sydney stations.

## 4

## Facilitate New Spaces and Activities

The Metro is the catalyst for the public domain and its private interface to become a special place within the fabric of the North Sydney Centre.



## Activity

Ensure that opportunities to implement active ground floor uses in existing and new development within the precinct are pursued. New developments are to make every effort to locate active uses, through site links and the like to the laneway interface.

## Spaces

New spaces for respite and congregation within the public domain should be created to provide interest and character. Spaces should reflect and contribute to the intimate urban character of the precinct.

## MLC

Activate the underutilised MLC space where possible via landscaping, seating, public art or other innovative activity.

Any future redevelopment of MLC site should encourage better built form enclosure of the street and maximise active frontages.

# Recommendations



## Recommendations

It is recommended that:

### 1. DCP 2013 Amendment

An amendment be made to North Sydney Development Control Plan 2013 to include a new area character statement for the Central Laneways Precinct. The amendment should reflect:

- The need for significant public domain upgrades in the precinct;
- The growing importance of the precinct as it relates to the Metro and wider North Sydney Centre;
- The opportunities for creating a unique pedestrian-focussed environment in North Sydney;
- The secondary priority of maintaining loading and delivery functions of the precinct; and
- The need for the development approval at 1 Denison Street to be revised with a view to better integration with the Victoria Cross Metro and the pursuit of opportunities for a better public / private interface response.

### 2. Use of this Document

This document be used to inform any future consideration of development and public domain outcomes within or adjacent to the subject precinct.

### 2. Transport for NSW

This document be forwarded to Transport for NSW to guide its on-going planning and design of the Victoria Cross Metro station and surrounds.

### 3. Shared Zone Implementation

Council undertake appropriate traffic management and other plans required to pursue a shared pedestrian priority zone throughout the precinct.

### 4. Brett Whiteley Place

That Council reaffirm its commitment to the adopted Brett Whiteley Place concept plan of February 2015 and continue to pursue its full implementation.

### 5. State Contribution

That Transport for NSW be approached to contribute to the studies and works required to achieve the objectives and opportunities outlined in this Masterplan.

### 6. Public Domain Strategy

That any future Public Domain Strategy for the North Sydney Centre include detailed further consideration for place-making and public domain improvements within the subject precinct.

## North Sydney Public Domain Style Manual

All streetscape elements used in Council's laneways will comply with Council's adopted Public Domain Style Manual. These elements include, but are not limited to, all furniture, fixtures, paving, lighting, soft landscaping, etc. The Public Domain Style Manual can be found on Council's website:

[http://www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/Projects\\_Infrastructure/Public\\_Domain\\_Infrastructure/Styles\\_Specifications](http://www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/Projects_Infrastructure/Public_Domain_Infrastructure/Styles_Specifications)